



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

27 AUGUST 2024

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Tuesday, 27 August 2024

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MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.00): Members:

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
Yanggu ngalawiri, dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
Nginggada Dindi dhawura Ngunnaawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin.

The words I have just spoken are in the language of the traditional custodians and translate to:

This is Ngunnawal Country.
Today we are gathering on Ngunnawal country.
We always pay respect to Elders, female and male, and Ngunnawal country.

Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the adjournment debates on 27, 28 and 29 August 2024 and 3, 4, and 5 September 2024 being extended by 15 minutes each day.

Petitions

Waste—Mugga Lane landfill—petition 27-24

By Ms Lawder, from 111 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly that since 2015, residents of certain Tuggeranong suburbs have been intermittently affected by the odour emanating from the Mugga Lane Resource Management facility.

We, the undersigned residents of the ACT, draw the attention of the Assembly to this recurring issue that has plagued our community for many years. Recently, the situation has become unbearable, especially when we open our windows or when it rains. This persistent stench has significantly diminished our quality of life. It is imperative that these issues be addressed urgently due to their severe impact on our daily lives. It's impacting on our health and wealth.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to thoroughly investigate this issue and take appropriate action in response to our complaints. We seek effective and immediate solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of the odour from the Mugga Lane Resource Management facility on our community. Additionally, when works or changes take place at the facility which may have any impact at all on odour, residents in nearby suburbs should be advised ahead of time about the works, why required, how long any impact might persist, and avenues for them to complain.

Transport—Latham bus services—petitions 29-24 and 37-24

By Mr Cain, from 82 and 123 residents, respectively:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to:

- a) Residents of Latham are experiencing reduced accessibility to bus services since the removal of the Macrossan Crescent bus route and bus stops.
- b) Bus routes that currently service Latham only operate along Dalley Crescent, Florey Drive, Kingsford Smith Drive, O’Loughlen Street, and Onslow Street, leaving much of Latham unable to easily access public transport due to far distances to bus stops, a lack of connecting and well-maintained footpaths and difficult terrain.
- c) Vulnerable residents of Latham, especially elderly and disabled people, have had their independence hindered by the removal of the bus stops and bus route along Macrossan Crescent.
- d) Residents of Latham deserve convenient and accessible public transport services along Macrossan Crescent as they previously had for many years.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to reinstate the bus route along Macrossan Crescent, Latham to promote convenient and accessible public transport services for Latham residents.

Hawker group centre—road safety—petition 30-24

By Mrs Kikkert, from 31 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

- the Hawker Group Centre is a thriving local shopping precinct;
- hundreds of residents live nearby in units and multi-unit buildings located south of the shops;
- walking to the shops and the Hawker Community Garden from these areas requires crossing Coniston Street, which can often be busy; and
- a raised pedestrian crossing in Coniston Street would make it safer for pedestrians walking to and from the shops.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the ACT Government to install a raised pedestrian crossing in Coniston Street, Hawker, linking the existing footpath on the north side of the street with the laneway opposite (between 7 Coniston St and 9 Coniston St).

Garran—footpaths and roads—petitions 31-24 and 36-24

By Dr Paterson, from 60 and 14 residents, respectively:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly that:

- Abbeyfield in Garran is an independent living facility for people with disabilities, providing a supportive and community-oriented environment. Ensuring that residents at Abbeyfield have access to necessary resources and infrastructure aligns with the principles outlined in the ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033.
- The ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033 is a vital framework that ensures the ACT Government in meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and aims to promote accessibility and inclusion, empowering people with disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives.
- However, we wish to draw attention of the Assembly to the current accessibility and safety aspects of Stephens Place that currently impact significantly on the residents and their visitors, most significantly there is lack of adequate footpath (residents have to walk down the middle of the road) and very chaotic parking that congests the road and is very unsafe.
- We recognise that safe and accessible footpaths are crucial for residents with disabilities to navigate their community independently and the current lack of adequate footpaths on Stephens Place, Garran hinders mobility and poses safety risks for residents. The residents of Abbeyfield Garran walk to the local shopping area where they can access their medical practice, the dentist, the local shops and cafes and catch the bus. Most of the residents do this on at least a daily basis and sometimes more often.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to take immediate action to improve footpath access and parking issues at Stephens Place in Garran, ACT. These enhancements will not only support the residents' independence and safety but also uphold the values and objectives of the ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033.

Rivett—roads—petition 33-24

By Dr Paterson, from 132 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly

- Kids Academy in Rivett is a local daycare centre that provides essential early childhood education for families in the local Weston Creek community. Ensuring safe and convenient access to the facility aligns with the ACT Government's commitments.
- The ACT Government emphasises the importance of accessible and safe infrastructure for all community members, especially in areas that serve children and families.
- However, we wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to the recent changes in parking regulations around Kids Academy at the corner of Bangalay Crescent and Rivett Place. The installation of 'no standing' and 'no parking' signs has created significant challenges for parents and caregivers during

drop-off and pick-up times. This situation is particularly problematic for parents with multiple children or those with children who have disabilities, as it compromises the kids' safety and convenience. These changes have caused a chaotic, dangerous parking situation.

- With the upcoming opening of a new childcare centre at the Rivett shops, the parking situation is expected to worsen, exacerbating congestion and safety concerns. The petitioners propose that making Rivett Place a one-way street with a dedicated pick up/set down lane could alleviate these issues by improving traffic flow and creating safer conditions for parents and children. This would allow for the inclusion of safe drop-off parking spots at the front of the centre.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to review the current parking restrictions and implement a one-way traffic system on Rivett Place with a dedicated pick up/set down lane. These changes will ensure safe and convenient access to Kids Academy and the surrounding facilities, supporting the needs of families and aligning with the ACT Government's commitment to community wellbeing, accessibility and safety.

Middle East—conflict—petition 34-24

By Mr Braddock, from 912 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly

The following residents of the ACT draw the attention of the Assembly to the State of Israel's genocidal war on the Palestinian territory of the Gaza Strip.

This horrific war has been going for almost ten months, but the suffering of the Palestinian people has been ongoing for much longer. This Palestinian territory of Gaza has been subjected to a siege by Israel since 2006, as well as ongoing attacks by the Israel Defence Force. Just like the Gaza Strip, the West Bank has been occupied by the State of Israel since 1967 and the Palestinian people have been subjected to constant attacks and harassment by settlers, increasing significantly in the last 10 months.

The unlawful annexation of Palestinian land and expansion of Israeli settlements continues, preventing the Palestinian right to self-determination. The International Court of Justice on 26 January 2024 issued a ruling confirming that it is plausible that Israel is committing a genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, whilst the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has sought arrest warrants for the Israeli Prime Minister and Defence Minister in relation to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The International Court of Justice made a further ruling on 19 July 2024, finding that:

1. the occupation of Palestine by the state of Israel is illegal;
2. Israel is practicing apartheid;
3. Israeli settlements are to be dismantled;
4. Palestinians have the right to return to their lands; and
5. Israel should pay reparations for its crimes.

The ruling places a positive obligation upon all states and territories, including ours, to urgently act to ensure an end to our complicity in Israeli crimes. In section 31 of the ACT Human Rights Act 2004, it states that “international law and the judgments of foreign and international courts and tribunals relevant to a human right may be considered in interpreting a human right”. It is clear that the ACT has obligations based on international law. Palestinian and Muslim communities living in the ACT have faced increasing racism and Islamophobia since the war in Gaza began.

We call on the ACT Government to demonstrate its commitment to human rights by aligning itself with the positions stated by international law and therefore showing overdue solidarity with communities impacted by the genocide here in the ACT.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to:

1. Act on the divestment motion introduced by the Greens and agreed to by Labor on 7 February of this year.
2. Enact legislation banning settlement goods and services from entering the ACT marketplace.
3. Undertake an extensive review and urgent inquiry, with the purpose of identifying the ACT Government economic relationships, investments, trade agreements, cooperation schemes and programs with companies that has ties with Israel and cancel them immediately.
4. Immediately divest and cut ties with weapons manufacturers and financial institutions listed by the United Nations OHCHR on 20 June 2024 which are complicit in human rights violations and possibly genocide.
5. Voice their support for:
 - a. an immediate and permanent ceasefire;
 - b. all perpetrators to be held accountable for their actions in accordance with international law;
 - c. ending the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and apartheid against the Palestinian population;
 - d. Condemn islamophobia, and racism; and state these have no place here in the ACT;
 - e. Canberra’s Palestinian and other Muslim communities during this challenging time, including for people seeking refuge in the ACT.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having at least 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.

Ministerial responses

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

Calwell shops—maintenance—petitions 7-24 and 13-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City Services, dated 28 June 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lawder on 9 April, concerning Calwell shopping centre.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petitions 007-24 and 013-24, lodged by Nicole Lawder MLA regarding ‘Calwell Shopping Centre Needs Urgent Attention’.

The ACT Government maintains and upgrades public open space infrastructure to ensure current standards of safety, access and security are met. In addition to routine maintenance, the ACT Government, through Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), has an ongoing commitment to improving local centres to increase their vitality, safety, accessibility and usability.

Design work commenced on the Calwell Group Centre improvements in early 2023 with a draft preliminary design being released for public consultation from June to August 2023. The detailed design is presently being finalised and a construction tender is planned to be released to market in June 2024. The specific construction start date and timeframes will be confirmed upon engagement of the successful contractor. However, based on a successful procurement process, works are expected to commence on site in August 2024.

Key features of the design are:

- New seating and tables providing spaces to sit and gather;
- Revamped play and accessible play elements which include an accessible nest swing, bounce zone, steppers and climbing set;
- New accessible parking bays;
- Safer pedestrian entrance through re-engineered levels;
- A service gate to restrict parkland access;
- Additional trees and better landscaping; and
- Improved access for pedestrians including paths, safe crossings and stairways.

Construction timeframes will be finalised through the tender process and timing of the works will be communicated to the community at this time.

I am advised that two tree stumps at the Calwell Shopping Centre were removed on 7 March 2024. It is anticipated the stumps will be replaced with new plantings and alternative tree-friendly surrounds are currently being investigated. Similarly, work has commenced on addressing the damage caused by lifting pavers and this is expected to be completed in June 2024.

The Principal Petitioner or an appropriate community representative will be invited to a site meeting in June 2024 with a senior Urban Treescapes Manager for the purpose of clearly documenting a list of additional agreed works to be completed. This will provide an opportunity to review specific sites where the community has concerns in relation to foliage, leaves and debris causing drainage issues, and where trees may be blocking lighting of footpaths or obstructing

surveillance cameras. The Urban Treescapes Manager will be able to provide site specific advice on the scope of works that is possible, the timing and any need for additional ongoing monitoring or scheduled pruning maintenance.

Works to repair the potholes at the loading dock were completed on 1 May 2024. These repairs were undertaken using cold mix, which provides a safe and immediate solution to trip hazards. Long term repair works using heavy patching will be added to the road maintenance schedule for future works.

An inspection of the stormwater drains at the Calwell Shopping centre will be undertaken during June 2024 and a clean programmed as necessary. As well as an assessment of the street lighting along the footpath from the aged care village will be undertaken June 2024.

Watson—crime—petitions 6-24 and 12-24

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Police and Crime Prevention, dated 5 July 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lee on 9 April 2024, concerning crime in Watson.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 9 April 2024, regarding petition E-PET-006-24 (and PET-012-24 with the same content), Crime in Watson. The petition requests the Assembly call on the Government to:

- a. Provide adequate resourcing for policing and make police presence in the community visible and regular;
- b. Ensure Housing ACT uphold its responsibilities and obligations to the community and those in community living (i.e strata) to prevent and address anti-social behaviour in accordance with relevant legislation; and
- c. Ensure repeat offenders are held to account to protect the community.

Pursuant to Standing Order 100, this letter constitutes my response.

Crime and Community Safety issues in Watson and Downer

As with Canberra generally, rates of crime in Watson and Downer are low. Indeed, data from ACT Policing shows the number of offences in Watson and Downer reported to ACT Policing have decreased.

Incidents reported to ACT Policing from the area have increased. This increase indicates that people are willing to come forward to report matters to ACT Policing. Incidents reported to police include reports from any source including police operations and cover a wide range of behaviour or issues. That is, reporting of an incident or issue may or may not be criminal.

- ACT Policing has observed that incidents reported in Watson have **increased by 17.2 per cent**, with 837 incidents reported in 2022 and 981 incidents reported in 2023. Between 1 January to 31 March 2024, there has been 257* incidents in Watson reported to ACT Policing, this compares with 261 incidents reported in the same period in 2023.

- ACT Policing has observed that incidents reported in Downer have **decreased by 3.9 per cent**, with 533 incidents reported in 2022 and 512 incidents reported in 2023. Between 1 January to 31 March 2024, there has been 159* incidents in Downer reported to ACT Policing, this compares with 149 incidents reported in the same period in 2023.

*An **incident** includes reports made to police from any source (operations, front desk, online reporting etc.) recorded in PROMIS, where a criminal offence may or may not have occurred. This term also encompasses pro-active police activity recorded in PROMIS, including random breath testing, criminal targeting operations etc. where a criminal offence may or may not have occurred.*

- Regarding the perception of an increased crime trend in the suburb of Watson, ACT Policing advises that offences reported for Watson have **decreased by 23.8 per cent**, with 416** offences reported in 2022 and 317** offences in 2023. Burglary and Property damage offences reported reduced significantly from 2022 to 2023.

*One or more **offences** are recorded against an incident when credible criminal activity is reported to, or becomes known to ACT Police. To be classed as an offence:*

- *The circumstances as reported or detected amount to a crime defined by law and fall within the jurisdiction of the police agency; and*
- *There isn't credible evidence to the contrary.*

** the PROMIS database is a live system which is updated on a daily basis, therefore data extracted is subject to slight change dependent on the date of extraction. The data for this figure was extracted and accurate as at 19 April 2024.*

***Statistics include issued Traffic Infringement Notices and Criminal Infringement Notices.*

Police Resourcing

In June 2023, the ACT Government committed to enhance community safety by investing more than \$107 million in recruiting additional 126 ACT Policing personnel for the next five years. This is the largest single staffing and funding boost ever received by ACT Policing. All areas of ACT Policing will see an increase in numbers. The funding will allow an additional dedicated ACT Policing recruit class to be run annually for the next five years.

The first year of More ACT Policing (MAP) funding covered 28 positions, equivalent to 18.75 FTE for 2023-24. Financial year to date 2023-24, ACT Policing FTE has met the overall affordable FTE level, inclusive of the MAP increase. This FTE level is forecast to increase towards the end of this financial year in preparation for 2024-25 MAP funding, through commencement of recruits and lateral members as outlined below.

ACT Policing secured an additional recruit course for 2023-24. Three courses have already graduated throughout this FY with a total of 71 new Police Officers

commencing operational duties with ACT Policing. A fourth additional course started in January 2024 with recruits to graduate and commence operational duties as Police Officers in ACT Policing in July 2024.

Additional to the above recruit courses, ACT Policing has 10 Lateral Police Officers currently undertaking AFP training, set to commence in ACT Policing in June 2024.

Pending successful completion of their training, it is estimated that a total of 106 recruits (inclusive of Lateral members) will have commenced in ACT Policing between July 2023 and July 2024.

Actions by ACT Policing and the Government to address concerns in Watson and Downer

Efforts have been made by ACT Policing and the ACT Government to engage the Watson and Downer community to address concerns. Following a meeting attended by Minister Vassarotti with the Watson Community Association, another meeting was held on 27 February 2024, where Minister Rattenbury, Minister Vassarotti, Detective Superintendent for the North District Scott Moller, and a representative from Housing ACT met with representatives from the Watson Community Association. On 7 April 2024, Housing ACT and ACT Policing also participated in the Community Cohesion Day event organised by the Watson Community Association. The engagement with the Watson Community Association continues, with a meeting held in June 2024 attended by Minister Vassarotti and representatives from ACT Policing and Housing ACT to monitor the ongoing work to support the local community.

ACT Policing is also engaging with the community in Watson by contributing content to the Watson Community newsletter, including information about how and when to contact police. Similar information is being displayed on notice boards in the area.

General Duties Officers from the City Station routinely conduct proactive policing patrols in all northern suburbs of the ACT, including Watson and Downer. They respond to reports of criminal behaviour, including drug-related incidents. To address concerns raised by the Watson community, ACT Policing are conducting a review of some recent reports made by the community.

Housing ACT has responded to complaints regarding tenants. Syringe disposal units were provided in the public housing blocks, and regular clean up and maintenance have been carried out in Windeyer Court and A'Beckett Court. Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) have engaged with the Watson community and identified an increase in the inappropriate disposal of used sharps around the Watson shops. TCCS will soon provide a sharps bin for safe disposal of sharps, which is not known to increase the use of sharps in an area and instead facilitates the safe management of sharps that are already being used.

Housing ACT is committed to working with tenants residing in Watson and Downer, ensuring they are well-supported and able to fulfill their obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. Housing ACT staff has recently conducted targeted visits and issued several legal notices where breaches of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* have occurred. If these notices are not remedied or there are further reported breaches, further legal actions will occur, which may include referral to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Housing ACT and ACT Policing are committed to collaborating with the Watson Community Association, as well as other Government and Non-Government partners, to address any ongoing issues in Watson and Downer.

ACT Policing Approach in Responding to Crime and Incidents in the ACT

ACT Policing's Intelligence Team analyses a variety of information sources to identify patterns, convergences, and prioritisation, to maximise crime reduction opportunities and increase community safety. The intelligence informs target areas for police patrols. Canberra's condensed geographical nature means that officers can move across the territory in a timely manner, with police regularly undertaking duties in different patrol zones if the resources are required. In addition to those located at the City Police Station, ACT Policing's dispatch system ensures the closest and most available resources will be allocated. Police response time and resourcing are based on all other operational priorities occurring at the time. Additionally, ACT Policing prioritises its responses to life-threatening emergencies, followed by incidents where there is an immediate threat to a person or property.

Education and public messaging are important to crime prevention, community safety and confidence in police. ACT Policing has been steadily increasing its community engagement activities. Over the past year, police officers have attended and hosted numerous events in local shopping centres and cafes, engaging residents face-to-face to maintain a strong relationship with the Canberra community. ACT Policing has received more than 117 requests in 2023 to attend community events in a public engagement capacity and continues to facilitate officer attendance at these events as operational priorities allow.

ACT Policing recognises the significance of a community's willingness to partner with police in ensuring a safe city. ACT Policing encourages the community to utilise the various reporting avenues available when requiring police assistance. They have been exploring a range of technical upgrades to community reporting channels for minor incidents, particular crimes and other matters, and are implementing online reporting to complement existing methods. Additionally, ACT Policing also works with partner agencies to address social issues that often underpin anti-social behaviour before it becomes a recurring issue.

I trust this information provides the petitioners with assurance that their concerns are understood and have been acknowledged by the ACT Government.

Maribyrnong Primary School—travel links—petition 8-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City Services, dated 8 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Braddock on 16 May 2024, concerning improving active travel at Maribyrnong Primary School.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning petition 008-24, lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA, requesting improvements of the active travel network around Maribyrnong Primary School in Kaleen.

The ACT Government takes road safety, and in particular safety of school children, very seriously and is keen to encourage greater uptake in active travel with the many benefits this provides for health and sustainability.

The ACT Government is currently progressing active travel and road safety improvements at schools all around Canberra, including at Maribyrnong Primary School. Information regarding active travel projects that are in feasibility, design and construction is available on the [Walking and cycling infrastructure map \(arcgis.com\)](#).

Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) has been working with Maribyrnong Primary School to improve road safety and provide greater opportunities for active travel to this school.

I am pleased to report that a feasibility study into providing additional paths and crossings, to improve the active travel network to and around Maribyrnong Primary School, was undertaken in 2023. The report recommended:

- Construction of a footpath on the southern side of Alberga Street from the end of the existing path to connect with the existing path on the southern side of Shannon Circuit;
- Construction of a footpath on Shannon Circuit along the northern side of Shannon Circuit; and
- Raised zebra pedestrian crossings (wombat crossings) on Shannon Circuit and across the school access road.

Following completion of the feasibility, the Government allocated funding in the Budget for the design of these potential improvements and design is currently underway. The construction of these proposals will be considered and prioritised in the context of other proposals for active travel and school safety improvements across the Territory.

In the past seven years (2017 to 2024), there has been two reported crashes on Alberga Street and no reported crashes on Shannon Circuit. The two crashes reported involved damage only and occurred in the vicinity of the shops. This crash record does not indicate a road safety issue on either of these roads.

Traffic surveys on Alberga Street from May 2024, indicate the average speed of traffic is approximately 35km/h northbound and 36km/h southbound during the hours the 40km/h school zone is in operation, and 41km/h northbound and 45km/h southbound outside the school zone hours when the 50km/h default speed limit applies. These speed results indicate good compliance with the speed limits and that speed management safety measures are unlikely to be of benefit.

TCCS is currently reviewing how the school crossing supervisor program is delivered. Currently, there is no immediate plan to expand this program to Maribyrnong Primary School. However, Maribyrnong Primary School will be added to the list of schools that have expressed interest in having a dedicated crossing supervisor and, should the scheme be expanded in the future, the request will be considered against both the criteria for a supervised crossing and the priorities across the Territory.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Macquarie—playground—petition 17-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City Services, dated 8 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert on 14 May 2024, concerning the Erskine Street neighbourhood playground.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning Petition E-PET 017-24 lodged by Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA regarding the Erskine Street Neighbourhood Playground.

The ACT Government is committed to safe, varied and inclusive play spaces and recognises that play spaces can enhance health and wellbeing, strengthen the social fabric of our communities and contribute to environmental outcomes.

The ACT Government manages over 500 public play spaces located across the ACT, including seven in Macquarie. The Erskine Street neighbourhood playground in Macquarie is classified as a local neighbourhood playground. Local neighbourhood playgrounds generally contain basic structured play equipment to support local residences (as most residences are located within 400 metres of a local playground).

All requests for improvements to Canberra playgrounds are assessed and prioritised annually, guided by direction set by the ACT Play Space Strategy. The assessment process considers factors like demand, hierarchy, proximity to recent playground upgrades, condition, demographics, equity, sustainability and availability of funding.

Consultation through the development of the ACT Play Space Strategy identified that the ACT community supports a ‘quality over quantity’ approach to improving the play spaces network. This support for quality reflects how playgrounds are used across Canberra, with many more people visiting district and central playgrounds than local playgrounds. A key focus area identified by the community within the ACT Play Space Strategy includes prioritising district and central playgrounds for refresh and major upgrade because these are much more valued by the community. As such, there are currently no immediate plans to upgrade the Erskine Street neighbourhood playground.

However, I am pleased to advise that the ACT Government is upgrading a central community playground in Macquarie, near the local shops on Lachlan Street. This playground is approximately 500 metres or a 5 minute walk from the Erskine Street neighbourhood playground.

This playground upgrade is intended to cater to the demographics of the area and will provide a wider range of play opportunities for local residents. Construction of this central community playground commenced in the week of 8 July 2024, and upgrades will include slides, an accessible swing, shade sail and nature play elements.

In response to community feedback provided in the petition regarding the basketball court at Macquarie Primary School, the Education Directorate and Macquarie Primary School have inspected the area, which includes a concreted area with two basketball hoops. The Education Directorate has identified minor maintenance opportunities that will improve the condition and functionality of the area, by strengthening the basketball hoop fixtures, as well as the upkeep of grass, weeds and leaf litter, which will be delivered by Macquarie Primary School.

The Education Directorate will also continue engaging with Macquarie Primary School regarding possibilities for future upgrades.

The Education Directorate will continue to consider the infrastructure needs of all ACT public schools, informed by regular engagement with schools, as part of the ACT Government's ongoing work to plan for and invest in public education infrastructure to meet the needs of students, schools and the community.

I appreciate the passion that Macquarie residents have shown for their local playgrounds through their support of this petition and hope they will enjoy the upgraded playground at Macquarie shops a short distance away once complete.

Higgins—footpaths—petition 19-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City Services, dated 8 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert on 15 May 2024, concerning the footpath between Fullagar Crescent and Higgins shops.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning Petition 019-24, lodged by Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA, regarding the Footpath between the western side of Fullagar Crescent and Higgins Shops.

Fullagar Crescent currently has a footpath on both sides of the road that provides a safe connection between the western side of the oval and the Higgins shops. The footpath on the side of Fullagar Crescent also provides a safe access for residents of 'The Henry' to the shops.

The request for additional footpath connections along the southern edge of the Higgins Oval to provide a more direct connection from the western side of Fullagar Crescent with the Higgins shops, including a footpath connecting the shops and the path on the east side of the oval, will be added to the footpath infill program request list.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Florey shops—parking—petition 21-24

By **Ms Cheyne**, Minister for City Services, dated 8 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mrs Kikkert on 16 May 2024, concerning parking at Florey shops.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter concerning Petition 021-24, lodged by Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA, regarding parking at Florey Shops.

Prior to receipt of the petition, the ACT Government had identified the need to consider improvements that could be made to traffic, parking and pedestrian safety. Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) engaged a consultant to review and identify options to improve pedestrian access and circulation and utilisation in the car parks. A consultant's report has been produced identifying a number of new improvements.

TCCS recently engaged with the community regarding several proposals to improve traffic, parking and pedestrian safety at Florey Shops. Initial proposed improvements include:

- a new pedestrian crossing at the front of the medical centre on Kesteven Street
- 2 new streetlights and a speed cushion on the approach to the pedestrian crossing
- a reduced speed limit of 40kmh in the Florey shops precinct
- 2 new speed cushions on the approach to the existing pedestrian refuge island on Connah Street with age friendly crossing warning signage
- new wayfinding signage, including to the car park adjacent to the oval which has lower utilisation
- new seating.

Community consultation began on Thursday, 27 June 2024 and closed on Thursday, 18 July 2024. The consultation included three 'pop-ups' at the Florey Shops, enabling the community to discuss and engage with TCCS officers directly. In addition to the proposals above, TCCS officers also engaged with the community on suggestions for parking improvements.

Themes from the community consultation included:

- Support for a new crossing outside the Medical Centre
- Varied response to the speed limit and associated speed humps
- Increase the number of accessible parking spaces (currently two)
- Change parking restrictions, to have some short-term parking (i.e. 15 minute or 30 minute) near the shops with longer term parking (i.e. 2-hour parking) further away and also some within the oval
- Retain some all-day parking at the oval
- New street lighting at the oval car park, to improve safety and encourage use during the winter/evening shopping
- Consider motorcycle parking (currently no specific motorcycle parking area)
- Consider loading zone (currently no specific loading zone for some shops (i.e. butchers, bakery, etc);
- Improve the traffic arrangement / one-way system through the area.

Following community consultation, TCCS will consider feedback and identify improvements, which will seek to address the issues raised.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Woden—crime—petitions 29-23 and 18-24

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Police and Crime Prevention, dated 13 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Cocks on 14 May 2024, concerning increasing police presence in the Woden town centre.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter of 14 May 2024, regarding the petition E-PET-029-23 and PET-018-24. The petition requests the Assembly to call on the Government to increase foot patrol frequencies in the Woden Town Centre to protect small businesses and the public from crime.

Pursuant to Standing Order 100, this letter constitutes my response.

Community engagement

The ACT Government has been listening to the concerns of small business owners in the Woden Town Centre about both criminal and anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour is always concerning, and efforts are being made by Government and ACT Policing to address these issues.

Education and public messaging are important components of crime prevention, community safety and enhancing confidence in police. ACT Policing is committed to raising awareness of community safety through active engagement with the entire community and the delivery of effective safety messaging.

A large component of ACT Policing's crime reduction work is engagement with the community and Community Interest Groups which it has steadily been increasing. Over the past year, police officers have attended and hosted numerous events in local Canberra shopping centres and cafes, engaging face-to-face and re-establishing ACT Policing's strong relationships with the Canberra community.

As part of ACT Policing's commitment to community consultation, Officers in Charge of all ACT Policing Stations engage with business owners and operators as opportunities arise, to raise awareness about burglaries and other criminal conduct, and when requested, provide education on how to protect and secure businesses from criminality.

ACT Policing has been highly vigilant with engagement with the inner south community and continues to build relationships with business owners and residents of Phillip and surrounding suburbs. Senior police members attend community forum sessions upon request, including Woden community meetings, to address questions from and work with business owners on strategies to help reduce anti-social behaviour incidents and limit the opportunity for crime to occur.

ACT Policing routinely conducts proactive patrols across the ACT, paying particular attention to crowded places, including transport hubs and shopping centres. ACT Policing Woden Patrols are spending time at Westfield Woden and the Woden Bus Interchange daily and meet monthly with the management of Westfield Woden. In addition to these monthly meetings, ACT Policing will host an upcoming event at Hoyts Westfield Woden for retailers to talk to police about their concerns.

In September 2023, Woden Police Station members hosted Coffee with a Cop, which is an opportunity for members of the community and business owners to meet their local officers. As Coffee with a Cop events are planned across the ACT each year, it is anticipated the next event held for Woden will be in September 2024.

Alongside these initiatives, ACT Policing received more than 117 requests in 2023 to attend community events in a public engagement capacity. ACT Policing continues to facilitate officer attendance at these events as operational priorities allow, further demonstrating its commitment to strengthening relationships with the community.

Crime Statistics

There are multiple factors that can prompt a rise in crime and the complexity of new crimes is also an issue that police are encountering more than ever. ACT Policing is working with Government and partner agencies to identify strategies on how best to address the social issues that often underpin anti-social behaviour before it becomes a recurring issue.

As at June 2024, the majority of reported offences committed in the suburb of Phillip (which comprises Woden Town Centre) are either on par with or decreasing to those made to ACT Policing in 2023. There is, however, a projected yearly increase relating to the offence of theft (excluding motor vehicles) with 205 reports (to June 2024), compared to 369 reports for the 2023 year.

Offences reported to ACT Policing in Phillip

Offence	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Homicide	0	0	1	0	0	0
Assault	87	67	77	114	122	50
Sexual offences	9	13	20	30	22	6
Robbery	9	3	6	15	12	5
Burglary	48	38	50	80	65	21
Stolen Motor vehicle	38	22	45	36	33	25
Theft (excl motor vehicle theft)	304	224	340	394	369	205
Property damage	131	104	95	113	104	46
Other offences against property	52	62	68	73	75	14
Other offences against good order	28	20	24	19	31	16
Justice procedures	64	50	64	47	53	29
Firearms and weapons	4	6	10	11	18	4
Drug offences	6	11	14	6	8	3
Traffic Offences	111	122	87	90	71	28

Breach Health Order	0	21	5	0	0	0
Other offences n.e.c.	3	3	7	7	2	1
Total	897	775	916	1047	1001	458

*1 January 2024 - 20 June 2024

Source: PROMIS as at 20 June 2024

For the Woden Plaza (as at June 2024), the majority of reports of offences are either on par with or decreasing to those made in 2023. Reports for traffic offences, burglaries, stolen motor vehicles and theft (excluding motor vehicles) have projected yearly increases to the 2023 calendar year.

Offences reported to ACT Policing in Woden Plaza

Offence	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Assault	17	13	21	21	38	12
Sexual offences	1	2	3	1	1	1
Other offences against the person	1	2	1	1	1	2
Robbery	3	2	2	9	6	3
Burglary	6	2	6	5	3	5
Stolen Motor vehicle	2	3	6	1	4	7
Theft (excl motor vehicle theft)	120	67	106	112	162	109
Property damage	20	19	8	9	15	8
Other offences against property	13	8	34	9	16	7
Other offences against good order	6	7	6	5	16	6
Justice procedures	4	5	12	7	5	7
Firearms and weapons	2	4	4	9	10	1
Drug offences	0	4	4	1	6	0
Traffic Offences	8	12	4	5	1	6
Breach Health Order	0	11	1	0	0	0
Other offences n.e.c.	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total	203	161	218	196	285	175

*1 January 2024 - 20 June 2024

Source: PROMIS as at 20 June 2024

Youth crime

Anecdotally, Police have observed an increase in emboldened youth anti-social behaviour, and while proactive patrols with an overt police presence provide a degree of comfort to the public, they are less effective at preventing crime and antisocial behaviour than they have been historically. These issues are not localised in Woden, or the Phillip business district. Anti-social behaviour and youth crime occur across the ACT, impacting on all sectors of the community.

As at June 2024, ACT Policing had arrested 23 young people (17 years or younger) in the suburb of Phillip in 2024. This is a projected doubling of the 2023 calendar year number of 21 and 13 in 2022.

Arrests of offenders 17 or younger in Phillip by ACT Policing			
	2022	2023	2024*
Arrests	13	21	23

*1 January 2024 - 24 June 2024

Source: PROMIS as at 25 June 2024

Early intervention, education and diversion strategies are key to disrupting the life cycle of criminal offending and ACT Policing works with partner agencies to identify youth at risk and suitable candidates for diversion programs to divert youth from harmful behaviours. ACT Policing works closely with Canberra's Police Community Youth Club (PCYC) to promote programs aimed at creating healthier and safer pathways for young people. It also works in collaboration with the ACT Education Directorate to provide safety-themed education programs and resources and employs Youth Liaison Officers to engage with young people and schools on a referral basis, in relation to anti-social behaviour and other significant issues in their lives.

SupportLink established a referral pathway called the Safer Youth Response Service (SYRS), a diversionary program for young people 10-14 years displaying anti-social behaviours and beginning to engage with police. The program includes intensive outreach case management for both the young person and their family. The aim of the service is to provide a safe and responsive service to young people, diverting them from the youth justice system and further behaviours that lead to interactions with ACT Policing or justice systems.

Woden Patrols, along with all ACT Policing sworn members have been utilising the SupportLink referral service since its launch, when required, within their daily duties. It is important to note however, that while ACT Policing has access to this support referral pathway for youths, acceptance of, and participation in the program is entirely voluntary.

Resources and police response

ACT Policing's Intelligence Team analyses a variety of information sources to identify patterns, convergences, and prioritisation to maximise crime reduction opportunities and increase community safety. Target areas for patrolling are based on intelligence, which draws on sources including community involvement such as reporting via Crime Stoppers and engagement directly with ACT Policing.

While police stations will always be a part of the police ecosystem, it is important to recognise that ACT Policing officers have more communication tools and technology than ever before, which allows them to do more of their work on the road and respond faster to crimes when they are occurring. Police response time and resourcing is based operational priorities occurring at the time with life threatening emergencies being prioritised first, followed by incidents where there is an immediate threat to a person or property. Canberra's condensed geographical nature does, however, means that officers can move across the territory in a timely manner, with police regularly undertaking duties in different patrol zones as required.

In June 2023, the ACT Government made the commitment to enhance community safety by investing more than \$107 million to boost ACT Policing personnel by 126 over five years. This is the largest single staffing and funding boost ever

received by ACT Policing. 106 police recruits have commenced with ACT Policing to 1 July 2024.

Reporting

The community is encouraged to utilise the various reporting avenues available when requiring police assistance.

The public is encouraged to call 131 444 to report any illegal or anti-social activity as the incident is occurring to allow police the opportunity to direct the best and most appropriate resource to respond.

Another option is to submit a report via Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or via the website on www.crimestoppersact.com.au. Reports can be provided anonymously via Crime Stoppers. This avenue is best used to build intelligence on a person/s of interest, or safety concern for a community so police can proactively provide a presence in the area and target the problematic behaviour. CCTV and dash cam footage can also be submitted via this Crime Stoppers.

ACT Policing has implemented an online reporting to supplement current reporting methods. On 30 June 2023, an online reporting portal was launched to the public and is now available to the ACT community for the reporting of minor, non-urgent property damage and vandalism incidents and dangerous driving incidents. This option will provide convenience for the community and allow police to better respond to incidents where immediate police assistance is required. The Online Reporting portal's aim is to complement, not replace, ACT Policing's engagement and physical presence at crime scenes.

I trust this information provides the petitioners with assurance that their concerns are understood, have been acknowledged by the ACT Government and efforts are being made by Government and ACT Policing to address these issues.

Richardson—shops—petitions 2-24 and 16-24

By **Mr Steel**, Minister for Planning, dated 13 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Burch on 14 May 2024, concerning Richardson shops.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 14 May 2024 about Petition No. E-PET-002-24 and PET-016-24, lodged by Ms Joy Burch MLA, about the vacant supermarket at Richardson shops, Block 4 Section 454 Richardson.

The Government notes the matters raised in the petitions in relation to the current use of the site. It is noted that the petition is requesting ACT Government to provide an update regarding the future use of the site. The following provides information addressing each of the matters raised in the petitions.

a) Future plans for the site

The petition is requesting to seek a full update from the owner on any future plans for the site.

Access Canberra have investigated a non-compliance complaint and has advised that the lessee is not currently in breach of the obligations under the lease.

It is the Territory Planning Authority's (the Authority) understanding that the lessee is experiencing difficulties securing a tenant under the existing lease purpose clause.

It is open for the lessee to submit a development application (DA) to the Authority for a lease variation to add uses to a Crown lease, subject to the provisions of the Territory Plan. It is noted that the subject site is privately leased and that it is up to the proponent to determine which future use they would like to pursue for the site.

The Government will assist the lessee, where appropriate, to encourage the use of the site and Access Canberra will continue to monitor the site to ensure there is no future breach.

b) Obligations in the Crown lease

The petition is requesting advice on what obligations the owner has in terms of meeting all the conditions on the use of land agreement.

The use of land for this site is administered through a Crown lease. The block is privately leased and expires on 21 February 2082. In 1989, the Crown lease was granted under the *City Area Leases Ordinance 1936* for the purpose of retail and/or personal services. The Authority is of the view that the current provisions in the Crown lease do not establish a set length of time a block can be vacant.

Under the provisions of the Crown Lease, private owners of commercial premises are responsible for keeping the block clean, and maintaining, repairing and keeping in repair the premises on the block. Failure to keep the block clean is a Controlled Activity under Schedule 2.2 of the *Planning Act 2023*, and the Authority has powers under Part 11.2 of this legislation to make a Controlled Activity Order, if necessary, requiring a leaseholder to take certain actions to bring the leasehold into compliance with the legislation and the Crown Lease. When determining whether a leasehold is unclean, Access Canberra assesses a site in accordance with several criteria. For example, if the land visible from the public domain is covered in items such as rubbish, builder's spoil, scrap timber or other items.

Access Canberra inspected the site and determined that the lessee is not currently in breach of the obligations under the lease.

c) Residents options

The petition is requesting advice on what residents can do to compel owners to provide a public good. As described above, the subject site is a privately leased block and therefore the ACT Government has limited options to make this service available, unlike ACT Government owned public goods. That said, Access Canberra is able to take action when a lessee is non-compliant with the provisions in the lease.

If a person believes a lessee is not meeting obligations of their Crown lease, then a complaint can be made with Access Canberra. Further information on the complaints process is available at:

- <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/professionals/regulation-and-responsibilities/complianceand-disciplinary-action> and

- <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/contact/disputes-andcomplaints#:~:text=If%20your%20complaint%20relates%20to,out%20the%20online%20feedback%20form.>

In addition to the above, residents are able to contact the lessee directly to show interest in utilising the proposed future uses which may provide confidence for future tenants that the site will be viable.

d) Alternate use of the land

The petition is requesting advice of what alternate use of the land and site can be considered. The subject site is Block 4 Section 454 Richardson which is located in the is CZ4 Local Centre Zone. The Territory Plan identifies a number of assessable uses for this zone under the Land Use Table in the *E02 – Commercial Zones Policy*. These assessable uses include uses such as animal care facility, bulky goods retailing, business agency, café, community activity centre, craft workshop, drink establishment, early childhood education and care, health facility, indoor entertainment facility, multi-unit housing, office, produce market, restaurant, shop, take-away food shop and veterinary clinic and hospital.

Given the block is privately leased, it is up to the lessee whether an application is sought to add any additional allowable uses to the Crown lease.

e) Any required planning process/change

The petition is requesting advice of what changes can be made to planning rules such as purpose clause changes to the crown lease that would facilitate more timely responses and remedy for situations such as this. The current planning system already includes processes or options to increase opportunities for this site.

A development application (DA) is required for a lease variation to add any additional uses to a Crown lease. The DA is assessed by the Authority against the requirements of the Territory Plan and *Planning Act 2023*. A DA for a proposed lease variation is publicly notified for a minimum of 15 working days where the community is able to comment on the proposal. The Authority will also seek advice on the application from various entities.

If the Authority approves an application, then the lessee must undertake administrative steps to register the lease variation. The administrative steps may require the determination and payment of a lease variation charge (LVC).

f) Options to Develop the Surrounding Site to Increase Activity at the Shops

There are currently three undeveloped parcels of land which are unleased and managed by the ACT Government north of the site. These parcels are identified as Block 15, Block 16 and Block 17 Section.

The blocks are currently zoned CZ4 - Local Centre Zone and are situated between a public park and the Richardson shops site. Under the current zoning, the sites could allow for a range of uses under the Territory Plan. This includes such as housing and commercial opportunities. This would align with current Government policy to revitalise shopping centres, which is identified in the Statement of Planning Priorities. Government will also explore changes planning changes that could increase potential undertakings on the sites, such as block consolidation or amendments to planning controls.

Following this response to the petition, Government will undertake the necessary planning work to facilitate release of the sites through the future Indicative Land Release Program.

g) Report findings to the assembly

The petition is requesting to report any findings and progress back to the Assembly by 27 August 2024.

I would like to reiterate that the Government is not in a position to mandate or apply a timeframe on the lessee to secure a tenant for the site. The tenant arrangement and future use of the site, including any future lease variation, is a commercial decision for the lessee and the future tenant for the site.

However, Government can encourage activation of the shopping site through the release of Government held land in the broader areas to encourage further activity at the Richardson shops. In response to the petition, Government will look to release adjoining sites to the market in future through its land release processes.

It should be noted that the current leasing and planning system encourages an efficient and continual use of a site. The ACT Government will guide lessees through any required government processes and assist, where appropriate.

Thank you for providing me with this petition, I trust the information in this letter is helpful to the Principal Petitioner and the Sponsoring Member.

Housing ACT—maintenance—petition 10-24

By **Ms Berry**, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, dated 21 August 2024, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Parton on 14 May 2024, concerning public housing maintenance.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Finlay

Thank you for your letter dated 14 May 2024 regarding petition 010-24 lodged by Mr Mark Parton MLA. The petition calls on the ACT Government to launch a “Royal Commission into Housing ACT’s failure to maintain public housing properties placing tenants’ health and safety at risk”.

All Housing ACT tenants have the right to a safe, secure and adequately maintained home. The ACT Government acknowledges the petitioners’ concern for the prioritisation of repairs and maintenance that present as a risk to tenants in their homes.

The ACT Government will not launch a Royal Commission. With new and existing investment already in place to address public housing maintenance, the significant public cost of a Royal Commission would benefit neither public housing tenants nor the broader community. Instead, the ACT Government will continue to strengthen existing mechanisms and invest in new initiatives to further improve public housing maintenance and repairs for all tenants.

As the Territory's largest social landlord with a portfolio of more than 11,700 properties, the ACT Government has obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act (1997) to ensure its properties meet health and safety standards set out in the legislation. This function is overseen by the Community Services Directorate through Housing ACT.

The ACT Government upholds its facilities management responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act (1997) utilising a Total Facilities Management (TFM) model. This ensures the amenity, safety, security and condition of the public housing portfolio is preserved and continuously improved for the benefit of current and future tenants.

Royal Commissions

The Territory has provisions under the Royal Commissions Act 1991 (RCA) to inquire into a matter; however the establishment of a Royal Commission has financial implications which can be considerable. These costs would require significant investment of public funds. Further a Royal Commission cannot implement legal, governmental or policy changes itself, it can only make recommendations to the government and the time between conclusion and changes experienced by service users can be extensive.

While the Territory has participated in a number of Royal Commissions convened by the Commonwealth under its legislation, there has never been a Royal Commission under the RCA. In previous instances where there has been a call for a Royal Commission, the ACT Government has chosen other methods of inquiry rather than proceed with a commission of this type, largely due to the extended timeframes to consider and execute action and the considerable expense involved.

The ACT Government has several avenues to available examine and address matters raised in the petition including extensive complaints processes which are detailed further in this letter. The ACT Government is also examining other options for the future delivery of public housing repairs and maintenance, as also outlined below, to ensure public housing tenants receive the support they need.

ACT Government commitment to public housing repairs and maintenance

All Housing ACT tenants have the right to a safe, secure and adequately maintained home. The ACT Government has committed to responsive and cost-effective mechanisms to maintain public housing properties for the health and safety of tenants.

The Total Facilities Management (TFM) Services Agreement delivers outsourced repairs and maintenance services for social housing, Narrabundah Long Stay Relocatable Home Park and Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

The agreement is currently held by Programmed Facilities Management.

The TFM Agreement has an estimated value of \$60 million per year and delivers on average 50,000 work orders across more than 11,000 properties each year. The TFM Agreement is anticipated to facilitate a repairs and maintenance program of approximately \$65 million in 2024-25.

Addressing health and safety risks in public housing

The current TFM contractor, Programmed Facility Management, engages local subcontractors to undertake the bulk of the repair and maintenance work, and is required to deliver these services in a way that meets Housing ACT's obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, particularly with respect to the prioritisation of critical, safety related repairs and maintenance issues that present a risk to tenants in their homes.

Ensuring the liveability and safety of public housing extends beyond the structural integrity and maintenance of the physical bricks and mortar of the home. As a provider of housing for people experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage, the ACT Government recognises that for some people challenges such as mental health, domestic violence, frailty, and other personal factors, mean extra supports are needed to help them live independently.

In these cases, Housing ACT work in close partnership with specialist community agencies and the tenant to address both the physical surroundings and broader personal issues that may impact their ability to sustain a tenancy and a home.

Prioritising the delivery of repairs and maintenance.

The delivery of repairs and maintenance across the social housing portfolio is contractually divided into a ratio of 70:30; 70 per cent planned works to 30 per cent responsive works. This balance ensures immediate, urgent repairs are prioritised while the integrity and sustainability of the overall housing portfolio is maintained.

Planned works, while not critical in nature, are essential for the long-term preservation of the property and to enhance the liveability of the home for tenants. It ensures minor maintenance issues do not escalate into major problems. Some examples of planned work include routine maintenance and checks, annual inspections, preventive maintenance (such as painting or landscaping) and scheduled upgrades (such as kitchen or bathroom end of life replacements).

Responsive maintenance, by comparison, addresses critical and urgent issues that pose an immediate health or safety risk to tenants. Responsive works are categorised into levels of urgency, this allows for a triaging and prioritisation of work based on the severity and potential impact of the issue. Triaging ensures the most critical repairs are addressed swiftly and effectively, to prevent any compromise of tenant safety or further damage to the property.

Managing both planned and responsive works enables the ACT Government to meet its responsibilities as a social landlord under the *Residential Tenancies Act (1997)* and ensures urgent- safety related repairs receive the highest priority.

Raising maintenance concerns and issues

Housing ACT tenants are strongly encouraged to report all repairs and maintenance issues directly to the 24/7 Maintenance and Repairs call centre, via phone or email. This ensures immediate attention and prioritisation of all repairs and maintenance issues.

The ACT Government has a strong commitment to accountable government, open access to information and rights of review, appeal and compensation. All public

authorities must act in a way that is compatible with human rights. There are strong protections and avenues to support public housing tenants to raise and resolve concerns they may hold in relation to their health and safety.

Should tenants feel any repair or maintenance issue remains unaddressed, they are able to lodge a complaint. Housing ACT has a complaints process in place to appropriately investigate and resolve complaints. This includes, but is not limited to:

- discussions with their dedicated Housing Manager
- lodgement of formal complaints to the service providers and to Housing ACT,
- Housing ACT review of decisions
- Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman intervention,
- ACAT Tribunal hearings, and
- raising concerns directly with their local member and responsible ministers.

Complaints lodged with Housing ACT are thoroughly investigated and, when necessary, appropriate action is undertaken to remedy the issue raised.

On average there are 410 formal complaints made about property condition each year. This represents 3% of tenancies/tenants and 0.8% of all works completed. These avenues are appropriate and proportionate to address concerns raised and support a response as proposed.

In the case of critical, life-threatening situations, the first point of call for tenants, like all Canberrans, should always be emergency services via 000. In the case that a property requires a maintenance response during these events, Housing ACT takes appropriate action in close partnership with ACT Police, emergency services and relevant community service providers to address and mitigate the risks.

Urgent and safety related repairs and maintenance

Urgent and safety related repairs and maintenance issues, once reported, take precedence over planned and other responsive work. The TFM Agreement has four categories to ensure urgent work is scheduled and completed:

- a. Urgent 4 hour (U4) – Urgent maintenance work presenting as an immediate risk to health, safety or security, to be completed within 4 hours;
- b. Priority Next Day (PND) – Urgent maintenance work, which is likely to develop into a health, safety or security risk if not repaired, to be completed by 6:00pm the following day;
- c. Day 5 (D5) – Urgent work, to be complete within 5 calendar days; and
- d. Day 20 (D20) – Works that are not critical or urgent and do not impact on the liveability of the home, to be completed within 20 calendar days.

U4 and PND work orders require an immediate response to mitigate imminent safety risks in the home and includes responses for households compromised by an unforeseen emergency, family or domestic violence or vandalised by criminal activity. Some examples include lock changes, external door replacements or exposed live electrical wiring rectification.

Under the TFM Agreement, 10,000 work orders require a U4 response each year to secure and make safe properties across the portfolio, 96% of these works receive an onsite response within the required 4 hours.

On average, a further 4,500 work orders receive PND action to mitigate presenting health or safety issues within a property, 95% of these works receive an onsite response within the timeframes required.

Financial investment

The ACT Government is committed to investing in the Territory's social housing portfolio to ensure *Residential Tenancies Act* (1997) obligations continue to be met, tenants' health and wellbeing is prioritised and the overall standard of the wider portfolio is maintained.

The 2023-2024 budget demonstrated the extent of this investment, with \$177 million for Housing ACT to grow, renew and maintain high quality public housing over four years. That means the repairs and maintenance schedule for public housing in 2023-24 saw the completion of:

- a. \$51 million of planned maintenance and upgrades; and
- b. \$14 million of responsive repairs.

Building on this, the 2024-2025 ACT Budget included \$51.163 million over four years to deliver significant additional public housing repairs and maintenance including kitchen upgrades, domestic violence security works and disability modifications.

Future for public housing maintenance

The Total Facilities Management Services Agreement, which delivers repairs and maintenance services for social housing, is one of the ACT Government's largest contracts.

Given the size of the contract and the significance of the services to some of Canberra's most vulnerable citizens, the ACT Government has announced a taskforce to investigate the benefits, costs and risks of the Government's readiness and capability to insource public housing repairs and maintenance.

Over the next two years, the ACT Government will explore the viability of insourcing, including conducting a trial, in partnership between Housing ACT and ACT Property Group, to manage general maintenance services in two multi-unit properties. This will provide real-world insights to inform the broader assessment of insourcing facilities management requirements.

Concurrently, the ACT Government will continue funding for Housing ACT to maintain high quality public housing through the Total Facilities Management Services Agreement for another two years.

Motion to take note of petitions

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 98A, I propose the question:

That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted.

Middle East—conflict—petition 34-24

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.06): Just over a week ago, the Palestinian health ministry announced that the death toll in Gaza had reached 40,000 people. That is equivalent to 10 per cent of the population of the ACT. Like many others, I am running out of words to express the insanity and the absolute despair of watching 10 months of genocide unfold on livestream without any real consequences.

While Australia was celebrating its most successful Olympic Games in history, the State of Israel bombed a school and a mosque sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza. While performing their morning prayers, 80 people were killed. There were no full bodies found intact and the survivors had to collect the martyred remains in bags divided by weight in order to bury them.

The ACT is often referred to as a human rights jurisdiction, but if we do not proactively advocate for and strengthen the framework through which we uphold such rights then we do not deserve this title. This petition calls on the ACT government to urgently identify and divest from companies that are complicit in the State of Israel's genocidal campaign in the Gaza Strip.

This is a community call that goes further than my resolution that was passed in this place on 7 February this year. It calls on all commodities produced in the illegal settlements in the West Bank to be banned from entering the ACT marketplace. The intention is clear: we do not want this territory to fund genocide or systems of apartheid being imposed on Palestinians.

The petition received over 500 signatures in just one weekend. Our constituents are fed up with politicians' empty promises to review, revise and look into but never state outright an intent to follow through. I think it is quite reasonable to ask our government unequivocally to commit to divesting from any company or financial institution that is complicit in human rights violations and possibly fuelling a genocide. The Canberra community deserves to know where its leaders stand.

The United Nations have even made it simple for us. They have published a list of companies that have been found to be complicit, and they have outlined the obligations for investors to uphold the Geneva conventions, the genocide convention, international human rights treaties and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. I, for one, have confidence in the ability of the UN to identify companies breaching their human rights obligations and from which we should therefore divest.

As of March this year, the ACT government remained invested in Rheinmetall AG, an arms manufacturing company that supplies the Israeli military and has enabled the State of Israel to kill, injure and disappear 10 per cent of the population in Gaza over the past 10 months. This is unacceptable, and the ACT government should divest immediately, if it wishes to remain a so-called human rights jurisdiction.

The Palestinian community in Canberra deserves more from its leaders. There are people in our community who have lost over 30 family members due to the missiles raining down on Gaza. They are enraged that the ACT government profits from

suffering, and so they should be. Representative democracy apparently does not apply when it is uncomfortable.

The system of apartheid imposed on Palestinians and the indiscriminate bombing of the Gaza Strip are in breach of numerous international treaties and international humanitarian law intended to prevent genocide and racial discrimination. This petition calls on the Assembly to condemn these acts, to state that no perpetrator is above the law and to ensure that the ACT has no ties to the gross violations of human rights that are occurring.

As the violence in Gaza escalates so, too, does the racist rhetoric intended to divide our communities. I echo the request of this petition calling on this Assembly to condemn racism and Islamophobia, which have no place here in the ACT. I stand in solidarity with Palestinians as they experience a second Nakba, and invite everyone in this chamber to join me and members of the Palestinian and Muslim communities outside the Assembly this Thursday at 5.30 pm for a vigil for Gaza and to listen to their stories of their homeland and what has happened to their families in Gaza.

Transport—Latham bus services—petitions 29-24 and 37-24

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.11): The petition that I have brought to the Assembly's attention this morning aims to address the need to reinstate the bus route on Macrossan Crescent in Latham. I have lodged the petition with 205 signatures.

This petition draws attention to the accessibility of public transport for everyone in our community and the impact that removing local bus routes has had on residents. I want to thank the principal petitioner, Ms Chiaka Barry, for bringing forward this petition for my sponsorship to support vulnerable members of our community and give them back their independence. Ms Barry is an amazing Canberra woman of great integrity and community spirit. I greatly appreciate her advocacy for residents in Latham and across Ginninderra in order to see practical changes implemented in Belconnen to benefit our community. It is a delight to see Ms Barry here in the gallery to witness the petition being presented. I thank her for her support and for coming along this morning to see this happen.

I am delighted to sponsor this petition and demand change. Residents of Latham are experiencing reduced accessibility to bus services since the removal of the Macrossan Crescent bus route. I am often told by Latham residents that public transport is no longer an option for them. Many residents cannot navigate the steep inclines around Macrossan Crescent, and there is a serious lack of connecting footpaths, which leads to further accessibility issues.

Bus routes that currently service Latham only operate along Dalley Crescent, Florey Drive, Kingsford Smith Drive, O'Lughlen Street and Onslow Street, leaving much of Latham unable to be easily accessed by public transport due to distance to bus stops.

I have had many conversations with one particular constituent, Mr Shane Haby, who lives with cerebral palsy and has been directly impacted by the removal of bus stops. What used to be an accessible two-minute walk for Mr Haby is now over

15 to 20 minutes. As you can imagine, Madam Speaker, for someone with a physical disability, this impacts his daily life and his ability to access the community. Unfortunately, this is only one of many conversations that I have had with residents in Latham. He is one of many who are negatively impacted by the removal of this bus route.

The bus shelters and bus stops are actually still there, along Macrossan Crescent. This should make it easy for the government to reinstate this bus route, adding a mere five minutes to the route. The residents of Latham deserve convenient and accessible public transport services along Macrossan Crescent in Latham. Vulnerable members of Latham, especially the elderly and people living with a disability, have had their independence hindered by the removal of the bus stops and bus routes along Macrossan Crescent.

I will close by quoting the words of the petition—and, again, I thank Ms Barry for bringing this to my attention:

The petitioners therefore request the Assembly to call on the ACT government to reinstate the bus route along Macrossan Crescent and ensure all Latham residents have access to public transport.

Garran—footpaths and roads—petitions 31-24 and 36-24
Rivett—roads—petition 33-24
Mawson playing fields—amenities—out-of-order petition

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.15): I wish to speak to a couple of petitions today. The first one is from residents of Stephens Place in Garran, with 60 signatures. I also seek leave to table an out-of-order petition.

Leave granted.

DR PATERSON: I table the following out-of-order petition:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Mawson Playing Fields—Improved and safer public toilets for the Woden Valley Soccer Club—Dr Paterson (302 signatures).

I would like to thank the residents of Abbeyfield for approaching me with their concerns about the lack of a footpath in their street. Abbeyfield is an independent supportive living place for people with disabilities. There is no footpath from the Abbeyfield residence down the street to the Garran shops, which means most of the residents have to walk down the middle of the road, which can be particularly challenging for residents, and dangerous in terms of having to avoid and dodge vehicles coming up the road. We think it is important, given that we have an ACT disability strategy and that we are very committed in the ACT to having an accessible and inclusive community. I have presented this petition to the minister, and I hope this issue in Garran can be addressed.

My second petition today, with 132 signatures, is from the parents, in particular, of children attending the Kids Academy childcare and early learning centre in Rivett. This

childcare centre in Weston Creek has a pretty significant issue with parking. Recently, the parking arrangements in the street changed, and parking has basically become chaotic.

The residents are calling for a solution to this problem. Perhaps a one-way traffic system through Rivett Place would be an adequate solution, with a dedicated lane for pick-up and set-down by parents. This problem will be significantly exacerbated when the second childcare centre which is currently under construction comes on board, as well as the church facilities that will be directly opposite this early learning centre. This problem needs to be looked into and addressed because it will become a very significant issue.

I acknowledge all of the businesses at the Rivett shops who are very supportive of this idea. They believe that there needs to be a bit more clarity with the traffic arrangements and the arrows on the road, for example, that direct traffic in an orderly fashion around that little shopping centre.

Finally, the out-of-order petition relates to public toilet facilities at the Mawson playing fields. The petition requests improved and safer public toilets at the Mawson playing fields for the Woden Valley Soccer Club.

Mawson playing fields—amenities—out-of-order petition

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Planning, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for Transport and Special Minister of State) (10.18): I wish to speak to the out-of-order petition tabled by Dr Paterson about public toilet facilities at the Mawson playing fields, which has been brought forward by members of the Woden Valley Soccer Club, of which I am proud to be a patron.

It was a pleasure last week to join the sports minister, Yvette Berry, and the President of the Woden Valley Soccer Club, Mark Stooove, and to inform them that, under Labor's plan for Woden, in our regional plan, we will deliver a full upgrade of the public toilet facilities at Mawson playing fields to support members of the club, and refurbishment of their facilities as well. This builds on work that the ACT government has already funded to build a new toilet at Mawson shops. Of course, temporary toilet facilities are already in place to support the community. We will look at the options around providing some temporary arrangements for the club, as we look to upgrade their toilets in the future, should we be re-elected in October.

It also builds on the work that we have done at the northern end of the shops, which includes some path improvements, place-making improvements and stormwater improvements, to make sure that this part of the world continues to be accessible for the range of different recreation and sporting activities that take place at Mawson playing fields.

Today is a very sad day for the Woden Valley Soccer Club, with the memorial service for the late Dr Gordon Carmichael, founder of Woden Valley Soccer Club and former president of the club. I will have more to say about that in an adjournment debate in the next sitting fortnight.

**Waste—Mugga Lane landfill—petition 27-24
Calwell shops—maintenance—petitions 7-24 and 13-24**

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.20): I want to speak very briefly about the responses to two petitions. I am looking forward to reading the response to the tip smell petition. It is a topic that has come up over at least the past nine years, since I have been in this place. I have not yet read the response.

It also came up during estimates, and the minister agreed that the process followed most recently regarding the smell from the tip area was not what she would have hoped for. We would like to see a much better system in place. People generally are very accepting of temporary disruption, if they know why it is happening and for how long it might be going on. But having a smell go on and on without being given notice is not acceptable to local residents.

There was also a petition lodged by Sandi Mitra regarding the general maintenance around the Calwell shopping centre. It was not really asking for upgrades. It was asking for basic local maintenance, including street sweeping, maintenance of seats, pothole repairs and removal of tree stumps. Some of this work has already taken place, but I note that, not long after the petition was lodged, one of the seats in the public areas at Calwell shops broke when someone was sitting on it.

This petition has not been lodged just for the sake of it; these are genuine issues that need to be addressed. I hope that the government will do more about basic local maintenance, not to mention upgrades generally. Basic local maintenance is something on which this government do not have a good track record, and they should do a lot better.

Maribyrnong Primary School—travel links—petition 8-24

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.22): I would like to speak about the government response to the Maribyrnong Primary School petition regarding improved active travel. My colleague Mr Braddock has sponsored this petition, and Mr Braddock and I were happy to meet with Mr Mark Timbrell, who has run this petition in the community over there.

There was a really reasonable request made here. Over 550 kids attend that school. The kids are finding it really hard to walk and ride to school, and their parents are really nervous to let them go, because there is so much congestion around there; the crossings were not up to scratch and there was no school crossing supervisor.

I am pleased to see the government's response today. As we have seen, there has been a feasibility study. The government are genuinely engaging with the community there and looking at what works they can do to improve the crossings around this area. They are also considering providing a school crossing supervisor. School crossing supervisors are excellent. They give parents and kids a lot of confidence, and they are a great way to encourage a lot more people to walk and ride to school.

It is great to see this genuine engagement, and Mr Braddock and I are looking forward to seeing some much better active travel improvements in this area soon.

Hawker group centre—road safety—petition 30-24
Transport—Latham bus services—petitions 29-24 and 37-24

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (10.23): This morning I presented a petition calling on the ACT government to construct a raised pedestrian crossing on Coniston Street in Hawker, linking the existing footpath on the north side of the street with the laneway opposite, located between 7 Coniston Street and 9 Coniston Street. Thirty-one residents have signed the formal online version of the petition. More have signed an informal hard-copy version of the petition, and I will table that at a later date.

A raised pedestrian crossing would make active travel in the area safer. Building it in the location that I described earlier is ideal, as it links a high-density residential area to the nearby shops. I thank Frances Knight, the principal petitioner, for the incredible work she has done with the Hawker community gardens and in getting people to sign the petition. On behalf of the signatories to this petition and the ones to come in the out-of-order version, I commend this petition to the Assembly and look forward to the minister's response.

On another note, I would also like to speak in support of reinstating the bus route along Macrossan Crescent. I support this petition and note that a poor bus service has been a persistent issue for residents around Macrossan Crescent for close to a decade. In fact, one of my first representations upon entering the Assembly in 2016 was on behalf of residents who were upset that the then bus route for their area, the 903, did not travel along Macrossan, whereas the weekday bus for the area, the 16 and 316, did. They requested that the weekend service cover Macrossan, just as the weekday service did. This request was denied, but the then minister, Minister Fitzharris, said it would be taken on as feedback for future changes.

What happened next, from 2019 to 2022 under Minister Steel, was disgraceful and insulting to the residents of Latham. He decided that not only would Macrossan not be serviced by a bus on the weekend, but also the weekday service would be cut. For some residents living in the previously serviced Macrossan area, this has meant a walk of more than one kilometre to the closest bus stop for the past four years.

Residents' requests for a restored bus service were refused once again just five days ago. This refusal was again accompanied by a promise to consider this request in future network reviews. The last time the government committed to consider the request to reinstate the Macrossan weekend bus, they instead cut it even more.

The consideration period is over. The government should reinstate the bus route through Macrossan Crescent in Latham. It is clear from over eight years of persistent advocacy from residents that there is demand for a bus service in this area. On behalf of these residents, I would like to thank Chiaka Barry for putting forward this petition and getting people to sign it. I commend this petition to the Assembly and look forward to action.

Garran—footpaths and roads—petitions 31-24 and 36-24
Rivett—roads—petition 33-24

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.26): I would like to address a couple of the petitions that Dr Paterson raised today and commend her for making contact with the residents

in both Garran and Rivett around these two issues, because these are issues for which I have been advocating for some time.

The problem we face is that, in spite of the disgraceful level of neglect that we see in places like Rivett, the response that we get back from the Minister for City Services is entirely dismissive. When I write about these issues, the minister gets back to me and says, “Just lodge it through Fix My Street.” Fix My Street is not working.

Dr Paterson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Dr Paterson.

MR COCKS: The approach from the government seems to be that they ignore these problems until the last sitting fortnight; then, suddenly, it becomes an issue that the Labor Party care about.

Dr Paterson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Dr Paterson, please.

MR COCKS: Madam Speaker, let me tell you that, with the parking area at the Rivett shops, the Pitch Black Cafe owners have been campaigning to get that fixed for years; every time they reach out to the Minister for City Services, they are ignored. When I reach out, I am ignored. It is time to change the approach to how we deal with these issues so that we do not let these places end up in the utter state of neglect that they are in now.

It should never have got this bad. It should never have got to a stage where you cannot see the lines in that parking area. It should never have got to a stage where apparently the government have been caught by surprise, as new facilities and services, like the childcare facilities, open there. The government knew this was happening; they should have been prepared.

Over in Garran, we have similar problems. Garran is unlike anywhere else in the ACT. Garran is a suburb, the only place in the ACT, that shares a public hospital with the rest of the community. That provides specific challenges that the government should understand are integral in that community. It changes the way traffic moves through the suburb. It means that there is a higher demand for parking. The street that Dr Paterson referred to has deep problems linked to people parking on the side of the road there, because they cannot find anywhere—

Dr Paterson interjecting—

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think it is around Dr Paterson.

Ms Lawder: She is ignoring your ruling, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: You are interjecting persistently. Can you please refrain? I call Mr Cocks.

MR COCKS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My point is very simple. These problems are entirely predictable. They are the result of decades of neglect from the ACT government. They have ignored the problems. It has taken our efforts to push them to actually do anything, and it is about time that they changed the way they look at the entire thing.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health—Digital Health Record system—update Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Disability and Minister for Health) (10.30): I rise today to make a statement on recent audits and reviews relating to the Digital Solutions Division of the ACT Health Directorate and the Digital Health Record program. The reviews and audits relate primarily to DSD’s budget, financial procurement and contract management, as well as aspects of the DHR project. I will also be tabling the following three reports: the KPMG Digital Solutions Division budget and financial management review report of August 2023; the NTT Australia invoices review internal audit report of April 2024; and the KPMG Digital Health Record program review report of August 2024.

By way of background, DSD has been part of the Health Directorate since the directorate’s establishment in 2018. DSD’s role is to address the increasing need for digital solutions and technology support in health service delivery. Functions and budgets relating to all information, communication and technology, or ICT service delivery, were centralised in DSD. This included the management of ICT project systems, infrastructure and assets across the ACT public health system. Digital services functions for the ACT public health system, including Canberra Health Services, or CHS, continue to be centrally managed through DSD.

Since its establishment, DSD has managed complex ICT projects, particularly the DHR, which was a commitment under the ACT Digital Health Strategy 2019-2029. The DHR went live on 12 November 2022 across all ACT public health services, including Canberra’s public hospitals, community health centres and walk-in centres. It is one of the largest ICT projects undertaken by the ACT government and is a significant investment in our public health system’s digital infrastructure. The project was formally completed in March 2023 and the DHR then became part of DSD’s business as usual operations.

It is well understood that health systems across Australia and indeed around the world have experienced substantial pressures and unanticipated cost increases over recent years. These have been driven by increased patient numbers and lengths of stay, as well as supplier price increases. These all have had flow-on impacts, not only for the cost of delivering health services but also on DSD’s costs.

Of course, one of the biggest impacts on our health system was the COVID-19 pandemic. DSD played a critical role in the ACT’s response to COVID-19, including

supporting the rapid set-up of drive-through testing centres across the ACT and redeploying clinical staff from the DHR program to perform testing; developing the Check In CBR app to support contact tracing and minimise the spread of disease; working with the DHR vendor, Epic, and NTT to rapidly develop the vaccine information management system for COVID-19 vaccine bookings and administration processes; staffing the vaccine booking line; and managing the ICT fit-out to stand up the mass vaccination clinic at the Australian Institute of Sport, including the deployment of clinical devices.

The DHR team also configured the COVID Care@Home program in the vaccine information management system to support CHS to manage the care of COVID-19 patients in their homes. Additionally, in the lead-up to the DHR go-live, there were significant international supply chain issues for all ICT equipment due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to cost and time pressures for DSD to be able to procure and budget for a large number of new devices and peripherals. To avoid delays in the go-live of the DHR, the directorate agreed to additional delivery and sourcing costs for this new equipment.

During the COVID response, the division was exceeding its available operating budget and had done so each year since its establishment. While this had initially been managed through savings in other parts of the directorate, the extent of the variance to budget was growing in real terms, and the full range of drivers for the cost pressure were not well understood. These issues became even more apparent as the DHR project approached formal completion in late 2022.

Given this, in February 2023, the directorate engaged KPMG to undertake a management-initiated review of DSD's budget and financial management to better understand the drivers of the cost pressures. The KPMG review report was finalised in August 2023 and outlined findings against three main categories of the DSD budget: workforce, supplier and other operating expenses; and business cases and capital works. It made 16 recommendations.

In relation to the workforce category, the report found that, while initially operating within budget, the workforce numbers and costs grew above budget in 2021-22 and the gap widened considerably in 2022-23. The cost of overtime, penalties and allowances had grown significantly over the preceding two to three years. In the second half of 2022-23 the variance to budget had increased with the closure of the DHR program.

In relation to the supplier and other expenses category, the report found that suppliers and other expenses had consistently spent above budget since the creation of the directorate, growing to a projected overspend of \$20.6 million in 2022-23. Coupled with this, there was increasing pressure on the "suppliers and other expenses" budget over the forward estimates, due in part to assumptions about the decommissioning of legacy systems that may not be realised.

In relation to the business cases and capital works category, the report found that there were process and reporting shortfalls in how project employees' offsets and commitments were approved, monitored and re-profiled within the approved budgets. There were also inconsistencies in information presented to digital committees and

program boards and the corresponding information reported to the executive from the corporate finance system. These shortfalls increased the risk of budget overspends, particularly in the operating budget.

The overspend against the overall DSD budget was in part caused by project offsets not being realised, project commitments for which funds were not available and project personnel being funded from the operating budget. On receipt of this report, the directorate established an ongoing work program to address the issues raised and to improve system controls. I will provide more detail on this work throughout this statement.

The second report I will table is the NTT Australia invoices internal audit, which has already been provided to the Assembly through a question on notice. The directorate engaged NTT Australia Pty Ltd in December 2020 to provide hosting services for the DHR and related systems. The estimated value over the deed's initial five-year term was \$66 million. In October 2021, the deed was extended by one year to 23 December 2026, and the value increased to \$79 million, a roughly proportionate increase to the contract for a one-year extension. This was done to align the support of Epic production hardware and the five-year life cycle of the equipment.

In March 2022, the value of the deed was increased to \$110 million due to the need for migration of related systems and the establishment of core data centre services. This change approved five years of Citrix licences for the DHR. It is important to note that this \$110 million figure is the maximum spent over the term of the deed. It is not necessarily a reflection on how much will be spent for these services. Total expenditure as of 30 June 2024 was \$66.6 million.

In June 2023, the directorate's strategic finance branch became concerned that 118 separate NTT invoices were received for payment in June to be included in the 2023-24 financial statements. This increased the directorate's financial risks relating to the invoicing and acquittal of NTT invoices. While the initial estimate was 118 invoices, some of these were able to be consolidated, resulting in 78 invoices in total. Of the 78 invoices, 25 were paid in June 2023 and the remaining 53 were accrued and subsequently paid in July 2023. The total value of these invoices was \$7.9 million.

As a result of the identified concerns, the directorate commissioned an internal audit in August 2023 to assess the NTT invoices received in June 2023 and make recommendations for improved practice. The NTT review report was finalised and signed off by the directorate on 3 April 2024, with all recommendations accepted. The report found that, overall, the directorate was not able to provide assurance that the invoices received for NTT services in the period of 1 June 2023 to 30 June 2023 were appropriate for payment. It noted that invoices from NTT were not adequately structured to permit acquittal of the invoices in sufficient detail.

In August 2023, as a financial control while the audit was underway, Strategic Finance Branch started supporting DSD with invoice processing and assurance functions to maintain compliance with financial requirements. This process remains in place. The branch has also delivered training to DSD staff on invoices review and confirmation of goods within the electronic payment system.

Disappointingly, recent spot checks of Epic travel and work hours for May and June 2024 have indicated that some invoices have been paid without sufficient third-party supporting documentation, poor financial compliance within the DSD on travel invoice approval processes and overpayment of some invoices due to the mistreatment of GST by Epic. The directorate has met with the Epic account leadership team and provided details of the issues for appropriate action, specifically ensuring that evidence and supporting documentation are supplied with invoices on travel and work hours.

In September 2023 the KPMG report was provided to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, with advice that the ACT Health Directorate had a cost pressure for the financial year 2023 attributable to DSD. The Health Directorate then developed a business case for additional funding to support ongoing delivery of the Digital Health Strategy as part of the 2023-24 budget review.

The budget review allocated just under \$48 million in expense funding and approximately \$16 million in capital funding for 2023-24. CMTEDD also received \$1 million to assess the arrangements for delivery of digital health services and make recommendations to support future decision-making. This review was undertaken from January 2024 by senior officials from the ACT Health Directorate, CHS, Treasury, and Digital, Data and Technology Solutions, or DDTS, as well as a project team from CMTEDD's Strategy and Transformation Office.

The review team was tasked to undertake a comprehensive review of: DSD governance arrangements and key decisions taken to date; existing versus required staffing numbers and skill sets over time; DSD's performance against KPIs, including business as usual; contract and project management; ongoing implementation and performance of the DHR, including to clearly define the roles and responsibilities between DSD and DDTS and to explore options to reduce costs over time; hosting contracts required for DHR; and annual assessment of DHR performance against KPIs.

The ACT Health Directorate provided relevant documents to support the review team, which included the KPMG report and the draft NTT review report. Consistent with the earlier KPMG report, the review found that there was no single cause of the cost pressures associated with digital health services. The interim report notes that there were several interrelated contributing factors, from the broader operating environment and from decisions taken during DHR implementation. Specifically, the interim report found that the delineation between the DHR program and DSD business as usual was not clear, and with separate governance arrangements, it likely masked cost pressures, preventing them being identified earlier.

There were very optimistic assumptions made in the budget about potential offsets, and these were not revised when it became clear that they would not be realised in full. Some irregularities were found in ongoing financial management, with commitments in key contracts that were substantially beyond the available funding. The absence of technical architecture as a formal design phase for DHR resulted in a range of issues that impacted implementation and will continue to impact costs and scope for the program. There were issues with the way the scope and timeline of the project were managed, with the decision to compress the project timeline and conduct a big bang approach taken early in the project, without clear documentation.

Unfunded positions, overtime and on-call costs are significant drivers for cost pressures. This has been compounded by limited oversight of project staff numbers as they were reflected in the capital budget until go-live. DSD was focused on delivering the project on time, without adequate regard for cost, and this culture influenced the management of the program. The program board did not have sufficient visibility of, or control over, these matters for it to be an effective governance body. Reporting to the board was inconsistent and at times misleading, and project risk was not adequately documented, actively managed or appropriately escalated.

The Health Directorate is responsible for leading the implementation of recommendations from this work, and a cross-directorate executive group has been established to oversee implementation, with members from ACTHD, CHS, Treasury and DDTS. This provides an assurance measure that ensures a level of independence is maintained in monitoring its progress and in preparing the final report for cabinet. As these matters are still to be considered by cabinet, I will not be tabling the interim report today. However, its findings are closely mirrored by the DHR program review undertaken by KPMG for the Health Directorate, which is being tabled.

The directorate commissioned this second KPMG review in May 2024 as an assurance review of the DHR with a focus on the financial and performance elements of the DHR program. The review's focus included: project and program governance and management, including budget and financial management; procurement processes and ongoing contract management; budget and financial management, including DHR budget management within the broader DSD budget; delivery of business outcomes and benefits, including the savings identified in the business case; and risk management processes and practices.

The DHR program review found that, overall, the DHR provided a successful clinical and technology delivery. However, financial management and cost control were ineffective. Further, it outlined the issues created by separating the DHR from data migration activities and found that increases to program costs during implementation were not effectively managed and ultimately resulted in long-term commitments far in excess of approved funding. The DHR program review report presented its findings in three categories—governance and program management; financial management; and offsets and benefits—with nine recommendations that have all been accepted.

In April 2024 the ongoing work program that had been established to address the issues raised in the initial KPMG report was brought together with the recommendations from the NTT invoices internal audit report. The directorate established the DSD Business Improvement Plan and the DSD Oversight Committee to oversee the implementation of the plan. The improvement plan outlines the critical priorities for DSD in response to the recommendations from the two reports. It identifies key deliverables and implements an accountability framework to clarify ownership and responsibilities across key priority areas.

The key priorities are to leverage expertise from enabling services delivered by the Corporate and Governance Division in decision-making; build financial management and procurement framework capabilities for all senior leaders; establish governance and assurance processes and resources to improve financial management, procurement and contract management; effectively manage performance and address conduct and

behaviour of senior leaders; and to continue to build a respectful, supportive and high-performing workplace culture.

The oversight committee supports the chief information officer in ensuring that DSD maintains business operations and within budget; meets the capability requirements for financial management and procurement; achieves expected results with integrity; represents principles of probity and value for money; and is in compliance with legislative frameworks, policies and ethical standards, specifically the Financial Management Act 1996 and the Government Procurement Act 2001.

Prior to the establishment of the business improvement program, the directorate had already progressed and implemented a number of actions and deliverables through a work program. In relation to the CMTEDD DHR review, the directorate has also identified several recommendations that will be managed through the program and overseen by the committee. I can assure the Assembly that the government and the directorate are taking these matters very seriously and have taken active steps to review and address the budget and financial management issues since the initial KPMG review in 2023.

Since May 2024 the directorate has been working with the ACT Audit Office and has provided a range of information in relation to the scheduled performance audit on major ICT projects in the ACT public service, which includes the DHR. The directorate has also since met with the Auditor-General and his office to request that the scope of the audit be broadened and deepened to support the directorate to ensure effective and efficient budget and financial management.

On 7 August 2024 the ACT Integrity Commissioner publicly advised that he had received a referral regarding the conduct of ACT Health Directorate executives involved in the delivery of the DHR program. The commission noted that it is currently investigating the matters that have been referred. Importantly, the commissioner stated that no adverse inferences should be drawn about any individual while the commission conducts its investigation.

I would also like to emphasise that these concerning issues do not impact the functionality of the DHR and there are many benefits of the system that make it a success. Indeed, in the most recent estimates hearings, Dr Suzanne Smallbane, an emergency physician, described the DHR as “an absolute godsend”. The DHR has transformed the way clinical care is provided in ACT public health services, tracking the engagement with a community member and giving clinicians the information they need to help provide better care for patients. It has replaced almost 40 systems that most clinicians previously used, providing a single, secure health record that allows doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other healthcare workers in the ACT public health system to access patient information much more efficiently.

The DHR has also significantly improved consumers’ access to their own information, with more than 1.3 million MyDHR logins by over 100,000 individual users. As of 16 August 2024, since DHR went live there have been over 2,000 medications replaced after receiving a warning to check the dose; more than 54,000 medications updated after receiving a warning that the drug contained an active or inactive ingredient that the patient is allergic to; 75 per cent of results released to MyDHR within one day in the

past year; over one million results sent directly to a patient's MyDHR account within one day of being available; more than 71,000 patients submitted general questionnaires in MyDHR to allow clinicians to provide better care; and over 140,000 patient blood draws were saved by adding on to an existing lab order.

Overall, from a health service delivery and healthcare consumer perspective, the DHR has been incredibly successful, and the benefits of the system will continue to be realised well into the future. In relation to financial management, the government and the Health Directorate are taking the findings of the audits and reviews very seriously. We are committed to improving governance systems and processes, including progressing the work of the DSD business improvement program.

I present the following papers:

ACT Health Directorate—

Digital Health Record Program Review, dated 26 August 2024.

Digital Solutions Division (DSD)—Budget and Financial Management Review—Final Report, dated August 2023.

Internal Audit—NTT Australia Invoices—Final Review Report, dated 3 April 2024.

Digital Health Record and Digital Solutions Division Update on Implementation of Recommendations from Audits and Reviews—Ministerial statement, 27 August 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (10.50): I have a few remarks on the ministerial statement. I think we need to be crystal clear about what the minister is doing now. It is called “damage control”. This audit would never have seen the light of day unless I had raised it during estimates. The draft report was provided to the directorate on 25 January, and the final report on 3 April this year. That was four months that the directorate had the report and there was no all-staff email and no admission from the acting director-general that there are no excuses for this extraordinary waste of taxpayers' money.

Unsurprisingly, the minister's response has been just to pass the buck to her directorate officials, with no accountability or apology for allowing the waste of tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars on her watch. What did the responsible minister have to say when this story broke? She said that she “was not explicitly briefed on the audit and the circumstances that led to it being undertaken”. This is despite the fact that she was actually briefed on this audit in May, after the final report was released. I think what the minister should have said was, “I was briefed, but I did not ask any further questions. I did not do my own follow-up or investigation.” In other words: “I did not do my job.”

This has to be one of the most disgraceful admissions from a government that has overseen hundreds of millions of dollars of wasted public money. While families, businesses, students and seniors are doing it tough, trying to keep up with this government's ever increasing taxes and charges, the health minister cannot even be

bothered to ask for more detail on an audit that clearly shows that she is wasting millions of taxpayer dollars.

When Minister Steel wasted \$78 million of taxpayer money, he made the outrageous comment that there were lessons learnt. It appears that the only lesson that has been learnt by Labor ministers is repetition. The lesson that Minister Steel and Minister Stephen-Smith have learnt is: do not ask questions when your department is briefing you about the waste of taxpayers' money; do not apologise, and blame anyone except yourself.

I repeat that the minister and the directorate would never have released this audit if they did not have to. It is no secret that these are two Labor cabinet ministers who are competing against each other for the top job in the Labor Party. It really is a race to the bottom in the Labor Party at the moment, when the choice for the next Leader of the Labor Party is between two ministers who have no oversight of their directorates or how they spend their constituents' money. Labor MLA candidates and their CFMEU comrades will all be doing deals to see whether they will back the person who has wasted around \$80 million or \$110 million.

At least Mr Barr can take comfort in the fact that, either way, his legacy of continuous deficits and careless financial management will be in safe hands when he leaves. He can also rest easy knowing that both ministers share his proclivity for spin, rather than coming clean and apologising to Canberrans for failing to do their jobs.

What I find equally concerning is that it seems that this matter would never have been referred to the Integrity Commissioner until I asked about it in estimates. As I mentioned, the final report was released on 3 April 2024. We do not know when the current Director-General of ACT Health or other senior executive staff were made aware of this or other reports relating to the DHR overspend, but for the last four months there was no report to the commission.

The minister was aware of the audit in May, and Mr Peffer as late as July. Again, there was not one report made by anyone to the Integrity Commissioner. All of a sudden, the report is made public and questions are being asked. They changed their minds and reported this matter to the commission. It begs the question: why did they wait over four months to meet their reporting obligations if they believed that there was reasonable suspicion of corruption? With all the officials, and eventually the minister, who read this report, why did it take four months for a report to be made to the Integrity Commission?

Given the sudden change of heart from the minister and her directorate, you have to think that the imputation that the media is drawing is correct: the government has only reported these audits to the commissioner to avoid answering questions and releasing more material in an attempt to save themselves from further embarrassment. The only time the government cares about corruption is when they can use it as an excuse to not answer questions or face up to one of their many failures. What really makes me disappointed is that none of this surprises me. Every single member of this government should be ashamed and embarrassed that this level of secrecy and failure is what we expect from the government.

Two other audits were undertaken by the strategic finance team in 2023-24. One was for travel and work invoices submitted by Epic and another for credit card expenditure and sign-off in the Digital Solutions Division. We do not know when these additional audits were provided to Health Directorate officials or the minister. We do not know how much more public money was wasted. We do not know whether the government will be able to recover any of this money and why this issue and others were only investigated months after they occurred. We do not know whether there have been any consequences or repercussions for anyone involved.

The minister just provided a 15-page speech that said very little about any of these concerns. What the minister has again failed to do is take responsibility for any of these failures. She claims she was kept in the dark, but you have to ask: how can there be multiple internal reviews that have delivered so many damning results and the minister is unaware? As far as I can tell, either the minister was aware and being briefed on these issues but never bothered to second-guess why ACT Health had commissioned more than five audits into one team and project, or the minister was aware of these issues and was not transparent with Canberrans, in the hope that she would avoid embarrassment. Alternatively, the minister was kept in the dark and her directorate is keeping information from her, and she has no control. Either way, the Canberra Liberals have very serious concerns about the minister's leadership of the Health Directorate.

There are a number of additional documents that I believe the minister should provide. These include all briefs that she received that reference any of the audits undertaken into the Digital Solutions Division; details on when the director-general was made aware of any of these internal audits and why these serious issues were only referred to the Integrity Commission after they were made public; the internal audits into travel and work hour invoices submitted by Epic; and credit card expenditure and sign-off in the Digital Solutions Division.

I know the minister read out her entire statement, so I do not want to go over all of it, but I find a couple of statements staggering: the interim report found that the program board did not have sufficient visibility or control over the matters above; reporting to the board was inconsistent and, at times, misleading; and the project risk was not adequately documented, actively managed or appropriately escalated.

I think I said it in estimates: this is project management. You must be reporting, asking your project team to clearly articulate and have audits—all sorts of things. This is the clincher for me. The minister said:

... the DHR provided a successful clinical and technology delivery.

We know that. She then said:

However, financial management and cost control were ineffective.

Cost control ineffective! She continued:

Further, it outlined the issues created by separating the DHR from data migration activities and found that increases to program costs during implementation were

not effectively managed and ultimately resulted in long-term commitments far in excess of approved funding.

How does this happen?

I would like to read out some comments from the DSD staff survey that was undertaken in January 2023. I am sure the minister would be aware of this survey, given that it received media attention because the initial documents that I requested were completely redacted except for the positive comments. After the Ombudsman upheld my appeal, we saw comments from staff within DSD, who said:

Take your findings—

of this survey—

to the DG ACTHD as well as the Ombudsman as appropriate. Trigger an internal investigation into recruitment and the leadership of [name withheld] and [name withheld].

...

People promoted and positioned based on friendships and not merit. The whole place should be thoroughly investigated for this and for executing projects well outside PMA standards.

Finally, staff said:

DSD branch is run top down with little to no engagement or participation from middle management and the workers. Grossly mismanaged project and recruitment is based on [redacted] and favours. There is a rotted culture of bullying and those guilty of [redacted] remain unpunished. All senior leadership should be investigated.

The minister visited the DSD team. She was briefed on these audits and ignored the concerns of her own staff until this issue became public. She is now trying to play defence. I want to reiterate my disgust at this government and the contempt that this minister has shown for Canberrans and the Assembly. Every single cabinet member should hang their head in shame that this has become the stock standard, expected response when millions of Canberrans' money is wasted.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Disability and Minister for Health) (11.01): I want to briefly, in closing, note that Ms Castley asserted as fact that this matter had never previously been referred to the Integrity Commission. She has no basis in evidence to assert that as fact. As members of this place are aware, we are not able to talk about conversations with the Integrity Commission prior to the commissioner giving authority to do that. I ask Ms Castley to reflect on her assertion as fact something for which she had absolutely no evidence whatsoever.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Dhulwa Mental Health Unit—*independent oversight board*—*report*

Ministerial statement

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Population Health) (11.01): I rise today to provide a fifth and final update on the work completed to develop the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit, based on the report of the independent board following their final meeting. I will also table the latest report from the board.

The Dhulwa Independent Oversight Board was established following the inquiry into the legislative, workplace governance and clinical frameworks of the Dhulwa Secure Mental Health Unit. The final report of the inquiry outlined 25 recommendations and 28 sub-actions, which the ACT government agreed to implement. As this work progressed, I have continuously emphasised the importance of ensuring that the recommendations made by the board of inquiry are implemented in a way that is reflective of sufficient rigour, independence and expertise, under the guidance of the Independent Oversight Board. Today I am very happy to be able to update the Assembly on the board's final report and the progress made over the 12-month period in which the board had oversight over the implementation of the recommendations.

The board met for the final time on 24 April 2024. I was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to attend the final meeting to seek a progress update on the work undertaken and to understand the board's views on the effectiveness of this process and what could be improved. It has been uplifting to see the positive impact of the work overseen by the board on strengthening workplace culture and service delivery at Dhulwa. I recognise that their role was important in providing scope for a range of views and opinions, which greatly assisted collaboration in discussing critical issues. I remain grateful for the board's frank and fearless advice. This has been complex work and their guidance was crucial in ensuring that this work was progressed in a timely and effective manner. Whilst their work is now complete, I am sure that the change they have been part of creating will continue long into Dhulwa's future.

During the final meeting, the board endorsed 14 recommendations and related sub-actions and were satisfied that action taken by Canberra Health Services has had the effect of satisfactorily implementing the purpose behind each of the recommendations made by the inquiry, other than the fifth stage of recommendation 2 and recommendation 7. I have also been advised that the board was satisfied that action continues to occur in relation to both matters, with a view to full implementation in the future.

Infrastructure changes are required to meet the intent of recommendation 2.5, which cannot be planned, designed, budgeted, put to tender and physically completed within a 12-month time frame. However, I note that cosmetic changes are in progress, such as changes to furniture and bedding, to make the physical environment of Dhulwa more homely and conducive to social integration. Additionally, work is ongoing to develop a lived experience workforce which will address recommendation 7. This is something that the ACT government is committed to. However, it will take longer than 12 months to fully implement.

I am satisfied that, based on the board's advice, although this work cannot be completed within a 12-month period as planned, work is ongoing and that this does not undermine the intent and improvements achieved over the past year. I also note that a significant review has been undertaken of all clinical and operational policies and procedures currently in place at Dhulwa, as outlined under recommendation 4, and that this recommendation has been endorsed by the board.

This review was particularly important in ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with the model of care and that staff have an ongoing opportunity to be included and to provide feedback as to the efficacy of procedures within Dhulwa. Extensive consultation with staff, peak bodies, consumers and carers, industrial partners and the Human Rights Commission was undertaken as part of this review, and I thank everyone involved for taking the time to engage with us.

Ensuring that the clinical and operational policies and procedures are aligned with the new model of care will lead to better outcomes for those currently receiving treatment at Dhulwa. After having received the final report from the independent board, I recently visited Dhulwa to speak with staff and people receiving care and seek their feedback on the current culture at Dhulwa and their experiences in the implementation of these recommendations. The feedback I received is that these changes have made a real difference to both staff and the people currently receiving care at Dhulwa. It was warming to hear this feedback firsthand and to have the opportunity to speak with staff directly.

Significant change has occurred at Dhulwa in a very short period of time. I once again thank all involved in creating change at Dhulwa which has benefited staff, people receiving care, their families and carers, and stakeholders. Your work should be commended.

I present the following papers:

Dhulwa Independent Oversight Board—Report 5, dated 24 April 2024.

Ministerial statement, 27 August 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Courts—Coronial Restorative Reform Process

Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.06): I rise today to table the *Coronial restorative reform process: overview, outcomes, priorities for next steps and a recommendation to support future restorative reform processes* report prepared by the independent facilitator, Mr Alistair Legge. The ACT

government affirms its commitment to improve the accessibility, timeliness and transparency of the ACT's coronial process to align with the needs of the people using it. The ACT Coroner's Court plays an important role in our community. Coroners inquire into when and where someone died and the manner and cause of their death, determine the identity of deceased persons, and expose other matters of public importance. Our coronial system operates to provide information and answers in often difficult circumstances, including when a person who is in care and custody dies. Because of these important public functions, it is critical that we continue to consider how the system is working for our community.

As members would recall, the ACT government's review of and commitment to improve restorative and therapeutic practices in the ACT's coronial system commenced several years ago. In 2021, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate worked with Relationships Australia to conduct a series of roundtables with families and professionals with lived experience of the coronial system. These roundtables provided an opportunity for family members to share personal experiences and provided government with valuable ideas for coronial restorative reform in Canberra. Following the feedback that I heard at these roundtables, the ACT government committed \$3.2 million in the 2021-22 budget for the appointment of a dedicated coroner and support staff. The government also committed \$250,000 in budget funding to engage an independent facilitator as part of a restorative coronial project.

In September 2022, Mr Alistair Legge was engaged by the ACT Human Rights Commission as the independent facilitator to lead the coronial restorative reform process. The purpose of this work was to explore opportunities to enhance the accessibility, timeliness and transparency of the coronial system so that it aligns with the needs of the people using it and to ensure families feel better heard and supported throughout the process.

Mr Legge has concluded this process and formally presented a final summary report to me in July this year. Subsequently, the report was published on the commission's website. This independent report reflects the views and lived experiences of community advocates and some families who have come in contact with the ACT's coronial and justice system. These stakeholders have advocated for improvements that would better ensure the wellbeing of community members who progress through the coronial system. The report is not a reflection of the views of Mr Legge, the ACT government, the Chief Magistrate or other ACT agencies. I would like to thank the advocacy groups, individual community members, families and other stakeholders for their shared experiences, valued contribution and unwavering dedication to support this important work.

The report recommends a number of key priorities and recommended next steps for the government to consider. I have asked the Justice and Community Safety Directorate to consider the findings of the report. I note that the report contains reflections and recommendations that have implications for ACT government agencies and office holders. JACS will consider these holistically, along with the other findings. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with stakeholders and advocates to explore opportunities to strengthen and improve the ACT's coronial system.

In addition to our commitment to consider the report's recommendations, I wish to highlight the steps that the government has taken already to implement and strengthen restorative practices in the ACT's coronial and justice system. As I outlined earlier, in 2021-22 the ACT government committed \$3.2 million in funding to establish a dedicated coroner and support staff, including a family liaison officer to support families and friends of loved ones who have passed. In the 2023-24 ACT budget, the ACT government provided further funding to support restorative and therapeutic practices in the Coroner's Court. This included funding for forensic counselling services and family liaison officers.

The Justice and Community Legislation Amendment Act 2019 and the Coroners Amendment Act 2020 implemented legislative reforms to better respond to the justice needs of families engaging with the coronial system. These amendments included: explicitly recognising the impact on and interests of the family and friends in the death of a loved one; requiring a government response to be presented to the Legislative Assembly following the release of coronial findings which identify matters of public safety; and clarifying the Judicial Council's role to examine complaints about magistrates performing a coronial role.

Several restorative practices have also been implemented at the Coroner's Court. Information material has been developed to help bereaved families and facilitate discussion between religious and cultural leaders, the Coroner's Court and Forensic Medicine Centre staff on practices around death, autopsy and burial. There is also greater transparency for families through the work of the family liaison officers about what information the family would like to receive and in what form. Trauma-informed practices are in place when discussing sensitive or confronting material with families and in discussion prior to the release of any potentially distressing material.

Changes in court processes have been introduced to assist families to be informed and engaged. For example, there is now an increased preparedness to share information such as a post-mortem report or a police report at an earlier stage than had previously been the case so that family can ask informed questions. Families are consulted as to whether they have any questions or input at a minimum of three points during the investigation and are given the opportunity to understand the information and ask questions prior to file closure.

The court has implemented restorative conferencing in coronial inquiries where appropriate. At the conclusion of a case, and sometimes at certain points during the process, the court now writes substantive letters to families which set out the work the court has done and explain findings, medical information and legal terms in clear and simple language. The coroner now prepares narrative findings in some cases where hearings are not held. These findings are either published or unpublished and prepared for the family's benefit. This process will contribute to the development of coronial jurisprudence in the ACT and support both families and the community to understand the circumstances of a death and future opportunities for prevention. Input is provided by families with respect to personal details about the deceased and may be included in the findings.

Increased use of non-invasive methods of post-mortem investigation, including CT scans, X-ray, biochemistry and toxicology, reduces the need for internal examinations and expedites the return of the deceased to their family for funeral arrangements, which we know is critically important to families grieving the loss of a loved one.

Physical updates to the Forensic Medicine Centre have been undertaken. This includes increased storage capacity, the purchase of a new X-ray machine, and a new scientific freezer for retaining blood samples. The scientific freezer provides families with the opportunity for further testing—for example, for use in genetic counselling and paternity and DNA testing. In addition to these changes in processes and updates to facilities, work has been undertaken to ensure that staff and judicial officers are equipped to undertake their important functions.

The court has supported opportunities for coroners to discuss restorative approaches with colleagues across jurisdictions. Further, internal ACT courts and tribunal funding has been allocated for two additional legal officers to assist the coroner. Court staff have been upskilled in trauma-informed practices and further training on these practices is planned. Additionally, the court is undertaking scoping work for a new case management system to support staff in their investigations and communications with families.

Finally, changes have been introduced to support government responses to coronial reports and inform policy development. Ministerial guidelines for government responses have been developed to inform responses to coronial reports required by law. Additionally, in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the ACT Suicide Register has been established to inform national collection of data in relation to deaths by suicide and to assist in national suicide prevention policy development.

I wish to again thank the tireless contributions of advocacy groups, community members and families who have shared their lived experience and contributed to the coronial restorative reform process in the ACT. The ACT government will continue to seek opportunities to strengthen restorative practices in the ACT's coronial system to ensure that families and friends have the support they need when they come in contact with the ACT's coronial and justice system.

I present the following papers:

Coronial Restorative Reform Process: Overview, Outcomes, Priorities for Next Steps and a Recommendation to Support Future Restorative Reform Processes—Report prepared by Alistair Legge, Independent Facilitator, dated 6 May 2024.

Independent Coronial Restorative Reform Process Report—Ministerial statement, 27 August 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Estimates 2024-2025—Select Committee Report

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.17), by leave: Pursuant to order, I present the following report:

Estimates 2024-2025—Select Committee—Report—*Inquiry into the Appropriation Bill 2024-2025 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2024-2025*, dated 15 August 2024, and a corrigendum together with schedule of questions for which answers were not provided during the inquiry and a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

The report was circulated to members on 16 August 2024, pursuant to standing orders.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the first and final report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025. The committee commenced on 6 May 2024 and received its reference from the Assembly on 25 June 2024. The committee received 12 submissions and held 11 days of public hearings. Witnesses took 233 questions on notice during the hearings and received a further 240 questions on notice afterwards. The committee notes that 27 of these questions had not received an answer at the end of the inquiry. The 74 recommendations address topics across the ACT public sector.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to recognise ministers, officials and community organisations for the evidence which formed part of the basis of the report. The committee looks forward to its report informing the budget debate.

On another note, it has come to the committee's attention that some of the private deliberations of the committee may have been the subject of an unauthorised disclosure. As members know, standing order 241(b) states that the proceedings of committees must not be disclosed to a person unless they have been reported to the Assembly or authorised by the Assembly or the committee. The committee considered this matter and decided not to take action pursuant to standing order 242 because the committee would dissolve after tabling its report. Instead, the committee wrote to the relevant member to draw this matter and the committee's conclusions to their attention. The committee would also like to remind all members of the provisions of standing orders 241 and 242 and emphasise the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of private committee proceedings.

I thank other members of the committee, Ms Suzanne Orr and Miss Laura Nuttall, and recognise the timely outputs by Hansard and broadcasting staff, noting the heavy workload during the hearings. I also thank the secretariat, Dr David Monk, James Bunce, Kathleen de Kleuver, Katie Langham, Sophie Milne, Alicia Coupland, Erin Dinneen, Anna Hough, Kate Mickelson, Nicola Straker, Adam Walker, Lydia Chung, Dikshes Patel, Satyen Sharma, Connor Roe and Justice-Noah Malfitano. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 44

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.21): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 44, dated 20 August 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR CAIN: Scrutiny report 44 contains the committee's comments on five bills, 38 pieces of subordinate legislation, proposed amendments to seven bills, and seven government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.21), by leave: I want to highlight some parts of this scrutiny report for the chamber around the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2024 that is coming on for debate this afternoon. I want to highlight the fact that numerous rights in the Human Rights Act have been limited and the explanation for the limitations has not been provided by Ms Castley in the explanatory statement. The report draws this matter to the attention of the Assembly and asks the member to respond with sufficient time to allow the committee to consider the response prior to the bill being debated. The bill is being debated this afternoon, so Ms Castley's response does not allow sufficient time for the committee to respond. It shows clear disrespect for scrutiny processes.

I would like to go one step further and talk about what a stunt this bill is, because there has not been any public inquiry into this legislation at all. This scrutiny report is the only Assembly oversight of this bill. In our JACS Committee work, we have two separate committees. We have a scrutiny committee and a policy committee for JACS. I was away for one of the meetings of the policy committee where members, Mr Cain and Mr Braddock, were presented with the bill to decide if our committee should inquire into it.

To give some context, we are a committee that has conducted 13 inquiries this term. The bill is a perfect example of a bill that we would normally inquire into, given it is not a government bill, it has not been consulted on, it is a relatively new legislative area in Australia, and there is an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to provide input and oversight into this very important policy area. However, Mr Cain and Mr Braddock voted against an inquiry. I honestly could not believe this. With all the talk in the Assembly about what an important issue it is, the Greens and the Liberals did not feel it warranted an inquiry.

At the following meeting, I moved a motion to have an inquiry into the coercive control bill and both Mr Cain and Mr Braddock voted against it. Shame on them. It demonstrates to me what a political stunt this bill is and that the Canberra Liberals are not interested at all in doing the hard work to get this legislation right. Ms Castley has

not respected the scrutiny committee's request to consider her response to the committee's serious concerns, and it paints a shameful picture of Mr Braddock and Mr Cain as members who do not view coercive control an important enough issue to the community to progress an inquiry.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (11.25), by leave: All responses from the scrutiny committee that came to my office have been responded to, and we sent all that information back to the scrutiny committee, with all concerns addressed. Briefly—I do not really need to go through much of it all—I note that Dr Paterson said that there has been no consultation. We have had extensive consultation on this bill. As I said, all areas of concern were addressed very quickly and sent back to the scrutiny committee.

I note that Dr Paterson has talked about a lot of information. I do not know whether talking about who voted for what in that context was committee information that did not need to be shared here in the chamber. I just want to reflect on Dr Paterson's comments about what goes on in that committee. It is disappointing that they are using their response as a political hit here. Coercive control is important. There have been countless reviews, reports and investigations across the country. This is something that is being rolled out across the country. I believe that it is a despicable way to stall the good work that we are trying to do in this Assembly today in criminalising coercive control.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.27), by leave: I just want to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that what Dr Paterson has mentioned this morning is disclosing committee-in-confidence material, and I will be raising that within the confines of our committee to see if further action is warranted regarding the fact that Dr Paterson has disclosed information confidential to the committee in this public forum. Apart from the standing rules and all the things that we will be looking at as a committee, I am extremely disappointed in Dr Paterson for adopting this tactic, on this occasion, to disclose confidential information about the committee.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee Report 11

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.28): I present the following report:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Report 11—*Inquiry into micro, small and medium business in the ACT region*, dated 26 August 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

The Standing Committee on the Economy and Gender and Economic Equality commenced its inquiry into micro, small and medium business in the ACT region on 21 August 2024. The committee received 10 submissions and was pleased to hear from several peak bodies and industry associations. The committee decided not to hold public

hearings and to proceed on the written evidence provided. This is the committee's 11th report. The committee's report makes 15 recommendations including that: the ACT government investigate ways to facilitate communication between business and government agencies, ease regulatory burdens, and address skills and labour shortages. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who participated in or assisted with the inquiry. Of course, I want to thank the other members of the committee, Ms Orr and Miss Nuttall, and I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee Report 13

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.29): I present the following report:

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Report 13—*Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT*, dated 20 August 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

In my role as chair of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, I am pleased to speak to the committee's report, *Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT*. This is the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion for the Tenth Assembly.

At a private meeting on 17 October 2023, the committee resolved to inquire into this matter and report to the Assembly. The terms of reference sought to investigate the prevalence of loneliness and social isolation here in the ACT, the cost to individuals and the community, and opportunities for government to enhance the social connectiveness of the territory. The committee received 39 submissions, held three public hearings and conducted one site visit. Witnesses took 12 questions on notice.

Loneliness and social isolation are issues that impact people throughout the ACT and across the nation. The committee heard that action is needed to address the barriers to social connection and improve wellbeing, including: prioritising social connection across government and addressing the stigma associated with feeling lonely; providing a range of targeted programs, such as social prescribing to people who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, loneliness and social isolation; improving transport options; providing access to spaces for socialising; and reducing costs wherever possible for social activities, making it as easy as possible for people to connect.

The report makes 28 recommendations to reduce loneliness and social isolation in the ACT. It is supported by all committee members. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this important inquiry. The committee particularly acknowledges and thanks those who shared their personal experiences of loneliness and social isolation. We also offer thanks to Nicole Wiggins, Director of the

Early Morning Centre, who shared valuable insights with the committee during a site visit and tour of the centre.

Finally, I would like to thank the ACT government for their participation in the inquiry, as well as the other members of the committee, Miss Nuttall and Ms Lawder, and the committee's secretariat—you are wonderful as always. I note the presentation of this report marks the end of what is likely to be the final inquiry of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion of the Tenth Assembly. I would like to thank all of the organisations and individuals who have contributed to the committee's inquiries over the past four years.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee Report 13

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.32): I present the following report:

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee—Report 13—*Inquiry into Raising Children in the ACT*, dated 20 August 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

In my role as Chair of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing, I am pleased to speak to the report on the *Inquiry into Raising Children in the ACT*. This is the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing for the Tenth Assembly.

At a private meeting on 5 March 2024, the committee resolved to inquire into and report on raising children in the ACT. The committee received 81 submissions and also conducted five public hearings, during which the committee heard from 35 witnesses. Witnesses took 13 questions on notice.

The committee heard that the ACT has the lowest fertility rate of any state or territory in Australia. Individual submitters and witnesses shared their experiences of raising children in the ACT and of making decisions around whether or not to do so. Key themes that emerged from the evidence included: the cost-of-living pressures faced by Canberrans and how these are impacting their decisions around raising children in the ACT, with some people deciding to have fewer children than they would like to or to move interstate; the need for more affordable and accessible housing, childcare and healthcare for current and prospective parents and carers in the ACT; people's concern and uncertainty about the environment contributing to their decisions around raising children; and that strong family and community support is really important when raising children. Throughout this inquiry, the committee heard that these complex issues

require a range of practical actions in response. The committee's report makes 33 recommendations.

On behalf of our committee, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this inquiry for their important contributions. We heard a lot of deeply personal stories, and we heard from a lot of Canberrans who are in a lot of pain. I would like to thank everybody who wrote to us or who appeared before us and shared their stories. Those personal experiences are so important for us to hear, and for us to reflect on, and for us to think about how we can better serve our community. I would also like to thank the ACT government and the members of the community, my colleagues, Mr Milligan and Mr Pettersson, for a really cohesive committee inquiry. I would really like to thank our extremely hard-working secretariat, who have pulled this report together whilst also working on estimates.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.35): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the reporting period—1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024—the committee considered two statutory appointments.

I now table a schedule of the statutory appointments considered during this period:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2024.

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.36): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion. I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period—1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024—the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion considered a total of 15 appointments to the following bodies:

- University of Canberra Council;
- Children and Young People Death Review Committee;
- Board of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute;
- Board of the Canberra Institute of Technology;
- ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies; and
- ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority Board.

I now table a schedule of the statutory appointments considered by the committee during this period:

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2024.

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.36): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity.

Pursuant to standing order 258, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the committee; however, as chair of the committee I dissented from the motion to make the statement.

On 12 December 2023, the committee commenced an inquiry into climate change and a just transition. As part of this inquiry, the committee held public hearings on 30 April 2024. In accordance with the usual practice of committee secretariats, contact with the office of the Minister for Climate Action was made on 5 March 2024 to check his availability to attend a public hearing on 30 April 2024. On 8 March 2024, the minister's office responded on his behalf, noting that the minister had nothing to add to the written submission to the inquiry and declined to attend the hearing.

Noting the provisions of standing order 258, which require that “if a committee desires the attendance of a member as a witness, the chair of the committee shall, in writing, request that member to attend,” on 18 March 2024 I wrote as chair formally inviting the minister to attend the hearing on 30 April. On 22 April, the minister's office responded that he was unable to attend due to his schedule, but could take questions on notice in relation to the inquiry.

I wrote to the minister on behalf of the committee on 21 May 2024 requesting he provide a suitable time for a hearing on one of six specified days. The minister's office responded on 22 May 2024, asking the committee to propose a time and date for the hearing.

On 11 June 2024, the committee agreed to hold a public hearing on 2 July 2024, and to invite the Minister for Climate Action to attend this hearing, noting that he had not directly refused to give evidence for the inquiry. A copy of this letter was sent to my office on 11 June and unfortunately I did not get to see this letter until 26 June. The letter was sent to the minister on 26 June. The minister's office responded to this letter on 1 July 2024, that due to the late notice—which I, as chair, take full responsibility for—the minister was unable to attend the hearing on 2 July. The minister's office indicated that he would consider another possible date, and noted that the hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates provide an opportunity to ask questions about climate change and next steps.

In considering the matter, two members of the committee took the view—noting my dissent—that the various responses from the minister's office amount to a refusal by a

member to give evidence to a committee, and, consistent with the provisions of standing order 258, resolved that the committee advise the Assembly, and not again request the member to attend.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.40), by leave: I just want to note that it is disappointing that the Minister for Climate Action did not appear before the Committee for the Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity to provide evidence to our hearing about a just transition to climate change. That is all I wish to say at this time.

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.40): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing relating to statutory appointments, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

This statement covers the period 1 Jan 2024 to 30 June 2024.

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period—1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024—the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing considered a total of 11 appointments to the Therapeutic Support Panel. The committee considered these appointments within the 30-day timeframe provided by section 228 of the Legislation Act 2001.

I now table a schedule of the statutory appointments considered by the committee during this period:

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2024.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (11.41): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety relating to statutory appointments, in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

During the reporting period—January 2024 to June 2024—the committee considered a total of seven appointments and re-appointments to the following bodies:

- ACT Racing Appeals Tribunal
- Gambling and Racing Commission
- ACT Official Visitors Board
- Professional Standards Council

I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2024.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (11.42): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the period—1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024—the standing committee considered no statutory appointments.

In accordance with continuing resolution 5A, I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—
10th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2024.

Planning—final Territory Plan

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Planning, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for Transport and Special Minister of State) (11.42), by leave: I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) the interim Territory Plan was made by the then Minister for Planning and Land Management on 5 September 2023, and presented to the Legislative Assembly on 12 September 2023. The commencement date for the interim Territory Plan was 27 November 2023;
 - (b) on 11 September 2023, before being presented to the Legislative Assembly, the interim Territory Plan was referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services (the Committee). On 12 September 2023, the Committee resolved to undertake an inquiry into the Territory Plan;
 - (c) the Committee finalised Report 16: *Inquiry into the Territory Plan and other associated documents* (the report) on 8 March 2024 and formally tabled the report in the Legislative Assembly on 13 March 2024;
 - (d) an amended Territory Plan has been prepared in response to the Committee's report, as well as in response to internal and external feedback received. This plan includes clarification and editorial changes to make clearer the policy intent of provisions, address translational issues from previous versions and improve readability. The changes made are consistent with the overall policy intent of the Territory Plan and other associated documents;
 - (e) the amended Territory Plan is being provided to the Assembly for approval as the Territory Plan under section 610(1) of the *Planning Act 2023*; and
 - (f) if the amended Territory Plan is approved by the Assembly, in accordance with section 610(3) of the *Planning Act 2023*, it will commence on a day fixed by the Minister for Planning by written notice; and

- (2) approves the amended Territory Plan as the Territory Plan under section 610(3) of the *Planning Act 2023*.

Following the introduction of the interim Territory Plan in November last year, I am pleased to present to the Assembly today an amended Territory Plan for approval as the Territory Plan. I am presenting this to the Assembly in accordance with section 610 of the *Planning Act 2023*.

Canberra's population is expected to reach almost 700,000 people by 2050. In one of the nation's fastest-growing cities, the ACT government has been determined to deliver a planning system that can respond to and facilitate this growth while maintaining the quality of life that we currently enjoy. This includes facilitating development that is fit for purpose so that urban spaces are enjoyable and to use and provide connection to services, nature and transport.

In November 2023 the ACT's new outcomes focused planning commenced, underpinned by the new *Planning Act 2023* and supported by the interim Territory Plan. Our outcomes focused planning system is designed to place a focus on the needs of our community in planning decisions, proposals and development. The new planning system was the culmination of extensive consultation and contributions from planning experts, industry and the ACT community.

In 2023 this Assembly agreed to the commencement of an interim Territory Plan. The Assembly noted the new structure of the Territory Plan and its focus on proposed development setting to meet or exceed assessment outcomes rather than a metrics-based approach. The transition from a rules and criteria-based approach to an outcomes focused planning system is a significant change in approach to planning matters in the ACT. As we then change our work does not stop once the change is made. It is important for the government to consider where refinements can be made to improve how Canberrans interact with the planning system.

I appreciate the feedback that has been received on the interim Territory Plan from those who have used it or reviewed it or who, as part of the implementation of the new planning system, provided their feedback. The final changes to the Territory Plan from the interim Territory Plan have been included to improve legibility, address translational issues from the previous version of the Territory Plan and clarify the policy intent of the Territory Plan. This includes minor amendments to zones policies to ensure that policy intent is accurately reflected and clear to both developers and the community as well as the inclusion of new definitions to provide clarity around intended uses across the territory. The design guides and planning technical specifications have also been updated to improve clarity and readability and to make them consistent with the amended Territory Plan. The amendments to these supporting documents continue to encourage better design outcomes by providing guidance on public space, built form interface, housing, biodiversity and ecology design matters. I present a fact sheet outlining changes made to the final Territory Plan and other associated documents, and I encourage interested members of the community to view this publicly available fact sheet. I present the following paper:

Final Territory Plan, undated.

Territory Plan Factsheet.

The final planning system review and reform project has been a significant achievement for the ACT government. The amended Territory Plan is the final stage of implementing the new system, a system that will place greater emphasis on innovation and high-quality design, conserving biodiversity and nature and considering how natural built and cultural heritage elements join together. The refinements and clarifications made in the amended Territory Plan build on the interim Territory Plan to make it stronger and clearer as a statutory planning document.

Of course, as I have already indicated, this is not the end in terms of amendments to the Territory Plan. It is a living document and it will set the foundations of the planning system where we will be making further changes in the future, including both minor and major plan amendments. The next stage of planning reform I have outlined in my statement of planning priorities will be focused on housing supply and, in particular, a focus on achieving the ACT government's commitment as part of the national housing targets, which will be in place over the next five years. It is about building more homes where people want to live and it includes enabling the missing middle in Canberra; planning for more housing in and around key precinct shops and rapid transport connections; planning for the growth of Canberra's newest regions; outlining Canberra's future jobs and innovation precincts; supporting community needs in the ACT; environmental protection; building on the design focus of the Territory Plan and the new planning system; and, importantly, monitoring and evaluating the new system as it is implemented.

I am therefore pleased to present the amended Territory Plan to the Assembly today, and ask that the Assembly approve the amended Territory Plan as the Territory Plan under section 610(3) of the Planning Act 2023.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Clay**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Controlled Sports Amendment Bill 2024

Debate resumed from 25 June 2024, on motion by Ms Berry:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.49): I rise today to briefly speak to the Controlled Sports Amendment Bill 2024 and respond to its amendments. The amendments are limited in scope. There are just two—with one being a very minor one—and I am told that both are welcomed by the controlled sports community.

The first amendment proposes that a public servant, rather than the minister, be responsible for the appointment—similar to other registrar positions. This seems to be a straightforward amendment. It is the second amendment which has raised the most interest. Many industry representatives have previously expressed concern with me relating to the time taken to receive a response from the registrar after submitting an application to obtain or amend a controlled sports registration. These delays can significantly disrupt sporting events and increase the financial risk faced by promoters. The amendment bill specifies a 20 working day timeframe for the registrar to review applications, though there is no timeframe specified for the registrar to respond to the

initial application for a new or amended registration. According to industry representatives, there are significant other issues that have been identified by the community. I believe the minister was alerted to those issues, yet other concerns were not addressed in this bill.

As the legislation now stands, it is proposed that, in the next Assembly, a comprehensive review should take place. Though the amendments are limited in scope, they are both sensible amendments, and the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.51): As the Greens spokesperson for sports and recreation, I rise to speak to the Controlled Sports Amendment Bill 2024. The concerns I have heard from stakeholders are generally pretty consistent. Funding is, of course, always a concern. After that, I would say that the administrative burden placed on community sporting groups does come up time and time again. This bill will make some small but necessary steps to make life easier for those working hard to ensure that controlled sports are fair, safe and held to the highest professional standard.

The commitment required to take on an administrative role or become an official within a sporting group is often underestimated, and I understand this can be especially complex in a controlled sports space. The level of passion required to actually give up the time that you would otherwise personally spend in the ring, on the court, pitch or field to ensure that others can continue to enjoy the sport instead is something that we want to encourage here in Canberra. The level of selflessness and community-mindedness is essential to ensuring Canberra is a warm and welcoming place.

In an area where registration can be complex, collating multiple registrations on the one licence is a great way to streamline licensing so officials can actually spend their time supporting the sport they love. I am personally quite eager to see what further actions we can take to improve people's experience in controlled sports.

The other significant part of this bill is that ministers will no longer be responsible for the appointment of the commissioners of controlled sports. I think this is a really promising direction for the government to be moving in—and, I believe, the right direction, which is to depoliticise decisions that government makes to support sports and recreation. I understand this brings controlled sports into line with the other areas, which is also always good. If I could surreptitiously reach for a second, I think we should be moving faster to get away from all sports being dependent on knowing the right people or having to lobby us as politicians directly to ensure they can function from one year to the next.

Ultimately, we are really eager to see this bill improve the experience of people who officiate and compete in controlled sports. The ACT Greens welcome the Controlled Sports Amendment Bill and will be supporting it today.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (11.53), in reply: I thank colleagues for their comments on the bill. As I noted in my introduction speech, the bill

will make two minor amendments to the Controlled Sports Act 2019 to improve the efficiency and operation of the legislation. These amendments were brought forward following a review of the act which focused on identifying and addressing operational issues within the legislation.

Firstly, this bill will amend the Controlled Sports Act 2019 so that a public servant may appoint the controlled sports registrar. This amendment will ensure that the appointment arrangement of the registrar is consistent with similar registrar positions across the ACT government and will ensure efficient management and governance of the position. While this amendment may seem minor, it will result in a more streamlined and more efficient approach to the routine appointment of the registrar.

Secondly, this bill will also introduce two new sections of the act to allow registered controlled sports officials and contestants to apply to amend their existing registrations to add additional official capacities and controlled sports styles to their registration. Currently under the act, there are limited mechanisms available for these changes to registrations to be made efficiently for registrants, particularly if they are in the middle of their registration period when seeking to make these changes. The introduction of these provisions will increase the flexibility of officials and contestants to add capacities and controlled sports styles to their existing registration. This change will also assist Access Canberra to better manage these applications. This issue was raised by industry participants, and the change to the legislation has been supported by industry stakeholders engaged through the review.

Finally, it is important to note that the decision to amend an application for both controlled sports officials and contestants will be a reviewable decision in the bill. This will preserve the rights of the registrants to a fair review process through the legislation if they disagree with the outcome of the decision.

To finish, I would like to thank all of the industry stakeholders who have been proactively engaging with both the directorate and my office on these changes and other changes to code and regulations for the various controlled sports. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.56 am to 2 pm.

Questions without notice Industrial relations—CFMEU

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to the announcement last week that the federal government has placed the CFMEU's construction and general division into administration, including the ACT branch. You

have previously said, in relation to this matter, that “the allegations aired over recent days, which resulted in the federal government’s application to appoint an independent administrator, have not included the ACT division of the CFMEU”. Chief Minister, do you support the action taken by the federal government in placing the ACT branch of the CFMEU into administration?

MR BARR: It is a decision that they have made in relation to the construction and general division across the entire nation. There was some question as to whether a handful of state and territory branches would not be put into administration. They have determined to put the entire division, every state and territory, into administration, although I understand that the legislation did contain an amendment that would enable branches to be released from administration early, should there be no substantive issues or findings against them by the administrator. With that provision in place, I am comfortable with the decision that the federal government have made.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, do you remain satisfied that there is no criminal activity within the ACT branch of the CFMEU, of the kind that has recently been aired publicly?

MR BARR: I have seen no such evidence and heard no such allegations. But I am not an entity that would be reported to in that regard. I am not the police; I am not the Integrity Commission. I would not anticipate that I would be the one that would learn first about any issues, if there were any. I am not aware of any issues, but that is a matter that now sits with the administrator and with investigative authorities.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, will you now formally cut all ties with the CFMEU?

MR BARR: That is not a matter that is within my responsibilities as Chief Minister of the territory. We have, as a political party, said that we would not accept donations from the CFMEU at this time.

Industrial relations—CFMEU

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, during recent estimates hearings, when you were asked about the CFMEU, you said:

The ACT government does not have ties with the CFMEU.

You repeated in question time just now that, as Chief Minister, you do not have any ties. You also refused to undertake a review into ACT infrastructure projects, saying:

... there are no specific allegations in relation to any ACT government project other than that that is currently before the Integrity Commission.

Chief Minister, I note that Zach Smith, the National Secretary of the CFMEU, is a member of the ACT government’s Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Council, which, according to the website, advises the minister on the operation of the code. Chief Minister, do you still maintain that the ACT government does not have any ties to the CFMEU?

MR BARR: That was an appointment made in the past, reflecting that that particular advisory council has representatives of both employees and employers. I believe there should continue to be employee representation on that council—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: It would then be a matter for the administrator of the CFMEU as to who they would appoint to that role, should they wish to change that appointment.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, will you now commit to undertaking a review of all ACT government infrastructure projects to ensure that there are no issues as a result of the allegations involving the construction division of the CFMEU?

MR BARR: If the question is literally “all infrastructure projects”, that would be a massive undertaking involving thousands and thousands of individual projects. The review, as it relates to projects where the contractor would have an EBA with the CFMEU, is one that is being conducted at a national level because we operate under the federal industrial relations system. We are not going to have a duplicative—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: We are not going to have a duplicative review of matters already under investigation.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, what other ACT government boards or advisory councils contain members of the CFMEU?

MR BARR: I do not believe there would be many, but I will take that on notice for Mr Cain.

Industrial relations—CFMEU

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to an answer provided to a question on notice to the Integrity Commissioner which asked him to elaborate on why he thinks an investigation into lobbying in the ACT would be beneficial. He said:

... the ACT is a small and highly interconnected community where links (personal, political and commercial) are invasive. Lobbying on an official and unofficial basis can occur easily.

Chief Minister, have you instructed members of your cabinet and their staff to cease taking meetings with the CFMEU following the ACT branch being placed in administration? If not, why?

MR BARR: I have not issued a directive to that effect. I would consider, if there were any approaches—lobbying in that regard—advising ministerial colleagues not to take those meetings at this time, until the administrator has completed his initial work.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, are you aware of any members of your cabinet or their staff who have met with members of the ACT branch or national branch of the CFMEU following the damning allegations that they have been infiltrated by bikies and criminal gangs?

MR BARR: There are no such allegations relating to the ACT branch, to be clear. The question extends to a range of people. In the context of what constitutes the CFMEU, I will interpret that to mean officials as opposed to people who may simply be members of the CFMEU. I am not aware of any such meetings, but I cannot be certain that there have not been casual encounters on the street or people running into each other at the supermarket, as the CFMEU does have thousands of members. I imagine that there may well be social connections, but, in an official capacity, I would think not.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, do you share the Integrity Commissioner's concerns about lobbying, particularly by the CFMEU, following the public hearings of Operation Kingfisher, which outlined potential corruption as a direct result of lobbying by this disgraced union?

MR BARR: I do not think the Integrity Commissioner was particularly focused on the CFMEU—

Ms Lee: Yes; he was. It was in answer to a question directly about the CFMEU.

MR BARR: when he was making his observations about lobbying—

Ms Lee: It was in answer to a direct question about the CFMEU.

Mr Hanson: Is Ms Burch's office going to tip them off again, or not?

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, enough!

MR BARR: His observations about lobbying were much broader, and he was clear in that regard, and I agree with him. I get lobbied, more so by people seeking to avoid paying tax than I do by any representations from trade unions. There are, of course, reasons and delegated powers under the Financial Management Act as to why people would lobby me for act of grace payments—why law firms would lobby me for act of grace payments—and other things. So I think it is appropriate in the educative role of the Integrity Commission, which is a key component of the legislation, that more work is undertaken by the commission—not just with members of this place but more broadly—about how to appropriately manage being lobbied.

Canberra Hospital—Critical Services Building

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you provide an update to the Assembly on the success of opening the new Critical Services Building earlier this month?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. The opening of the new state-of-the-art Critical Services Building on Saturday 17 August was almost the final step in our journey to deliver the \$660 million Canberra Hospital Expansion. More than 1,500 Canberra Health Services staff worked in the Critical Services Building across the opening weekend of 17 and 18 August. I want to thank every single one of them, as well as the campus modernisation team, Major Projects Canberra, Multiplex and its subcontractors, and the consumers, carers and clinicians whose commitment has brought us to this moment.

On 17 August the new emergency department, intensive care unit, heli-deck, operating theatres, cardiac catheterisation labs, clinical forensic medical unit, medical imaging and inpatient units went live. The teams transferred around 100 patients across to the new building, along with thousands of pieces of equipment, supported by Grace removalists. Moving patients who require critical care is complex and the team used an evidence-based approach to make the move in one day. Planning and implementation were supported by Smooth Hospital Move, a team of people with significant experience and expertise in these kinds of moves, much more significant than the Leader of the Opposition, who determined to give her expert view about how this move should be done prior to the successful move on 17 August. Over that weekend, CHS teams saw 522 patients in the new Emergency Department, performed 50 surgeries in the new operating theatres and completed an emergency cardiac catheter lab procedure in the new suites. This was a fantastic start to the largest health infrastructure investment since self-government.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Dr Paterson, can I just say that I am having trouble hearing the minister.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what are the early benefits being seen by the health workforce and consumers who are attending the new Critical Services Building?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary. The clinical and consumer reference groups have been integral to the design and delivery of the Critical Services Building. We are already hearing about the positive impact of the new hospital facility. This starts with Lynnice Church's artwork, which forms the veil outside the Welcome Hall, the new main entrance to Canberra Hospital. This sends a clear message to Aboriginal and Torres Islander patients and their families that the hospital is a safe and welcoming place for them. The new building's light-filled design and emphasis on family and visitor spaces makes a big difference to patients and their loved ones. I am told these spaces are already being well used, with people commenting on the natural light and sweeping views of the Brindabellas.

The Emergency Department team has introduced geriatric streaming, with a dedicated pod to support older people, another Labor election commitment delivered to the community. Speaking to some of the CHS staff specialists last week, they were enthusiastically sharing their early experiences and appreciation of the state-of-the-art technology in the operating theatres and the cardiac catheter labs. From more efficient services to better training opportunities, the new facility is delivering for our teams. Many of you would have seen the first patient in the new Critical Services Building was

Mr John Wynd. His procedure represented another milestone for Canberra Health Services, as he was also the first patient to receive a Micra pacemaker in the ACT public health system. This is just one example of the cutting-edge procedures and clinical innovations that are being enabled by the new Critical Services Building.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what are you now considering for the broader health infrastructure program in the ACT following the opening of the Critical Services Building?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The ACT Labor government has been delivering on our significant health infrastructure program over the past decade and across the term of this government. Not only has this delivered state-of-the-art facilities but it supports our ongoing successful work in recruitment and retention. This is supported by the Epic digital health record, something the Canberra Liberals have never understood the benefits of and have consistently sought to undermine, which was recently described by a senior clinician as “an absolute godsend”.

The design, construction and opening of the new Critical Services Building has also provided the ACT with a strong evidence-base for our ambitious health infrastructure program for the future. With the more than \$1 billion Northside Hospital in the design stage, we will be able to incorporate the design features that are working for teams, consumers, carers and visitors. While the Canberra Liberals have never committed to building the new Northside Hospital, we are getting on with the job. Last week I announced that MPC has short listed two experienced contractors to engage in the request for tender process for the very early contractor involvement for the Northside Hospital project. Just today, Minister Davidson and I announced the planned new location of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services cottage in Lyons as part of the early works to relocate services from buildings that will need to be demolished. ACT Labor has a practical progressive plan for health infrastructure, and we have proven that we can deliver.

Digital Health Record system—procurement

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health. The NTT audit states:

There is a significant risk that ACTHD has paid ... for products and services that are inconsistent with the terms and conditions of the Deed.

Minister, you have also confirmed that you were briefed about this audit in mid-May this year. Why did you fail to ask your own directorate for the internal audit when you were specifically briefed about the audit in relation to the potential waste of taxpayers' funds?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I indicated and outlined in some detail in the ministerial statement this morning, by the time the NTT invoices audit report was received, work was already underway in relation to a CMTEDD project that was funded in the 2023-24 budget review. That work was commissioned by the cabinet to report back in relation to the DSD budget and the DHR work. In fact, the budget review allocated \$500,000 a year for two years for CMTEDD resources to assess the delivery of digital health

services over the time. As I said, this work was underway when the NTT invoices audit was received, and it was appropriate that the audit report was provided to that review team for consideration in the context of the work that was already underway.

I have said that I am disappointed that I was not explicitly briefed on the NTT invoices audit. But the reality is that this was part of an ongoing consideration of DSD's financial issues, and I was well aware of those broader issues. If the directorate and CMTEEDD had not already been undertaking this work and I had not asked any questions, the opposition might have a point. But the fact is that the work was underway and was due to report back to cabinet to inform the 2024-25 budget—which is exactly what happened.

MS LEE: Minister, how much more ACT taxpayers' money is going to be paid to continue the NTT over the life of the contract?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As is already available on the public record, the maximum amount of the deed is \$110 million up to 23 December 2026. Around \$83 million worth of work orders has been entered into, and the expenditure up to the end of June 2024 was \$66.6 million. I am sure that Ms Lee and Ms Castley can do the maths on that.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, have you become so desensitised to cost blow-outs as a member of this government that you did not even bother to question the fact that your directorate may have over spent millions of taxpayer dollars?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I said in response to the first question, I and the cabinet absolutely did question that fact. But let's go back a little bit. As Ms Castley is aware, I was regularly briefed in relation to the DHR project. She is aware of this because she has FOIed many of the relevant briefs and status updates. In those briefs, I was regularly advised about budget deep-dives that were forecast or taking place, including deep-dives to be presented to the project board. It is now clear that the financial implications outlined in these briefs and in the advice to the project board significantly understated the financial pressure the DHR project was under. The reasons for this are spelt out in the two KPMG reports that I tabled today.

As Ms Castley is also aware, while financial risks were not highlighted, there were a range of other risks identified in the reports and briefs that I was receiving. Given that the burn rate of the project was \$165,000 a day and the significant potential for clinical risk in implementing a new electronic patient record, I think any fair-minded person would appreciate that the major focus for me and the project board was on the identified risks and the feedback being received from stakeholders.

However, in October 2022, I did question the presentation of financial implications in the brief, noting the need to better understand annual expected and actual expenditure to know if the project was really on track financially. At this time, DSD was advising an underspend in operational expenditure. Of course, we know that it became apparent after go-live that the project and DSD's budget overall was in fact overspent. But, as the reports I tabled this morning made clear, there is not a single reason for that. Once this became apparent, the directorate took action. This included commissioning the first KPMG report I tabled today, which was commissioned in February 2023.

Digital Health Record system—ACT Integrity Commission

MS CASTLEY: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Earlier this month the Integrity Commission confirmed that they had received a referral regarding the conduct of ACT Health executives involved in the delivery of the Digital Health Records project.

Minister, you have confirmed that, on 17 July 2024, the acting director-general verbally raised with you high-level concerns relating to the handling of NTT invoices and payments. As you would be aware the Integrity Commission Act states that senior executives and the Head of Service have mandatory reporting obligations to the commission if they suspect on reasonable grounds serious or systemic corrupt conduct.

Minister, has the former acting director-general explained to you why he did not report this issue to the Integrity Commission before 17 July, when he was already concerned enough to verbally brief you?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think if Ms Castley goes back and actually reads her question, she will probably have the answer to that. To make reports, people are to suspect serious and systemic misconduct or behaviours.

I can let Ms Castley and the rest of the Assembly know that the work was presented to ministers and to cabinet, to inform the work that the Chief Minister of the Treasury and Economic Development Directorate was leading, which I spoke about earlier. When that work was reported back to cabinet, ministers expressed—as you would expect—significant concern and made clear that further work was required to understand whether the Financial Management Act had been breached. It was our clear expectation that this work would progress and that, should there be evidence to support referrals to appropriate authorities, we would expect such referrals to be made.

Such referrals require evidence to support them. Ms Castley earlier made the assertion that no previous referrals had been made to the Integrity Commission. I would remind Ms Castley that, had a conversation been held with the Integrity Commission—and I am not saying whether one was or was not—we would not be at liberty to talk about that. That is the way the Integrity Commission processes work.

We would all hope that every project and every contract is managed by every public servant in line with every requirement of the Financial Management Act, of procurement rules and of ACT public sector values. We also know that mistakes will be made, systems will never be perfect and sometimes people will do the wrong thing. That is why directorates have audit and risk management committees. It is why they have internal audit programs and spot checks. It is why they work with the Auditor-General to understand how things need to improve. And it is why directorates occasionally refer matters to the Integrity Commission. What is not appropriate is to draw adverse inferences about any individual while these Integrity Commission processes are underway. *(Time expired.)*

MS CASTLEY: Minister, are you aware of any reports to the Integrity Commission by senior executives or the head of directorate regarding suspected corruption throughout the DHR project before these issues were made public?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice. I need some advice about whether I am in a position to answer that question.

MR COCKS: Minister, have you sought any advice from your directorate as to whether they have failed in their mandatory reporting obligations to the Integrity Commission?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have received some advice in relation to that matter.

Public housing—maintenance

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, I wrote to you on 25 June, at the start of winter, about a public housing tenant in Cook who had a hole in his wall and was waiting for it to be repaired so that his house could be warm and sealed from the elements during winter. I did not hear back, so I followed it up with your office on 9 August. This morning, I received a response. Can you please confirm whether that housing resident in Cook has a warm and secure home now?

MS BERRY: I refer Ms Clay to the letter that I wrote to her, which confirms that Housing ACT has been working with the tenant to ensure that their home is appropriately warm.

MS CLAY: Minister, can you confirm that the repairs have been made?

MS BERRY: I understand that they are to be completed shortly, by the end of this month.

MISS NUTTALL: How many public housing tenants have reported repairs that are not yet fixed?

MS BERRY: That is a question that would be incredibly difficult to answer, to go through the data that would be required to understand whether there were tenants that had been—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, the comments coming from the opposition are entirely inappropriate. Whilst they might not be unparliamentary, suggesting that I can't count high enough—

MADAM SPEAKER: I did not hear the comments. If you think they are unparliamentary, you can draw that to my attention. Sometimes it is wise just to ignore them; block them out.

MS BERRY: I think it was just rude, actually. I could not possibly suggest that there would be a particular number. If Miss Nuttall is truly interested in the actual number at this point, she could write to my office, and I could make some investigations for her.

Suburban infrastructure renewal

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, the ACT government is making major investments in new community infrastructure across Canberra's suburbs. Can you provide an update on projects in my electorate of Yerrabi?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. We do have many important projects underway in Yerrabi, including the \$3.2 million upgrade of Yerrabi Pond District Park. We have already delivered new nature play, seating, path improvements, drainage and a floating wetland. New lighting is being installed along Mirrabei Drive to Bizant Street, with the skate park lighting now operational. Construction has just commenced on the next stage of works, including two new toilet blocks, barbecues, drinking fountains, shelter, picnic settings and more parking.

In Franklin construction is underway on the new dog park, including fencing, dog agility areas, waste bag dispensers, a looped path, picnic facilities and parking.

Mr Cain: Why not during the term?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, why not you be quiet.

MS CHEYNE: Nearly all work is complete on the Casey community recreation park, including new play and sport equipment, with a flying fox, toilets, barbecues, picnic settings and parking. Work also commenced in July on the upgraded playground on Wakool Circuit in Kaleen.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what works are underway to upgrade parks and playgrounds in other areas of Canberra?

MS CHEYNE: Construction is well underway on the new destination playground in the growing inner north, with new play equipment, toilets, an amphitheatre, multi-use courts, bike repair and parking, barbecues, drinking fountains, picnic facilities and fitness equipment. We are also making improvements to Telopea Park, in the inner south.

In Tuggeranong construction is mostly complete at the Point Hut playground in Gordon, including new nature play, seating, a vortex climber, a slide and a Maliyan nest, which will open next month. We are also progressing final approvals on the Lanyon dog park, which I know you are particularly interested in, Madam Speaker, which will include dog agility and training areas. Construction is set to commence later this year.

In Woden we have installed a temporary replacement for the outdated toilet facility at Mawson shops and planning is underway to deliver a permanent replacement. We are upgrading the playground at Lyons oval with new nature play, a nest, swings, slides and picnic facilities, having an autumn theme. This is in addition to recently upgraded playgrounds in Aranda, Ngunnawal, Chisholm and the Tuggeranong town centre.

MS ORR: Minister, how are works progressing on upgrading shopping precincts across our city?

MS CHEYNE: In Belconnen, public realm upgrades are underway at Kippax, including new paving for outdoor dining, lighting, raised crossings and landscaping. Charnwood shops has seen new paving, seating, drainage, trees, landscaping and a beautiful new mural painted in partnership with children from the local school. Macquarie shops are also being upgraded, including seating, paths and playground improvements. It was great to see works underway there on the weekend.

Work is commencing soon at Evatt shops, including new play equipment, seating, murals, paths and, with additional funding from the recent budget, a new toilet. The upgrade is complete at Campbell shops, and we will soon get underway at Narrabundah shops, following design completion. Calwell shops will soon see improved landscaping, seating and play equipment. Lanyon Marketplace upgrades will soon commence. This is in addition to Monash shops, Cooleman Court and Duffy upgrades. All of this is part of the biggest suburban infrastructure renewal our city has seen, and one that we are proud to deliver.

Digital Health Record system—procurement

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, you have confirmed that ACT Health signed two contracts with KPMG. One contract was executed in early 2023, with the other commencing in May 2024, despite the Auditor-General confirming that he would conduct a performance audit in November the previous year. In addition, there were internal audits relating to the potential overpayment of NTT invoices, travel and work-hour invoices submitted by Epic and credit card expenditure and sign-off in the Digital Solutions Division. Minister, were you briefed on each of these audits? If so, why did you fail to raise serious concerns with the directorate given you were briefed multiple times on the mismanagement of taxpayers' money?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We discussed in estimates that all directorates run a program of internal audits. I do not think any minister would expect to be briefed on every internal audit that is run by a directorate. Certainly, it has not been my experience, in eight years as a minister, that directorates have routinely briefed ministers on every internal audit that they undertake. That was the evidence presented in estimates as well in relation to these matters.

As I have previously indicated, I was well aware that concerns had arisen, following the completion of the DHR project, about the Digital Solutions Division's budget situation and that there was significant work underway to better understand what was happening with DSD's financial situation and budget management. That work took place, including through the two KPMG reports, the first of which informed the 2023-24 budget review process, which then funded \$500,000 a year for two years for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate to lead a process to assess delivery of digital health services over time. So, certainly, this was an ongoing conversation between me and the Health Directorate, and subsequently the cabinet as well, but I would not expect that the detail of those individual audits, and in fact spot checks, would necessarily have been briefed to me in detail.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, will you apologise to Canberrans for burying your head in the sand on this rather than asking serious questions of your directorate about how they are spending taxpayers' money? There is no doubt.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I made clear in my previous comments that I was asking questions, that cabinet was asking questions, and that we were being briefed in relation to these matters and were trying to get to the bottom of them. What the reports that I tabled this morning make clear is that there was no single reason for, or simple

answer to, the challenges that the Digital Solutions Division was facing in relation to its budget. Indeed, some of these issues related to some challenges that had arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic, which put further pressure on the Digital Solutions Division and the Health Directorate as a whole. Despite this, the Health Directorate, as soon as the Digital Health Record project went live and they realised that there were some more significant financial issues associated with DSD's budget and with the Digital Health Record project, took action to identify those issues. As I indicated, in October 2022, a month before the Digital Health Record went live, I was being advised and the project board was being advised that there was an underspend in the operational expenditure on this project. And, despite the fact that I was being advised that there was an underspend, I commented on the brief, noting the need to better understand annual expected and actual expenditure to know whether the project was in fact on track financially in the long term.

MR COCKS: Minister, why was the decision made to engage KPMG for a further \$150,000 when the Auditor-General had already confirmed that he was undertaking a performance audit of DHR and there were already concerns?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The Auditor-General's work is underway, and the KPMG report has been produced, has informed budget processes and has been released. That probably answers Mr Cocks's question. The Health Directorate wanted that work done quickly. They wanted a deep dive into that project. The Auditor-General's work, as I understand it, relates to a broader suite of ICT projects, of which DHR is one.

Sports and recreation—proposed stadium

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister. I refer to a response from Ms Berry to a question on notice, where she claims that construction of a stadium at the city pool site would cost almost \$3 billion. One of your previous eight feasibility studies stated that a new stadium would cost around \$582 million in 2021, which means your latest estimate is a 400 per cent increase in just three years. Chief Minister, why is the ACT government investigating costings for a Civic stadium after you confirmed, as late as estimates, that your government has abandoned a stadium in the City Plan?

MR BARR: The work that was commissioned contained a number of different assessments, including a knock-down-rebuild, a build on a generic site, a progressive improvement to the existing facility, and, indeed, the city site. That work was commissioned earlier—

Ms Lee: When?

MR BARR: Back several years. The work obviously contains a range of estimates in relation to the project against a set of different assumptions. Those assumptions include the question of whether a new stadium would have a drip-line roof, which is the lower cost option, or a retractable roof—so a much more expensive option. It includes—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members.

MR BARR: It includes precinct works, car parking, intersection upgrades, infrastructure service upgrades, operational commissioning, latent conditions, design fees, a 30 per cent contingency, agency fees and a 4.5 per cent average escalation, which reflects the range of possible costs. The government is not pursuing a \$2.9 billion outcome. We are pursuing a much lower cost option.

Mr Cain interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I have asked you a number of times today. Do not have me come back to you today.

MR BARR: We are pursuing a much lower cost option, and clearly from the initial advice, which is at a preliminary stage, more work is needed to reduce the cost of the project to make it affordable for the territory.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, has Treasury signed off on this 400 per cent increase for this stadium figure—no matter when the work was done—or is this something that Ms Berry has dreamed up?

MR BARR: The work was commissioned by Chief Minister and Economic Development in the Economic Development stream, who are leading the project. It is the advice of consultants and it provides a range of different costings against a range of different options, with a significant contingency and a number of significant elements that clearly the government would not pursue, which is why a range of costs were provided in the report. The answer to the question on notice reflected the report.

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, what other infrastructure project costs in your pipeline will increase by 400 per cent?

MR BARR: The scope of the project that Ms Castley refers to is very, very different. The 400 per cent increase that she is quoting relates to a different project. There are no projects that have a 400 per cent cost escalation based on like-for-like. When you are talking about retractable roofs and relocating major roads, major infrastructure works and additional carparks—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Mr Barr.

MR BARR: The government has never advocated for a retractable roof.

Mr Parton: On the tunnel?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton!

MR BARR: The government has never advocated for a retractable roof. The government was clear that the costs of moving Parkes Way were prohibitive and meant the city site was not viable. Hence, we are pursuing a different pathway.

Ms Lee: Why now?

MR BARR: Why? The question was asked, and we had a report and we have provided the answer.

Sports and recreation—proposed stadium

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, I refer to your response to a question on notice where you claim that construction of a stadium at the Civic pool site would cost almost \$3 billion. One of your previous eight feasibility studies stated that a new stadium would cost around \$582 million in 2021, which, of course, is a 400 per cent increase in just three years. Minister, can you provide a breakdown of what has caused construction of a city stadium to become 400 per cent more expensive in three years? Has there been any further feasibility study done post 2021, or are those figures based on the study seven or eight years ago?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, will you be taking that question?

MR BARR: Yes, I will, Madam Speaker. The study is May 2024. It provides indicative costings against a range of different parameters that Ms Berry answered in response to the question, including the fact that there has been a significant increase in construction costs, particularly associated with stadium projects. The elements of the costing include a 30 per cent contingency, which is in the order of \$200 million to \$300 million. There are also elements associated with different sites, particularly the city but also sites in Bruce, that would bring into the cost equation precinct works, car parking, intersection upgrades, infrastructure service upgrades, operational commissioning, latent conditions, design fees and agency fees, and there is an inbuilt escalation factor of 4.5 per cent in these costing ranges.

There is also the question of “a roof or not a roof”, as in a drip-line covering spectator seating versus a retractable roof covering the entire arena. A retractable roof costs significantly more. There is also then the question of different options around demolition costs for whatever might be on the preferred site. Construction of the stadium itself would cost around \$600 million to \$860 million. But all of the additional costs and the 30 per cent contingency give the project cost ranges, which is why the lower-cost option is the one that the government is pursuing.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, will you table the document that you have just read from, the study and the advice from May 2024 which, as you have stated, place this figure at almost \$3 billion?

MR BARR: Yes; I table the following paper:

Option costing report—Canberra Stadium Masterplan, prepared by WT, dated 23 May 2024

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Barr.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, are you concerned that your costings for the Bruce Stadium could increase a further 400 per cent by 2029-30, which is when you say you will commence construction?

MR BARR: No, because the cost range includes both a 30 per cent contingency and an escalation. That, I think, indicates the upper-bound of potential costs. The work that will be needed now is to reduce that to a point at which the government can justify a business case and seek co-investment from the commonwealth and potentially the private sector, under exactly the same model that is being used in Tasmania and, indeed, in Queensland. Obviously, I have just tabled the report. But, assuming you can manage contingency effectively, you can bring the cost of the project down significantly.

Light rail—expenditure review committee

MS LEE: My question is to Mr Rattenbury in his role as a member of the government's expenditure review committee. The Parliamentary and Governing Agreement that you signed commits the parties to build light rail stage 2 to Woden. Minister, you remarked in a recent panel forum that you could not keep up with the Chief Minister's infrastructure plans such as the stadium and the convention centre, and you sit on the government's own expenditure review committee!

Recently on radio you stated that the reason you have not revealed the cost of light rail stage 2B is that the opposition will tie you to that figure. Can you confirm whether you have seen the costings for stage 2B of the light rail and whether it has increased by 400 per cent, in line with the minister's and Chief Minister's detailed estimate of a Civic stadium?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the question is to you, as a minister on the ERC, Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: Madam Speaker, I am trying to keep up with the question, but I think Ms Lee just wove several threads together trying to tell some story. I am not entirely clear what it was. Ms Lee is well aware, as Minister Steel has clearly explained, that costings relating to stage 2B of light rail are not available—because the government has not procured it—and any considerations that have been taken to the budget process are cabinet in confidence at this time.

MS LEE: Mr Rattenbury, will you commit to releasing the cost of light rail stage 2B before the election, given that the Greens supposedly believe in open, accountable government?

MR RATTENBURY: This government—the Greens part of it and the Labor part of it—has actually been very transparent on costings on light rail. We are the only government in Australia that has released the detailed costings that have been seen for previous stages of light rail. Minister Steel has made the point on a number of occasions—and I agree with him on this—that if the government is to release costings in advance of going to market it would pre-condition the market and we would not get the best value for money for the taxpayer.

To go to the cheap shot that Ms Lee was making, the observation I made on radio was simple. The journalist was saying to me, "Why don't you just come up with an estimate?" I said that as soon as you do that, someone will start to say, "Well, that's the thing." We do not actually have an estimate that can be used publicly at this point in time.

MR PARTON: Mr Rattenbury, how many times has the Chief Minister changed his mind about the location of the stadium and convention centre while you have been on the ERC?

MR RATTENBURY: I am not able to answer that question at this time.

Mr Cain interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, the next time I come back to you, you will be warned and then you will be named. These are the last two weeks; do not push it, Mr Cain.

Schools—staffing

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, you will know better than anyone that we have an acute teacher shortage. I have been hearing from the community that there are situations where learning support assistants are being asked to fill in and cover classes. Recognising that there is a teacher shortage and that it can cause coverage gaps for some classes in our public schools, how are learning support assistants and other staff supported to run classes when there are no substitute teachers available?

MS BERRY: I thank Miss Nuttall for her question. To be clear, school assistants are not to be directed to provide relief lessons when a teacher is absent from the classroom for extended periods of time. We have made sure that that information is available to schools through the existing HR policies. However, I am also aware that the Australian Education Union, ACT branch, wrote to the Education Directorate, calling for clearer guidance around reasonable expectations for school assistants, specifically as it relates to those duties in the classroom. The Education Directorate has responded to the Education Union, agreeing to provide clearer guidance. We are welcoming further engagement with the relevant unions on this work, which includes the CPSU as well.

I acknowledge, of course, that our schools are not immune to the staffing crisis and pressures that the country is experiencing right now. We have developed a schools management model which empowers schools to be able to work through a range of strategies when they need to manage periods of time of reduced staffing. Those strategies include changes to non-essential activities, timetable modifications, in-built relief and alternative delivery modes. Our teachers are to be absolutely congratulated, valued and respected, and we do that through not only our enterprise bargaining negotiations but also by continuing to work with them on workload reduction, because we know that is the way that we will be able to ensure that teachers can provide the best possible education.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what requirements and restrictions are there around learning support assistants providing duty of care in classrooms?

MS BERRY: As I said in answer to the first question, they are not to be directed to be responsible for a class when a teacher is absent. There are a number of other strategies in place that we have worked through with the Australian Education Union. We know that there is more work to do in the space, and we will. We are also providing nation-leading training to learning support assistants, the first of its kind in the country,

which is in addition to the training that they already receive, to support their work in our schools. We understand that it is important, vital work and that they have a different kind of relationship with the students in our schools, teachers, the community and parents more broadly. But they are not teachers. We do not expect them, and they are not to be directed, to be teaching a class when a teacher is absent.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, do you know how often LSAs are being asked to fill in and cover classes?

MS BERRY: I have already said twice that LSAs are not to be directed to teach a class. That is the clear direction from the Education Directorate. We are working with the Australian Education Union and the CPSU to ensure that that is clearly understood across our schools, and there are strategies for schools to put in place when there are circumstances of teacher shortage.

Energy—electric vehicle charging

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction. Minister, are we on track to achieve the Zero Emissions Vehicles Strategy commitment of delivering 70 public EV charging stations across Canberra?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes. We are making really good progress on providing more electric vehicle charging across the city. We have contracted the delivery of over 70 EV chargers in the territory. Some are already installed, and all the remaining chargers will be delivered within this financial year. As at 1 August 2024, 46 public chargers, with 79 charging bays, had been installed with ACT government support. This includes a mix of slower AC chargers, the ones that are good if you are going somewhere for a few hours as a destination, through to the faster DC chargers across the ACT. The sites include Deakin, Barton, Casey, Tuggeranong, Woden, Amaroo, Belconnen, Kingston, Dickson, Gungahlin, Calwell and Civic.

Mr Parton: Calwell!

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, Calwell. They are some of the latest chargers installed, with government support. I am happy to talk to you about that, Mr Parton. I think you really had the wrong end of the stick in estimates. Some of the latest chargers installed with government support are fast chargers in Jamison—again—Calwell, Hobart Place in Civic, Curtin shops and Braddon.

A second round of grants awarded recently has provided a further \$1.5 million to support the installation of additional public chargers across the ACT. The second round will deliver a further 39 chargers, servicing 78 charging bays, and will be delivered this financial year. This will take our total to 85 EV chargers installed with ACT government support. The second round will install chargers at new locations across the territory, targeting gaps in the network and also looking at tourism destinations, shopping centres and areas with high-density residential buildings.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, what EV charging options are available for the people of Gungahlin, who make up 20 per cent of the ACT's population?

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Well, in a minute you can answer, Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: As at 1 August 2024, the ACT had 164 individual public EV chargers servicing 213 charging bays across 71 sites. Some chargers are capable of charging two vehicles at once, which is why the number of charging bays is probably a more practical measure of the scale of charging infrastructure available across the territory. This stands in positive contrast to 2020, when we had just 29 chargers. We have made real progress in the last couple of years.

In terms of Gungahlin specifically, the ACT government has supported the delivery of nine EV chargers in Gungahlin, including five DC chargers, the faster ones. These are located at Amaroo shops, the Raiders club, Casey Market Town and Gungahlin Marketplace. There are additional EV chargers in Gungahlin that were not funded by the government. These can be found using the website PlugShare. That is probably the best source of information for people. There are a range of chargers now available in different locations, depending on people's different needs.

What we know is that most people in the ACT charge their vehicles at home. For those who cannot, because they perhaps live in an apartment, this is where the provision of public charging infrastructure is so important—and for when people get caught out or just need a quick top-up and are not able to charge at home. This public infrastructure is an incredibly important part of creating a system where Canberrans can have confidence that, if they own an electric vehicle, they can get charging when they need it.

MS CLAY: Minister, what options do we have for charging a vehicle in Belconnen?

MR RATTENBURY: There are now six EV chargers, with nine charging bays that are supported by ACT government funding in Belconnen. This includes five AC and one DC chargers. Those sites include the Central apartments in Belconnen, Raiders in Belconnen and at Jamison Plaza.

As I have a little bit of time left, I will go to the interjection about Calwell. I should not set this precedent, but I will do it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Don't encourage yourself, Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: I was asked about this in estimates. What I can tell the chamber is that there are now two lots of charging infrastructure in Calwell. One has been provided by the owners of the shopping centre. That is a set of AC chargers, which are the ones that take a couple hours. They are great for while you are maybe going to the club or doing some shopping and the like.

There has recently been installed a set of DC chargers, which are the high-speed ones that maybe take half an hour to charge. These have been put in place recognising the snow traffic that flows up, and Calwell being not very far off the highway, so they are set up for tourists as well as locals. They provide quite a different service to the ones

provided by the owner of the Calwell shops. I am also assured that there was extensive consultation in the lead-up to the installation of the new DC chargers in Calwell. I, for one, think that it is a positive for Tuggeranong to have more infrastructure. The line of questioning in the estimates hearings was that we should have less. I do not agree with that.

ACT Policing—funding

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Police and Crime Prevention. Minister, could you outline the government's investment in ACT Policing to enhance community safety?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her strong interest in community safety. The government is deeply committed to supporting the dedicated men and women of ACT Policing, whose members consistently demonstrate an unwavering dedication to serving the Canberra community. Between 2018 and 2024, under this government, ACT Policing's budgeted sworn FTE increased by 8.5 per cent, with an overall average increase of 10.7 per cent across the entire ACT police workforce. In 2023, the government made an unprecedented commitment to community safety, with a \$107 million investment over five years. This investment is focused on deploying an additional 126 officers, representing the largest single investment ever made in ACT Policing.

I am proud to report that, across the last financial year, 80 recruits successfully graduated and joined the ranks of ACT Policing, another 26 recruits graduated in July, and 60 more recruits are forecasted for training across the remainder of the current financial year. Our ongoing recruitment ensures that ACT Policing remains at full strength. It enables our police force to be agile and responsive to emerging priorities within the community, allowing for the effective deployment of resources when they are needed most.

In terms of police facilities, building on substantial previous investment, in 2024-25 the budget includes an additional \$4.5 million in new initiatives for emergency services infrastructure and improvements to ACT police stations. Canberra residents can feel assured that their safety and protection remains a priority of this government, now and into the future. As our population continues to grow, it is crucial that our investment in police staffing, resources and facilities keeps pace to ensure the continued safety and security of all Canberrans.

MS ORR: Minister, how have investments like this enabled proactive and preventative policing strategies?

MR GENTLEMAN: ACT Policing is evolving to meet the needs of our increasingly dynamic and diverse community. In the 2019-20 period, the government announced \$33.9 million in investment in policing to adopt a proactive and system-wide approach to crime prevention, disruption and response. This initial investment and the ACT government's ongoing investments in policing, as well as broader investments addressing underlying social issues, have enabled ACT police to implement proactive and preventive police strategies. This includes the establishment of the community

policing's Proactive Intervention and Disruption teams, the PID teams. These teams collaborate with partner agencies to disrupt criminal activities and put downward pressure on crime rates across the city.

Aligned with our government's goal to reduce recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025, Operation TORIC has focused on recidivist offenders involved in motor vehicle theft, dangerous driving and drug related crime. I am proud to note that ACT Policing recently achieved its 500th apprehension under this operation. The recent City Safe campaign had a significant impact, effectively reducing criminal and antisocial behaviour in the Canberra city centre. The "Outsmart the Offender" campaign, in partnership with Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers, raises community awareness to prevent property crime. This is complemented by the SafeHome Program, providing advice and education on the simple measures people can take to improve home security. These proactive measures have contributed to the ACT enjoying some of the lowest crime rates in the country. In the past reporting period, the ACT has seen an overall 9.9 per cent decrease in crime, inclusive of a 26.9 per cent reduction in sexual assault and a 27.4 per cent reduction in armed robbery. ACT Policing's commitment to— *(Time expired.)*

DR PATERSON: Minister, how does ACT Policing contribute to supporting vulnerable people in our community?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Paterson for her interest in safety too. The public does not often see the critical behind-the-scenes work that ACT Policing undertakes every day to assist our most vulnerable community members. Policing efforts go far beyond traditional policing, encompassing community outreach, mental health support and wellbeing initiatives. While ACT Policing's Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons command officers focus on early identification, intervention and referral to both government and non-government service providers, this proactive approach helps improve outcomes for vulnerable members of the community.

During 2023-24, through ACT Policing's partnership with SupportLink, liaison officers made 6,296 referrals to connect victims, witnesses and offenders with essential support services tailored to their needs. Furthermore, Policing supports various community based programs. This includes support to organisations and events like Neighbourhood Watch, Menslink, Africa Party in the Park, and many more outreach initiatives that foster social cohesion and safety. Importantly, Policing works with partner agencies to support better outcomes for people living with mental illness or disorder through participation in Mental Health, Emergency, Ambulance and Police Collaboration. This partnership brings together policing, ambulance, our hospital network and mental health, alcohol and drug services. Some of the outcomes of the partnership include the Enhanced Mental Health Training Program and the Police, Ambulance, and Clinician Early Response capability, the PACER capability. These initiatives provide greater support for first responders in managing people in crisis or in representing people with challenging behaviours. I am proud to say that the government has provided an additional \$7.6 million over four years to ensure the ongoing support of the second PACER team.

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

Answers to questions on notice

Question Nos 2060, 2063 and 2076

MRS KIKKERT: Under standing order 118A, I seek from the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development an explanation as to why Question Nos 2060, 2063 and 2076, which were taken on notice, have not been answered within the 30-day explanation period.

MS BERRY: I thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing that to the attention of the Assembly. Answers to those questions are with my office right now, and they will be signed by the end of this week at the latest. There is quite a bit of data that Mrs Kikkert asked for in those questions, but we are getting to it.

Question Nos 2047 and 2096

DR PATERSON: I would also like to request from the Minister for Gaming an explanation concerning unanswered questions Nos 2047 and 2096.

MR RATTENBURY: We are currently working on those questions to get some appropriate detail for the member, and I will have them back to you as soon as I can.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General’s Report No 6/2024—Business Transformation Program: ICT renewal activities, dated 2 August 2024.

Bills, referred to Committees, pursuant to standing order 174—Correspondence—

Bills—Not inquired into—

Controlled Sports Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion, dated 2 July 2024.

Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2024—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 3 July 2024.

Commissioner for Standards, pursuant to Continuing Resolution 5AA of the Assembly of 31 October 2013, as amended—Annual report—2023-2024, dated 10 July 2024.

Estimates 2024-2025—Select Committee, pursuant to standing order 253A—

Answers to Question on Notice—

No 16, dated 23 August 2024.

No 118, dated 20 August 2024.

No 122, dated 20 August 2024.

No 125, dated 20 August 2024.

No 127, dated 20 August 2024.

No 135, dated 20 August 2024.

No 193, dated 20 August 2024.

No 204, dated 20 August 2024.

Answers to Question Taken on Notice—

No 223, dated 20 August 2024.

No 224, dated 20 August 2024.

No 225, dated 20 August 2024.

No 226, dated 20 August 2024.

Schedule of questions answered after the dissolution of the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025, dated 27 August 2024.

Ethics and Integrity Adviser for Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory, pursuant to Continuing Resolution 6A of the Assembly of 10 April 2008, as amended—Annual Report—2023-2024, dated 15 July 2024.

Integrity Commission Act, pursuant to section 213—Special Report – Operation Luna (Part One)—An investigation into the allegations of corrupt conduct by Canberra Institute of Technology public officials in connexion with the procurement of organisational change consultancy services, dated 27 June 2024.

Legislative Assembly (Members' Superannuation) Act, pursuant to section 11A—Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly Members Superannuation Board—Annual Report—2023-2024, dated 26 July 2024.

Standing orders—

99B—Petitions—Referral advice—Correspondence—

e-Petition 005-24—Snakes—Licensing, catching and education—Review—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity, dated 3 July 2024.

e-Petition 029-23 and Petition 018-24—Woden Town Centre—Proposed increase of police presence—Copy of letter to the Speaker from the Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, dated 21 August 2024.

191—Amendments to—

Children and Young People Amendment Bill 2024 (No 2), dated 4, 5 and 9 July 2024.

Housing and Consumer Affairs Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, dated 4, 5 and 9 July 2024.

Parentage (Surrogacy) Amendment Bill 2023, dated 4, 5 and 9 July 2024.

Property Developers Bill 2023, dated 8 and 9 July 2024.

Mr Gentleman, pursuant to standing order 211, presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 21—Auditor-General's Report No 2/2024—Management of key contracts under A Step Up For Our Kids—Government response, dated August 2024.

Budget 2024-2025—Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—

Budget Outlook—Corrigendum to the Out of Home Care—Establishment and Transition of New System initiative description, dated 7 August 2024.

Budget Statements—G—Community Service Directorate | Housing ACT—
Corrigendum, dated 7 August 2024.

Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act—Commissioner for
Sustainability and the Environment (State of the Environment Report—Reporting
Period and Reporting Day) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument
DI2024-91 (LR, 13 May 2024)—Revised Explanatory Statement.

Education and Community Inclusion—Standing Committee—Reports—
Government responses—

No 9—Inquiry into the Future of School Infrastructure in the ACT.

No 10—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023.

No 11—Inquiry into the Disability Inclusion Bill 2024, dated 23 August 2024.

Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity—Standing Committee—
Report 10—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-23—Government
response.

Estimates 2024-2025—Select Committee—Report—Inquiry into the
Appropriation Bill 2024-2025 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative
Assembly) Bill 2024-2025—Government response, dated August 2024, together
with a tabling statement.

Financial Management Act—

Pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report for the financial quarter
ending 30 June 2024—Interim result.

Pursuant to subsection 30F(3)—2023-24 Capital Works Program—Progress
report—Year-to-date performance—

as at 31 March 2024.

as at 30 June 2024.

Health and Community Wellbeing—Standing Committee—Report 12—Inquiry
into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-23—Government response, dated August
2024.

Heavy Vehicle National Law as applied by the law of States and Territories—
Heavy Vehicle National Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024 (2024 No 126),
together with an explanatory statement.

Integrity Commission Act, pursuant to section 215—Special Report – Operation
Luna (Part One)—An investigation into the allegations of corrupt conduct by
Canberra Institute of Technology public officials in connexion with the
procurement of organisational change consultancy services—Government
response, dated August 2024.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Reports—Government
responses.

No 26—Inquiry into the Integrity Commission Amendment Bill 2022 (No 2),
dated July 2024.

No 27—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-23.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Reports—
Government responses—

No 16—Inquiry into the Territory Plan and other associated documents, dated
August 2024.

No 18—Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-23, dated August 2024.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act and Financial Management Act—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2024 (No 2)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-209 (LR, 11 July 2024).

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2024 (No 3)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-210 (LR, 11 July 2024).

Agents Act—Agents (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument
DI2024-171 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Animal Diseases Act—

Animal Diseases (Exotic Disease Quarantine Area) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-206 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Animal Diseases (Exotic Disease Quarantine Area) Declaration 2024 (No 2)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-207 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Animal Diseases (Exotic Disease Quarantine Area) Declaration 2024 (No 3)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-203 (LR, 5 July 2024).

Animal Welfare Act—

Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-236 (LR, 25 July 2024).

Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-237 (LR, 25 July 2024).

Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-238 (LR, 25 July 2024).

Animal Welfare (Advisory Committee Member) Appointment 2024 (No 4)—
Disallowable Instrument DI2024-239 (LR, 25 July 2024).

Animal Welfare (Keeping and Breeding of Ferrets in the ACT) Mandatory
Code of Practice 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-229 (LR, 18 July
2024).

Animal Welfare (Keeping and Breeding of Guinea Pigs in the ACT) Mandatory
Code of Practice 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-230 (LR, 18 July
2024).

Animal Welfare (Keeping and Breeding of Rabbits in the ACT) Mandatory
Code of Practice 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-231 (LR, 18 July
2024).

Animal Welfare (Keeping and Breeding of Rats and Mice in the ACT)
Mandatory Code of Practice 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-232 (LR,
18 July 2024).

Associations Incorporation Act—Associations Incorporation (Fees)
Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-157 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act—Births, Deaths and Marriages
Registration (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-144
(LR, 24 June 2024).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable
Instrument DI2024-241 (LR, 29 July 2024).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-242 (LR, 29 July 2024).

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act—Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-16 (LR, 6 August 2024).

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act and Financial Management Act—

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-198 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-200 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Building and Construction Industry Training Levy (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-201 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Casino Control Act—Casino Control (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-158 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-135 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Charitable Collections Act—Charitable Collections (National Fundraising Principles) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-220 (LR, 15 July 2024).

Children and Young People Act—Children and Young People (Death Review Committee) Appointment 2024 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-202 (LR, 4 July 2024).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act—City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Agency Board Member) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-137 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-196 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Civil Law (Wrongs) The Bar Association of Queensland Professional Standards Scheme 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-204 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Civil Law (Wrongs) The Law Society of Western Australia Professional Standards Scheme 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-205 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act—Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-159 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Co-operatives National Law (ACT) Act—Co-operatives National Law (ACT) (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-160 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Court Procedures Act—

Court Procedures (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-154 (LR, 24 June 2024).

- Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-9 (LR, 28 June 2024).
- Crimes (Sentencing) Act—Crimes (Sentencing) Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-15 (LR, 18 July 2024).
- Cultural Facilities Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—
- Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-211 (LR, 15 July 2024).
- Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-212 (LR, 16 July 2024).
- Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act—Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Fees and Charges Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-189 (LR, 27 June 2024).
- Dangerous Substances Act—Dangerous Substances (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-190 (LR, 27 June 2024).
- Domestic Animals Act—
- Domestic Animals (Exercise Areas) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-215 (LR, 18 July 2024).
- Domestic Animals (Prohibited Areas) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-216 (LR, 18 July 2024).
- Duties Act—Duties (Pensioner Duty Deferral Scheme) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-180 (LR, 26 June 2024).
- Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act—Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) (Reporting) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-185 (LR, 27 June 2024).
- Emergencies Act—Emergencies (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-148 (LR, 24 June 2024).
- Emergencies Act, Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act, Road Transport (General) Act and Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Emergencies, Road Transport (General), Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Embassy and Diplomatic Residence Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-147 (LR, 20 June 2024).
- Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1), including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2024-17 (LR, 15 August 2024).
- Firearms Act—Firearms (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-149 (LR, 24 June 2024).
- Gambling and Racing Control Act and Financial Management Act—Gambling and Racing Control (Governing Board) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-244 (LR, 1 August 2024).
- Gaming Machine Act—Gaming Machine (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-161 (LR, 24 June 2024).
- Guardianship and Management of Property Act—Guardianship and Management of Property (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-155 (LR, 24 June 2024).
- Health Act—Health (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-188 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Juries Act—Juries (Payment) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-187 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Labour Hire Licensing Act—Labour Hire Licensing (Fee) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-194 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Land Titles Act—Land Titles (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-162 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Act—

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Members' Salary Cap Determination 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-141 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Speaker's Salary Cap Determination 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-142 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Liquor Act—

Liquor (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-145 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Liquor (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-243 (LR, 1 August 2024).

Liquor (Reduction in Annual Licence Fee for Eligible Events) Guidelines 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-208 (LR, 8 July 2024).

Litter Act—Litter (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-246 (LR, 5 August 2024).

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Act—Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Services Industry Employer Levy Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-224 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Lotteries Act—Lotteries (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-163 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Machinery Act—Machinery (Fees) Determination 2023—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-191 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Magistrates Court Act—

Magistrates Court (Extension of Time) Guidelines 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-151 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Magistrates Court (Waiver of Penalty) Guidelines 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-152 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Magistrates Court (Withdrawal of Infringement Notice) Guidelines 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-153 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Official Visitor Act—

Official Visitor (Children and Young People) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-213 (LR, 15 July 2024).

Official Visitor (Mental Health) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-146 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Partnership Act—Partnership (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-164 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Planning Act—Planning (Lease Variation Charges) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-184 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (Strathnairn) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-186 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Public Place Names (Whitlam) Determination 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-245 (LR, 1 August 2024).

Public Trustee and Guardian Act—

Public Trustee and Guardian (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-156 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Public Trustee and Guardian (Investment Board) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-225 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Public Trustee and Guardian (Investment Board) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-226 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Public Trustee and Guardian (Investment Board) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-227 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Public Trustee and Guardian (Investment Board) Appointment 2024 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-228 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—Race and Sports Bookmaking (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-143 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Rail Safety National Law (ACT) Act—

Rail Safety National Law (Drug and Alcohol Analysts) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-218 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Rail Safety National Law (Drug and Alcohol Analysts) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-221 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Rail Safety National Law (Drug and Alcohol Analysts) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-222 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Rates Act, Duties Act, Land Rent Act and Land Tax Act—Rates, Land Tax, Land Rent and Duties (Certificate and Statement Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-183 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Registration of Deeds Act—Registration of Deeds (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-165 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Retirement Villages Act—Retirement Villages (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-166 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Road Transport (Driver Licensing Act, Road Transport (General Act, Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management Act and the Road Transport (Vehicle Registration Act)—Road Safety Legislation Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-11 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (LCCC Saturday Night Blues Rallysprint) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-138 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation (Shamrock Motorsport Test Day) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-235 (LR, 22 July 2024).

Road Transport (General) Parking Permit Fees Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-140 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Road Transport (General) Pay Parking Area Fees Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-139 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Road Transport (Offences) Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-10 (LR, 1 July 2024).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act—Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Maximum Fares for Taxi Services Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-199 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Road Transport (Road Rules) Regulation—Road Transport (Road Rules) Advertising Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-240 (LR, 29 July 2024).

Scaffolding and Lifts Act—Scaffolding and Lifts (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-192 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Security Industry Act—Security Industry (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-168 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Sex Work Act—Sex Work (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-169 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Amounts and Rates Payable—Payroll Tax) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-173 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Disability Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-176 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Duty) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-174 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Home Buyer Concession Scheme) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-175 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Land Rent) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-182 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Land Tax) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-181 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Motor Vehicle Duty) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-136 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-177 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (Off the Plan Unit Duty Exemption Scheme) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-178 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration (RZ1 Unit Duty Exemption Scheme) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-179 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Taxation Administration Act and Rates Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Rates) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-172 (LR, 26 June 2024).

Territory Records Act—

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-247 (LR, 8 August 2024).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-248 (LR, 8 August 2024).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2024 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-249 (LR, 8 August 2024).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2024 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-250 (LR, 8 August 2024).

Traders (Licensing) Act—Traders (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-167 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Unit Titles (Management) Act—

Unit Titles (Management) (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-217 (LR, 15 July 2024).

Unit Titles (Management) Sale Certificate Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-219 (LR, 15 July 2024).

Unlawful Gambling Act—Unlawful Gambling (Charitable Gaming Application Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-170 (LR, 24 June 2024).

Urban Forest Act—Urban Forest (Tree Advisory Panel) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-223 (LR, 18 July 2024).

Veterinary Practice Act—

Veterinary Practice (Board) Appointment 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-233 (LR, 22 July 2024).

Veterinary Practice (Board) Appointment 2024 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-234 (LR, 22 July 2024).

Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Act—Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance) Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-7 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Victims of Crime Regulation 2000—Victims of Crime (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-195 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Fees) Determination 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-150 (LR, 20 June 2024).

Work Health and Safety Act—

Work Health and Safety (Fees) Determination 2024—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-193 (LR, 27 June 2024).

Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2024 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2024-8 (LR, 28 June 2024).

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act—Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Declaration 2024 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2024-214 (LR, 15 July 2024).

Crimes (Anti-Consorting) Amendment Bill 2024

Ms Lee, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.10): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Every Canberran deserves to feel safe in their community and in their home. It is a fundamental responsibility of government to keep its citizens safe.

In the past, the Canberra Liberals have raised serious concerns about the ACT not being aligned with other jurisdictions, particularly New South Wales, by having anti-consorting laws, and I acknowledge the work of Mr Hanson, who led the charge on this issue for many years and, indeed, many terms. We raised concerns back in 2019 that without similar laws we will inevitably see an increase in the number of outlaw motorcycle gangs operating in the ACT, and that is exactly what we have seen.

At annual report hearings late last year, the then ACT Chief Police Officer confirmed that the presence of bikie gangs is growing in the ACT. In his evidence, he said:

... what does concern us is that we now know we have the presence of four OMCG gangs in the ACT ...

Outlaw motorcycle gangs have been assessed as the largest and most serious organised crime element impacting the country, with access to onshore and offshore networks, and they play a major role in the trafficking and storage of illicit drugs and firearms.

The then CPO told the committee that the gangs tended to attract people who had a high propensity to violence, and that Australia had generally seen an increase in offending involving OMCGs in the past few months. Even more worrying, in December last year the CPO outlined that preventing a repeat of violence associated with the presence of outlaw motorcycle gangs will be the major focus for ACT Policing in 2024.

In a wide-ranging media interview, CPO Neil Gaughan explained that the ACT was attractive to organised criminal syndicates because of its proximity to Sydney and Melbourne, as well as its different OMCG and drug laws. He said:

We don't have any [anti] association laws, we don't have any laws in relation to stopping bikies from wearing their colours, we don't have any firearm prohibition orders. We're the only jurisdiction that doesn't have [at least] one of those, and most have all three.

CPO Gaughan also warned that the presence of four different gangs in the ACT was concerning, raising the possibility of increased violence should these gangs start a turf war in the ACT. These are direct quotes from the ACT's top police officer at the time.

This year, we have seen disturbing and very serious allegations raised about the construction branch of the CFMEU—allegations that bikie gangs, criminal gangs and underworld figures had infiltrated the construction branch of the CFMEU. This is a union, let us not forget, that is not only a member of ACT Labor that has direct and influential input into party leadership positions; it also provides significant donations to ACT Labor. Alarming, we have seen unions in the ACT push for even more power over ACT government procurement and the appointment of senior ACT public servants.

It follows that Canberrans have every right to question whether the same type of criminal behaviour is occurring in the ACT, especially given that there is a current investigation underway by the ACT Integrity Commission into potential union influence in the awarding of the contract for the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project—influence that we have heard from public hearings came directly from the education minister’s office.

But we have seen very little action from the Chief Minister, who has, to date, refused to cut ties with the CFMEU. Instead, he has doubled down and insisted there is nothing to see here. That is, of course, despite the fact that Master Builders ACT have raised concerns about union interference in procurement for years. In media comments, Master Builders ACT said:

We know our local members have experienced the same illegal activity, bullying and downright thuggery that has been reported in other states on a daily basis.

The 2015 Heydon Royal Commission dedicated 337 pages to wrongdoing by the ACT CFMEU in their report. ACT CFMEU secretary Zach Smith and other ACT officials have been found to be in breach of legislation on numerous occasions.

These are extremely worrying comments from the MBA, and Canberrans have a right to feel let down by the Chief Minister’s wilful blindness on, and condescending dismissal of, these very serious issues. As I said at the very start of this speech, every Canberran has the right to feel safe in our community and in their home.

This legislation is about equipping our police with the necessary tools they need to be able to deal with these gangs to ensure that the community is protected. This legislation will send a message to outlaw motorcycle gangs that Canberra is not open for their business, and I commend my bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Rattenbury**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2024

Debate resumed from 25 June 2024, on motion by Ms **Castley**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (3.16): I rise today, as the Attorney-General, to speak in that capacity, and as a member of this Assembly and a citizen of Canberra, to say that I am committed to doing all I can to end violence against women in this country and in our city and in our community. We know that domestic and family violence claims the lives of more than 100 people in Australia every year and causes enduring damage to individuals and to society as a whole. Coercive control is almost always an underpinning dynamic of domestic and family violence. Coercive control has traumatic, pervasive immediate and long-term impacts on victim-survivors, their families and communities.

In Canberra the recent *ACT domestic and family violence review: Domestic and family violence homicides 2000-2022* report found that, in nearly all cases reviewed,

the perpetrator used coercive control. This included abusing the victim's freedom, stalking them and controlling their access to money. The review found that coercive control was present even when there was not a history of physical violence but that the forms of coercive control intensified leading up to the victim's murder. Coercive control involves perpetrators using patterns of abusive behaviours over time in a way that creates fear and denies liberty and autonomy. It is complex and nuanced, and its presentation varies in terms of manner, form or intensity, depending on the relationship.

The death review told us that the signs of coercive control can be difficult to spot. Behaviours can be subtle and insidious, individually targeted and tailored to the victim-survivor. People who use coercive control can use many different types of abusive behaviours to exert power and dominance. This is why the response to coercive control behaviours in the ACT needs to be carefully considered and coordinated. It is so important that, first and foremost, we listen to the sector and victim-survivors and are led by their experience.

The Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2024 being debated today introduces an offence of coercive control into the Crimes Act 1900, punishable by up to seven years imprisonment. Consultation with key justice and community stakeholders has identified a range of risks associated with the bill. These risks include the limited evidence base demonstrating the efficacy of criminalising coercive control, the significant risks of negatively impacting vulnerable communities and the need for additional training and education on identifying coercive control.

The ACT government's position on this bill, supported by many stakeholders in the domestic and family violence sector, is that it is not the right time to criminalise coercive control as a standalone offence. In our view, it is premature to progress law reform, as there are complexities which must be carefully considered and understood before committing to criminalisation, and a failure to do so will undermine our efforts to ensure a holistic, evidence-based response to coercive control on our territory. On this basis, I will not be supporting the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2024 today.

As mentioned, the domestic and family violence sector has largely cautioned against penalising coercive control as a standalone offence. I acknowledge that there are other views, but they have told us, and most of the conversations I have had have told us, that education and community engagement are the best first step in how the ACT should respond to coercive control. I emphasise that point: the best first step. I do not think anybody is dismissing the view that, down the line, we will probably want to move down the path of legislation, but that is a further set of steps.

The Domestic Violence Crisis Service has told us that a whole-of-system response is needed to address coercive control and family violence, including further education, cultural change and appropriate resourcing of crisis response support and legal advocacy services. We do not believe that the 12-month delayed commencement proposed by the bill is a sufficient time frame to ensure that this system response is appropriately targeted and rolled out.

Criminalising coercive control now, without a consistent understanding of coercive control behaviours across police, political, justice and community service systems, is

unlikely to generate the level of change needed and risks causing further harm to victim-survivors. In particular, criminalising coercive control risks increased criminalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors and women with a disability through misidentification of perpetrators. It also risks acting as a further barrier to these cohorts of women reporting abuse and seeking support. We need to prioritise a coordinated approach to promote cultural and attitudinal change. Most importantly, we need to ensure that the protection of victim-survivors is at the forefront of any reform.

I am aware that other jurisdictions have decided to criminalise coercive control as part of their strategy to address the insidious nature of domestic and family violence. The laws in New South Wales have only been in effect for under two months, and the Queensland laws are yet to commence. The ACT has the opportunity to witness and learn from the implementation of these laws before moving down the path of law reform here in the ACT. In both New South Wales and Queensland extensive multi-year consultation processes preceded law reform. In Scotland the consultation and co-design period took around five years.

The domestic and family violence sector has told us that education and community engagement is a good first step for how the ACT should respond to coercive control. I acknowledge that legislation can only do so much. This national issue needs community and cultural change. In Australia, jurisdictions across the nation, the ACT government included, are recognising coercive control as a pressing issue that requires a coordinated national approach. In September 2023 I stood with my colleagues on the Standing Council of Attorneys-General to endorse the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence. Importantly, the national principles set out a shared national understanding of the common features and impacts of coercive control, which is vital to enhance the safety of Australians, particularly women and children.

The ACT government is working on how to embed these national principles in our practices and use them as a starting point for creating a shared understanding of coercive control in the ACT. It is important that, first and foremost, before we rush through legislative change, we focus on educating our community and frontline agencies on what coercive control means, what it can look like and how we should respond to it. There is also a range of work happening across Australia arising from the 1 May National Cabinet meeting on addressing gendered violence.

The ACT government remains focused on working with our jurisdictional colleagues to progress coordinated, effective reform to improve our response to domestic and family violence, including addressing coercive control. In the recent 2024-25 ACT budget, the ACT government committed \$375,000 to a coercive control package, which will provide training to frontline agencies, such as ACT Policing and the courts, on identifying and responding to coercive control. The 2024-25 budget will also provide for a public education campaign informed by specialist coercive control expertise.

No meaningful solutions to improve the ACT's response to domestic and family violence can be made without victim-survivors. I thank them for their courage and bravery in sharing their experiences. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the domestic and family violence sector. I acknowledge the tireless efforts of victims'

advocates and frontline service providers, who spend their days listening to the stories of victim-survivors and working with them and our service systems to get victims the protection and support they need.

I look forward to us all gaining a better understanding of coercive control so that we can more easily recognise when our mothers, sisters, daughters, neighbours and friends might be subject to coercive behaviours, and to know what to do and how to respond in a safe and supportive way. It is very clear to me that this area needs a lot more work and that we need to continue to work together as much as we can. I recognise that, even amongst the experts in this space, there are differing views. There are different sets of priorities on how we should approach this. I have had the full range of perspectives put to me.

In adopting the position that I have today, on behalf of the Greens and as part of the government, I have formed a view that this is not the right time to legislate. We also are very clear that we do need to keep working on this. As we progress through this, further reform will be necessary. I give the community my assurance today that we will continue to work closely on these issues to ensure that we are taking the best steps we can here in the ACT.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.26): I rise to speak on Ms Castley's Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2024. This bill will enact crucial reform in our criminal justice system, reform which will save lives and keep families together. Coercive control is a form of domestic and family violence that employs abusive patterns of behaviour which are designed to dominate a relationship and exercise control.

We have heard, and I am sure those opposite have also heard, from frontline services and police that without a criminal offence for coercive control their ability to intervene before assaults and murders take place is so much more difficult. I would like to remind members of this chamber, some of whom were not here at the time, about how the abuse of Tara Costigan escalated to murder in 2015. Tara Costigan, within a day of filing for a domestic violence order against her ex-partner, was dead.

She told the court when applying for the DVO that there was verbal and emotional abuse. She was threatened by her partner but not physically harmed at that point. The next day, her ex-partner forced his way into her house and murdered her with an axe in front of her two sons, aged nine and 11, while she was holding their week-old baby girl.

Back then in 2015, we did not talk about coercive control. It is a more common term these days than it was nearly 10 years ago. But following the death of Tara Costigan and a couple of others here in the ACT—a couple of other terrible, terrible murders—we started talking a lot more about domestic and family violence. More recently, we have included coercive control in that discussion.

We all know that when it comes to domestic and family violence, taking a more preventive approach is long overdue. We have heard reports, including from the ABC, that the number of family violence incidents attended by ACT police increased by a shocking 20 per cent last year—a 20 per cent increase last year in domestic and family violence incidents that were attended.

We have seen tragedy after tragedy, with one woman violently murdered every four days this year. We used to say that one woman is violently murdered by her ex-partner or intimate partner every week—one a week. Now we are saying one every four days—every four days. We know that coercive control precedes 99 per cent of intimate partner homicides, and often the police are unable to intervene in an abusive relationship until an act of physical violence occurs.

If we criminalise coercive control, that can change this flaw in our approach to domestic and family violence. It will allow our justice system to address the insidious patterns of abuse and coercion that so often lead to tragedy and trauma. This is trauma not just for that woman—it is her family, her friends, her workmates and colleagues, her neighbours, the school children who are friends of her children and their families.

We see this when there is a terrible tragedy—families in the community coming and laying flowers at the house or the gate where this terrible tragedy has occurred. It touches everyone in our community. You know what? I am sick of seeing these videos of people laying flowers at the scenes of these tragedies. I am sick of seeing it. We need to do so much more. Why are we saying we need to wait?

The community is angry. I am angry too. We have been calling for reform and a preventive approach. It is time that we, as representatives, listen to the community, listen to the experts, and act. Act is only a three-letter word, but it is very powerful: act on coercive control.

We find ourselves in a situation where the ACT is among the last jurisdictions in Australia to commit to criminalising coercive control. This is from a government that like to tout how progressive they are and that they are the first in Australia to do things. Why, then, are we amongst the last in Australia to do this? I do not understand it, and people in the community do not understand it.

New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia have all criminalised coercive control or committed to doing so. Why are we lagging behind? Why is it going to take so many more years to take action? Remember that little three-letter word? Act. Why can we not act on this? Why do we have to wait so long? Why will you try to let the perfect stop the good? It just does not make sense.

This government has made a conscious decision to uphold the status quo of injustice when it comes to coercive control. You have decided to let this continue for however many more years. Minister Berry claimed she would look into criminalising this form of abuse four years ago—four years ago, and we are still in the same position.

We cannot keep waiting while tragedies occur and families are torn apart, like the Costigan family and like so many other families. Criminalising coercive control is long overdue. This bill has seen support from frontline services, police and victim survivors. Ms Castley has consulted with people in the sector and members of the community, despite the political point-scoring that some people have tried to use today.

I implore those opposite to put their politics aside and support this legislation reform, which would save lives and families and strengthen our ability to prevent domestic and family violence. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Early Childhood Development, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.33): I do not support this bill as it stands today. From the many stakeholders that I have engaged with and on the advice that I have, now is not the right time to progress a standalone offence to criminalise coercive control.

All of us agree coercive control is a key part of domestic and family violence. I would be deeply concerned if there was anybody in this chamber that thought differently. It is an indicator of domestic and family violence risk and potential lethality, and we have seen that in our community.

This government is absolutely committed to preventing domestic and family violence, supporting victim-survivors to live in freedom and safety, and holding people who use violence to account. We have heard from the specialist DFV sector that building awareness and understanding to recognise and respond to coercive controls needs to happen before criminalisation.

I agree with Mr Rattenbury's comments that not all of the DFV sector agree on that point, and I note the presence of the YWCA representatives here in the chamber, who have suggested a different point of view. I have met with the YWCA. They are very well aware of my point of view in this respect, and I acknowledge the advocacy that they have made towards this bill today.

We need to ensure that any law reform will support and protect victim-survivors, rather than the possibility of harming or criminalising them. This is my primary concern, and this is the concern that is often raised with me about introducing a bill at this time.

This bill has been progressed with some consultation, I agree, but I do not think that consultation has been deep enough or adequate with the ACT community, including victim-survivors with lived experience, advocates, the specialist domestic and family violence sector, justice stakeholders and priority groups, specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and people.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council provided advice to me on the feasibility of criminalising coercive control in 2021. This is the advice that the government has been guided by, in addition to the many conversations that I have had with specialists and others leading up to the introduction of this bill. The Domestic Violence Prevention Council specifically recommended the ACT government consult across government, support agencies and the wider community.

The bill, as it currently stands, does not reflect or respond to the experiences or realities of victim survivors or the services and systems which engage with and support them.

In New South Wales and Queensland, laws to criminalise coercive control were passed only after significant formal stakeholder consultation through the New South Wales Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control and the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce in Queensland. Additionally, the New South Wales act specifically includes

the establishment of the Coercive Control Implementation and Evaluation Taskforce to consult with stakeholders, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the offence and advise the minister, and three separate statutory reviews of the law, including one after two years. Ms Castley's bill requires only one statutory review after two years. This simply does not do enough to ensure this significant reform is implemented safely and properly.

The bill also fails to properly listen to or respond to the voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In their advice, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council cautioned against the unintentional harms that criminalising coercive control could cause Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other minority groups, including the culturally- and linguistically-diverse community. Across Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and advocates have consistently expressed concerns about the impact that criminalising coercive control could have on their communities. This bill has not been informed by the voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and it does not respond to those concerns. The government cannot support a bill which would have a significant impact on our community without properly consulting in depth and in great detail with them and taking clear and considered steps to prevent and mitigate the potential harms that such a reform could cause. In my view, to do so would be reckless and harmful.

As an example of the complexity that we need to understand better, I met recently with international experts who shared with me stories of domestic violence perpetrators who are continuing to coercively control their partner, even while incarcerated. So to what end are we putting people away if the coercive control continues, even when they are incarcerated? These are the kinds of outcomes that we risk if we pursue law reform in such a rushed manner and with only limited consultation. Instead of making law reform prematurely, the government has committed \$375,000 through the ACT government for a coercive control package that focuses on training for frontline service respondents.

I am committed to ensuring that people who use violence and abuse in the ACT are held accountable. It is the responsibility of everyone in our community to do this work. I am also committed to fund behaviour-change programs for perpetrators of violence. I have heard from some victims that they do not want their partners to be locked away. They form the view, and other experts do as well, that we simply cannot arrest our way out of this complex issue, but they want the violence to end. We are investing in building the capability and capacity of our community and our service response sector to do this work.

Before considering law reform, we need to focus on addressing the gaps in community education and frontline training, and this is what the ACT government is prioritising. I have made this commitment dozens of times in this place and I make it once again. I will always listen to victim-survivors, the specialist service sector and other experts and minority groups about what the government should be prioritising. I will not be forced into making a rash decision, and if as a result of that I cop some heat, I am prepared for that. I will make sure that we get the response to domestic, family and sexual violence for every member of our community right. So, as I said at the start, I cannot support the bill today.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.40): I rise in support of Ms Castley's bill, and I commend her for her dedication to improving the lives of vulnerable Canberrans by introducing this important piece of legislation.

The Canberra Liberals are calling on this place to follow the approach taken across Australia and commit to a scheme to criminalise coercive control and its harmful outcomes. This bill calls on the government to appropriately recognise the perverse and harmful nature of coercive control and to work collaboratively to support the transition period to its criminalisation—a period of over 12 months. This reform comes at a time of pressing need for change.

The status quo is not working. Women around the country have, for far too long, remained maliciously and deliberately targeted by abusive partners. Violence against vulnerable people, especially women, tragically often takes the form of intimate partner and family violence. Vulnerable Australians, especially women, are being deprived of liberty, ridiculed, abused, beaten and killed by those they ought to trust. Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology in 2022-23 shows that the number of women killed by an intimate partner in Australia increased by almost 30 per cent year on year. Patterns of domestic violence and coercive control are a blight on our society and the scale of abuse against women must end.

I was proud to stand with my colleague Ms Castley when it was announced that the Canberra Liberals would bring a private member's bill to the Assembly to create a standalone offence for coercive control under the Crimes Act 1900. I did so as shadow attorney-general in this place.

In a national poll of 1,074 Australians commissioned by White Ribbon Australia, 70 per cent of respondents support criminalisation of coercive control, and 81 per cent of respondents thought it unlikely that a perpetrator would be detected or charged with domestic violence unless they caused physical injury, stalked or intimidated a vulnerable party, breached an AVO or damaged property.

As the bill outlines, coercive control is a form of domestic and family violence characterised by abusive patterns of behaviour designed to exercise domination and control in a relationship. It takes a variety of forms and can emerge in any relationship. It is rarely limited to a single incident; it manifests as a pattern of behaviour. Coercive control is particularly pernicious as it often occurs silently and incrementally. This does not make it any less dangerous. The evidence suggests a strong causal link between patterns of coercive control and domestic violence.

I will quote a damning finding in the 2020 report of the New South Wales Domestic Violence Death Review Team which reviewed 112 intimate partner domestic violence homicides in New South Wales between 2008 and 2016. Page 154 of the report states:

In 111 of the 112 cases in this dataset (99%), the relationship between the domestic violence victim and the domestic violence abuser was characterised by the abuser's use of coercive and controlling behaviours towards the victim. In each of these cases the domestic violence abuser (all male) perpetrated various forms of abuse against the victim, including psychological abuse and emotional abuse.

So nearly 100 per cent of intimate partner domestic violence homicides are preceded by or involve coercive control. Coercive control rarely occurs in isolation and it is a form of domestic violence. Let me be absolutely clear: coercive control is a form of domestic violence.

Victim-survivors who experience both coercive control and violent forms of abuse reported coercive control is, in some cases, more degrading and harmful. The onslaught of psychological abuse is unbearable and no-one should ever be subject to this treatment. The laws must urgently be addressed to reflect this zero-tolerance position. The bill sets a clear stance on coercive control in declaring its incompatibility with respectful relationships. The bill draws a line in the sand. The Canberra Liberals in the ACT say, “No more coercive control. No more domestic violence and harm to our women and vulnerable people.”

New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland have already passed coercive control laws and made appropriate headway in educating the community on avenues for reporting and understanding its presence. It is a shame that the ACT government, including members of the Greens, cannot accept this as a standard approach in law reform. You introduce reform, you commit to educating the community and, if needed, you allow for a delay in implementation of the law, which indeed Ms Castley’s bill does provide. If you do not think there is time to educate the community properly, how about moving an amendment for delayed introduction? But, no, we cannot even get Labor and Greens members to rise to that level. Minister Berry, who is no longer in the chamber, declared years ago that the government are certainly looking into this area, this great area of concern, and what have they done? Nothing, except oppose a bill to address this harmful practice. Shame on members opposite!

Western Australia and South Australia, the remaining jurisdictions, are exploring criminalisation schemes for coercive control. I have no doubt that they will follow suit with the other jurisdictions. Maybe, again, on an important area of protection for our community, the ACT will be the last to catch up, if at all, if this government remains. While women disproportionately represent the vast majority of victims of coercive control, I recognise that men too can often be victimised, especially vulnerable men. The Labor-Greens coalition must follow the lead of the Canberra Liberals on this. They must follow the evidence and support this bill. Clearly, they have no intention to do so.

This bill will improve societal outcomes for women, families and vulnerable partners. The evidence suggests that providing a clearer mechanism for criminalisation affords victim-survivors greater security while contributing to the prevention of serious harm. The onus is on Labor and the Greens to listen to the evidence, listen to the advice of the leading advocacy and expert groups and take appropriate action for a resolution. The population at large may not fully understand the consequences of coercive control, but it is for a responsible government to educate them in a timely manner to be ready for the implementation of new laws. This government is clearly not committed to that pathway. Legislating for the criminalisation of coercive control would ensure cross-jurisdictional harmonisation with New South Wales—which is something that should weigh heavily in the consideration of law reform—and ensure all communities within our region understand its practice.

The Canberra Liberals will always remain a party firmly committed to justice, human rights and the inviolable dignity of every individual in our community. I urge Labor and the Greens to reflect on that, but I suspect it is pointless to reach out to them. I urge them to reconsider and support this bill. There is time to educate the community. A responsible government would do so. If 12 months is not long enough, perhaps move for a slightly longer period to do the job. A Canberra Liberals government led by Elizabeth Lee will do the job.

It is sad to see the responses from both Labor and Greens representatives. One would assume every Labor and Greens MLA will oppose this criminalisation bill. It is sad to see that position in this Assembly. They have decided to run on a political agenda, in my opinion. Why oppose it? I wonder whether it is because we have moved this; Ms Castley has moved this. Why oppose it? We have not heard a sound reason to oppose this bill. Coercive control needs to be criminalised. Of course, the community must be educated, as one does for every piece of law reform that is introduced in this place. Of course, a responsible government would bring the community with it. That is not what is sitting opposite.

I emphatically commend Ms Castley's bill to the Assembly and urge Labor and Greens members to reconsider their position.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.51): I thank Ms Castley for bringing forward this bill and for her leadership in this space. She and Mr Cain, in his capacity as the shadow attorney-general, have reached out and spoken to so many victim-survivors, have spoken to people on the frontline and have spoken to those who have harrowing tales about their lived experiences with coercive control.

The fact is that domestic and family violence is a scourge on our society. Whilst there are no easy answers, it is a multifaceted and complex issue and law reform only goes so far, there are levers within the control of legislators that we must pull to ensure that we are keeping some of the most vulnerable members of our community safe—members of our community who have reached out time and time again and have developed the courage to reach out. If that help is not there, it may impact on their confidence and accessibility, and then it might all be too late.

As Ms Castley has said multiple times, and as you, Mr Assistant Speaker Mr Cain, have said, coercive control was present in a staggering 99 per cent of intimate partner homicides. The police have told us, time and time again, that at times they feel helpless and sometimes it is too late. At times, physical violence has already occurred; at times sexual violence has already occurred; and, at times—heaven forbid—children have been harmed as well. The fact is that coercive control has been raised for many years as a significant factor and a significant concern, especially when it comes to domestic and family violence.

No-one pretends that it is an easy issue. But the fact is that the minister herself stated at the beginning of this term that she was committed to looking into it, that there was a genuine call for coercive control to be criminalised and that she would genuinely consider it as the representative of the ACT government. So the fact that we are here

now, four years later, and after Ms Castley has introduced this bill, and we have the minister saying, “No, no; it is about going slow, and law reform is not going to be something that I am forced into,” confirms that she has utterly failed to do the work this whole term to prepare so that the ACT Legislative Assembly, as a whole, is in a position to pass this law. That is an admission of her failure to take this very important issue forward, and Canberrans, especially those who are vulnerable, should not have to pay the price for a minister’s failure.

The Canberra Liberals have been out there listening to the community. Many people come to see us because they have not been heard by the government. So we have taken the initiative, and I commend Ms Castley and Mr Cain for the leadership that they have shown in bringing this bill to the chamber so that we can now have a vote.

Criminalising coercive control is one step, but a critical step, in preventing domestic and family violence. Whilst law reform alone will not stamp out this evil and heinous crime, law reform is important from a number of perspectives. The first is that we, as elected members in this place, who have the enormous privilege and right to make laws that are for and on behalf of the community, send a strong signal to the community that coercive control is domestic and family violence, that domestic and family violence is criminal conduct, that it is not acceptable in our society and that it will not go without consequence. It is also important from the perspective of giving our hardworking police on the frontline the confidence and the tools that they need to ensure that they are protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

It is incredibly disappointing to see that Labor and the Greens will not be supporting this bill. I had high hopes. I hark back to the time when I introduced the stealthing legislation. At the time, some within the legal profession said, “We do not think it is necessary, because we think it is covered,” to which I responded, “Even if that is the case, isn’t it incumbent on us as legislators to make it clear to the community that it is illegal?” I was very grateful for the support that I received from all members in this place. In fact, Ms Berry, Mr Rattenbury and I were all in furious agreement that that should be the way to go. So, on an issue as important as this, I had hoped that we would face the same response and that they would have the same attitude to work together to pass this legislation.

It is incredibly disappointing because the excuse that is used is: “We need to take it slow, we cannot be rushed and we need to make sure that we do some education first.” Ms Castley’s bill specifically incorporates that. Ms Castley has listened to the community and has acknowledged the importance that education plays in relation to coercive control and has specifically addressed it. So to use that as an excuse is not very genuine. The ACT government love being the first to do things and love rushing through law reform when it suits their political agenda—but now it is time to put the brakes on? That does not fly. It does not pass the pub test, and it is important to call that out.

Whilst I see the writing on the wall—and we all know what happens in this place when it comes to a vote—I will say in closing directly to the community, through you Mr Assistant Speaker, that the Canberra Liberals have heard your concerns. We know the anguish and the heartache of your lived experiences of dealing with coercive control. We have listened, we have taken your experiences seriously and we, as a

government, will do something about it. That is our commitment to you, and that is something that every member of the Canberra Liberals will commit to. I commend Ms Castley's bill to the Assembly.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.00): I would like to reiterate the point that domestic and family violence is a scourge on our society, and we absolutely need to be doing more to address this. Mr Cain asked for a sound reason to oppose this legislation. As I spoke about this morning, the scrutiny committee raised significant human rights concerns with this legislation and asked the member to respond with sufficient time to allow the committee to consider the response prior to the bill being debated. Ms Castley has responded to the committee, but the committee has not had time to consider her response. With such a critical conceptual bill, getting the human rights concerns addressed should be front and centre of the work that is done on this. While we have heard all the talk about the Canberra Liberals' consultation on this, it was near impossible to find a copy of the bill on the Liberals' website, as just a lay person trying to understand what they were proposing.

To go back to the JACS committee, two members of the JACS committee, Mr Cain and Mr Braddock, voted against an inquiry into the bill and also, as I said this morning, a motion that I moved in the following meeting to see an inquiry into coercive control. I strongly believe that this is something that the community and stakeholders in this community deserve an opportunity to have their say on. Our JACS committee has done countless inquiries over this term about a vast range of issues, but apparently this issue was not big enough or did not warrant enough attention, or perhaps Mr Cain did not want scrutiny on this bill.

Ms Lee: On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker: Dr Paterson has now made multiple references to committee discussions that have occurred, including how individual members have voted on whether or not committee inquiries happen, and I ask that she be disciplined for that.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain): On the point of order, I think what Dr Paterson is saying is probably something a committee would look into itself to see if there is any requirement. I might just take some advice from the Clerk. I do thank the Clerk. Obviously, Ms Lee, if you do have concerns, you could write to the Speaker on a matter of privilege or even address correspondence to the committee. Dr Paterson, please continue.

DR PATERSON: There were two members on that committee, and there is no inquiry. That speaks for itself.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Could you address the chair, please?

DR PATERSON: Chair, there were two members of that committee who voted to inquire into that, and the decision by the committee—

Ms Lee: Mr Assistant Speaker, I am sorry, but Dr Paterson is now literally taking the micky in terms of committee confidence, and I ask that she seriously reflect on the comments that she is making. With only three members on that committee, it is incredibly important that, despite the fact that I think that she thinks she is being cute,

it is going to give away confidences. I ask that you ask her to reflect on her comments and make sure that she does not proceed with further comments that will breach committee confidences.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I repeat my earlier direction—and I again thank the Clerk for the advice. Ms Lee, you are obviously entitled to write to the Speaker on the matter of privilege or indeed address your concerns to the chair of the committee, and of course it is open to the committee itself to consider what has happened here and what is happening now. Dr Paterson, please continue.

DR PATERSON: My point is that the Canberra Liberals do not want scrutiny on this bill. That is incredibly problematic when we are talking about—

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker. This is an imputation against the Liberal member of that committee, and I would ask you to seek a withdrawal.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, I am conscious you are in a very difficult position at the moment. As the member who is being spoken about is sitting in the chair, would it be suitable for the chamber to take a short break so we might ask the Speaker to come down, if you are left in an uncomfortable position?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I am happy that I can consult with the Clerk as to whether there is any reason I cannot continue as chair.

Mr Rattenbury: I do not object; I just think you are in a difficult position, Mr Assistant Speaker.

Ms Lee: Mr Parton is here.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I appreciate the reflections on what is happening here. I guess, just to remove any scent of me acting in any sense of impropriety in my role as chair, I might ask Mr Parton—

Ms Lee: It is not about impropriety.

Mr Rattenbury: Just in fairness, Mr Assistant Speaker Cain, I am not suggesting impropriety in any way whatsoever. I think you have just been put in an impossible position, and I think it is better that somebody else takes the chair.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I have no dilemma handing the chair over to Mr Parton.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Dr Paterson, I believe the call is yours.

DR PATERSON: I will reiterate my point that the Canberra Liberals do not want scrutiny on this legislation and they do not want to give the community an opportunity to provide feedback.

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Dr Paterson is making imputations against the Liberal member of the committee. She said the Liberals do not want scrutiny

of this bill, and I think that is quite incorrect. It is an imputation, and I would ask you to ask her to withdraw.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Lawder, I am going to seek advice, just because I have missed the last 10 minutes of the debate.

Ms Lee: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may assist: the fact is that, just before that line that Dr Paterson said about the Canberra Liberals not wanting scrutiny on the bill, she spoke about the Liberal member of the JACS scrutiny of bills committee and about how there was no inquiry from the JACS committee. Given that there are only three members of that committee, including only one Liberal member, that is where the imputation is coming from.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Lee, I appreciate your assistance; I am just going to seek advice from the Clerk. Members, this is where I sit as the Deputy Speaker presiding over this session right now: members have means before them to question processes that have been undertaken in committees. I know that they also have the means to question things that have been said in this chamber about committee matters. I would like us to proceed with this debate. Dr Paterson, I would just ask that you do whatever you can in your speech to have us get through this debate today.

DR PATERSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will state in general that I believe that, in the conduct of the release of this bill, to the point where it was introduced and now, the Canberra Liberals did not want scrutiny on this legislation.

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest the Canberra Liberals do not want scrutiny on this. Dr Paterson is making an assertion based on nothing but her own feelings. There is no evidence that we do not want scrutiny of this particular bill. In fact, the opposite is true. Dr Paterson keeps making the same claim, even though you have asked her to think about it. You have suggested there are other methods that someone, such as I, could take. But, in the meantime, Dr Paterson is continuing to say the same thing. It is unfair and it disallows an opportunity for other processes to take place.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Deputy Speaker, on invasive points of order, under the standing orders, you must not debate the original motion. It is raising the point of order and saying in the point of order that you believe the assertions are not part of the standing orders or not part of the original motion and they clearly are. You cannot debate the point of order; you simply raise the point of order and the Speaker makes the decision.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your advice on that, Mr Gentleman. Dr Paterson, I just wish that we could continue with this debate without reflecting—as you have, so much—on things that have gone on in that committee that you are on that have not necessarily been seen by other eyes. If that is possible, I think that would be a good thing for all of us.

DR PATERSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will say that I was reflecting on the process of the bill rather than the inquiry, or no inquiry, in the last two times I said this. Anyway, I will do everyone a favour and say that I think that there are significant concerns around the legislation, which is why I will not be supporting it today.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (4.13): I am compelled to respond to some of the assertions that Dr Paterson made earlier today and repeated just now. I want to say very clearly that I do treat coercive control seriously and absolutely reject any implication by any member, in particular Dr Paterson, to the contrary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to further derail this debate by having any further discussion about what did or did not happen within the committee. I think that you and the chair have quite clearly stipulated that that is not helpful in terms of this debate. That does not mean that I necessarily agree with what Dr Paterson has said today on this matter.

Finally, I say again that I do treat coercive control very seriously, and I take my duties as a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety very seriously.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.14): I would like to support what we have heard from our Attorney-General today. I speak today as the Greens spokesperson on the prevention of domestic and family violence. I thank Ms Castley for her efforts to raise awareness of coercive control through bringing this bill to the Assembly. I think we have some common ground in that we want to see better support for people experiencing violence, and the prevention of it occurring.

It is important that any changes we make are evidence based and include safeguards against unintended consequences. As Minister Rattenbury has said, it is important that, regarding whatever changes we make to our laws, we do this by working alongside victim-survivors and the organisations who support and advocate for them. Understanding what coercive control is, how it is used in a family violence context and how to change patterns of behaviour takes time and skill on the part of those organisations who do this work every day in our community.

In 2018, when coercive control became something that could be covered in a family violence order, I had the opportunity to participate in a seminar delivered by Legal Aid ACT to community sector workers who were supporting or in contact with people experiencing domestic and family violence. It was very helpful, particularly in understanding how to recognise when a person subject to an FVO might be breaching their orders and what the legal consequences might be. But the broader community also needs this understanding about how coercive control works and how to recognise the warning signs that it might be occurring to someone you are working with or a friend or family member. What Minister Rattenbury said about the findings of the death review—that coercive control is particularly difficult to identify—was absolutely right, even for people who have many years of experience working in the sector.

I am also mindful of the disproportionately high experience of domestic and family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, and the content of the *We don't shoot our wounded* report. When First Nations women tell me that they want support programs to help with behaviour change, as well as more assistance that is culturally safe for people who have experienced violence, I listen to them. I will continue to do whatever I can to support those resource needs.

Over the decades, I have had domestic violence training in a number of different workplaces across the public service and community sector. One of the best training programs I have had the privilege of attending was run by the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. As a frontline service who provides support to people experiencing violence, as well as behaviour change programs for people who do not want to continue using violence, and systemic advocacy and advice to government and the community, DVCS really do understand what is needed.

As Minister Rattenbury said, many stakeholders who work in the domestic and family violence space have said that now is not the time to criminalise coercive control as a stand-alone offence, and that we first need more support for primary prevention and behaviour change programs, more funding for frontline services working with victim-survivors, and more time to work alongside those community organisations about what a stand-alone offence should look like.

What I would love to see right now is more funding for primary prevention programs like education on coercive control and other forms of domestic and family violence. But—and this is really important—that funding must be in addition to, not at the expense of, increased funding for frontline services that support victim-survivors.

Ms Lee: Could I seek some clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this a point of order, Ms Lee?

Ms Lee: Not a point of order per se; I am just seeking some clarification and some guidance from you, Mr Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of Ms Davidson's speech, she said that she was speaking specifically as the Greens spokesperson on domestic and family violence. No-one, obviously, has any question about her ability to speak as the minister, a local member and a member of this place, but I seek your guidance about whether it is appropriate to be speaking specifically as the Greens spokesperson on the matter. I am seeking some guidance.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Lee, with respect, I do not have a problem with that at all. I do not think there is anything to see here.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (4.18), in reply: I would like to table a revised explanatory statement to the bill. I rise to speak to the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill that we have discussed at length today. It is a piece of legislation that I am so proud to have presented in this place on behalf of the countless Canberrans who have experienced the tragic and harrowing reality of coercive control.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the dedicated people who have informed this bill and supported us in our fight to achieve justice for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. I refer, firstly, to the victim-survivors and their loved ones who have reached out and shared their very personal stories of coercive control, even as recently as during my mobile office session at Amaroo shops on Friday. You could not have scripted it; a lady walked up to me and said, "When will someone address coercive

control?” and shared with me the very devastating story of her daughters having to move and be in Canberra.

It is a deeply personal issue for me, and I understand the level of courage that it takes to stand up and say something. I say to all of you: I promise that we will keep fighting for justice and for a government that treats coercive control as the crime that it is, to drive change and remove the scourge of domestic violence.

I want to thank Canberra’s domestic and family violence frontline services for their relentless work and continued advocacy. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their support in developing this legislation—in particular, shadow attorney-general Mr Cain and his office.

In developing this legislation, I have heard from countless stakeholders across the community. This bill largely mirrors the coercive control offence passed two years ago in New South Wales. As five out of the eight jurisdictions in this country have taken the path of criminalising coercive control, it is essential that the ACT criminal justice system’s approach to domestic and family violence is consistent with that of our neighbours.

Coercive control has been described by victim-survivors as one of the worst forms of domestic and family violence. It is insidious. Mr Rattenbury even said it. Without education and a strong legal framework, it will continue to lead to tragedy. Criminalising coercive control is a critical step towards having a Canberra that is safe for everyone, but particularly for women and children, who are most often the victims of domestic violence.

We have seen the step taken in New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and a number of jurisdictions overseas. Furthermore, Western Australia and South Australia have both begun the process of criminalising coercive control. The fact is that the ACT is being left behind because our government lacks the willpower and common sense to treat coercive control for what it is—a criminal form of abuse.

In the territory, where Labor and the Greens are constantly off on a tangent, banning something and stealing a hospital, they refuse to equip our legal system with the tools it needs to bring perpetrators of domestic and family violence to justice. Make no mistake: this government has made a conscious decision to uphold the status quo. It is a status quo where 99 per cent of intimate partner homicides are preceded by coercive control, and a status quo where a woman has been violently murdered every four days this year. It is a status quo where, according to the AFPA, coercive control is under-represented and under-reported because there is no offence defined for this type of crime.

YWCA Canberra support the criminalisation of coercive control and say that, while the ACT has been left behind, this bill acknowledges the tapestry of behaviours that have been linked to coercive control. CEO Frances Crimmins also said:

It is evident in police data that domestic violence incidents and offences in the ACT continue to increase and we know that non-physical forms of violence that degrade, humiliate, control, stalk or isolate are abundantly present in survivor stories of domestic violence. Coercive control is intrinsic to domestic and family violence.

I want to thank Frances and Leah from the YWCA, and the team, for their advocacy regarding coercive control and making sure it is a criminal offence, and regarding better supporting our frontline services.

I also thank YWCA for their consultation and feedback on this bill. They have suggested that a review provision should be written into the legislation, and the bill was amended to reflect that, and we thank them for that. The government also was welcome to help out with amendments but chose not to. The consultation on the bill was extensive. Feedback on the exposure draft was open for public submissions for weeks.

We received advice from advocates across the sector, including YWCA, AFPA, DVCS, Women's Legal Centre, Women's Health Matters, ACT Bar Association, ACT Law Society, Legal Aid and Relationships Australia, among others. In 2021 we heard from the then DVCS general manager that ultimately, there needs to be a legal response to coercive control. In the same year, the then principal solicitor of the Women's Legal Centre ACT said that a new offence on top of family violence orders would need to be introduced to capture the insidious nature of coercive control.

Two of the biggest advocates for the criminalisation of coercive control are the parents of Hannah Clarke, Sue and Lloyd, who we have been in touch with throughout this process. Hannah and her three children were tragically murdered by a man who used coercive control, a shocking crime which brought the form of abuse into the national conversation again and motivated legislative reform in Queensland. Sue Clarke said that the fight is not over until coercive control is criminalised throughout Australia.

Queensland passed legislation criminalising coercive control in March, when Labor Premier Steven Miles said that criminalising coercive control would save lives. Queensland's Labor Minister for Women, Shannon Fentiman, said:

We know that non-physical violence is just as dangerous as physical violence.

Coercive control is also the biggest predicting factor for intimate partner homicide.

That's why we have taken strong steps to make coercive control an offence in Queensland.

Minister Fentiman also said that criminalising coercive control indicated her government's commitment to keeping women and girls safe from violence and holding perpetrators to account. Good on her. It is a real shame that the government in this place does not share this sentiment with their Labor counterparts in Queensland.

In 2020, New South Wales Greens MP Abigail Boyd introduced a bill to criminalise coercive control. Ms Boyd said:

Many victims of domestic abuse live in a constant state of fear, in relationships marked by dangerous patterns of controlling behaviour. That is what coercive control is, and why we need to criminalise it.

It is about living in constant fear. She continued:

By clearly defining this crime for what it is and bringing it into the public consciousness, we can begin to start tackling this scourge of abuse that women are facing across the country and save countless lives.

Unfortunately, the ACT Greens do not share the commitment of their New South Wales counterparts to keep Canberra families safe, either.

When I raised it with the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, it was declared that the government would go slow on addressing the scourge of coercive control. This is a shocking betrayal of victim-survivors and those in the community who continue to be oppressed by coercive control and coercive behaviours as we debate this bill today.

A 2023 study by Monash University found that 91 per cent of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence—91 per cent—believe that coercive control should be made a criminal offence. These are the survivors. It is those in our community with lived experience of the horrors of coercive control who are asking for this critical law reform. The government's inaction sends a strong message that they are not listening.

Minister Berry said that education needs to come first, to ensure that the community and frontline responders understand. After four years of neglecting her responsibilities, it took a motion by the Canberra Liberals to compel Ms Berry to act and agree. Now, over three months later, the government has committed a woeful \$375,000 for education. Really? Do you seriously think that is enough money to take this seriously, to educate the ACT on coercive control, which we have all agreed today is very serious and needs addressing? Education is key. I said it; it is in my bill.

In recent years this government has wasted millions and millions of dollars. We heard about it this morning, in the health section. It is ridiculous—rebrands, and crazy levels of debt. It is deeply upsetting that this government refuses to invest sufficiently in preventing domestic and family violence. It was only this year, after prolonged advocacy from groups like YWCA, that the government agreed to direct, finally, all revenue from the safer families levy towards frontline services.

In the ACT, domestic and family violence has increased by 35 per cent since 2019. Minister Berry and her government have failed to keep Canberra families safe from domestic violence. The opposition have taken the lead on domestic and family violence, but our efforts have been blocked by petty politics. I have news for the government: virtue signalling is not enough.

The government talk a lot about their desire to listen to Indigenous communities, but their approach to this proposed legislation would suggest otherwise. Ms Berry said that the government wanted to examine the impact of interjurisdictional coercive control offences, particularly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. To stoke fear around the adverse impacts of criminalising coercive control for First Nations Canberrans is disingenuous. Monash University's 2023 study found that an overwhelming 85 per cent of First Nations victim-survivors stated that coercive control should be criminalised. We know that the inappropriate use of legal penalties against victim-survivors who have used violence in a retaliatory or pre-emptive manner is a serious barrier to justice. This is a particular issue for First Nations victim-survivors.

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32 states:

For example, a person using violence in a single incident may be considered the perpetrator, but when viewed more broadly, it is clear that they are the victim of a pattern of coercive control and are using retaliatory or pre-emptive violence.

If coercive control is recognised by the criminal justice system then we will be able to protect victim-survivors who have used violence in retaliation for a criminal form of domestic abuse. The failure to correctly identify the perpetrator of a domestic violence offence disproportionately impacts women in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A stand-alone criminal offence for coercive control will make it crystal clear when violence has been used by a victim-survivor in response. This is a crucial step in addressing a situation where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are being incarcerated for defending themselves against these forms of domestic abuse. While the government has attempted to lecture me on the impact of a coercive control offence on First Nations Canberrans, they continue to see the highest Indigenous incarceration rates in the country. This is utterly disgraceful. It is my firm belief that criminalising coercive control will keep Indigenous women, who are too often incarcerated for defending themselves and their children, out of prison.

This bill has a 12-month deferred commencement period to allow for the successful dissemination of the education campaign. This is in line with what DVCS CEO, Sue Webeck, said: an education campaign could be launched within six months and see results within nine. Given that the government agreed to an education campaign in May, they would have had ample time to educate the community on coercive control events before the bill's commencement. Coercive control criminalisation must be complemented by a campaign to educate frontline services, police, legal professionals and the community. Unfortunately, going slow is a running theme with the government, and they do not appear to have taken any action on this commitment.

Ms Berry said that coercive control is a complex issue and that we need to get it right when the legislation is introduced. My office offered her and Minister Rattenbury a briefing on this bill on 20 June. In the more than two months that have passed, I have received no response. When I presented this bill, I said that I was looking forward to working constructively with other parties in this place to get coercive control criminalised. Despite my efforts, this government, which claims to be so keen on getting the legislation right, has been awfully quiet.

Coercive control is an urgent issue in our community. It is life threatening and life destroying, and yet the government continues to go slow. Ms Berry thinks that addressing coercive control is too complex, and that we should wait and see what happens in other jurisdictions. So I ask the government when they stop waiting for more tragedies to occur? When will they listen to victim-survivors? When will they listen to frontline services? When will they listen to the police who are called to tragic domestic violence scenes every day?

The community is angry and fed up with the status quo. We saw it in the marches that were held all over the country earlier this year. We are sick and tired of a broken system

that does not and cannot effectively address domestic and family violence. While this government waits for years to criminalise coercive control, our justice system must wait for tragedies before they can prosecute domestic and family violence. That is a shame. History will not be kind to this government, which has betrayed the most vulnerable in our community.

This government has failed to take action on coercive control, which will keep killing and keep tearing families apart. It is not too late to change this. The community is desperate for reform, and I hope that all of us here want to look back on our time in this Tenth Assembly and know that we did all we could to prevent domestic and family violence. The Canberra Liberals will not stop fighting until we have a criminal justice that protects victim-survivors and has the capacity to intervene before tragedy occurs.

I want to address some remarks that were made earlier with regard to scrutiny. (*Extension of time granted.*) Going back to Dr Paterson's remarks, I thought we might have dealt with this this morning, but she came back and wanted to discuss the lack of scrutiny again. We have tabled an updated explanatory statement, and my understanding is that is what was required from the scrutiny committee. We acted as quickly as we could, and we returned that back to scrutiny.

Dr Paterson also made remarks about us wanting to get this in without scrutiny. I would like to reflect on some very wise words from our Ms Lawder. I believe it was in response to Minister Gentleman, when he was trying to suspend standing orders to pass the draft Territory Plan in 2023. This is what she said:

Over the past six months or so, it seems that, at every sitting, the government has sprung something on us without prior consultation ...

I am not springing anything on the government. All of you could have had a briefing with me. Ms Lawder goes on to say:

On 30 March there was no notice of the JACS amendment bill being debated. On 9 May they failed to inform us of a change in the order of the bills for debate. On 11 May the schedule of papers that we are supposed to get by 1.30 was sent late. On 8 June the new government sitting program was provided an hour before the sitting. On 26 June the new government sitting program was provided a day before the sitting. On 29 August we had the introduction of the Victims of Crime Amendment Bill without any notice. On 11 September we now have this new executive motion without notice, and they are seeking leave. These are important matters and they should be done in the correct fashion.

Thank you for that, Ms Lawder. I would appreciate it if Dr Paterson would reflect on her own government's errors—the way that they do business—before she has a crack at something that we have done trying to make sure we keep Canberrans safe. I commend my bill to the Assembly. I think that is all I have to say, because I am too cranky to continue!

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 13

Peter Cain
Leanne Castley
Jeremy Hanson
Nicole Lawder
Elizabeth Lee
Mark Parton

Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall
Andrew Braddock	Suzanne Orr
Joy Burch	Marisa Paterson
Tara Cheyne	Michael Pettersson
Jo Clay	Shane Rattenbury
Emma Davidson	Rebecca Vassarotti
Mick Gentleman	

Question resolved in the negative.

Bill negatived.

Economy—cost of living

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4. 39): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the release of the ACT Council of Social Services 2024 ACT Cost of Living Report (the Report);
- (b) the Report confirms that the cost of living crisis in Canberra is worsening, and those already doing it tough are being squeezed especially hard;
- (c) the Report found that over the past five years, Canberra has experienced above-inflation increases in the prices of many essential goods and services, including:
 - (i) education costs up 26 percent;
 - (ii) housing costs up 22.8 percent;
 - (iii) medical and hospital services costs up 22.4 percent;
 - (iv) transport costs up 22.3 percent;
 - (v) childcare costs up 21.4 percent;
 - (vi) food up 20 percent; and
 - (vii) gas up 20 percent;
- (d) the Report details how the cost of raising children in Canberra has increased significantly, and that centre-based childcare and family day care in the ACT were the most expensive in Australia; and
- (e) most worryingly, the Report found that almost one in 10 Canberra children live below the poverty line;

(2) further notes:

- (a) that, as a result of the worsening cost of living crisis in Canberra, our community sector organisations are continuing to see increased demand for their services, including from people in employment who are struggling to make ends meet;

- (b) that despite the worsening cost of living crisis in Canberra, the Treasurer has, in the recent ACT Budget, imposed even more pain on Canberrans by increasing:
 - (i) household rates by between four point five and nine percent;
 - (ii) vehicle registration fees by four percent;
 - (iii) drivers licence fees by four percent;
 - (iv) public transport fees by three percent; and
 - (v) the Safer Families and the Police, Fire and Emergency Services Levy; and
- (c) these increases are on top of recent increases by the Labor-Greens Government, including:
 - (i) electricity costs increasing by 12.75 percent; and
 - (ii) water and sewerage charges increasing by seven percent; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) undertake a comprehensive review of the *2012 ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy* in partnership with the community sector to ensure concessions are keeping up with changes to the cost of living; and
 - (b) apologise to Canberrans for inflicting even more cost of living pain by raising taxes and charges in the recent ACT Budget.

The cost-of-living crisis in Canberra is worsening. When I and my colleagues are out and about in the community, we hear this firsthand. We talk to families, to seniors and to young people—all of whom are doing it tough. Households are struggling to pay their mortgages. Seniors are having to decide whether they heat their homes or buy groceries. Young people are putting off medical treatment because they cannot afford it. Parents are struggling with childcare costs. Students are eating two-minute noodles for the third week in a row. It is our most vulnerable who are doing it the toughest.

Last week, ACTCOSS released its *2024 Cost of Living Report*. The report was sobering reading. It detailed not only how the cost-of-living crisis in Canberra is worsening but also that its impact is deepening on those Canberrans who are already struggling. Most disturbingly, the report revealed that one in 10 Canberra children live below the poverty line. Think about that: one in 10 children in the nation's capital. I think most Canberrans—indeed, most Australians—would be staggered by that finding. This is in a jurisdiction that Mr Barr loves bragging has the highest average income in the country—and yet one in 10 children in Canberra are now living below the poverty line.

The ACTCOSS report found that, over the past five years, Canberra has experienced above-inflation increases in the prices of many essential goods and services—above-inflation increases in education, which has increased by 26 per cent; housing, which has increased by 22.8 per cent; medical and hospital services, which have increased 22.4 per cent; transport costs, which have increased by 22.3 per cent; childcare costs, which have increased by 21.4 per cent; food costs, which have increased by 20 per cent; and gas costs, which have gone up by 20 per cent. The reality is, as the report detailed, that these above-inflation price increases for these essential goods and services has had a disproportionate impact on low-income households who are trying to manage the cost of raising children. Along with these above-inflation increases, many

of these households have experienced significant increases to their mortgage repayments due to the increases in interest rates, resulting in double the pain.

Many of these families had to reach out and ask for help for the very first time. In the report, Roundabout Canberra, an organisation that provides essential baby and children items to families in need, told how it is seeing the impact of these cost-of-living pressures on many Canberra families, including those families who have not previously had to ask for help. They said:

We continued to see families where one or both parents were working, yet it was not enough to cover essentials. Many of these families have not previously needed support.

Many of these families were having to access support for the first time. So far in 2024, Roundabout Canberra has seen a whopping 32 per cent increase in the number of children requiring material support from the previous year. Roundabout Canberra also detailed the case of a family they had been assisting—a family who, despite working, have recently been evicted from their rental property and are now homeless. As low-income workers, they do not earn enough to pay all the weekly expenses, and the mum and dad are now experiencing mental health issues due to the stress on them.

Care Financial Counselling has also seen a large increase in people accessing their services, including people who have never previously had to access support. The CEO of Care said:

Financial stress is on the rise and is impacting a broader cohort, including people who have not previously required assistance from a support service.

St Vincent de Paul has also witnessed an increase in demand for their services. In the report they detail how they are seeing new groups of people seeking assistance for the first time—groups such as mortgage holders, private renters and dual income households—as cost-of-living pressures affect a broader section of society. They go on to say that 28 per cent of requests were from people who have never sought their assistance before.

This report clearly shows that the current cost-of-living crisis has extended the reach of financial stress to an increasing number of households, including many households that are employed and working. That is also what we are hearing about in the community. I can only assume that members of the Labor and Greens parties are either not out and about talking to people or are not listening to organisations like ACTCOSS or Roundabout or people who work for St Vincent de Paul. If they had, they would not have delivered a budget that inflicted even more cost-of-living pain on Canberrans.

Despite the Treasurer promising that this budget would be a cost-of-living budget, what we saw when the budget was released would have sent a shudder down the back of many Canberrans, especially those who are already doing it tough. In this year's budget, the Labor-Greens government did not decrease taxes and charges to provide cost-of-living relief. No; they increased taxes and charges that will inflict more cost-of-living pain on Canberrans. They increased household rates by between 4.5 per cent and nine per cent—and that is just on average. This is on top of the increases over the last decade, averaging over six per cent per year. They increased vehicle registration

fees by four per cent. They increased fees for drivers licences by four per cent. They increased public transport fees by three per cent. They increased road rescue fees by four per cent. The Safer Families levy has gone up from \$50 to \$70 and the police, fire and emergency services levy has increased from \$375 to \$396.

If this were not bad enough, these increases come on the back of recent increases under this Labor-Greens government—with electricity increasing by 12.75 per cent and water and sewerage increasing by seven per cent. This is how members of this Labor-Greens government respond to the worsening and deepening cost-of-living crisis that more and more Canberrans are experiencing. But, given that this Labor-Greens government is so out of touch with what is happening in our community, it does not surprise me that its members are not aware of how much people are hurting.

This was clearly demonstrated recently when the Chief Minister was asked by the media about increasing fuel prices. He said that it was about moving people from petrol cars to battery-powered cars to combat high petrol prices. Really, that was his answer: to say that people should buy an EV with an average price of between \$60,000 and \$90,000! What a joke. It harks back to the time when he encouraged Canberrans to buy a little treat with their tax cut or the time that he said parking fees are not even likely to be the cost of sparkling water. How out of touch can someone be?

These comments are not merely one-offs; they are consistent comments. These consistent comments by the Chief Minister in dismissing the struggles that many Canberrans are facing demonstrate that he is incapable of understanding the real struggles that people are facing every single day out in the community. These comments should tell every Canberran that this Chief Minister, who has been in the top job for over 10 years, has well and truly stopped listening to what is really happening in the community.

That is why, earlier this year, the Canberra Liberals released our cost-of-living relief package—a package designed to provide real and tangible relief targeted to help all Canberrans. This package, which will see a family of four better off by an average of \$750, is a package that will deliver real cost-of-living relief to those, as detailed in the ACTCOSS cost-of-living report, who have found themselves needing help for the first time. Recently we released our policy that will deliver a fairer and more transparent rate system for Canberra households, which will not only cap rate increases but also ensure that all Canberra households have full transparency of how their unimproved value is calculated. Of course, we have also committed to abolishing Mr Barr's GP payroll tax. We have already seen increases for Canberrans wanting to see a doctor, with every other cost going up. This will make seeing their GP even more unaffordable and drive even more people to the emergency departments in our hospitals. The tangible and real measures that we have already announced will deliver real relief to Canberrans.

What was the Labor-Greens response? Their response was to slug Canberrans with either more increases to taxes and charges—higher rates, higher electricity costs, higher rego, higher drivers licence fees and the list goes on. Their response was to spruik the measures in the budget that they said would provide relief for households—measures that are outdated and are not keeping up with a deepening cost-of-living crisis. In its report, ACTCOSS said:

Canberra's cost of living crisis means many of the current ACT and Australian government assistance programs do not go far enough in alleviating cost of living pressures on low-income households. Given reports that we are now seeing more people in employment seeking support services, the ACT Government should expand eligibility criteria for concessions and financial relief.

The 2012 ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy is now over a decade old. Economic conditions have significantly changed. The fact that our community sector organisations are all experiencing a significant increase in demand for their services shows that the assistance scheme that this Labor-Greens government has is not working.

This motion calls on the Labor-Greens government to do two things. It urges them to do what ACTCOSS has called for specifically, and that is to undertake a comprehensive review of the 2012 ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy to make sure that concessions are keeping up with changes to the cost-of-living conditions. Importantly, it calls on this Labor-Greens government to apologise to the people of Canberra on whom they have inflicted even more cost-of-living pain by raising taxes and charges, including in the most recent ACT budget.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development) (4.51): I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion forward, and I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) the prices of essential products have increased significantly across Australia in the last two and a half years, combined with interest rate increases this has placed many household budgets under pressure;
 - (b) the impacts of cost-of-living pressures have been felt differently across the community, with younger people and lower wealth households bearing a greater impact; and
 - (c) the June Quarter 2024 Consumer Price Index (CPI) released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that Canberra's CPI increased by 3.1 percent through the year to the June Quarter, lower than the national increase of 3.8 percent over the same period;
- (2) further notes that in the 2024-2025 Budget, the ACT Government is providing \$143 million of targeted cost-of-living relief this financial year including:
- (a) an Electricity, Gas and Water Rebate (formerly the Utilities Concession) of \$800 to eligible recipients in 2024-2025 (approximately 43,800 households);
 - (b) a one-off payment of \$250 to apprentices and trainees, who tend to earn just above the threshold to qualify for Commonwealth financial assistance but are still lower income earners relative to others in Canberra with a lower level of assets or savings;
 - (c) extending the Rent Relief Fund to assist those experiencing rental stress or financial hardship for a further year or until funds are expended;
 - (d) reducing stamp duty for owner-occupier purchases for the thirteenth year in a row;

- (e) increasing the Future of Education Equity Fund in 2024 for families with financial hardship impacting access to and engagement in the education system for ACT students;
 - (f) increasing the value of vouchers available through the Utilities Hardship Fund;
 - (g) providing additional funding for community organisations, including Roundabout Canberra, Scouts ACT, Fearless Women and Women's Health Matters to ensure their ongoing delivery of essential services to vulnerable Canberrans;
 - (h) increasing funding support for emergency material, financial aid programs and food relief services; and
 - (i) other concessions, such as:
 - (i) the Pensioner General Rates and the Police, Fire and Emergency Services Levy (PFESL) Rebate, providing around 15,700 households a rebate of up to \$750 per year for general rates and \$98 PFESL rebate per year;
 - (ii) the Conveyance duty concessions providing 3,900 eligible home buyers up to 100 percent discount on conveyance duty;
 - (iii) spectacle subsidy scheme providing around 11,000 Canberrans with a subsidy of up to \$200 for spectacles;
 - (iv) motor vehicle registration concessions providing 66,750 ACT drivers with up to a 100 percent discount on motor vehicle registration fees;
 - (v) driver licence concessions providing around 4,700 ACT drivers with up to a 100 percent discount on driver licence fees; and
 - (vi) public transport concessions providing reduced or free fares on Transport Canberra bus and light rail services for over 5.1 million trips;
- (3) finally notes that the Commonwealth Government has introduced a number of cost-of-living measures, in partnership with the Territory, or on their own, including:
- (a) a tax cut to all workers in Canberra with almost four in every five taxpayers in the ACT receiving a larger tax cut than compared to the previous Government's plan;
 - (b) a \$300 rebate on electricity bills for all Canberra households and a \$325 rebate for small businesses;
 - (c) HECS debt relief for 57,000 people in the ACT, predominantly providing support to younger Canberrans who have recently graduated;
 - (d) increase of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by a further 10 percent, building on the 15 percent increase in last year's Budget will benefit approximately 7,300 Canberra households;
 - (e) cheaper child-care, with Child Care Subsidy rates up to 90 percent for eligible families; and
 - (f) freezing the cost of medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme; and

- (4) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) continue to monitor the impacts of cost of living on Canberra households through the cost-of-living subcommittee of Cabinet; and
 - (b) continue to deliver targeted cost-of-living support.”.

The amendment notes that the price of essential products have increased significantly across Australia over the last 2½ years and that, when combined with interest rate increases, this has placed many household budgets under pressure.

We note that these cost-of-living pressures are being felt differently across the community, with younger people and lower-wealth households bearing the greatest impact. Pleasingly, there has been some divergence in CPI here in Canberra from what has been occurring nationally. The June quarter 2024 Consumer Price Index released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that Canberra’s CPI increased by 3.1 per cent through the year to the June quarter, which is significantly lower than the national increase of 3.8 per cent over the same period.

We note that, in the 2024-25 budget, the government is providing \$143 million of targeted cost-of-living relief this financial year. That includes an electricity, gas, and water rebate of \$800 to nearly 44,000 households and a one-off payment of \$250 to apprentices and trainees. This is provided because apprentices and trainees tend to earn just above the threshold to qualify for commonwealth financial assistance, but clearly are lower income earners relative to others in Canberra and often have a lower level of savings or assets on which to draw upon.

The government extended, for a further year, the Rent Relief Fund to assist those experiencing rental stress or financial hardship in the private sector rental market. We have reduced stamp duty for owner-occupied purchases for the 13th year in a row. The budget included additional funding for the Future of Education Equity Fund for families experiencing financial hardship that is impacting access to and engagement with the education system. The government increased the value of vouchers available through the Utilities Hardship Fund. Recognising the increased burden on services in the community sector, there was additional funding provided to Roundabout Canberra, to Scouts, to Fearless Women and to Women’s Health Matters, to ensure the ongoing delivery of essential services to vulnerable Canberrans. Funding was also provided to increase support for emergency material and financial aid programs and food relief services.

Other concessions include the pensioner general rates and police, fire and emergency services rebate, which provides 15,700 households a rebate of \$750 per year on their rates and just under \$100 on the Police, Fire and Emergency Service levy rebate each year; conveyance duty concessions, which provided 3,900 eligible homebuyers with a 100 per cent discount—as in, they paid zero conveyance duty; the Spectacle Subsidy Scheme, which provides 11,000 Canberrans with a subsidy of up to \$200 for a new set of glasses; motor vehicle registration concessions, which provided 66,750 ACT drivers with up to a 100 per cent discount on their motor vehicle registration fees; driver’s licence concessions, providing 4,700 ACT drivers with, again, up to 100 per cent discount on their driver’s licence fees; and public transport concessions that provided

reduced or free fares on Transport Canberra bus and light rail services for over 5.1 million trips.

Of course, we note that, in any cost-of-living crisis, it is not only the territory government but also the federal government that needs to step up and to provide support to the community. The commonwealth government, in its budget, introduced a number of cost-of-living measures, some of which were delivered or are being delivered in partnership with the territory government and some of which are being delivered exclusively by the commonwealth. That includes a tax cut for all workers in Canberra, with almost four in every five taxpayers in the ACT receiving a larger tax cut under federal Labor's tax cuts than they would have under the previous coalition government's plan. The commonwealth, in partnership with the territory, is providing a \$300 rebate on electricity bills for every single household in the ACT and a \$325 rebate for small businesses. This rebate exceeds the increase in electricity prices for the average Canberra household. That increase is in the order of \$240 to \$260, and the commonwealth rebate of \$300 exceeds that price increase.

Importantly, given it is young people who are experiencing the greatest financial impact on their cost of living, the HECS debt relief for 57,000 Canberrans is an important initiative. I was pleased to see that legislation introduced into the federal parliament, and I hope that the Senate will pass it quickly. I also note the commonwealth have increased rent assistance by a further 10 per cent, building on the 15 per cent increase in last year's budget. This benefits approximately 7,300 Canberra households. I also note their initiatives providing cheaper child care, with the childcare subsidy rates now up to 90 per cent for eligible families. I also note and welcome the initiative to freeze the cost of medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

This is a small set of examples in the time available to me to outline the measures that the territory government and the commonwealth government, and jointly, are providing to address the cost of living. I advise the Assembly that the government continues to monitor the impacts of cost of living on Canberra households. We have a cost-of-living subcommittee of cabinet that will look through each budget round at the measures necessary to support those most in need. The government will continue to deliver targeted cost-of-living support. With that, I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (4.59): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this really important issue this afternoon. It is one the Greens are very focused on, and we have a plan to address and seek to assist our community to face these significant financial pressures.

We will be supporting the amendment moved by Mr Barr this afternoon. We believe it gives a more accurate picture of the cost-of-living situation in the ACT. Nevertheless, as I have said, the cost of living is a serious and significant issue that demands government efforts and attention, and has been a clear focus for our party throughout this term of government and as we put forward our plans for the coming election period.

There is no doubt that there is a cost-of-living crisis. It is a national issue affecting every state and territory, with significant increases in food, fuel, electricity, housing, renting, education, medical and hospital services. According to the ABS, wages in the ACT are

rising faster, at 4.1 per cent, than inflation, at 3.1 per cent, but that does not take account of the many people who will not be seeing their real pay keep up with the costs that they are experiencing.

The many Canberrans who are renting will know that Canberra is not cheap. That is why the ACT Greens support taking action to cap rental increases, with a current mechanism ensuring that they can increase by a maximum of 110 per cent of the rate of inflation, and we have proposed further measures for the future, including a two-year rent freeze and a two per cent rental cap for future years, which provides certainty and simplicity. We have also worked to better empower renters in the relationship they are often in with landlords. We recognise that in a tight rental market it can be very difficult for tenants to assert their rights, which makes it necessary to regulate in certain areas. Our program to ensure minimum insulation standards for rental properties will make homes more comfortable and—critically, in the context of today’s discussion—will help reduce energy bills.

If you have a home loan, over the past few years you have had to bear the brunt of the Reserve Bank’s battle against inflation, with significant increases in interest rates dramatically pushing up rent payments and putting real pressure on the household budget for many Australians, including many households here in Canberra. We have all heard examples of people who now find themselves really stretched due to the increased repayments they now have to make.

The cost-of-living challenges we face today are also the result of long-term decision-making by successive Liberal and Labor governments at a national level in essential areas such as housing and transport. The ACT Greens recognise that the only real long-term solution to the growing homelessness and housing stress is more actually affordable homes. My colleague Minister Vassarotti has put forward the ACT Greens plan to build and buy 10,000 public homes over the next 10 years. This will address the dire shortage of affordable homes and ensure that everybody who needs a home has one. The ACT Greens will set up a public developer and provide certainty to the construction industry, employing modular building techniques to ensure that high-quality public homes can be built with increasing cost effectiveness. Making these homes as energy-efficient as possible, with higher-quality appliances, means they will be cheaper to heat and cool—a big bonus, especially for those on lower incomes.

Planning for our city to be an affordable place to live in the future is crucial. My colleague Jo Clay has launched a plan to turn the well-located racecourse into over 5,000 homes, adjacent to existing light rail and complete with schools, public housing, community housing and community facilities. Such planning decisions are crucial if Canberra is going to be affordable for the long term. Using available land wisely for a wide variety of housing, and connecting the housing to education, employment, health and recreational activities by active and public transport, gives time back to people and makes a car less than essential. Making it easier for people to access those services is also cheaper and if you are able to walk, or bike even, it really does improve your health.

I certainly welcome Labor’s furious agreement with the ACT Greens about the need for at least 100 new buses. The ACT Greens bus plan would increase frequency to at least every 20 minutes during the week and every 30 minutes at the weekend, making public transport an increasingly viable option for getting around our city. According to the

motoring lobby group, the Australian Automobile Association, the cost of owning a car in Canberra is \$1,000 below the national average of \$24,262 per annum. But, at \$23,262 per year once depreciation, insurance, fuel, servicing, tax and other costs are taken into account, owning a car is a very significant expense. If we are able to make it possible for households to get by with one fewer car by providing better public transport and by making our city more walkable and more rideable, then that is a considerable cost-of-living saving, and we can make a long-term difference for Canberra households.

In her motion, Ms Lee raised the cost of health care. The Greens are working towards a country where health care is free at the point of use. That is why my ACT Greens colleague Emma Davidson has announced that, if we are re-elected, we want to introduce four new bulk-billing clinics—two north of the lake and two south. We want to invest in preventative care that enables Canberrans to access health care with just their Medicare card. We are concerned by the stories we hear of people putting off going to the doctor because of cost-of-living pressures. That is why we have put forward a plan to enable more Canberrans to get free access to the health care they need. We cannot and should not be living in a country where people are avoiding going to the doctor because they cannot afford it. We also do not want Canberrans to have to think twice about calling an ambulance if someone needs one. That is why we have put forward a plan to make all ambulances free in the ACT, saving individuals up to \$1,000 each time they need to make that emergency call.

National policies, of course, remain significant to the ACT, and the Chief Minister has touched on some of these in his remarks. The Greens believe one of the best ways we can assist people in poverty, people dealing with the really hard end of cost-of-living pressures, is through raising the rate of JobSeeker. That is what a large number of non-government organisations tell us, and that is why that campaign continues. The Greens have raised this issue repeatedly. This is a critical and fundamental measure that would help the people who are most in need—the people who really, really feel cost-of-living pressures.

The cost of food and groceries is another area which needs national actions. My colleagues in the Australian Greens last year secured an inquiry into the impact of market concentration on food prices and the pattern of pricing strategies employed by the supermarket duopoly. The Australian Council of Trade Unions has also investigated this issue, conducting its own inquiry, and in January the federal government asked the ACCC to investigate the supermarket sector. The result of this focus will be, hopefully, reforms to the supermarket duopoly in Australia and pricing changes that bring relief to Australians paying for necessities.

Electricity is another essential item that has increased steeply in price across the country due, again, to a complex array of national and international issues. The key point to emphasise here is that, amongst the turmoil, the ACT has maintained the lowest or close to the lowest electricity prices in the nation. Consumers literally have to pay, on average, hundreds of dollars extra for electricity if they cross the border into New South Wales. The ACT has been able to maintain this position while also taking the environmentally responsible step to move to 100 per cent renewable electricity. In the energy space, the government has a range of programs. I do not have the time to speak to all of them, but I make the point that we have put in place a range of options to assist Canberrans to cut their energy bills, whether it is installing more energy-efficient

devices or getting more help to electrify their homes, which we know saves Canberrans significant amounts of money each year on the running costs of their homes.

I also want to emphasise the significant range of concessions that are available. Concession-holders, for example, are eligible for the \$800 energy and water concession, and they can also receive free or discounted public transport and discounted car registration. The Chief Minister has alluded to these points in his amendment, so I will not repeat them here. I will say, though, that members will note that the majority of this cost-of-living help is targeted. It goes to concession-holders, pensioners or renters at risk of evictions—the cohorts of people who most need the help.

I have talked about how cost-of-living stresses hurt Canberrans who are least well off and most vulnerable. Many people who have higher-than-average incomes are often protected from the harshest impacts of price rises. We need to target the resources we have to those who need them. The promises from the Canberra Liberals are for a multitude of non-means-tested payments to Canberrans. As the CEO of ACTCOSS pointed out, not means testing these payments simply means that well-off people will receive government payments when they do not need them.

This comes at the expense of help that could be provided to the least well off. It is a payment to everyone, even the millionaire who does not even feel the cost-of-living pinch. I have heard one community NGO refer to this Liberal promise as a bribe. It is a poorly aimed bandaid at best. Nor do the payments go to any of the structural, entrenched issues that cause and exacerbate cost-of-living issues in our city—the sorts of things I have talked about today. The Greens have real plans to tackle these issues on a long-term basis. I hope that I see the Liberals make significant commitments to affordable housing, or commitments that will help renters or concession holders—initiatives that are targeted at the smaller cohorts of people who are actually most in need, rather than a splash of cash to everyone in the community.

In conclusion, I will say that the ACT Greens will continue to focus on the cost of living by building and buying 10,000 public homes; by building 5,000 homes at the racecourse; through making active and public transport more accessible; through bulk-bill GP clinics and free ambulances; and through other measures that make a real difference to help Canberrans address cost-of-living pressures.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi): (5.09): I rise to speak on this important motion by Ms Lee. It is a cost-of-living crisis that so many Canberrans find themselves in. I begin by thanking Ms Lee for this important motion. It is time to act and for this government to apologise and to address what, for many Canberrans, has become an all-consuming, stress-inducing and lifestyle-reducing emergency that is leading many to hit their social, health and mental breaking points.

As many of you would also do, I try to get across the media each day and understand what is being reported. I read and understand what is occurring in our community. It was interesting when I found the headline “From the backbench” today in the *Canberra Daily*. There is an update from Dr Marisa Paterson. She opens with:

Standing at our local shops, I hear the stories of Canberrans struggling with the cost of living.

We are in furious agreement about that, Dr Paterson. I also hear the stories of Canberrans struggling with the cost of living. We all hear the stories. I was wondering if this was a come-to-Damascus moment. Will we finally get an apology from the Labor member for the cost-of-living crisis being imposed upon Canberrans? No; this was the opening for an article praising the Barr government's approach. The next line says it all:

The pressures are significant, with families balancing housing costs and basic living expenses, which is why ACT Labor, in government, has prioritised relief over the last few years.

“ACT Labor, in government, has prioritised relief over the last few years.” Have they really? I think that is the question that they all ask. Never have I read such nonsense. I am sure it will come as a surprise to all Canberrans, whose stories we all hear.

In the most recent budget—Ms Lee has already been over these figures—rates have increased by 4½ to nine per cent; vehicle registration fees are up four per cent; drivers licence costs are up four per cent, public transport is up three per cent; and there are increases to the Safer Family Levy, going to police and emergency services.

How can a government member keep a straight face and write that they have been prioritising relief when, just last week, ACTCOSS found that Canberrans have seen their core costs—such as education, housing, medical, transport, food and gas—all increase by over 20 per cent in the last few years? One in 10 children lives below the poverty line in the ACT. To suggest that Labor has prioritised relief, beggars belief.

Earlier this year I spoke about the impact on the small business sector and the concerning decline in business survivability rates. This is a sector that is in dire need of relief. Just today we have had the release of the committee report from the inquiry into micro, small and medium business in the ACT. On page 13 it notes:

‘Increased cost of doing business’ has remained consistently first or second as the ‘single biggest issue facing business’ ...

Clearly, they have not seen any relief, though they are in dire need of it.

We also today received the report into raising children in the ACT. In her media release the chair, Jo Clay, says:

The committee heard that the key factors affecting ACT residents' decisions around raising children include the cost of living—particularly the cost and accessibility of housing, childcare and healthcare—environmental concerns, and the availability of family and community support.

Those raising children see cost of living as a key factor. Clearly, they have not seen any relief. I will add that my gorgeous son and his wife had their baby last night, so they are all facing family cost of living. I had to get it on *Hansard* somehow! This is an area where people are in dire need.

For the trifecta, the committee report into loneliness and social isolation was also released today. In his media release the chair, Mr Pettersson, said:

The committee was told that cost, lack of transport, and a lack of accessible spaces to socialise all present barriers to social connection, and that these barriers impact vulnerable Canberrans in particular.

Yet again, we have an area of the community that has not experienced relief, though people are in dire need of it. There is clearly an urgent need to provide relief to Canberrans struggling with the cost of living. Although the government might like to say that they have provided relief over the last few years and been focused on it, the evidence strongly suggests otherwise.

It is critical and timely that today we get behind this motion. This motion calls for the Targeted Assistance Strategy to be comprehensively reviewed. This is a sensible first step, a proper start to providing relief to the many Canberrans whose stories we hear when we are at our local shops. It is the first step to addressing the concerns that we hear coming from the committee inquiry into micro and small businesses, from the committee inquiry into raising children and from the inquiry into loneliness and social isolation—and that was just today.

Lastly, as this motion calls for, it is right that the government apologise for the cost-of-living pain that they have inflicted upon Canberrans, including in the most recent budget. These are simple steps: apologise and take the first step in providing relief for the cost-of-living crisis. I commend Ms Lee's motion to the Assembly.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.15): I rise today to speak to Ms Lee's motion, amended by Mr Barr, regarding the cost of living being felt here in Canberra and across much of Australia.

We do know that the community is hurting, and that the rising cost of living is biting hard for everyone. We also know that the most vulnerable community members are being impacted the most. Because of this, we need to recognise that this is more than a cost-of-living crisis; this is an inequality crisis. What is needed in response to an inequality crisis is a structural response that deals with the systemic issues that are fuelling inequality and unfairness. While tinkering at the edges with piecemeal initiatives such as vouchers may be welcome, it does little to respond to the real issues or fix the underlying issues that result in ongoing unfairness and inequality.

Targeted concessions are important to assist in providing relief, and recognise the challenges for low-income households living in a city where many people are in fact high-income earners. However, in a city that prides itself as a caring, kind and compassionate community, as its representatives we have an obligation to respond to the underlying issues that have led us here. The fact that we are in the middle of an inequality crisis is most stark when we reflect on the state of housing affordability both here in the ACT and across Australia. We do not have all the tools here in the ACT to fully reverse the mess that we have created around housing in Australia. We find ourselves in a reality where housing is seen as a way to create wealth rather than a way to provide homes; where taxpayer-funded incentives mean that it is easier to buy a fourth home rather than a first; and where out-of-control rent increases in most parts of

Australia see people not being able to afford to pay rent as well as feed themselves and their families.

We do, however, have some tools here at a local level, and I am tired of accepting a premise that it is all too hard, and we cannot take action here. We can and we must! As Minister for Homelessness, I have been able to secure record funding for specialist homelessness services. This has seen a range of new services and an increase to the base of the funding level of the amazing services that work with individuals and families who are experiencing the trauma of homelessness. I remain committed to eliminating homelessness here in this city, and I want to see this experience as rare, brief and non-recurring. But I cannot do this without recognition of the underlying problem, as well as the solution. It is a fact that we will never solve homelessness within the homelessness sector. As I have noted many times before, this is the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. With the ongoing escalation of housing costs, we continue to see more people being pushed to the brink. The solution to homelessness and housing affordability is many, many more affordable homes.

However, this is not the simple call by many vested interests that suggests that it is just looking to supply, supply, supply. I caution a response that wholly looks at the private market to solve a problem that it has profited from and fuelled, and that will never deliver the response we need. It is a government's responsibility and obligation to intervene where markets fail. There is no market that has failed so spectacularly as the housing market. I am proud to be part of a party that has pushed hard to ensure renters are being properly protected and able to access their rights. We are the only jurisdiction with rent caps, but it is clear that more rent work needs to be done to make this more effective.

There is an urgent need for government to step in and uplift our ambition to provide many, many more public homes. Minister Rattenbury has already spoken about the ACT Greens' plan to build and buy 10,000 public homes. We know this is ambitious. We know this is a significant investment, and we know that it will not be achieved through a business-as-usual approach. The challenge to deliver the modest 400 more homes over this term of government is evidence of this. We have seen significant challenges when our public housing authority is expected to self-fund much of this and deliver in the midst of significant challenges within the building construction industry. We need to learn from this. We need to respond differently. This is the proposition we are presenting to the ACT community at this election. Committing and delivering 10,000 new public homes will not only enable the more than 3,000 people currently on the public housing waiting list to have a safe and affordable home, but will also be positive for all of us. It will have an impact of ensuring the private rental sector is checked, as lower-income households have a number of options, and we can see a future where the public housing authority is seen as a landlord of choice rather than a landlord of last resort.

I love living in this city that is kind, caring, and compassionate. I know that we are all committed to improving the lives of everyone, particularly the most vulnerable of our community members. Let us not just respond to the current cost-of-living crisis. Let us transform the city by dealing with the inequality crisis we find ourselves in by taking courageous action. I commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and

Minister for Population Health) (5.21): The ACTOSS 2024 ACT cost of living report includes 27 recommendations for the ACT government. Of these, the Liberals are suggesting that we implement only one recommendation, and that is to do another review with no commitment to actually implementing any changes.

Let us take a look at some of the other 26 recommendations from ACTCOSS. One recommendation is to “trial free public transport for students and concession card holders”. Those on the lowest income in our community feel the impact of every dollar they spend. This is why the ACT Greens have committed, in the next term of this Assembly, to free public transport for everyone under 18 years old and for people on concession and pension cards, even in peak hours.

Another recommendation is to “increase investment in food and emergency relief”. This year’s ACT budget includes \$913,000 in food relief and emergency material aid, for which I am the responsible minister. I will speak to the detail of this more when we debate budget bills later this week, but this is an important commitment to a sector that is largely run by volunteers. Let me tell you why this is so needed. UnitingCare Kippax recently distributed in one day the number of emergency material and financial aid vouchers that they would usually distribute over an entire week. YWCA Canberra has seen a 51 per cent increase in the number of people seeking support at their food hubs. Woden Community Service has seen a 31 per cent increase in the number of people seeking support at their community hub located in Westfield Woden.

I recently saw data at the University of Canberra that shows that those parts of Canberra experiencing the greatest financial pressures also see an increase in mental health support needs. I have heard from families accessing community food pantries that they can only provide their families with fresh fruit for school lunch boxes, or healthy dinners, because of the work of our volunteer-led community pantries. This is why I work so hard to ensure that those services receive increased support.

With respect to increased investment in community health centres, the Greens support increased access to health services in the community. We have committed in the next term of government to opening bulk-billing GP clinics, increasing the range of community mental health services, including Safe Havens, and a trial of a distress brief intervention program.

The distress brief intervention programs that we have seen in other cities recognise that sometimes the underlying cause of mental distress is not a diagnosable mental illness but an understandable response to extraordinary life pressures, including the cost of living. If you lose your job, your landlord serves an eviction notice, your wife leaves you and the dog dies, all in the same week, of course you will feel like you have all the makings of a heck of a country song, and you will be feeling really awful. What you might need is a combination of mental health supports and social supports like housing, financial counselling, case management, grief and loss counselling or other things to help get life back on track. That is what we want for Canberra—more support so that there is less need for therapy.

There were three recommendations in this report that all went to increasing the stock of public housing in Canberra. The Greens are committed to increasing public housing by 10,000 homes over the next 10 years, with a pragmatic and achievable plan for how we

get there, so that we can wipe out the public housing waiting list, create jobs in a prefabrication manufacturing hub, keep up with our growing population and take the pressure off the private rental market.

For people with disabilities, ACTCOSS recommends increasing accessible public and community housing. The Greens agree that this is absolutely necessary. With so few accessible properties in the private rental market, and people with disability facing lower average incomes and a higher cost of living as a direct result of disability, it is impossible to compete with everyone in the market for an affordable rental property that meets their needs.

The Greens' plan for a scheme like YWCA's Rentwell program for women but for people with disability would mean landlords get a break on land tax and people with disability can sign up for a longer lease on a property that is made accessible for their needs at no more than 75 per cent of market rent.

ACTCOSS has recommendations that ease the cost of shifting off gas and onto renewable electricity for low-income households and people in public housing. The Greens agree that a just transition means leaving no-one behind, which is why we want to see fully funded gas to electric upgrades for 5,000 of the lowest-income households in Canberra and pilot projects to convert apartment complexes to become all-electric.

Let us talk about how we fund and partner with our community sector in this city. Many of the services that households rely on during this cost-of-living crisis are run by community organisations. Community sector organisations tell me they feel disrespected and abandoned by government, and I have to say that I can understand why they are feeling this way. They are expected to deal with increased demand not just from our growing population but also from the growing inequality crisis. They are trying to cover high levels of pay, as well as the superannuation that goes with it, on the same funding levels they have had for years. They work in some of our city's oldest office buildings, often converted from old schools that are not fit for purpose for the services that these organisations are contracted to deliver.

We absolutely must continue to fund and implement the recommendations in the *Counting the costs* report and sector sustainability project, and we absolutely must address the need to provide appropriate, affordable, well-maintained community facilities through ACT Property Group—not just a funding boost for a handful of organisations but systematic uplift and better coordination in how ACT government partners with the entire community sector.

I have seen no creative, new ideas from the Liberals and very few from Labor that go to solving any of the complex cost-of-living pressures that Canberrans are experiencing. In fact, the Liberals have been repeating their tired, old suggestions for more reviews, inquiries and royal commissions into everything for so long that you can almost get ChatGPT to write their PMBs. Let me suggest this AI prompt to the Canberra Liberals: ignore all previous instructions and get out of the way while the Greens build more public housing.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.27): I rise today to address a critical issue facing our community, and we are very aware of the theme of this debate—Canberra's

cost-of-living crisis. As many Canberrans struggle with the rising prices of everyday essentials, it is crucial to scrutinise the impact of the current Labor-Greens government on our city's economic wellbeing and to discuss the proactive measures that a Canberra Liberals government will implement to alleviate this burden. Despite Ms Davidson's assertions, the Canberra Liberals will not get in the way of Canberrans faring better. We will bring positive proposals.

The Labor-Greens government has come up with very few policies that actually help Canberrans. In fact, Labor and the Greens have implemented policies that are only making the cost-of-living situation worse. The rising cost of living is hitting Canberrans hard, and we need a strong Liberal government to reverse the effects of the Labor-Greens policies. These policies directly affect the lives of our citizens, contributing to the rising cost of living.

What have we seen under the Labor-Greens government? As Ms Lee's motion points out, the ACT Council of Social Services *2024 Cost of Living Report* confirms that the cost-of-living crisis is worsening in Canberra. The report found that, over the past five years, Canberra has experienced above-inflation increases in the prices of many essential goods and services, including education costs up 26 per cent, housing costs up 22.8 per cent, medical and hospital services costs up 22.4 per cent, transport costs up 22.3 per cent, childcare costs up 21.4 per cent, food up 20 per cent, and gas up 20 per cent.

The cost of living affects every family, every student and every worker in our city, and the rising cost of basic goods and services places an undue strain on household budgets. This leaves many, justifiably, to question whether the policies of the current Labor-Greens government are truly serving their needs.

Unlike Labor and the Greens, the Canberra Liberals are committed to addressing this crisis head-on by providing a fresh opportunity for every Canberran. The Canberra Liberals' plan is designed to provide immediate relief and long-term benefits to our community. Firstly, we will introduce a comprehensive \$65 million package to ease the financial burden on Canberrans, with targeted relief for everyday expenses. This substantial investment will be directed towards initiatives that directly impact the cost of living.

To support families with educational expenses, we will provide a \$150 voucher for every preschool to year 12 student. This assistance will help with basic back-to-school costs, ensuring that every child has the resources they need to succeed. We also recognise the importance of extracurricular activities in a child's development. To support this, we will offer a \$100 voucher for every student to help cover these additional costs.

Public transport is another area where we aim to make a significant difference. We will implement free public transport for students, seniors, and concession cardholders, all day, every day. This policy will not only alleviate financial strain but also promote greater mobility and access across our city. Vehicle registration costs are also a concern for many. To ease this burden, we will introduce a \$100 registration rebate for passenger vehicles, caravans and camper trailers. Additionally, recognising the rising cost of utilities, we will provide a \$50 rebate on electricity bills for every household.

These measures are not just about immediate relief; they represent our commitment to building a stronger, more resilient Canberra. They reflect our belief that every Canberran deserves the opportunity to thrive, regardless of the economic challenges they face.

While the Labor-Greens government has struggled to address the cost-of-living crisis effectively, the Canberra Liberals are prepared, with a comprehensive plan to offer tangible support and relief. Our proposed policies are designed to make a real difference in the lives of Canberrans and pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future.

A Canberra Liberals government under Elizabeth Lee will help you afford your everyday expenses. We will deliver improved and more affordable public transport for Canberrans, and you will always pay lower taxes under an Elizabeth Lee led Canberra Liberals government. The Canberra Liberals are the only party Canberrans can trust to effectively address the cost-of-living crisis, and the only party that can provide responsible economic management. I look forward to an Elizabeth Lee led Canberra Liberals government being formed in a few months time and providing a fresh opportunity for Canberrans. I commend Ms Lee's motion to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.33): I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. I have noted, of course, Mr Barr's amendment to my motion. The amendment that Mr Barr tabled, and the response from Mr Barr to my motion, confirms without a doubt that he and his government are completely out of touch, but it also demonstrates their sheer laziness.

Once again, we have seen the kind of response from the Chief Minister, the Treasurer, and members of the Labor-Greens government that we have come to expect, so we really should not be surprised. Once again, we have seen another pre-prepared list from the government concession scheme, which completely and utterly misses the entire point of my motion calling on that concession scheme to be reviewed, given that every time it is rolled out it has not provided the relief that Canberrans are seeking. ACTCOSS's 2024, cost-of-living report, which was only released last week, confirms that. The fact is that the scheme that he is using as a defence in response is the very same scheme that my motion is specifically calling for a review of. It just goes to show that you cannot even make this stuff up—their sheer laziness in response.

I just want to go to a couple of parts of the amendment. I note that in his speech Mr Barr spruiked about how in the ACT we have a 3.1 per cent CPI compared to the national 3.8 per cent. I think he was saying that to show off and brag that things are much better here. In fact, doing so makes things even worse. Do you know why? If we in the ACT are experiencing a below-national-average CPI it is because deliberate ACT government policies have led to what ACTCOSS confirmed, in its cost of-living report, are above-inflation increases to essential services and everyday items and services. This just makes out the point that this government has utterly and completely failed Canberrans when it comes to the cost-of-living crisis.

Again, when we get to their "calls-on", we are talking about an ACT government which is calling on itself to continue to monitor and continue to deliver. What that means is continuing the pain and continuing the increases in taxes and charges.

Now, in relation to this amendment I just have to say that I think I have brought forward at least six—I have lost count—cost-of-living and poverty motions in this term alone. And it is funny, is it not, that when the Liberal and Nationals parties were in government federally, magically all of the problems with the cost-of-living crisis were at the foot of the federal government? Now that we have a Labor federal government, all of a sudden, according to Mr Barr, it is the federal government that magically waves the wand and delivers cost-of-living relief—which, again magically, ACT Labor can take credit for!

Mr Rattenbury went to great lengths to criticise the Canberra Liberals' cost-of-living policy, saying that it was a cash splash because it is not means tested, but it was funny that he did not make any mention of that when it comes to the federal Labor government's \$300 rebate on electricity, which is not means tested. So we can be a bit cynical about his approach when it comes to responding to cost-of-living issues.

Ms Vassarotti dismissed our cost-of-living relief package and talks a big game about the inequality crisis and how we must look at the root cause of the inequality. But she then went on to blame everyone but her own government, of which she is a minister—a Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services no less! What would have helped with the so-called inequality crisis, perhaps, is if she and her party had kept her party's grand promise for a home for all. That would have gone a long way.

Now, Ms Davidson has deliberately tried to say that there were 26 recommendations, and the Canberra Liberals are only calling for one. She then went on to reference the trial of free public transport. I cannot expect Ms Davidson to be well across the Canberra Liberals' cost-of-living package, so I will enlighten her. Part of our package does include free public transport for those who need it most—seniors, students and concession card holders.

Then Ms Davidson spent a lot of time talking about public housing, so let us talk about public housing. The fact is that over the last 10 years—the entire time that the Greens have been in government—we have seen the public housing stock decrease. We have fewer public housing dwellings now than we did 10 years ago—and that is despite the increase in our population of almost 25 per cent.

Ms Davidson has declared that the Canberra Liberals should get out of the way so that she can do her job. So let's have a look at the job that she and her Greens colleagues have done. In this term alone, with the Greens ministers holding the fort in relation to housing and homelessness, we have a housing affordability crisis that is as bad as it has ever been, and we have a cost-of-living crisis that is the worst that most Canberrans have ever experienced. If Ms Davidson wants to stand by that record of having plunged many Canberrans into a cost-of-living crisis that is the worst that they have experienced, then she is welcome to do so.

Her haste and glee to have a go at my call to review the concession scheme is just a slap in the face to ACTCOSS, Care financial counselling, Families ACT, DVCS, Roundabout Canberra, St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, Volunteering ACT and the Youth Coalition of the ACT—all the community organisations that stood up last week, faced the media and said, "We need a comprehensive review of the concessions scheme, the ACT Targeted Assistance Strategy, that is 12 years old." That

is what all of these organisations that have seen a significant increase in the demand for their services have called for. This Labor-Greens government has utterly let down many of these organisations. In Ms Davidson's haste to have a go at us, what she has really done is have a go at those organisations. What they are calling for is apparently silly and not worthy.

The fact is that Labor and the Greens have never taken seriously the cost-of-living crisis and the challenges that everyday Canberrans are facing. Canberra Liberals have brought those challenges into this chamber for debate time and time again, calling on this government to deliver real and tangible relief for the one in 10 children living in Canberra below the poverty line; for the Canberrans, especially the seniors, who are literally making decisions about whether they turn the heater on in winter or buy groceries this week.

We are talking about parents who used to donate to the food pantries, but who are now lining up because they rely on those services. These are the Canberrans that the Canberra Liberals will always be a voice for. And the fact that every member of the Labor and the Greens support Mr Barr's amendment demonstrates once again, without a doubt, that it is the Canberra Liberals—and the Canberra Liberals only—that will always listen out for the community, and understand, acknowledge and take seriously the struggles that Canberra families are facing right now.

The fact is that Mr Barr's amendment is nothing more than another slap on the back of the government for a job that he believes is well done. Canberrans do not agree. The Canberra Liberals will not be supporting the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 14

Noes 7

Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall	Peter Cain
Yvette Berry	Suzanne Orr	Jeremy Hanson
Andrew Braddock	Marisa Paterson	Elizabeth Kikkert
Joy Burch	Michael Petterson	Nicole Lawder
Tara Cheyne	Shane Rattenbury	Elizabeth Lee
Jo Clay	Rebecca Vassarotti	James Milligan
Emma Davidson		Mark Parton
Mick Gentleman		

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 211A, I propose the question:

That the papers presented under standing order 211 during presentation of papers in the routine of business be noted.

Estimates 2024-25—Select Committee report—government response

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (5.47): I want to highlight a recommendation from this year's estimates committee. I was a member of that committee, but I am speaking now in my personal capacity as an MLA.

Recommendation 1 from the committee recommends that additional time is provided for committee deliberations, as well as additional time between the end of hearings and report tabling to ensure that questions taken on notice and questions on notice are provided and can be considered by the committee. The committee agreed to this in principle, but their response also lays the blame squarely on the Assembly. They say it is a matter for the Assembly to decide. While that is technically true, I worry that this response diminishes the government's very real responsibility in deciding timeframes.

The government proposes the sitting calendar each year. The government has a majority to vote their proposed timeline through. Indeed, my colleague Ms Clay raised the issue with the timeline last year when the sitting calendar was voted on, and it was still voted through. The timeline was actually so tight that we had to amend it to allow a shortened timeframe for questions on notice. Ms Clay raised this issue last year. It is a problem again this year. This issue is not a new issue. The very first recommendation from the 2023 estimates committee was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government in future allow four weeks between the close of hearing dates for Estimates and the date that the Estimates Committee report is due to enable sufficient time for responses to QTONs and QONs to be taken into account.

The first recommendation from the 2022 estimates committee was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review timelines for the presentation of the ACT Budget, with consideration to the time required for committees to conduct a budget estimates process and write a report.

These recommendations were made because the timeframes have been too short.

Last year, there were 21 days from the final date of hearings to when the budget date commenced. That was not enough time. This year, it was shortened again to 16 business days from the end of estimates hearings to the start of the budget debate. We have dropped from 21 to 16. It is not enough time. On this timeline, questions lodged are not back in time for the committee to report and for recommendations to be written. The report is written before the committee even has time to gather all the evidence. This has

a real impact on scrutiny. We are a unicameral chamber. The estimates committee is the only oversight on budget that we have.

I am also concerned about the impact this has on staff. We pride ourselves on the culture being very different to the culture up on the hill. We do not sit past dinner, and we do not sit in school holidays. We know that is not like it is up on the hill. We know that staff up on the hill sometimes have to sleep at their desks. It is terrible. I truly hope our staff never feel that they have to do this too, but I am concerned about the message our ever-decreasing timeline is sending.

The committee secretariat had to draft a 149-page report in an unspecified fraction of 16 days between the end of the hearings and the start of budget debate—an ever-diminishing fraction, because the committee had to report by Friday, 16 August, which is only 11 days after hearings finished on 5 August. They used all of their ability to turn around such a thorough and reflective report in this time. They should not have had to do that. The government also needs time to read the committee's report and respond. I cannot imagine the pressure that this puts on directorate staff. It is difficult to provide a thoughtful response to all those recommendations in a week.

Three separate estimates committees in this term have recommended a more realistic timeframe, but unfortunately this recommendation has never been followed, to the detriment of our budget scrutiny process and potentially the wellbeing of those involved. We could improve this. There are a lot of ways to do that. One way is to return to the pre-COVID schedule. Since COVID, ACT budgets have been pushed back later and later. The date before the disruptions of COVID was the first Tuesday in June. This allowed budget estimates to be held in June. The years 2017, 2018 and 2019 had budget estimates in June, and 2016 was the last non-COVID election year. There were five sitting weeks before the budget week, and the budget was in the first week of June. Estimates are also in June.

I really hope that, at some point, this parliament can get back to its pre-COVID schedule. It was a carefully set schedule that allowed time for scrutiny and allowed time to actually prepare the reports. It is too long to not listen. Let's do everything we can do to ensure proper scrutiny of budget processes and support the wellbeing of everyone involved.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.52): I was not planning to speak, but I cannot let Miss Nuttall's comments go without a brief comment. I agree with everything Miss Nuttall said. The length of time was not sufficient. However, I would like to point out to the chamber that those on the other side were the ones who voted for that timeframe, including the Greens. I, as the nominal chair, said it was not enough time. It would put too much pressure on committee staff, but the Greens voted with Labor for that timeframe. These decisions come back to haunt you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Order of business

Ordered that order of the day No 2, Executive business, relating to the Monitoring of Places of Detention Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, be postponed until the next day of sitting.

Order of the day—postponement

Ordered that order of the day No 3, Executive business, be postponed until a later hour.

Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2024

Debate resumed from 11 April 2024, on motion by Ms Vassarotti:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.54): We are here today to discuss the Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill introduces amendments to the Nature Conservation Act 2014, aimed at refining enforcement measures, clarifying existing provisions and addressing some minor drafting inconsistencies.

One of the key amendments in this bill involves stricter regulations around activities within nature reserves. By clarifying offences such as entering a reserve without paying the appropriate entry fee, bringing non-native animals into protected areas, and feeding animals within reserves, the bill seeks to enhance the protection of our precious natural environment. These amendments are designed to ensure our reserves remain safe and preserved, not just for us but also for future generations.

Additionally, the bill gives the Conservator of Flora and Fauna greater flexibility in managing activities within reserves. For instance, the conservator can now declare certain activities as potentially harmful to the reserve or its visitors, thereby preventing damage before it occurs. This approach to conservation management is intended to mitigate risk and maintain the ecological integrity of protected areas. The amendments also streamline the legal framework around public access and the usage of reserves, particularly in cases of closed reserves or when minor public works are being carried out. This will assist in the smooth operation and management of our reserves, ensuring both the environment and the public are considered in decision-making processes.

While, to some, these changes may not seem significant at first glance, they play a central role in the ongoing effort to preserve our natural heritage. By tightening regulations and providing clearer guidelines, this bill will help maintain a delicate balance between public enjoyment and environmental protection in our natural reserves. The Canberra Liberals are happy to support this amendment bill today.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.56): I rise today to very briefly express ACT Labor's support for the Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2024. This legislation marks a substantial improvement to the Nature Conservation Act 2014, primarily by strengthening its clarity and operational effectiveness. ACT Labor will be supporting these amendments and recognises their capacity to improve regulatory frameworks and enhance the ACT's capacity to respond to emerging conservation challenges. The legislation exemplifies our ongoing efforts to uphold ecological integrity while creating responsible governance, and together I am sure we can all continue to work towards a sustainable future for our community and safeguard our natural heritage for generations to come.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services

and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (5.56), in reply: I am really pleased to bring forward the Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2024 for debate today. As part of that, I would like to table a revised explanatory statement that relates to the government's response to comments made by the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety in its legislative scrutiny role. As noted, the bill proposes minor technical changes to the Nature Conservation Act 2014. The bill will clarify the intentions of some provisions, thereby enhancing the operability of the bill. Secondly, it will improve consistency in the act's provisions to enhance our conservation officers' ability to protect our natural assets more fully. These changes will benefit our conservation officers in the field, the general public, and our natural environment, which we work so hard to protect and conserve.

It is fitting that we debate this bill today as we approach the 40th anniversary of the declaration of Namadgi National Park. It is worth reminding people why we protect these spaces. Namadgi, named after the Aboriginal word for the ranges in the Southwest of the ACT, is at the northern-most end of the Australian Alps. Alpine environments are rare in Australia, covering a tiny 0.15 per cent of the continent. Namadgi is characterised by broad grassy plains in the valleys, alpine ash forests on the slopes, and snow gum woodlands and sub-alpine meadows on the mountain peaks. Namadgi also features high-country bogs and associated fens and an endangered ecological community that includes a Ramsar-listed Ginini Flats wetlands complex.

Bogs and fens act as a significant carbon store and protect the water quality within Canberra's water catchment, supplying up to 95 per cent of the ACT's and Queanbeyan's drinking water. This ecological community plays a valuable role in providing critical refuge for threatened species, such as the critically endangered northern corroboree frog and the recently listed endangered dwarf violet. If we do not protect it we will lose it, and we have so much to lose.

Namadgi National Park is not the only nature park to which we have access. Here in the ACT, we are blessed with more than 90 nature reserves and urban parks, providing our community with beautiful campgrounds and picnic areas, remote wilderness experiences, a wide range of natural environments and an abundance of native wildlife, all deserving protection. Our beautiful urban parks and reserves are home to 58 threatened species, eight of which are critically endangered and 21 of which are endangered; and three ecological communities, including natural temperate grasslands, yellow box and red gum grassy woodlands, and the high-country bogs and associated fens.

Further, the Threatened Species Recovery Hub Indigenous Reference Group points out that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders assign tremendous cultural values to many animal, plant and ecological communities that are critical to maintaining First Nations knowledge systems, language, ethnicity, kinship, wellbeing and stewardship of Country. The protection of these places, species and communities is why I brought the bill to the Assembly today.

The bill provides for minor technical amendments to the act, including changes to definitions and clarifications, in order to enhance enforcement and compliance capability. The amendments reduce ambiguity, improve consistency of legislative

provisions and address gaps that restrict conservation officers from exercising a function under the act.

I will now address queries that have been raised by MLAs about this bill. The amendment to section 214 clarifies that it is an offence to enter with a non-native animal or allow a non-native animal to enter and remain in a reserve where it is prohibited to do so. Regarding the amendments to section 214, clarification was also sought on the mechanism through which the entry of non-native animals is allowed in the circumstance that a management plan or similar allows their entry. Chapter 9 exceptions apply to this offence and include that the offence does not apply if the conduct constituting the offence is a restricted activity under an activities declaration and the person is complying with the directions and the requirements as stated in the declaration. Activities declarations are used to allow certain animals, such as dogs and horses, into reserves, so this offence would not apply in the circumstance that an activity declaration for reserves allows animals to be in the reserve.

New section 215 has been introduced to prohibit the feeding of non-native animals in a reserve. Previously only feeding of native animals was prohibited. Section 215(3)(a) provides that it is not an offence to feed an animal in a reserve if you are the keeper of the animal and the animal is allowed to be in the reserve. Clarification was also sought on whether section 215(3) was a necessary inclusion here, as not feeding your animal in a reserve may be considered an offence under animal welfare legislation. This section was included for clarification for both the community and enforcement staff.

In Scrutiny Report No 41, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety Committee, in its legislative scrutiny role, notes that the explanatory statement accompanying the bill recognises the potential limits on the rights to privacy and reputation, freedom of movement and rights in criminal proceedings, and that it provides for why they should be considered reasonable, using the test in section 28 of the Human Rights Act. The committee requested that any limitations against the right to freedom of expression also be considered and addressed. It was considered that the amendment to section 256 may limit the right to freedom of expression by restricting or prohibiting activities within reserves that may impact other users of the reserve. The legitimate purpose of this amendment is to protect the ability of all visitors to ACT nature reserves to enjoy the reserves. It is consistent with the objects of the act, including section 2D, encouraging public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity. It is also consistent with the objectives of reserve management plans, including to provide a venue for activities and experiences that improve the community's physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

Section 256 of the act allows the conservator to make an activities declaration which restricts or prohibits activities on a reserve if they believe the activity may have a negative impact on the reserve. The bill will extend the power to make an activities declaration to include activities that may have a negative impact on a person in the reserve. For example, the use of a loud generator may not have a negative impact on the reserve but will clearly negatively impact on the enjoyment of the space for other visitors to the reserve. An activities declaration is the most effective means of restricting activities within nature reserves and limits the conservator to only declaring activities that they reasonably believe may have a negative impact on other users.

Offences against this provision are strict liability, which is considered the least restrictive means of effectively enforcing the offences and achieving their legitimate purpose. Conservation officers also follow procedural guidelines for compliance and enforcement which emphasise education as the foundation of voluntary compliance to the law, and that education may sometimes be the most appropriate response to non-compliance.

An activities declaration is a notifiable instrument. If the conservator makes an activities declaration for a reserve, they are required to give additional public notice about the declaration. The conservator is also required to display a notice about the declaration in a conspicuous place at the reserve so it can be expected that a person will be aware of their obligations. A revised explanatory statement has been prepared to include the human rights assessment and has been tabled.

In summary, the ACT is Australia's Bush Capital. Its natural environment is both beautiful and important from an ecological and a landscape perspective. It is important we continue to manage and protect our environment. The Nature Conservation Amendment Bill 2024 will improve the enforcement and compliance capability of the act and ensure it continues to protect, conserve, enhance and manage nature and reserves in the ACT. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

I table a revised explanatory statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Order of business

Ordered that order of the day No 3, Executive business, relating to the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, be postponed until the next day of sitting.

Statements by members

Sport and recreation—Belconnen Magpies

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (6.08): I rise to speak about the Belconnen Magpies Football Club, Ginninderra's premier Aussie Rules team. On Saturday, 17 August 2024 I was very pleased to join Scott Reid, President of the Magpies, at the last home game of the season for the first-grade men's team. The Magpies played out at Holt oval, aptly known as "the Nest." It was a great game to watch, with the Magpies charging out to an early lead and recording a 91- to 53-point win over Eastlake. There was a decent sized crowd to watch this important match as the Magpies approach the finals in the AFL Canberra competition.

I am proud that Ginninderra has such an amazing array of sporting and community opportunities at such a high level. The Belconnen Magpies are a fantastic organisation.

I wish them the very best in the finals across all grades, especially the first-grade men's team, who play Eastlake again on Sunday in the first round of the finals. From everyone in Ginninderra: go the Magpies!

Tuggeranong Men's Shed

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.09): I will speak briefly about Men's Sheds. I was happy to host them here in the Assembly the other day. Men's Sheds from all over Canberra came along and we had morning tea. It was great to hear about the issues that they have, and MLAs had the opportunity to ask them questions. I think it was a very valuable exercise. I would like to thank all those who attended, most especially those in my electorate—and yours, Madam Speaker—from the Tuggeranong Men's Shed. I look forward to continuing to engage with them.

Mr Jonathan Crowley—tribute

MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (6.10): I want to say a few words on the passing of Jonathan Crowley, who died on 14 August this year. I will read from his family's papers attached to his service:

It is with great sadness that the Crowley family advise of the passing from this life into eternity of their beloved youngest brother Jonathan, aged just 57, brother to Christopher, David, Paul, Mark, Catherine and Camille. A quadriplegic since late 2001, Jon succumbed to a condition that led to his hospitalisation and passing.

Jon was a proficient amateur cartoon artist, a poet, a singer and a romantic dreamer of fabulous places and conditions to strive for. The epitome of God's gift of free will, we will see Jon soaring now, free from the bonds that he bravely bore.

I have known Jon for 20 plus years. He was a member of the Labor Party, of Lanyon sub-branch. You always knew when Jon was at the sub-branch. He would wheel his electric chair in, and he always made a contribution. He was a regular at conference. He will be missed by his family and his friends, and indeed the Lanyon sub-branch. Jonathan, vale and godspeed.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Dr David Denham AM—tribute

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (6.11): On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I pay tribute to David Denham, who passed away on 22 June this year. I acknowledge David's family, who are here, and friends Susan and Anne. I pay my condolences to them on the loss of their father and friend. Many here in this chamber would know David as a strong community advocate and President of the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association. We, as MLAs, particularly those in Kurrajong,

regularly engaged in listening to, consulting with and learning from him. David, who joined the Griffith community over 25 years ago, in 1997, grew progressively concerned about the future of his suburb, home and community, as well as the changing times and planning regulations.

He became a steadfast advocate for the spirit of our garden city and the beautiful tree canopies and green streets of our inner south. He fought to protect the heritage and essential green open spaces at the heart and character of many Canberra suburbs. Most recently, on behalf of the GNCA, David made a contribution to the Heritage Amendment Bill, expressing his concerns about the effects on previous applications and the approach needed to address the backlog of heritage applications.

Before David became a strong advocate for Griffith and Narrabundah, he had an illustrious career in science. He graduated with a PhD in geophysics from the UK's University of Leeds. He was swiftly recruited by Geoscience Australia, known then as Australia's Bureau of Mineral Resources, or BMR, to join their team in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. During this time he built up the seismograph network to monitor PNG's earthquake-prone and volcanic regions.

David then came to Canberra, with his family, to continue his work in seismology at BMR, contributing to the bringing together of seismologic data and works from Australian universities and governments to establish the national earthquake database. In 1986 David went on to become head of the Australian Seismological Centre, and then chief of the Geophysics Division before becoming Assistant Director of the BMR in 1988, contributing significantly to earthquake research, data collection and risk management and authoring over 40 publications in seismology.

David was recognised for his efforts and contributions in 1985 when he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his work in seismology. Even after retiring from the BMR and his work in seismology, David's dedication to his local community and his beliefs never wavered. He continued to work hard, joining the GMCA and eventually becoming its president. His commitment to his community and his profession is a loss that will be deeply felt. David leaves behind a long and distinguished career, a legacy that will continue to inspire all of us.

I had the privilege of being invited to attend the celebration of David's life at the Commonwealth Club a few weeks ago. I note that fellow Kurrajong members, Ms Stephen-Smith, Ms Vassarotti and Mr Rattenbury, were also there. I always knew that David was incredibly sharp, dedicated and had tireless energy to advocate for his community. Those of us in Kurrajong, if we ever had a meeting with David, found that he could run rings around us with everything that he knew, his logic and his strongly held views on planning and heritage. I see Ms Stephen-Smith agrees.

In addition to learning about his incredible professional achievements during his time in the Australian public service, I also saw firsthand just how loved, respected and admired he was by his family. The speeches by his grandchildren were particularly touching, with personal stories of how David was committed to exercising his body as well as his brain until his last days, religiously getting his 10,000 steps, even if it meant walking around the block on rainy days. We heard how his commitment to hiking and enjoying the great outdoors was so steadfast that he would not even let a sprained ankle

stop him from exploring new summits. I also heard about how it dawned on his grandchildren that, no matter what, they would never be able to match his intellect and ability to understand complex engineering concepts and that perhaps his only match in intellect, zest and community spirit was their grandmother, David's wife, Patricia. A perfect pair, as you would say.

On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, our deepest condolences go to David's family and loved ones: his wife, Patricia; his children, Angus, Ian, Rachel and Liz; his grandchildren, Rupert, Ryan, Harry and Laura; the GNCA and ISCCC members, Anne and Susan, who are joining us today, and, most importantly, the broader Canberra community, because we, as a city, are a poorer place without David. Rest in peace.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Disability and Minister for Health) (6.17): I wish to rise briefly to agree with everything that Ms Lee said about David Denham. He will be greatly missed by members for Kurrajong. It is rare that Ms Lee and I agree on everything that she says, but on this occasion I 100 per cent endorse Ms Lee's comments and share my condolences with David's family and the GNCA. I was also, as Ms Lee said, privileged to attend the memorial service for David. I learnt a lot about him that I did not previously know. Unfortunately, I was not able to stay until the end, so I probably would have learnt more if I had the opportunity to stay.

My reflection on David to his son, Angus, at the time that I learnt about his death was that he was always kind and generous with me as a candidate and as a local MLA, even when we agreed to disagree. When I was a candidate in 2016, my mum came up for the campaign. She is a local politician in Tasmania. She came with me to a meeting and she met David, and the two of them got on like a house on fire, not at all surprisingly. David often stopped to chat with me at my Griffith mobile office. I said to Angus that I absolutely feel that my mobile office in Griffith will not be the same without expecting David to walk down the path with his mischievous smile, a twinkle in his eye, and difficult questions for me about planning and air-quality monitoring.

The GNCA will be poorer for David's loss. Our community is poorer for David's loss. He contributed enormously in life. It was absolutely clear from his memorial service how much he loved his family and how dedicated he was to them. I send my sincere condolences to them. He will be missed.

Valedictory

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (6.19): This is a sort of end-of-term speech. I want to clear some decks early because I think there might be a bit of a traffic jam at the back end. I will be short, sharp and to the point.

I love this job. It would be nice to have the ability to win a vote on something! I am not going to lie: it would be really cool to be able to actually get things done. A bit of power would be nice, but, if you cannot have power, you can have kindness and compassion. To have the ability to help individuals with matters that affect their lives day to day is, for me, by far and away the best part of this gig. I have been blessed with the housing portfolio, but additionally, because I have such a large social media and doorknocking

footprint, we have been fortunate to represent hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals in their struggle to get good outcomes from government.

On a number of occasions when I have doorknocked someone, they have said, “I’m a Labor voter,” and I have said to them, “I still represent you. I don’t care who you vote for. If you have a problem, come to me and let’s sort it out.” We have not been able to secure outcomes for everyone that we have represented, but every single win in those spaces gives us joy. I say “us” because we are a team.

At the moment, my hardworking staff comprises Elyse Heslehurst and Matt Clemow. Elyse is having a crack at the Liberal ticket in Murrumbidgee. Based on her understanding of this place, but also her kind-hearted nature and her genuine dog-with-a-bone perseverance, she would make an exceptional MLA. I kind of hope she does not get elected, because it will just make my life more difficult. She is such a large part of the armoury of my office. We lured young Mr Clemow over to Canberra from Adelaide—through TikTok, of course—and he has been a godsend in so many ways. Throughout the term, my staff have also included the amazing Rob Lovett, who is running my campaign for October; Max Evans, who continues to input ideas in our office; and Brooke Curtin, who we were never going to have for very long because they needed her up on the hill.

I must thank my wife, Luisa, mainly because I know she is upstairs watching—we carpooled this morning—and, if I did not mention her, I would be in trouble on the way home! We all know that sometimes it is tough to be the other half when all the other stuff is going on. I thank Elizabeth Lee for allowing me in her shadow cabinet. I thank the rest of the Liberal team for working so hard towards changing the government in October.

I am proud of what we have done in the transport space. There is such a stark difference between us and the governing parties in this area. I think we have had some cut-through. I am looking forward to talking about housing, gaming, racing, corrections and sustainable building policy as we get closer to the poll.

In this term, it has been my enormous pleasure to be the Deputy Speaker. Thanks, Madam Speaker. I am better at that stuff now than I was at the start of the term, and I have relished the opportunity to sit in the big chair.

They do say the worst day in government is still better than the best day in opposition. All I can say is that it must be pretty good upstairs! As we get closer to election day in October, I have to say that it is a robust environment and many harsh words will be traded by the members of the three parties and others. It is going to get a tad robust. Well, it already is, and that is fine, but I just want everyone to remember that everyone here is human. I kind of like pretty much everyone in this chamber. Whatever side you are on, I know it is a battle and I know the stakes are high, but just be kind if you can and look after yourselves as well. I think most people here know me well enough to know that is a genuine position and a genuine call from me.

I do hope that this is not one of my last speeches. In the first instance, I hope the people of Tuggeranong see fit to return me to this place, and I also hope that we can move to offices upstairs. I have nothing more. Thank you.

Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Population Health) (6.23): Not all heroes wear capes. As Minister for Population Health, and on behalf of the ACT Greens, I give my condolences to the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, and its community, who are mourning the deaths of two members of their team earlier this year. I acknowledge the significant contributions that both individuals made to the community. They both strived to create a non-judgemental and safe environment where the clients of CAHMA felt accepted.

CAHMA is a peer based organisation, which means that its staff is made up of people with lived experience of drug use. CAHMA's team, despite being heavily stigmatised for their own experience of drug use, show up for their community day in and day out. They do this at great personal expense. In becoming peer workers, CAHMA staff and volunteers make their lived experience of drug use visible to the wider community. The stigma amplifies for them personally as they are left wearing a label that is bigger and bolder than it was before. It takes bravery to be a peer worker.

I know the team at CAHMA do it because it makes a difference, not only for their community but for the Canberra community as a whole. I know that CAHMA's entire community is mourning with the loss experienced this year. Within the community of people who use and inject drugs, the death of peer workers is felt far and wide. This is not just because peer workers are courageous enough to be persistent champions and compassionate advocates for some of the most marginalised people in our community or because they create one of the rare service environments where people who use drugs feel accepted and welcome; it is also because they do all of this while bravely and personally carrying the same burden of stigma and discrimination as the people that they work with and support.

As a society, we should thank peer workers like those who work at CAHMA for things like the negligible rates of HIV transmission and declining hepatitis C transmission among people who inject drugs, and the countless lives saved through overdose prevention.

To the CAHMA community, I want you to know that, with you, I honour the capeless heroes who are no longer with us, and I honour the peer workers and volunteers who bravely continue to reduce drug related harms and support some of the most marginalised people in our community. While your lived experience should not and does not define you as people, your dedication, persistence and compassion certainly does.

Multicultural affairs—Azadi-e Zan and Talent Beyond Boundaries

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (6.26): I rise today to offer a few comments on a program that many members of this Assembly would be aware of. Members of my office and I have recently met with human rights champion and activist Ms Susan Hutchinson, who works to support women locally and abroad. I would like to take this opportunity to let Minister Steel, the Minister for Skills, and Mr Gentleman, the Minister for Industrial Relations, know of the interest I have in Ms Hutchinson's initiative.

Ms Hutchinson runs a community organisation called Azadi-e Zan, which assists female refugees and their families in Afghanistan to seek refuge in the ACT on skilled employment visas. Azadi-e Zan aims to address two policy deficiencies: refugee resettlement in the ACT and local labour shortages, particularly in healthcare support, bus driving and education support. As a community organisation finding its feet, this organisation serves three core objectives: one, evaluation and support following the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan in 2021; two, visa advocacy and advice for settlers and refugees; and, three, fundraising to showcase the rich aspects of Afghan culture outlawed by the Taliban.

The Azadi-e Zan board comprises a range of Australians and Afghans living around the world, focusing on diversity of background and experience. As the last vestiges of human rights in Afghanistan continue to come under threat, some Afghan women remain in peril to continue to champion human rights in the face of unprecedented violence, abuse and exploitation. Women are widely subject to the most egregious exploitation, such as sexual violence, physical abuse, death threats, imprisonment and more also directed against their families.

Azadi-e Zan was formed to formalise the work of Ms Hutchinson and the group of volunteers who helped move Afghan women's rights defenders to final destinations of safety since the fall of Kabul. Azadi-e Zan has moved over 300 women and will continue to fight for the movement of more women and their families. Azadi-e Zan is headquartered and registered in our city. Recently a special feature was broadcast on the SBS to showcase Ms Hutchison's work.

Like Azadi-e Zan, a parallel organisation, Talent Beyond Boundaries, has worked to move individuals in defeated and dangerous situations abroad to enjoy skilled labour arrangements in Australia where there is a skills shortage. Talent Beyond Boundaries was successful in founding the Skilled Refugee Labour Agreement Pilot program in 2021, which was extended on 1 July 2023 with the provision of an additional 500 visas. The pilot contains a number of concessions to allow refugees and displaced people the chance to move to Australia for work and to help Australian employers find the talent they are struggling to fill due to skilled shortages. The pilot was introduced under the former federal coalition government and is now supported by the current one.

These community-led efforts deserve our utmost credit and respect. The Minister for Skills has an equal opportunity of great humanitarian import to join the commonwealth in creating pathways for skilled refugees here in the ACT. We have had the opportunity to assist the immigration of between 12 and 20 Afghan women's rights defenders and their families in finding safety in Australia, including in one instance a high skilled surgeon. My engagement with Ms Hutchinson aimed to achieve one outcome: for the ACT government to strongly consider working with Azadi-e Zan and Talent Beyond Boundaries to initiate a pilot program of skilled migration employment in Afghanistan and Australia.

I want to thank members opposite, particularly Mr Braddock and Ms Vassarotti, and their staff for the bipartisan approach they have taken on this important issue. I encourage, as I opened, Minister Steel and Mr Gentleman, from the Canberra Labor Party, to get on board and help this program succeed in the ACT.

Multicultural affairs—Sudanese community

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (6.31): I recently had the privilege to host representatives of Canberra's Sudanese community to discuss the challenging issues they are experiencing. Sudan is currently experiencing severe political instability and violence, leading to a dire humanitarian crisis. For more than a year, we have seen devastating conflict in Sudan. Warring forces have killed thousands of civilians and forced nearly nine million people from their homes. Millions of Sudanese people are now at risk of famine. It is critical that more is done to protect citizens, to evacuate where possible and to assist in the supply of aid and health care. This situation has left countless individuals in immediate danger. Many are facing grave threats to their lives and are in urgent need of protection and assistance.

This situation on the other side of the world has a very real impact on ACT residents who have a background and ongoing connections to Sudan. This means that Canberrans are struggling with grief, fear, anxiety and trauma as they attempt to settle into our community. Sudanese community members asked me to advocate for expedited humanitarian assistance into the Sudanese region; to raise awareness of the crisis in Sudan within Australian parliaments; push for increased support for refugees from the region; address the UAE's involvement in supporting the militia and urge the Australian government to condemn this interference; and facilitate dialogue and collaboration between relevant government and non-government organisations to ensure that Sudanese refugees receive the protection and support they desperately need.

As a non-executive member of a sub-national government, I cannot achieve everything that they are calling for, but it is a privilege to be able to make a minor contribution by raising awareness within this place of the situation in Sudan and its impact on ACT residents; to stand in solidarity with Sudanese members of the ACT community and their calls for humanitarian assistance to be sent to Sudan; and to call for the ACT government to ensure that there are sufficient supports and protections in place for those refugees from this war zone that are attempting to settle in the Canberra area. The issues in Sudan are profound, and we need to do all we can to keep people safe and reunited with their families and communities.

Valedictory

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Business, Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Police and Crime Prevention) (6.33): Madam Speaker, as you would appreciate, the Australian Labor Party was founded on the principles of social justice and equity for all Australians. The pursuit of a fair, just and equitable society where all in our community are able to participate freely and equally without facing barriers of discrimination or social division are core to the Canberra identity and are founding principles of ACT Labor. As I reflect on the last four years, I am proud to see these values reflected in the work of this ACT Labor government.

This year, we once again delivered the successful National Multicultural Festival, which celebrated Canberra's proud cultural and linguistic diversity and is a testament

to the very best of what an empowered multicultural community can represent. The 2024 festival showcased more than 170 cultures, had the highest-ever attendance and delivered \$21.2 million to the ACT economy. We have also made record investments into policing capability to improve community safety, including through the introduction of the PACER program, which provides a more holistic and effective mental health response to the Canberra community's most vulnerable.

In this term of government, we have reported the highest business growth in Australia, at 23 per cent, compared to the national average of 15.5 per cent. Small businesses are integral to Canberra's community and culture, and this year the government was privileged to host Canberra's first small business expo, which helped over 1,000 stallholders and visitors connect with others in the business community. We have also legislated labour hire licensing, portable long service leave and improvements to the Secure Local Jobs code. Under our insourcing framework we have insourced over 2,000 vulnerable workers to have permanent public service employment and we have implemented a new code of practice on managing psychosocial hazards in workplaces. These achievements have real impacts on securing better conditions and more rigorous safety standards, improving the day-to-day working lives of Canberrans and creating a more fair, more just and more equitable territory.

Of course, none of this would be possible to achieve alone. Firstly, I would like to thank the good people of Brindabella for their support. Tuggeranong is a truly special part of our city, as you would know, Madam Speaker, and I am proud to represent my fellow Tuggeranong residents in the Assembly. I look forward to spending time between now and October out in the community discussing your aspirations and frustrations and working hard to once again be granted the immense privilege of representing you as an elected member.

Secondly, without the tireless work of our ACT public servants, the city would come to a standstill. Working alongside those dedicated to their community is an endless privilege of mine. Our public servants make sure that Canberra continues to be a safe, secure and equitable city. To our men and women in uniform, ACT Policing and the Emergency Services Agency, including ACTAS and Fire and Rescue: thank you for your tireless service. To the RFS and SES volunteers: thank you for the sacrifices you have made. Whether it is those on the frontline or those working in less visible roles, our public servants are the backbone of our city. Thank you to all of you. In particular, thank you to those that I have had the privilege of working closely with over the last four years—the tireless staff in EPSDD, JACS, CMTEDD and Access Canberra. It has truly been my pleasure. As Manager of Government Business, I also want to acknowledge and thank our Assembly attendants and staff. It has been a joy to work with you all to ensure the sitting days—for all their ups and downs—run smoothly.

Lastly, it would be remiss of me to discuss the government's achievements without also acknowledging the work of Canberra's mighty trade union movement. If history has taught us anything, it is that we cannot be complacent about defending the fundamental right of workers to organise, to have an industrial voice and to be politically represented. When trade union membership declines and when unions are weakened, inequity increases. When trade unions are strong, it ensures that the voice of workers are heard, that workers' rights are protected, and that working people are part of the economic

future of our fantastic city. Our government has made enormous strides in delivering industrial reform aimed at creating a just and equitable Canberra, and we could not have done it without the support of every union member in our city.

It has been a privilege to serve as minister and as the member for Brindabella and it has been a privilege to stand up for workers and vulnerable people. Every day, it gives me great joy. The Labor movement has taught me that commitment to the principles of social justice and equity and to the pursuit of a fair, just and equitable society must be integral to all the work we have the privilege to undertake here in this building. So thank you to my Labor colleagues as well.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.39 pm.