



**DEBATES**  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**DAILY HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

29 August 2024

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Thursday, 19 September 2024**.

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**Thursday, 29 August 2024**

**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.

**Mr Bill Wood AM**  
**Motion of condolence**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development):  
I move:

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of Mr Bill Wood AM, former Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1989 to 2004 and Minister of a diverse range of portfolios, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

I rise this morning to pay tribute to Bill Wood AM. Bill was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, on 4 November 1935. Bill and his twin brother, Peter, proudly carried on the legacy of their parents, Leslie Arnold Wood and Anne Alice Margaret Rayment, who lived a life of service to their community.

Bill's father, Les, served in the Australian Imperial Force and worked as a schoolteacher before commencing his career in politics, when he successfully won the seat for East Toowoomba at the 1946 Queensland by-election. Les went on to become the Leader of the Opposition in Queensland in 1957, until he sadly passed away seven months later, in 1958. Les's involvement in education and politics paved the way for Bill and his brother, Peter, who both went on to become teachers and successful politicians.

Growing up in Toowoomba, Bill would get up to fun and mischief with his twin brother, including confusing the opposing half-back as rugby players for the then Toowoomba State High School. He would later complete his teaching degree at the University of Queensland and went on to become a dedicated educator of children with disabilities across numerous Queensland state schools.

Bill was an inspiring and passionate teacher who loved to see his students learn and succeed. Shaped by his father's political career and the drive to give back to the community, Bill eventually worked towards his own political career. His brother, Peter,

had successfully won his home seat of Toowoomba East for the Labor Party in 1966, which meant that Bill had to look a little further afield to contest the next Queensland state election.

Bill and his young family moved to Cairns and, in 1969, Bill was elected to the Queensland parliament as the Labor member for Cook. Peter was also re-elected to the Queensland parliament, so the pair made history by being the first twin brothers elected to any Australian parliament and government. In 1972 Bill was transferred to the new seat of Barron River. Redistributions do occur in politics; electorates are renamed. Unfortunately, Bill was defeated at the 1974 election.

His lifelong commitment to public service and the values of continuous learning instilled by his father saw him then return to education. His reappointment as a teacher was not straightforward, but Bill remained dedicated to improving ways of educating children with disabilities.

In 1977, a fairly tough time for the Labor Party federally, Bill took on the challenge of running for the federal seat of Leichhardt. He was only narrowly defeated, but it was at this point he saw that the future for him and his family was in Canberra.

With years of tireless political campaigning behind him, Bill's young children enjoyed the extra time they got to spend with their father. Their family saw a move to Canberra as a way to get away from politics. But politics was obviously something that Bill could not leave behind.

His first role in Canberra was as a teacher of children with disability at the Woden School. Perhaps like many who moved to Canberra in that era, he had never planned to stay in Canberra for long, but he saw the move as the best decision of his life. Several years later, Bill was drawn back into politics and took on the role of private secretary to ACT Senator Susan Ryan when she was the Minister for Education.

During that time there was a significant shift in Canberra politics, as the ACT moved to become a self-governing territory. Bill took on an opportunity to be part of the first Legislative Assembly campaign, to give back to his new community. In that 1989 election, Bill was elected as a Labor member to the very first ACT Legislative Assembly.

He was the only backbencher in the first Follett Labor government, and the breadth of administration for that First Assembly and that first government was indeed challenging, particularly for Bill, who had to sit on every single Assembly committee. He worked diligently during his first term and was handsomely re-elected to the Assembly in 1992, when he was appointed as the Minister for Education and Training, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Environment, Land and Planning.

The portfolio responsibilities for education and training were obviously fitting, having regard to his work as an educator, but his responsibility for the arts aligned with one of his greatest passions in life. Bill was passionate about promoting and advocating for the arts. He was instrumental in bringing life to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, the Glassworks, the ACT Poetry Prize, the Street Theatre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the Civic library and the Canberra Art Prize, to name a few.

Bill was re-elected to the Assembly in 1995 and 1998—again, during tough periods for the Labor Party. During the Carnell Liberal government era, he was appointed as Deputy Speaker and took on a range of shadow portfolios in areas such as the arts, development, justice and community services.

In 2001, Bill stood for the electorate of Brindabella one last time. Under the newly formed Stanhope Labor government, Bill took on the responsibilities of Minister for Urban Services, Disability Housing and Community Services, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

It was his role as Minister for Police and Emergency Services on 18 January 2003 that truly encapsulated Bill’s lifelong commitment to community service. He not only helped to drive the response to the devastating Canberra bushfires, but also he used the lessons learned to ensure that Canberrans were prepared for the future and to heal from such a devastating loss.

Another important legacy that Bill leaves the ACT is the early work that he led to improve housing affordability and reduce housing stress. In 2002, he commissioned an affordable housing task force to assess the extent of housing stress in Canberra and to develop a broad range of strategies to increase housing affordability. The findings of that task force led to an unprecedented investment in social housing, land supply and homelessness services.

After achieving so much in a long and successful political career, Bill said farewell to this place on the last sitting day in 2004. To many, in the early days of self-government and indeed right through the first couple of decades of this place, Bill was seen as the “father of the Assembly”. His name is proudly inscribed on the very first page of the first-ever *Hansard*.

He was admired by his colleagues and his political opponents for his social activism, his dedication to his constituents and his incredibly strong sense of community. He was seen as a person who could take on enormous workloads with ease and flair, and he always had time to help others.

For Bill, there was little time to rest. Following his formal retirement from politics, he remained active in the community sector and took on roles as chairman of Arthritis ACT and as patron of the not-for-profit disability organisation Abbeyfield ACT. He was also an active columnist for the *Canberra Times* and remained up to date with politics and current affairs.

Bill’s commitment to the community did not go unnoticed. On 26 January 2013, Bill was a recipient of the Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to the community and the Legislative Assembly of the ACT. True to his humble character, Bill recognised that there were so many people and community groups working very hard and doing great things.

He could never have achieved all that he did without his family and his loving wife, Beverley. Beverley was the greatest love of his life and provided endless support to Bill through all of his political campaigns and career. Together they raised their four

children, Andrea, Richard, Matthew and Wendy. Although Bill was always a busy man, he was first and foremost a loving father. He patiently encouraged his children to learn and grow, he actively supported them in their many endeavours, and he was truly present when they needed him the most. He also adored his six grandchildren, and taught them to think and to debate.

Bill also had a very strong sense of family within the Labor Party. He was actively involved in campaigns for his Labor colleagues and provided mentorship for new and emerging politicians. He had a wealth of experience and put aside his busy schedule for the betterment of the team. He was proud to be involved in the First Assembly, but, more than anything, he wanted to be there to help shape a government that worked for the people.

Our time in this place did not overlap as members, but I was a young staffer in the early days of my career, and Bill was always very helpful, supportive and encouraging of my political involvement. I know I speak for hundreds, if not thousands, of members of the ACT branch of the Labor Party in acknowledging his contribution to mentoring and supporting us through our political journeys.

His lifelong commitment to education, politics, family and community is something that we can all aspire to. He will be sorely missed, and his legacy as a founding member of this place will never be forgotten.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition): On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I pay tribute to Bill Wood AM, who passed away in May this year. Bill was a stalwart of the Labor Party, as the Chief Minister has outlined, having first been elected as a Labor member in the First Assembly when the ACT obtained self-government in 1989.

Of course, the ACT was not Bill's first foray into politics. Bill served as a Labor member in the Queensland state parliament in 1969 as the member for Cook for three years and then as the member for Barron River for two years.

Bill and his family came to Canberra in 1978 and he was elected to the Assembly in 1989. He was subsequently re-elected at the 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2001 elections, which in itself is an incredible record, and he served in the Assembly for a total of over 15 years. During that time, Bill took on a number of ministerial roles, including in education, disability housing, community services, police, arts, and urban services.

In 2004, Bill retired from the Assembly, but certainly not from serving the Canberra community. He went on to become the chairman of Arthritis ACT and patron of Abbeyfield ACT, where he continued to advocate for the community sector and people with disabilities.

Bill's dedication to the Canberra community was unwavering. He was honoured for this dedication and hard work in 2013, when he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to the community and the Legislative Assembly.

I did not have the pleasure of knowing Bill personally, but from what I have heard and understand, Bill was one of those conviction politicians. He was incredibly hardworking and diligent in his service to his community, and he was admired by

colleagues from across the political spectrum.

This unshakable determination and work ethic continued right up to his last days, along with his passion for politics. I understand that his niece, Stephanie, observed that on his final day, as a *Quarterly Essay* about Peter Dutton and Manning Clark's *A History of Australia* were on his hospital bedside. Bill will always be remembered in this place as a member of our First Assembly and for his commitment and dedication to a life of serving his community.

In Bill's first speech in this place over 35 years ago, he recognised the historical significance of the moment when he said:

We have not been born in the most auspicious circumstances. It has been a long battle, I do not know when it started, whether it was twenty years ago, but certainly it generated considerable impetus about four years ago. Defining a system—which itself is long and tortuous—was a long and tortuous process.

Madam Speaker, I think that captures the historic moment, the tumultuous time of the commencement of this Assembly, and it gives us in this place now an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as an Assembly.

During Bill's valedictory speech in 2004, he also took the opportunity to reflect on his first contribution in the Assembly through to why, after 15 years of service, he knew it was right for him to leave, when he said:

... 15 years ago, in a carefully scripted program, the life of this Assembly began. With a sudden urge to get his name recorded in that historic first *Hansard*, an eager member jumped to his feet and, ignoring that script, spoke without leave or place in the daily program. My name remains in *Hansard*. I have mostly kept to the standing orders since then. The *Hansard* says that it was by leave, but that is not right; that was not what happened.

I think that captures what Mr Barr was saying about how he appears, still to this day and will forever, on the first page of the first *Hansard* of this place. Bill did go on to say:

But 15 years is long enough. It is time to move on, reluctantly, but the timing is right. I will miss the place and the work—the more of that the better—but I am not sure that I am looking forward to the likely dramatic change of pace. Running a ministry, a number of them, is a great job; it is the best. It provides the opportunity to play a constructive role in running this great city—demanding, challenging, constructive, frustrating, but always rewarding.

Today, 20 years on, we stand here as members of the 10th Assembly on the shoulders of the members that came before us, particularly in the First Assembly—members like Bill Wood.

On behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I express our deepest condolences to Bill's family: his wife, Beverley, his children, Andrea, Richard, Matthew and Wendy; also Steve, Eileen, Fu Yang and Cameron; his grandchildren, Sylvia, Nick, Maxwell, Harry, Georgette and Bella; and his many friends and loved ones.

Bill was a giant of ACT politics and of the Canberra community, and we are a better place today because of his enormous contribution to our city. May he rest in peace.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong): I rise to speak on behalf of the ACT Greens and extend my condolences to all those in the chamber and beyond who knew and loved Bill.

Bill was a figure of admiration whose impact extended far beyond the confines of his cherished Labor family. This esteem was evident at his funeral, attended by every Chief Minister, a testament to the high regard in which he was held across the political spectrum. Those who knew, worked with or were supported by Bill consistently spoke of his dedication, deep commitment and compassion. All of those things made him a better politician.

As has been touched on, not many can claim the distinction of serving in multiple parliaments, but Bill was one of those few. His political journey included periods in both the ACT Legislative Assembly and the Queensland parliament. He was born into a political family, with both his father, Les, and identical twin brother, Peter, serving in the Queensland parliament. Bill's working life was dedicated to public service, having initially pursued a career in education as a teacher.

During an occasion like this, it can feel challenging to speak eloquently in tribute to someone that you did not know well. While I have met Bill on a number of occasions, I never had the opportunity to converse with him in great detail. But on this occasion, there are two really important things that I want to reflect on that are less about the facts and details of Bill's life and more about what he represented during his long career.

First and foremost, as I noted earlier, he began his professional life as a schoolteacher. We probably need more teachers in politics. Much of the world is currently holding its breath, hoping that the United States elects a teacher as its vice-president in November, and there is a good reason for that. Teachers are far more important to the happiness and success of our whole community than their status and profile in most communities would suggest. A teaching career is an excellent preparation for politics in many ways because, at heart, both professions, when done well, are about service. They are about giving more than you take. They are about that rising tide that lifts all boats.

Teachers need to skilfully balance listening to others with commanding attention. So do politicians. They need to be able to read people, as do politicians. They need to be able to juggle priorities that are often in conflict. Politicians; you get the point of where I am going.

They have to support kids who are struggling while providing additional challenges for kids with a keen appetite for learning. They have to deal with parents, admin, reporting obligations and playground behaviour. They have to recognise the ways in which their classrooms are reflective of the broader community and act accordingly. Good teachers try to make sure they navigate all of this and more in order to create multiple winners. Good governments do the same thing.

The fact that Bill returned to teaching after losing his seat in the Queensland parliament and moving to Canberra suggests that he was aware of the transferability of his skillset;



then, when the ACT attained self-government, he recognised an opportunity to transfer that skillset once again.

That leads me to the second thing that I want to reflect on. That first term of the Assembly must have been a bit of a wild one. In rebellion against the very notion that Canberra might want to govern itself, four of the 17 members represented parties who opposed self-government. In fact, they opposed self-government so much that they could not even govern themselves enough to coalesce into a single party. Three members represented the No Self-Government Party, while one was from the Abolish Self-Government Coalition. Only one of those four survived into the Second Assembly.

Meanwhile, Bill, as a member of the Labor Party, took government in the ACT seriously from the start. It is a tribute to him and some of his early colleagues that the positive role of government and the importance of self-government quickly outshone the regressive notion that Canberrans could happily leave the management of the territory to someone else, voluntarily embracing second-class citizenship compared to other Australians.

It is an interesting thought experiment to consider what we probably would not have here in Canberra if people like Bill had not rolled up their sleeves and got to work 35 years ago, if the no self-government proponents had kept going and sabotaged the initial flexing of our muscles of self-representation.

Without people like Bill, it is hard to see ourselves in this place right now, with the energy and ambition we all bring to moving Canberra forward into the future. Building on the work he and others did, he was a faithful proponent of the idea of service and community for more than 50 years, and we need more like him.

Bill's life after politics was equally rich and fulfilling. He remained active in numerous organisations, including Arthritis ACT and Abbeyfield. His dedication to public service was formally recognised in 2013, when he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant contributions to the community and to the Legislative Assembly.

Former Chief Minister and now Senator Katy Gallagher, speaking at Bill's funeral, highlighted his dual qualities of being both interested and interesting. Bill had a genuine knack for building relationships and pursuing his passions, including housing and the arts.

Beyond his public persona, Bill was a loving and valued partner, son, brother, father and grandfather. Family were central to his life. On behalf of the ACT Greens, I extend my heartfelt condolences to Bill's beloved wife, Beverley, his children, Andrea and Steve, Richard and Eileen, Matthew and Fu Yang, Wendy and Cameron, and his grandchildren, Sylvia, Nick, Maxwell, Harry, Georgette and Bella.

Bill's legacy is one of tireless service, profound compassion, and an unwavering commitment to improving the lives of people in the communities in which he served. He will be remembered not only for his political achievements, but also for the personal connections he forged and the positive impact he had on countless lives. His life stands as a testament to the enduring power of dedication, empathy and public service—

someone from whom we can all continue to take inspiration.

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra—Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Minister for City Services, Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform and Minister for Human Rights): I rise to add my voice in paying tribute to the late Bill Wood AM and to extend my sincere condolences to his family, his friends, his loved ones and his many colleagues, following his passing on 19 May.

Madam Speaker, Bill was a man who dedicated his life to serve others, as you have heard expressed already—a man who has been described as “nothing phoney”, and “the greatest arts minister ever”. He was hands-on, approachable and, above all, always wanted to help, no matter the role or the time of his life.

Bill was born in Toowoomba, Queensland on 4 November 1935 and into an active Labor family. He, his father and his twin brother, Peter, all served in the Queensland parliament. Bill moved to Canberra in 1978 with his wife and partner since the age of 16, Beverley, and their four children, Wendy, Matthew, Richard and Andrea. They had not planned to stay for long, but, luckily for the Canberra community, Bill and Bev changed their minds. They made Canberra their home and, by Bill’s own admission, he could not keep out of politics. He was elected to the first ACT Legislative Assembly in 1989 and remained a member for 15 years.

He is perhaps best remembered for his passion for the arts. Bill believed that cultural activities play a key role in Canberra being an inclusive, prosperous, skilled and creative city. Bill credited Bev with having introduced him to the performing arts. She is an accomplished dancer and later a choreographer.

In the early 1990s, Bill Wood described his granting of the ACT’s first literary award and grants to film, video and music artists as something he had been waiting for all his life. The article in the *Canberra Times* by Robert Macklin that described this occasion noted his genuine interest in art and added, “There is nothing phoney about Bill Wood. He could well be the most self-effacing politician to which Canberra has ever given shelter.”

It was this commitment to the arts that led him to play a pivotal role in the establishment of so many of Canberra’s cultural institutions, organisations and prizes, so many of which endure today, from the Tuggeranong, Manuka and Belconnen arts centres to the Canberra Glassworks, the Street Theatre, CMAG, the ACT Poetry Prize and the Canberra Art Prize.

It is now part of Canberra’s arts folklore that he and his twin brother caused great amusement when they both attended the opening night of a Bell Shakespeare production of *A Comedy of Errors* at the Canberra Theatre Centre, a play which deals with confusions arising from identical twins.

He rescued major Nolan works from the Lanyon Homestead during the 2003 fires—appropriately enough, from the *Dante’s Inferno* series—piling them into the back of his own car and storing them there until they could be safely rehomed.

It was Bill who announced and ensured there was funding for the bushfire memorial project developed in consultation with the community and which continues to stand as a focal point in remembering the January 2003 fires.

Bill was not only Minister for the Arts but minister for many other things, including Minister for Urban Services. As his contemporary counterpart, I think it is important for me to reflect on some of those achievements, too.

As the city responded to significant damage and destruction from the fires, he led several improvements to disaster recovery. A number of things that we now take for granted exist because of Bill. Bill established a new domestic recycling and garbage collection service to facilitate and encourage recycling. He introduced the default 50-kilometre-an-hour speed limit for local streets to improve safety, and the first standards and guidelines for records management.

He is remembered fondly by his directorates as a minister who was caring and by his staff as wonderful to work for. It is no surprise that he attracted dedicated, loyal staff, including Margaret Watt, who is here today—qualities he valued and lived himself.

After a total of 20 years in public office, five in Queensland and 15 here, Bill did not recontest the 2004 election. But it is no surprise that he remained such an active member of the community, an enduring and passionate supporter of the arts, mentor to countless Labor candidates, and mentor and friend to successive arts ministers.

Bill is remembered as someone who lived by his father's words—"to be useful"—but he was so much more than useful; he was, and he remains, loved, respected and revered.

This Assembly and the ACT would not be what we are today without Bill Wood. He has left an indelible mark on our city and on our community. Vale, Bill Wood.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, I want to acknowledge in the room the family of Bill Wood, and recognise and welcome back, in order to show their respect, Gordon Ramsay, Marion Reilly, Dr Chris Bourke and former Senator Bob McMullan.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

*At 10.34 am, the sitting was suspended until the ringing of the bells.*

*The bells having been rung, Madam Speaker resumed the chair at 10.45.*

## **Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Act 2019—review**

### **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) (10.45): Understanding that we have a very full agenda today, rather than speak to this ministerial statement I would be happy to simply present the review of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Act 2019, its appendix and a copy of my statement.

I present the following papers:

Review of the operation of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Act 2019, dated August 2024.

Appendix A: Detailed analysis of secondary data—Appendix to the Review of the operation of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Act 2019, dated August 2024.

Review of the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Act 2019—Ministerial statement, 29 August 2024.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee Statement by chair**

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (10.46): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services relating to referred petitions. E-Petition 2-24 and petition 16-24, titled *Richardson Shops* and *State of the Richardson Shops*, were received by the Assembly on 14 May 2024 and referred to the committee under standing order 99A. These petitions relate to what residents refer to as the derelict state of the Richardson shopping precinct, due to the closure of the local shops and the empty retail space.

The committee notes that the petition calls on the Assembly to ask the government to seek an update from the owner on future plans for the site and to provide advice on the owner's obligations, options available to residents and any required changes to planning processes. The committee notes that the government has provided a detailed response to these petitions. The response sets out the limitations on government in relation to a privately leased block but also highlights measures the government is considering to encourage activation of the shopping site; namely, the release of government-held land in areas adjoining the Richardson shops. In light of the government's detailed response to matters raised in the petitions, the committee has decided that an inquiry will not add any value or new information on the issues raised, and so it will not be inquiring into the petitions.

### **Statement by chair**

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (10.47): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services relating to referred petitions. E-petition 21-24, titled *Parking at Florey Shops*, was received by the Assembly on 16 May 2024 and referred to the committee under standing order 99A. This petition relates to expanding the parking available at Florey shops to support local businesses and their customers, including local residents, many of whom are aged over 60.

The committee notes that the government response to this petition indicates that steps are being taken to address the issues raised. The response states that the ACT government recently commissioned a report to review traffic, parking and pedestrian safety at the Florey shops and identify options for improvements. Additionally, the ACT government has held three pop-ups at the shops to engage directly with the community on potential improvements.

The committee acknowledges that the government has undertaken to consider the feedback received during that community consultation and identify improvements that can be made to address the issues raised in the petition. In light of the government's response, the committee has decided that an inquiry at this time will not add any value or bring new information to light, and so it will not be inquiring into the petition.

## **Appropriation Bill 2024-2025**

[Cognate bill: Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2024-2025]

Debate resumed from 27 June 2024, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2.

**MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (10.49):** I start this debate by noting what Canberrans expect of their government and how they view this government and its ability to craft and construct a budget for the ACT. As members would be aware, the budgetary process is a large piece of work and is one of the most important that any government can do. The appropriation bills that we are debating today are important and do impact on the lives of Canberrans.

I cast my mind to the budget survey results and the final report published in June. It asked the pertinent question of the community: "Does the ACT budget impact on my day-to-day life?" Sixty per cent of Canberrans agreed with this question; only 13 per cent disagreed. Clearly, what we are debating today is important to the majority of Canberrans. What did Canberrans say when asked if the budget reflects the needs and priorities of the community? Only 41 per cent agreed. The majority of Canberrans, when assessing the budget process that this government runs, do not agree that it reflects their needs and priorities. For a government that is 23 years old to still have the majority of people thinking that their ability to put together a budget does not reflect the needs and priorities of Canberrans tells us all we need to know about how they go about governing. Let us hope this is the final time. Twenty-three years is long enough to still not have it right or to listen and to learn.

When it comes to health, it tops the list in importance. Canberrans rated health the highest. When asked about their top 10 themes, health was again at the top. When thinking of infrastructure, again, health was listed as number one. It will not come as a surprise to any members here that the health system has been running in a series of crises for many years. From botched IT upgrades to delayed infrastructure to wasteful

rebrands and everything in between, this government has missed opportunities and failed to appropriately spend money to improve actual health outcomes. It is no wonder the feedback has been very strong that the health budget needs work, needs priority and needs attention.

The ACT should have the best health system in the country. Unfortunately, what has been widely publicised and experienced by Canberrans is that we have one of the worst in the country. Year after year, we look at the same metrics to see if outpatients who enter ED are being seen within clinically recommended wait times. Of course, this has not been fixed. Fifty-six per cent of emergency department presentations were seen within four hours or less.

The health ministry took over the portfolio in July 2019. At that point, 60 per cent of patients were seen within four hours. Canberra Health Services' estimated outcome for elective surgery numbers in 2023-24 was that only 74 per cent of category 1 patients were seen within clinically recommended wait times. These are patients who should be seen within 30 days, as their condition can deteriorate quickly. Only 44 per cent of category 2 patients were seen within clinically recommended wait times. These are patients who have a condition that causes them some pain, dysfunction or disability. Finally, only 67 per cent of category 3 patients are seen within clinically recommended wait times. Canberrans in this category still have pain, dysfunction or disability.

Back in 2019-20, these wait times were 96 per cent of category 1 patients seen within clinically recommended wait times, 78 per cent of category 3 patients seen within clinically recommended wait times, and 79 per cent of category 3 patients seen within clinically recommended wait times. It is clear that there has been a decline in performance on this minister's watch, yet the difference in the total spend on health in 2019-20 compared to the 2024-25 budget is \$1.8 to \$2.6 billion. There has been an \$800 billion increase and yet this minister has been in charge as the health system has declined. Yes, she was in charge during the pandemic, which undoubtedly impacted these services, and we know how overworked our frontline staff were during that period. However, there is no excuse to receive more than a 44 per cent increase in your budget and still be in charge of one of the worst health systems in the country.

Much was made by the Labor-Greens government of the increase in the health budget from \$2.3 to \$2.6 billion. The health minister said that this funding will support our territory-wide teams to continue this momentum in delivering more timely care to Canberrans. We just ran through the minister's track record in providing timely care; it has declined. The minister cannot run the health system and providing an additional \$800 million is the definition of throwing good money after bad.

In the Minister's defence, her party had already sealed its fate long ago, when they decided to cut the Canberra Hospital expansion in favour of light rail. The Labor-Greens government made the decision to prioritise 15-minute commutes to work over four-hour trips to ED. They prioritised abolishing public housing and developing Northbourne Avenue over making sure that patients who are experiencing pain, discomfort or disability are seen within clinically recommended wait times. They cut health projects as well, as a result, and there was a bed shortfall in our health system that has never recovered.

With not enough government resources, backing or up-to-date infrastructure, such as imaging machines, understandably, staff started to leave our health system. The culture in our health system deteriorated to a point where one of the most scathing reviews was handed to this government. A survey released early 2019 found that two out of three staff had witnessed their colleagues being bullied. Two out of three! There was a clear-out of senior staff and a split in the directorate, yet still significant issues persisted in our health system. Looking at what has occurred this term, it is clear to see that, despite a rebrand, the same problems exist and the health system is still regressing.

If you listed some of the failings that have been uncovered throughout this term, you would be amazed that the minister still has a job. Some of these failings include the tragic and very sad death of a five-year-old girl; that case has been heard by the coroner. Other failures include the failure to comply with their own nurse-to-patient ratios and being ranked the worst performing emergency department in the *Report on Government Services* every single year this term. Tens of thousands of our patients have overdue appointments, with some patients waiting thousands of days for their appointments. There was the waste of millions dollars of taxpayers' money on the \$14 million build of the Garran Surge Centre, then the additional \$8 million to decommission it. We saw the \$1.6 million rebrand of Canberra Health Services, as well as ACT patient health records being deliberately sent to an external organisation.

Five senior cardiologists wrote to the health minister about deteriorating services, missing referrals and staff leaving the ACT. I believe that now they are claiming a treatment that has happened in the public system could have happened years and years ago and Canberrans are again waiting longer than we should have to. Endoscopy waitlists show that 600 patients are waiting an average of 399 days. There is also the loss of accreditation of foetal medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, plastics and reconstructive surgery and the Child at Risk Health Unit.

We have seen the acquisition of Calvary Hospital that was passed by the Labor-Greens government in secret, without telling the previous owners, the staff or the community. We have seen the GP payroll tax that this government implemented, despite the advice from their own Health Directorate. Two internal disasters were called at both North Canberra Hospital and Canberra Hospital, which largely came out of staffing shortages as a result of the Calvary takeover and failure to address the appropriate staffing levels.

Finally, there is the shocking story that this government has wasted tens of millions of dollars through the Digital Health Record project, with referrals made to the Integrity Commissioner. The minister will not rule out that her directorate failed in their mandatory reporting obligations.

Just recently we saw the botched implementation of the new Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, which resulted in one of three IVF clinics sending erroneous correspondence to those undergoing treatment, causing stress, anxiety and fear. This was on top of the bill requiring two sets of amendments. I at least had the decency to apologise for failing to realise those scenarios when scrutinising the bill. This minister could not even be humble about her failure. Rather than ensuring that the three clinics impacted by the reform fully understood their legal obligations, she instead blamed the clinics. They are medical clinics, not law firms.

This is just the most recent example of failure and lack of attention to detail by this minister, regarding her responsibilities. Her desire to shift and attribute blame to others, rather than to take ownership, is yet another example—

*Ms Stephen-Smith interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, it is going to be a long debate. How about we behave?

**MS CASTLEY:** This is just the most recent example of failure and lack of attention to detail by this minister, regarding responsibilities. Her desire to shift and attribute blame to others, rather than take ownership, is yet another example, plus a litany of failures of leadership. There have been so many failures from this government. In this budget she is awarded another \$300 million. Unless the minister can use the \$300 million to procure a magic wand, she will never fix the health system by doing the same thing she has done since July 2019.

The only way to fix the ACT health system is to get rid of this government. It is as clear as day that their approach is not working for our health system and our frontline staff. They promise that things will change and nothing does. Ms Lee will move a motion today that lists some of ACT Labor's broken election commitments. A significant number of them relate to health. These include the south-side hydrotherapy pool, the north-side elective surgery centre, the upgrade of endoscopy rooms at the Canberra Hospital, a palliative care ward in Canberra Hospital and additional walk-in centres. It is increasingly likely that they will fail to deliver their target of 60,400 elective surgeries over the term of this government.

By my count, of the 10 election commitments that relate to health, the Labor government has failed to implement half. They say one thing during an election period and then forget all about the promises they made. You have to wonder, if 50 per cent of the election commitments in this term have failed, what they plan to cut if they are re-elected. Is it the north-side hospital, which the minister has provided very little detail on? We know from history that when the Chief Minister starts building light rail projects the health portfolio is the first place he looks to cut. This might explain why there are 16 capital works projects—16—that have been delayed between 2023-24 and 2024-25. This list of delayed projects includes several election commitments to critical projects that have been on the radar for years and are continually pushed to the outyears.

Fortunately there is a better way. A Canberra Liberals government will provide a fresh opportunity for our health system—its amazing and hardworking frontline staff, its ageing infrastructure, our underutilised private health system and our community health organisations. We will have renewed focus on preventative health care and primary care systems so that Canberrans can receive the health care they need well before they have to go to hospital. We will deliver the infrastructure that Labor and the Greens have neglected.

We value our frontline staff. In speaking to a nurse only a week or so ago, she said, "We want to feel protected, respected and listened to. We want to know that we actually have the minister's ear." She felt that she did not. That is something the Canberra Liberals will commit to. We will fix the rotten culture that this government has allowed to fester. We will encourage new staff to join and our experienced staff to stay. That is



what needs to happen. We will utilise our community health providers that are overwhelmed by Canberrans trying to receive timely health care.

I was pleased earlier this year to announce that an elected Canberra Liberals government would support those undergoing treatment for assisted reproductive services. Despite the minister saying back in 2022 that Labor would explore options for increasing affordability and accessibility for ART, it would appear that nothing has been done. I know that, for many Canberrans who require access to medical reproductive assistance, cost is a key barrier.

This is one of the costs of mismanagement of money that we have seen in this portfolio and across the budget more broadly. I truly think it is an area of health care the government needs to support. It is a missed opportunity. As we know, any delay can mean the difference between success or failure for many prospective mothers. I suspect that an announcement from the government in this space will be timed with the political cycle. It needs to be based on budgetary cycles, but it needs to come with compassion.

In closing, \$2.6 billion towards health care is a significant investment in our health system, at 32 per cent of the total budget, yet we continue to decline on several key hospital metrics. Our experienced staff are leaving and infrastructure is being delayed continuously. It is time for a fresh opportunity, to rethink our strategy and to overhaul the systemic failures, cultural secrecy and cover-ups. We need to work together across all areas of the health system to create a more effective health system for all Canberrans. We have seen the Labor government's track record in health over the past two decades and it is clear that only the Canberra Liberals can deliver a fresh opportunity for Canberra's health system. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

### **Detail stage**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered. That is, in the detail stage, any schedule expressing the services for which appropriation is made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory. Is this the wish of the Assembly? That being so, schedule 1 will be considered by each part, consisting of net outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory, then the clauses and the title.

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

ACT Local Hospital Network, ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services—parts 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I understand that it is the wish of the Assembly to debate parts 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 together.

**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) (11.05): It gives me great pleasure to rise to update Canberrans on how the Barr Labor government's 2024-25 ACT budget is delivering world-class health services today and into the future. The Barr Labor government is delivering record investments across our health system, with 32 per cent of the ACT budget's investment supporting our health workforce, delivering state-of-the-art facilities and equipment and increasing surgeries, appointments and performance, as we have done over recent years.

Total funding across the health portfolio will grow to a record high of \$2.8 billion in recurrent expenditure in 2024-25. What we know is that only Labor governments are actually committed to ensuring that health is the number one priority in government, because we know that community health and wellbeing are essential. This budget clearly demonstrates this commitment, as does our record of achievement this term, including delivering the Critical Services Building, the single Digital Health Record across our public health system, record levels of elective surgeries and improved performance across our emergency departments over this term of government.

Building on this record of achievement this term, the Barr Labor government is injecting an additional \$920 million in new funding into our health system over the next four years to continue delivering on our comprehensive plan for health. We have been focused on continuing to build strong public health services in the ACT. From acute care in our hospitals to more care closer to home, we have delivered for Canberrans.

One of the most important achievements of the Barr Labor government in this term has been the opening of new Critical Services Building, on 17 August. Once again, I would like to thank the Canberra Health Services team for their incredible efforts in successfully making the move to the new building. The \$660 million Canberra Hospital expansion is the single largest health infrastructure project undertaken by the ACT government so far—something I have been absolutely committed to driving and achieving in this term of the Barr Labor government.

Through our new Critical Services Building we have significantly increased our public theatre capacity and incorporated the latest technology. That means better outcomes for the community and even better facilities for our hardworking health workforce. Already our clinicians are using cutting edge technology to deliver even better outcomes at Canberra Hospital, and they have enthusiastically been relaying their experience to me when I have caught up with them. I want to thank everyone involved in the delivery of the Critical Services Building, particularly the team at Major Projects Canberra.

Building on this new capability, this budget includes more than \$52 million in emergency and elective surgery to open more theatre space, fund more surgical beds and support more surgeries. We know that access to timely surgery is critical. After years impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the fire at what was Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, we are back on track, delivering on our commitments to provide accessible surgical care.

Importantly, through the 2024-25 budget and the opening of the Critical Services

Building, we will deliver on our four-year commitment to 60,000 elective surgeries. That is more elective surgeries than the ACT has ever completed before over a four-year period. That means fewer people waiting for essential planned care. We know—and I agree with Ms Castley on this—that this care is crucial. Labor will continue to ensure that we are providing the best access to these services we possibly can.

To support more access to endoscopy procedures, we are investing \$3.7 million in additional endoscopies at the North Canberra Hospital as part of a territory-wide public hospital waitlist. This activates the second endoscopy procedure room at North Canberra Hospital, which was recently opened. This funding will build on our investment of more than \$7.9 million since 2021-22 to deliver an additional 2,700 endoscopies—funding that has supported our public health services to successfully drive down the number of people on the public waiting list for scopes.

A key focus in this term of government has been on driving performance improvement across our hospitals, including our emergency departments. I am pleased to advise that the ACT has halved our median wait time, increased our four-hour rule performance and is now outperforming or equivalent to almost every jurisdiction in Australia.

As Ms Castley would be aware, in a peer hospital comparison Canberra Hospital has always performed on par with peer hospitals around the country. Ms Castley has never recognised or acknowledged those teams at Canberra Hospital for the hard work that they have done in comparison with their peer hospitals. As often the third busiest public hospital emergency department in the country, our teams work incredibly hard and yet only ever get criticised for their performance by those opposite. Ms Castley also continues to describe the four-hour rule as “being seen within four hours”, which is absolutely not what it means. We will try and figure it out at some point.

Our investments in services and infrastructure, and improvements in emergency department performance metrics in 2023-24, demonstrate that the government is meeting the challenge of delivering high-quality services even with increased demand on the health system. The new Acute Medical Unit, which has also transferred across to the Critical Services Building, has been shown to be an essential inpatient service that is supporting better performance in our emergency department at Canberra Hospital. In the 2024-25 budget we are investing more than \$31 million to permanently bring 24 beds online in the Acute Medical Unit and support patient journeys through the new operations command centre.

Our investments in public health services have not just been in acute and critical care. This budget is also supporting positive outcomes for Canberrans at every stage of life, from newborns to older people. We are investing more than \$75 million in additional services for infants, children, young people and their families. From intensive care to community paediatrics, we are ensuring that there are more specialist neonatal and paediatric services in the ACT.

In this term of government Labor has strongly focused on supporting better access to reproductive health care. We have continued this focus in the 2024-25 budget by investing more than \$26 million to expand the Fetal Medicine Unit, the Maternity Assessment Unit, the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit and the homebirth program. This is in addition to the \$4.4 million in funding from the 2023-24 budget to support

more Canberrans to access free abortion, a program that was expanded earlier this year.

In our subacute services at the University of Canberra Hospital we are further increasing the number of permanent beds available through a \$54 million investment in an additional 44 rehabilitation and subacute beds.

In the 2024-25 budget more than \$18 million has been allocated to strengthen the ACT health system to meet the health and wellbeing needs of older Canberrans with complex health needs. The Centre of Excellence for the Health of Older Canberrans, focusing on dementia in the first instance, is being supported through a dementia health experts network, enhancements to Ward 4 West at North Canberra Hospital to deliver for specialist dementia care, and funding for the Care Optimisation Transition Unit at Canberra Hospital.

Our investments have not just been in health services; we are also continuing our transformation of our hospitals. We have invested more than \$67 million on further Canberra Hospital campus changes, including a new Yamba Drive entrance, upgrades to existing buildings and advancing designs for the next stages of the Canberra Hospital master plan. This will make Canberra Hospital more accessible, increase service capacity and prepare the campus for the future.

We are also continuing detailed design on the more than \$1 billion north-side hospital and progressing to very early contractor involvement, with a request for tender to selected tenderers just recently released. This is a commitment to the new north-side hospital that the Canberra Liberals have never made and still have not made. In Ms Castley's speech she still did not indicate whether the Canberra Liberals will actually build the new north-side hospital if they are elected in only seven weeks from this Saturday.

This development, if Labor is re-elected, will surpass our health infrastructure investment in the highly successful Critical Services Building. In the 2024-25 budget we are investing more than \$27 million to support work on the North Canberra Hospital campus to make these preparations for the north-side hospital. In the meantime, we will also be making upgrades across the campus to ensure that the dedicated staff there can continue to provide safe and quality services during the build.

To continue our work of providing more health care closer to home, the 2024-25 budget makes significant investments in establishing new health centres throughout the Canberra region. Earlier this year, after consultation and using local health data, the ACT government finalised the location of the south Tuggeranong health centre in Conder and the array of services to be offered to meet the needs of the Tuggeranong community. I invite that community to engage in the development application process and to look at the design of this new facility.

This budget provides \$52 million for the design and construction of the inner south and north Gungahlin health centres, and for commencing the design phase for the new health centre in west Belconnen. These health centres will complement our existing community health services and build on the range of services available closer to where people live—at least, they will if Labor is re-elected. Again, the Canberra Liberals have said nothing about whether they will support this community-based infrastructure.

I have been incredibly pleased to see the success of the Inner North Walk-in Centre, which I opened in 2020 with the Chief Minister, and the Weston Creek community medical imaging facility, which I opened in 2023. These services are supporting our community to access free health care, and our new health centres will grow our community health network even further.

While we expand services and build health infrastructure for Canberra's future, we are also investing in our health workforce: to recruit them, retain them and ensure that they have a safe work environment. Over this term the Barr Labor government has invested in competitive conditions and wellbeing initiatives, safer workplaces for nurses and midwives, boosting the allied health workforce and supporting junior medical officers.

The 2024-25 budget sees an \$86 million investment to expand nurse and midwife-to-patient ratios. This will roll out ratios across all remaining inpatient areas at Canberra Hospital, North Canberra Hospital, the University of Canberra Hospital and Clare Holland House. This will support our investments in paediatrics, critical care and maternity services, to name just a few. We will be just the second jurisdiction in Australia to introduce maternity ratios that will count the baby—a significant step forward that will mean better outcomes for patients and our hardworking nurses and midwives. My understanding is that Labor governments are the only governments that have ever introduced nurse and midwife-to-patient ratios. I look forward to seeing whether the Canberra Liberals will in fact commit to maintaining ratios and continuing to work with the union on this important measure.

The budget also sees investment in a behind the scenes yet critical role in our public health services. We are investing in bringing lower paid cleaners at North Canberra Hospital and the University of Canberra Hospital in line to reach pay parity with Canberra Hospital cleaners. This will make a real difference to their lives and the support they provide to their families. It is a significant investment in cost-of-living support for some of the lowest paid but most important and critical workers in our health system.

The ACT's health services are also supported by long-term strategies and the development of health policy that is guiding significant reforms. In the 2024-25 budget we are investing to continue the Digital Health Strategy. This includes continuing to optimise the Digital Health Record, which is now in its second year of operation and has been described by a senior clinician as "an absolute godsend". This IT infrastructure is supporting better health outcomes and more efficient services across ACT public health services.

The passage of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act earlier this year was a big and long-awaited change for our community and our health system. It has represented one of the most significant projects in the health portfolio this term. The Barr Labor government recognises the importance of implementing this change properly. That is why we are investing more than \$19.2 million for the implementation of voluntary assisted dying in the ACT. The ACT Labor government will continue to work closely with healthcare providers, community organisations and the public to make sure this new law provides a compassionate and dignified end of life option for eligible Canberrans who choose it. That is something that the Canberra Liberals cannot be

trusted to deliver, with the majority having voted against this critical legislation.

The ACT Labor government recognises the importance of the broader health sector in the community. Through a \$1.65 million investment we are providing a boost to community health sector organisations, in recognition of the financial pressures being felt across the community sector from increased costs and service demand. This funding will further support a range of high-value services for people living with chronic conditions, including hydrotherapy on the south side, and support for people living with epilepsy, asthma, diabetes, pain disorders, bleeding disorders and cancer, as well as their carers and families. It will support access to primary care for vulnerable Canberrans and further the goal of the Community Assistance and Temporary Support Program, or CATS, which provides short-term support for people to leave hospital safely, recover in their homes and navigate pathways to access longer term support programs.

The 2024-25 budget reflects our community's values and continues to deliver on ACT Labor's election commitments. It is a budget that is practical and balanced, while supporting our progressive approach to delivering the services Canberrans need, when and where they need them. At the upcoming election Canberrans can be assured that a Labor government will continue to invest in health, just as we have in this budget. We have a proven plan to continue delivering a world-class health system in the ACT, and we will make sure that work progresses over the next four years. We will not cut critical services, health workers or health infrastructure projects that will support our future health needs. We will not use a costly and drawn-out royal commission as a stalking horse to decimate healthcare services, roll back progressive health reforms like free abortion and voluntary assisted dying, or undo the essential investments made in this budget.

We know those opposite will vote against our plan when we put this budget to a vote. What we do not know and what Canberrans do not know is what they are offering as an alternative. We know they do not want to talk about their plans for health, but we have some hints.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Cain):** Members!

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** We know they have a plan to roll back our successful, much-loved walk-in centres. We know they have a plan to roll back our nation-leading, evidence-based treatment of drug addiction as a health issue. We know that a majority of those opposite do not support access to abortion and voluntary assisted dying. Most of all, we have an admission mission from the Canberra Liberals that they have a plan to do nothing with the health system and to outsource any plan to a royal commission into a health system that is performing better than many other jurisdictions in Australia and, indeed, around the world.

Canberrans know that you cannot trust the Liberals with health care. ACT Labor will use our practical, proven and progressive approach to deliver on our comprehensive plan for health that ensures the right care is available in the right place at the right time. I commend the 2024-25 budget to the Assembly and the investments this government

is making in the health of our community.

**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) (11.22): There are always more things that we want to commit resources to than there are resources available to be committed. Budgets are about priorities.

I am very pleased to say that, in this budget, we have continued to prioritise investment in community delivered mental health services with more than \$15 million over the next four years, enabling more people to receive the care they need at an earlier stage of their health journey in the community rather than in a hospital bed. This includes \$1.682 million in funding to continue youth mental health programs that have previously been funded by commonwealth government and were at risk of having to shut down without ACT government support when commonwealth government support ended last year. These are: the Mindmap youth navigation portal, which is a partnership between ACT Health and Marymead CatholicCare; Youth Aware of Mental Health, a prevention program delivered in high schools by Mental Illness Education ACT, MIEACT; the Stepping Stones Program for children up to 12 years of age, delivered by Marymead CatholicCare; and the WOKE program, which is providing dialectical behaviour therapy for young people and is delivered by the University of Canberra.

This budget also provides \$4.209 million in funding for the second PACER team over the forward estimates. We know that PACER could be even more effective at supporting people in mental distress if we had additional resourcing for outreach follow-up from mental health services or a safe place to which PACER could take a person to continue their de-escalation if they are not clinically in need of being taken to hospital but need a break from home. It is still remarkably helpful to have the second PACER team continue, and we know what we need to work towards in a future budget from the review of the PACER service.

In the cost-of-living crisis we are seeing a real increase in psychological distress, where the underlying causes are related to financial pressure, housing stress or relationship difficulties. Providing social support alongside mental health support is an effective way to address those underlying causes of mental distress and reduce the risk of someone cycling through crisis again and again. We have seen this work in other cities.

This budget includes \$1.91 million to redesign the Step Up, Step Down at-home program to align its delivery with a distress-free intervention model. The Step Up, Step Down at-home program, delivered by Wellways, receives a significant number of referrals from PACER. This is a program that has the capacity to provide time-limited and supportive problem-solving skills for people experiencing distress. All they need is some extra support and a framework that enables them to really lean into their holistic approach to mental health care. While we would still like to see a full Distress Brief Intervention trial in future, similar to what is successfully delivered in Scotland and is being trialled in other cities in Australia, this initiative is a great way to start building our skills and knowledge in Canberra.

I mentioned earlier housing stress as one of the underlying causes of psychological crisis. For people with long-term mental health conditions, maintaining tenancy is

critically important for their health stability, but it can be difficult to achieve without support. We know that there are people in our community who need the support and are not able to access it through the NDIS. In fact, I expect the number of people with this unmet need will only grow with the recently passed changes to the NDIS.

This budget provides \$2.767 million over four years to provide better support for people with high-intensity needs related to their mental health condition and would be at risk of homelessness without that support. This includes \$1.992 million over four years for the staged implementation of approximately 10 support packages for community sector organisations to provide wraparound support for people with a mental health condition to live independently based on the successful Housing Accommodation Support Initiative that we have seen elsewhere in Australia, and \$478,000 over two years to support the transition from the current discharge accommodation program model to the new contemporary evidence based HASI model and dedicated resourcing to lead interagency work on the development of a long-term whole-of-government solution.

Another area where we expect there will be growing unmet need for mental health support for people who are no longer able to access support in an NDIS plan as a result of the commonwealth government changes is for people transitioning home after a period of time in custody. This budget provides an additional \$341,000 for the Detention Exit Community Outreach program for 2024-25. DECO, which is delivered by Wellways, provides people with a diagnosed mental health condition who are exiting detention with up to 18 months of transitional mental health and life skills development support. As a result, people participating in this program are better able to achieve their aims in employment, education, and strengthened family and social relationships. This is the kind of support that makes Canberra a healthier and safer community for everyone.

Earlier, I tabled my report about the importance of harm reduction and a health focused approach to drug use. This budget includes an extension of funding for the CanTEST drug-checking service of \$1.807 million over 2.5 years from 2024-25. Operated by Directions Health Services in partnership with Pill Testing Australia and the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, this service is a successful example of community led and government supported services that have increased the number of health focused interventions for people who use drugs and has provided important information about the substances checked by the service so that people can make informed choices about what they are considering taking. While I would like to see this service funded permanently in conjunction with other drug harm reduction and peer support services, it is great to see that this budget will continue funding the service in its current form, and that means we will continue to see lives saved and overdoses or other harmful health effects reduced.

Finally, I would like to talk about one of the most important elements of this budget's investments: our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health initiatives. This budget provides \$897,000 over two years to support culturally-responsive mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes \$400,000 to co-design a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth mental health and trauma service, and we will engage an Indigenous consultancy to work with Aboriginal community controlled organisations in this co-design process. There is \$200,000 to build culturally-responsive capacity across our mental health sector, recognising that First Nations people need culturally safe and appropriate care across a diverse range of



ACT government delivered mental health services, and resourcing over two years for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander position within ACT Health to work with us on these measures and bring the full service model back to a future budget process, recognising that there is still so much more that we need to address.

We recognise the intergenerational impacts on our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and that our First Nations people have been through a particularly traumatic experience in the way that their identity and human rights have been publicly debated. The ACT government is committed to working alongside and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in establishing the culturally appropriate, holistic, and trauma-informed services that they need. I would very much like to see this work continue through the investments in this budget and for it go on to address the full range of needs in the Yulang Indigenous Evaluation, commissioned by ACT Health, to consolidate information about what the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has told the ACT government to do about mental health and wellbeing.

I would particularly like to note that many of the investments in this budget for both mental health and alcohol and other drug harm-reduction services are delivered by community sector organisations, including Wellways, Directions, CAHMA, MIEACT, Pill Testing Australia, Indigenous consultancies and Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and Marymead CatholicCare, who also deliver a range of other community health and social services for the ACT government, including the early intervention service for eating disorders, as well as the University of Canberra.

The ACT government being able to partner with the community sector enables people in our community to receive care that draws on the depth of knowledge, community relationships and trust that the community has with organisations who see the whole person in ways that clinical services in acute settings cannot do in the same way. I thank the community sector and the University of Canberra for their innovative and person-centred care for people accessing the services that they provide to the people of Canberra.

It is important that we continue to deliver acute-care services that meet the needs of our growing population and greater complexity of care needs, which is why the Greens have strongly supported increased nurse and midwife-to-patient ratios. Ensuring that we continue to work to grow and support our workforce is also important, and the Greens will continue to advocate for measures into the future that reduce the financial pressures for students looking towards a future career, such as those related to placements and the cost of university studies.

We are also very committed to continuing the good work that has been done over recent years by Canberra Health Services, ACT Health and the workforce at the North Canberra Hospital to improve culture and support the workforce. We are also absolutely committed to shifting health care to deliver more and more care in the community at an earlier stage in the journey, including increased access to quality and free primary health care, integrated with the social supports that contribute to wellbeing. Our focus on community delivered mental health care, which was accelerated with Minister Rattenbury's establishment of the Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing in the previous term of this Assembly, will continue to pay dividends in both life outcomes and the economic impacts on the ACT and commonwealth health budgets well into the

future.

I particularly acknowledge the work of Dr Elizabeth Moore, who completed her term as our first ever Coordinator-General of the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing. Her commitment to the vision of a kind, connected and informed community working together has contributed to making Canberra a better place for all. I am sure that Dr Sarah Miller, our new Coordinator-General, will continue to build on the strong foundation that Dr Moore established.

The decisions we make about where we invest our collective Canberra community resources will outlast all of us, and I hope that the ACT government will continue to progress that focus on prevention and early intervention in mental health, community delivered care, and a harm-reduction approach to drug use beyond this budget and into future years.

**MR COCKS** (Murrumbidgee) (11.33): The budget is broken and, no matter what spin the government comes up with, that is fundamentally why, on this side of the chamber, we are going to vote against it. Over the course of 23 years of Labor in government, the critical function of setting and sticking to a budget and balancing fiscal responsibility with delivering the services and infrastructure Canberra needs has degraded into farcical announcements, obfuscation and spin. The Greens have done nothing to improve that situation, and, if anything, things have become progressively worse.

Indeed, in the mental health portfolio, which the Greens have held since its inception as a stand-alone portfolio, this broken budget is big on spin and band-aids and not much else. There is no increase in funding. In fact, it looks like funding for mental health actually goes backwards compared with inflation. Everything is offset from existing health appropriations. Existing programs are extended or there are tweaks to things that are already there. The minister has just spoken about how their investments are going to things that are not about delivering services. Statements about aspiration are not good enough in mental health. Mental health is a critical element of our health landscape in the ACT.

Demand for mental health services is increasing and the demands that are being placed on our community mental health sector are increasing, and this government is doing nothing to help that sector deliver critical services to the ACT. Our community mental health sector, as the minister has just acceded, delivers huge value to the ACT at an efficient price. The community mental health sector fills in a space that I am not sure this government understands. The community mental health sector spans the acute space and all the way to the wraparound services that Canberrans depend on. But, at the same time, over a number of years, since before I came into this place, the community mental health sector has been staring down the barrel of a so-called commissioning process that has every one of them nervous that the government is going to apply insourcing to their sector and see the services that they have spent years developing absorbed within government.

The government has a track record on this. You only have to look at the Calvary acquisition. You can see that the intention of this government is to take and break. They will take everything that they can and they will take credit for everything that they can, but they are not doing the work that it takes to deliver the world-class mental health

system that Canberrans deserve. It is very clear when you look at this budget. All the minister has managed to deliver is band-aids and funding extensions. There is no effort in this budget to deliver the mental health reform that the community deserves. The initiatives that the minister has pointed to, like extending funding for the community mental health services that the federal Labor government has divested from, are not reforming initiatives; they are just band-aids, and Canberra deserves better.

The utter failure of this budget to even attempt to contend with the mental health workforce crisis that we face is appalling. The utter failure in this budget to deliver any increased mental health funding in order to deliver more services is appalling. Canberra needs more services. It is not good enough for them to run around saying they are going to redesign a few programs and they are going to shuffle money from here to there—shuffle from this health appropriation to that health appropriation. That is not what Canberra needs when it comes to mental health. Canberrans deserve a mental health system that is connected, stops people falling through the cracks and catches people before they need acute services—a system that intervenes when people are most vulnerable and stops them from getting to that state whenever possible.

The approach that this government is taking to mental health is appalling. It talks a big game—it always talks a big game—but it has nothing but recycled promises. It shuffles money from here to there and fails to deliver in the end. I do not think that there is any example more clear and more stark for me than the repeated promises for MyHome in Canberra, the Curtin housing project. The minister has spoken about the importance of housing when it comes to mental health, and she is right—it is critical—but I do not think she actually understands how important it is. The Greens have repeatedly promised to deliver additional housing for people with mental health needs, but they have not delivered it.

It is being felt at the pointy end in the mental health system now, because, when I speak with mental health nurses and clinicians from the mental health system, they tell me that housing has become a complete barrier to actually getting people through the mental health system and back into the community. They cannot discharge someone when there is no home to safely discharge them to. Because of that, people who may need only low-intensity supports are being discharged into high-intensity supports, because that is the only way to free up a bed. What we are seeing is a complete breakdown in the incentives in the system. Because we are not doing the right thing at the front end, the critical acute end is suffering.

We have to sort out this sector because Canberrans deserve it. We have to sort out the mental health system. We have to take a holistic perspective so that Canberrans with mental health needs get the support they deserve—the support they need when they need it. If we can do that, people can actually get back to contributing to society. They can get back to being healthy and they can recover. But we need to make sure we take a holistic perspective and move beyond the silos and the spin that we have come to expect from this government.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.4—Education Directorate

**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) (11.41): The 2024-25 ACT budget makes a significant investment in public schools across Canberra. It invests more than \$1.2 billion in public education. That funding is going to help deliver high-quality education for more than 50,000 students enrolled in our 91 ACT public schools. It also supports more than 7,000 full-time equivalent staff across the ACT public school network and the Education Directorate, who are making a real difference in the lives of our young Canberrans in every classroom every school day.

I would like to highlight just a few of the areas of that investment. The ACT government has committed to every student realising their potential in literacy and numeracy. Strong Foundations is the ACT government's new system-wide and evidence based program for teaching literacy and numeracy in our schools. It will implement all eight recommendations from the final report of the ACT government's recent Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel. The 2024-25 ACT budget includes a \$24.9 million initial investment to start this work, in close collaboration with our school principals, unions and parent representatives. The focus of Strong Foundations is on strengthening literacy and numeracy outcomes for students and reducing the workload for teachers by providing them with well-informed resources, supports and professional learning. It is about investing in a new assessment and data tools to give teachers and school leaders real insights into the learning progress of our students. It is about ensuring that every ACT public school delivers multi-tiered systems of support for each student at their point of need.

Last week I had the great pleasure of joining a workshop with ACT school principals to plan how the implementation of this program in ACT schools will be rolled out. I was excited to see and hear the enthusiasm amongst them to be engaged in this work and their passion for our public schools. I am really looking forward to sharing more with the community as this work progresses.

The ACT government is committed to equity across our public school system. All students are entitled to receive a high-quality education wherever they are from and regardless of circumstances. The 2024-25 budget includes funding to support the Meals in Schools pilot that commenced across five ACT public schools this term. This pilot program provides breakfast and lunch for three days a week at Gilmore Primary School, Richardson Primary School, Narrabundah Early Childhood School, Gold Creek School's senior campus, and Melba Copland Secondary School's college campus. The pilot schools were selected based on a range of factors, including student enrolments, location and educational setting to capture a broad representation of ACT public schools.

I was able to see the pilot in action firsthand during a visit to Richardson Primary School a few weeks ago. We all know students learn better with full bellies. The research supports this and I saw it in action. I also want to acknowledge the Embrace Disability Group who have been contracted to provide this program and the important work that they are doing in our schools. They are an established catering group that gives real-life work opportunities and hospitality training to people living with disability.

As part of the ACT government's cost-of-living package, this budget delivered a \$1

million boost to the Future of Education Equity Fund for the 2024 school year. The Future of Education Equity Fund provides a one-off annual payment to low-income families facing financial difficulty across the ACT. It helps to cover the cost of education expenses such as school uniforms, school excursions, sporting equipment and activities, as well as music lessons, to name a few. So far this year, more than \$3 million has gone into families' bank accounts, which will go a long way to help families support their children to fully engage and participate in their education.

The ACT government is delivering the largest pipeline of public education infrastructure investment in the history of self-government. We have commenced the design of a second college in Gungahlin, we are continuing to modernise Telopea Park School, we are delivering new public primary schools with co-located early childhood education and care services in Whitlam and Strathnairn, we are redeveloping Garran Primary School, and we are set to open the ACT's 92nd public school next year. At the same time, we are maintaining and upgrading the existing schools Canberrans know and love.

Through our nearly \$100 million Asset Renewal Program, the most recent ACT budget adds additional funding to support roof replacements at Charnwood-Dunlop School, Dickson College and Melba Copland Secondary School, as well as refurbishment and modernisation of the existing gymnasium at Lyneham High School.

The ACT government is continuing to deliver a world-class budget for world-class public education. This budget delivers investment that reflects our commitment to students, staff and teachers in our public schools, both now and well into the future. I commend the 2024-25 ACT budget to this Assembly.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.46): Canberra should have the best education system in the country. We have excellent teachers, well-funded schools, committed parents and an educated population, but, sadly, the Labor-Greens government is failing our children. In the ACT, one in three children are falling below the new NAPLAN proficiency standards. For students whose parents did not finish high school and for First Nations students, this number rises to a staggering two out of three. Our schools are lacking basic facilities that would seem like the bare minimum, like suitable toilets and adequate heating and cooling. The ACT has the highest rate of violence against principals, with a staggering three-quarters of our principals having experienced physical violence on the job.

What we have seen in education over the last two decades is another example of this government ignoring the experts and embarking on an ideological crusade which has resulted in our literacy and numeracy standards declining. This has failed a whole generation of Canberra's students, and it is unconscionable that the minister has been responsible for letting them down badly. Over the last two decades, there have been at least nine critical reports on education. The reports were authored by researchers and experts who have highlighted the need for an evidence-driven approach to teaching literacy and numeracy, but the Labor-Greens government ignored them all.

It was only after a motion brought forward by Mr Hanson, from the Canberra Liberals in this Assembly, that finally got the government, kicking and screaming, to establish an independent inquiry into literacy and numeracy in the ACT. The final report of the

expert panel, which was released earlier this year, was emphatic. It said:

There is an overwhelming body of research demonstrating the positive impact of explicit teaching on student learning outcomes ... This has been demonstrated in primary, high school and college settings, across different subject areas, and in both Australian and international contexts. Explicit teaching has been shown to be an effective teaching approach in large scale experiments ... and by many inquiries, panels, and education departments in Australia and overseas ....

The expert panel made eight recommendations that even this government could not ignore. After finally agreeing to listen to the experts, the government let Canberrans down again. Back in June, just a few days before Mr Barr delivered his latest budget, we saw the education minister, along with Mr Barr, stand up in the media and announce that they have finally listened to the experts. They announced:

The 2024-25 ACT Budget invests \$24.9 million over the next four years, funding will support the implementation of the Final Report's eight recommendations, beginning from 2025.

At the time of that announcement, education experts were alarmed that the \$24.9 million that was announced was grossly inadequate for the significant reforms required to fully implement all the expert panel's recommendations, and they were right to be concerned.

If that was not bad enough, it got worse. When we saw the budget papers handed down in the afternoon of 25 June, the true picture was revealed. Despite stating only days before that the budget would invest \$24.9 million into the government's Strong Foundations program, it was revealed that, in fact, there was only \$1.7 million in new money, with the remaining money coming from within existing directorate resources. And, during the estimates hearings, the minister had to admit that they were actually relying on the federal government to fund the remaining aspects of the Strong Foundations program through the new Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, which the ACT has not signed up to yet. In addition to grossly underfunding these critical reforms, the minister is refusing to release any details on the implementation of those reforms. So what we really have from this government is no funding, no plan and no guarantee whatsoever that the reforms will be rolled out in all ACT government schools.

This government has not just failed students in literacy and numeracy standards. Our students, parents and teachers deserve high-quality school facilities, but, despite numerous inquiries into school infrastructure in the ACT and issues around inadequate heating and cooling and suitable toilet facilities, they are still being raised by parents, teachers and the union. This is not good enough. Our children and our teachers deserve access to quality basic services, no matter which school they attend. This government has had over two decades to at least get just the basic maintenance of our school right, and yet it fails time and time again. This government has failed a whole generation of Canberra students by ignoring the evidence from experts on the basics of reading, writing and maths. This government is failing children, teachers and staff by not even ensuring adequate basic facilities at our schools, and this budget has failed them again.

In stark contrast, the Canberra Liberals released our comprehensive education policy a few weeks ago which will deliver an education system that is better for our students

and better for our teachers. It is clear that we are the only party that can be trusted to fully fund and fully implement an evidence based approach to teaching literacy and numeracy, with a \$98 million commitment which includes year 1 phonics checks, small-group interventions, a multi-tiered support system, and strengthening of the monitoring of progress across all year levels of school. We will make sure that every ACT government school is equipped with decodable readers and that our teachers receive the support and training they need to deliver the best evidence based methods for teaching literacy and numeracy in our classrooms.

We will put teachers at the forefront of education by lifting the overbearing administrative burden they face so they can do what they do best: be in our classrooms and educate our children. We will deliver a \$200 voucher for every teacher at the beginning of each academic year for classroom supplies that they want to use in their classrooms. We will positively and consistently engage with teachers so that they are at the table when it comes to the decisions that affect them, from work conditions, pay and entitlements, to the school communities that they work in. We will make available, on an opt-in basis, a behavioural curriculum to support teachers who want it, because we all know that a disruptive classroom is not good for students and is not good for teachers.

We will boost the Asset Renewal Program by a further \$25 million in funding to make sure that every ACT government school has what many Canberrans probably believe should be a bare minimum, by having adequate toilets, heating and cooling, and we will deliver a more systemic, transparent and proactive process for school maintenance and infrastructure. We will undertake the feasibly work required to look at growth areas in Canberra and where new schools may be needed in the future, including undertaking feasibility work on the option of a new vertical school in the inner north.

The Canberra Liberals support choice for Canberra families when it comes to education. We have had a very positive relationship with the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT. We value and respect the contribution our non-government schools and the teachers and leaders in those communities have made to our city and the education of our children. We will continue to work collaboratively and positively with them to ensure that every child in Canberra gets the best education in Australia, no matter which school they choose.

I thank the Australian Education Union ACT, and in particular its president Angela Burroughs, the ACT Alliance for Evidence-Based Education, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT, the Catholic Education Office, and the numerous volunteer parent groups for their expertise and positive engagement in the development of our plan for the education of Canberra students.

In this election, how our children will be educated could not be clearer to Canberra families. Canberrans will have a choice: continue with the tired, stale and arrogant Labor-Greens government that has failed a whole generation of students and has released a half-baked plan that does not even commit a quarter of the funding required to fully implement a strong evidence based approach to teaching literacy and numeracy, or take up the fresh opportunity for education under a Canberra Liberals government that will fully fund and fully implement the best evidence based method for ensuring our children are equipped with the literacy and numeracy skills they need. A Canberra

Liberals government will put teachers at the forefront of education and a Canberra Liberals government will finally address the long-term neglect of the infrastructure needs of our schools.

**MISS NUTTALL** (Brindabella) (11.56): I will begin the speech with a disclaimer that education is an unbelievably broad space and, from everything we heard during estimates, the ACT Greens are broadly satisfied with the way this budget approaches education. We are proud to be part of the only government in Australia that funds public schools above the school resource standard. I will be focusing today on areas where the ACT Greens want to see progress. In some areas, we really need to see significant progress, but it would be disingenuous to suggest that the majority of investments in this budget are not worthwhile.

My experience as Greens spokesperson for education has been an enlightening. I am happy to see that funding is being provided to cover many of the material needs of the school system, and I am really hoping that finally finalising our property quality standards will allow us to review all ACT public school assets and prioritise getting school infrastructure up to scratch. It is heartening to see the amount of funding that has been earmarked for modernising and expanding the ageing infrastructure in many Canberran schools, and I know we have a lot of old schools in Tuggeranong in particular. However, as has become extremely apparent from the public concerns surrounding the Majura Primary School modernisation and expansion, there does need to be consistent engagement with the community while these projects are carried out. What can look on paper to be adequate funding for a project will never be enough if the school and the school community are not meaningfully consulted on what their needs are. Majura Primary is the most notable example of a community not being consulted on their needs, but we certainly hope they prove to be an outlier and that future modernisation and expansion projects feature more community co-design.

I believe that there is more we could be doing when it comes to addressing racism in ACT schools. Racism. No Way! is a really important first step for schools but we cannot rest on our laurels with it. The program was, I believe, launched in 2000. Although Racism. It Stops With Me is a good program that should certainly be integrated into ACT schools, it is not enough on its own. I understand that one is 12 years old. The challenges facing teachers and students 24 years on are going to need fundamentally different responses than when the program was first created.

The *It really stabs me* report showed a clear issue with young Canberrans experiencing racism, especially in school settings, and the continued shortfall of the ACT government in reaching the targets regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolling in or graduating from public college systems shows that we are not doing enough to engage and support them in the school system. When I pressed in estimates about these targets not being achieved, I was quite concerned that the best justification that the directorate could provide for these lower rates of enrolment and graduation outcomes for a group of marginalised students is that they hold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to the same targets compared to other states and territories. While I am shocked to hear that other states and territories do not even have parity for targets, parity for targets is not the gold standard; it is merely where we should be. In reality, setting targets means nothing if we are not going to commit the funds and support needed to make those targets



achievable and, if we cannot achieve the goals set for us, more needs to be done to get us there.

Next, I want to talk briefly about the issue of sexual harassment towards school staff in ACT schools. I appreciate that work is being done with the centralisation of reports as of last year in order to more accurately assess the scale of the issue and, hopefully, recognise patterns that emerge so they can be more effectively dealt with. I believe we as a government have an obligation to make sure that the process and timeline for reporting sexual harassment in the workplace is transparent and widely known. If a teacher has the awful experience of sexual harassment, they should, at the very least, be able to easily find out from publicly available resources what they should do next, what support will be available to them and how long they will need to wait until they hear back from anyone they might contact. My strong hope is that this is something that could be done within existing resources and teams within the directorate. We need consistency, accountability and transparency in this space, and we would really welcome more action from the government.

I was particularly relieved to learn in estimates hearings that the government will be phasing out the scam model by 2026 if all goes to plan. The scam model has been quite distressing for a lot of students, parents, teachers and staff—and I have heard that from a few places in the community. That deficit-oriented model that relies on diagnosis is not how we should be supporting students with a disability or additional learning needs. So I am really glad to hear that the ACT government has commenced a consultation on a new strengths-based model for providing supports for students with a disability and hopefully one that does not actually require on diagnosis and provides support for young people regardless. We also want to strengthen the system that meets their needs, a truly inclusive system. So the ACT Greens will be eagerly awaiting the outcome of the review into allied health supports in schools. That is definitely something we would like to see actioned more strongly in future budgets.

In the early childhood education and care space, I would very much like to see an increased investment in providing families with more hours of universal access to preschool for three- and four-year-olds. I appreciate that the ACT government have had a strong focus on 15 hours for four-year-olds, but I really urge them to bring that same energy and increase their support for universal free three-year-old education sooner rather than later. And, of course, we wholeheartedly support the government in their stance that the workforce must be brought along for any expansion. We could not do it without them, and we would not advocate moving ahead faster than the workforce can match. However, this is an issue of urgency. Above and beyond the profound benefits that early childhood education provides to children, benefits that reverberate across their schooling, freeing up more time for parents and carers of young children would be a huge boom to the ACT. That is more people given the choice of paid work and more people with a choice of training and studying. The sooner we can expand universal access to three- and four-year-old education, the better the outcome for our whole community.

Lastly, there are no silver bullets in education—I think we all this—but funding is a fairly universal enabler. I understand we are still negotiating the new school funding agreement and trying to get the federal government to come on board and pay their fair share. Territories and states have asked for the federal government to contribute an extra

five per cent of the school resource standard to public schools. Yes, we are notionally fully funded but this is still sorely needed in the ACT. One can only imagine the improvements you might get to infrastructure, funding for allied support for funding health professionals and learning support assistance, curricula resourcing and support for teachers within the classroom that you could into the ACT budget for that kind of an increase. I am really glad to see the ACT Minister for Education holding her ground on this one. Thank you. I would like to say to Minister Berry—through you, Mr Assistant Speaker: “Give them hell.”

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (12.03): I want to speak briefly about schooling in Belconnen and in the town centre in particular. In May this year all three parties supported my calls for assessments and, subject to those assessments, the delivery of a school in the Belconnen Town Centre. The agreement was to commit to delivering a new primary and secondary school in the Belconnen Town Centre subject to the outcomes of feasibility work and the identification of a suitable site. Unfortunately, this budget does not deliver this. There are some welcomed funding streams for other projects—and my colleague Miss Nuttall has spoken to some of those—but I remain disappointed that ACT Labor are so reticent to admit that they do not support a vertical school in the Belconnen Town Centre and are not looking at that right now.

The government response to the education committee’s future of school infrastructure inquiry agreed in principle that the ACT government, when required, should construct vertical schools in the ACT, giving consideration to relevant health and safety considerations. We had a parliamentary committee look at this and said, “Yes, vertical schools are probably a good idea for the ACT and we should start to consider those.” But, unfortunately, what we saw from ACT Labor’s plan for Belconnen published was a commitment that they were working with the University of Canberra to undertake a feasibility study on sites for a future public and primary school on campus. There was no mention in there of looking at a vertical school or a feasibility study into it and there was no mention in there of the previous commitments for looking at a primary and high school in the Belconnen CBD.

UC is close but it is not the town centre. A school at UC would not be walkable or rideable for kids in many of our town centres’ growing developments, including the Markets and Eden developments that have 695 homes, the Lathlain Street precinct’s 600-plus homes, the Circus precinct’s 500-plus homes and possibly more than 2,000 build-to-rent homes that Westfield are looking at at the moment. There is a lot more plan development. Those are just a few. We have a lot of people going into that town centre, which is why I brought the motion up in the first place.

If we do not build a central, walkable town centre school, we will end up with thousands more students who need to be driven to school. This will make our town centre a traffic congestion mess. It will mean our kids do not get the health benefits and the mental health benefits of being able to get to school independently. It will make the lives of parents much, much harder than they would otherwise be. I am calling on all parties to consider where our development is occurring in this town centre and where our current residents live. We need to plan for those Belconnen Town Centre schools as soon as possible and then we need to get on with building them before our town centre population doubles again.

It is a real shame that Labor have dragged their heels on this. We are doing infill. We need to do schools when we do infill. We cannot just put in the homes. We also need to put in the schools at the same time, and we certainly need to be setting aside that land and planning for it. The Greens recognise this. We recognise that, as residents move into existing suburbs, we need to expand our existing schools. We have taken action on that for Belconnen Town Centre. We are looking at it at the Canberra Racecourse site too. We understand that, when you put in 3,000 homes or 5,000 homes, you also need to put in extra school capacity. We will not only commit to building new schools whenever and wherever we can where we know that we need them for our residents but also make sure that our colleagues are also looking at current and future school needs.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

*Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour.*

**Sitting suspended from 12.07 to 2.00 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Government—infrastructure—costs**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, when announcing your costings for the city stadium, you cited various associated works, including a multistorey car park, as part of the project and a 30 per cent contingency. Conversely, when discussing stage 2A of the tram, you insist that the cost is \$577 million because you do not include the cost of raising London Circuit, the cost of acquiring the additional rolling stock, the cost of retrofitting the trams, upgrading the depot and so on, which, when included, actually make the cost more than \$1.4 billion—and that does not even include a 30 per cent contingency. Chief Minister, why do you present the total costs for projects you do not want to build but seek to hide the associated costs of projects you actually want to build?

**MR BARR:** I reject the premise of the opposition leader's question. The government has very clearly published costs associated with expanding light rail depots or, indeed, the raising of London Circuit project. Of course, the benefits of those projects, and particularly raising London Circuit, extend beyond just enabling light rail.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, does the \$1 billion price tag for the new north side hospital include a 30 per cent contingency and all associated works?

**MR BARR:** Certainly, there will be elements of contingency and precinct works associated with that project.

**Ms Lawder:** Is it 30 per cent?

**MR BARR:** Thirty per cent is the consultant's benchmark.

*Mr Parton interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Parton! That is enough.

**MR BARR:** It is, of course, reasonable, as projects go through development—and this is common practice with infrastructure projects—that the more refined the project, and the more work that is done on it, the lower the contingency and the lower the provisional sums for certain elements will become, because risks will be eliminated and scope will be managed. This is common practice—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members.

**MR BARR:** This is common practice with all major infrastructure projects as they go through their development. An example of the cost of a major health infrastructure project is the one we have just completed at Canberra Hospital.

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, given this 30 per cent contingency is now being applied to infrastructure projects in the ACT, has stage 2 of the tram in its entirety exceeded \$5 billion yet?

**MR BARR:** No.

### **Digital Health Record—ACT Integrity Commission**

**MS LEE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, yesterday during question time you refused to provide information to the Assembly about whether ACT Health met their mandatory reporting requirements to the Integrity Commission and about when you were first made aware of potential corruption in relation to the Digital Health Record project. Minister, I ask you once again: when were you first made aware that there were concerns about potential corruption related to the DHR program?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** The concerns that have been raised relate to financial management. That has been very clear. The Integrity Commissioner has made a statement that these matters have been referred to him and that he is investigating these matters. The allegation is not, as far as anybody is aware and as far as has been publicly discussed, an allegation of corruption, which is a different thing. I would remind those opposite of the Integrity Commissioner's explicit—explicit—direction that it is not appropriate to draw adverse inference about any individual while the commission conducts its investigation.

**MS LEE:** Minister, can you table in the Assembly any correspondence that you have had with the Integrity Commissioner seeking advice about whether you can answer questions on whether ACT Health met their mandatory reporting obligations and when you were first made aware of these allegations?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** As I said after question time yesterday, I sought and received advice about what I was able to say about this matter. I have provided that advice to the Assembly. I will take the question on notice in relation to what I am allowed to say about where that advice came from and whether I can table that advice. The opposition, I think, should by now very much understand the requirements of the Integrity

Commission Act and the relevant regulation. They totally understand that it is not appropriate to provide advice to this place that one has been explicitly advised is not able to be provided. Again, I would encourage the opposition not to draw inferences in relation to the nature of the allegations that have not been raised previously.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, are you refusing to answer the question about when you were first aware of potential allegations and whether mandatory reporting obligations were met because you are a witness in this investigation?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Ms Castley is well aware that I would not be able to answer that question.

### **Digital Health Record—procurement**

**MS CASTLEY:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, you have attempted to assert that you and your government were taking the waste of taxpayers' money in relation to the DHR project seriously. You have stated that a review was undertaken by senior officials from ACT Health, CHS, the Treasury, DDTS and CMTEEDD in January 2024. We also know that you were briefed about the NTT report in mid-May 2024, despite saying recently in the media that this was not the case. Minister, why did you fail to ask for more information when you were briefed about the NTT audit, especially after you were told four months earlier that a review consisting of five different directorates was investigating the DHR project?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** As I said in my statement—and again I refer Ms Castley to my statement on Tuesday when I went through all of this—I was disappointed that I was not explicitly briefed on the details of the NTT audit, but I was aware of it because it was cited in further information that related more broadly to DSD financial management and the DHR project. That information was about the taskforce review report that cabinet was considering. As I said at the time, the audit report had been appropriately referred to that review. That review was underway. Ministers, including me, had been very clear with the relevant directorates that were looking into this matter that they should be investigating whether there had been any breaches of the Financial Management Act, the Procurement Act or any other legal requirements of public servants, and that, if any breaches were identified, they should be appropriately referred. So all action that could be taken at that time, to my understanding, was being taken.

What I also said publicly prior to this and on Tuesday was that I was aware, obviously—because it came to the 2023-24 budget review and it came to the 2024-25 budget process—that work was underway to better understand the financial management and issues in the Digital Solutions Division. I said to the media at the time that this was raised that I was broadly aware of the issues and that I had been briefed on the issues. What I had not explicitly been briefed on was the detail of that internal audit.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, have you spoken to the staff that you claim did not specifically brief you about the NTT audit, and have there been any consequences?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I have expressed my disappointment to the director-general of the ACT Health Directorate. She has apologised for not explicitly briefing me in relation to that audit. With the benefit of hindsight, which we all obviously now have,

she has indicated that she thinks she probably should have briefed me on that audit. The acting director-general, while the director-general was away, has clearly indicated that he believes that I should have been briefed on that audit. But the reality was that, when that audit report was received, there were already reviews and inquiries underway. That audit report was referred to those reviews and inquiries that were reporting back to cabinet, and did report back to cabinet, and the audit report recommendations fed into a program of work that was already underway—that I knew was already underway and that the Expenditure Review Committee knew was already underway—and was already leading to change, and there were already controls in place. I think this is a really important point: when this matter came to light, when the audit into the NTT invoices was commissioned, financial controls were immediately put in place in the ACT Health Directorate, and those controls remained in place earlier this year and they remain in place today.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, will you table each brief, unredacted, that you received for each financial audit of the DHR fiasco?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I will take that question on notice and will look at what I can release. I have tabled the two KPMG reports and the NTT invoices audit. What I clearly indicated in the ministerial statement was that the first KPMG report was commissioned and informed the 2023-24 budget review process. I will need to take some advice because that report informed a cabinet process, so it is reasonably likely that the briefing that I received was explicitly in the context of cabinet considerations and business cases. So I will need to seek some advice about what can be released and tabled in the Assembly. Just to be clear for the Assembly: I will not be able to do that today, because I will be leaving this afternoon for a ministerial council meeting, but I will get some advice about that.

### **Housing—Affordable Housing Project Fund**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, the ACT government increased the \$60 million Affordable Housing Project Fund from \$60 million to \$80 million in the 2024-25 budget. Can you tell me why this is such an important investment?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for her interest and continued advocacy for affordable housing. The \$20 million increase to the ACT government's Affordable Housing Project Fund is part of this government's announcement and investment into housing right across the housing continuum. Affordable housing is rented out at less than 75 per cent of the market rate. These homes will be perfect for Canberrans who earn a little bit too much to be eligible for public housing but might still be struggling with the cost of renting from the private market. The ACT government knows that having a decent and stable home provides the foundation for so many aspects of life: for health, education, work, family and so much in between. It is one of the ways this government is meeting its commitment of 600 affordable rental dwellings by 2025-26.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what sort of projects does the fund support?

**MS BERRY:** The Affordable Housing Project Fund is set up to help community housing providers deliver new housing stock and ensure there are affordable homes

available for Canberrans on lower incomes. Already the fund has supported six build-to-rent projects that will see around 280 new affordable rental homes, including: 45 in Turner as part of a joint venture between Canberra Police Community Youth Club, CHC and the Snow Foundation; 70 in Phillip as part of the development by CHC Australia and the Canberra Southern Cross Club; 54 in Curtin as part of a development between the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn's North Woden Parish and Marymead CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn; and 22 as part of Ginninderry's women's housing initiative.

**MR PETERSSON:** Minister, how does the ACT government work with the community housing sector to increase different types of housing in Canberra?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The community housing sector has, and continues to be, a particularly important part of the housing solution in the ACT and across the country. As well as providing specialised social housing and crisis accommodation, community housing providers are increasingly looking to provide affordable rentals. This is great news for people on lower incomes, like cleaners, hospitality workers, retail workers and front-line care and community service industry workers. This community is vitally in need of housing as well, and this government will do everything it can to support these key workers and make sure that they have quality, secure and affordable places to call home, close to where they work and play. I have been so impressed with the innovative ideas the community housing sector has brought forward to tackle this challenge, and the incredible partnerships that they have made, both through the Affordable Housing Project Fund and the Commonwealth's Housing Australia Future Fund, round one. Together, in these important partnerships, I know the ACT government and the community housing sector can make a real difference, bridging the gap between social housing and the private rental market.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—Boomanulla Oval**

**MISS NUTTALL:** My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, I was grateful for your update in estimates regarding Boomanulla Oval and the work underway with the aim of returning it to community control. I recall that you explained the current challenge was the lack of an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation willing to take on the oval at this point in time and, potentially, the need to upgrade the site. Given that lack of an available organisation, is there work underway to build the capacity of organisations so they can take on management of this site and other sites in the future?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. Yes, it is really important that we continue to work with the community to return Boomanulla Oval to community control. Boomanulla Oval is an important and special place for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and it has been a cultural and sporting centre for the community for 40 years.

The ACT government has continued to invest in Boomanulla Oval since 2015, after the previous owner, the Aboriginal Corporation for Sporting and Recreational Activities, entered voluntary administration. I am really pleased that we have been able to bring the oval back to competition standard. The 2018-19 budget included \$770,000 to restore and revitalise the main building, community area and Garden of Achievement at

Boomanulla Oval.

In the most recent budget—the budget we will be voting on next week, presumably—we have the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation Establishment and Expansion Fund, for the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. That is almost a million dollars a year over the next few years out of the Healing and Reconciliation Fund—exactly to do what Miss Nuttall is asking about in relation to supporting the capacity of community-controlled organisations so that they can meet the needs that the community has identified.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you, Minister. Could you update us on working happening with the Elected Body to determine a timeframe for when the site may be returned to community control?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Thank you very much for the question, Miss Nuttall. As the previous Elected Body acknowledged in its August 2023 hearings, TCCS, the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, has been working very hard with the Elected Body to understand how this transition can occur. Indeed, the Elected Body noted:

... the dedicated work of Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) for their extensive work on the grounds.

And the—

... positive steps to bringing Boomanulla Oval into contemporary standards and to ensure appropriate resourcing for the facilities maintenance is provided in an ongoing way.

The Elected Body also held community consultations on the future of Boomanulla Oval in February this year. I want to acknowledge the leadership of the previous Elected Body on this issue. In particular, this work was led by the former deputy chair and now Independents for Canberra candidate Ms Paula McGrady. In the August 2023 hearing report, the Elected Body stated its intention to conduct further community consultations to determine community expectations around the management of the oval and to establish an interim management committee to guide management of the oval and its facilities, with the aim of transitioning Boomanulla to full community control within two years. I have no doubt that Ms McGrady, who was very committed to this work over her time in the previous Elected Body, will certainly not hesitate to work closely with this Elected Body should she be asked for advice, to ensure that this vision becomes reality.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, have all the necessary upgrades to facilities occurred and, if not, what is the timeframe for any outstanding upgrades?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Braddock for the supplementary question. The ACT government has invested significant resources into upgrading Boomanulla Oval. I would note that when the oval returned to ACT government management in 2015, a process was established under the then Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Sport, Mr Rattenbury, that would have required the community-controlled organisation to support and fund the re-establishment of facilities at the oval, including the restoration of the sporting oval to sporting capacity and the restoration of the facilities at the site.



It has long been my view, since I have been Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, that it was not a reasonable proposition to require this community to support and maintain a proper sporting facility and buildings on the basis of the income that they would generate. That is not what we expect of other sporting organisations in the ACT. The ACT government maintains sports ovals across the city, and we should do this for Boomanulla Oval as well. So I have been very pleased to be part of the decision-making to ensure that that could occur and that this facility could return to appropriate standards for sporting use—to have lights put in place so that it can be used for training and to have that \$770,000 investment to restore and revitalise the main building, community area and Garden of Achievement, to restore community access to this important site.

### **Industrial relations—CFMEU**

**MR COCKS:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, Ms Jacqueline Agius was appointed Work Health and Safety Commissioner in April 2020. It was recently revealed that the three-person selection panel for that process included the then ACT CFMEU secretary. That is a union which Ms Agius continued to work closely with and allowed to attend WorkSafe inspections.

Over the years, there have been concerns raised from both businesses and workers about WorkSafe inspections and how they are conducted. These issues were highlighted in the media earlier this year, where it was said:

There were also allegations that Prohibition Notices were not followed up as lawfully required, leaving workplaces shut down, with complaints to management going nowhere.

And:

... during the blitz on construction sites, the pressure was on to accumulate as many Prohibition and Improvement Notices as possible to present an image of activism in the media.

Minister, is using blitzes to maximise the number of infringement notices and make your regulator look good in the media an appropriate strategy for WorkSafe ACT?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Cocks for the question. WorkSafe do a very good job in the ACT in ensuring safety in workplaces. From 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 there were 2,476 Workplace visits by WorkSafe ACT. There were 2,441 improvement notices, 675 prohibition notices, 121 infringement notices and 29 non-disturbance notices. This goes to show the activity of WorkSafe ACT on this very important task of making sure that workplaces are safe. I support the work they do, the training that they received for their inspectors and, of course, the commissioner as well.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, have you personally investigated any of the allegations that prohibition notices were not followed up as lawfully required?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** No. The oversight is the Work Health and Safety Council in the

ACT. They are the ones that look after WorkSafe ACT and ensure that the job is done correctly. As I have indicated there is an incredible lot of work across the ACT and we have, now, a safer workplace, particularly in construction across the ACT, due to the efforts of WorkSafe.

**MR CAIN:** I have a supplementary question. Minister, was it appropriate for the secretary of the CFMEU to sit on the selection panel that chose the Work Health and Safety Commissioner—a role that has significant power over employers and workplaces?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** These joint selection panels are appropriate to ensure that we have the views of both sides—the employers and the employees across the ACT. There is an incredible lot of knowledge held by the people that take on those roles and it is appropriate that we use that knowledge where we can.

### **Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner**

**MR COCKS:** My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. In July this year, the *RiotACT* published deeply concerning allegations about the culture of bullying and intimidation in the Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner, including that there was a systemic, toxic culture and bullying at all levels within WorkSafe ACT, that within WorkSafe bullying and harassment are common, that a lack of training means that work is done without the necessary skills, and that anyone who questioned office practices would be isolated and forced out. It seems these behaviours could represent a breach of division 11 of the work health and safety regulations that Ms Agius is supposed to regulate. Under Westminster conventions, ministers administer and bear responsibility for the actions of an agency within their control. Minister, following the media reports of these disturbing allegations, have you personally undertaken or commissioned any investigations into the actions and behaviours of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner and her agency?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, I did. I wrote to the Work Health and Safety Council and asked them to provide some advice. It is not my decision; it is up to the council. I will update the Assembly when it comes back.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, given the seriousness of the allegations about the behaviour of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner, why have you failed to report these issues to the Assembly, in line with Westminster conventions?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** These are allegations by anonymous people in a local media broadcast, and not once have we had any evidence that there was anything untoward going on. Nevertheless, I did write to the Work Health and Safety Council, who regulate WorkSafe and look after those aspects of WorkSafe. Of course, once they reply to me, we will be able to update the Assembly.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, do you accept any responsibility for the actions of your Work Health and Safety Commissioner?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, of course I do. I am the minister.

## **Municipal services—active travel infrastructure**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, this government is making a record investment in walking and cycling infrastructure. How are works progressing on some of the major active travel projects?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Work is well underway on major active travel projects across Canberra. Construction has begun to upgrade the paths around Lake Ginninderra, and major works are occurring on the path through John Knight Memorial Park on the eastern foreshore. We are also engaging a design consultant to renew Emu Bank, including widening the retaining wall, replacing the trees and improving the pavements permanently. Procurement will commence soon to construct a seven-kilometre path along William Hovell Drive, as part of the duplication project.

In the inner north, construction has commenced on the Garden City cycleway, which will ultimately connect Watson, Downer, Hackett, Dickson, Ainslie and Braddon with the city. We will soon construct a new path in Telopea Park.

Finally, in Tuggeranong works have been completed to upgrade the foreshore to improve access to recreation spaces and connectivity to the town centre. Sulwood Drive will soon reopen, with the first stages of the new four-kilometre cycleway.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what work is underway to build new footpaths and better connect our suburbs?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. I am pleased that this budget provides over \$1.4 million in additional funding to fill missing path links throughout our suburbs. In Woden and Weston Creek, we will construct the missing links near Wittenoom Crescent in Stirling and formalise a desire line on Batchelor Street in Torrens.

In Belconnen we will extend the recently completed shared path on Kuringa Drive to better connect Fraser and create a new walking loop in Palmerville Heritage Park. In Kingston we will build a median crossing to improve safety near the train station, close to where stage 2 of the Kingston cycleway will run.

Each of these projects has been informed by requests from the community and will be completed this financial year. There are many more projects underway to improve footpaths, and I encourage members to have a look at the interactive map on the City Services website, which shows where each of City Services' active travel infrastructure projects is up to.

**DR PATERSON:** Minister, how is the government's insourcing agenda improving the way we keep our footpaths in good condition?

**MS CHEYNE:** I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary question. We are investing \$5.8 million over four years to establish a new path replacement crew, complementing the insourced path-grinding crew established in last year's budget. With an additional

10 full-time positions and new equipment, City Services will be able to respond to cracked, broken and lifted paths much more rapidly. The crew can also construct small-scale improvements, such as building new ramps, kerbs and missing sections of paths to make our streets age-friendly and accessible.

This insourced team removes the need for City Services to package broken and cracked panels in individual suburbs into larger work orders and undertake a procurement process. Now City Services can respond more flexibly, quickly and often more cheaply to maintain our footpaths to the conditions that Canberrans expect and to keep Canberra as a walkable and age-friendly city.

### **Industrial relations—CFMEU**

**MR COCKS:** My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, as we have said, Ms Jacqueline Agius was appointed Work Health and Safety Commissioner in April 2020, and it was recently revealed that the three-person selection panel for that process included Jason O'Mara, the then ACT CFMEU secretary—a union which Ms Agius continued to work closely with. In July this year, the CFMEU pushed, via the ACT Labor Conference, for more powers and more involvement in appointing senior public servants, including sitting on hiring panels—a position that the Chief Minister described as “Neither an ACT Labor party policy position, nor something that is being actively considered by the government”. Minister, why was the secretary of the CFMEU on a hiring panel for a supposedly independent government regulator if it is not your government's policy?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are responding, Mr Barr?

**MR BARR:** Mr Cocks has misquoted me. He has the union wrong and he has misquoted me. Those comments were in relation to a proposal by the CPSU, not the CFMEU. The comments that he referred to in relation to the CFMEU and WorkSafe—those comments of mine related to that proposal: joint selection committees are in the Public Sector Management Act. So you have conflated the two issues, Mr Cocks, and misquoted me.

**MR COCKS:** Minister, has the CFMEU, or any CFMEU official, ever been appointed to any other government selection panels for senior public sector roles or statutory appointments?

**MR BARR:** I will take that on notice.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, do you deny that appointing the CFMEU to the selection panel for the Work Health and Safety Commissioner raises significant conflict of interest issues?

**MR BARR:** No; it does not raise conflict of interest issues.

### **Housing—Kippax**

**MS CLAY:** My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, it is great to see the upgrade to Kippax Fair being progressed and that there are 150 homes in that upgrade—

that is, 70 more than was indicated in the 2023-2024 Indicative Land Release Program. As part of this upgrade, Kippax Fair will be providing 24 new affordable and public homes. How many of those homes will be public homes?

**MS BERRY:** We have not gotten into that kind of detail at this stage.

**MS CLAY:** For the affordable homes, did the developer pay full commercial market rate for the land, or was the land valued at a discount rate because the housing would earn less rent?

**MS BERRY:** It was a commercial rate.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Why aren't more public housing properties being provided in an area that is close to shops, public transport and good community services?

**MS BERRY:** As part of the agreement the ACT government made through their negotiations with the Kippax Fair owners and as was taken through the economic review process as well as the cabinet process, it was agreed by the government and the executive that this was an appropriate outcome; that the sale of the site include at least 24 new affordable and public housing dwellings. This is more than 15 per cent of the 150 new homes that will be built there.

### **Belconnen—government performance**

**MR CAIN:** My question is to the Deputy Chief Minister. Deputy Chief Minister, your party recently announced its plan for Belconnen, and it appears that ACT Labor clearly think so little of Belconnen residents that they were hoping no-one would notice that these were re-announcements. A Strathnairn primary school, a West Belconnen health centre and a William Hovell Drive duplication—as you would be aware, Minister—are all recycled announcements and broken promises from previous elections. I also refer to an interview on ABC Radio Canberra on 5 April this year where you said that, “We don't make promises we can't deliver on.”

Deputy Chief Minister, how can you be so insincere and disingenuous by re-announcing broken promises as new policies?

**MS BERRY:** I completely reject the premise of the question and note the member of the opposition's cherry-picking in collecting that sentence from an interview which was about another matter. But it is no surprise that the opposition would use that tactic to attempt to say that the Labor Party is doing something that it is not. The Belconnen plan was clearly about making sure that people were aware of what is happening in Belconnen. Those are not the only things happening in Belconnen, and the Labor Party will have more to say on that.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, how is this recycled policy announcement not an accurate reflection of the fact that ACT Labor are too tired, too complacent and uninspired after 23 years?

**MS BERRY:** What a shame to hear those kinds of comments from a Belconnen person themselves, be undermining the work that is happening out there that has been

advocated by the Belconnen community over and over again. The ACT Labor Party in government is absolutely delivering for Belconnen and will continue to. The ACT Labor Party will continue to—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, please!

**MS BERRY:** The Labor Party will continue to make announcements leading into the election—like everybody else will, I expect—but we are certainly achieving more than the Liberal Party have ever achieved in this space.

**MS CASTLEY:** Deputy Chief Minister, why do you think so little of Belconnen residents that you would recycle and repackage announcements and pretend that they are brand new?

**MS BERRY:** Again, I completely reject the premise of that question as well.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, are you going to allow the minister to answer?

**Ms Lee:** If she is actually relevant.

**MS BERRY:** I will just reject the premise of the question, Madam Speaker.

### **Elections ACT—polling booths**

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is to the Special Minister of State. I have been approached by the Giralang Primary School Parents and Citizens Association, which had planned to hold a barbecue for election day this year, for that wonderful institution called a “democracy sausage”. However, the list of polling booths has been released, and, to the school’s surprise, it is not amongst the list of polling places. Minister, what has the rationalisation of polling booths been about, and why has Giralang Primary been cut from the list of polling places?

**MR STEEL:** I thank Mr Braddock for his question. I acknowledge the concern from the local parents and community association about the lack of a polling station in Giralang, but I should be clear that the power to appoint a specific place to be a polling place on polling day for an election is a power reserved for the Electoral Commissioner, as identified in section 119 of the Electoral Act.

It is important that these decisions are made by an independent Electoral Commissioner and that there is no undue influence on the conduct of the election. In that spirit, I encourage Mr Braddock to contact the Electoral Commissioner directly. There will be the opportunity, I am sure, for a future Assembly to inquire into the conduct of the 2024 election and examine such matters in the future.

### **Disability—DeafACT**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, I refer to the government response to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion's inquiry into access to services and information in AUSLAN tabled on 7 June 2023. The committee recommended that the ACT government provide financial assistance to DeafACT, and this was agreed in principle in the government response. Minister, at this time DeafACT has no funding. Why has the ACT government failed to provide financial assistance to DeafACT as agreed?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Lawder for the question. As she has indicated, that recommendation was agreed in principle. Often, with responses that are agreed in principle, the ACT government supports the intent of the recommendation but it is subject to further consideration through budget processes. Clearly, those budget processes have not at this point resulted in additional funding for DeafACT. I can assure Ms Lawder that I recently met with DeafACT to discuss both their concerns and what they would like to see for the future. Of course, we will continue to monitor that issue.

I would also note that, in relation to the types of activities that DeafACT undertake, these are exactly the types of activity that state and territory governments would have expected to be funded under the tier 2 arrangements for the National Disability Insurance Scheme when it was established. Unfortunately, the information linkage and capacity building stream of the NDIS funding was established as a grant program and did not meet the expectations that states and territories and the disability community had for it. This is an ongoing matter for conversation between the states and territories and the commonwealth, as we work through the NDIS reform that is currently underway.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, how does the ACT government expect DeafACT to provide support to deaf and hard of hearing people in the ACT without funding?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** Of course, I very much appreciate the work that DeafACT has been doing and continues to do. We will continue to consider all of the priorities that are put forward to us by the disability community and other advocates. When we talk about the budget, what we often say—and my colleague Ms Davidson made the same point this morning in her speech on the budget debate—is that we always have more requests for funding, more things that we would like to fund, than we are able to fit into any budget. As I said in response to the first question, I recently met with DeafACT, and we will continue to consider the range of disability funding options available to us.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, why doesn't the ACT government value the support to Deaf and hard of hearing Canberrans delivered by DeafACT?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I reject the premise of that question. I said in my previous answer that we very much do value it.

### **Animals—dog parks**

**MS LAWDER:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, according to the CMTEDD website, Tuggeranong has the highest level of dog ownership, at 48 per cent of households. This is followed by Weston/Molonglo, at 36

per cent; Belconnen, at 32 per cent; Woden, at 32 per cent; the inner north, at 28 per cent; the inner south, at 26 per cent; and Gungahlin, at 23 per cent.

Despite having the highest level of dog ownership, Tuggeranong only has one dog park at the moment. Gungahlin, with the lowest level of dog ownership, according to the government's website, has two at the moment. There is a new one being built in Franklin, due to open in the summer of 2024-25, bringing it to three in Gungahlin.

During the 2020 election ACT Labor promised a new dog park in Lanyon, with construction to commence in July 2021 and to be completed that same year. Minister, why has your government prioritised the construction of the Franklin dog park over the Lanyon dog park?

**MS CHEYNE:** This detail is publicly available. We are committed to the construction of Lanyon dog park. In fact, I mentioned it in my answer yesterday, if Ms Lawder was listening. We are working through planning and environmental approvals and we expect those to have public notification periods in the coming months. The construction procurement is underway, with construction anticipated to begin in the second half of this year, pending successful approvals and procurement processes.

**Mr Parton:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, resume your seat. Point of order.

**Mr Parton:** My point of order is on relevance. Ms Lawder's question was about why the government has prioritised the construction of the Gungahlin park ahead of Lanyon. We have got all these details. We just want to know why.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister has one minute left. Perhaps to that point, Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** I answered it in the first few moments of my answer. It is because some extensive environmental approvals have been required, through investigations on that site.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Cain and others!

**MS CHEYNE:** You are aware of this yourself, Madam Speaker. It is not about prioritising one over the other. We are getting on with the biggest suburban infrastructure renewal program this city has ever seen, and we look forward to delivering the Lanyon dog park as soon as we can.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister why have you failed to deliver on yet another promise for Tuggeranong?

**MS CHEYNE:** I have not.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, will you apologise to the dog owners and the dogs of Lanyon



for failing to deliver on your promise?

**MS CHEYNE:** I apologise to the dogs.

**Ms Lee:** Just the dogs?

**MS CHEYNE:** And the dog owners. I particularly apologise to Nic Nat and the other one in Mr Parton's household! Dog parks are not the only places that dogs and people can exercise and enjoy recreation. I appreciate that dog parks are highly valued infrastructure. That is exactly why we committed to it and why we will be delivering it. It has taken longer because of these environmental approvals. Other projects have also been delayed because of environmental approvals, not necessarily dog parks. This has meant that things have taken longer.

Yes, I am sorry to the dogs. I am sorry to the dog owners. They should certainly check out the map of dog exercise areas, which is available on the City Services website and ACTmapi, to see the many, many off-leash areas for dogs, as well as on-leash areas for dogs, right through the ACT, which provide plenty of enjoyment no matter where you live.

### **Economy—employment**

**DR PATERSON:** My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, can you please update the Assembly on the employment market conditions in the ACT?

**MR BARR:** I thank Dr Paterson for the question. Employment in the territory, as at July, has grown by 2.3 per cent through the year. The unemployment rate fell to 3.6 per cent. This means the ACT has the lowest unemployment rate of any state or territory in Australia. I am also pleased to advise that our employment-to-population ratio rose to 70.1 per cent, which is the highest across Australia. We have a participation rate of 72.7 per cent. So, in summary, the labour market is strong. I point out to members that we went to the 2020 election committing to grow the size of the total labour market in the ACT to 250,000 jobs by 2025. July 2024 data shows that we have 271,300 jobs in the territory—the highest amount ever.

**DR PATERSON:** Treasurer, which industries or sectors have seen the most growth in the past four years?

**MR BARR:** Since 2020, many of the industries that are integral to our economy have grown substantially. Health care and social assistance have experienced a 40 per cent growth. Arts and recreation have grown by 28.7 per cent. Financial and insurance services have grown by 26.6 per cent. Construction jobs grew by 25½ per cent. Education and training jobs grew by 17.2 per cent. Admittedly off a low base, but nevertheless, our manufacturing sector increased its employment by 12½ per cent. These are just a sample of the areas of our economy where we have seen significant increases in the amount of employment—the total number of jobs—over this term of government. I think every sector that I just mentioned grew at a greater rate in the ACT than they did across Australia, some by close to an extra 10 per cent. For those who have an interest in the balance of jobs growth between the public sector and the private sector, over the period since 2020, public sector growth was 23.1 per cent and private

sector jobs grew by 33.9 per cent.

**MS ORR:** Treasurer, what does the labour force data mean for the ACT?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Orr for the question. It shows that our economy is growing and it is diversifying. It shows that more secure local jobs are being created. As I mentioned in question time yesterday, off the back of the nation's fastest business growth, we are seeing significant growth in the private sector. But also, as I have just indicated, growth in employment in the public sector, which is particularly focused on the delivery of free services to our community—free public health care, free public education, and a range of other areas of public employment—has not only contributed to more secure and long-term jobs in our economy but has also resulted in better services for Canberra. Canberra continues to get better. It is a place we all love and, if we continue this focus on strong employment growth, keeping our unemployment rate low and supporting the growth of both public and private sector jobs, we will continue to see our economy being one of the strongest in the country, and we will be able to continue our record of 34 years of consecutive economic growth.

With that, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

### **Supplementary answers to questions without notice**

#### **Cultural Facilities Corporation—staff conduct**

**MS CHEYNE:** Yesterday, Ms Lawder and Ms Castley asked me a series of questions relating to the June 2024 consolidated financial reports, page 50, which had a capital injection for employee entitlements related to special executive termination payments and leave liabilities paid out at termination for the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

This payment relates to cash payments of accrued employment entitlements to, firstly, the former CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, who went on long service leave in 2021 before retiring officially in 2024, following 40 years of public service, and, secondly, the former CFO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, who retired from the ACT public service in 2024 following 18 years of ACT public service. Both former longstanding employees had accrued entitlements under their terms of employment. Both employees were of the highest professional standards, and they did leave with the respect and appreciation of the CFC and the ACT government. My office was informed of the former CFO's retirement on 4 August 2023, and I was told shortly after, and the former CEO advised me directly of her intention to retire on 11 May 2021.

#### **Industrial relations—CFMEU**

**MR COCKS:** Earlier in question time, the Chief Minister suggested that I had got the wrong union and misquoted him. The information that I was using at that time came from an article entitled, "ACT CFMEU pushes for more power", which stated:

At the ACT Labor Conference later this month, the CFMEU will reportedly push for increased authority to investigate and prosecute companies that breach the ACT secure local jobs code; more involvement in appointing senior public servants, including sitting on hiring panels; more powers to address workplace safety and pay issues for companies bidding on government tenders; union consultation to scrutinise companies; and employment quotas for women in

government-funded construction projects.

The article also directly quotes the Chief Minister as saying that the policy proposals were “neither an ACT Labor party policy position, nor something that is being actively considered by the government”. The Chief Minister may wish to correct the record from his statement earlier.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the Chief Minister, it is probably more appropriate that you raise those matters under a personal explanation next time, Mr Cocks. But, in response—

**MR BARR:** Yes, Madam Speaker. The article has conflated motions moved by different unions at the conference. My comments—I know, because I was answering specific questions by the media outlet—were in relation to the CFMEU motion in relation to workplace access. The question of joint selection committees and union representation already exists within the Public Sector Management Act. That motion, I know, because I was at the conference, Madam Speaker, and would know a little more about the Labor Party conference than Mr Cocks, with the greatest of respect, was moved by the CPSU—two different unions. Mr Cocks conflated in his question—

**Mr Parton:** Mr Cocks didn’t; the *Canberra Times* did.

**Mr Cain:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, we are not prosecuting an argument. You put the question and the Chief responded. You think you were misrepresented. You had an opportunity after, I think it is 46 or 47, for a personal explanation. Can we conclude?

**MR BARR:** Yes, I will conclude in one moment, Madam Speaker. The point being, relying upon a newspaper summary which may have conflated—

*Mr Parton interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please.

**MR BARR:** But I am aware because I was asked to comment by the *Canberra Times* on both motions. But the premise of Mr Cocks’ question, incorrectly—and I will take him on his word that it was as a result of a confusion about a *Canberra Times* article—quoted me. So I stand by my statement that, if Mr Cocks would care to check other *Canberra Times* articles, I think it would be quite clear and clarify which union moved which motion.

### **Energy—electric vehicle chargers**

**MR RATTENBURY:** Earlier in the week, I was asked about electric vehicle chargers in the ACT. At the time, I said that the government had contracted for the delivery of 85 public EV chargers in the territory and that 46 public chargers have been installed with ACT government support under round 1 grants. I would like to correct the record with some minor clarification of these numbers and the programs that are delivering them so that there is absolute certainty on this.

As of 1 August, there were 43 public chargers installed with ACT government support, 28 of these via round 1 grant funding and 15 via rebates offered to community clubs. Seventeen chargers are still to be delivered under round 1 to reach the total of 45 chargers. Rounds 1 and 2 grant funding will see the installation of a total of 84 EV chargers in the ACT. Some of those are already installed, and all remaining chargers are due to be delivered this financial year. This includes round 1 and round 2 grant funding, delivering 45 and 39 chargers respectively. Combined with the community club rebates that have delivered 15 EV chargers, this will take the total to 99 EV chargers installed with ACT government support.

## **Answer to question on notice**

### **Question 2096**

**DR PATERSON:** I am seeking an explanation for unanswered question No 2096 from Minister Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY:** As I emailed Dr Paterson earlier today, the directorate has not been able to provide the final version to me at this time. I hope to have it to her as soon as practical.

## **Papers**

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

ACT Volunteering Strategy—

2024-2034, dated August 2024.

Action Plan 2024-2027, dated August 2024.

Australian Crime Commission (ACT) Act, pursuant to subsection 51(5)—Board of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—Chair annual reports—2022-23 dated 16 May 2024.

Belconnen to Civic Bus Corridor—Upgrades—Assembly resolution of 1 November 2023—Government response.

Casey retail precinct—Traffic and transport issues—Assembly resolution of 24 October 2023—Government response—Casey retail precinct—Traffic and transport study, dated June 2024, together with a statement, dated August 2024.

Chief Psychiatrist Report on the ANU incident—Government response, together with a statement.

Civil Law (Sale of Residential Property) Act, pursuant to subsection 19F(2)—Final Report—Review of laws protecting off-the-plan home buyers from unfair contract cancellations—Feedback from public consultation on the statutory review of Part 2A of the Civil Law (Sale of Residential Property) Act 2003, dated August 2024.

Commercial agent licensing scheme—Proposed establishment—Assembly resolution of 21 March 2024—Government response—Report to the Legislative Assembly—Regulation of Commercial Agents.

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 99(4)—Suburban Land Agency—West Belconnen Joint Venture Agreement Participant Substitution—Statement.

Government Procurement Act—

Pursuant to subsection 31(4)—

Direction, letter to the Chair, Government Procurement Board from the Special Minister of State, dated 28 August 2024.

ACT Government Procurement Board—

Strategic Direction—2024-25.

Terms of Reference, dated August 2024.

Pursuant to subsection 42(1)—Government Procurement Rules 2024—Disallowable instrument, dated 28 August 2024.

Human rights incompliant companies—Divestments—Assembly resolution of 7 February 2024—Government response, dated August 2024.

Inclusive access to swimming facilities—Assembly resolution of 12 October 2022—Update, dated August 2024.

India and Singapore Trade Mission February 2024—Tabling statement, dated August 2024.

Knife-related crime legislative reforms—Jack’s Law—Assembly resolution of 16 May 2024—Government response, dated August 2024

Operation and Effectiveness of the Family Violence Act—Update to the Assembly, dated August 2024

Planning Act, pursuant to subsection 268(2)—Statement of Leases Granted—

1 April to 30 June 2024.

1 January to 31 March 2024—Addendum.

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report July 2024—ACT Government response, dated July 2024.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program 2024—Statement.

## **Government—performance**

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.00): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes during an ABC Radio interview in April 2024, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the Labor Party “do not make promises we cannot deliver”;

(2) further notes:

(a) that currently the Labor Party will fail to deliver their 2020 election commitments, which includes but is not limited to:

(i) build additional walk-in health centres;

(ii) complete construction of a new southside hydrotherapy pool;

(iii) build a northside elective surgery centre;

(iv) upgrade endoscopy rooms at Canberra Hospital;

(v) build a palliative care ward in the Canberra Hospital;

(vi) complete construction for a new primary school at Strathnairn;

- (vii) complete construction of a Gungahlin tennis centre;
  - (viii) Stromlo District playing fields; and
  - (ix) complete upgrades to Gorman House;
  - (b) that currently the Labor Party will fail to deliver their 2016 election commitments, which includes but is not limited to:
    - (i) duplication of Athllon Drive; and
    - (ii) a new Tuggeranong ice rink; and
  - (c) according to the 2023 Parliamentary and Governing Agreement Progress Update, around two in five commitments have not been delivered by the Labor-Greens Government; and
- (3) calls on the Deputy Chief Minister to:
- (a) apologise for saying that the Labor Party “do not make promises we cannot deliver”; and
  - (b) correct the record by listing every single election commitment that the Labor Party has failed to deliver since 2012.

In my time in this place, we hear a lot of things said by many members, either inside or outside of this chamber. Needless to say, a lot of us might disagree, but most of the time you think that at least the member who is saying it probably genuinely believes what they are saying. Then you have doozies where you have to stop and take a double take and say, “Did I actually really hear that?” That is what happened when we heard the Deputy Chief Minister in April this year on ABC Radio declare that, “The Labor Party do not make promises that we cannot deliver.” By any objective measure, this is downright laughable and belongs in fantasy land.

So let us have a look at just a couple of the promises that the Labor Party have made that have clearly not been delivered. Almost a decade ago, Labor went to the election promising a new Tuggeranong ice rink and to duplicate Athllon Drive. Almost 10 years later—yep, you guessed it—not delivered. You can understand, Madam Speaker, that Canberrans feel a sense of disappointment, disillusionment and frustration and feel like they have been lied to by the Labor Party time and time again. Term after term and election after election, Canberrans are told that things will get better, that things will change and that Canberra’s voices will be heard, and all that happens is the list of failures grows the longer. ACT Labor not only lets down their community time and time again but also never owns up to any of its failures, never takes responsibility and deflects any sense of accountability or transparency for their failures.

Ms Berry herself would be very aware of her party’s election commitment to a northside college expansion. The election commitment claimed that construction would be completed in 2024-25. But the latest budget, for 2024-25, shows that funding for “planning for an increasing college capacity in Canberra’s north and delivering a second college for Gungahlin”, but, of course, neither of these projects will deliver a constructed college in 2024-25. This seems to follow through to other areas where Ms Berry is responsible, such as the Strathnairn ELC and primary school and the Gungahlin district tennis court.

These projects were announced during the election with much fanfare. Ms Berry said

in 2020, when announcing the proposed Gungahlin tennis facility, “Investing in sport infrastructure benefits the Canberra community in so many important ways and means that Canberrans can have an active and healthy lifestyle and connect with their community.” Ms Berry seems to have utterly lost the point that the benefit comes from not announcing an investment in these facilities but from actually building and delivering these facilities for Canberrans to realise those benefits—and the ACT Labor Party has failed to do exactly that. And only today, we saw another article that confirmed the final nail in the coffin for the much-lauded “Throsby home of football”, which has been plagued with problems from the beginning—yet another broken promise to add to the string of many. Perhaps, maybe outside of this chamber, you can ask Mr Parton what he calls that “Throsby home of football”.

Canberrans want to actually see infrastructure delivered in their suburbs. That is why they are not buying any of Labor’s recent suburb election announcements. The thought behind this announcement screams of something that was cobbled together at about 4.55 pm the day before the Chief Minister had to make his once-a-term trip down south. Almost every “announcement”—Hansard does not see this, but I am putting it in quotation marks, and I put that in quotation marks because this “announcement” included duplication of Athllon Drive, a new health centre in South Tuggeranong, a new hydrotherapy pool, the dog park in Lanyon and upgrades to Tuggeranong Arts Centre—was an announcement that was made in previous elections. This “announcement”—again in quotation marks—has been universally mocked and ridiculed, because Tuggeranong residents are not buying it. They know that this is not an election promise. They know that it is nothing more than a public confirmation of the Labor government’s failure to deliver on previous election promises.

Does the Labor Party have so much contempt for Tuggeranong residents that they think people will forget that these are promises they made and have not delivered over the course of the last few terms? What is more staggering is that at the time, Mr Barr said:

With retiring members, with obviously the turmoil within the Greens political party in this electorate, and how close Labor came last time to winning three seats, it’s certainly an area that we are focused on.

How blatant is that? What a slap in the face to Tuggeranong residents—Mr Barr saying, “We are only doing this to get an extra seat, not because we actually care about you.” The Labor Party may run a government that forgets its promises but, don’t worry, it remembers your votes.

This announcement was symbolic of what was to come for Molonglo, Woden, Weston Creek and Belconnen which the Labor Party have announced in recent weeks. And let’s be honest: none of these other plans have fared better in public feedback. The sheer number of “announcements” fall into basically three categories. There is essential, core city services, which, for any other local government, is literally business as usual. Once again, in stark admission that it has dropped the ball on the basic bread-and-butter duty of any local government for so long, it is being spun as an election promise. The second category is a re-hash of promises made in previous elections that have not been delivered, election promises that have been broken—and some broken over multiple terms. The third category is to “announce” as an election commitment initiatives that the Canberra Liberals have been calling for or have already announced, like a

standalone police station in Molonglo.

The Canberra Liberals team, on the other hand, have been out in our communities for the last four years and we have been listening. What the Canberra Liberals have been hearing is that the biggest concern for Canberrans right now is the cost-of-living crisis. It has never been more difficult to keep up with the rising costs of petrol, groceries, health care, including seeing a GP, water, sewerage and, of course, Andrew Barr's ever-increasing rates bill. That is why we announced a \$65 million cost-of-living package, to provide real and tangible relief for Canberrans and their families when they need it. It is also why we have promised to deliver a fairer, more transparent rates system, which will cap rate increases at 2.2 per cent in the first term of a Canberra Liberals government.

On average, a family who lives in the great electorate of Brindabella with two children in Primary School and who own two cars will be more than \$2,400 better off under a Canberra Liberals government. We will also abolish Andrew Barr's GP payroll tax, because Canberrans should not have to pay more to see their doctor. We have also made a \$100 million "putting your suburb first" commitment for local projects chosen by the local community, because our suburbs have been neglected for too long under this Labor-Greens government.

We have also committed to delivering a faster, cleaner, more reliable and more frequent public transport system that will be delivered sooner and at a fraction of the cost compared to either Labor or the Greens transport plans. We have already seen both Labor and the Greens attempts at poor copycat jobs on our public transport policy and there is no commitment that it will deliver the public transport outcomes that Canberrans need and deserve.

We have also announced a policy that will make our city safer, with a boost to our police force on the frontline, a new standalone police station at Molonglo and Gungahlin, with work on Woden and Civic stations, a commitment to introducing anti-consorting laws and criminalising coercive control and reform of bail to bring our justice system in line with community expectations. Our comprehensive education policy demonstrates that we are the only party that can be trusted to fully fund and fully implement the evidence-based approach to teaching literacy and numeracy. We will put our teachers at the forefront of education and we will make sure that our students and teachers have safe learning environments. We look forward to announcing the rest of our policy packages that are based on what community groups, residents and experts have told us throughout this term.

The list of ACT Labor failures contained in my motion does not go anywhere near naming every one of the broken election commitment, just as it does not highlight every promise that has been made by this government. We could have also included commitments that have been made by the Treasurer, such as his promise in almost every budget to deliver a surplus, which of course has never come to fruition. If members would like to view more of these broken promises, all you have to do is google "Barr's bogus budgets"—and that is just the broken promises using Barr's own words since 2012, let alone all the broken promises by the Labor Party.

It is easy to see why the Labor Party have come up with their three-P-word slogan, because it is clear that they have proven that they break their promises, that they have



ignored practical ideas and that they have progressively deteriorated the ACT's budget, almost to the point of no repair, and progressively deteriorated essential government services that Canberrans need and deserve. It is time for a fresh opportunity for Canberrans—a Canberra Liberals government that will listen to the community and announce policy packages that meet those needs and improve essential government services by putting Canberrans at the centre.

I commend my motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development) (3.10): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after paragraph (1), substitute:

“(2) further notes:

- (a) that the ACT Labor and ACT Greens Government has made significant progress in delivering the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement including:
  - (i) important progress on climate change action, such as:
    - (A) commissioning the Big Canberra Battery;
    - (B) establishing a Sustainable Household Scheme;
    - (C) supporting homes and businesses to transition to 100% renewable electricity;
    - (D) enacting minimum energy efficiency standards regulations for rental properties;
    - (E) implementing a \$50 million program for energy efficient social, public and low-income housing; and
    - (F) development of Molonglo Town Centre as all-electric;
  - (ii) more and better housing options for all Canberrans, such as:
    - (A) improving and simplifying the ACT's planning system to deliver more housing in greenfield and existing suburbs;
    - (B) completing Common Ground Dickson;
    - (C) expansion of the early morning centre services;
    - (D) increasing emergency accommodation capacity and expanding specialist homelessness services;
  - (iii) key enabling projects for Light Rail Stage 2A to Commonwealth Park are underway and design and planning have progressed for Light Rail stage 2B from Commonwealth Park to Woden;
  - (iv) reducing harm from gaming while supporting sustainable clubs, by:
    - (A) reducing the number of electronic gaming licenses to 3500 by July 2025;
    - (B) conducting a review into water costs for high-intensity club users;
    - (C) establishing a Building Energy Efficiency Upgrade;

- (D) supporting clubs to become heat and smoke refuges;
  - (v) delivering three-year old preschool to more than 2,700 children across 142 services in the ACT;
  - (vi) completing the Fostering Neighbourhood Democracy pilot in two suburbs;
  - (vii) key legislative reforms, including:
    - (A) establishing industrial manslaughter as an offence;
    - (B) raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility; expanding the portable Long Service Scheme;
    - (C) protecting tradespeople from silica dust;
    - (D) ending No Cause evictions;
    - (E) introducing a right to a healthy environment; and
    - (F) creating entertainment precincts;
  - (viii) executive reforms including creating a dedicated coroner in the ACT and establishing the Office of Water; and
  - (ix) administrative reforms including increasing access to government information;
- (3) further notes that alongside these delivered joint commitments, the Government has the following commitments underway:
- (i) maintaining and expanding the free health services provided by our Walk-In Centre network;
  - (ii) opening the new Critical Services Building Hospital at Canberra Hospital;
  - (iii) opening and expanding 17 schools across the city's growth areas; and
  - (iv) renewing and growing our public housing dwellings; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Chief Minister and Leader of the ACT Greens to release the final PAGA report outlining its record against commitments, prior to the 2024 caretaker period.”.

The amendment I move goes to outline the commitments that the government has delivered upon in this parliamentary term. We will, of course, provide a full update to the community in relation to the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement items and their status of completion by the end of this parliamentary term. The amendment specifically calls for that, and I am very comfortable, obviously, together with the leader of the Greens, Mr Rattenbury, to be able to release that final report. We have—I think as Ms Lee’s motion references—been progressively releasing updates on the commitments undertaken and delivered through the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement.

I did note with a certain irony that the first half of Ms Lee’s contribution was spent very heavily focused on Labor’s plans for the city and then attacking elements of that but then went through a long recycled list of previous Liberal Party announcements going back not just to the 2020 election but to 2016 and 2012. I think there are elements of Ms Lee’s platform that we may well have heard before in previous election campaigns.

*Ms Lee interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** So there is a delicious irony in being so focused on everything that the Labor Party is doing and then accusing us of announcing initiatives that have previously been announced before and then spending the second half of her speech reannouncing things that she has already announced in this term, trying to present them as fresh ideas. Many of those ideas that are so fresh were taken to the 2020 election by Alistair Coe, to the 2016 election by Mr Hanson—the member in exile amongst the Liberal team; the individual who can no longer play, apparently, an active role in Liberal party matters, because both he and Mrs Kikkert have been expelled to the back bench in a massive show of unity amongst the Liberal Party.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, Ms Lee was heard without this level of interjection.

**MR BARR:** You certainly know when you have hit a raw nerve when they get as excited as they all have this afternoon. The amendment that I have moved reflects the considerable achievements by the government in this term. Significant progress has been made to deliver the projects outlined in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement with all of the initiatives underway or delivered. Key milestones include continuing to deliver increased housing choice, access and affordability; progression of our transition to a zero emissions future; extending the light rail network; providing all three-years-olds with access to one day a week of early childhood education; and progressing a large number of legislative reforms.

As a government, we have made significant efforts to address housing affordability, including increased investment in social and affordable housing projects; more housing, helping more people to move into a new home; making significant investments to build more homes for Canberrans in the greatest need; and the changes to the territory's planning system and reforms focused on providing community with clearer and easier use of the system. The new Territory Plan that passed through this place this week, the updated district strategies and the new design guides all support more housing options, whilst retaining planning and design elements that have made Canberra one of the world's most liveable cities. We have expanded the Affordable Housing Project Fund to \$80 million to support significant growth in the number of affordable rental properties; we have provided additional funding for new public housing to improve existing public housing; and we have taken the Housing ACT Capital Works Program to over \$530 million over four years. The government has also implemented further stamp duty reforms to help first homebuyers, first purchasers of new dual occupancy properties, people with a disability buying a house to live in and pensioners wanting to downsize.

We have supported the environment through electrification of residential and public housing, as well as replacing gas assets with electric technology in government-owned buildings. The Big Canberra Battery project is delivering a network of large-scale battery storage to ensure our electricity grid remains stable. The project will deliver at least 250 megawatts of power, enough renewable energy to power one-third of Canberra for two hours during peak demand periods. Construction of the grid-scale

battery at Williamsdale, in partnership with Eku Energy, as part of stream 1 of the project, begins shortly. The ACT government has also finalised the installation of batteries at nine existing government sites.

We have made it easier for Canberrans to own zero-emission vehicles. The strategy 2022 to 2030 sets out an ambitious target for this jurisdiction with an aim of having 80 per cent to 90 per cent of new vehicle sales being zero-emissions vehicles by 2030. I do note the ACT continues to be the jurisdiction with the fastest take-up of zero-emission vehicles.

We have established the Sustainable Household Scheme, a national award-winning scheme that allows households and not-for-profit community organisations to access interest-free loans of up to \$15,000 to assist with the cost of rooftop solar panels, household battery storage systems, zero-emission vehicles and transitioning from gas to electricity. To date, we have provided \$23 million worth of zero interest loans to more than 10 per cent of all households in the ACT in the first few years of the scheme.

We are progressing the delivery of the light rail extension. The main works contract, planning and design for light rail stage 2B continues. We are delivering the enabling works that raise London Circuit and present an opportunity now for further land release to encourage more housing, commercial and retail development in our CBD, bringing the city closer to the lake.

We are investing in upgrading Canberra's health infrastructure, the Critical Services Building opened at the Canberra Hospital, as well as increasing funding for mental health services, expanding outpatient paediatric services and progressing other infrastructure upgrades at our hospitals. We are building new schools and expanding new schools across the territory and, as I mentioned, delivering three-year-old free preschool to more than 2,700 children across 142 services. As part of the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, we undertook a fostering neighbourhood democracy pilot in two Canberra suburbs, with community grants awarded to support the implementation of selected ideas.

In a legislative reform area there has been a very significant term of achievement for this Assembly. We have raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility. We continue to ensure worker safety by banning engineered stone benchtops, slabs and panels, and we have also introduced silica safety rules banning dry cutting of engineered stone and other silica containing materials as well as mandated silica dust awareness training for certain workers. The government has established industrial manslaughter as an offence. The government passed laws through amendments to the Electoral Act 1992 to ban political donations from foreign sources as well as introducing real-time political donation reporting—something the Liberal Party might want to pay some attention to.

In addition, to the significant progress against the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, the government has delivered on progressive issues and values, including making it easier for women to access abortion services, ensuring women can continue to make choices about their bodies and their health care; and taking the next steps in a harm minimisation approach to the use of illicit drugs, with illicit drug decriminalisation. We have finally had the opportunity, thanks to a change of

government federally, to address voluntary-assisted dying, passing legislation to ensure that Canberrans have the right to make informed end of life choices. This last list—abortion, illicit drug decriminalisation and voluntary assisted dying—are policies that the majority of the Canberra Liberals did not support. These are policies that the Canberra Liberals as a political party have opposed throughout this decade and the decade previously. These are policies that I suspect, should the balance of the party room change, a future Canberra Liberals team would look to revoke. They are on the public record in relation to a number of these matters as policies that they would revoke.

**Ms Lee:** You have no idea what we are doing.

**MR BARR:** So are you indicating now, Ms Lee, that you support illicit drug decriminalisation?

**Ms Lee:** No; I meant voluntary assisted dying.

**MR BARR:** There we go.

**Ms Lee:** Voluntary assisted dying.

**MR BARR:** A majority of Canberra Liberals voted against voluntary assisted dying.  
*Ms Lee interjecting—*

*Mr Rattenbury interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can I just ask members—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, the Chief Minister is on his feet. He has the call. If you have ideas or comments then I would say that you use them in debate when you have an opportunity.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Canberra Liberals will seek to reverse a number of the progressive law reforms that have been initiated and passed in this parliament.

**Ms Lee:** You really do live in fantasy land, don't you—honestly!

**MR BARR:** A number of the reforms that have been passed in this parliament, the Canberra Liberals are on the public record as seeking to reverse. These are policies that the majority of this place have supported—

*Ms Lee interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Lee, can you retain your comments for when you are on your feet in rebuttal; thank you.

**MR BARR:** These are policies that have been developed in this term of government, as we committed to do, and have been delivered. The Canberra Liberals are on the

public record as saying they will seek to reverse them.

I welcome the opportunity today to speak about all of the issues, all of the projects, all of the policies and all of the legislative reforms that this parliament and this government has driven in this parliamentary term. We remain focused on delivering a progressive agenda for this city. Those opposite seek to take us back to an era that is now long gone. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

**MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.24):** I rise to speak in support of Ms Lee's motion today about broken promises. It is very timely, given the important decision that Canberra is facing in just a few weeks time. This motion calls upon the government to own up to their broken promises and to correct the record. Intrinsic to this is that with a promise comes a level of trust: trust in them to deliver and trust that they are being truthful and honest in what they say and the commitments that they make.

It is said that trust is hard to earn, easy to lose and very, very difficult to re-establish. I would put it differently. Trust does not come with a refill. Once you start losing it, bit by bit and drip by drip, you will not be able to refill the glass. And once you are out, that is it. It is virtually impossible to regain. Like the drunken spender at the pub, when he runs out of credit he is left high and dry.

This government has lost its trust with the Canberra community. It needs to work damn hard to rebuild it. I will say it again: Canberrans entrust this government to look after their best interests, to work for them, to take stewardship and oversee a government that keeps its promises and does not break its word.

It did not happen overnight. It was not in a single action, though there have been a few absolute doozies. Instead, it has been with a consistent, arrogant, drip-by-drip, wilful failure to achieve what they say they will achieve and live up to their own spin and lofty promises.

The most recent budget, which we have seen debated today, has been a classic case. The government's own YourSay budget consultation report handed down in June gave a statistical analysis of how Canberrans view this government, with only 41 per cent agreeing that the ACT budget generally reflects the needs and priorities of the community. I find the wording itself slightly biased by the inclusion of the caveat of 'generally'. Even then, this government still only gets 41 per cent agreeing. This is indicative of a lack of trust; they do not think this government has their needs and priorities in mind.

This motion notes a series of broken promises over the years that have failed to be met. As the shadow health minister, I am appalled at the failure, again and again, to deliver health infrastructure. It is a recurring theme, and each time it becomes that extra little drop of trust lost. This permeates the system, and it is no wonder the staff survey results are continually poor. We find that trust in senior management is consistently bad. When they are trying to deliver political promises and spin targets, it is no wonder people begin to give up hope, start actively disbelieving and, ultimately, lose trust.

Just this week we heard about the shocking waste and mismanagement that has occurred in the digital project space, but was anyone truly surprised? I am not sure that the trust

that this government would be overseeing good project governance and appropriate financial management was there in the first place. Given that there is no longer trust, maybe it was hope that was lost.

Now that we have lost trust and shattered hope, I guess Canberrans are at the stage of despair with this government. I know many are fearing a re-elected Labor-Greens government. We hear it all the time while doorknocking out in the electorate. That is where the community sits with this government today: fear and despair.

Just this year, we had the first report into the Small Business Strategy. It outlined a failure to deliver their promised initiative to deliver workforce development plans. Sorry, it did not outline a failure. That would have been wholly truthful. It was marked as “in progress”. Keep in mind that this was a strategy launched in July 2023 that had a target of these workforce development strategies being delivered in 2023. In June 2024, we find that it is marked as “in progress”. The reason that these were not delivered was the negotiations with the Australian government on the National Skills Agreement.

The problem is that the National Skills Agreement was signed by the Chief Minister on 16 October 2023. With six months to deliver agreements signed in October, they still cannot deliver, instead marking it as “in progress” in June the following year. I am sorry, that is a failure to deliver. You have failed, and the government needs to be honest. This another example of trust lost and another promise that has failed to be delivered.

A lack of honesty and accountability is a sad consistency with this government. The litany of broken promises and the failure to own up and apologise for mistakes leave Canberrans with no trust and shattered hope and in a state of fear and despair. But you continue to hold the reins of government.

I had a couple of little thoughts about Yerrabi as Ms Lee was speaking. Close to the beginning of this term, Friends of Yerrabi Pond lobbied to have lighting and things fixed around there. Yesterday I heard that in one area there is still no lighting. I believe there was a bicycle thrown at joggers and a dog ran off. People are unsafe, and they are being assaulted in areas where we have asked for lighting.

This is beyond frustrating, because it is now about public safety. It was in the hands of the government to take action earlier, but they waited to the end of a term to start doing these projects, hoping Canberrans would forget all the years of broken promises. It is just not good enough. With Kaleen lights, parts of it are missing. They are not going the full way to keep people safe. There is the Casey playground, the health centres—we could go on and on.

I said at the beginning that this motion is timely, given the decision Canberrans will soon be making. They are all out of trust, and I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (3.30): What I truly love about this city—and countless people tell me the same—is that our brightest days are still ahead of us. To get there, we need bold vision and the ambition to tackle the challenges we face head on. From leading Australia in the fight against

climate change, to investing in the principles of restorative justice, to allowing people to live healthy lives through a preventative system, we have the power to shape the future where everyone thrives. While others may try to talk our city down, we stand ready to rise to the challenge of creating a healthier, greener future.

Regarding this term, the Greens have been pleased to work with the Labor Party to achieve important things for this city. We came into this term with our respective agendas. Through a transparent process, we have a written agreement, and we have worked together to deliver a range of important outcomes for Canberrans.

That is always my focus: what can we get done for people of this city? If I look to my own ministerial responsibility, we are supporting homes and businesses to transition to 100 per cent renewable electricity and to get off gas. We have legislated for minimum energy efficiency standards in rental properties. We have set the last day on which a vehicle powered by an internal combustion engine can be registered in the ACT—a new vehicle, that is, just to be really clear. We have paved the way for the new Molonglo town centre to be all electric.

We have raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility to keep kids out of custody and to help them move safely in the community. We have stood up the Law Reform and Sentencing Advisory Council. We have invested in the Drug and Alcohol Court and the circuit sentencing court. These are showing positive outcomes that are breaking the cycle of offending behaviour. We have strengthened the Restorative Justice Unit, which means that people who have survived crime can get better outcomes. We have established the position of a dedicated coroner in the Magistrates Court.

These are just a few areas specifically within my portfolios. There are obviously many more. The Chief Minister gave a pretty extensive list before, and there is quite a bit mentioned in the amendment. Of course, as the amendment notes, the Greens and the Labor party will shortly release a report against the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, as we have done each term, and as we do on a regular basis in a transparent way that enables the community to keep track of what progress has been made against that agreed, publicly available agenda for the term.

When we look at the contrast, the Liberals remain resistant to taking measures needed to tackle climate change. We have seen an explicit policy from Ms Lee to reverse the phase-out of the gas network—the fossil gas network, the one that contributes to more than 20 per cent of the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions. You cannot stand up credibly and say, “We are serious about tackling climate change, but we are just going to keep pumping the fossil fuels out.”

**Ms Lee:** And you cannot be serious about the cost of living.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Ms Lee, of course, is interjecting, because she cannot help herself. While she was heard in respectful silence, she has interjected throughout this debate because she does not like some of the things she hears. That is just incredibly disrespectful.

**Ms Lee:** The hypocrisy!



**MR RATTENBURY:** Here she comes again, making another interjection. The government has clearly put together the information and is working with Canberrans to demonstrate it. Ms Lee is starting to interject about the cost of living. Well, what we know is that an all-electric household is the cheapest household to run. We are focussed on delivering outcomes for Canberrans.

**Ms Lee:** How much does it cost to get it there?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Just ignore, perhaps.

**MR RATTENBURY:** We know this is the way to save Canberran's money in the long run. Again, Ms Lee interjects, asking: how much does it cost to get there? We are thinking about those things. That is why there are interest-free loans available. That is why the government is supporting some of the lowest income households in the ACT to make the transition, so that they can access those savings, not just the people who can afford to put solar on their house or who can afford to do it themselves—as plenty of Canberrans are, because they understand the economics better than the Liberal Party are willing to acknowledge. We are doing it to make sure every Canberra household can benefit from this transition.

Similarly, we see the Liberal Party running resistance to finding the evidence to get law reforms that will underpin a kinder, safer society. They want to see Canberra's most vulnerable children jailed, not diverted to community services that could help them get back on track. The Canberra Liberals are so backward that they think they can arrest their way out of crime.

I was most concerned to see Mr Cain's lack of understanding revealed in his opinion piece published yesterday in the *Canberra Daily*, where he astonishingly said the Liberals will “amend bail laws to appropriately punish offenders”. Mr Cain has revealed he either does not understand the purpose of bail laws, does not understand the presumption of innocence or, perhaps most concerningly, sees bail as a mechanism to punish—which it clearly is not. The punishment comes when you get sentenced. The fact that the person who wants to be the Attorney-General of this city wrote something like that is, frankly, astonishing. It is frightening on so many fronts.

The Liberals want to repeal the laws we have introduced that decriminalise some drugs. They will seek to criminalise a health issue. That is simply cruel. It is short-term, and it is just astonishingly against the evidence of what it takes to make a safer city.

The Liberals talk about introducing stop-and-search powers—sometimes known as “wanding”—for those handheld metal detectors to address knife crime, despite the evidence showing stop and search is ineffective at best and at worst is used to target vulnerable cohorts. It is the same approach they take to issues like anti-consorting laws. The evidence shows they do not reduce organised criminal activity. Despite that, the Canberra Liberals agitate for them.

The reality is that our approach to the justice system is working. The ACT has made positive progress towards its target of reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025. Recidivism has declined by 19.6 per cent since the goal was set in 2018.

**Mr Parton:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, this motion is supposedly about promises that have been made by the current government. It is not about promises made by the opposition. I am not sure that Mr Rattenbury's speech is going to the substance of the motion.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I believe he is going to the substance of the motion and also to the amendment, because that is the question on the floor. Mr Rattenbury.

**Ms Lee:** The amendment does not say a thing about the Canberra Liberals.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, I do not want to have to start warning people. Mr Rattenbury, you have the floor.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Madam Speaker, I take the view that it is always worth hearing from the community. I am receptive to stakeholder feedback, because working with the people who are passionate about their cause, who have lived experience or subject matter knowledge, can really help make things better for the citizens of this city. This is an approach adopted by my Greens ministerial colleagues, Ministers Davidson and Vassarotti.

For instance, Minister Davidson has been a tireless advocate for the disability community and has worked, through a seat at the national table, to protect the NDIS. Throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, she has delivered enhanced mental health supports for the people of our city—working in partnership with the community—such as the expansion to the PACER service to provide better care and support for Canberrans suffering an acute mental health crisis.

Minister Vassarotti has delivered nation-leading reforms to ensure building quality in our city through licensing developers and creating a public building inspector alongside record support for homelessness services and for the environment.

I would reflect that government is not always easy. When we report back on the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement before the end of the term, whilst there will be substantial progress as has been noted in the amendment today, there are of course items where I wish we had seen more progress.

It has become clear to me that our current mechanism for delivering public housing is not sufficient for the scale of the challenge we face, and I wish we had been able to achieve more this term. There has been a lot of hard work put in—I acknowledge that—but the scale is the issue. We are going to need to scale up and take a different approach. With over 3,000 people on the public housing waiting list, we need a bold plan to go further and faster to deliver change. That is why the Greens have a plan to build or buy 10,000 public homes and to develop around 5,000 homes along with a school and community facilities on the site of Thoroughbred Park.

Ms Lee, in her original motion, is right to point out that Athllon Drive has not been duplicated. I tend to agree with her on that one, because not all promises are worth keeping. This is Labor's promise. In a housing and climate crisis, frankly, we believe there are better improvements we can make for the people of Tuggeranong. We want to see existing roads maintained or upgraded, so that separated active travel paths are

available, but we cannot support the endless duplication of the existing road network. Roads need a lot of space, they cause a lot of carbon emissions—both during their construction and their use—and in the end the endless expansion results in more congestion, emissions, noise and costs to car owners.

We hear all these calls for more road extensions. No-one ever talks about the cost of that. But the costs are numerous, and they have a significant impact on our lifestyle. What we need instead is a commitment to get light rail sooner to Woden and onwards to Mawson, and then plans in place right down to the Tuggeranong Town Centre. That is a commitment that we Greens have made to the community through our election positioning.

In closing, I want to reaffirm the ACT Greens commitments to the values that have guided us through the past four years: fairness, sustainability and respect for Canberrans. While others may choose to hold onto outdated approaches, we remain focussed on building a city that serves everyone. We work hard to deliver the things we take to an election. We have a strong track record of delivering. We are transparent about it, and I think Canberrans will recognise that. We will continue to do our best to deliver for this city. As I said at the start, we believe the brightest days for this city do still remain in front of us.

**MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.42):** On the daily program it looks like I am rising to talk about election promises. Of course I am actually rising to talk about broken election promises. Promises broken by this government. Promises that are made on the never-never without any due diligence, without any real study about whether they are feasible or not, and they get made time and time again.

They are big on announcements, but very poor on delivery, and those of us in Tuggeranong often feel like we bear the brunt of this. We are the poor cousins. We are neglected. However, hearing from Ms Lee and Ms Castley, it is not only Tuggeranong, for example. We are not alone. It is happening in a range of different areas and in a range of different portfolios as well. The fact that there are so many failed Labor Party 2016 election commitments for Tuggeranong that have been rolled out again for this election, before the 2024 election, confirms that Tuggeranong really could be confused for the land of broken promises. According to the 2023 Parliamentary Governing Agreement Update, around two in five commitments have not been delivered. I want to talk about a couple today in Tuggeranong, in my own electorate of Tuggeranong.

Firstly, let us travel back in time and start with the Athllon Drive duplication. A major piece of work that was first suggested by the Canberra Liberals in 2012, then promised by ACT Labor in the leadup to the 2016 election. We saw the great big signs go up and they are still out there and that is about all we have seen. As we approached the 2020 election more talk, and now here we are in 2024 talking about designs for the duplication and some enabling works, for example. Here we go again. The Greens have also said time and time again, as recently as just a few minutes ago by Mr Rattenbury, that they do not even support the Athllon Drive duplication. We will not get it if they have their way. There is no money in the budget for the actual duplication of Athllon Drive. It is a couple of little bits and pieces around the edges to make you think something is going on as you drive that way. But the duplication itself: who knows when, or if, that will actually happen. We are supposed to get excited about these great

big signs coming up; the relocation of utilities; new lighting but there is no date for when the work for the actual duplication will start.

Also, back in 2016 we heard all about the new Tuggeranong ice rink; the ice sports facility. An indoor ice sports facility in Tuggeranong to give our community somewhere to have time to have fun, get exercise and to watch high performing ice sports. Fantastic we all thought. Bring it on. It is now 2024 and where is it? It has been eight years. Eight years since that promise. It was promised in 2016. Has anyone here been to that new ice sports facility? Anyone? No one. No one has been there. The Labor Party promises us they are working on it. Maybe, as worthy Mr Cain says, they should get their skates on about it.

Let us keep talking about recreational activities in Tuggeranong. We have already spoken today about the Lanyon dog park and I will repeat, Tuggeranong has the highest proportion of dog ownership in the ACT: 48 per cent, but we have only one, very well patronised, dog park at Lake Tuggeranong. So well patronised that the car park is often full and people park down the road there on Mortimer Lewis Drive and sometimes get in trouble for parking there because it is the only off-leash dog park that is fenced in Tuggeranong. In 2020 Labor promised to build a second dog park for Tuggeranong in Lanyon. There is a sort of dog park, an unofficial dog park, that people in Lanyon go to. I am not quite sure what is happening now with the environmental concerns when people go there and park on the verge and let their dogs out because surely that may have degraded whatever the environmental concerns are that are being used as an excuse here for the Tuggeranong dog park down at Lanyon. The community were really looking forward to it. That was in 2020. It is four years since they said there was going to be one at Lanyon and one in Gungahlin. Gungahlin already have two. Tuggeranong has one, yet they have chosen to go ahead with Gungahlin first. I just do not understand it. It is a broken promise once again from this government.

How about the Tuggeranong Arts Centre? That was also a promise. Back in the 2020 election Labor came out with a lovely little tile that they can use in social media and around the place about the things they are going to deliver for Tuggeranong. It included upgrades for the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. This is fantastic looking at the view of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. As recently as March 2023, over a year ago, on 29 March 2023 in the *Our Canberra* online newsletter, the ACT government website said, “The upgrades at the centre are expected to be completed by the end of 2023.”

That is eight months ago. Have they been completed? Anyone? No. No, of course they have not! Once again big on announcement, big on brochures, big on putting stuff on their social media—actual progress: very, very low. It still has not taken place and it was promised at the 2020 election. All of their promotion about their election promises and it still has not happened. They said they would spend \$2 million on an upgrade of the community theatre. I have now heard it is going to happen in early 2025, but we will wait and see because they have said it would happen in 2023, for example, and it did not happen.

So, when they make promises, you should take these, not just with a grain of salt—probably rock salt—a piece of rock salt not a grain of salt! Maybe that Himalayan pink rock salt, because it is not really going to happen. If it is going to happen, it is “one day.” I think all of these promises should have a little qualifier after them. So, for example,

we could say, let me think: “the ice sports facility will happen one day;” “The dog park will happen eventually;” and “The Athllon Drive duplication will happen somewhere over the rainbow.” The arts centre is a Claytons promise. For those of you who may not remember, that is the promise you make when you are not actually making a promise. It was an ad about a drink: “the drink you have when you’re not having a drink.” So, this is a Claytons promise. Promised it and it has not happened and who knows when it will.

One of the ones, probably the longest running run one that I can think of, is the Southern Memorial Park. Do you remember that one? It has gone very, very quiet on the Southern Memorial Park. It has been talked about for maybe 20 years from my recollection. Then just before the last election, probably four years ago almost exactly, great big signs went up down there on Mugga Lane. I always get confused between Mugga Lane and Mugga Way, although one has lots of lovely houses and the one has the tip. But it is the one with tip. Great big signs went up about a new cemetery coming soon: “The ACT government is building a new cemetery on this site.” Has anyone seen that cemetery? Anyone had anyone buried? Anyone seen any activity whatsoever on that site? No? No, nothing there!

The hydrotherapy pool. We should say the promise is that the hydrotherapy pool is an in-principle announcement. It is not actually going to happen. There is no money but one day, one day it might happen. With this government, most of these things are like “Somewhere, over the rainbow, Bluebirds fly,” but for them, it is more like somewhere over the rainbow, one day, when pigs fly. That is when it is going to happen! When pigs fly! That is when most of these things are going to happen. And while we are talking about pigs, you can put lipstick on a pig but it is still a pig. You can put lipstick on these broken promises but they are still broken promises. There are still broken promises from 2016, 2020 and now we are going to have a whole bunch more for 2024.

I do not understand why people fall for it. It is broken promise after broken promise for Tuggeranong. It is just not good enough. Tuggeranong residents deserve more. They deserve better. It is time for them to embrace that new and fresh opportunity and elect a government that might actually deliver something for them—not just a pig with lipstick!

**Ms Berry:** Just before Mr Parton speaks to this, I want to bring to the attention of the Assembly—I am not sure whether it was parliamentary or not, or if the soon to be vacant seat of Ms Lawder described the government as a pig with lipstick on it.

**Ms Lawder:** I did not describe it. I said the promises. Promises were like a pig with lipstick.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** So there is no point of order.

**Ms Berry:** Thank you for taking that into account.

**MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.52):** In adjournment earlier in the week I talked about my love for all the members here, and I have a genuine love for most people here. I am here to help you all. Some people call me “Parto from marketing” and as a consequence—

**Mr Gentleman:** Relevance, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It is fine Mr Gentleman.

**MR PARTON:** I am here to help the Labor-Greens government with their election push in this current year. In 2008 Barack Obama famously stormed to the White House with a stunning campaign based around the catchcry, “Yes, we can.” He was emphasising that anything is possible, and that as president he would do, absolutely, he would do what he said that he would do. I know that Mr Barr, and I am sure Mr Gentleman and Ms Berry and Ms Cheyne, are big fans of the former American president. I am just thinking—and I am trying to help here, I am trying to help—I am just thinking that perhaps the government should borrow a little from that campaign and reinvent the slogan for this election campaign.

Barack Obama said, “Yes, we can.” I think Canberrans collectively, when it comes to promises from Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury, should shout very loudly the words, “No, they will not. No, they will not.” The long history of saying one thing and doing the absolute opposite means that voters across this city should be very comfortable whenever this mob promises to do anything, and it does not matter what it is—it does not matter what it is—they should be very, very comfortable and shouting out loudly, “No, they will not.”

It was 2016 when they originally promised to deliver the new ticketing system in public transport. It was 2016. It is still not in place. I hold no confidence that it will be operational by the end of the year. I know that Mr Steel will be comfortable if it drags past that date because the election will be done and dusted by then. The election will be over, so it does not matter if it drags into 2025. Once the election is over, they do not care. When they promise, “Yes, we can”—in public transport ticketing, when they say, “Yes, we can,” we say, “No, they will not.” When they promised to deliver electric buses in great numbers, because this is one of 106—there is 106 of them—when they say, “Yes, we can,” you say, “No, they will not.”

When Mr Barr said, as he did prior to the election of 2020—he said categorically the tram would get to Woden by 2025. He said, “Yes, we can.” We say, “No, they will not.” When they said very clearly that light rail would get to Commonwealth Park in this current term, because that was the clear commitment, it was going to get to—passengers would be arriving in this—they are not even going to start building it in the term. They are not even going to start building it! They promised that this tram to Commonwealth Park would be operational in this term, “Yes, we can”, and we all should say, “No, they will not”. The Woden bus interchange, it is supposed to be operational by now. It is not. “No, they will not”. The Athllon Drive duplication: “No, they will not;” the William Hovell Drive duplication: “No, they will not;” the Lanyon dog park: “No, they will not.” The Tuggeranong package that was announced recently—I mean I went out doorknocking in Tuggeranong, and I am not the one who is prompting “No, they will not”. The no, they will nots’ are as loud as the barking dogs down in the Lanyon Valley hankering for their dog park at Lanyon, but not being able to get there—“No, they will not.”

In every single budget in the last decade there has been a promise to grow public and social housing stock, and it is only just in recent months that they have finally inched past the previous level while our population continues to expand well past the level whereby this miniscule growth in number will have any impact. They say, “Yes, we can,” we say, “No, they will not.”

When we talked in our transport policy about growing the electric bus fleet, they originally said that we were dreaming—we were dreaming, and it just would not be possible. Now all of a sudden, Mr Steel is saying regarding the electrification of the bus fleet, “Yes, we can”. You know what the correct response is! It is, “No, they will not.” They will promise so many things in the next seven weeks. It will get crazy. For the most part, they do not intend to do any of them. They are not going to do any of this stuff. Nobody believes that they are going to do any of this stuff. When they say, “Yes, we can,” the correct response is, “No, they will not.”

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (3.57): I rise today to speak in support of Ms Lee’s motion and against Mr Barr’s amendment. It is disappointing Mr Barr is not sticking around to hear debate on his own amendment. How disappointing is that! I do want to thank Ms Lee for bringing this important issue to the Assembly’s attention. As has already been touched on, I also remember when the Deputy Chief Minister appeared on ABC Radio in April this year. It makes me chuckle when I think about it. It reminds me of episodes of *Utopia* or *Yes Minister*—when she said with a straight face that ACT Labor, “Do not make promises we cannot deliver.” Was she being serious? Or was she just being a bit cynical and sarcastic? Or did she actually think anyone would believe that? It is very concerning if she thought people would believe it—that would be more worrying. If she stands by this statement she is actually misleading Canberrans, and she would know that. It is absolutely false.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Cain, you need to be mindful of language accusing someone of misleading. So do you want to just rephrase? Can you choose your words and maybe repeat what you said because I just heard the word “misleading”.

**MR CAIN:** It is premised, Madam Speaker if I might say—it is premised if Ms Berry stands by this statement, and it is open to her to discount it or otherwise, or qualify it—then she is misleading Canberrans. That is what I have said. So it is not very genuine of Ms Berry or any ACT Labor MLA to say that “The party do not make promises we cannot deliver.”

As Ms Lee’s motion extensively points out, there is a litany of examples of Labor broken promises showing the statement that she made is actually untrue. Where are all those additional walk-in health centres? The new southside hydrotherapy pool? The northside elective surgery centre? The upgraded endoscopy rooms and palliative care ward at Canberra Hospital? The Gungahlin Tennis Centre? Strathnairn Primary School? Every single electorate has examples of Labor broken promises, which Ms Berry says just does not happen. It just does not happen. But there it is for the whole community to see. In every single policy area, Labor broken promises are present. This city has been ravaged by Labor broken promises, especially under the tenure of this current Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister. The most shameful part of Ms Berry’s comments on Labor broken promises is that she has the audacity to keep doing it.

I refer to the recently published Labor plan for Belconnen, or lack thereof, if we want to speak truthfully. ACT's Labor plan for Belconnen is recycled, reactionary and disrespectful. ACT Labor clearly thinks so little of Belconnen residents they have re-announced previously broken promises hoping no-one will notice. Madam Speaker, we have noticed, and the people of my electorate of Belconnen will also be noticing this. Strathnairn Primary School: there is not one. The West Belconnen Health Centre: not there. The William Hovell Drive duplication and its failed timelines are all recycled announcements of Labour broken promises. Shame on Ms Berry and Ms Cheyne for treating Belconnen residents with such contempt and disrespect. Belconnen residents are not as stupid as Ms Berry and Ms Cheyne think they seem to be by recycling this package of promises which are a litany of broken Labor promises.

ACT Labor plans for Belconnen even adopts an idea from the Canberra Liberals. This recent announcement includes the delivery of a new all-ability playground at Charnwood Dunlop School. As the local members here would know, I have a petition calling for that very thing still alive right now and open for signatures. They could not even give credit where credit was due. I would encourage Ms Berry and Ms Cheyne to sign the e-petition, which is still open for signatures—get their staff, their supporters. If it is one of their policies, why would they not sign the petition? Let us get that number up. It is one of your policies—sorry, it is an idea I presented on behalf of a local resident. That is where it started. I want to thank the local resident, Mrs Jessica Ascione for her support and encouragement to actually sponsor such a petition, such a worthy petition, which Labor is now taking credit for. Shame on them.

It is very clear that ACT Labor are tired, complacent, uninspiring and fail to give credit where credit is due. After over two decades they have run their course and have nothing else to offer. The only thing they have to offer Canberrans are recycled broken Labor promises. Shame on them. It is clear that Canberrans deserve a fresh opportunity, not more broken promises or might I say, Greens delusional promises.

The Canberra Liberals will put Canberrans at the centre of our government. We will provide targeted relief to help Canberrans pay their bills. We will make our city safer to ensure every Canberran feels safe in the community and in their own homes. We will deliver a strong and ambitious plan for people-focused public transport. We will put Canberrans suburbs first and fix the problems in our suburbs, in our streets and on our footpaths.

Unlike those opposite, who make misleading statements and recycle Labor broken promises to cover up their inaptitude, Canberrans can trust that a Canberra Liberals government, under Elizabeth Lee, will stick to their word. I want to commend Ms Lee's motion to this Assembly and wholeheartedly reject the Chief Minister's deceptive and misleading amendment.

**MR COCKS** (Murrumbidgee) (4.05): I rise briefly to thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion today because people across my electorate are eternally frustrated with the fact that we seem to be missing out in the south; with the fact that it feels like Labor just walks away from them after every election.

I also want to acknowledge that what the Chief Minister has done today is highlight the smoke and mirrors by which they do this. Just one example is that before the last



election the Chief Minister considered that banning gas in the ACT was not something Labor would look at. It was not something that Labor thought was a good idea. Yet, as part of the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement after the election—the deal that they do with the Greens to stay in power, the thing that they hold dear so that they can keep on clutching onto power—this thing that the Chief Minister is referencing today, that is what they use to turn around and say, “Actually, we are not going to stick by our promises. We are not going to stick to what we said at the election.”

The Greens do the same thing. The Greens promised a home for all. They walked away from that because it is not in this agreement. This agreement that the Chief Minister has pointed to today, this is the smoke and mirrors by which the government walks away from the promises that they do not want to keep. The government needs to stand up and recognise that they keep on going to elections promising things that they cannot do and that they do not have any intention to do. It is not always the little details that we tend to talk about in this place: sometimes it is the promise behind the promise.

This is a government that came in in 2016. They did not just promise a tram. No! They promised to fix congestion. They promised they would fix congestion on our roads using the tram. I can tell you no one in Molonglo thinks they have fixed congestion. I am pretty sure no one in Gungahlin thinks they have fixed congestion out that way. The people sitting in their cars for ridiculous amounts of time, every morning, are pretty sure the government has not met their promise to fix congestion. They may have built a tram. It cost us a lot of money. They are still sitting in their cars. This government walks away from promises. We know it. We see it. People across Canberra see it. It is about time for that to change.

**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) (4.08): I would say this motion that Ms Lee has moved today is a bit of a ridiculous political stunt, designed to make personal attacks on me and open the door for Mr Cain to make personal attacks on me, and to draw—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members.

**MS BERRY:** —to draw Ms Cheyne into the conversation as well. To use a cherry-picked sentence and use it out of context, completely out of context, in an attempt to deliberately mislead. There are no surprises—

**Ms Lawder:** Point of order.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Lawder.

**Ms Lawder:** The use of the term “mislead.” Ms Berry has said Ms Lee is trying to deliberately mislead.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Berry, on numerous occasions Ms Lee has been ruled

as unparliamentary, and I would ask you to withdraw.

**MS BERRY:** I withdraw the comment. It needs to be said that cherry-picking a sentence and using it completely out of context is something that Canberrans need to know about with regards to the potential and the terrifying prospect of the Canberra Liberals forming a government of any kind in the ACT. Ms Lee, being the leader of that party, using this as an opportunity, or allowing members of her opposition—giving them the opportunity to have a go and again use a cherry-picked sentence from an interview on the radio station and use it completely out of context. I listened to the speeches of those opposite in silence, Mr Deputy Speaker, and they are chatting and talking—

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members. Members. Members, if you want to have a conversation, there is an ante room. Ms Berry.

**MS BERRY:** As the Chief Minister's amendment notes, we have delivered 85 commitments from the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement and we are delivering much more. Those commitments are listed in the PAGA and here is just a few more that ACT Labor has delivered on within my own portfolio responsibilities: universal access to free three-year-old preschool; we have supported more than 5,000 students each year experiencing financial difficulty through the Future of Education Equity Fund; a new home for dragon boating; three new schools, Evelyn Scott, Shirley Smith and Throsby, all with a double court gymnasium available for hire; netball court upgrades in resurfacing across the city; new netball courts in Jacka; the North Woden Tennis Club upgrades; and upgrades as well to the Boomanulla Oval. We are continuing to deliver. Construction is underway on a double court gymnasium at Agnes Shea High School, another at Garran Primary and major upgrades to Phillip District Enclosed Oval to name a few projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we are also rolling out free meals, piloting it in five ACT public schools. We have launched and begun work on a 10-year roadmap to make our schools more inclusive for students with a disability, supported by a team of inclusion coaches who are working across our Tuggeranong schools. I have seen this program at work, and I have heard of and seen its success. In the very short time that we have been implementing it, the difference it has made to the lives of those students—and the ability for teachers to get that professional learning to make the school as inclusive as it possibly can be for students who learn differently or might need different kinds of support—is just quite outstanding. I cannot wait to speak more about that program of work.

We are also supporting work in schools to take a whole school approach to respectful relationships education, through a new team of gender-equity coaches. We have established the education justice partnership, which provides public college students with free legal aid, and we are rolling out additional social and youth workers all across our schools.

ACT Labor has our record behind us. We have delivered on local suburb and city changing infrastructure for the Canberra people, and we will continue to do so. We have our vision set for this city and it is firmly out in front of us. I support the Chief Minister's

amendment to Ms Lee's motion and I commend the record of these achievements of mine and my colleagues' in government to the Assembly.

I thought it might be useful for the Assembly if I table the media release for the new district playing fields for Throsby because the *Canberra Times* article did not do it justice. I thought it would be useful for the Assembly read the factual comments that I put in the media release to ensure that members of the Assembly know exactly what was said in the media release and, unfortunately, was not completely captured in the article within the *Canberra Times*.

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra—Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Minister for City Services, Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform and Minister for Human Rights) (4.14): Mr Deputy Speaker, I need to respond to some of the absolutely bizarre remarks that have come out from those opposite in this debate, particularly from Ms Lawder and then Mr Cain.

Ms Lawder, to start with. Plenty of the examples that she gave, she either does know where it is up to and pretended not to, or she has never asked. As the shadow minister for city services, even though she is retiring, and shadow minister for the arts, even though she is retiring—I have never understood, but that is your politics—I can certainly say that Ms Lawder does know where the Southern Memorial Park is up to. She wrote to me in June. My office responded on the same day. So to say, "Oh, I have not heard anything about that for a while. Oh, it has gone quiet, has it not?" Well, that is not right, is it? That is actually not correct.

**Mr Cocks:** It has got to happen once in a while. July, August...

**MS CHEYNE:** Yes, Mr Cocks, two months, goodness me, really quiet. She knows that detailed design is being finalised for stage one works; that the conservator review of documents submitted for environmental approval is in progress; and that the determination will be submitted to support the development application to stage one works. I am quoting from the email back to her office. There will be a public notification period for this development application expected to be lodged in the coming months. So that was remarkably disingenuous.

On the Tuggeranong Arts Centre Theatre, if she had asked, she would know that the final designs have been supported by Tuggeranong Arts. The timing for that upgrade has been chosen in a window that best suits the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, noting their very full program.

**Ms Lawder:** I have a big article about it, that it is going to be finished in 2023.

**MS CHEYNE:** Because, Ms Lawder, if you had ever asked before today—

**Ms Lee:** So it is Nicole's fault? Like, seriously!

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, if we can allow the minister to speak.

**MS CHEYNE:** At least interject with something funny! There is a theatre audio package which required extended consultation to ensure the specifications met user

requirements. The tendering of that work package is scheduled to commence very soon. Yes, that means the works will start in January, as we have made clear. The scope of works is good, Mr Deputy Speaker, I think you will look forward to it. It makes safe the cross-stage transfer and includes upgrades to back-of-house facilities, new theatre floor coverings, new storage and new sound and lighting systems. Thanks for raising it today in the eleventh hour, but I am glad you are finally interested.

Mr Deputy Speaker, talk about thinking so little of your electorate or treating it with contempt. Those words were used by the same person, Mr Cain, who said in this place in his inaugural speech that he was elected on his CV. A CV where he described his professions so that people in his electorate would not wonder where he worked; would not wonder why he made the change to law; that people would not realise he worked at a school that was deregistered; and that his law degree was paid for by the Kingdom Defence Trust—

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne, if you could just—

**MS CHEYNE:** —an organisation established to defend legal challenges to Christian—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is a point of order—Ms Cheyne!

**Ms Lawder:** I am trying to make a point of order and she should sit down when I am standing.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne, I am asking you to sit. Ms Lawder.

**Ms Lawder:** The Speaker has ruled on this. Ms Cheyne is wilfully and continually ignoring a ruling of the speaker, and I ask that you name her in accordance with the standing orders.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne, people have been through this in this chamber before.

**Ms Lawder:** Yesterday. As recently as yesterday.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I do not want to hear any more about it sitting in this chair. Continue.

**MS CHEYNE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may. What we have spoken about previously is positions, and what I said just now is different.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Cheyne, the Speaker specifically spoke yesterday—

**MS CHEYNE:** About the principle aspect.

**Ms Lee:** No. That is just—

**Ms Lawder:** Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. According to standing order 202(e):

If any Member has...persistently and willfully disregarded the authority of the Chair – that Member may be named by the Speaker.

This was talked about yesterday, on other occasions, and yourself twice. This is the second time today, Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask that you use the standing orders available to you to name this member.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I appreciate your advice on this, Ms Lawder. It must be said that in all of the shouting and carry-on—not that I actually do really want to hear what point Ms Cheyne was getting to— but we have not heard what point Ms Cheyne was getting to. Broadly speaking, it is probably not really for the Speaker to say, but I would advise that the pair of you just grow up and move on from this and deal with the debate that is before us. I am asking you respectfully if you can get back to that debate, Ms Cheyne, and continue with it.

**MS CHEYNE:** I am done.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You are done? Thank you. Ms Berry?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer to section 55 in the standing orders:

All imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections on Members shall be considered highly disorderly.

**Ms Lee:** Yes, we agree.

**Ms Berry:** Not with regards to this matter. With regards to myself, I have been referred to in this motion and by Mr Cain, that using a sentence out of context that suggests that I am breaking—that the ACT Labor Party keeps all of its promises, which it does, but it was used—

**Ms Lee:** Point of order.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Lee, can I just hear Ms Berry out?

**Ms Berry:** It was used specifically in response to the Greens—

**Ms Lee:** Point of order. This is the whole point. The point of order—

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Lee, I just want to hear Ms Berry in entirety and then I am going to come to you. I would ask you to be seated please.

**Ms Lee:** She is debating the point. That is the whole point of it.

**Ms Berry:** I gave an interview on the radio in response—

**Ms Lee:** This is a debating point.

**Ms Berry:** I have to explain the reason why.

**Ms Lee:** You had your chance.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Berry, I think I do understand the point that you are raising, Ms Lee.

**Ms Lee:** The point of order is that Ms Berry is attempting to debate the point. She had her opportunity. She did not even take up her entire allocated time and she had plenty of opportunity to come up with whatever she wants to explain, but to use a point of order to do it is actually a misuse of the point of order.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Lawder.

**Ms Lawder:** Mr Deputy Speaker, on the point of order, just to continue. I think it is quite clear that Ms Berry was quoted. It may have been a truncated quote, but otherwise she is saying something—that we keep promises, but only in certain circumstances it would appear. Based on what she is saying now, she feels she is being misrepresented in some way.

**Ms Berry:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept that I have probably raised this belatedly. I will wait until the speeches are finished, and if it continues I can raise it again then.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Cocks.

**Mr Cocks:** To the point of order. The use of a quote from a member could in no way possibly be considered a personal reflection. It does not go to motive. It is simply and ultimately a quote.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am not really interested in debating this point of order any further. Ms Berry, this motion appeared on the notice paper at the start of the week.

**Ms Berry:** I already said, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am in agreement with you. I am happy not to debate this matter any further.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Let us move forward.

**MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.23):** To close what has been a very interesting debate, who knew that it would lead to so many contributions from so many members in the chamber? Going to Mr Barr's amendment and his response to my motion, we should not be surprised at all, because it is straight out of the ACT Labor playbook. Once again, we see no responsibility taken for the litany of failures by this government.

The only way I can describe the contribution that Mr Barr made, especially in the beginning, is by using his favourite phrase: "word salad". I think what he was trying to do was have some kind of gotcha moment by saying that the Canberra Liberals have not delivered on some of our promises.

I know that he has never been in opposition, so let me enlighten Mr Barr. We do not hold votes in this place. We do not have access to the billions of taxpayer dollars to be

able to actually deliver on promises. The fact is that it is his government, and Mr Barr himself, that has been afforded the privilege of being able to do that for longer than anybody else in the history of self-government.

How has he conducted himself as the Chief Minister? He spent most of his contribution going on a very lazy—and, I have to say, politically shallow—fear campaign tirade, which was just an embarrassing demonstration—

**Ms Berry:** On a point of order, that was a sentence with about five personal attacks on the Chief Minister, which I consider to be unparliamentary. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you to either make a ruling now that she withdraw, or take it on notice, if you can, and consider the *Hansard*.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Ms Berry, I can take it on notice. I did not hear anything in that stream of words that has been considered unparliamentary in previous Assemblies. I understand that it is a robust debate, but I certainly did not hear anything unparliamentary in those words.

**Ms Berry:** Can I ask you to take it on notice and look at the *Hansard*?

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Gladly.

**Mr Cocks:** On the point of order, nothing in what Ms Lee has just spoken about was a personal reflection. Ms Lee is simply reflecting on the arguments that the Chief Minister attempted to bring. There is nothing in the standing orders that prevents attacking or debating an argument that someone brings.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Cocks. Let us see if we can finish this debate. Ms Lee.

**MS LEE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, the politically shallow fear campaign tirade was an embarrassing demonstration that is not becoming of a political elder who, every Canberran knows, does not want to be in this place. Given that, apparently, Mr Barr knows better than us what a Canberra Liberals government is going to be like, let us put on the record what many Canberrans know about what our city will become if, heaven forbid, Mr Barr is returned with his Labor-Greens government.

This is the Chief Minister who literally dismissed concerns that people have about increasing parking fees as merely the difference between ordering tap water and sparkling water. This is the Chief Minister who scoffed at concerns about increasing petrol costs during a cost-of-living crisis and said, "Hey, the solution is just go and buy yourself an EV."

We are talking about the Chief Minister who told everybody, "Hey, with the federal tax cut, go and buy a little treat," in the midst of the worst cost-of-living crisis that many Canberrans have seen and that many community organisations have called for action on. Only yesterday, I moved a motion in this very place about the sheer waste of this government: the hundreds of millions of dollars that have gone down the drain due to incompetence and alleged corruption, and how that money could have gone to

supporting so many Canberrans. On Tuesday, I brought a motion in this very place calling for a comprehensive review of the concession scheme, which, of course, was dismissed and voted against by every member of Labor and the Greens.

This is the worst Treasurer in the history of self-government, a Treasurer who has not once delivered a surplus, who has done nothing to ease the burden of the cost-of-living crisis for so many Canberrans, who has done nothing to stop the outrageous situation of the corrupt CEO walking away with \$1.2 million after having been on full paid leave for two years, and who has done nothing about one of his ministers who has lost hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, on his watch, due to the absolute incompetence with the HRIMS project and the CIT contract scandal. Another minister has lost \$160 million, overblown on the DHR project.

This is a Chief Minister who has had a decade and has eroded the public housing stock to the extent that we have fewer dwellings now than we did ten years ago, despite the increase in population of almost 25 per cent. This is a Chief Minister who rebuffed my calls, despite the fact that ACTCOSS released their cost-of-living report that revealed the harrowing statistic that one in 10 Canberra children are living below the poverty line.

That is what we have seen under this Chief Minister. Let us face it and let us be open and honest about what every Canberran is thinking. Even if, somehow, this rotten government was returned this October, he is not sticking around. What will his legacy be? It will be leaving behind a debt to the tune of \$19.4 billion, which comes with an \$855 million interest payment bill each year—more than \$2 million a day. That is a debt that he will saddle our children and their children with, a legacy as the worst Treasurer in the history of self-government.

With Mr Rattenbury, the utter hypocrisy of his words knows no bounds. After saying all the buzz words about how the Greens care about the cost-of-living crisis, after he says all of that, his solution again is: "Hey, just go all electric, because that will cost less." I have had local constituents come to me in tears, talking about how they would love to go all electric, but, at a cost of \$25,000 for some of them, that is not possible. These are people who are having to choose between buying groceries or going to the doctor that week.

The most laughable sentence today was that the justice system under his watch "is working well". I cannot tell if Mr Rattenbury is so deluded that he actually believes this, or that he has been in power for so long that he genuinely thinks that Canberrans will swallow whatever he serves up. If he is so proud of his record as Attorney-General, just ask community leaders like Julie Tongs, just ask the Bar Association and just ask the grieving families like Tom McLuckie's if the justice system is working well.

Ms Berry talks about how we have apparently been "cherrypicking" her words. Let us not forget that Mr Barr's own amendment leaves in paragraph 1, which specifically quotes her quote, so perhaps you need to tell Mr Barr that. She cries foul and plays victim about a personal attack. Have a look at my motion. There is one line which quotes her words, and all it does is ask for her to apologise for not keeping those promises. This is another way to deflect and deny.



Ms Cheyne's contribution demonstrates that she has entirely missed the purpose of this whole debate. Apparently, she thinks that just saying, "Hey, we are doing it. We are doing things," is the same as delivering on broken promises. I guess it has worked for Mr Barr for 15 years, when it comes to the stadium and the convention centre.

The fact that Mr Barr, Mr Rattenbury, Ms Berry and Ms Cheyne spent so long—the vast majority of their contributions—taking lazy, cheap shots at the Canberra Liberals just confirms that this government cannot stand by its record, because they know they have failed Canberrans.

They have failed Canberrans on health; they have failed Canberrans on education; they have failed Canberrans on housing; they have failed Canberrans on community safety; they have failed Canberrans on infrastructure; they have failed Canberrans on basic city services; and they have failed Canberrans on the responsible use of their hard-earned money.

Make no mistake—through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to the people of Canberra—Labor and the Greens do not care about you. All of their decisions are based on what is going to give them a continuation of their political power in this place.

This October there is a clear choice, a choice between a Labor-Greens government that cannot stand by their record, because they have failed Canberrans time and time again, and a government that is going to always put Canberrans at the centre. That is the clear choice that Canberrans have on 19 October: a fresh opportunity for Canberra that only a Canberra Liberals government can deliver.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Just before we get to the vote on this, I want to reflect, as the presiding officer for this rather robust session. I understand that Ms Berry has said that the matter is closed. There is no possible way that I could consider that the use of that quote—that the Labor Party “don’t make promises we can’t deliver”—is in any way an imputation of improper motives and a personal reflection on you as the member, Ms Berry. It is a comment that you made. I heard you make it on the radio.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, I did make it.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** At the time that you made it, I thought, “This is probably going to come back to haunt her.” It was a broad comment—

**Ms Berry:** The reason I was talking about it was the way that it was used by Mr Cain to suggest that I was misleading people—

**Ms Lee:** I have a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, again you have made your ruling and the Deputy Chief Minister continues to try to debate that point. She had her opportunity during the debate, and she refused to take it up.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Lee. Let us just get to the vote.

Question put:

That Mr Barr’s amendment to Ms Lee’s motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall	Peter Cain
Yvette Berry	Suzanne Orr	Ed Cocks
Andrew Braddock	Marisa Paterson	Jeremy Hanson
Joy Burch	Michael Pettersson	Elizabeth Kikkert
Tara Cheyne	Shane Rattenbury	Nicole Lawder
Jo Clay	Chris Steel	Elizabeth Lee
Emma Davidson	Rebecca Vassarotti	James Milligan
Mick Gentleman		Mark Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, agreed to.

## **Disability Inclusion Bill 2024**

Debate resumed from 8 February 2024, on motion by **Ms Orr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MR MILLIGAN** (Yerrabi) (4.39): I thank Ms Orr, for bringing this important bill to the Assembly. The bill provides a sound framework that will require ACT government agencies to proactively remove existing barriers to the fulfilment and participation of those living with a disability and ensure the timely enactment of both disability strategies and actions within a government agency. I know the community is keen to see this bill be enacted, and we on this side of the chamber are keen to see it enacted as well, so we will be supporting this bill.

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (4.39): I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister for Disability and add my support for Ms Orr's Disability Inclusion Bill, which was first presented to the Legislative Assembly in February 2024. I would like to thank Ms Orr for the detailed effort she has put into producing this bill, including her extensive consultations with people with disability and the local disability sector.

This bill will represent a significant step forward in the ACT's commitment to build a more accessible and inclusive Canberra, where all the opportunities and experiences our community has to offer can be enjoyed and participated in by all community members. There are more than 80,000 people with disability and more than 50,000 carers in the ACT. This, combined with their families, friends, supporters and the disability services sector, illustrates the reach and importance of this work. Just as importantly, the benefit of a more universally designed community will improve all our lives, especially when we need greater accessibility to information, buildings and services, to live, work and enjoy our leisure time.

The bill introduces a legislative framework for the ACT government to progress. This

includes: a commitment to establishing disability inclusion strategies intended to drive change across a priority area, such as health, justice or education; disability inclusion plans focused on action the government can take to reduce, remove and address barriers within their services; and the establishment of a disability advisory council. Importantly, the bill also introduces a minimum requirement for community consultation and engagement to inform the development of these strategies and plans.

I would like to highlight the importance of the bill being underpinned by the social model of disability. The social model of disability recognises it is barriers in society and the inaccessible way systems and services have been designed and built that create the experience of disability. Barriers are created when the full diversity of human experiences are not considered, prioritised and catered for in the planning, design and delivery of services and products. Barriers can be complex and compounding, particularly when there are intersections with other forms of diversity and additional vulnerabilities. Through this bill we can adapt the way we do things to create significant and sustainable change to reduce and remove those barriers in our society. That is what this bill sets out to achieve.

The bill will support and strengthen the implementation of our existing disability strategies; the ACT Disability Strategy, the ACT Disability Health Strategy, the ACT Disability Justice Strategy and the inclusive education strategy; and increase the number of disability inclusion plans being implemented by government agencies. Importantly, the bill aligns with the ACT government's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, fundamental freedoms and inherent dignity of people with disability. It also delivers on the ACT government's obligations as signatories to Australia's Disability Strategy which has vision for an inclusive Australian society and ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.

Disability inclusion plans are widely used around Australia and are an evidence-based approach for organisations to actively demonstrate and enact their commitment to addressing inequities and barriers, and providing equitable experiences and opportunities for all customers, service users, employees and stakeholders. Inherently tied to reducing and removing barriers is the need for policy and decision makers to listen to and hear from people with diverse disability and life experiences in the spirit of "nothing about us without us." The introduction of minimum consultation requirements in this bill, taking into consideration the full diversity of the ACT community and disability experiences, will support the ACT government to do this effectively. Without this engagement, it is not possible to understand the extent of the many and nuanced barriers that continue to be experienced by people with disability trying to access all of the places, spaces, services and opportunities that are on offer in the ACT community, or to truly challenge the biases, perceptions and attitudes that feed and perpetuate ableism. We also miss out on hearing innovative ideas, change and benefitting from the valuable skills, expertise and the insights people with disabilities bring to the table.

I am pleased to see the bill will further bolster the voice of people with disability through the establishment of a disability advisory council. This council will be made up of a diverse membership to advise the Minister for Disability and foster cooperative

relationships with people with disability, their families, carers, relevant organisations, government and community. I note that the Minister for Disability has benefitted greatly from the advice of the disability reference group during her terms as Minister for Disability, and I know that the disability advisory council will be a valuable asset to the ACT government.

Collectively, the framework described in the bill will position the ACT government to positively uphold the principles of disability inclusion across the breadth of services provided to the ACT community. The bill and its associated framework will support government agencies to lead by example and be more accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all Canberrans. I am pleased to commend this bill 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) (4.45): I am speaking today as the Greens spokesperson on disability. Shifting from the medical model to the social model of disability is really important progress towards inclusion, so I thank Ms Orr for bringing this bill today. It is really important that we have these opportunities to further improve definitions and our understanding of intersectionality as well, and to be able to reinforce how important it is that we have plans within ACT government directorates on how we take action to really bring life to our understanding of that social model of disability.

When Ms Orr first raised with me that she was planning on doing this work, I was very supportive of it. It is really important that we are able to progress these issues collectively across the Assembly. The community have also told me they really appreciate and value the recognition, the inclusion and the opportunity to shift thinking across the ACT community into that social model. Especially now. This is a really difficult time for many people in the community, with the existential threats that they are dealing with, the fact that COVID is not over, and people with disability are particularly hard hit by the cost-of-living crisis, but also with what has happened as the result of the NDIS bill that was passed last week.

The NDIS bill that Labor pushed through the Senate, with support from the Liberals, from David Pocock and Jacqui Lambie, will enable the NDIA to raise a debt against a participant where an NDIS provider has misused funds, even if the participant did not consent to that use of the funds or was not aware of the problem, and with even fewer review rights than were legally available to people who went through all the trauma of Robodebt. It includes a list of supports that will never be allowed in a NDIS plan but which some people might actually need as a result of their disability. The community consultation on that list closed two days after the bill passed and had been open for such a short time that there were many people in the ACT community who did not even know about it.

I think with the rights enabled through this Disability Inclusion Bill, it makes it very clear that this is not the way the ACT government wants to see consultation done with the community and the way that we want to engage with the community here about changes that affect people's lives. One of the biggest issues in that NDIS bill that passed last week is the rule change about what can or cannot be funded in a NDIS plan no longer needing agreement from all the states and territories before the commonwealth

changes the category A list. Spending territory funds should always be subject to territory oversight, and we are talking about really significant amounts here, hundreds of millions of dollars of territory funds that have gone into the NDIS over the past decade. We have always had a strong voice in discussion about what the NDIS will cover, and this is important so the disability advisory council that this bill provides for is able to have their voice raised by ACT government. But that is no longer the case if the ACT can be outvoted and issues that the ACT in particular needs time to transition to foundational supports may not be supported by other states.

This means that people who currently access private market or community sector supports for things like mental health will no longer be able to use a NDIS plan to access these things. The commonwealth rushed these changes through without properly sharing the data we need with the states, and without properly codesigning the changes with people with disability, so I expect that we will not have all of the foundational supports in place to provide alternative supports for everyone who needs them. I am worried that means we will see more people in hospital beds, in residential aged care, in homelessness services and in prisons, if support needs are unmet. This amounts to reinstitutionalisation and it is not acceptable.

Right now there are a lot of very distressed people in the community who are thinking about what all of these changes mean for themselves, for people with disability, for carers, for disability support workers and for the family members and friends of someone with disability support needs. My office has been taking calls from people, we have been receiving emails from people, people have been contacting me personally to tell me what this means for them, and that level of distress is very real.

We need the approximately 10,000 Canberrans with NDIS plans, the 80,000 with disability, the 50,000 carers and the thousands of disability support workers in our Canberra community to know that we see you, we hear you and we are here to support you. Things like a Disability Inclusion Bill help, they really do. I am sorry that what has been happening has happened the way that it did with the NDIS, but I will keep working for you, to raise your voices and for you to be engaged in planning for ongoing changes at every opportunity.

There are people that have been saying to me that they really need their political representatives to speak clearly about what has been happening and why it is so important that we raise their voices and the concerns that they have been sharing with us. There are also people that have been telling me that they kind of expected this and that maybe it could have been worse, or maybe it will still get worse in future. That is actually a really hard thing to hear, because what they are telling me is that there are people who are so conditioned to accepting this kind of treatment that there is still work that needs to be done to deinstitutionalise our own thinking about what disability means.

I think it is really important that we all take strength in the fact that the voices of people with disability are being heard across the whole Australian community; that we can still make a difference in the outcomes of designing foundational supports; and that after seeing what is possible when people have choice and control over their lives, “We cannot accept people with disability going back into the box,” as Dougie Herd said. So the recognition and the internally focused directorate plans that this bill underpins today are really important elements of that inclusion and that understanding. They do not in

themselves create accessibility and inclusive services, but they give us a framework within which directorates can be working towards how we achieve those things.

We need to continue to work hard to ensure that the commonwealth and that all states and territories codesign, with people with disability, changes to establish foundational supports as part of any future changes, and that we follow through on the Disability Health Strategy, the Disability Justice Strategy, the inclusive education strategy and the ACT Disability Strategy, so that the current and future action plans deliver on both existing and emerging needs, as well as the ACT government's actions in response to the Disability Royal Commission. This is why the Greens support this bill. We reaffirm our commitment to the principles of inclusion in this bill, the commitment by ACT government to disability action plans as outlined in this bill, and also to practical supports that ensure every member of our community has choice and control, the supports they need and the respect of everyone in our community. So thank you, Ms Orr, for bringing this today.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (4.54), in reply: I would like to thank everyone for their contributions to the debate today. Mr Milligan, I thank you for your support, as the member who moved the motion adjourning debate on the bill; and, as the whip, I thank you for the brevity of your remarks, because the last debate has thrown out all of my timings.

Mr Pettersson, thank you for speaking on behalf of the minister. I know that she wanted to be here today, but, somewhat ironically, you could say, she is attending a disability ministers meeting, so she is still flying the flag for making positive reforms and improving the lives of people with disability. I know she is very grateful that you have given a speech on her behalf, and for your support on many issues to do with improving the rights of people with disability.

Ms Davidson, thank you for your support. I approached you quite early in the term, when this was an idea, and you have provided input along the way. While I appreciate the point that you raised and acknowledge the genuine concern within the community about the NDIS reforms, I must say I was a little bit downbeat that we could not speak a little bit more about the positive change that this bill would make, to balance out those remarks. Nonetheless, as I said, I thank you for your support and the ongoing input you have had. I am sure we can all continue to work together, hopefully constructively, to keep making reforms for people with disability in our city.

I proudly introduced this bill in February this year, following a long period of development and public consultation. I would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the development of this bill and acknowledge that many of those contributors are here in the gallery today. I would like to thank them for sticking around for the previous debate. It is fair to say that you have seen the Assembly at its most theatrical and, hopefully, you will now see the Assembly at its best, as we pass this great piece of legislation—not that I am biased!

In my opinion, one of the most significant strengths of this bill has been, and remains, the active involvement during its development of people with disability, as well as advocates and supporters, and it has been an honour and a pleasure to shape this bill together.

During the consultation, I asked people to make a pledge to support the bill and what it sought to achieve. The pledge provided a mechanism for me to speak to the wider community about some pretty big topics, including what a social model of disability is, and topics that they might not have interacted with before. I am pleased to say that Canberrans overwhelmingly took the pledge and supported greater disability inclusion in the ACT. Once we had chatted to them about what this bill will actually do, they genuinely wanted to engage and to help drive that change.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of the pledges, as a record of support in the community for this change.

Leave granted.

**MS ORR:** I present the following paper:

Disability Inclusion Pledge—Support for a Disability Inclusion Act for the ACT,  
prepared by Suzanne Orr, Labor Member for Yerrabi.

Following the introduction of the bill in February, the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion undertook an inquiry into the bill and made a series of recommendations. In order to respond to these recommendations, as well as some further feedback from stakeholders, I will move minor technical amendments in the detail stage today. As the amendments are technical and minor in nature, I will not speak to them in the detail stage, but I would like to make some remarks now, to inform the overall debate.

Amendment 1 is a new clause that articulates the meaning of a disability inclusion strategy as intended under the bill. This amendment has been made following feedback during the committee inquiry process which indicated that, although the explanatory statement provides context on what is meant by both a disability inclusion strategy and a disability inclusion plan, it would be helpful to have this information presented within the bill itself.

Amendments 5, 10 and 13 are minor amendments to provide further guidance on who the minister must take all practical steps to consult with when developing a disability inclusion strategy to ensure that the diversity in the community is taken into account. The specific noting of veterans follows feedback from veterans and veteran advocates, asking that their unique life experience be reflected in the bill and considered in any actions taken under strategies and plans.

Amendment 6 is a new clause to allow for existing disability strategies to be adopted under the bill. The amendment allows for the ACT government Disability Justice Strategy 2019-29, a strategy to address unequal access to justice in the ACT, the ACT government Disability Health Strategy 2024-33, the ACT government Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-33, and the ACT Disability Strategy 2024-33 to be adopted as a territory strategy for their relevant priority area.

The strategies covered under this clause are consistent with the intent and approach of

the bill, and have been developed in consultation with the disability community and disability representatives. When the strategies reach their nominated expiration date, a new strategy for the priority area will need to be developed in accordance with the provisions of this bill. The clause will expire on 1 December 2035, as all of the strategies listed under it will have been replaced with new strategies for each of the priority areas. The new strategies will have been developed in their entirety under the provisions of the bill, and arrangements for transitional processes will no longer be required.

The amendment has been made following feedback from the committee inquiry process which noted the desire to recognise work done to date, as well as the need to avoid consultation fatigue by not duplicating consultation processes already undertaken.

Amendment 8 is a minor amendment to change the period for when a disability inclusion plan must be reviewed. The amendment is being made following feedback during the committee process which sought to better align the review period, the 10-year duration of a plan, as well as allow time for actions to be better progressed before review and prevent consultation fatigue.

Amendment 9 is a minor amendment that removes the requirement for the ministerial advisory council to be consulted on disability inclusion plans. This amendment has been made following feedback from the Disability Reference Group regarding the management of their workload and where they believe the incoming ministerial advisory council's advice can best be directed.

Amendment 12 is a minor amendment to provide greater clarity on who the minister can appoint to the ministerial advisory council, as well as better reflecting the important role and contribution of disabled people's organisations.

Amendment 14 is a minor amendment to change the maximum period of appointment to the ministerial advisory council from two years to three years. The amendment follows feedback that standard practice for ACT ministerial council appointments is three years, not two.

Amendments 16 and 18 are minor amendments to provide specific reference to universal design, which is an important component of the social model of disability, and the best practice method of creating environments so that they are accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability or disability, and to provide a clear definition in the dictionary of universal design, as referenced in schedule 1.

Amendments 2, 3, 4, 7, 11, 15 and 17 are minor or technical amendments to provide clarity on intent of some clauses, provide consistency with other clauses, provide alignment with more commonly used language, or to correct drafting orders.

Despite improvements in disability rights, people with disability continue to face discrimination in varying aspects of their lives. The Australian Bureau of Statistics disability, ageing and carers survey in 2018 found that, among people with disability aged 15 years and over, one in 10 people had experienced discrimination and one in three avoided situations because of their disability in the previous 12 months. In



Canberra, one in five residents live with a disability, highlighting a significant proportion of our community who are affected by discrimination and ongoing accessibility challenges.

Disability discrimination occurs when a person with a disability is treated unequally or not given the same opportunities as others due to their disability. The discrimination can be experienced directly by an individual or indirectly because of a practice, rule or policy that applies to all that causes unreasonable disadvantage to a person with a disability.

The Disability Inclusion Bill 2024 is a bill to promote disability inclusion and drive the change that will address any ongoing discrimination, whether direct or indirect, and to create a truly equal and inclusive Canberra. The bill recognises that people with disability are an important and valuable part of our community and that to create a truly inclusive ACT, we need everyone to work together as a community to challenge, identify and remove barriers to accessibility.

Significantly, the Disability Inclusion Bill enshrines within ACT law for the first time an understanding of disability that is social and not medical. For too long within the law, we have been operating under the medical model of disability, which treats disability as a health condition, with a focus on fixing impairment.

The medical model of disability emphasises individual responsibility, asking people with disability to adapt to society, rather than change aspects of society to accommodate them. The Disability Inclusion Bill enshrines a social model of disability; that is, a model that recognises disability as a construct, meaning that barriers to accessibility and inclusion are a result of the way in which society is organised rather than a person's impairment.

The social model of disability looks at ways of removing barriers which restrict the life choices of people with disability so that each individual can feel independent and equal within society. In other words, it says society and its environment must adapt, not the individual.

To achieve the community-wide change that we know will make a difference and that we are seeking through this bill, the bill puts in place a legislated framework for driving systematic change across a number of priority policy areas. By actively promoting visibility and representation, we will dismantle preconceived notions and foster a culture that values all individuals. This will not only empower people with disabilities; it will also educate the broader community about the capabilities and contributions of people with diverse abilities and how our own conscious or unconscious bias might need to change so that we all benefit from this inclusion.

The creation of the ministerial advisory council is another important feature of the bill and, as the saying goes, "Nothing about us without us." The ministerial advisory council and the representation it will enable will ensure that the voices and experiences of people with disability are front and centre of the reform agenda that this bill will put in place.

The third component of the bill comprises the disability action and inclusion plans,

which are focused on how the ACT government will make its directorates and processes more inclusive, because we cannot expect everyone else to do what we ourselves are not willing to do.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every person in the ACT who has contributed to this bill. I thank all of the people living with a disability who have shared their stories and experiences, the disability support workers, the disability advocates and organisations, and my team, who have been with me at every step along the way.

I am incredibly proud of this bill that, hopefully, will be passed in a moment. I want everyone to know that it would not have been possible without the support and the contributions of so many people. I am excited about the changes that we will see from this bill now and into the future. This is not a bill that will be an overnight ripple; it will be something that drives long-term change, and I think that is for the better. While there will always be more work to do, today is a big step in the right direction, and I look forward to commencing that journey.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

### **Detail stage**

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (5.08), by leave: I move amendments Nos 1 to 18 circulated in my name together [*see schedule 1 at page 2336*]. I table a supplementary explanatory statement to the amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill, as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

### **Papers**

#### **Motion to take note of papers**

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Cain): Pursuant to standing order 211A, I propose the question:

That the papers presented under standing order 211 during the presentation of papers in the routine of business today be noted.

#### **Government—investments**

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (5.09): I rise to voice my bitter disappointment at the Chief Minister's response to my motion passed in this chamber in February. The motion, very reasonably, called on the ACT government to divest from companies that the United Nations had found to be complicit in human rights violations in the occupied

territories of Palestine. These companies were found by a United Nations fact-finding mission, comprising leading legal experts in the field, to be enabling human rights violations by the State of Israel.

When the motion was passed in this chamber, my Labor colleagues made sure to amend it to remove the term “apartheid”. Since then, not only has the International Court of Justice found that the State of Israel is responsible for imposing a system of apartheid on Palestinians, but also the ACT Labor conference passed a party motion in which they condemned “the operation of an apartheid system in Israel”.

It could not be clearer that Canberrans are sick and tired of their representatives not taking decisive action on Palestine. Over 40,000 people have been confirmed dead in the Gaza Strip, including many family members of Palestinians here in the ACT. Canberrans are not asking much of their government, just that it does not profit from companies that are enabling Israel to violate the most basic rights of Palestinians to live freely and with dignity and that instead it takes this opportunity to listen to the community, their own party membership and the advice of the United Nations itself.

The Labor Chief Minister has chosen to display a clear lack of leadership, to take no action and instead question the United Nations process. I understand that the Chief Minister has sought further advice from the United Nations, questioning the process through which these companies have been identified. This response is surprising considering that, in 2016, the Treasurer seemed quite pleased by the fact that the territory had received an “A” in performance from the United Nations for its responsible investment practice.

It is also a frustrating response considering that the Human Rights Council has published reports detailing exactly how these fact-finding missions are conducted. Their website provides information on each independent commissioner, their work and their qualifications. The reports outline the background as to why a mission has been commissioned, their mandate, definitions used and the methods of work.

Frankly, I am sure the United Nations currently has more pressing issues to deal with than to provide further details justifying their findings to the Chief Minister. I, and others like me, will hold the Chief Minister to account following any response that the United Nations provides.

The government response proudly proclaims that the ESG controversies assessment framework and criteria are aligned with international norms and conventions. I find this baffling—how we are aligned with international norms and conventions when it is an official United Nations process that my motion referred to.

The nine companies listed in my original motion were found, by a thorough investigation, to be contributing to the illegal construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. The motion was for the bare minimum—for the ACT government to not profit from these actions in direct contravention of established international law.

I want to emphasise that divesting from these nine companies listed in the motion was the bare minimum that the government should do. This is not just my view or that of

the ACT Greens; it is the view of the ACT Labor Party membership, which passed a motion during its conference to go further. The 912 people who signed the petition that I tabled yesterday also want us to go further.

The community are crying out for leadership, because since Israel's indiscriminate war in the Gaza Strip began, illegal settlements have actually increased in the occupied West Bank. Palestinians right now are being forced to leave their homes, or even forced to demolish the homes that they have lived in for generations, and are being forced to flee whole villages as extremist settlers attack them under the protection of the Israeli forces.

We as a government are investing in companies that contribute to illegal settlements; therefore we have a duty to act urgently. As a supposed human rights jurisdiction, we have an obligation to ensure that we are not profiting from such egregious crimes.

**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) (5.14): I rise briefly to note the deep concerns of the ACT Greens ministers with regard to the ongoing decision of the ACT government to invest in companies that have been identified by the United Nations Human Rights Committee as being in compliance with human rights, including supporting illegal activity within the Palestinian occupied territories.

As a human rights jurisdiction, we have an obligation to be a leader in ensuring that we do all we can to meet the highest ethical standards, particularly in regard to human rights. The ACT government's investments are essentially the investments of our community, one that prides itself as being a kind, compassionate and progressive community. Investments should reflect these values.

While we understand a board's tendency to take a conservative approach, it is the role of government to show leadership and use whatever tools it has to ensure that it is not inadvertently complicit in human rights abuses.

The ongoing horror of the onslaught in Palestine is one that has deeply affected many in our community. Since this motion was moved in February, more than 10,000 more innocent people have been killed in Gaza, with more than 40,000 people killed, tens of thousands more injured and around two million people displaced.

Today, we have heard of pre-emptive strikes into the occupied West Bank territories that are occupied territories. We stand here having heard the International Court of Justice determine that there is evidence to suggest a genocide is occurring and that the State of Israel is overseeing apartheid. It is the ACT Greens' firm belief that there is no justification to continue to support investments in companies that have hit the list of the United Nations human rights organisations. This is what we did in the case of South Africa. There is genocide occurring now. Apartheid exists now. There is enough information to act now. We must act now.

As a small, subregional parliament, we are not going to solve the issues of the Middle East, but all governments have an obligation to stand in solidarity and stand up in the face of injustice.

We do not agree with the decision that has been made to continue to invest in these companies and we have not agreed with the government response. We will continue to raise and pursue these issues with our colleagues.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Appropriation Bill 2024-2025**

[Cognate bill: Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2023-2024]

### **Detail stage**

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Debate resumed.

Part 1.5—Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (5.17): Everyone has their own cost-of-living story. One that I frequently hear is about insurance. The Consumer Price Index published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that insurance prices have increased by 13.9 per cent over the last financial year and by 32 per cent since the start of this parliamentary term. However, these numbers alone do not tell the full story.

The ABS measures prices using the “standard basket of goods” approach, as it is commonly known. This means that when the price of an insurance service is measured, they are measuring a change in price on a thing with the same value and the same risk profile as when it was previously measured. This means that the CPI for insurance masks changes in how risk profiles are reassessed, what products are on offer and what products have been withdrawn.

Given the stories we have been hearing about insurers redrawing risk maps and exiting from various markets, it means that the already massive 13.9 per cent posted in the CPI for 2023-24 is only part of the story of what people are currently experiencing right here in Canberra.

I know of one person in Queensland who has related how they are now paying per month what they used to pay per year in insurance, and I believe him. Some community organisations are reporting they have made the decision to go without directors’ insurance because the costs have begun to outweigh the benefits. Again, I believe them.

Closer to home, Scouts ACT have contacted MLAs to talk about how their public liability insurance bill went up 294 per cent in 2024, plus being exposed to a potential excess of \$250,000 for any flying fox incident, which has resulted in them shutting down their recently certified flying fox at Camp Cottermouth. This is despite not having had any incidents since 2013. Once again, I believe them.

Having spoken with my federal colleagues in the Australian Greens, I have become convinced that we are experiencing a market failure. Insurers are exiting what they fear to be risky markets, leaving their clients to obtain insurance only because of expensive insurers of last resort who manage their risk profiles by simply setting their prices at

extortionate levels.

If they are not exiting, they are substantially redrawing their risk boundaries or lowering sums insured to handle their risk appetite more conservatively. Why are they doing this? In short, it is because of climate change. Climate change is the result of a surge of catastrophic events worldwide. Catastrophic events can overwhelm an insurer and force them to access what is called reinsurance. The reinsurers are therefore themselves feeling the effects on their bottom lines, putting up their prices, and the effects are reverberating indiscriminately through the entire market.

From speaking to the ACT Insurance Authority at estimates, it is clear that the government are alert to these issues, but perhaps only insofar as it affects the ACT government's risk profile. That has probably prevented them from thinking more broadly about how we can help Canberrans.

We know that the problem is systemic. With my encouragement, my federal colleagues in the Australian Greens in the Senate have set up a select committee on the impact of climate risk on insurance premiums and availability. They have received 54 submissions, and they are currently holding public hearings. They should be delivering a report on this issue in November.

When that report is published, I expect that it will have the advice that we need to carefully heed. We are experiencing a market failure, and it is clear that public sector intervention is required. I am not sure how much and in what way, but I believe that is something that the next Assembly will need to look at quite closely.

**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) (5.20): This section of the budget includes the Office of Industrial Relations and Workforce Strategy. I can say, as part of the Labor government, that we believe all Canberrans have a fundamental right to a safe and healthy workplace. As Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, I am incredibly proud of the strides that we have made in achieving just outcomes for workers and ensuring that we live in a fair and progressive community.

Over the last financial year, our work health and safety regulator, WorkSafe ACT, continued its commitment to creating a strong safety culture across all ACT government workplaces by engaging with stakeholders and the community to improve knowledge and understanding of work health and safety issues.

Over this period WorkSafe ACT inspectors undertook 2,798 workplace inspections and issued a total of \$645,944 in fines. In 2024, WorkSafe ACT also have overseen successful prosecutions for serious breaches of work health and safety legislation which resulted in a serious injury to workers.

Continuing to ensure that the regulator can operate independently to deliver safe and healthy workplaces for the whole Canberra community is critical. Furthermore, it is a testament to our government's progressive stance on work health and safety and industrial reform. Ongoing budget initiatives in the IR and workplace safety portfolio

also continue to contribute positively to the ACT's budget position and to improving public services.

For example, as part of our ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of Canberra workers, we have established a new insourced work rehabilitation service team of allied health practitioners to support employees with a work-related injury or illness. Offering more streamlined, tailored and integrated services and supports such as this reduces rehabilitation costs for workers and compensation claims; but, more importantly, it means that these workers can get back on their feet quicker and helps lessen the psychological and financial burden that a workplace injury causes.

The ACT government's commitment will always be to support working people. It gives me great pride to see this commitment reflected in the ongoing funding commitments made in this year's territory budget. Despite my longstanding view being that you simply cannot put a price on workers' safety, I am incredibly proud to commend this part of the bill to the Assembly.

**MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (5.23):** I rise to speak as the shadow minister for business. I would have loved to rise to congratulate the government on delivering a budget that addresses the concerns of the business sector and identifies and delivers real relief for those in business, especially small businesses and hospitality businesses, which are all doing it tough, and a budget that addresses the real costs and burdens being placed on the sector. Instead, this budget is virtually absent on measures to help and support this vital sector.

ACT businesses, particularly small businesses, are facing rising input costs, interest rates, waning consumer confidence, workforce shortages and supply chain pressures. It is unsustainable and it just does not make sense for the ACT to keep increasing public sector outlays, particularly when we hear of so much waste and mismanagement off the back of Canberra businesses. I should add that the increase in fees and charges in this budget will disproportionately impact on small business and strip away the discretionary income of their customers. When it comes to managing money, this government seems to only excel at the taking of it and mismanagement in spending it.

As for reaction, the Labor candidate for Ginninderra, Heidi Prowse, posted immediately after the budget that it was great to hear from Andrew Barr and attend the budget lunch with the business sector. The issue she also proudly posted about was that the budget got a 3.5-star rating from the business community. If your own candidates are posting about and celebrating a 3.5-star rating, what does this tell you about how your own side feels about your budget and its impact on the business sector? I imagine that they privately know that this budget fails Canberra businesses, that this budget reflects a government that burdens the business sector, and that this budget presents another missed opportunity—"Phew! Let's quickly post that because it could have been much worse." I am sure that at the time, having just heard all the spin, faux concern and nice-sounding plans from the Chief Minister, they were actually feeling generous. I wonder how history will treat this budget and what the business sector would rate it in a year. I do not think it will age well.

This budget was a budget of missed opportunities and further burden, and again demonstrated a lack of engagement with the business sector. The business sector is

viewed as a cash cow to milk, not a sector to nourish and support. We on this side know that, to be successful, you need to nurture and nourish the small business sector. They are, after all, the key drivers of economic activity, the key employers of Canberrans and the key providers of goods and services to the community.

Prior to the budget, the Canberra Business Chamber submitted that they were seeking three areas of improvement: to make the ACT government more competitive for business so that they can grow and attract new firms; to make it easier to deal with the ACT government; and to deliver the framework, infrastructure and resources to support growth. Clearly, the government have failed to deliver. The Canberra Business Chamber ends their submission by noting that most of these commitments require minimal or no investment, just a change in attitude. That says it all.

I was reminded of this government's attitude towards business yesterday when the *Canberra Times* reported on the recent inquiry's report into micro, small and medium ACT businesses. The opening line—and you can look it up if you do not believe me—is:

The ACT government is “too scared to have a real conversation” ...

I ask: too scared of what? It is too scared to meet with business traders regarding the money—pardon the pun. The article stated:

The ACT government said it would be a “complex and costly exercise” to identify how much it costs to run a business in Canberra compared to other jurisdictions.

What a farce. No wonder we see government waste and mismanagement occurring again and again. They are too scared to ask the proper questions in order to have oversight and understand what is occurring. It appears they put any attempt to have an understanding around how business costs work into the too hard basket. Why would we expect them to seek having an understanding around how government costs work?

It is interesting to know that the Business Chamber had a breakfast a couple of weeks ago that Mr Barr, the Chief Minister, was invited to attend and chose not to. It was essentially a leader's debate. I think that says it all when we are talking about having a conversation with businesses. There are none so blind as those who will not see. I truly think this government have stopped caring and do not want to see. It is like their heads are constantly in the clouds. When I ask whether they see the problems, they say, “No; I haven't seen anything.” Of course, you actually have to inquire, have the tough conversations and face up to panels to ensure that, when things are not happening or the costs start stacking up, you roll up your sleeves, do the work and understand why, and, if things need changing, you adjust them. This is what businesses do and this is what Canberrans expect the government to do.

Canberra businesses are paying the price. Again and again, we see our business sector being left out to dry. Our business survivability rates are truly terrible. Our ability to build community infrastructure is massively compromised and expensive, and all because there is no proper governance and oversight. The government have overseen such a litany of waste and failures, and anyone else would be too afraid to show their face—too embarrassed. In this government's case, however, it is more that they are



already hiding away and do not want to acknowledge their failures or understand how to resolve and fix things and ensure it does not happen again.

Earlier in the year, I moved a motion with regard to business survivability. It noted that there was a continuing and concerning decline in business survivability and that, according to ASIC, insolvencies had shown a concerning rise. This should not be news to anyone. We all know and read every day how tough the economy has become, how many businesses are struggling to survive and how the policy settings of this government are not conducive to a successful business environment. I raised that the ACT government's flagship Small Business Strategy 2023-2026 was a year in, but no changes had been made to reflect current trading conditions. This budget was an opportunity to announce changes, pivot, be agile, and support a sector that is seeing economic conditions materially decrease.

I also note that the Small Business Strategy identified a series of measures of success by which to track and inform the success of the strategy and the initiatives within it. It was staggering that the government, when they provided their update against the strategy, did not even bother to use their own success measures. I suggest that they did not want to know the results, leaving their heads in the clouds. Nevertheless, this budget represented an opportunity to tack, pivot and make substantial changes to support the business sector.

To give you one last anecdote about how this government treats business, at estimates I asked the question:

... the Government Procurement Amendment Bill 2023 was passed in February this year, with changes going live from July 1. The procurement guidelines—the Supplying to the ACT Government Guide and the website—have not been updated to reflect this yet. What is the holdup?

The answer was:

We are in the process of getting that updated.

I noted that this would potentially impact small businesses and their ability to obtain work by government procurement.

I was saddened when I looked today. I can confirm that, as at this morning, this document is still not updated and available to support Canberra businesses, some seven months after the bill and two months since the changes come into effect. It is no wonder the business sector has no confidence in this government, which cannot even get the basics right. Any decent minister would have followed up and ensured that this was actioned post the estimates process. This is yet another example of the government not listening and not responding, and it is clearly not caring.

I asked a question on notice in estimates regarding the government's running of the Social Enterprise Grant Program. I noted that this grant program was open for applications from 8 December to 19 January—a bizarre period that seems likely to have excluded some applicants who would have been away or busy during the summer and Christmas period. I asked the government if they considered the periods appropriate and whether they would commit to a different period? In the answer, they deflected and

said it was determined by Mill House Ventures—“Nothing to see here. Not our fault.” They cannot even tell us whether they will commit to a different period or whether they considered it appropriate. Clearly, they just do not care.

I also noted that 70 per cent of applications were rejected—70 per cent!—and asked whether they would increase the funding substantially for this important project. The government’s response was that it has gone up from \$340,000 to \$360,000 in this budget. Again, I suspect more than two-thirds will miss out and this will become yet another example of the impact that government waste and mismanagement has.

We noted earlier this week that the budget has increased costs on Canberrans via household rates between 4½ to nine per cent, vehicle registrations by four per cent, driver’s licences by four per cent and public transport fees by three per cent. This comes on top of electricity costs increasing by 12.75 per cent, and water and sewage costs increasing by seven per cent. These costs will flow through and impact on the business sector. This budget is a bad budget for Canberra businesses, and the businesses that are doing it tough will unfortunately see no relief from this budget.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.33): I rise to speak to this line item of Appropriation Bill 2024-2025. I am sure that ACT taxpayers across the entire territory will vote on this last appropriation bill that we will see from the Labor-Greens government—a government which is old, tired and addicted to spending more taxpayers’ money, regardless of whether it delivers a result, and in many instances to the detriment of delivering results. For context, it is worth looking at just how much the tax burden has increased in the ACT since the government embarked on its reform journey. According to ABS data, in 2011 taxation revenue for the ACT was \$3,182 per capita. In 2022, that had increased by a whopping 76 per cent to \$5,610, which is easily the sharpest tax hike in the country and well above the national average.

Does anybody believe that we are actually getting value for money for all the extra tax that we are paying? The performance of our schools has certainly not improved, wait times for GPs and specialists has not improved, housing affordability has not improved, community safety and wellbeing has not improved, and our suburbs have been neglected and run down. You cannot blame ACT taxpayers for wondering where all the money has gone. It certainly has not gone to alleviating any cost-of-living pressures for so many Canberrans doing it tough.

In the run-up to this year’s budget, Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury, who are of course the leaders of the Labor and Greens parties, members of the government’s Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet and members of the government’s so-called Cost of Living Committee promised to deliver cost-of-living relief to Canberrans—much needed relief that Canberrans need and deserve, given that prices in Canberra have increased by more than 17 per cent in this term alone. Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury promised that their government would protect Canberra households from energy price hikes and said that this would be the primary focus of the Cost of Living Committee, which met in the lead-up to the budget.

But what did we see in this year’s budget? Did households get protection from energy price hikes? Did they get cost-of-living relief? Did they get anything that would help them with the inflation that is squeezing their household budgets and keeping many

Canberrans up at night? No, they did not. In fact, instead of the much-needed cost-of-living relief, they got slugged with tax hikes. Household rates are up, commercial rates are up, payroll tax is up, rego fees are up, licence fees are up, public transport costs are up, the Safer Families Levy is up, the emergency services levy is up, electricity charges are up, water charges are up, sewage charges are up, and so on. This is exactly the opposite of the budget that Canberrans wanted and needed—the budget that Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury promised to deliver.

I think we have every right to ask why that is. In fact, we need to ask why that is. You could say that it is just another broken promise from a government that has always struggled to deliver on its promises and is not that fussed about integrity or accountability. You could say that it is the government's warped idea of financial responsibility to promise cost-of-living relief while slugging Canberrans with tax hikes, or you could say the government is intentionally withholding cost-of-living measures so that it can announce them during the election campaign as some kind of community blackmail.

But I think the true story about why Labor has stiffed Canberrans is that the government's chickens have finally come home to roost. After many years of financial mismanagement, pretending that prudence and responsibility were nothing more than meaningless buzz words, this government has been mugged by reality. The ACT's credit rating was downgraded last year—the first time in over 20 years. Interest rates are rising, the pressures of the debt pile are growing, and many Canberrans who have never worried about cost-of-living pressures before are now finding themselves in financial stress.

Despite gouging households every single year, all that extra revenue has been wasted on projects that have never eventuated, wasted on projects that have blown out due to sheer incompetence, wasted on projects that were mismanaged from the beginning, wasted on projects that are now being investigated for potential corruption, and wasted on projects that have been found to have been a result of serious corrupt conduct. There is nothing left which could be used to support households that are now doing it tough.

This is Mr Barr's 13th budget and this is Mr Barr's 13th deficit. He runs deficits in good years and bad years. He pumps stimulus into the economy when inflation is low and when inflation is high. He promises surpluses, delivers deficits and loses his temper when anyone calls him out on it. That irresponsibility, coupled with the arrogance of never taking any responsibility and complemented by a cabinet that could charitably be described as a supine, is why ACT government debt is on track to exceed a whopping \$25 billion by 2030—up by more than three-quarters, or \$10 billion, in the next six years.

The interest bill on the debt, which already sits at more than \$3,000 per household, will more than double to almost \$7½ thousand by 2030. Put another way, \$12 out of every \$100 that Canberrans pay in tax will not go to improving our schools, will not go to cutting specialist wait times, will not go to making homes more affordable, will not go to our frontline workers who put their lives on the line to protect our community, and will not go to making our streets cleaner and safer. Instead, it will all go to paying interest on Mr Barr's debt. This is the legacy of his leadership, and that is assuming that we do not have another credit downgrade as we did last year.

After that rude awakening, the government knew that it needed to make some drastic changes if it was to avoid another downgrade this year—one which could potentially be announced during the election campaign. That means that the government simply could not afford to provide households with any cost-of-living relief. It could not afford a big splashy pre-election budget. It could not even afford to maintain the current level of spending across most of the directorates, which is why Health is losing \$100 million and why more than \$25 million is being cut from both public safety and environment protection in real terms across the forwards, and it is why the Strong Foundations program in education has only \$1.7 million allocated to it, which is just a fraction of what is needed to fully implement the program. Labor signing off on cuts to health and the Greens signing off on cuts to the environment clearly demonstrates just how deep the hole is and how desperate Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury are to avoid any accountability for their decisions.

Of course, the government does not feel the need to be up-front with the community about the challenges that we are facing or who is responsible for the situation that we are in, but, after 13 years as Treasurer and 13 years of mismanaging the budget, nobody bears more responsibility for this mess than the Treasurer and the Chief Minister himself: Mr Barr. It is unconscionable that every Canberra taxpayer will pay the price for his failures. They are paying the price on the taxes that continue to rise, the falling quality of government services and the debt that he has accumulated that our children and grandchildren will have to pay off—a debt that has increased under this Labor government from zero to \$80,000 per household today and predicted to be \$130,000 per household in 2030.

It is clear to me that the community is sick of the waste, mismanagement, political spin announcements and endless false promises during election years. The community wants a government which delivers essential services, a government that will actually respect Canberrans' hard-earned taxpayer money, and a government that will always put the community at the centre of decision-making. That is what Canberrans will get under a Canberra Liberals government that I lead. This October gives the opportunity to make that happen.

**MS CLAY** (Ginninderra) (5.42): I would like to speak in my capacity as ACT Greens spokesperson for the arts. Costs are rising and our arts organisations are struggling to survive. Funding has not kept pace with CPI, and they are struggling to maintain their facilities, roll out their programs and pay proper wages to artists and arts workers.

Twenty-one arts organisations signed a joint letter late last year, pointing out their funding shortfall and lack of indexation. I am pleased to see that they did win some indexation, even though it was only a one-off and it was applied halfway through the year. The budget papers indicate that indexation will be payable from 2024, if available, and it will be determined by the territory.

I agree with the estimates committee recommendation that the ACT government should consider applying indexation of arts funding on a calendar year basis. I would go further and say it is not about considering it; they should just do it. If costs go up, you need your funding to be indexed in line with that.

The government response to that recommendation was “noted”, which is not the same as “agreed”, and it certainly looks like the ACT government will continue to do what they have been doing, which is to provide indexation if they wish to, and not let anybody know in advance whether they will.

There is an accountability indicator in the budget that had the number of artists directly and indirectly supported through arts activities funding. This is targeted at 100, and that is great. I would love to see 100 jobs for artists. That was a Greens election idea. But arts activity funding is really gig funding. There is not a lot of job security, so it is hard to tell from that indirect support how much of a job each of those jobs has created.

We are also still spending the vast majority of our arts funding on buildings and not enough on artists and programs to go alongside those buildings. Space for our artists is really important and maintenance of the buildings that we have is also important. But I remain concerned that we do not put enough support into the arts, and we do not put enough funding and long-term commitment into making sure that we have artists, work and programs inside those buildings.

No plumber, sparkie or project manager works without pay, but many of our arts venues are still running gig programs, and they are still cutting those programs whenever a grant runs out. Many of our galleries are running exhibitions by artists who have to rent their own space to display their work, for the honour of it. I do not judge any arts organisation that does this. This is the sector that you are in. It is really hard to afford to do arts work and to support it. We need to make sure that our fundamental government funding and our program are supporting this for us.

**MISS NUTTALL** (Brindabella) (5.45): I rise to speak as the ACT Greens spokesperson for tourism and events, LGBTQIA+ affairs and sports and recreation. I will keep all of it to the one speech, in the interest of time. Please bear with me while I balance my hats.

In my capacity as the ACT Greens tourism and events spokesperson, I am glad to see that adequate funding has been given to the tourism sector in this budget. As a member of the ACT Greens, it is always my priority to ensure that tourism to the ACT is made as sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible, and I urge the government to do this. However, Canberra is a beautiful city, and I support the efforts being made by the government to ensure that as many people as possible can come out and enjoy it for themselves.

If we are talking about events in particular, the ACT currently presents many different supports for groups wishing to organise their own events, and I am glad that funding to encourage building a sense of community in Canberra exists. Having said that, a gap I would like to highlight is the lack of support for young people wishing to organise events. There is no actual reason why someone under the age of 18 cannot organise their own event, especially since they are often the ones best positioned to know what events are most appealing to people in their own age group. It is also a fantastic way to build skills in organising events and tap into the pattern of people who will go on to shape the community, if we support them to do so. We would love to see more financial supports made available to younger people to organise their own events, to allow them to better participate in our local Canberra community.

We would also love to see some more hyper-local community event grants for those without previous formal event experience more generally. Brilliant events like the Kambah 50th celebrations may happen, through sheer force of will, but it would be great to have more entry-level event grants to tap into the wonderful organising and enterprising minds in our community.

One particular area of tourism that we would like to see more support for is, of course, mountain biking. Mountain biking has drawn a large number of tourists to the ACT over the past few years, and it is now facing more competition from rural towns in New South Wales, who have seen the success of the ACT and invested in their own local mountain biking industries.

It is heartening to see that the ACT is intending to work to make the most out of the Sea Otter Australia event in Mogo next year. I would love to see mountain biking tourists enjoying all that the ACT has to offer during their trip to Batemans Bay. However, I urge the government to work quickly to ensure that our mountain biking industry is prepared to put their best foot forward before October 2025.

The government does not have the best record, shall we say, of communicating clearly with the mountain biking community from a single place, or necessarily building infrastructure in a timely manner. Hopefully, this clear deadline of the upcoming opportunity will bring about a different approach.

This presents a good segue into sports and recreation. The real point I wish to make here is that grassroots community sports are crying out for comprehensive, meaningful, long-term planning. These are genuinely promising stats, such as last year's survey into the infrastructure priorities of the sporting community, coming out of a motion from 2021. But things are moving far too slowly and they are not going far enough.

During estimates hearings, we heard that the listening report into the facilities prioritisation survey was due very shortly. At this time I have not managed to find it on the sports and recreation website. It would have been wonderful to have actually had the listening report to provide further comment on the budget in line with sports and recreation priorities, but I do look forward to seeing it released shortly.

We need a long-term infrastructure plan for community sports. We really need one, so that various sporting codes know when their turn is due. Currently, we have a survey that is already almost a year and a half old—almost to the point that it risks being out of date—and it has not had its findings revealed to the public.

If the government is serious about long-term planning for sports, we need to go further and we need to do it faster. We are entering another electoral cycle where every sports body needs to play the lobbyist to ensure that they get a slice of the pie. They should actually just be able to rest assured that they will get the funding as needed without getting their priorities listed as an election promise.

I could stand here and list specific projects around Canberra that need funding support, but that is simply feeding into the problem that we are currently contending with. We

really need comprehensive, long-term planning. The government have said this is what they want to do, so this should not be the problem that it is proving to be.

Finally, as LGBTQIA+ spokesperson for the ACT Greens, Canberra is a beautiful, diverse city that is consistently welcoming to the queer community, and the ACT Greens really want to make sure that it stays that way. I was glad to see the ACT government commit to continuing the capital of equality grants. Although there are no major developments or changes for LGBTQIA+ folk in this budget, as always, I will urge the government to keep their ear to the ground to ensure they are hearing the voices of queer people and all of the various needs that our different communities have.

There is still a lot of room to invest more in the community sector, and the work they do to support the LGBTQIA+ community. I raise this under the Office of LGBTQIA+ Affairs because we will struggle to achieve our goals of true and proper equality without a well-resourced and well-supported community sector. We need to be providing LGBTQIA+ community orgs with secure and sufficient funding.

Things like gender-affirming care are essential to so many Canberrans, and we need to ensure that this care is accessible, affordable and safe from the whims and vitriol of transphobia and TERFs who would have it taken away from the people it would benefit. There is progress to be made, of course, but one of the real priorities for me is that the government should ensure the gains that have been made are not let slip. We have come a long way, and we need to ensure that the ACT continues to be the most progressive and welcoming part of Australia when it comes to LGBTQIA+ support and legislation.

While it is not immediately budget related, with members' indulgence, we do welcome the inclusion of asexual, aromantic and agender folk in the acronym of what was formerly the Office of LGBTQI+ Affairs. Visibility helps us to include aro, ace and agender folk in our budgeting decisions. It is about time that we got proper recognition. Thus ends my omnibus rant.

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra—Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Minister for City Services, Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform and Minister for Human Rights) (5.52): I support this part of the appropriation, as Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, and Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform.

Fit-for-purpose arts spaces and studios are the subject of one of the most common conversations I have as minister. This budget sets aside more than \$5 million over two years to undertake essential upgrades and corrective repairs and maintenance works across the artsACT portfolio facilities.

We will be providing \$300,000 over two years to support the development of an arts assets needs analysis. This work will inform future government investment to meet the needs of the arts sector and the Canberra community. Additional funding of \$384,000 over three years is being provided to Arts Capital to assist in managing the Gorman Arts Centre through its refurbishment, and to enhance revenue-generating opportunities upon its completion.

We know that arts organisations are also being affected by cost-of-living pressures, and

a one-off increase of \$200,000 is being provided to our 29 funded arts organisations. Of course, this budget continues the recurrent funding of more than \$10 million to the arts fund, directly supporting arts organisations, artists and arts workers.

I will quickly touch on the work to progress the Canberra Theatre redevelopment project. While I could speak about it under the Cultural Facilities Corporation or Major Projects Canberra, I believe it is best, in the interest of time, to touch on it here. Of course, this project will have a significant impact on the performing arts in our city. Building on previous work, our budget has committed a further \$13.5 million to the project. As part of an early contractor involvement delivery model, last month we invited the construction industry to partner with us to progress the design, development and planning stage.

This is a city-shaping project, not just in physical presence but in what it will deliver for the arts, arts workers, our audiences and our creative economy throughout all of Canberra. We look forward to having more to say about the outcomes of that early contractor involvement soon.

As Minister for Government Services and Regulatory Reform, I am pleased that there are additional resources to make our transactions simpler, easier and faster. Funding will modernise the traffic and parking systems by updating existing camera technology and infrastructure, with integrated multi-modal solutions to enhance traffic and parking regulatory enforcement.

We are also upgrading and streamlining Access Canberra's IT systems with a \$2 million investment over four years. We will develop a customer portal and enable the lodgement of documents online for the births, deaths and marriages registers, and we will continue our work to sustain and modernise the ACT rego system. A further \$2 million will expand driver safety assessments to keep our roads safe.

I have been focused on creating the right settings for a vibrant night-time economy. This budget includes funding to expand resourcing and the available tools within Access Canberra to support the implementation of those reforms. This includes additional staffing in relevant teams and purchasing two in situ noise meters for the Environment Protection Authority to assist with the enhanced noise limits that we announced earlier this month.

Through this budget, we are continuing to strengthen Access Canberra as the responsive front door to ACT government, and we are maintaining our commitment to arts, culture and the creative economy. I commend this part of the bill to the Assembly.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (5.56): I rise today to speak about the Select Committee on Estimates report and the ACT government's response, particularly in relation to the arts sector.

It is somewhat disheartening to see the government merely "noting" some recommendations, rather than embracing them with the urgency and commitment that our vibrant arts community deserves. Recommendation 7, which called for the consideration of applying the indexation of arts funding on a calendar year basis, was met with a lukewarm response. The government decision to simply "note" this



recommendation shows a lack of genuine commitment to providing stable and predictable funding for our arts organisations. These organisations are the lifeblood of our cultural landscape, and they deserve more than just vague promises of support. They need the certainty that allows them to plan to grow and continue enriching our community.

Most specifically, in light of cost-of-living pressures, the cost of everything is going up for these organisations and individuals involved in the arts and creative sectors. It is difficult for them to continue to enrich our lives when their very livelihood is constantly under threat.

Furthermore, recommendation 8, which suggested clearly differentiating planning for arts infrastructure from funding for the arts themselves, has been dismissed under the guise of “existing government policy”. This is not enough; this is not what we have heard from members of our artistic and creative sectors about what they want to see.

Whilst there is so much support, for example, for the redevelopment of the Canberra Theatre, that does not help an artist now, today or next week, who is struggling to make ends meet and express their craft. Our artists and arts organisations need clear, transparent communication about where and how funds are being allocated. Bundling capital expenses with funding for creative projects blurs the lines and risks short-changing the very artists that we claim to support.

While the government claims that it will continue to work with stakeholders on the development of the Kingston arts precinct, as highlighted in recommendation 9, its response lacks any real commitment to action. After decades of promises, consultations and backflips, it seems we are no closer to having a Kingston arts precinct than before. The arts community feel that they are being left in the dark about time lines, costs and responsibilities. This uncertainty hampers their ability and the ability of organisations to plan for the future and fully realise the potential of what should be a thriving hub for creativity.

The arts should not be just an afterthought. They are a vital part of our community, our economy and our identity. The ACT government’s tepid response to these recommendations is not only disappointing but indicative of a broader disregard for the arts.

On this side of the chamber, we will continue to hold the government to account and fight for the support and recognition that our arts sector rightfully deserves. It is time to move beyond mere words and deliver real and tangible support for our artists, our creators and our cultural institutions.

**MR COCKS** (Murrumbidgee) (6.00): Very briefly, I want to go to one of the key issues that comes up across my electorate every time I am outdoor knocking and every time I am meeting with people at the shops, and that is rates. All the way back in 2012, I think it was, the Chief Minister promised Canberrans that rates were absolutely not going to triple. Sadly, that is yet another promise that the Chief Minister has failed to keep.

Every time I speak to people in our community, they tell me how their rates are impacting their lives. Through the estimates process this year, I asked for some

information around what the average cost of rates bills in each of the suburbs in my electorate were. The Chief Minister and the government were unable to provide that information. I am not sure why. It was fairly straightforward information as far as I could tell, but apparently they do not collect it. I did some digging myself and, let me tell you, the amount that people are paying in rates is absolutely astounding across my electorate. In fact, when you look at all of the suburbs, almost no-one is paying less than people in Mosman, one of Australia's most wealthy suburbs. For the people in Mosman, their average rates are \$1,573 a year. I wish that people across Canberra could say that their rates bill was equivalent to what people pay in Mosman.

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Deputy Speaker.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Have you got a point of order?

**Ms Cheyne:** Just a query.

**Mr Cain:** Is it a point of order or not?

**Ms Cheyne:** It is a query about the appropriateness of talking about rates, which is connected to ACT Revenue, which is connected to Treasury, not CMTEDD.

**Mr Cain:** Point of order or not, she cannot debate the matter.

**MR DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Cain, I am going to allow Mr Cocks to continue. It is a broad debate. I understand the point that you are making.

**MR COCKS:** This has a real cost-of-living impact and it has an impact across our entire community. It falls in with the increasing fees and the increasing rates right across every sector of this government. We have already been speaking about the cost-of-living broken promises, but it is very clear, when you look at all of these expenses that people are trying to keep up with in Canberra, that Canberrans simply are not getting value for money. It is absolutely astounding to me that people in Curtin, in my electorate, would be paying more for their rates than people in Mosman. It is absolutely astounding that people in Waramanga would be paying more for their rates than people in Mosman. At the same time, if you are renting, you are paying even more. It just happens to go out through your rent to the government.

It is time that this changed. The budget is broken. The foundational aspect of this budget, the approach to extracting the maximum amount of money out of every Canberran, must change. It is absolutely time for Canberra to have a fresh opportunity. It is time for Canberrans to get control of their government again. It is absolutely time for a change in a little under eight weeks time.

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

## **Statements by members**

### **Hawker Men's Shed**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (6.04): I want to sing the praises of Hawker Men's Shed,

which will begin construction next month of a large kit-form building, a permanent home for the organisation, on the grounds of Softball ACT. Sheddars, as they call themselves, marked nearly five years of planning and fundraising with a sod-turning ceremony at the site last Friday. It was my delight to be in attendance and again to meet up with the president of Hawker Men's Shed, Jon Wells, the president of Softball ACT, Frank Curcio, and Miss Megan Parsons, from the Snow Foundation, who very generously contributed to this project.

The new build will be welcome after four years of operating out of a shared site, a site shed and three shipping containers. It will provide a large, safe workshop environment and an activities meeting room for members. Mr Wells the president of the Hawker Men's Shed said it was anticipated that the new facilities would attract a healthy and diverse membership as well as attracting wider community involvement and activities, and broadening time for the shed will be available to interest groups. While they have decided at the outset to appeal to men and women from a range of groups in the Belconnen area, the response over the past 2½ years demonstrates just how varied and far-reaching community interests are. Site preparations began earlier this week and it is hoped that construction will be very, very soon. I want to commend the Hawker Men's Shed for their outreach to our community.

### **Multicultural affairs—Bangladeshi community**

**MR BRADDOCK** (Yerrabi) (6.06): I want to give a shout-out to Canberra's Bangladeshi community, who have had a rollercoaster of a month. They watched with mounting alarm for the safety and wellbeing of families and loved ones in Bangladesh. The ruling regime unleashed a brutal crackdown on student protesters, resulting in numerous deaths, injuries and disappearances. The government's actions included the imposition of a prolonged internet and telecommunications blackout, creating a climate of fear and repression. You can well imagine how this was received by the Canberra Bangladeshi community.

It was at the height of these happenings that it was my privilege to join that community and protest outside of Parliament House and listen to their fears, concerns and anger. I also had the opportunity to share their relief and happiness when regime change occurred. No-one underestimates the work required to rebuild neglected and shattered systems of democracy and government. But now they have one essential building block: hope; hope for a better future.

I also want to draw attention to local Bangladeshi community group ATN, who have been performing excellent work providing services to the local Canberra community to help people settle into the Canberra community. It was a pleasure to see their hard work acknowledged as finalists in the 2024 Multicultural Awards. Well done to everyone in ATN and in the Bangladeshi community for getting through the past month.

### **Sister Veronica Dunphy—tribute**

**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) (6.08): I rise today to briefly acknowledge and celebrate the life of Sister Veronica Dunphy, much-loved gardener at

the COGS Dickson Community Garden, who passed away peacefully on Saturday 17 August at the age of 101.

Her life was dedicated to caring for others as a nurse and nun and, in recent years, she has been a well-known and loved local gardener. She propagated interesting plants regularly and never lost the fascination with seeds and the magic that emerged from something so small. She used to say that getting her hands dirty kept her grounded. Her fellow gardeners described her patience, good humour, resilience and so much more. Even a car accident and a fractured collarbone in her hundredth year did not keep her down for long.

I was privileged to attend Veronica's 100th birthday celebration at the garden in March last year. She was back for her 101st birthday earlier this year to shovel the first soil in a new orchard planted in her honour.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order, if I could. Madam Speaker, I note that there is a protest happening outside of this place at the moment and that the minister is wearing a symbol of that protest here in this place. I notice also that that has been banned in the Victorian parliament—the wearing of that Palestinian symbol. I just wonder if I could seek your advice to rule on that matter, given that we do not want to bring external protests into this place and, obviously, be inconsistent with other parliaments.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. I am very conscious that this has not been worn before, and it has coincided with a protest external to here. So I would ask that the external is kept external and that we keep this place respectful to our multicultural community. We all have passions and beliefs, but there are ways and means of doing that.

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Happy to take it off. I just had it on.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. Do you want to go back to your 90-second statement?

**MS VASSAROTTI:** Yes, if I could, that would be great.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Vassarotti.

**MS VASSAROTTI:** I was privileged to attend Veronica's 100th birthday celebration at the garden in March last year, and she was back for her 101st birthday earlier this year to shovel the first soil in a new orchard planted in her honour, in the rain, with thrilled gardeners celebrating with her again. I am told that, when people handed her a shovel to ceremonially dig a small hole, she instead got straight to work and helped plant the substantial tree. The Dickson Community Garden is a special place. Michelle, Sarah, John and many others took the time to organise events with her to recognise her life. She will be missed but, at 101, no-one can say she did not deserve a rest. Her memory will be kept alive, and whoever takes on her plots will benefit from soil much loved for over a decade. Thank you, Veronica Dunphy.

## **Valedictory**

**MISS NUTTALL** (Brindabella) (6.11): I made a huge gaff yesterday in my speech and did not manage to honour a few people that have been absolutely crucial to the contributions I have been able to make to this place. That is not a reflection on them; it is a deeply goofy mistake on my behalf, and I apologise sincerely.

Thank you to the man, the myth, the legend, Harry, our brilliant comms adviser. Harry has been an absolute gun. From the morning of the countback he went out of his way to prepare me for media and reassure me out of my abject terror. Without Harry there and calm and able to explain things using short words and simple sentences, I probably would have cried. You have Harry to thank for my socials highlights, including the Subway surfers video—that might have had politics stuff in it. Words cannot express how grateful I am for his ability to be calm, creative and unhinged at the drop of a hat. Without Harry, far, far fewer people would know about the work we are proud of. So please look after your Harrys and appreciate them.

Thank you also to Aileen, queen of the world's most beautiful spreadsheets, who, with no obligation to do so, was willing to support me and let me draw on her expertise in the women's portfolio and endless knowledge of parliamentary process. Thank you to Phee(?). Phee is the hero we need, not the hero we deserve, and her ability to be across anything, literally everything, and still be gentle, warm and responsive to everything I throw her way is remarkable. Thank you to Guy for being a working mentor, sounding board and wealth of knowledge and reassurance. Thank you to everyone I have not had a chance to mention. You have all helped so much, and I could not have done this without any of you.

*Discussion concluded.*

## **Adjournment**

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **Valedictory**

**MR CAIN** (Ginninderra) (6.13): I thought I would take this opportunity to deliver my valedictory speech. I am pleased that you are in the chair, Madam Speaker, because I want to thank you for your many years of public service to the ACT community in this place. I note that you will have some words to say yourself next week.

Elected just under four years ago, I had no idea what would await me. I called myself a probie MLA for a while, until my advisers told me to stop doing that to myself. I am not quite sure what I should call myself right now. I will leave it to others to call me what they like.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Oh, don't encourage that, Mr Cain!

**MR CAIN** I am trying to be in good spirits. It has been a remarkable part of my life that I could not have anticipated happening, quite frankly; nor did I predict what would

unfold. It is pleasing to know that, as a local member, I believe I have stuck to my guns as being what I call constituent heavy. I have been committed to my electorate, because that is actually my job: to be an effective local member.

It has been a thrill for me to be able to see a memorial bench installed at Shepherds Lookout in memory of Brontë Haskins, at a place where she found comfort. That is a story that many will be aware of—and of others gone too soon, like her, in really trying circumstances.

I oversaw the successful petition with over 2,000 signatures, over three years ago, that meant that the green waste facility at west Belconnen remains operating and open to the community. I led hundreds of petitioners to increase the number of police controls at Kippax. Unfortunately, that was not something that was followed through, in my opinion.

I called on the government to develop an all-ability playground at Charnwood-Dunlop School, which seems to be a commitment that the government, I am pleased to see, has made. I called on the government to restore Macrossan Crescent bus routes to appropriately service vulnerable residents and public transport users.

I successfully petitioned—and I am not saying I am taking the sole credit for some of these things, but certainly I have been an advocate and voice—to fix the lighting on the path that lines Lake Ginninderra. It looks like my office has sent over almost a thousand letters to ministers on behalf of constituents in nearly four years of local representation.

It has been a real joy as well to chair the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety since February 2022. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion from my time starting here until February 2022.

As members would be aware, I introduced a bill to basically make it much more difficult for unfair rescissions of contracts on off-the-plan purchases to occur. It was interesting to see the progress that led the government to introduce a bill to ban the same practice, presented on the same day as my own.

I am happy to say that I have led the Canberra Liberals' response to significant government bills and reforms, including the Planning Bill 2022, the raising of the minimum age of criminal responsibility, the Government Procurement Bill 2023 and the Multiculturalism Bill 2022. I have moved amendments to multiple bills over this term.

The motions that I have had involvement with include calling for the audit of the HRIMS program to ensure appropriate procurement had taken place; prioritising transparent expenditure in procurement practices; and advocating for the removal of the size restriction on second dwellings in large RZ1 parcels and providing the owner with the option of a separate title.

As members would be aware, I have perhaps made the most adjournment speeches in this place, but I am happy to be corrected on that. I do not know if I should call for a motion see if that is supported or not.

I do want to thank my wonderful staffers over the time. My first senior adviser, Amy Vickers, sorely missed, got to work in the leader's office, driving policy there. She is with her wife in Hawaii now. I hope one day she comes back. Who knows? She might work for me again. I thank Unity Patterson, who took an opportunity to work for me, leaving a secure position with KPMG; Nisha Dahiya; Isaac Ellis and Hamish Wright. I thank my current staffers, senior adviser John Hooke, Sam Reeve, Jessica Townsend and Sophie Collings. (*Extension of time granted.*)

It would be inappropriate of me not to acknowledge the members of my own party, the Canberra Liberals, and certainly our leader, Elizabeth Lee, who I do sincerely hope is the next Chief Minister. I want to thank her for her support in the leadership. I thank our local branch chair, Mr Ray Zak, and wish him all the best as he continues his role. I thank my volunteers, particularly my campaign manager and my volunteer coordinator, and the Canberra Liberals leadership in this city for helping us to present a strong case to the community. Thank you.

### **Valedictory**

**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) (6.19): I want to take the time tonight to say a few thank-yous, along with everyone else this evening, this week and into next week. I want to begin with my family and my kids.

This will be the first time for me campaigning in an election where my children have reached their late teens and early adulthood. I cannot tell you how strange that feels. I feel a little bit lost when I am not getting the “WRU” messages or a phone call asking, “What’s for dinner?” right in the middle of question time. It does feel a little bit different. I have at least gained two new votes for myself in my electorate, so that is something to look forward to.

Along with the two new adults joining my home, two new rescue dogs have joined our family this term, so whilst part of my life outside of work has, in many ways, become easier, that space has unfortunately been filled with some fur kids who are happily destroying what was a peaceful moment of serenity that was achieved in the adulthood of my children. But I would not have it any differently.

I want to thank Team Berry in my office, and all the volunteers and supporters who have worked with me over this term of government. It is strange in this job to hand over your life and your work diary to some strangers at times. It does not take very long for them to quickly know a lot more about you than perhaps they need to. I want to thank them all for their Chippy Fridays, for their nice cups of tea and for all the interesting book reading that we have been doing as well.

I want to acknowledge all of the public service officers, across all of my portfolios, who have worked so hard over the last term. We have achieved so much together. I hope you get a bit of a break during this shutdown period and the election period and are ready for a fresh new Labor government after 19 October.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of the stakeholders across all of my portfolios as well. Some I have worked with for many years and some are new to this space. I look forward to continuing that positive relationship, achieving great things for people across our Canberra community.

To the Legislative Assembly cleaners, attendants, all the OLA staff, and to you, Madam Speaker: I hope you all get a little bit of a break as well while we work through the festival of democracy. Especially to you, Madam Speaker, I hope that you get some time with your family, your garden and your fur friends as well.

To my Labor party colleagues and friends: this term, for me, has been when we have been the most united that we ever have been. I have been proud to be working with you all and I cannot wait to work with you all again in a new Labor government following 19 October.

To the Greens and the Liberal Party, I think I will use Mr Petterson's line and say I wish you good health and I wish you good luck, but not too much, in the upcoming election. Finally, to the electorate of Ginninderra, my neighbours and friends: thank you for your continued support. I hope I can count on you again this October so that we can do even more great things together. Our Belconnen community is strong, it is supportive and it is inclusive, and I cannot wait to work with you all to make it even better.

### **Children and young people—out of home care**

**MISS NUTTALL** (Brindabella) (6.22): I have the extraordinary privilege of delivering a speech on behalf of Jasmine, Tayla, Tyler and Shona, young people, advocates and survivors of the out of home care system. I am really grateful to have some of them join us today in the chamber, with their little ones. As a member, I ask my colleagues to, more than any other speech I have done in this place, please listen carefully to their words:

Why did you hate me? Why was I nothing? Why did my life cost less than a wet paper bag? I wish they would listen to me. I had no-one else. I wish they didn't force me to go back there, where my sister was raped. I wish they didn't force me to live in fear. I had to earn the right to have period products because I was autistic.

These statements are just a small snippet of our experiences as young people who grew up in the ACT out of home care system. Our stories are ones that will make people stop and listen. They are stories of pain and sadness. Our names are Jasmine, Tayla, Tyler and Shona, and we have survived a system that was supposed to protect us. Instead, it stole our voices and stripped away our power, leaving us neglected, broken and left to pick up the pieces. We represent countless children and young people who have been let down by the out of home care system.

Imagine being a child, uprooted from everything you know. We lived in placements and not homes. We carried our lives around in bags, constantly moving from one place to another. We had no stability, no choices, no real home and no-one who would truly listen. Our entire existence was defined by uncertainty and never belonging. This isn't just our story; it is the reality for many in the out of home care system.



Despite being just innocent children, the system drilled into us that we would amount to nothing. We were told, “You will end up dead or in jail. You will never have a good job or a good education. You will do nothing with your life.” The underlying message was clear: statistically we were bound to fail. However, we are not just statistics; we are real people with real stories.

How is it that we have had to suffer at the hands of an out of home care system, despite the laws in place to protect us? In care we have had to beg for food, for period products, for safety and to be listened to. We are taught that these are supposed to be some of our basic human rights, so what makes us different? The system did not just fail us; it condemned us to a path of despair, not by choices but by the actions and inaction of those working within it.

On behalf of all the children and young people in out of home care past, present and future, we demand change. Change that is grounded in the reality of our experiences. The system is failing its most vulnerable children and young people. And we urge you, as leaders, to take action. The reforms that are underway must be enacted with our experiences at the front and centre of change. Those responsible for turning the reforms that exist on paper into the reality of their practice need to hear and deeply, deeply listen to what we have to say. The lives of our most vulnerable children and young people are at stake.

For too long we have been silenced. It is our right, as children and young people, to be listened to. With the support of the Children and Young People Commissioner, Jodie Griffiths-Cook, and informed by other children and young people in out of home care, we created *Listen to Me*, a publication that is the first of its kind. *Listen to Me* marks a historic moment for the ACT. It is a plea from children and young people in out of home care to the adults that work with them. It challenges adults to not only listen but to implement the change that we need, through these five actions:

Action 1: Don't just hear me, LISTEN TO ME.

Action 2: SHOW ME you are listening.

Action 3: BELIEVE ME when I tell you something.

Action 4: CARE ABOUT ME, so I can care about myself.

Action 5: TAKE ACTION when I need you to.

The time for change is now and this publication is only the beginning. We have done it on our own for far too long. Will you stand with us and be a part of the change or allow us to suffer in silence? The choice is yours.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you to the brave young women who are here. Thank you for telling your story.

### **Valedictory**

**MS ORR (Yerrabi) (6.27):** I will give my end of term speech in a moment—from my extensive notes that I have written in the last 30 seconds—but, first of all, I would like to acknowledge the young women that Miss Nuttall has brought in today. Certainly, I think it is fair to say, you have been heard.

I will now turn to the term that has been. It has been a big term—so big that I forgot the stuff we did at the start of the term was actually this term. I think that is down to just

how busy I know I have been and I am sure everyone has been. Amongst the highlights for me, certainly passing the three private members bills that I put forward, the Carers Recognition Bill, the Period Products and Facilities (Access) Bill and, today, the Disability Inclusion Bill, have certainly been professional and personal highlights for me throughout this term.

Certainly working with the good people of Yerrabi to make sure that our home reflects what we want it to be has been a great privilege and a core part of my work. I am very glad to see the Giralang shops are under construction, and I am sure everyone is very happy to know that I will probably never be giving another adjournment speech on how much I would like to see the Giralang shops built. I am very happy to see the Franklin dog park progressing. I appreciate my colleague Ms Lawder has some other views, but I am pretty excited by it. It is one that I have been pushing along and maybe part of the answer has been that I have been relentless in making that one come to fruition.

The Casey Park has been another great achievement. What has been really special about this and a number of the projects has been the way that we have been able to work with the community to make sure that what goes into these projects does reflect the community. The Giralang shops obviously got pushed along by the community petition and the committee inquiry that held the developer accountable, and, with Casey Park, we were able to put together a community design brief so that that park reflected the wants and the needs of the community. It has just opened. It is fantastic. My favourite part of it are the sensory boards to allow children who are non-verbal to point to the emotion they are feeling or what they would like to be doing next, making it one of the most inclusive parks that we have in Canberra.

The Franklin Grasslands, now known as Budjan Galindji, is progressing with the next round of works going on in there—again, brought together through working with the community, the Friends of Grasslands and the local Franklin and Harrison communities. Then there are the Bonner trees. We finally got trees for Mabo Avenue. It has been great. It has taken a while, but we got there. I had a very heated contest between whether it was crepe myrtles or banksias. Crepe myrtles won out by a few votes, but, in the end, everyone was happy. It is all these little things that have been great to see coming across our community.

I would like to thank my colleagues and all of their staff as well, who have fielded my hundreds of inquiries throughout the term and questions I have about little projects I would like to do, such as, “Hey, can I have some trees for the Bonner vale, please?” please?

I would also like to acknowledge the Greens and Libs. I think it is fair to say we all get to work with each other in committees and across the chamber in a whole range of different capacities and, behind the scenes, we actually probably get along better than I think most people realise. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge my fellow whips, Ms Lawder and Mr Braddock. The life of a whip and the work we get to do is, I think, a bit unglamorous. It is the grunt work of this place. But I have certainly appreciated the straight bat that both of them have brought to making this place turnover.

I would like to thank the committee staff, in particular Kathleen, who was the secretary on the Select Committee on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2023. I think it is the

first committee report she has ever had to take drafting instructions from someone who has just had sinus surgery, with splints up their nose, but she got there. I would like to thank her for accommodating me. I would like to thank the OLA staff; the Clerk and his office, who have worked with me tirelessly, particularly around whip stuff, providing lots of advice; HR, Rachel, Emma and Sam, who are absolutely godsends and answered every question I have had, because I am not a HR expert; and, obviously, my staff, Jayden, Kirra, Kelsey and Tim, who are still in the office and who have been working tirelessly doing a lot of things and open to just about every crazy idea I have come up with and every ambition I have had.

I would also like to acknowledge, Martin, who started the term with us and was instrumental in pushing along the Carers Recognition Bill. He left us to move upstairs—a common story. We also had Jason Clark. I will give a bit of a shout-out to him. He has also moved upstairs. Minister Berry poached him, much to my dismay, and to her joy. I think it is fair to say that he has been a big loss to our office. He was definitely quite a big personality. We have a lot more room in the fridge, but we certainly miss his five meals a day smelling out the office. I think everyone appreciates their staff and knows that we could not do this job without them. So a very big shout-out to them.

And, obviously, Madam Speaker—perhaps saving the best for last—I would like to thank you. As whip, you probably got to spend more time with me than just about anyone else in the Labor caucus—and I know that you are not sick of me just yet. Thank you again for all of your guidance and support throughout the term and for the job that you have done.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.32 pm until Tuesday, 3 September 2024 at 10 am.**

## Schedule of amendments

### Schedule 1

#### Disability Inclusion Bill 2024

Amendments moved by Ms Orr

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**1**

**Proposed new clause 7A**

**Page 5, line 1—**

*insert*

#### **7A Meaning of *disability inclusion strategy***

In this Act:

*disability inclusion strategy*, for the Territory, means a strategy for—

- (a) disability inclusion in the ACT community; and
  - (b) the implementation of the disability inclusion principles in the ACT.
- 

**2**

**Clause 9 heading**

**Page 6, line 7—**

*omit the heading, substitute*

#### **9 Disability inclusion strategies for the Territory**

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**3**

**Clause 9 (1)**

**Page 6, line 9—**

*omit everything after*

the Minister,

*substitute*

make a disability inclusion strategy for the Territory in relation to the priority inclusion area.

**4****Clause 10 heading****Page 7, line 9—***omit the heading, substitute***10****Disability inclusion strategies made in consultation with people with disability etc****5****Proposed new clause 10 (2) (ba)****Page 7, line 26—***insert*

(ba) life experiences, including the experiences of veterans; and

**6****Proposed new clause 10A****Page 8, line 18—***insert***10A****Certain existing strategies may be adopted as first disability inclusion strategy**

- (1) The responsible Minister for the priority inclusion area mentioned in an item in table 10A, column 2 may adopt the strategy mentioned in the item, column 3 as the first disability inclusion strategy for that priority inclusion area.
- (2) If a responsible Minister adopts a strategy mentioned in an item in table 10A, column 3 as a disability inclusion strategy—
  - (a) the adopted strategy is taken to meet the requirements under section 9 (2); and
  - (b) the requirements under section 10 do not apply to the adopted strategy; and
  - (c) the disability inclusion strategy is taken to expire at the end of the year mentioned in the item, column 4.

**Table 10A**

<b>column 1 item</b>	<b>column 2 priority inclusion area</b>	<b>column 3 strategy</b>	<b>column 4 expiry</b>
1	community attitudes	ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033	2033
2	education and learning	ACT Government Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034	2034
3	health and wellbeing	ACT Government Disability Health Strategy 2024-2033	2033
4	personal and community support	ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033	2033

column 1 item	column 2 priority inclusion area	column 3 strategy	column 4 expiry
5	safety, rights and justice	ACT Government Disability Justice Strategy 2019-2029—A Strategy to Address Unequal Access to Justice in the ACT	2029

(3) This section expires on 1 December 2035.

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7

**Clause 13 (1)**

**Page 10, line 12—**

*after*

ableism

*insert*

within, and across the business of, the entity

---

8

**Clause 13 (5) (b)**

**Page 11, line 11—**

*omit*

3 years

*substitute*

5 years

---

9

**Clause 14 (1) (a) (iii)**

**Page 12, line 7—**

*omit*

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10

**Proposed new clause 14 (2) (ba)**

**Page 12, line 19—**

*insert*

(ba) life experiences, including the experiences of veterans; and

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11

**Clause 14 (4)**

**Page 13, line 9—**

*omit*

strategy for a priority inclusion area

*substitute*

plan for the public sector entity

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12

**Proposed new clause 19 (3) (ca)**  
**Page 16, line 13—**

*insert*

(ca) represents a disabled peoples organisation; or

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13

**Proposed new clause 19 (8) (ba)**  
**Page 17, line 1—**

*insert*

(ba) life experiences, including the experiences of veterans; and

---

14

**Clause 19 (9)**  
**Page 17, line 6—**

*omit*

2 years

*substitute*

3 years

---

15

**Clause 20 (a)**  
**Page 17, line 21—**

*omit clause 20 (a), substitute*

(a) for misconduct; or

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16

**Schedule 1, proposed new section 1.2 (3A)**  
**Page 21, line 24—**

*insert*

(3A) Universal design is the best practice method of designing environments without barriers to accessibility.

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17

**Dictionary, definition of *disability inclusion strategy***  
**Page 24, line 14—**

*omit the definition, substitute*

***disability inclusion strategy***—see section 7A.

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**18****Dictionary, proposed new definition of *universal design*****Page 25, line 5—***insert*

***universal design*** means the design of an environment that can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of the nature of their attributes, including their age, size, ability or disability.

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