



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

4 September 2024

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Wednesday, 4 September 2024

Petitions:

Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24	2461
Belconnen—cyclepaths—petition 42-24.....	2461
Ministerial response.....	2462
Motion to take note of petitions.....	2463
Belconnen—cyclepaths—petition 42-24.....	2463
Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24	2464

Out-of-order petitions:

Out-of-order petitions	2465
Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24	2469
Out-of-order petition	2469
Out-of-order petition	2472
Out-of-order petition—statement under standing order 47	2472

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee.....2473

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025.....2474

Questions without notice:

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct.....	2500
Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct.....	2501
Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct.....	2502
Land—Belconnen rural block 50	2503
Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct.....	2503
Industrial relations—CFMEU	2504
Public housing—assets	2505
Economy—cost of living.....	2506
Public transport.....	2507
Budget—health.....	2508
Jacka—boundary fences	2510
Jacka—boundary fences	2511
Planning—Thoroughbred Park.....	2511
Government—investments	2512
Arts, Culture and Creative Policy.....	2512

Supplementary answers to questions without notice:

Ginninderry—joint venture partnership	2513
Land—Belconnen rural block 50	2514

Standing orders—suspension.....2514

Industrial relations—CFMEU.....2514

Building—public sector certifiers.....2529

Valedictory.....2535

Building—public sector certifiers.....2549

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025.....2556

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025.....2564

Standing order 76—suspension 2575 |

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025.....2576

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2024-2025.....2580

Statements by members:

Kurrajong infrastructure	2581
Government—taxation	2582
Sport and recreation—women’s sport	2582

Adjournment:

Valedictory	2582
Valedictory	2585
Climate change	2586

Wednesday, 4 September 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.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24

By Mr Hanson, from 378 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draw to attention of the Assembly that: Approximately 22 thousand Veterans and Families in the ACT do not have a dedicated venue to meet.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to: Provide a building or facility for Veterans of the ADF, AFP, ACT Fire Fighters, Paramedics and all other frontline responders. Facility needs to be secure to house equipment for musicians, yoga, martial arts and other functions. The facility would enhance the wellbeing of all Veterans in the ACT.

Belconnen—cyclepaths—petition 42-24

By Ms Clay, from 87 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

Jamison is a growing and thriving centre, but some residents find it increasingly difficult to be able to cross this busy road to get to the shops or even the local bus stop.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to call on the Government to:

Upgrade the CS cycle path through Macquarie and Cook, construct raised pedestrian crossings along the CS cycle route at Catchpole Street, Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent, reduce speed limits on Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent to increase safety; and conduct a further analysis of active travel needs around the Jamison shops and catchment with a particular view of looking after the needs of people with a disability, people with mobility issues and people who ride, walk, wheel or push a pram or trolley around the shops, and invest funding to implement solutions.

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

Ministerial response

The following response to a petition has been lodged:

Gordon—playing fields—petitions 14-24 and 25-24

By **Ms Berry**, Minister for Sport and Recreation, dated 2 September 2024, in response to petitions lodged by Mr Parton on 25 June 2024 concerning the Gordon playing fields.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter regarding petitions E-PET-014-24 and PET-025-24, lodged by Mr Mark Parton MLA, regarding Gordon Playing Fields.

Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) is responsible for the ongoing management and maintenance of the Territory's community sportsgrounds and associated facilities. TCCS maintains playing surfaces, irrigation systems, pavilions, and other facilities such as floodlights, across a range of oval configurations to ensure the ACT's sporting facilities are safe and fit for purpose.

I acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the community while the Gordon Pavilion has been awaiting rebuild works to be undertaken, and during this time the TCCS has been in regular communications with the principal user groups of the playing fields and offered alternative sites as an option.

TCCS has sought to minimise the impact of the loss of the pavilion through the provision of temporary facilities – two unisex changerooms, five toilets and a canteen, all utilising shipping containers fitted out for purpose.

The construction work commenced in May 2024 on the rebuild of the Gordon 1 Playing Fields pavilion and the scheduled date for completion of all works is mid-September 2024.

The delivery of the rebuilt Gordon 1 Playing Fields pavilion will ensure that all members of the Tuggeranong community can once again visit and enjoy this

sportsground facility and amenities. TCCS will continue to engage with principal user groups and the community through the delivery process.

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

Motion to take note of petitions

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

That the petitions and response so lodged be noted.

Belconnen—cyclepaths—petition 42-24

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.03): I seek leave to table an out-of-order petition with 745 signatures which mirrors the calls in the paper petition seeking pedestrian improvements around Jamison shops.

Leave granted.

MS CLAY: I present the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Cook and Macquarie— Upgrade to the C5 cycle path and other active travel measures— Ms Clay (745 signatures).

These petitions call on the government to upgrade the C5 cyclepath through Macquarie and Cook; construct raised pedestrian crossings along the C5 cycle route at Catchpole Street, Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent; reduce speed limits on Redfern Street and Lyttleton Crescent to increase safety; conduct a further analysis of active needs around the Jamison shops and catchment, with a particular view to looking after the needs of people with a disability, people with mobility issues and people who ride, walk, wheel or push a pram or trolley around the shops; and to invest funding to implement the solutions.

This petition has come about because a man who lives in the area, John Barlow, who is visually impaired, was finding it really, really hard to walk from his home to the Jamison shops. It has been an absolute delight working with John and his dogs, Jazzy and Luigi. He is an absolute powerhouse. He speaks about issues like this regularly on radio and in the media. He is a really, really good advocate for his community.

It was really interesting. We did some stalls with John and we did a bit of doorknocking in the area and we did a bit of work with Pedal Power. What I discovered in this area right around Jamison shops is that there has been a really good upgrade around there. We have got a lot of housing that has gone in right near our group centre. That is exactly the way we should be developing in this town.

We met four other people who were visually impaired when we did a couple of hours doorknocking in the area. I think a lot of people who have a disability or are ageing or have a visual impairment have intentionally chosen to live in this area so that they can walk to the shop and so that they can walk to the medical facilities there. It is really good access, but many of them are finding it hard. We need a better active travel

treatment around there.

We have also got a school there. We have had some upgrades go in, which is really good to see, but it is a really, really crazy time for the kids at drop-off time. I have been down there at school drop-off time and seen the kids riding and walking. We could have some much better crossings in that area.

We have also got some really, really fast streets around that area. As a cyclist myself, I know how frightening it is to ride on some of these streets. That is really, really close to our group centre. John Barlow has looked at this and Pedal Power have looked at this, and a lot of people have agreed that we could do much, much better around this shopping centre. I think many of our residents would very much appreciate that.

Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.05): I rise to speak to the petition calling for greater support for our veterans, which is a petition I was very proud to sponsor. As a veteran, I was very pleased to support this because there are 22,000 of us across Canberra, supported by our families, but in the ACT veterans do not have a dedicated place to congregate and to meet. The petition therefore calls on the ACT government to provide a building or facility for veterans of the ADF, the AFP, ACT firefighters, paramedics and all frontline responders. The facility needs to be secure to house equipment for activities, music, martial arts and other functions. The purpose of this facility would be to enhance the wellbeing of all veterans in the ACT.

I think it is a terrific idea. Certainly, there is much more that I think we need to be doing for veterans. This is a great idea. The support that we provide to veterans has been a key part of the focus I have had over my 16 years in this place. Indeed, when I was elected in 2008 we did not have a shadow minister for veterans' affairs. We did not have an advisory council and there was very limited support provided for veterans in the ACT. I was very pleased at that stage to lobby for and work on that, to establish the first shadow ministry. We now do have a minister. That is a good thing. We do have an advisory council. That is a good thing, but I think there is more that needs to be done.

The fact that so many people have signed this petition shows that I am not alone in that view. I am delighted that the Canberra Liberals have announced a plan that very much matches the intent of this petition. I thank the shadow minister for veterans' affairs, Nicole Lawder, who has put that forward.

I would like to particularly thank Mr Colin Greef, who is a veteran of the Royal Australian Navy, for his tireless work in putting this petition together. I have seen him standing out at the shops in the cold, the wet and the rain, trying to gather signatures for this. That is what it feels like to be a candidate, so you can get a sense of that. We are also joined here today in the Assembly by Ray, Jenny and Bill from a guitar group. Colin is also part of that guitar group, who collect and recondition guitars and provide them to veterans and their families. You can Google that and find out about Colin, who is described as a local legend. I would not go that far, but I do acknowledge that he did a great job! Well done. I commend this petition to the Assembly.

Out-of-order petitions

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.08): I seek leave to table four out-of-order petitions: on the tram stage 2B, on drug decriminalisation, on police in Weston Creek and on police in Molonglo.

Leave granted.

MR HANSON: I table the following papers:

Petitions which do not conform with the standing orders—

Drugs decriminalisation—Objection—Mr Hanson (3,160 signatures).

Molonglo Valley—Increase of police numbers and resources—Mr Hanson (154 signatures).

Tram—Objection—Mr Hanson (2,710 signatures).

Weston Creek—Increase of police numbers and resources—Mr Hanson (119 signatures).

I have tabled an out-of-order petition from 2,710 residents calling for the ACT government not to proceed with stage 2B of the tram. I have tabled an out-of-order petition from 3,160 residents calling on the ACT government to stop legislation that decriminalises hard drugs like heroin and meth and to invest in drug treatment services. I have tabled an out-of-order petition from 119 residents calling for the ACT government to increase police numbers across Canberra and to establish a dedicated police station in Weston Creek or Molonglo. I have also tabled an out-of-order petition from 154 residents calling for the ACT government to increase police numbers across Canberra and establish a dedicated police station in Molonglo. Thank you.

Out-of-order petitions

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.09): I seek leave to table the following out-of-order petitions: to fix Garran parking, to fix Torrens parking, to fix Yarralumla parking, to fix Deakin parking, to fix Waramanga parking, to fix Cooleman Court parking, to upgrade Pearce shops and to not fence Farrer Primary School.

Leave granted.

MR COCKS: I table the following papers:

Petitions which do not conform with the standing orders—

Cooleman Court—Parking improvement—Mr Cocks (190 signatures).

Deakin Shops—Parking improvement—Mr Cocks (15 signatures).

Farrer Primary School—Objection to playing fields fence—Mr Cocks (121 signatures).

Garran Shops—Parking improvement—Mr Cocks (53 signatures).

Pearce Shops—Upgrade—Mr Cocks (54 signatures).

Torrens Shops—Parking improvement—Mr Cocks (36 signatures).

Waramanga Shops—Parking improvement—Mr Cocks (26 signatures).

Yarralumla—Parking improvement—Mr Cocks (55 signatures).

Madam Speaker, you will notice the theme in a lot of the petitions that I have just tabled: parking. Our local shops across Canberra are places that are more than just a corner store. A lot of our shops, as with the ones that I have taken the petitions around, are places where the community comes together. They are places where we have cafés and supermarkets and where our local hairdressers are. They are places where the community comes together in all sorts of ways.

Often, as in the case of Torrens, they are places that are also home to a childcare centre. One of the big challenges that people across Canberra are facing is that the only way to get to these places is often by car. They are the places that you need to stop on your way to work. Often you are dropping off children at a childcare centre. Without the parking that people need, it is impossible to have a thriving community in that location.

It is really important that we pay attention to what the community is asking for. Every one of these petitions has been driven from the community. We can see that in the petition to upgrade Pearce shops. I have sat down with shop owners in the area. They tell me that the current state of those shops, and the fact that it is so difficult to get the government to come together to work with the shop owners, to work with the building owners, and has been for so long, is a real challenge to getting people to come to those shops and to stay there, spend time there.

You see that with calls like “don’t fence Farrer Primary School”. A large proportion of the community in Farrer want their children to be able access the primary school facilities, the playground, all those sorts of things, and to make use of that without it being locked off and locked away, as we have seen across Canberra. This is a desire that you hear from a lot of areas in Canberra. It doesn’t matter whether it is Farrer or whether you are over in Coombs. People want to be able to take advantage of the community facilities that are there, without being locked out. People want to be able to get to their local shops. The local businesses there need people to be able to get there and spend time there. It is very clear that it is something that’s been neglected for far too long.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.13): I would like to speak to Mr Cocks’s and Mr Hanson’s out-of-order petitions. These are fake petitions and this is fake advocacy.

Mrs Kikkert interjecting—

DR PATERSON: This has been going on for the last couple of years. I have seen the rate of—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order. Members, please!

Mr Cocks: The member has suggested that these are fake petitions. Every name on those petitions came from the community and—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Dr Paterson, I would just ask you to be cautious with your words there. This debate is on the petitions tabled; talk to the merit or the policy of the petition.

DR PATERSON: With Mr Hanson's petitions my rough calculation is around 5,000 people, and with Mr Cocks's around 500 people, so around 5,500 Canberrans have been duped into signing petitions that only have been tabled—

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not quite sure of Dr Paterson's point, but if she is claiming that these are not real petitions, we have quite a standard in this place of out-of-order petitions and I would ask you to ask her to withdraw her allegations.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I would just say be mindful of your language; speak to your concerns on the petitions.

DR PATERSON: I will represent the members of the public who have written to me and who I know I have written to Ms Lee and to other members complaining about these petitions because they have not been tabled. The whole point of a petition is that you go and talk to the committee about them.

Ms Lawder: So were Ms Clay's fakes as well, because she had not tabled them till now?

DR PATERSON: Many of these have been out for years.

Ms Lawder: Really?

DR PATERSON: Yes. They are taken on the last day so that the government cannot do anything about this. This is data harvesting; that is what the Canberra Liberals are doing. If they really were serious about the petitions, they would table them through the Assembly.

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Madam Speaker. You have directed Dr Paterson to speak to the merits of the petitions or the issues in the petitions. She remains wilfully—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Cocks. Continue, Dr Paterson.

DR PATERSON: We have a process in the Assembly where there is a member of the public who wants to petition the Assembly, and a member sponsors that petition. Members of the public can then all sign that, through the Legislative Assembly website. That is a process that is very rigorous. The contact details of members of the public are kept private. We members never see those details.

What I know is that for the last four years—and I see that Mr Cocks took on Mr Hanson's modus operandi in terms of operating fake petitions—

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes. Please withdraw the word “fake”.

DR PATERSON: I withdraw the word “fake”. These petitions are political stunts in the community and they are not actually serious about the advocacy. On these petitions, what is the government going to do?

Mr Cocks: Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is a separate point of order, because the member is now casting aspersions that we are not serious about the advocacy. That is a reflection on motives, and I ask that she withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am going to let it ride but remind you to be very mindful of your language, please.

DR PATERSON: Okay. Mr Hanson’s stop the tram petition was, I think, three years ago. Mr Hanson can provide the dates on the record if he would like. The “don’t decriminalise drugs” petition was a couple of years ago as well, when we were debating the drug decriminalisation laws. I know “don’t fence Farrer Primary” was last year. Many of these petitions are long, long gone, and the advocacy has not—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Cocks: You are wrong.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, you were heard in silence. You may not agree, but please allow her to speak.

DR PATERSON: Madam Speaker, I ask Mr Cocks to withdraw the comment that I am lying.

MADAM SPEAKER: If you have said that, you need to withdraw.

Mr Cocks: I did not say that. I said that she is wrong.

DR PATERSON: You just said I was lying. You said a lie.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did not hear it, but if you used that language, I ask that you withdraw.

Mr Cocks: I said that she was wrong. I did not say that she is lying.

DR PATERSON: You said “lying”. You said “lying”, Mr Cocks.

Mr Cocks: I am happy for you to check *Hansard*.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I did not hear it. I can go to *Hansard*, and if I need to come back to you, Mr Cocks, I will.

DR PATERSON: I will make my point: members of the community, be very, very, very wary of these types of petitions because they are not about genuine advocacy. Members of the community, go to the Legislative Assembly website, sign your petition

there. Your data is secure. Your petition will enter the Assembly and your advocacy will be heard by the government. Thank you.

Emergency services—frontline response veterans—petition 41-24

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.18): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing the petition about veterans to the Assembly today regarding the need for a dedicated veterans facility in Canberra. I acknowledge Mr Hanson's service to our country and his strong commitment to the over 22,000 members of the veteran community of the ACT and their families. This petition calls on the ACT government to hear the voices of the well over 22,000 Australian Defence Force and first-responder veterans who are seeking a dedicated venue to meet and hold activities.

The closure of the Robert Poate Centre last year left many veterans groups without a place to call home. This venue had provided a space for veterans to hold activities, including music groups, yoga classes, martial arts, creative arts classes and social gatherings, and those activities were attended by many veterans and their families—veterans who have served their country and community. They have a shared understanding of the demands that their service places on themselves and their families, which Mr Hanson well understands. The opportunity to meet for activities and socially is very important to the wellbeing of veterans. These meetings are more than just a group of veterans coming together with a shared interest. For many, it is about a peer support therapy session, and it contributes positively to the wellbeing of all who attend.

Since the closure of the Robert Poate Centre, the veterans groups that were displaced have sought new venues. Most of these groups now rely on community clubs and community centres to provide meeting spaces at low or no cost. However, some groups also need storage space, which can be difficult to secure at these venues. We heard in February that a veterans and families hub in Queanbeyan was approved, and the hub would also service the ACT, but it is very unclear whether this venue would have spaces available for Canberra veterans groups, the activities I have already referred to and those in the petition. That is why the Canberra Liberals were very pleased to announce a veterans policy which included something along the lines of what is requested in this petition.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to Mr Colin Greef, a community champion for veteran wellbeing, for putting this petition forward. I have spoken previously in this place of Colin's passion for music and his charity that fixes and refurbishes donated guitars to be passed on to underprivileged kids and veterans going through a tough time. I look forward to, in due course, one day, to the government's response to this petition and for better support for veterans groups in the ACT.

Out-of-order petition

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) (10.21): I table an out-of-order petition from 643 signatories relating to upgrades and maintenance of the Fraser Primary School oval.

Leave granted.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, you did not like those interjections or comments, so please do not continue them. Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: I table the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Fraser Oval—Improvement (99 signatures).

I rise today to table a petition that was presented to me about the Fraser Primary School oval. Fraser Primary School is a great local school. It has a fantastic sense of community. I recently met with two dedicated parents at the school, Kiara and Mandy, and they explained to me how the condition of the current green space at the school has deteriorated following heavy use from students, and how the oval outside of the school gates requires further maintenance in order to encourage its use by the school.

The ACT government wants to encourage students to get outside and be active, and we are absolutely committed to supporting local schools with the facilities that encourage outdoor play. Kiara, Mandy and the entire school community who got behind their petition have put forward some fantastic ideas on how the ACT government can support a redevelopment of Fraser Primary School's green space. Their petition is accompanied by letters from students in years 4, 5 and 6 who have been studying persuasive writing. The students applied their new skills to writing very persuasive letters to me about what they would like to see happen at their school. I thank them for all their wonderful ideas, and I want to assure them that I have very much been persuaded. I look forward to working with the Fraser Primary School community to deliver on their ambitions, because every ACT public school deserves safe sporting and playing surfaces.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.23): I would like to touch on a few things to do with the out-of-order petition lodged by Ms Berry. Firstly, I note that Dr Paterson left the chamber before Ms Berry got up to present an out-of-order petition. Every criticism that Dr Paterson levelled at the Canberra Liberals' petitioners would apply to Ms Berry. Every criticism that Dr Paterson has just levelled at the Canberra Liberals would apply to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Sport and Recreation and a local member for Ginninderra. Let that be on the record. It is really interesting that Dr Paterson chose not to be in the chamber when a petition was presented with characteristics that she has just roundly criticised, but they happened to be from the Canberra Liberals. Shame on her! I wonder what kind of conversation Dr Paterson and Minister Berry had about coordinating their presentations this morning. So shame on Labor!

But let's talk about this petition. Minister Berry has been the sports minister for nearly four years, she has been the education minister for nearly four years, she has been a local member for longer than that, and here she is petitioning herself. I make reference to a change.org petition, "Encourage the ACT Government to Repair and Maintain the Fraser Oval", commenced on 30 July this year, with—and I checked this morning—

656 signatures. I thank Ms Amanda Snashall for lodging this petition and getting this action going. It seems that it has caught the attention of the minister responsible for sport, the minister responsible for education, and a longstanding local member. It has finally caught her attention after at least four years of not having her eye on the interests of the students at Fraser Primary or the residents around the Fraser oval. Shame on you, Minister!

I wonder whether it is because of the time we now find ourselves in, with fewer than two months before an ACT election, that the minister for sport, the minister for education, and a longstanding local member says, “We should do something about this oval—oops—because someone has just raised a petition on change.org.” Shame on you for your longstanding inaction!

Mr Gentleman: A point of order, Madam Speaker: the standing orders call for members to relate their conversations to the chair, not directly to other members.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. To the point of order, through me.

MR CAIN: Thank you Madam Speaker. We have a petition presented again with the characteristics of one that a Labor member in this place has just criticised the Canberra Liberals for, and she took herself out of the chamber when one of her Labor Party colleagues presented a petition with the same characteristics.

But, as I have said, what makes this whole exercise even worse and pure politics at play is that the member who is presenting this petition has been the responsible minister, in at least two portfolios, who has done nothing for the residents of Fraser, the parents of Fraser Primary School, the children who attend that school and children of neighbouring regions. She has done nothing except pick a moment that is close to an election. The petition was prompted by the community through their own action and, no doubt, frustration to get a response from this government—a belated response and one that really does signal to this community how tired and complacent this government has become.

Shame on the local member, shame on the responsible minister in at least two portfolios, and shame on the Labor Party members in this place for sitting back while one of their colleagues criticised the Canberra Liberals and then left the chamber so as not to be seen in the company of someone from her own party who presented a petition with the same characteristics she just pilloried. Shame on Labor—same old Labor—for playing political tricks for their mates.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Berry, you have spoken. Is there a point of order?

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) (10.28): No. I seek leave to speak again on this matter.

Leave not granted.

Ms Berry interjecting—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, enough!

Out-of-order petition

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (10.29): I seek leave to table an out-of-order petition to build a raised pedestrian crossing through Coniston Street laneway to the Hawker Community Gardens, signed by 99 petitioners from my electorate.

Leave granted.

MRS KIKKERT: I table the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Hawker—
Construction of a raised pedestrian crossing in Coniston Street—Mrs Kikkert
(99 signatures).

I spoke about the in-order version of this petition last week. I just want to thank Frances, who has organised her wonderful community gardeners in Hawker and also sought support from neighbours and friends and community people for her petition to include a raised pedestrian crossing near the Hawker Community Gardens.

Also, I have spoken to a lot of Fraser residents—mums, dads and children—while I have been at the shops, and they have mentioned that the Fraser oval is in need of an upgrade and maintenance. I am grateful to all of those parents who participated in the petition and I look forward to an upgrade in our local community, especially at Fraser Primary School. Thank you.

Out-of-order petition—statement under standing order 47

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) (10.30): I seek leave to make a statement under standing order 47.

Leave granted.

MS BERRY: The petition that Mr Cain has deliberately tried to muddy the waters around was a petition that was conducted by the community and the students at Fraser Primary School. It was presented to me by two parents, Kiara and Mandy. Mr Cain's comments—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, you will be warned very soon.

MS BERRY: suggesting that I had anything to do with this petition are completely incorrect and he should correct the record. He should apologise to the Fraser school community for undermining the work that they have done to draw the attention of this important issue to the chamber—

Mr Cain interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, you are warned!

MS BERRY: and to the minister responsible. It was mean and nasty and, frankly, a disgraceful attempt to smear my good name with the Fraser school community in working with them to address this important issue. I ask again that Mr Cain apologise for those comments where he has undermined the school community's important work in this space—and particularly children. He calls himself an educator and a teacher, and allegedly a school principal.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Berry, the point is just to explain, not to debate. Standing order 47 is where you think you have been misunderstood.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms Lawder: Point of order, Madam Speaker. Would you ask Ms Berry to withdraw her comments about Mr Cain just then that he is allegedly an educator and a principal? We have had this discussion before, Madam Speaker, under 202(a).

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes. Thank you. If you have made an inference that is not a statement of fact, can you please withdraw it?

MS BERRY: I can withdraw “alleged” and say that Mr Cain has said in this place that he previously served as a school principal. Thank goodness he is not now.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, but I remind you that standing order 47 is not for debate.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Report 31

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (10.32): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 31—*Inquiry into Integrity Commission's confidential report into Operation Kite*, dated 2 September 2024, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety. On 5 August 2024, under section 192 of the Integrity Commission Act 2018, the ACT Integrity Commissioner provided the committee with a confidential investigation report. Under section 192, a confidential investigation report presented to the committee is taken to have been referred to the committee by the Legislative Assembly for inquiry and any report the committee considers appropriate.

Due to privacy reasons, the committee has not made the commissioner's report public. The committee's report makes two recommendations, including that the ACT government ensure that recruitment processes and ACT government board appointments identify and determine the suitability of candidates who have received adverse findings in Integrity Commission reports, including confidential reports.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Integrity Commission for bringing this report to our attention. I thank the other members of the committee, Dr Paterson and Mr Braddock, and our professional secretariat for their support in producing this report. I commend the report to the Assembly.

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 1.8—Community Services 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) (10.35): The 2024-25 budget is a clear demonstration of this government's commitment to preventing and addressing domestic and family and sexual violence. In this budget, we have invested over \$11 million dollars into our frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services. This includes over \$2 million for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, including funding to implement a case management program; over \$1.6 million for EveryMan to expand their prevention programs; \$900,000 for the YWCA to expand their Domestic Violence Support Service; and a \$2.5 million funding boost for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

Domestic, family and intimate partner violence is a national crisis and a national shame. Every single one of us in this place and in the community needs to work together to eliminate domestic, family and intimate partner violence. This budget includes a \$375,000 coercive control package to increase understanding and improve responses to this kind of domestic violence. The package will provide training to frontline agencies,

such as ACT Policing and the courts, on identifying and responding to coercive control. It will also provide for a public education campaign informed by specialist coercive control expertise. I am also incredibly proud of the fact that, for the first time, this year, we have moved all of our non-frontline government staff out of the Safer Families Levy. This will allow us to fund even more innovative pilot programs to help us tackle domestic and family violence.

In this budget, we have also invested in expanding our training to frontline health staff at the North Canberra Hospital, as well as continuing the Death Review work. The government has also continued our successful Return to Work Program. This program provides mentoring, workshops and financial support to people who are trying to return to the workforce. These women often come from vulnerable backgrounds. Sometimes they are exiting the AMC. Attending the graduations for this program has been one of the highlights of my job. It has been so inspiring to meet the incredible women who have participated in the program and hear their stories.

We have also made some changes to this year's Women's Budget Statement, to make it more useful and informative. We have aligned the Women's Budget Statement with five themes in the Women's Plan to make sure that the two documents talk to each other. We have also added a data snapshot, which I hope will include more information in future years. This snapshot will provide an annual update on the status of women and girls in the ACT. We have also committed an additional \$491,000 in funding to ensure ongoing delivery of essential services to vulnerable Canberrans. This funding will support a range of targeted initiatives for women delivered by Women's Health Matters, Fearless Women and Roundabout Canberra.

Finally, I am pleased that in this budget we have continued to fund CAYPELS, the Children and Young People Equipment Loan Service. This service provides free equipment loans to children and young people who are still growing, so that families do not have to invest in equipment that will only last a limited amount of time. Last year, the service assisted 280 families and practitioners, with over 900 pieces of equipment loaned. This invaluable service for our children and young people often goes unrecognised. The government remains committed to providing vital services such as these, to make sure that all of our kids get a fair start in life.

This is a budget that demonstrates our commitment to tackling the issue of domestic and family violence and to support the most vulnerable members of our community. This government will always do the right thing by vulnerable Canberrans and will continue to work with the community to make Canberra an even better place for people to live and for everyone.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.40): I rise today to speak on the Community Services Directorate appropriation, starting with women. I would like to start with the government response to recommendation 32 from the recent estimates committee report which called on the ACT government to review funding for women's organisations, such as Fearless Women. The goal was to assess their potential positive impact on service delivery and ensure comprehensive support for young women and girls. The government response to this was that it was existing policy. They claim they review funding throughout the budget cycle. But the reality is that this review lacks transparency, accountability and genuine engagement with the organisations that do

critical work on the ground.

Simply stating that reviews occur is not enough. It is not a plan. It is a box-ticking exercise that fails to address the pressing needs of the women these organisations serve. How many times have we seen submissions from women's organisations overlooked, their voices drowned out by bureaucratic processes? Women's organisations work tirelessly to provide safety, support and empowerment to women who need it most. In the case of Fearless Women, for example, they have the research to show their approach is working. Yet they are constantly left in a state of uncertainty regarding funding and support, hampering their ability to plan and deliver essential services for girls and young women. This government's approach is usually just more of the same, recycled policies without the needed impact. You may remember the famous saying, "If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting what you have always got." The government response to recommendation 32 shows that, instead of reassessing and increasing support, they are content with the status quo—and the status quo is failing.

I would like to talk about some other areas in CSD and, for example, questions around the management of staffing and resources within areas critical to women's safety and support. In the latest budget we saw an increase of positions in the directorate. Yet when questioned, it became apparent the government added new executive roles, such as a second Executive Branch Manager in the Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Office, to manage an increasing volume of work. If what the government is doing is working, why do we have an increasing volume of work? If the government's policies relating to domestic and family violence and sexual violence are working, why do we need additional resources to manage an increasing volume of work? It is because their existing structures are not functioning effectively. Why wasn't the work being done well or effectively before? Where was the oversight and accountability?

The government talk about domestic family and sexual violence being a priority, yet they have diluted the focus of key leadership roles. In one case, we had someone appointed as the Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Coordinator-General. But recently we have seen that role expanded to include Deputy Director-General of Housing and Inclusion in addition to that role of Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Coordinator-General. These are enormous areas of responsibility, each requiring dedicated focus and expertise. How can one person oversee all of those "allegedly" focus areas? How can we claim to be prioritising women's safety when we overload key roles, spreading them thin and ultimately risking the quality and effectiveness of these vital services?

This is not an indication of a government committed to making genuine change for women. It is a government that has become comfortable with making adjustments that look good on paper but are not improving outcomes in reality. The question I ask is a simple one: where is the commitment to real and actionable support; where is the accountability; and where is the transparency?

Just yesterday, I saw a social media post from Women's Health Matters in collaboration with and endorsed by other women's groups. It said:

In a city like Canberra, everyone should be safe from violence, have access to health services, and supportive and equitable jobs and communities.

While there have been steps in the right direction, slow action on domestic, family and sexual violence and women's health and wellbeing and an under-resourced and overwhelmed women's sector means that gender equity is still out of reach for ACT women.

Canberra women services need better.

And it goes on to talk about their election asks, calling for action. Does this sound like our women's groups are getting what they need? Does it sound like this government is delivering for women? Does it sound like this government is making a difference for women's safety? No; it does not—from this coalition of women's groups who are saying that, while there has been some progress, much more needs to be done and "gender equity is still out of reach for ACT women". So much more needs to be done. Women here in the ACT need more than lip-service from a government. They deserve a government that genuinely prioritises their safety supports, that supports the organisations that serve women in our community and that creates structures that enable dedicated and effective leadership. It is time for the government to stop hiding behind empty policies and start delivering on the promises they make to women.

I will move on briefly to seniors and veterans in CSD. Older Canberrans and veterans have come to expect very little in the budget, and we see this pattern continue once again. We see no new initiatives for older Canberrans; just more of the same, despite the continued increase in the proportion of ACT residents over 65, our ageing population. The government have an Age-Friendly City Plan that they like to talk about. It expires this year, yet consultation on the 2025-35 plan has only recently been undertaken. The budget includes funding for developing this plan, but older Canberrans want to see money spent on implementing plans—and sooner rather than later. Let's not forget that many of the initiatives that benefit older Canberrans benefit all Canberrans. It is wrapped up as if it is for older Canberrans, but it benefits everyone—everyone walking on footpaths; everyone with a pram or a scooter or a mobility device. They do not have to be older Canberrans to benefit from this. It is basic local government services.

One of the things older Canberrans continue to raise with me is public transport. Having a reliable and accessible transport system allows older people and veterans to remain independent and able to remain active in the community. In recognising the cost-of-living pressures faced by Canberrans on fixed incomes, as many older Canberrans and veterans are, a Canberra Liberals government would expand access to free public transport to the ACT Seniors Card holders and DVA Gold Card holders all day every day.

I would like to the advocacy and support for older Canberrans by COTA ACT and mention that the COTA ACT Seniors Expo, which receives funding from the ACT government and has for some time—so thank you for that—will take place on 25 September, where older Canberrans can go and learn more about what is available to them in many, many aspects of their life.

I was pleased to attend the Veterans Expo in July, also undertaken by COTA ACT. I thank the many ex-service organisations and veteran support groups who have engaged with me to raise the issues the veteran community faces in our city. Many ex-service organisations and veteran support groups have spoken to me about the difficulties they have experienced finding a regular place to meet and socialise. That is why we have

made a commitment to providing somewhere for that. I would like to acknowledge the community clubs who, in the interim, generously provide spaces for our veterans' groups to gather.

It is time to recognise the positive impact seniors and veterans have on our city. It is time to bring an end to the ageism that we have. Just last Minister Steel was talking about "old Canberrans". What kind of a term is that—"old Canberrans"? At what point do you become an "old Canberran"? Is it anyone older than Minister Steel, for example—which might include a lot of people sitting in this room? We must ensure that seniors and veterans are properly supported to live well in Canberra.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (10.48): There are a couple lenses I want to take in responding as the ACT Greens spokesperson for young people. This is a role in which I see the highest highs and the lowest lows. So often I have the amazing experiences of seeing young people thriving and doing what no-one expected someone of that age to do and pushing the system to acknowledge and support them in various fields in which they choose to invest their considerable talent. However, young people are more vulnerable than most to exploitation, cruelty and indifference from the systems that are meant to help them. I want to give both of these sides of my experience as young people spokesperson voice and represent them here.

As government, there is more we could be doing to prioritise the experiences of young people in out-of-home care. We welcome the decision to extend care leaver support to young people in out-of-home care until they turn 21. No child should dread turning 18 when so many opportunities become available while other children are excited to mark the milestone. None of us stop growing and needing to learn life skills when we turn 18. The government takes on the responsibility of the parent to young people in out-of-home care, and the idea of the ACT government being a parent that cuts off all support at 18 feels pretty heartless. The age of 21 gives three more valuable years to allow young people who have been in out-of-home care a chance to establish themselves in a world without feeling abandoned by the state. Additionally, the option to provide support to up to 25 years is a very positive one. I really hope the directorate is generous in making those decisions.

The young people I have met who are in or have come out of out-of-home care are strong, smart and resilient—often, as we heard last week, in spite of the system. I know that any money investing in their wellbeing will be a worthwhile investment in the future of Canberra. The situations that lead young people to be in out-of-home care are really happy ones, and I applaud the government taking the responsibility of giving those same young people the support I know they will benefit greatly from. As we continue to do this work, I really encourage the government to centre the experiences of young people in the out-of-home care system and to listen. If they need help with that, I would recommend reading the *Listen to me* report, written by young people in the out-of-home care system, for a start.

I think other priorities for young people in this budget have been challenging. One of these challenges is the diminishing number of free recreational spaces. If you were a young person, could you really name many places that you could rock up to and use for free? I am glad that all members in this chamber agreed with me last week that Tuggeranong Skatepark deserved a re-development. That is a good third space that we

should treasure. Otherwise, there is the cinema—costs money; joining a sports team, which is really worthwhile—costs money; or joining Maccas for the free wi-fi—costs money. Libraries are great free spaces. ACT libraries are fantastic. So, young people, if you are listening, definitely get in on that.

Where in the budget, though, do we explicitly invest in enough free recreational spaces specifically for young people? It is unclear to me that there is any dedicated funding or strategy to ensure that Canberra has enough of these coveted spaces. We do have resources to draw on, like the *Children and Young People Commissioner's More big kid swings* report on children and young people's views on the right to play and recreation in the ACT. In future budgets, I would love us to really explicitly and strategically look at how to provide and fund more of those third spaces for young people.

Lastly, I would love to see the ACT government facilitate more opportunities for young people to engage with government processes and, in fact, in Legislative Assembly processes. Speaking as a fairly politically engaged young person, I would have struggled to find opportunities to engage in committee inquiries and YourSay consultations if I had not actually worked in this building. Programs like the ones that our wonderful OLA Education runs are awesome. We need more of those. I would also really like to see more funding to entities like the Children and Young People Commissioner to develop children and young people friendly terms of reference for inquiries and other materials to make government and Assembly processes more accessible.

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) (10.52): Today I rise to speak to this government's ongoing commitment to our vibrant multicultural community here in the ACT. Over many years, the Labor government has recognised the significant value that Canberra's growing and proud multicultural community contributes to our city's culture and diversity, and we want to ensure Canberra remains an inclusive, vibrant and harmonious society where everyone can thrive.

Legislating the Multicultural Act 2023, establishing the Charter of Multiculturalism and establishing the Ministerial Advisory Council for Multiculturalism are just some of the foundation steps the government has taken to ensure continued commitment and support to multiculturalism. Additionally, being a welcoming city with advanced level accreditation, a proud refugee welcome zone and the annual National Multicultural Festival, which is the largest community celebration in Australia, highlight the strong and enduring commitment of this government to multiculturalism.

In this budget, we have again supported the continuation of funding for the Humanitarian Discretionary Fund. This year we have dedicated \$150,000 to provide vital financial support to asylum seekers and refugees in our community, who often are not eligible for other support. This includes cost-of-living and housing support, so they are not at risk of falling into further crisis once here in our country. Since commencing in 2020-21, the government has supported more than 350 requests for assistance, filling a critical gap and helping vulnerable people in our community who may otherwise fall

through the cracks and into crisis. The government has also supported the continuation of the Family Settlement Assistance Grants Program and has dedicated \$200,000 to provide further assistance to refugees fleeing global armed conflict, to support families and individuals to secure long-term accommodation and to pay for immediate living costs as they settle into the ACT. This program was established in September 2021 and, to date, we have supported over 160 individuals who now call Canberra home. Both of these funding programs are vital in supporting vulnerable people arriving in the ACT to start to build new, stable and safe lives in Canberra.

This year's budget is also investing in the future of the National Multicultural Festival, by committing \$1.7 million for the 2025 festival to support the delivery and future growth of the festival, including improving accessibility and additional staff and operational resources to implement public safety measures appropriate for an event of this scale and profile.

The Labor government has consistently shown our commitment to support and celebrate the diverse make-up of our community and to assist vulnerable people in their time of need. We will continue to embrace and support the diversity our multicultural community brings to the ACT and we will continue to ensure that Canberra is a proud, inclusive and diverse city where everyone belongs.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (10.56): Community service is one of the most critical functions of our territory government. Despite this, it is also one of the most significant areas of failure for this Labor-Greens government. We have a government in the Canberra which constantly touts its progressive credentials. But, if we look at the statistics, the real outcomes of this government's policy, the virtue signalling and grandstanding become clear.

This Labor-Greens government imprisons Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women at the highest rate in the entire country. In recent years, the ACT's Indigenous incarceration rate has continued to increase. This is a statistic that all of us here should be ashamed of, particularly the government. In the wake of the referendum result last year, Mr Barr claimed: "The ACT has proved once again that we are the most inclusive and progressive jurisdiction in Australia," and that "We are the progressive heart of the nation." I hope Mr Barr was not referring to progress in terms of Indigenous incarceration rates, because our country leader status in locking up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans is a national embarrassment.

But the failures in looking after vulnerable Canberrans do not stop there. The ACT has the highest rate of long-term homelessness in Australia, a rate which has continued to rise. In a city with winters as harsh as Canberra, you would expect this government to take homelessness seriously; yet homelessness is just another issue which has been neglected and exacerbated by the policy failures of this Labor-Greens government.

We have seen record-breaking increases in domestic and family violence this year. Since 2019, there has been a 35 per cent increase in family violence incidents attended by police. According to Domestic Violence Crisis Service CEO Sue Webeck, the scale of domestic and family violence across Canberra is likely much more significant than the numbers reported to police. What exactly has the government committed in this budget for the prevention of domestic and family violence? The answer is bitterly

disappointing: the bare minimum.

When the Safer Families Levy was introduced in 2016, the community expected its revenue to go towards frontline services. Eight years later and the government has finally been dragged, kicking and screaming to commit to sufficiently funding frontline services with this levy. This eventuated only because of the advocacy of community groups like YWCA, who pointed out that the levy was intended for frontline services—and that is certainly the expectation of the community when I speak to people in my electorate. With domestic and family violence getting worse, we need to get serious about adopting a preventative approach.

We know that coercive control is a preceding factor in 99 per cent of intimate partner homicides. We also know that the vast majority of victim-survivors, whether they be women, First Nations or LGBTQA+, want to see coercive control criminalised. Despite this, the effort of this government and their 2024-25 budget in addressing coercive control is woefully insufficient. Thanks to my motion in May, after years of inaction, the budget finally allocated \$375,000 towards an education campaign on coercive control. This is a feeble figure compared to the investments in education made by other jurisdictions who are serious about preventing domestic and family violence.

It is clear that the government are failing time and time again to deliver services and positive outcomes for vulnerable Canberrans. To make matters worse, they are failing to support our vital community sector, which would normally pick up their slack. We have heard from ACTCOSS and other community advocacy groups that 40,000 Canberrans live below the poverty line, including one in 10 children. Despite these dire statistics, only 10 percent of community organisations feel that their funding covers the cost of service delivery.

Groups like Kidsafe, who provide an essential child safety service to our community, have been pushed to “breaking point” by this government’s lack of support. Kidsafe CEO Francis Ventura said that he is “concerned that the importance of child accident prevention is not being viewed as a priority” by the ACT government. This is a running theme, this government’s modus operandi: focusing on the wrong priorities and leaving vulnerable Canberrans behind.

Everyone in our community should see this as a failure. The government, which preach progress, is failing even on the basics. We have seen failure after failure when it comes to looking after our most vulnerable Canberrans. Labor and the Greens are overseeing the worst rate of long-term homelessness in the country, as I said before. Labor and the Greens are responsible for the highest rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration in the country. They have dragged their feet on protecting Canberra women from increasing rates of domestic and family violence and gender-based violence. Labor and the Greens have voted against justice for victim-survivors of coercive control. Labor and the Greens are ignoring critical community services in our city which are debilitated by their cost-of-living crisis.

Labor and the Greens have crafted this budget—and it shows. While Mr Barr and his ministers continue their progressive pantomime, this Labor-Greens government’s track record speaks for itself. This budget is yet another missed opportunity.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Disability and Minister for Health) (11.01): I rise to speak to the significant investments that the government is making in this budget across my portfolios of disability, children, youth and family services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

I was pleased to be able to resume my role of Minister for Disability towards the end of last year and to get to work straight away to ensure that the government continues to deliver for Canberrans with disability. Labor has always prioritised supporting people with disability. As our stakeholders in this space know, it is not just about saying the right thing but about delivering on it. This budget builds on the 2023-24 budget review to deliver for Canberrans with disability and continue to build a more inclusive Canberra.

But do not take my word for it, Madam Speaker. Craig Wallace from Advocacy for Inclusion, who is not known to mince words, said:

This was a good budget for us in terms of the focus on disability in a tight environment.

And Ms Shannon Kolak, CEO of ACT Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability, similarly said she was “happy to see this level of investment, especially around the commitment to foundational supports and actually funding the strategies that we have spent years creating”.

We know that this financial year is going to be a crucial time in progressing disability reform nationally and locally. The release of the Independent Review into the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability late last year represents a watershed moment. This is a once in a generation opportunity to rethink and rebuild disability services and to make real, tangible inroads into the barriers that people with disability face and that prevent them from enjoying the same dignity and quality of life as other Canberrans.

Addressing the recommendations of these reviews and implementing our inclusion strategies across education, health, justice and the overarching ACT Disability Strategy is a key priority for the Barr Labor government. That is why this budget includes almost \$14 million in additional investment in disability measures over the next four years, with a further \$90 million provisioned for the development of foundational supports.

We are investing \$5.5 million over four years to deliver priority actions in the ACT Disability Strategy 2024-2033 and first action plan. This includes supporting Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability; working with the community sector to deliver a peer support program to improve the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people with disability; creating new disability liaison officer roles in Housing ACT and Access Canberra; developing a neurodiversity strategy; and working with the community sector to increase the availability of easy English resources in the ACT.

The budget also includes more than \$2 million over the next two years for a disability

reform task force to implement the recommendations of the disability royal commission and the NDIS review. The task force will play a critical role in driving transformation across government to improve services and supports for Canberrans with disability. We are also investing \$615,000 to establish disability liaison officers in the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Aboriginal Legal Services and Victim Support ACT to support inclusion across the justice system. The release of the Disability Justice Strategy second action plan last week is another milestone.

A further \$1.85 million is being invested to expand the provision of disability advocacy services for parents and families interacting with the child protection system, as part of the Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy 2022-2030. This will fund trusted community organisations to provide professional development for Child and Youth Protection Services, or CYPS, and partner organisations; individual advocacy for parents with disability who are engaged with CYPS; and support for parents with intellectual and cognitive disabilities who are at risk of interaction with the child protection system during pre-pregnancy through to the first 1,000 days of their child's life. This investment will also fund a new assistant disability liaison officer role in the Community Services Directorate, further supporting the collaboration between CYPS and community partners, including peak bodies and advocacy organisations.

As I mentioned earlier, the budget also provisions \$90 million over five years, from 2025-26, for the establishment of foundational supports for all people with disability, including those who do not have access to the NDIS. This reflects National Cabinet's agreement in December 2023 to joint funding for foundational supports which would see the ACT government's investment at least matched by the commonwealth, delivering an additional \$180 million over five years. The government will continue to work closely with the disability community to develop foundational supports that meet the needs of Canberrans.

We know that the rising cost of living is making life harder for many Canberrans and Canberrans with a disability can feel this particularly hard. That is why the budget includes almost \$3.3 million to reduce cost-of-living pressures for people with disability by expanding the Taxi Subsidy Scheme and increasing the life support rebate. The government is also expanding the Disability Duty Concession Scheme, making it easier for people with disability and their families to buy a home that meets their needs by reducing or completely eliminating stamp duty. The investments in this budget reflect the Barr Labor government's commitment to building an inclusive and compassionate community that welcomes, values and respects all people with disability in the ACT.

Ensuring that vulnerable children and young people are safe, supported and connected is a core responsibility of state and territory governments. This government has made significant progress towards a fairer, safer, more restorative child protection and family support system and this budget continues that substantial investment, guided by the Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy. This budget includes \$26 million in new funding for the children, youth and family services portfolio, bringing the total additional investment to more than \$195 million since Next Steps was launched in 2022. We are investing \$10 million, as Miss Nuttall has mentioned, to deliver on our commitment to extend care for young people in the out of home care system up their 21st birthday.

While the ACT has been a leader in the provision of support for care leavers, over recent years the Home Stretch campaign has highlighted the need for all jurisdictions to strengthen their support mechanisms. The government introduced legislative reform to create an entitlement to support for care leavers on an opt-out basis, which passed the Assembly on 26 June. The investment in this budget supports a new model of post-care support, based on the individual needs of care leavers.

We are also investing \$1.75 million to deliver on our commitment to implement an external merits review process for child protection decisions. This investment will support the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, or ACAT, to stand up the external merits review mechanism. Delivering this EMR mechanism was a commitment under Next Steps and will ensure that children and young people, families and carers have access to robust, independent oversight of the child protection decisions that so deeply and intimately affect their lives.

The government is also investing almost \$10 million in this budget to support the ongoing implementation of the Next Steps strategy. This includes increased supports for parents and families with disability that I mentioned earlier and new investment in family group conferencing delivered by First Nations organisations to strengthen self-determination.

Together, these investments represent important steps towards a more inclusive, supportive, restorative and trusted child protection and family support system. These investments will empower children and young people and their families to have a stronger voice in decisions that affect their lives and ensure that children and young people in the ACT can grow up safe, supported and connected to family, community and culture. The minimal or lack of comments that Ms Castley made about child and youth protection in her speech indicate to me that the opposition is supportive of the direction that we are taking.

The Barr Labor government is committed to improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to supporting the self-determination of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The government recognises that community control is an important act of self-determination and that it is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves who are best placed to address the myriad challenges that affect them, their families and their communities.

We also recognise that Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, or ACCOs, are often more trusted to deliver better results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than mainstream services. Growing and supporting ACCOs is a fundamental pillar of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This applies across all human services portfolios, which is why I have already talked about the specific engagement of ACCOs in both the disability and children, youth and family services portfolios.

We know we need to continue to support the community-controlled sector to build capacity and capability. That is why the Barr Labor government is investing in the growth of the ACT's ACCO sector. This budget includes an investment of \$3.86 million over the next four years, drawn from the Healing and Reconciliation Fund, to establish a specific fund to support the growth and sustainability of ACCOs in the ACT. The ACCO Establishment and Expansion Fund will support existing,

emerging and new ACCOs to build their organisational capacity and capability, and to develop and expand services that improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. Work is already underway to develop the guidelines for the fund, in partnership with the community and the ACCO sector. This work is being led by the Aboriginal Services Development Branch in the Community Services Directorate, a new branch established specifically to support service development across the board.

This is a budget that does what Labor governments do best: supporting and empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community. This is a progressive and practical budget that reflects the values and priorities of the Barr Labor government and the community we serve. It is a budget that delivers more and better supports to reduce barriers for people with disability in the ACT, that delivers a more therapeutic and restorative child protection and family support system and that delivers more funding to strengthen the ACT's vital Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. It is a budget that builds on the work we have doing throughout this term and, indeed, the work I have been doing in these portfolios since 2016.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the public servants across CSD who deliver these critical services and initiatives. Every year I acknowledge our child and youth protection workers, who have some of the hardest jobs in government. This week our budget debate falls in Child Protection Week, so it is an even better time to acknowledge this critical work—and the work of not just our public servants but all of our community partners who support child safety and wellbeing.

We have been commissioning a new service system and have some exciting opportunities coming out of that procurement. But for the last few years our primary partner in out of home care service delivery has been ACTTogether. I want to acknowledge their commitment to children, young people, families and carers. Our early intervention partner, Uniting Children and Families, has been quietly working away to ensure that children can stay safely with their families or be restored to parents with new parenting skills. Many of these parents have themselves experienced intergenerational trauma and disadvantage. I am particularly pleased that we now have an ACCO that is a registered care and protection organisation, a critical step to enabling the transition of services to community control.

In the context of raising the age of criminal responsibility, we are implementing a new service system to ensure that we can intervene earlier when children and young people are engaging in harmful behaviour. The Therapeutic Support Panel is up and running, along with the Safer Youth Response Program, the Safe and Connected Youth and Ruby's House. This change in the way we support at-risk children, young people and families is something of which I am immensely proud.

More broadly, our community sector across child, youth and family services, disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers delivers vital services. I thank them all for the enormous contribution they make to our community. I want to thank all of the public servants that I work with across the Community Services Directorate. The Office for Disability is small but mighty. It engages not only locally but in national policy conversations and definitely, in those conversations, punches above its weight.

I thank everyone across the children, youth and families division, not just those who work in child and youth protection services and youth justice but those working behind the scenes to deliver significant policy reform and to ensure that there are robust outcomes, frameworks and mechanisms so that we know exactly what we are delivering for our community. We are continuing to strive for better outcomes and better services. That is absolutely key.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, again, is another small team that is closely connected with the ACT community and engages nationally as well, through the Partnership Working Group under the Joint Council on Closing the Gap and in those important conversations about complex matters like native title. To all of those teams—I am not going to name anyone individually because the whip is probably already tearing her hair out about how long I have spoken for—and to all of those public servants across CSD: thank you so much for your work.

I realise that I neglected, in the health chapter, to thank all of the public servants across the ACT Health Directorate and CHS. There are thousands of them, so I generally thank the public servants I have worked with over this whole term of government, but particularly in delivering this budget, which delivers for the ACT community. I commend the budget to the Assembly.

This is the turn - 04Sep24-10.docx

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) (11.16): I speak to this cause today as Minister for Community Services, Seniors and Veterans. We are in a cost-of-living crisis. We are seeing unprecedented levels of demand for emergency material and financial aid and food relief, and most of that support is provided by community organisations such as UnitingCare Kippax, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Salvation Army, and food pantries run by organisations such as YWCA Canberra, Woden Community Service, St John's Care, Community Services #1, Holy Cross Tuckerbox, Communities at Work, NationsHeart Food Hut, and many others.

UnitingCare Kippax recently distributed in one day the number of emergency material and financial aid vouchers that they would usually distribute over an entire week, and they are seeing an increase in demand for financial assistance to pay for medical expenses. The Salvation Army has seen a 20.68 per cent increase in people needing financial assistance in six months, from January to June 2024. YWCA Canberra have seen a 51 per cent increase in the number of people seeking support at their food hub. Woden Community Service has seen a 31 per cent increase in the number of people seeking support at their Community Hub, located in Westfield Woden. In June, St John's Care saw an extra 100 families more than they had seen in May.

That is why this budget includes \$913,000 in funding for emergency material and financial aid and food relief support. This includes \$490,000 to deliver increased emergency material and financial aid and \$423,000 to deliver increased food relief support to Canberrans. Within the \$423,000 for food relief support, there is additional funding for FoodBank to ensure they are able to meet the costs of freight for food

supplies to Canberra, and additional food rescue capacity for OzHarvest. Those freight costs fluctuated by up to 150 per cent in the last financial year.

The investments in food relief in this budget build on commitments earlier in the term to support the Food Relief Network, led by Volunteering ACT, bringing together knowledge and ideas across our community food pantries. The network has developed a database to enable evidence based decision-making. Network members meet monthly to share knowledge and develop resources and best practice approaches. This is what community-led and government supported rebuilding of communities looks like. The community leads the way in showing up for each other and the government provides resources to support the rebuilding of our community—one that is compassionate and connected, where we leave nobody behind.

This government also remains committed to work funded in last year's forward estimates for 2024-25 to make Canberra a more inclusive, accessible, connected and compassionate community for veterans, older Canberrans and carers. Work continues on developing a veterans wellbeing framework. The framework will embed guidance across the whole of the ACT government to meet the needs of veterans and their families, recognising that the ACT has not only the highest concentration of veterans of any of our capital cities but also the most diversity in veterans' needs, experiences and life stages. We have seen interest from the community in ensuring that the needs of veterans are understood and met through strong attendance from community organisations, veterans and their families in the two veterans expo events held over the past two years, with thanks to the Belconnen and Gungahlin RSLs and COTA ACT for leading and organising these two expos.

Over the past three years, I have advocated for a wellbeing centre and community space for veterans. While I still believe it would be great to have a veterans wellbeing centre in the ACT, and the federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories both clearly understand that the ACT government wants a veterans wellbeing centre, the federal government is building one in Queanbeyan and it may be able to provide spaces and services for veterans and their families on both sides of the Canberra-Queanbeyan border.

The Office for Seniors and Veterans has also continued advocating and coordinating support across government for improved health services for veterans, including continuing the network of veteran liaison officers across our three public hospitals in the ACT. Veteran Employment Transition Support, including the ACT government becoming a platinum pledge partner with Soldier On, welcomes defence family members in an ACT public service veterans peer networking program, which continues the executive champions network for veterans and continues their involvement in ADF transition seminars.

We also supported our local community of veterans and their families throughout the royal commission into defence and veteran suicide. I expect future ACT government budgets will include actions particularly for transition support and mental health services in response to the recommendations of that royal commission. The royal commission report is due to be handed down on 9 September to Governor-General Sam Mostyn, who is herself the daughter of the Vietnam veteran.

We have also continued the funded implementation of the Carers Strategy and delivery of local carer recognition activities, with thanks to Carers ACT. This budget includes commitments made across the forward estimates in previous budgets: \$25,000 in 2024-25 for the governance of the Carers Strategy, and \$175,000 for the delivery of local carer recognition activities.

Progress continues to develop the Seniors Arts Festival that is funded through the 2024 budget. The Seniors Arts Festival, based on Scotland's Luminare program, will showcase the creative talents of our older Canberrans and will provide opportunities to enjoy arts and culture across the ACT.

Following the success of the first dementia-friendly film screening event, the work will continue to deliver a program of dementia-friendly events, led by the University of New South Wales, at the National Film and Sound Archive over 2024-25. This program is being delivered with thanks to Carers ACT and Dementia Australia as key partners.

We will continue to deliver on Age-Friendly City commitments with the development of the next Age-Friendly City Plan 2025-2035 being underway, and a listening report on the consultations that were completed on 28 June 2024 is now available on the YourSay website.

We are always looking for opportunities to support community-led work for a more connected and compassionate Canberra, where we celebrate getting older, understand and acknowledge the diversity of people's life experiences and skills, and provide the supports needed for everyone to live healthy and meaningful lives.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their Families, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and the many community organisations and groups who have so generously given their time to engage with my office and with the Community Services Directorate so that this government can better understand the needs of veterans and their families and seniors across the whole community sector in order to provide the critically needed support for people to live a good life in our beautiful city. This budget provides the resources to support some very important work over the next year, and I hope that there will be more opportunities to resource programs like these in future budgets.

This is the turn - 04Sep24-11.docx

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.23): The community has been waiting for several years now for funding for various disability strategies and the specifics as to how it was to be spent. I was also interested to see the budget response to the joint submission by Advocacy for Inclusion, Women with Disabilities, the Mental Health Community Coalition, Down Syndrome ACT and intellectual disability organisations, who submitted a list of shared priorities for the budget. The response from these disability persons organisations has been muted. Gaps were very quickly identified in the funding provisions. A concern has been expressed about the lack of investment in the community for people with an intellectual disability. Whilst it was acknowledged that there was some investment in youth mental health, these services are not suitable for people with complex intellectual disabilities. There are also significant gaps to grow

accessibility and affordability housing, help with rental processes as well as in addressing transport disadvantages outside of the taxi scheme. Then there are gaps in providing intensive care and management support.

There have been questions raised about where the money for the strategies is going. Is it going to the implementation of these strategies or is it just going on the activities of the directorate? For example, is the funding for the health strategy going to internal work and pilot projects for the Disability Reform Taskforce, which is how it appears, rather than upgrades to care in the Canberra Hospital and training in the social model of medical staff? I note that the task force was completely offset. Offset from what funding? It is very unclear. I observed that there is a lack of visibility of funding provisions, including, for example, the additional potential funding for foundational supports. This money, if transpires, has been laid aside with some kind of provisional funding pool with the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directory and will not be made available until the 2025-26 financial year. But it raises the question: why not make that part of the Budget Outlook? Is there a reason why this was not published through the normal budget processes? Why wait until next year? That money is desperately needed now.

Finally, there was a request from the disability persons organisations, in their joint submission, for further funding for their organisations. As Craig Wallace mentioned in the community day estimate hearings, disability is now an incredibly busy and complicated reform area, with multiple reforms underway at once which require their engagement. There is a really high need for advocacy in Canberra, with some organisations reporting extensive waiting lists. They are turning people away. But that money was also not forthcoming, and they will struggle with doing the best that they can on the limited budget that they receive.

When viewed as a whole, I understand the muted response from the disability community. There is lots of promise but, when you dig down to it, there is not much substance to this year's budget for people who are living with disabilities and support for those disability persons organisations in the community that are there to provide support for people living with disabilities.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.9—Major Projects Canberra.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.27): If feasibility studies were the measure of success for Major Projects, then Mr Barr would probably rival the Australian Olympic team with a swag of gold medals to add to his tally. Unfortunately for Mr Barr, the complete and utter lack of actual delivery probably makes his performance as the responsible minister for Major Projects more like that of Raygun: the performance looks busy, but really delivers zero, zero, zero.

Of course, after 15 years, and announcing by way of an answer to a question on notice, when Mr Barr went on the record with an eighth feasibility study that puts a city stadium at a whopping \$3 billion, it seems he is keeping to his tried and tested way of managing major projects in Canberra: ask Major Projects Canberra to assess options and then do a media release; scope all options of the project and then do a media release;

commission a feasibility study; and, of course, release flashy pictures of design in a media release; go to election day; after election day, complete the costings and either do not tell anyone or scrap the project completely and tell Canberrans it was never feasible. This is straight from the Andrew Barr playbook on how to promise everything and deliver nothing.

We have seen him do this with the Canberra Hospital expansion, a new stadium—I think most Canberrans have now lost count of how many times—and a new convention centre. For more than a decade, Canberra has been stuck in neutral with only two major infrastructure projects actually completed: the Canberra Hospital expansion—and how many years was that project delayed?—and stage 1 of light rail. Of course, Mr Barr cut the hospital expansion in favour of the construction of light rail stage 1. This decision—let’s call it for what it is—a political decision to appease the Greens, has contributed to Canberrans waiting for thousands of days for an appointment for conditions that are causing pain and impairment with a major impact on their quality and length of life. Rather than deliver on a major health infrastructure project that was promised and promised again to help Canberrans who are stuck on hospital wait lists, he decided to put politics above sick Canberrans.

Now we approach another election, and again we see Major Projects Canberra under Mr Barr’s help churning out feasibility studies, designs, tenders for early contract work and all of the usual pre-election flurry of activity, and yet this budget contains no actual funding for construction of any of these projects. This Labor-Greens government is telling Canberrans that it will build a new stadium, a new convention centre, a new theatre, a new pavilion, a new northside hospital and light rail stage 2B. This Labor-Greens government refuses time and time again to tell Canberrans how much some of these projects will cost or when construction will actually begin. This Labor-Greens government knows what the indicative costs are as well as the timelines. Mr Barr and Mr Rattenbury sit on the government’s Expenditure Review Committee and would be regularly briefed on all of these projects, their costs and timelines. And we have heard Mr Rattenbury openly admit that the reason he is not being upfront with the cost of light rail stage 2B is because—shock, horror—the opposition might actually hold him to it. Fancy that: a minister who is responsible for the use of billions of taxpayer dollars being asked to be transparent because he might actually be held accountable. A novel idea, really.

Statements like this from the leader of the Greens highlight the contempt and arrogance this government has for Canberrans and their hard-earned taxpayer dollars after more than a decade in power. They not only believe that they can get away with not revealing any of the costs for these projects, but they also believe that that is an acceptable response. With Labor and the Greens so blatant with their intentions to keep the costs for these projects under wraps, you have to wonder what they are hiding. Make no mistake: the last time this Labor-Greens government was building light rail, it cut health and housing projects. The pattern of Labor and the Greens is clear: promise, promise, promise and fail to deliver, fail to deliver and fail to deliver.

With a pipeline of infrastructure projects that this government has promised and not delivered, there are only two realities that will eventuate: everything Labor and the Greens promise in the lead-up to this election will again prove to be an empty promise and nothing more than a blatant grab for votes from a desperate government that knows

Canberrans are starting to see through the hollow, politically motivated election commitments that will never see the light of day; or there will be cuts to essential government services like health and housing, because they have done it before.

The Canberra Liberals understand that the ACT is being left behind compared to other jurisdictions because of this government's failure to actually build major infrastructure projects. We know that the ACT is the only jurisdiction to receive a fall in business investment at negative—negative—nine and a half per cent, where every other state and territory received a boost compared to the previous year. By investing in major infrastructure projects that will deliver the most benefit to our city, we can bring back business investment to Canberra with new hotels, apartments, bars, restaurants and small businesses creating thousands of jobs and revitalising areas of Canberra that have been neglected for too long. We can increase the number of domestic and international visitors to the ACT as well as retain Canberrans who end up travelling to Sydney or Melbourne because the ACT is overlooked by their favourite band and sporting teams. I mean, Canberra was the only capital in the city that did not even bid to host a Women's World Cup game. What an international embarrassment! We can ensure that the ACT has appropriate health, housing, police, transport and education facilities to meet the needs of our growing population.

The benefits are well known and extensive, yet this government has failed to build these projects for more than two decades. These budget papers are more of the same: all spin and no plan. The only people the government have fooled with their promises throughout the term is themselves. Canberrans will not be fooled, and no-one believes that they will actually deliver on these projects. Labor have had more than two decades in government and, if they wanted to build these projects, they would have done it by now. We owe it to our community, our children, our university students, our public servants and our businesspeople to demand more from our government and to provide infrastructure that will benefit Canberra for generations to come. It is only a Canberra Liberals government that will provide a fresh opportunity and deliver a bright future for our city that Canberra needs and deserves.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (11.34): I would like to speak for the Greens about transport and about light rail. We are strong supporters of light rail. It is an excellent service. Canberrans really, really love using it. It is a fantastic form of public transport, and it is a genuinely useful way to reduce our emissions. It runs on 100 per cent renewables. It is so good people would rather catch it than drive their cars, which is exactly what we need in Canberra. But we are disappointed about the pace of the rollout of stage 2. In 2019, Labor told us that it would be complete by 2025. Last year, we were told it would be complete by the end of this decade. Now, when the Greens say, "Let's finish it by the end of the decade," we are told that we are living in a fantasy.

Stage 1 was promised in 2012 and it was operational in 2019. That was a seven-year rollout. I understand that that was a simpler stage, but it was the first time we had done that. We had to build the light rail industry in the ACT from scratch. We had to train every single employee in a brand new industry. We had to build Major Projects Canberra to do this, and we had really, really limited commonwealth support for this project, and yet we managed to do it. Stage 2 was promised in 2016, and currently we are told that it will be complete in 2033. It is going to take 17 years from government commitment to completion, despite the fact that we know how to do light rail, we have

got a whole team trained up to do this work, and we have 50 per cent federal funding.

We are really concerned at the pace of this rollout. If this is offered up as a solution to climate change, it is not acceptable for it to be rolling out so slowly, and it is certainly disappointing when we have a whole skilled-up team. Perhaps they just need some more resources to do this work more quickly. We know that it can be done faster. We have spoken to people here in the ACT. We have spoken to interstate light rail projects in many teams where we are seeing light rail is rolling out much, much more quickly, and we feel that it is actually a lack of will that is holding this project back.

We have detailed a few ways that we think this project could be done more quickly. We think, for instance, that the planning and the procurement could certainly be done more quickly. We think there is a clear choice for Canberrans at the moment. We know that the Canberra Liberals will not continue with light rail. We know that Labor is doing it really, really slowly. The Greens are offering a different solution. We are very committed to rolling out light rail as quickly as possible. We have a lot of ideas about how that can be done more quickly, more in line with the way other states are doing it right now and the way we have done it in the past here. We also want to massively improve paths and buses. We need all of these things for Canberrans, and we need them as soon as we can have them.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.37): My remarks in this space will be limited to the expenditure on the tram and the complete debacle that is this project to Woden. In part, it is difficult to discuss that matter because, for yet another year, there is very little evidence of stage 2B of the tram in the budget, either the upcoming year or the forward estimates.

I must start my remarks about this project by referring—and I am kind of surprised that Ms Clay did not refer to it in her speech—to the Climate Council’s recently released report into Australia’s clean energy momentum, which calls out the ACT as having the worst record in the nation as far as the percentage of journeys that are on public transport or shared transport. In this progressive jurisdiction where, according to Ms Clay, every single decision that we make must be seen through a prism of the climate emergency, and the only government where the Greens actually have a hand on the steering wheel, in this Climate Council report, we have run last. We have the worst record in the nation as far as the percentage of journeys that are on public transport or shared transport.

You have to consider these numbers against a number of facts. One of them is that, in 2016, this government promised Canberra that they were going to run a public transport revolution; they were going to change the whole landscape. They promised Canberra that if we signed up to, at that stage, the most expensive project in the history of self-government, if we signed up to the building of the tram, we would become a public transport mecca. We are last. We are last on the list. They promised that we would get so many Canberrans out of their cars and onto public transport. Instead, what we find is that we have the lowest percentage of public or shared transport journeys in the whole of the country, at just three per cent. I think it is 13 per cent in New South Wales. Everything that Labor and the Greens promised would happen if they built the tram has not been delivered. It has been a complete failure. We have not moved the dial at all.

We the Canberra Liberals have prosecuted a line across two terms, suggesting that this government's failure to maintain the bus fleet and its constant pruning of the bus network has resulted in exasperated outer suburban residents abandoning public transport and getting back into their cars. And the proof is in the pudding when you go through this report. The Climate Council have blasted the ACT as having the lowest percentage of journeys in the country on either public or shared transport, pretty much because those in the outer suburbs cannot access services. You have spent all the money. You have shifted money from health. You have sold ageing public housing complexes. It has been proven in this place that you have shifted all of that money to the tram. Health, education, policing and basic suburban services have suffered, and you have not even moved the dial.

The other thing to remember is that we are a city state. We should be leading the nation—and Ms Clay would agree with me on this—on this metric. All of the other jurisdictions have large swathes of rural land and far-flung towns. Every other jurisdiction has so many destinations that are impossible to get to by public transport. Despite that, and despite all of the focus on this absurdly expensive tram project, you have not moved the dial. And we are going to tip in another \$4,000 million to turn an 18-minute bus ride into a 32-minute tram journey. That makes sense, doesn't it?

This year's budget contains the first reference to stage 2B of the tram, a simple budget line titled "Better Transport Infrastructure: Building light rail to Woden". But, of course, there is no project value and there is no estimated completion date. Unlike, for argument's sake, the proposed city stadium, we do not have any of that detail.

This is the turn - 04Sep24-13.docx

The 2025 completion date that the Chief Minister talked about a little over four years ago is now obviously impossible. I am sure that behind closed doors he regrets saying it, but he did say it. He is on the record in the lead-up to the election in 2020. The fact is that we are now three months away from 2025 and this government cannot even deliver light rail to Commonwealth Park before 2028. Even the government has conceded that it will not get to Woden until December 2033, which I think is Steel-speak for 2037. I believe that is the translation. There is an app for your phone; just go to "Steel-speak"! In "Steel-speak", if you say "December 2033," the app on your phone will say, "That's May 2037." That is how it works.

As far as the cost goes, my office costed this project—stage 2 in its entirety—at a little over \$3 billion earlier in the term. Our cost estimates for stage 2A have already been blown out of the water, and we can only assume that the total cost of stage 2 will now be over \$4 billion.

Mr Steel continually suggests that the government has been transparent in this space. He says, "We've been transparent," and they just have not been. At the drop of a hat last week, the government released detailed costings of every single aspect of a potential stadium in the city, but they somehow cannot give any indication about their signature project to Woden.

While we are talking about cost blowouts, let's look at stage 2A of the tram. In December last year, a joint funding agreement was signed between the Commonwealth and ACT governments with the value of \$577 million. However, the 2024-25 MPC

budget reveals the total cost has risen to \$780 million, which is an increase of 35 per cent in just seven months. Of course, that does not include Raising London Circuit, does not include the upgrades to the depot, does not include the procurement of additional rolling stock, and does not include the retrofitting of the existing stock to enable wire-free travel through the NCA sections. And none of that would need to be done if we were not going to Commonwealth Park.

In that same press conference, Minister Steel was happy to say that the first passengers would arrive on a tram to Commonwealth Park in January 2028, but again, if you spoke that into the “Steel-speak” app, you would find that January 2028 does not mean that at all; it would mean it has blown out to July. It has changed—everything moves—and, when you search back through the dates to find out which ones actually apply, in the end none of them do. Even Raising London Circuit, a project that the government is at pains to remind us is not at all related to the tram, is constantly delayed. It was meant to be completed in December this year at a cost of \$110 million. It is now delayed until June next year, and the cost has dramatically increased to \$129 million, with an explanation in hearings regarding asbestos findings. It seems the traffic chaos that the government have inflicted on Canberrans will continue, and that is only the beginning.

Simply put, the government has failed at every single metric it sets itself relating to these major projects. The completion dates, the total cost of the tram to Woden, Raising London Circuit, and the Woden interchange are just a small part of the orchestrated litany of—I cannot say that word, so I will not—that this government continues to tell Canberrans. Mr Rattenbury knows what I was going to say!

On 19 October, Canberrans can show this tired, broken and arrogant Labor-Greens government the door.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Planning, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for Transport and Special Minister of State) (11.46): I am very pleased to speak in favour of the appropriation for Major Projects Canberra in my capacity as Minister for Transport, Minister for Skills and Training, and Special Minister of State. Through this budget, we are continuing to deliver our commitment to build a better public transport system.

Work is already underway on Raising London Circuit. Despite the criticisms of the opposition that we are not getting on with building projects, there are many in the major projects portfolio that are under construction. Raising London Circuit is one of those. Of course, there is the CIT, which is coming along very strongly, and those across other areas of MPC as well, including the completion of the new Canberra hospital. We are delivering on our commitments, as we said we would at the last election.

Stage 2A will be supported by the Raising London Circuit project. We are continuing to work through the planning and design of the continuation of light rail to Woden, which also remains a key priority of our government. The 2024-25 budget includes continued funding to ensure Major Projects Canberra can deliver Light Rail Stage 2A in parallel with progressing the commonwealth and territory environmental planning approvals for Light Rail Stage 2B. These are necessary approvals to bring light rail to Woden.

Ms Clay has been briefed considerably on what is required to bring Light Rail Stage 2B to Woden. Those approvals are a critical part of what is required, and of course many of those approvals are out of the ACT government's hands. They require decision-making of the commonwealth, and that is one of the key challenges in being able to actually deliver the project, and it is one of the reasons it is a fantasy to suggest that we can, like we did with stage 1, deliver this project in a way that avoids those necessary approvals. Different approvals are required for this project compared to other stages of the line.

We are committed to getting on with it, working milestone by milestone through those approvals processes. To suggest anything otherwise, without providing a detailed plan about how you could avoid going through those approvals processes in order to so-called fast-track the project, is a fantasy. Quite frankly, the Greens should know better. They are part of the government. They understand the challenges of stage 2B of the project, and they have not provided any credible pathway that would fast-track the project.

The budget also includes continued funding for the procurement of new light rail vehicles and retrofitting of the existing fleet, expansion of the existing depot, delivery of the Light Rail Stage 2A main works contract, and ongoing design and technical studies for Light Rail Stage 2B. The government is investing now to deliver an integrated public transport network for our growing city, and, when combined with rapid and local bus services and integrated active travel routes, our public transport system will better connect Canberra to meet our city's future transport needs.

Contrary to what Mr Parton was saying, the whole reason we are investing in light rail as a future focus is to deliver a better public transport system for Canberra, because we know that buses have not increased patronage on our public transport system, despite operating for decades. We need mass transit for our city, and we know that mass transit, based on Light Rail Stage 1, increases patronage on public transport. Around 43 per cent of people who were surveyed using our light rail service on stage 1 have never used a bus in the past. So this attracts people to public transport, and of course it provides other benefits for our city that we will consider in a business case for stage 2B of the project next term.

We will continue to invest in public transport. Our system has some very good benefits. Most people in any city in Australia live within 400 metres of a public transport stop. But there are things that we can do to improve the transport system, and mass transit is a key thing that we need to do to be able to deliver that.

What we have seen during this election campaign is that the Liberals have put forward their alternative transport plan, and then they admitted that it would not work. They admitted that the so-called alternative to light rail—a busway on Commonwealth Avenue—actually could not be delivered, not only because it would not be approved by the NCA but also because it would take lanes off the road and cause traffic chaos on the south side of our city. So the Liberals actually have no plan; they have no alternative. In the lead-up to the election, they have admitted their transport plan will not work, and they have just left it there. They have not decided to amend the plan; they just basically said it would not work.

The only credible plan on the table is the Labor government's plan to deliver light rail to Woden and deliver a genuine mass transit system for the city—one that would add capacity to Commonwealth Bridge, which is a key bottleneck in moving north to south and vice versa. We know that mass transit light rail, through the delivery of an inset bridge over Commonwealth Avenue, between the two existing spans of the bridge, will add a capacity of up to 2,500 movements per hour. This is going to add significant capacity to the city in a way that buses simply could not deliver. In fact, it would choke the city if lanes were removed on Commonwealth Avenue and particularly around Capital Circle. Imagine what taking traffic lanes down to one on Capital Circle would do to the city, with cars banked up and having to move onto Kings Avenue Bridge to escape the traffic chaos on Commonwealth Avenue to get to the other side of the lake. It is simply not a credible plan for Canberra, and that is why Mr Parton has admitted that it simply will not work.

We have a credible transport plan and we will continue to deliver it. The continued funding in this budget will help to make sure that we progress our plans for stage 2A, which is getting underway, and stage 2B, which is in the planning and design stage. The necessary component of every infrastructure project is to get on with planning and design, and that is exactly what we are doing.

In terms of skills, I am very pleased to inform the Assembly that the CIT Woden project is making significant progress. Earlier this year, the project topped out, reaching its maximum height. Those who have visited the Woden town centre recently can see the demonstrable progress that the building has made, with the roof and glazed timber facade being installed, and work will commence shortly on the internal fit-out, landscaping and art. Major Projects Canberra, alongside the CIT, are working closely with campus staff to prepare them for the transition to the new campus which will provide state-of-the-art facilities for students and teachers.

The entire CIT Woden project has delivered 450 jobs for Canberrans, and our commitment to support apprentices on government job sites has provided over 5,000 training hours for students, apprentices and trainees. We are looking forward to the CIT Woden campus opening. It is on track for semester 2 in 2025 to welcome up to 6,500 students each year. They will get skills training in critical skills areas like IT, cyber security, business and hospitality.

In addition to this investment in the Woden town centre, I am very pleased that this budget also delivers on Labor's commitment to build the new Woden Community Centre. The new centre will be located on Callum Street, integrated with the new CIT campus and public transport interchange. This community centre will be the new front-of-house and centralised office for Woden Community Service. That is a vital not-for-profit organisation in my electorate that provides support for children, families and vulnerable people in the Woden Valley but also the surrounding region.

Community services hubs enable locals to access resources and services in a single location by clustering community facilities and integrating services. This is going to mean co-location of these services, boosting productivity and eliminating service gaps. It is another part of supporting the redevelopment and the transformation of the Woden town centre.

The four-storey facility will not only support Woden Community Service but also provide much-needed accessible spaces for the community in the Woden town centre, like bookable meeting rooms, a new multi-purpose hall and workshop spaces. Planning and development for the work of the centre is now underway. As this work progresses, community and stakeholder consultation will contribute to the design process and ensure the facility meets the needs of users and, of course, the Woden Community Service, which will be the anchor tenant for the community centre. Consultation will ensure that the facility blends seamlessly within the town centre, the surrounding new buildings of the CIT campus and the public transport interchange.

So we are getting on with the delivery of major infrastructure projects. We are a government that invests significantly in infrastructure, whether it is health infrastructure, school infrastructure or education and training infrastructure, as well as building the transport infrastructure that our city needs. What is arrogant is criticising the government for building infrastructure and, at the same time, saying to the community that you would cut major infrastructure projects. That is what the opposition are offering at this election: cuts to transport infrastructure on the south side that is critical for our growing city and an alternative plan that they admit will not even work. What is arrogant is criticising the timelines of infrastructure projects when we are getting on with delivering those projects for the community. We are delighted that CIT Woden will be opening next year and is on track.

The Canberra Liberals never committed to that project, and it is quite clear that they would take the approach of cutting infrastructure should they be elected. We know what Liberal governments do when they get into power. They cut TAFE, and that is exactly what they would do if they were elected. They would cut out the Canberra Institute of Technology, which delivers vital services for students.

What is arrogant is not committing to deliver projects like the Woden Community Centre, which is vital for our community. Woden has not had a proper community centre in the past. Our government is delivering on that. They are the sorts of projects that would also be at risk if a Liberal government ever got elected in the ACT. I look forward to having that conversation with the community in the lead-up to 19 October, because we are getting on with delivering the infrastructure projects that will make a difference for this city.

I commend the appropriation to the Assembly.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Parks and Land Management, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (11.58): I rise briefly in my role as Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction to talk for a few minutes about the program we are undertaking in terms of potentially combustible cladding. The safety of our community is of the utmost importance, and the government continues to work to reduce the risk of potentially combustible cladding on residential apartment buildings across the ACT.

This budget continues to provide support to private apartment owners, to provide concessional loans to owners corporations of moderate or high-risk buildings. This follows the first phase of the scheme that ran for one year between July 2021 and July

2022 and offered a rebate to owners corporations towards the cost of their testing and assessment for the cladding on their buildings to identify combustible cladding and to assess the risk of this cladding if combustible.

A new testing and assessment supplementary scheme was launched in May 2024 with applications due to close in March 2025. The supplementary scheme provides a rebate of 50 per cent of the costs of testing and assessment, up to a total grant of \$2,500. The supplementary scheme was needed to assist owners corporations that did not participate in the first testing of the assessment scheme but were seeking government assistance to confirm whether or not they had combustible cladding. MPC is working with owners and strata managers of all buildings identified that may have combustible cladding and have not been tested.

The concessional loan scheme continues and offers a low interest rate loan to assist owners corporation with the cost of remediations. Owners corporations who undertake testing and assessment and receive a moderate and high-risk rating are able to apply for the concessional loan until 27 February 2026. The concessional loan scheme is estimated to have helped over 6,100 Canberrans with the cost of remediating combustible cladding on their buildings, with commitments of \$72.5 million as of 20 August 2024. I encourage the owners of an apartment scheme that may have combustible cladding to participate in the scheme. The government is happy to be able to support this program to improve community safety.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (12.01): Just very briefly on this line for Major Projects Canberra, I want to highlight a lesser-known role that Major Projects are playing, and that is their delivery of the Electrification of Gas Assets Program. As members will know, the government is investing in an all-electric zero emissions future for Canberra. MPC is leading a significant project which will deliver gas asset replacement works and coordination of associated electricity network upgrades which are required for the electrification of over 1,000 gas assets in facilities owned and operated by the government.

The 2024-25 budget provides ongoing funding for this program over the next three years to continue the replacement of gas assets with new, more efficient electric technology in government-owned buildings, including capital funding for thermal comfort through centralised cooling at nominated public schools. Work this year will include initial site investigations of facilities and the removal of ageing and inefficient assets powered by natural gas, and it will see them replaced with energy efficient electrical alternatives at a range of government facilities.

This is a really important program because it is not only electrifying government assets across the city, which reduces government's greenhouse emissions by the replacement of the gas services; in many circumstances it is also really improving the provision of heating and cooling, in particular, in some of those ageing government assets. It is also driving industry development, job creation and expertise in the city. This capability will flow on to other sectors of the community. By the government getting on the front foot, driving this work and having this program, we are bringing the technology and the skills to this city to enable an expansion of the electrification program, which no doubt will benefit the non-government sector as well. Private industry and various others across

the city will now be able to access technology and capability to help move us further on the electrification journey.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.10—Superannuation Provision Account.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (12.04): Here in the twilight of the term I feel like it is worth reflecting on why the Greens, particularly Ms Clay and myself, keep talking about ethical investment. We keep talking about this because the standard you walk past is the standard you accept, and governments have a lot of capacity to determine what we should and should not accept. Governments are responsible for regulating and covering the floors in our economic system. But not only that: when we choose to intervene or not intervene in particular aspects of the market, we set an example for others in what we think is acceptable behaviour in the market system.

People pay attention. Banks pay attention. Investment funds pay attention as do universities. They create their own policies as well and will frequently look to the government as something to mimic, knowing that the government will model the behaviour consistent with how it wants to see the market function. Government behaviour signals how a government intends to regulate the market into the future. If primary sector organisations mimic the government's own investment behaviours, they should be fine—right? But not only that: governments are always leaders—always. It therefore follows that if we see a particular market behaviour as problematic, then the first thing that needs to change is government's own behaviour within that market.

There are four pillars which are the central objectives of the Greens, the guiding principles that underpin absolutely everything that we strive for: peace and non-violence, social justice, grass roots participatory democracy and ecological sustainability. Activities which are at odds with these fundamental principles are ones which we do not and cannot walk past and accept.

Ms Clay and I have done quite a bit on ethical investment over the last few years, each with our own fields of focus. What has become increasingly clear is that the ACT government is trying to be as hands-off as it can get away with in terms of ethical investment. We saw it in how strongly they pushed back on attempts to ban fossil fuel advertising at our sports grounds. The government's response to my divestment motion around Palestinian apartheid absolutely reeks of structural hesitancy to lead and a desire to not threaten the rivers of gold that flow from investments that many see as unethical. It shows a clear and simple means by which the ACT government could elevate its standard by elevating our screening profile from red to at least orange coded evaluations. But it is clear that the government does not wish to do so. There are so many red flags, so much indifference and so much of a struggle to convince the government that it has a responsibility to lead by example.

If people need proof of how influential government leadership is I would point out that the ANU's ethical guidelines review, where they decided to mimic the government's policy to exclude so-called controversial weapons and thereby sidestep the point of what student protestors at the pro-Palestine encampment were calling for. To quote Ms Aggi Court, a member of the ACT Labor Party, in a motion passed by the annual

territory conference: “The current exclusion on limited controversial weapons is based on a flawed and inherently unreasonable assumption that investment in non-controversial weapons is acceptable and that such weapons will be used ethically.”

Of course, the Greens would take one step further and point out that, by their very design, the overwhelming majority of military weapons are designed to be used violently and therefore cannot be ethical. Regardless, if we put aside the details and questions on orders of magnitude, it is clear that the Greens and the Labor Party membership are on a unity ticket in at least one regard: the ACT government has to do a lot better on ethical investment.

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) (12.08): I was not going to speak but I feel the need to call out the hypocrisy in Mr Braddock’s comments just now, especially as he called on the government to lead by example. This seems to be a matter of “do as I say, not as I do”, given he has conveniently forgotten what was publicised in the media: that following the motion brought by him in this place, it was revealed that not one but two Greens members, including the minister, had shares in companies linked to Israel. Indeed, I believe that one of those companies was linked to something like drones and the IDF.

In that case, Ms Clay’s case, I believe I have heard her say before that she regularly trades in shares and believes that she is the only one in this place who engages with the share market. If that is true, and even she did not know—I assume or maybe she did—the provenance of these shares or what she was investing in, what does that say about everything Mr Braddock has said—to lead by example? Well, preference reference that. I do acknowledge that once it was brought to their attention, I believe, by the media, there was an apology and a divestment. But a divestment does not mean that there was not profit made of it; it just means that those shares were no longer held. So what happened once those shares were divested? Again, to call on the government to lead in this place without acknowledging what had happened since that motion, to conveniently ignore it, just smacks of hypocrisy, and I could not let it stand.

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 12.11 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, the Auditor-General’s report into the Public Trustee and Guardian’s business transformation program reveals that there is no record that the PTG sought legal advice about using funds drawn from the Guarantee and Reserve Account when the project began in 2017, until September 2023. The Auditor-General’s report said:

It is questionable whether the PTG's use of funds from the Guarantee and Reserve Account for its ICT renewal activities was legal.

Attorney-General, have you received any advice about the legality of using funds meant for vulnerable individuals for a business ICT transformation project that is no longer in use?

MR RATTENBURY: I am unsure if Ms Lee means subsequent to the Auditor-General's report or previously. I will endeavour to answer the question, both elements of it. As I indicated in question time yesterday, both I and the government are obviously very disappointed to see this Auditor-General's report. I am very concerned at the findings of it. There is important work to be done in response to it. As has been noted, a number of matters are already being addressed, and the government will provide a formal response to the report in due course. In terms of specific legal advice, as I indicated yesterday, I am seeking advice from the agency on what steps might or should be taken now and whether any further referrals are required.

MS LEE: Attorney-General, why has there been such a lack of ministerial oversight and no legal checks on how the PTG is using funds from a trust account? How did you not know?

MR RATTENBURY: I think this is something that does need to be examined, in light of the Auditor-General's findings. As members know, the PTG operates with a degree of independence. For me, this report invites an examination of those arrangements. It is concerning and it is something that the government will need to consider as part of its formal response.

MR CAIN: Attorney-General, at what point does persistent, unlawful conduct of an official in a minister's portfolio become the minister's responsibility?

MR RATTENBURY: The most difficult part of the conduct that Mr Cain speaks of is actually identifying it and being aware of it. This Auditor-General's report has now drawn this to the government's attention, and that is why I take these findings very seriously. We need to examine both what they speak to from a systemic point of view and the specifics of the allegations.

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

MS LEE: My question is to the Attorney-General. The Auditor-General's report into the Public Trustee and Guardian's business transformation program reveals that there is no record that the PTG sought legal advice about using funds drawn from the Guarantee and Reserve Account, when the project began in 2017, until September 2023. Yesterday, during question time you confirmed that you were not aware of these serious issues, despite meeting with the PTG regularly and receiving briefings from them. Attorney-General, did the Solicitor-General ever raise the PTG's request for legal advice on 20 September 2023 with you?

MR RATTENBURY: Not to my recollection—no.

MS LEE: Attorney-General, do you accept that your lack of effective oversight of the

Public Trustee and Guardian has enabled the potential misuse and illegal use of funds reserved for vulnerable Canberrans?

MR RATTENBURY: No; I do not. In the course of meeting with the Public Trustee and Guardian at various times through that period, of course I discussed issues in the office. The sorts of matters that have been identified in the Auditor-General's report were not drawn to my attention—they were not discussed as specific issues—but the forensic work done by the Auditor-General has now brought them to light. They are obviously a point of significant concern. We now need to follow up on these findings.

MR CAIN: Attorney-General, will you resign as Attorney-General for allowing a corporation, squarely in your control, to use funds, which are meant to be reserved for vulnerable Canberrans, on another failed IT project without seeking any legal advice?

MR RATTENBURY: No.

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

MS LEE: My question is to the Attorney-General. I refer to the Auditor-General's report tabled earlier this year in relation the Public Trustee and Guardian: *Business transformation program: ICT renewal activities*. A key focus of the audit was the PTG's management of the design, development, implementation and use of its Customer Relationship Management system, the CRM.

The report found:

Actual expenditure on the CRM cannot be identified with certainty, but it is likely to exceed \$1.46 million between 2017 and 2023. At no point in time did the PTG make a reasonable estimate of actual costs associated with the CRM, nor has the PTG sought to retrospectively estimate costs.

Attorney-General, can you confirm the cost of the PTG's Customer Relationship Management system is \$1.46 million and counting, as detailed in the Auditor-General's report?

MR RATTENBURY: Ms Lee has outlined the information that is available in the Auditor-General's report. Given that she is seeking an update on that, I am going to take that on notice and provide that information to the Assembly.

MS LEE: Attorney-General, what discussions have you had with the PTG board—the board that you appointed—about these serious findings by the Auditor-General?

MR RATTENBURY: I have not met the PTG board since the Auditor-General's report has arrived. I have been discussing with the agency how the government best responds to this, as part of the preparations. We are considering the best way to respond to this report. That is where the work is up to.

MR CAIN: Attorney-General, what action have you taken to ensure that the funds the PTG used for the CRM have been returned to the Guarantee and Reserve Account?

MR RATTENBURY: As I said, the audit is over 140 pages long. The government is working through the details of that and considering the options that are available to it. That is the update I have at this point in time.

Land—Belconnen rural block 50

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Suburban Development. Belconnen rural block 50, north of Fraser and Dunlop, was recently purchased by the ACT government. The valuation request by EPSDD was published as part of a redacted land acquisition report. The valuation request was on the basis that it would be a multi-unit residential site. But, in 2017, the National Capital Authority did not agree to changing the land use policy for this block from hills, ridges and buffer spaces to urban areas. Despite this, the ACT government spent \$12 million on the block, even though it cannot currently be used for housing under the National Capital Plan. That rate was almost 4½ times the cost of the block at its last sale in 2014. Minister, given that the National Capital Plan does not permit residential homes on this site, why did the SLA request a residential valuation for the block?

MS BERRY: Because the site that Ms Clay is referring to is adjacent to the other block of land that the ACT government has been working with the federal government to secure, and it is strategic to that development. I acknowledge what Ms Clay has been saying about the use of that block. However, any change in use for that block would not be seen for at least another 10 years, and of course all of the other environmental studies would need to occur in the meantime.

MS CLAY: Minister, did you or the Suburban Land Agency discuss the block's zoning with the NCA before purchasing it?

MS BERRY: I certainly did not, and I do not believe the SLA did. I will take that on notice.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, did the valuation factor in that half the site contains high environmental values?

MS BERRY: Yes, it did.

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

MS LEE: My question is to the Attorney-General.

Attorney-General, I again refer to the Auditor-General's report tabled earlier this year in relation to the business transformation program ICT renewal activities of the Public Trustee and Guardian. In his report, the Auditor-General said:

The CRM, which subsequently became the predominant ICT focus of the PTG, has been a failure. The CRM is not used widely across the organisation and is currently irrelevant to most of the PTG's staff and to large areas of the PTG's activities. There is limited evidence of improvements in organisational efficiency, improved client service and data security resulting from the implementation of the CRM.

Attorney-General, what exactly did ACT taxpayers get for their \$1.46 million dollars

and counting?

MR RATTENBURY: As is noted, this was an audit that covered the period from 2016 to 2023. Ms Lee has just outlined the Auditor-General's findings and, in some ways, she has answered her own question. Clearly, this is a program that has not delivered what was anticipated; this is incredibly disappointing. We are now working to make sure that the recommendations from the Auditor-General are implemented. I am working with the new Public Trustee and Guardian to make sure that we are seeing effective expenditure in that office. I am confident that the work that is being done will put the PTG on a better footing

MS LEE: Attorney-General, who has taken responsibility for this colossal waste of ACT taxpayers' money?

MR RATTENBURY: Clearly, Madam Speaker, the government does need to take responsibility for this. The way to take responsibility is to get on and fix this and to ensure that conduct like this does not happen again. I have made the point several times already: we recommendations from the Auditor-General and we need to work through those and make sure that we effectively implement those recommendations and other procedural improvements in the office.

MR CAIN: Attorney-General, has this now become your version of Minister Steel's HRIMS failure?

MR RATTENBURY: Well, Madam Speaker, this is clearly incredibly disappointing. But this is the role of the Auditor-General—to go through and examine these sorts of matters in a forensic way, to provide government with advice for the government to then get on, analyse those recommendations and work to implement changes to make sure that we are getting the best service response we can for the Canberra community and to make sure government money is being spent effectively.

Industrial relations—CFMEU

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety. Minister, the Secure Local Jobs Code 2020 stipulates that businesses must not adopt policies or procedures that revoke the status of an employee organisation as a bargaining representative. The Work Health and Safety Act also allows unions the right of entry to workplaces. The CFMEU have recently been placed into administration following reports that criminals and bikies were in control of the construction division. Minister, will you make changes or at least guarantee, that businesses will not be punished if they make policies to prevent the construction division of the CFMEU, who are in administration because of alleged criminal ties, from accessing construction sites?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lee for the question. It is important, of course, that businesses can continue to operate well in the ACT, in a lawful manner. We have seen the most recent reports in regard to the CFMEU. I think that has been dealt with appropriately, and businesses should be able to operate freely in the ACT.

MS LEE: Minister, have you sought and received advice from your directorate about how the Secure Local Jobs Code and the Work Health and Safety Act could allow the

CFMEU to access employees despite being in administration? How does it work?

MR GENTLEMAN: They are not deregistered; they are still able to operate under the Secure Local Jobs Code. They continue to do that.

MR COCKS: Minister, have you or your directorate received any complaints from businesses or employees throughout the term about the conduct of the ACT CFMEU?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not recall any complaints to my office, but I will take it on notice and research it for the member.

Public housing—assets

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, more than 20,000 Canberrans call public housing home in the ACT, and the need for social and affordable housing is only growing. Can you explain how much public housing stock there is available in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I am pleased to tell the Assembly that, as of 31 July 2024, the ACT government's public housing stock number was 11,749 homes. This includes the 819 public housing homes built or bought since the start of the Growing and Renewing housing program in July 2019. Of this 819, 643 have been built by the ACT government and there are another 442 homes in the pipeline.

The life span of this program demonstrates the government's enduring commitment to expand and improve on public housing, even under some of the most extraordinarily challenging circumstances over the last four or five years, combatting COVID and a lack of construction supplies. It has been a very challenging program, but we are now starting to see the fruits of sticking with it and demonstrating the government's commitment.

MS ORR: Minister, how is the government increasing social housing stock in the ACT?

MS BERRY: The term "social housing" encompasses a wide range of subsidised housing. As well as the social housing programs that are run by the ACT government, the government continues to support a range of community housing providers to expand their housing and tenancy services.

Some of the ways that the government does this include head leasing more than 700 Housing ACT properties to community housing providers and other housing services to provide specialised accommodation services such as crisis accommodation for women escaping domestic and family violence and transitional accommodation for people exiting the justice system or the health system; setting aside land for community housing in the Indicative Land Release Program; providing option agreements on land for community housing providers applying for HAFF funding; and the \$80 million Affordable Housing Project Fund that supports new community housing developments.

DR PATERSON: Minister, what sorts of homes is the ACT government adding to its public housing portfolio?

MS BERRY: Just like everybody else, public housing tenants want to live in homes that meet their needs, so the ACT government is committed to providing those properties. Adaptability and accessibility are also front of mind in the design and construction of these homes, with 94 per cent of the new build of public housing being constructed to class C or livable gold standard.

Energy efficiency and sustainability is also a priority in construction, with double-glazing, strategic orientation and energy efficient heating, cooling and hot water systems. We also have the vulnerable households energy scheme, which is majority funded by the ACT government, with funding from the federal government, to build on our older and existing properties and ensure that they are more sustainable as well. This builds on the important work that we are doing to upgrade gas appliances and ceiling insulation.

Location is another important priority for public housing tenants. We want to make sure that public housing is spread equitably across Canberra's suburbs and is close to public transport, schools, shops and services—all the things that offer wellbeing benefits for tenants who live in public housing all across the ACT.

Economy—cost of living

MS LEE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, earlier this year you declared that the 2024-25 budget would target cost-of-living pressures facing Canberrans. The latest Cost of Living Index by City, published by data company Numbeo, reveals that Canberra is the most expensive city in the country and ranked 12th in the world. Treasurer, why should anyone take your promises seriously when you say that you will tackle cost of living pressures and, half a year later, Canberra is the 12th most expensive city in the world?

MR BARR: That data source lacks any credibility.

MS LEE: Treasurer, what specific actions did you take to prevent Canberra becoming the 12th-most expensive city in the world, and have you done any analysis as to why they were so woefully inadequate?

MR BARR: The data source is thoroughly discredited. The actual data sources that are produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics tell a different story in relation to the cost of living in Canberra. There are, of course, cost-of-living challenges that all Australians are experiencing, but inflation in the ACT has been lower than the rest of the country, and the initiatives—the nearly \$150 million of concessions contained within the territory budget—go to provide significant additional support to the 43,000 lowest income households in the territory.

MS LAWDER: Treasurer, do you take responsibility for the ACT's cost-of-living crisis or is it, as usual, everyone else's fault?

MR BARR: I know this is Ms Lawder's final week and that will be one of her last questions. She is certainly better than that question. My response to Ms Lawder is that I think she is well aware of the international and national impacts that are occurring in our economy that do have an impact on the cost of living for Canberrans. I would also

refer the member to the nearly \$150 million of concessions—nearly \$4,000 per household—to the 40,000 lowest income households in the territory.

Public transport

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, in 2016 your government convinced the city to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on what was the largest infrastructure project in our history, that being stage 1 of the tram, with the promise that this would create a public transport revolution.

Enormous amounts of money were diverted from health and housing to go to this project, and your government promised emphatically that this would dramatically increase public transport patronage. It has failed.

The Climate Council's national energy report issued this week shows that everything you have done in this space has failed. Canberrans are the least likely Australians to take public transport, according to their report, because of your woeful suburban bus services leaving Canberrans reliant on their cars.

Minister, after spending so much of taxpayers' money on the tram, how embarrassing is it that only three per cent of travel in the territory is on public transport or shared vehicles?

MR STEEL: I reject the premise of the question, which finally came after a long introduction. We have been building a better public transport system here in Canberra. Part of that means building a truly integrated service that has both buses and also mass transit light rail, for the first time. We are the party that delivered the mass transit system for Canberra that is increasing patronage on light rail and on our broader public transport system, with one in five trips now taken on mass transit. People who have never used a bus in their lifetime are using light rail for the first time.

That is why we are expanding the benefits to the south side, so that all of Canberra can get the benefit of a mass transit system, with a north-south spine that will be integrated with buses that connect the suburbs. That is what we need to do to manage the congestion, because we have a lake that divides our city. Unless we add capacity to Commonwealth Avenue—which will be delivered through light rail stage 2B—then, as our city grows to 700,000 people by 2050, we are going to face gridlock.

The alternative plan of putting a bus lane on Commonwealth Avenue Bridge is discredited and is a failed plan.

MR PARTON: Minister, is the Climate Council right when they say that our low public transport use is due to limited services in the outer suburbs?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, our government continues to expand services. We introduced rapid services throughout Canberra around five years ago. They have been incredibly popular. There are nine services, in addition to light rail and the local bus routes connecting them. We have a plan, which we will be taking to the election, to expand those services with more rapid bus routes, more frequent local routes and more frequent weekend services.

Mr Parton: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order on relevance. The question was: is the Climate Council right when they say that the low public transport use is due to limited services? Are they right? I am not sure that the minister—

MADAM SPEAKER: You know I cannot direct the minister to answer the question. He was talking about usage of buses.

Mr Parton: I thought I would try.

MADAM SPEAKER: You can try, Mr Parton.

MR COCKS: Minister, when are you going to concede that spending \$4 billion plus on a tram is not the solution to this problem?

MR STEEL: Well, clearly mass transit is a solution to getting more people onto public transport, because we have seen the benefit of stage 1. It was opposed by the Canberra Liberals every step of the way. They said that people would not use it, and they have.

Budget—health

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please provide detail on the investments you are making in health services for children and families through the budget?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the question. Through this budget, the ACT Labor government is investing more than \$100 million in health care for children and their families and for the workforce that supports them. This includes \$57 million in paediatric services to boost in-patient beds and community-based services for children and young people; \$18 million to support additional cots for critically unwell newborns; and \$26 million to continue supporting safer care in maternity services. In this budget, we have also invested \$86 million to expand the nurse and midwife to patient ratios, which includes paediatric and maternity services, in which we will be the second jurisdiction in the country to count the baby in maternity ratios. In terms of infrastructure, there is a further \$52 million for additional community-based health centres that will support paediatric and maternity service delivery across the ACT in addition to other community-based services. The investments in the more than \$1 billion new Northside Hospital include supporting a new child and adolescent mental health service in Lyons and, of course, paediatric and maternity services on the north side into the future.

These initiatives build on more than \$76 million of investments over this term to expand health services for children and young people and their families. This includes \$15.8 million to expand the paediatric workforce and deliver more services for children and young people; \$11.5 million to expand specialist services, with a specific focus on paediatric outpatient appointments; more than \$12 million to deliver the Maternity In Focus plan and more services on the north side; more than \$16 million to expand the allied professional workforce, including in paediatric services; \$15 million in neonatology services; and \$6.4 million to implement patient navigation, starting with the Paediatric Liaison and Navigation Service, which has been so welcomed by so many

families.

This is evidence that the ACT Labor government has been committed to delivering more health services for children, adolescents and their families.

DR PATERSON: Minister, how do these benefits also support the health workforce in these areas?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Dr Paterson for the supplementary. Our investments in paediatric and maternity enhance the quality of care for our youngest and most vulnerable Canberrans and provide vital support and resources for our dedicated health professionals. The funding of eight paediatric beds and services in the Special Care Nursery, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and across maternity services allow these services to plan for the future and to attract and retain skilled workers. These investments will provide our nurses, midwives, specialist allied health professionals and support teams with the tools and support they need to manage a growing demand.

The expansion of maternity services includes more services in the Maternal Fetal Medicine Unit, 24/7 services in the Maternity Assessment Unit and increased resources for the Early Pregnancy Unit. These initiatives will ensure that care for women and their families continues to be safe for health workers and responsive to the needs of consumers.

Implementing minimum nurse and midwife to patient ratios that include paediatric, maternity services and neonatal intensive care reflects our commitment to creating safer, more sustainable working conditions for our teams. I note that those opposite have still not committed to continuing and maintaining ratios, and certainly no other Liberal Party in the country has ever implemented ratios. So I think our nurses and midwives would have some concerns about the Canberra Liberals' commitment in this regard.

Our investments have been upskilling across the hospital and the care of critically unwell children. This is supporting teams alongside the opening of the new paediatric emergency area and dedicated paediatric spaces in the intensive care unit in the new critical services building. We are ensuring those programs continue and support teams cross both of our acute hospitals. Our investments in health infrastructure also ensure that we are providing state-of-the-art facilities for our teams to continue delivering high-quality care. By investing in our paediatric and maternity workforce, we are securing a healthier, safer and stronger future for Canberrans.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how do these investments align with key government strategies such as the Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. Our significant investments that I have outlined are aligned with our long-term plan for the future of health care in the ACT, including the ACT Health Services Plan and the Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan, as well as Maternity In Focus—our maternity services strategy. ACT Labor has been focused on the long-term vision that ensures children, young people, women and families have access to a health system that supports the right care in the right place at the right time. Our investments support key

actions in the Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan, including across areas like leadership, coordination and upskilling across health services. We have been focused on improving access to specialist paediatric services and the linkages with interstate services. We have been establishing new services, such as the Child and Adolescent Hospital in the Home program and the co-designed Paediatric Liaison and Navigation Service.

We have committed to improving wait times for specialist services. The establishment of a Molonglo site for community paediatrics means that children can access appropriate services closer to home. We have also ensured that parents and children who are waiting for a community paediatrician now have access to support services and preliminary assessment prior to their doctor appointment. Our work in Maternity In Focus is providing expanded maternity services and sits alongside progress of key actions, including maternity ratios and expansion of the Homebirth program.

These are just a few examples of the strategic work that we have undertaken over this term. Our investments are supporting implementation of these plans across our health system. Unlike the Canberra Liberals, we have a plan, and we are getting on with delivering more specialist services, supporting our workforce and building the health infrastructure our city needs for the future.

Jacka—boundary fences

MR CAIN: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development.

Minister, I refer to the ongoing dispute between the SLA and the rural leaseholders at the historic Elm Grove property in north Gungahlin.

For the past 22 months, rural leaseholder Mr Lee Carmody and his family have been locked in an unfortunate ongoing battle with you and the SLA over unresolved issues. Minister, why do you continue to deny all responsibility for the replacement of the property's southern boundary fence despite it not meeting your own government's rural fence standards and the fact that it is clearly not compliant with public safety standards?

MS BERRY: The SLA has advised the lessee at Elm Grove that the installation of new fencing is a matter for the lessee and not for the ACT government through the SLA. Now I understand that the lessee does not agree with the position that the SLA has taken and believes that the SLA should undertake the works for approval and fund new fencing.

However, in this case, the SLA has agreed to consider a proposal to contribute towards half of the costs of new fencing, subject to the lessee securing the relevant heritage approvals, and so the SLA awaits for that work to be done.

MR CAIN: Minister, why does the new extension of Roden Cutler Drive remain closed? Would it not be easily opened if you simply co-operated more with the Elm Grove rural leaseholder?

MS BERRY: The Elm Grove leaseholder is a private resident who is requesting the

ACT government fund things that the ACT government would not ordinarily fund for anyone. Now that does not mean that the SLA is not willing to continue to work with the lessee, and I have described that in the answer to the first question.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why are you risking public safety of Jacka residents by refusing to replace a \$20,000 boundary fence?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my first answer.

Jacka—boundary fences

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, I have seen the fencing plan sheet for the Jacka 2 residential estate development plan, which was drafted on 10 July 2018 and approved by a planning delegate on 11 July 2023 under the Planning and Development Act 2007. The plans clearly show that the southern boundary fence at the historic Elm Grove property was marked as an “existing fence to be removed”. This clearly demonstrates, Minister, that the replacement of the southern boundary fence was approved by the SLA. Minister, why have you reneged on this approval?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my previous answers.

MR CAIN: Minister, does the SLA want to resume the rural lease of Elm Grove, and can you categorically rule out compulsorily acquiring this lease?

MS BERRY: The SLA have no intention of acquiring the lease of Elm Grove, no wish to acquire the lease back from Elm Grove, and will continue to work with the lessee, as they have done for many years, to try to overcome some issues, some of which are of considerable difference between the lessee and the SLA. However, the SLA have committed to continuing to work with that lessee, and they will do that.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, why does this Labor-Greens government make it so difficult for rural leaseholders to go about their business?

MS BERRY: They do not.

Planning—Thoroughbred Park

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, under the Financial Management Act, I understand that you are responsible for approving the establishment of joint ventures. A joint venture is being discussed for the Canberra Racing Club to redevelop Thoroughbred Park. The club is currently half funded by the ACT government. I am concerned that without this funding they would not be able to continue operations. Treasurer, what financial due diligence is undertaken when assessing joint venture partners before entering into a joint venture?

MR BARR: I thank Miss Nuttall for the question. A multi-agency due diligence would be undertaken.

MISS NUTTALL: Would the ACT government’s significant, ongoing cash transfers

to the Racing Club be considered when entering into the joint venture?

MR BARR: To the extent that there was an ongoing MOU that did commit the government to future funding, yes, it would be considered.

MS CLAY: Is the final decision to enter into a joint venture a decision of cabinet or of the Treasurer or of someone else?

MR BARR: It would be a cabinet decision.

Government—investments

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, on Thursday last week, you provided the government’s response to my divestment motion. It was concluded, by the Investment Advisory Board, that the companies listed by the United Nations as breaching human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories did not meet the “very severe” category needed to divest. Chief Minister, are you aware that, on 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice advisory opinion ruled that states are “under an obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel’s illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”?

MR BARR: I have seen media reporting to that effect—yes.

MR BRADDOCK: Chief Minister, why has there been no action taken on the media reporting if you are aware of it?

MR BARR: I reject the premise of the question.

Arts, Culture and Creative Policy

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy. Minister, we have now had the Arts, Culture and Creative Policy in place for two years. Can you provide the Assembly with an update on the delivery of the accompanying action plan?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. The Arts, Culture and Creative Policy 2022-2026 is the roadmap for Canberra to be recognised as Australia’s arts capital, and it identifies 10 focus areas to deliver on this ambition, framed against the strategies of Create, Develop and Promote. The action plan outlines ongoing initiatives and targeted projects that implement the focus areas and deliver on the strategies. The plan is a vehicle to coordinate arts activities, acknowledging that the whole of government has a role in the arts and in creativity.

The action plan began with 82 actions, and the government is reporting annually on the delivery. The year 2 report was recently published, and it shows that 56 actions are on track and eight are complete. As a living document, six new actions have been added to the plan. There has been meaningful progress against all actions.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you share some of the highlights that have been achieved in past year?

MS CHEYNE: I am pleased with what has been achieved over the past 12 months, right across government, when it comes to the arts. While I only have time to share a small fraction of what has happened, a few of the standouts include: appointing nine members to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Space Reference Group to guide the design of the dedicated space at the Kingston Arts Precinct; the unveiling of the statue of the Hon Susan Ryan AO, recognising her significant impact on improving gender representation within our public artwork collection; the 2024 National Multicultural Festival included arts and cultural activities across each of the three days, including 17 arts and cultural stalls; and, finally, we have started exploring just how to position Canberra internationally as a City of Design.

MS ORR: Minister, what are some of the other actions we can expect over the coming year?

MS CHEYNE: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. There is a stack of work underway. Under the Venues and Precincts focus area, there will be upgrades to the Gorman Arts Centre and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. artsACT will deliver on the 2024-25 budget commitments to develop an Arts Assets Needs Analysis and to deliver the highest priority works identified in the Arts Facilities Strategic Asset Management Plan. We will progress the artwork of Stasia Dabrowski OAM. We will develop a directory of artists to support connections between businesses and artists, and the government will continue to invest in and showcase local artists at our events and festivals. A creative director has been appointed for Enlighten Festival 2025, and there is currently a callout for artists, creatives, organisations and venues to be part of that festival.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Ginninderry—joint venture partnership

MS BERRY: Yesterday I was asked questions about Riverview and profits, and I wanted to provide some additional information on that. Riverview surrendered its ACT landholdings, which were 670 hectares, at the formation of the West Belconnen Joint Venture Agreement in 2016 at a rural value of \$4.9 million, which excludes GST. Both participants in the GJV received profits in proportion to their interests—60-40. I understand that this can be confusing, as the built form of the project is a fifty-fifty partnership. Both participants have contributed owners' equity respective to their share to the project of 60-40.

From the inception, the territory elected to provide additional funding into the project. This additional funding earned a commercial rate of return to reflect the funding risk. This funding was made by the way of a priority equity. In August 2024, Riverview established an external financing facility for their share of the project costs. Riverview has since contributed their proportion, \$10.983 million, of the funding requirements into the project. The territory no longer earns a rate of return in Riverview's contributions. This is earned by an external financier.

I would note that most members in this place have at least once a year—some every

year—in this term of government, been invited to go out and get an update from the joint venture through our partners out there with Riverview. I am sure that that will continue. A lot of the questions that members have are asked during those visits.

In a response to a question I was asked about Riverview, about the 99-year contract, the West Belconnen Joint Venture Agreement is a 90-year contract, unless the project is completed prior to this time. The ACT government expects that the project will be completed within the next 20-plus years. The West Belconnen Joint Venture Agreement is regularly reviewed, as I said yesterday. Recent changes to the agreement were tabled in the Assembly on 23 August 2024, and they included a substitution of the ACT government participant in the West Belconnen Joint Venture Agreement Project from the territory to the Suburban Land Agency. This aligns with SLA operational responsibilities and facilitation of Riverview securing an external financing facility in order to establish a long-term funding structure in proportion to the 60 per cent to 40 per cent owner interest.

Land—Belconnen rural block 50

MS BERRY: On a question that I was asked by Ms Clay regarding the NCA and block 50, the NCA have no influence at all and, in fact, are irrelevant to the purchase of that block. So I can confirm that the SLA did not meet with the NCA.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent:

- (1) Ms Lawder and Ms Burch making their valedictory speeches at 4pm on Wednesday 4 September and 5 September 2024 respectively;
- (2) any business before the Assembly at 4 pm on Wednesday 4 September 2024 being interrupted to allow Ms Lawder to make a valedictory speech;
- (3) any business before the Assembly at 4 pm on Thursday 5 September 2024 being interrupted to allow Ms Burch to make a valedictory speech; and
- (4) debate on any motion before the Assembly at the time of interruption being adjourned and the Chair fixing the resumption of the debate on the matter interrupted being called on immediately after the valedictory is made.

Industrial relations—CFMEU

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (2.46): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes:
 - (a) that on 23 August 2024, the Federal Government placed all branches of the construction and general division of the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) into administration, including the ACT Branch;
 - (b) that this action was in response to the recent disturbing allegations of

- corruption and links to organised crime within the CFMEU;
- (c) comments by Master Builders ACT (MBA) that the cost of construction can increase by up to 30 per cent due to delays brought about by CFMEU influence on building sites, and that they have been raising concerns about union interference in procurement for years;
 - (d) that the unions recently sought to be given greater power to investigate and prosecute companies in breach of the Secure Local Jobs Code, and sought the right to oversee the appointment of senior public servants in the ACT; and
 - (e) the MBA's response to this push by the union for more power was "If the CFMEU get their way, they will continue to bully and harass not only our builders and subcontractors, but our government officials too";
- (2) further notes:
- (a) that Operation Kingfisher is a current investigation by the Integrity Commission into whether public officials within the Education Directorate failed to exercise their official functions honestly when making recommendations and decisions regarding the Campbell Primary School Modernisation Project;
 - (b) that the investigation heard evidence that the CFMEU pressured the Government not to award the contract for the Campbell Primary School Modernisation project to the company that was the preferred option following a tender process;
 - (c) comments by the Integrity Commissioner during recent hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025 where he said "The question of the CFMEU raises the whole question of lobbying by organisations, both of departments of particular public servants and of politicians. It is a problem in every jurisdiction in Australia. If I had the resources, I would have an inquiry about lobbying in the ACT";
 - (d) the Integrity Commissioner's further comments that "The ACT is a small and highly interconnected community where links (personal, political and commercial) are invasive. Lobbying on an official and unofficial basis can occur easily";
 - (e) that the Premiers of Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, the Labor Opposition Leader in Tasmania, and the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, have all taken action to suspend the CFMEU from their respective state Labor branches; and
 - (f) that the ACT Chief Minister has, to date, failed to take any action to suspend the CFMEU from ACT Labor, leaving him as the only Labor leader in the country not to take decisive action; and
- (3) calls on the Chief Minister to immediately take action and to suspend the ACT Branch of the CFMEU from ACT Labor.

Back in July this year I, like many other Australians, was shocked by the serious allegations that aired in the media about the construction branch of the CFMEU. A major investigation found underworld figures, bikies and criminal gangs had infiltrated major Victorian and New South Wales construction projects. The allegations included the placement of criminal figures in influential union posts, potential kickback schemes to CFMEU members and evidence of regular correspondence and collusion amongst certain CFMEU members and notorious underworld figures. These are very serious and

disturbing allegations, and, as the community would and should expect, the response from most leaders around the country was swift.

In the days following the airing of the serious allegations, the Victorian Labor Premier took action to suspend the construction division of the CFMEU from the Victorian Labor Party. The Premier also announced that the Victorian Labor Party would no longer accept donations from the union and moved to refer the allegations to police and the Victorian Anti-Corruption Commission, or the IBAC. In taking this action, the Premier said, “The union needs to fix its conduct, and it should not have anything to do with the party until it does.”

The New South Wales Labor Premier took steps to suspend the CFMEU from the New South Wales Labor Party and to cease any further donations or affiliation fees. At the time, the Premier said, “We are determined to take action on the basis that the current situation is completely intolerable.” The South Australian Labor Premier called for the construction division of the CFMEU to be suspended from the South Australian Labor Party. He also sought advice from the South Australian Police as to whether there are any links between the CFMEU and bikie gangs in South Australia.

The Tasmanian Labor Opposition Leader also took action. In a statement released following the disturbing allegations, the Opposition Leader said, “I have written to the Australian Labor Party’s national executive to request the immediate suspension of the CFMEU construction division from the Tasmanian Labor Party.” He took this action even after acknowledging that there were no specific allegations against any Tasmanian CFMEU construction division officials, delegates or members.

Madam Speaker, the list goes on. We saw action by the Queensland Labor Premier, the former Labor Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and, finally, the Labor Premier of Western Australia, who, following the actions taken by the federal Labor government to place all branches of the CFMEU, including WA and ACT, into administration, announced that he would immediately take action to suspend the WA branch of the union from WA Labor.

But there is one Labor leader who is still refusing to cut ties with the CFMEU. It is our own Chief Minister, Andrew Barr. To date, Mr Barr continues to refuse to cut ties with the CFMEU, despite every other Labor leader in the country moving to do just that. His justification for not cutting ties is:

The allegations aired over recent days, which resulted in the Federal Government’s application to appoint an independent administrator, have not included the ACT Division of the CFMEU.

He is refusing to cut ties because, as he said, the allegations have not included the ACT division of the CFMEU. This is in stark contrast to the leadership and actions of the Labor opposition leader in Tasmania, who also said that there were no specific allegations levelled at the Tasmanian division of the CFMEU but was unequivocal and clear in cutting ties from the Tasmanian Labor Party.

But not Mr Barr. Instead of moving to take power away from the unions, we have seen that in the ACT the unions are seeking to push for even more power. Earlier this year

we saw reports that the union movement here in the ACT was seeking to have greater power to investigate and prosecute companies in line for ACT government work and, even more worryingly, was seeking the right to oversee the appointment of senior ACT public servants. This sent shivers down the spine of those in the construction industry here, including Master Builders ACT, who said, upon hearing about this push for more power from the unions:

If the CFMEU get their way, they will continue to bully and harass not only our builders and subcontractors, but our government officials too.

We have every other Labor leader around the country stepping up and taking decisive action, even those leaders where there have not been any specific allegations made in their jurisdiction divisions, and even the federal Attorney-General, who has included every branch of the CFMEU in the administration, including the ACT. But not Mr Barr. Mr Barr keeps insisting that the type of criminal activity that has been occurring in other jurisdictions is just not happening here in the ACT.

Certainly, the Master Builders ACT would disagree. They say that they have been raising concerns about union interference in procurement for years. They have said that the original memorandum of understanding between UnionsACT and the ACT government was inappropriate, the Secure Local Jobs Code that replaced it was worse and that delays brought about by CFMEU influence on building sites could add up to 30 per cent to construction costs. And, of course, we have a current investigation underway by the ACT Integrity Commission into possible union interference in the awarding of the contract for the Campbell Primary School modernisation project.

Let us have a look at what the local CFMEU branch has been up to over the last few years. Even a mere Google search gives us some interesting insights into what has been publicly reported. These are just a few. In April 2018 the *Canberra Times* reported that eight Canberra CFMEU officials were facing a \$1.1 million lawsuit for allegedly blockading a north-side work site, demanding that the builder sign a CFMEU enterprise agreement.

In July 2020 the ABC reported that three CFMEU officials were fined for illegal picketing. Those officials included Jason O'Mara and Zach Smith. The ABC reported in February 2021 that then CFMEU boss Jason O'Mara had threatened businesses to establish a cartel. Later that year, in June, Mr O'Mara was in hot water again when the *Canberra Times* reported that he had had his right of entry revoked.

In January 2023 the *AFR* reported that the CFMEU had received a near-maximum fine for unlawful picketing, which involved actions by Zach Smith and Jason O'Mara. And in June 2023 there was an extraordinary article in the *AFR* saying that the CFMEU had spent \$300,000 to protect their leader after a drive-by shooting. I think you know who that leader was, Madam Speaker: Jason O'Mara.

What is interesting about this list are the two names that keep appearing: Jason O'Mara and Zach Smith. It is the same Jason O'Mara who we now know was on the recruitment panel that selected the current Work Health and Safety Commissioner and is a witness in Operation Kingfisher, the Integrity Commission investigation into possible union interference in the awarding of that significant contract for the Campbell Primary

School modernisation project. It is the same Zach Smith who sits on Mr Barr's own Secure Local Jobs Code Advisory Council, which advises the minister on the operation of the code, and is also a witness in Operation Kingfisher.

And let us not forget that the final report of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption dedicated hundreds of pages to serious goings-on within the ACT branch of the CFMEU, the same names that keep coming up over and over again with serious allegations of criminal conduct. So Mr Barr's insistence that the type of illegal activity that we have seen in media reporting is just not happening here in the ACT shows a new level of denial and deflection from the Labor leader right here in the capital.

Canberrans are right to ask: why is Mr Barr the only Labor leader in the country who is refusing to cut ties with the local CFMEU branch? Is it because he does not want to cause any problems for Mr Pettersson, who we know has very close ties with the CFMEU? In fact, it was Mr Pettersson himself who detailed how close the ACT Labor Party is to the unions. He said in this very chamber:

The Labor MLAs in this chamber are proudly bound by the ACT Labor Party; our policies are decided by our members, and, yes, that does include trade unions.

He went on to say that unions are not external to the Labor Party; in fact, they are, in his own words, "an intrinsic part of the Labor Party". Could it be that Mr Barr is protecting his fellow Labor candidate in Kurrajong, who we know is not only a former staff member for Mr Pettersson but a current employee of the ACT branch of the CFMEU who has been front and centre in moving motions to benefit the CFMEU at ACT Labor conferences, and has been front and centre of the CFMEU's very public marches against federal Labor's moves to place the CFMEU into administration.

Canberrans have every right to be asking who controls the agenda for the ACT Labor-Greens government. This motion is calling on Mr Barr to do one simple thing; it is asking him to do what every other Labor leader in the country has done, even in those jurisdictions where there has been no direct evidence of criminal activity in the state branches. It is calling on Mr Barr to immediately take action to suspend the ACT branch of the CFMEU from ACT Labor—nothing more; nothing less. If Mr Barr can say that he genuinely serves the Canberra community, he will have no issues with doing this. If he refuses, he will just have confirmed for every single Canberran that he has once again placed his and his party's own vested interests above the people of Canberra. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (2.58): This motion is ample evidence of a lack of any research or, in fact, following of contemporary political events. Had Ms Lee or her office bothered to check, she may well have noted that on 23 August the administrator of the CFMEU made a determination that the union would not engage in any party politics during the administration period. That includes donations, engagement at ALP conferences and promotion of particular candidates. On 29 August Labor's National Executive met and suspended the affiliation of all CFMEU branches with all state and territory Labor branches. This happened weeks ago but obviously escaped the attention of the Leader of the Opposition's researchers.

What this motion calls for happened weeks ago, Madam Speaker. The factual inaccuracies in the speech and the motion are numerous, but let me address just a couple of them. There is not a Tasmanian branch of the CFMEU. It is a Victorian-Tasmanian branch, run from Melbourne. That branch also extends to South Australia. There is no Northern Territory branch. It is run from Queensland. So the accusation within Ms Lee's speech about what Labor leaders in other jurisdictions have said or done, and an implication that there were no allegations in those jurisdictions and yet they still acted, is inaccurate. They were acting on allegations made in relation to a branch that included their jurisdiction and that was being run in another state—in one of those states that had been identified through the earlier actions of both the Labor National Executive and the federal government.

When the administrator made his decision, it was immediately acted upon by the Labor National Executive at its subsequent meeting a few days later. All affiliation with the CFMEU in every state and territory was suspended until further notice. So the calls-on element of Ms Lee's motion was addressed quite some time ago, which makes this whole debate somewhat redundant.

The content of Ms Lee's speech, if repeated outside of parliamentary privilege, would see Ms Lee join Mr Hanson as being the subject of defamation action. Comments made under parliamentary privilege have that protection. I am sure Ms Lee, as a smart lawyer, would know that. She would also know that if she were to repeat it outside of this place she would find herself in the same position as Mr Hanson. I caution members against making defamatory statements in relation to individuals and not to seem to pre-empt the Integrity Commission, the administrator or any other process that is currently underway.

To the substantive element of Ms Lee's motion: it happened weeks ago. If you were so interested in this matter, you might have paid attention, but, no, you were not; you were just seeking to point-score in this final sitting week. I support the amendment that Mr Gentleman will move, which outlines the actual facts, and I commend it to the Assembly.

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) (3.02): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after "That this Assembly", substitute:

"(1) notes:

- (a) that on 23 August 2024, the Federal Government placed all branches of the construction and general division of the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) into administration, in response to the recent disturbing allegations of corruption and links to organised crime;
- (b) that the ACT Branch of the CFMEU has been suspended from the Australian Labor Party since 29 August 2024, per decision of the ALP National Executive. The construction and general division's affiliation has been suspended in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and

Tasmania since 18 July 2024, and all suspensions will remain in place until further notice;

- (c) for the duration of this suspension, the construction and general division of the CFMEU will be excluded from all rights ordinarily afforded to an affiliated union under both Labor's National Constitution, and the rules of all ALP state and territory branches; and
- (d) ACT Labor will not levy or accept any affiliation fees or political donations from any branch of the construction and general division of the CFMEU for the period of the suspension, including the division's national office; and

(2) recognises:

- (a) that the ACT branch of the CFMEU will be investigated by the independent administrator with a view to confirming that there are no current issues that would require long-term intervention;
- (b) that it is important the ACT Branch be returned to the control of its members as soon as is practicable; and
- (c) that any allegations of criminal behaviour within the construction industry should and must be referred to the appropriate authorities for investigation.”.

Criminality has no place in the trade union movement. I say this as a trade unionist, a lifelong union member and a proud believer in defending the fundamental right of workers to organise, to have an industrial voice and to be politically represented. The allegations of criminality levelled at the Vic/Tas, New South Wales, Queensland, NT and SA branches of the CFMEU are incredibly concerning. These branches of the CFMEU have had serious allegations made against them. My fellow trade unionists know that this behaviour has no place in our movement as it unwinds the valiant efforts of unionists fighting for better wages and conditions across the country.

Nonetheless, the ACT branch of the CFMEU's affiliation to ACT Labor has been suspended, as you have heard, since 29 August, per the decision of the ALP National Executive. This formalises the previous position of ACT Labor in relation to donations and requires that ACT Labor not levy or accept any affiliation fees or political donations from any branch of the construction or general division of the CFMEU for the period of the suspension, including the division's national office.

That said, I well and truly understand that the opposition will take any opportunity to curtail the freedoms of trade unions to organise and further take any opportunity to try and turn a serious, genuine issue into a chance to score political points. The next time they wish to do this, I would suggest Ms Lee googles, as she did for some of this, to look at the issue at hand before attempting to waste the Assembly's time with a motion calling on the Chief Minister to do something which has already been done. However, I thank Ms Lee for her motion, because it gives me the opportunity to correct some of the outrageously false assertions that she has attempted to make in her motion here today.

First, Ms Lee's motion references claims that the cost of construction can increase up to 30 per cent due to “delays brought about by CFMEU influence on building size”. Madam Speaker, allow me to correct the record for Ms Lee once again. A Google search

may have benefitted her in this instance. The average margin of profit for commercial construction ventures in Australia is approximately five per cent—far less than the quoted 30 per cent cost increase cited by Ms Lee. If Ms Lee’s claims were correct, every worksite with a CFMEU EBA would be losing money. Presenting statements made by those who may materially benefit from a reduced industrial presence in the construction industry as statements of fact to the Assembly is both shortsighted and fallacious.

Second, Ms Lee’s motion attempts to position the Secure Local Jobs Code as an avenue through which trade unions such as the CFMEU can “bully and harass government officials”. This characterisation of the code is not only incorrect but incredibly ignorant of the role the code plays in ensuring that ACT government procurements uphold a truly safe environment for our workers. The Secure Local Jobs Code establishes a legislative framework to support our public servants in making determinations with regard to our behavioural expectations of potential contractors.

Under the Ethical Treatment of Workers Evaluation, which forms part of the framework, any member of the community, including any relevant unions, can share information with the government regarding concerns around contractor behaviour. These concerns could include, for example, that the contractor was engaging in corrupt conduct or had been infiltrated by organised crime. While this comment may sound tongue in cheek, I assure you it is not. The construction industry is rife with issues of insecure work, the potential for life or death situations to arise on a daily basis, and, yes, with issues of corruption.

However, contrary to Ms Lee’s assertions, literature on the topic suggests that whilst corruption is common in the Australian construction industry, it does not point to unions as being the main culprit. In fact, one study on behavioural factors that influence corruption in the construction industry found that it was not at the industrial level where the corruption was most likely to take place. It is, in fact, at the business-to-business level. This kind of pervasive corruption is exactly what the Secure Local Jobs Framework seeks to prevent.

Criminality is a serious matter. Transparency and objectivity are serious matters. All Ms Lee’s motion shows is that, rather than taking this as an opportunity to protect workers and to fight for a construction industry free from corruption, the Canberra Liberals will instead take any opportunity to use serious matters such as these to prevent trade unions from looking after their membership and doing their job. Their priority is not the welfare of ACT construction workers; it is winning a political debate on the floor of the Assembly.

It is important to be factual and it is important to be transparent. Truth, of course, is the founder of our democracy, and the fundamental truth is this: Canberra trade unions protect workers. When trade unions are weakened, inequality increases. When trade unions are strong, it ensures that workers’ safety is protected and that workers get to have their say on the matters that affect them. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (3.09): The Greens will be supporting Mr Gentleman’s amendment to this motion, and I would like to thank Mr Gentleman and his office for keeping a line of communication on this topic open: a ray of sunshine during this sitting

week. What has been settled on are the words that I think we can agree on, even if we might have slightly different interpretations of what those words should mean, and I will talk through that during the speech. We have some disagreements on how these things should have been handled, particularly at the federal level. However, we can clearly cooperate to the extent we need to in the context of the territory's governance.

At the core of the motion by the Canberra Liberals, and it seems also in the Labor response, is an assumption that the decision of the federal government to place all branches of the CFMEU into administration via an act of the federal parliament was an appropriate and good thing to do. The Greens disagree with that core assumption. As was said in the Senate by Senator David Shoebridge when the federal legislation was being debated, it represented an unprecedented attack on the rule of law. Civil liberties groups have rightly said that the federal legislation is a threat to freedom of association and the rights of all unions and membership-based organisations. Had similar legislation been introduced into this Assembly, as a human rights jurisdiction, I predict that our legislative scrutiny processes would have dismantled it.

There are certainly issues in the CFMEU. Criminal elements have done a disservice to union members and to the movement as a whole, and there needs to be proper investigation and prosecution of any and all illegal activity. However, the commonwealth parliament behaving as a judge, jury and executioner is not how to deal with it. There were processes underway in the Fair Work Commission to use existing legislative tools that would have resulted in the appointment of an administrator. They were going to be appropriately tested in the Federal Court. That process was given no opportunity to play out.

The Greens believe that unions are their membership, and it is up to members to decide how their union functions. We believe that unions should be strong, vibrant, and unencumbered by unreasonable regulation and outside interference in the right to organise working people and campaign for a better future. It is for this reason that the Greens believe that the CFMEU should be returned to the control of its members as soon as possible, preferably immediately, and allow the normal rule of law to take its course through investigation and prosecution of any and all illegal activity. That is not to say that we are on a unity ticket with the CFMEU. We do not agree on everything. Thinking about this week's flashpoint—and I know Mr Parton will be happy to hear this—I can point out that we disagree with the CFMEU being supported by the 296 poker machines at the Dickson Tradies.

I can also acknowledge the problems exposed during Operation Kingfisher, the Integrity Commission's investigation into the Campbell Primary School modernisation project. I am comfortable with them being removed from the motion as the matter that is no longer directly relevant to the calls, but they are still worth acknowledging as matters of fact. I, like many, look forward to seeing the Integrity Commissioner's report on this matter. The Integrity Commissioner's comments in estimates about lobbying are much broader than just the CFMEU. How lobbying works and, by extension, how political and public sector entities respond to lobbying is something I would agree is of particular interest to the Canberra community, and far more broadly than just the one single organisation. I would be supportive of providing the commissioner with the budget he needs to run such an inquiry next term.

I want to close by stressing the importance that the allegations of criminal behaviour are referred to the appropriate authorities for investigation and prospective prosecution. It is one of Australia's worst kept secrets that the construction industry has become a magnet for criminal activity. With the way the property market has gone, and all the insane price rises, it has become an industry where big turnovers and profits can be won. Allegations of bikie infiltration into the Victorian branch of the CFMEU is the obvious and recent example but, if rumours are to be believed, it is also prevalent amongst property developers and construction firms. The convincing evidence that property developers have a corrupting influence on politics did not come from nowhere.

In closing and to recap, the Greens have a policy position that stands with unionism. The Greens believe that unions are their membership, and it is up to the members to decide how their union functions. We also believe in the importance of the rule of law and that allegations of criminality are a matter for the legal system rather than the federal parliament. The Greens stand in solidarity with the union movement and may in fact now be the largest political party in Australia which still does. Maybe all members here should reflect on that.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.14): I rise to speak in support of Ms Lee's motion and commend her for bringing this important topic to the Assembly's attention. The way in which the Chief Minister has handled this ongoing issue surrounding the CFMEU has been nothing short of disgraceful—disgraceful in his response even today. He has waited, for example, until the national executive could act, rather than act himself, as other political leaders decided to do.

As Ms Lee's motion points out, there have been a plethora of seriously concerning allegations about the CFMEU in recent weeks. Allegations of corruption are linked to organised crime within the CFMEU. Mr Barr has failed to take appropriate action on behalf of the constituents in favour of looking after his union friends, waiting until the national executive did something for him. Mr Barr has favoured his protection racket for the CFMEU over doing what is the best—

Mr Barr: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is unparliamentary.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I would ask you to withdraw.

MR CAIN: Which part?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: "Protection racket", I am assuming, is what we are talking about. Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: I withdraw. I wonder how the Labor colleagues opposite justify the fact that Mr Barr sold out ACT Labor for donation money from the CFMEU and their exorbitant influence within the party.

Mr Barr: Point of order. Again, that statement implies a degree of corruption or malfeasance that should not be the subject of a parliamentary contribution, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Ms Lee: On that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. In these debates there have

frequently been times where members have talked about “selling out sick people for a light rail” and those types of things. If you are talking about specifically “selling out”, I do not think that extends that far.

Mr Cain: Colloquial language.

Dr Paterson: Point of order. I took Mr Cain’s statement to imply corruption.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask you to withdraw, Mr Cain. I think there was an inference which strays into the unparliamentary area. If you would like to withdraw and continue?

MR CAIN: Mr Deputy Speaker, “strays” into unparliamentary or is unparliamentary?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you questioning my ruling, Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: I am just asking for clarification on your ruling.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am suggesting that you withdraw.

MR CAIN: I withdraw.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR CAIN: I do not know how Mr Barr justifies strengthening, for example, new pokie laws, despite the fact that most of ACT Labor’s donations from the CFMEU come from poker machines.

Dr Paterson: Point of order.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Cain, if I can get you to take a seat for Dr Paterson.

Dr Paterson: The CFMEU’s donations come from membership contributions.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I mean that is really just in the margins, Dr Paterson. It is a “he said she said”. Continue, Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: At risk of being interrupted on any negative thing, I might say, I will continue. I also do not know how Mr Barr justifies standing a candidate in the upcoming ACT election who is not just a member but an employee of the CFMEU. It does beg the question: why has that Labor candidate not been disendorsed, for example, from ACT Labor’s ticket? And why haven’t all ACT Labor MLAs been made to review and potentially amend their own union memberships to ensure that they are not members of the CFMEU? Where is the Chief Minister’s righteous stand in these questions? He has no right to stand here and criticise the Canberra Liberals or any other party or candidate for that matter. He needs to sort out his own backyard before he throws stones elsewhere.

He has failed to take action and instead relied on the national executive to act for him when he could have acted himself. He has failed to take action on ACT Labor MLAs

with on-going connections to CFMEU ACT. He has failed to take action on ACT Labor candidates who are employed by CFMEU ACT. This lack of action is putting our territory's democracy at risk, because we know what sort of influence the CFMEU is capable of having if they are allowed to do what they want—particularly if these allegations of criminal connections are true.

It was the CFMEU that allegedly applied pressure to award government contracts to union favoured businesses. The Chief Minister could confirm here and now whether it is appropriate for an MLA in the ACT Labor Assembly team to be a member of the CFMEU. He could also confirm whether it is appropriate for one of his Labor MLAs to receive complimentary hospitality and accommodation to attend the national CFMEU dinner event.

ACT Labor are failing Canberrans by their lack of action and by their closeness with those allegedly engaged in criminal behaviour. So strong are these allegations that even federal, national and state leaders have acted. If the ACT Greens had stronger convictions on this issue, it was the time to show up, but sadly we are not seeing that. In the strength that I think they could have shown, they should vote with the Canberra Liberals on this issue.

The Canberra Liberals, despite allegations otherwise, stand with construction workers. We do stand with looking after workers in their workplaces and making sure their rights are granted to them and that they can go to their work with the confidence that they will return home safely. We do stand with ACT workers. What we do not stand with is criminal behaviour and bullying in our workplaces. Criticising the CFMEU does not mean we are criticising workers, unions, construction workers or construction unions. In fact, we would stand with them to make sure none of their activities are tainted by criminal behaviour. We will stand against corrupt and criminal organisations that stand in the way of workers' rights and democratic freedoms. Canberrans should appreciate that Canberra Liberals are not anti-union. We are not anti members of unions; we are pro worker safety and pro worker rights, but we are not pro criminal behaviour being left unhindered and unopposed in our workplaces or our construction sites. I commend Ms Lee's motion to this Assembly.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ms Orr, are you speaking to this or do you have a point of order?

Ms Orr: I am not speaking; I have a point of order and seek your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. Mr Cain said many things in his last speech, including some reflections on a candidate who is also an employee of the CFMEU not an elected official that I do not think would probably pass the pub test and that infer that there might be some reason to disendorse that candidate. I seek your guidance.

Ms Lee: Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a debating point.

Ms Orr: I am explaining my point and I will get to the point, Mr Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance as to whether members can make inferences without having evidence to back those up.

Ms Lee: Do you mean like when Mr Gentleman says the Canberra Liberals hate all the unions? It is a debating point.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am just going to seek advice from the Clerk. Ms Orr, I appreciate the point that you have made, but, in the context of such a robust debate, which has at times strayed into areas that it should not, I think that the actual original motion is such that I cannot see a problem with that particular aspect being explored in Mr Cain's speech. So, thank you; there is no point of order.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi) (3.24): I would like to speak on this important motion that Ms Lee brought here today, in light of clear allegations of corruption and links to organised crime that the CFMEU have been accused of and that have been widely reported in the community. This motion is important as it is a way for us as elected representatives and for this Assembly as a leadership body to show Canberrans that we take note and that we do not accept behaviour by any party, group, business or union that does not meet community expectations and that, where serious, credible and damning allegations are made, we will be swift and decisive in our response.

If a business was alleged to have acted corruptly, we would promptly issue a show cause notice and suspend their contract. If an individual acted corruptly, they would be fired from their job and referred for prosecution. The community is right to ask: why is there a different approach when it is a union that is under a cloud? Corruption and organised crime are serious issues and, though the ACT is a small jurisdiction, we are not immune to these issues and, when allegations come to light, we need to act and take a stand to reflect community concern and show leadership. Fundamentally, that is what this motion is about. It is about showing leadership and reflecting community concern.

This motion notes that the Premiers of South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland as well as the opposition leader in Tasmania and a former Chief Minister in the Northern Territory have all taken action to suspend the CFMEU from their respective branches. The Labor leaders of these jurisdictions have listened, have shown leadership and have acted. It is appalling that, once again, the ACT is dragging its feet and finds itself behind the rest of the country. This government likes to talk the talk on acting in the best interests of Canberrans but, when it is time for action, for leadership and to show courage, all we get is crickets.

Apart from the shocking allegations we have all heard federally about the conduct of the CFMEU, this motion outlines that there are currently serious concerns regarding the local ACT branch. It notes that the contract for the Campbell Primary School modernisation project was potentially awarded subject to influence and pressure being applied by the local CFMEU branch. Wouldn't this sort of activity alone be enough to consider suspending ties? Yet, when these allegations came to light, the Chief Minister has taken no action.

This motion notes that the Master Builders Association estimates that construction costs can be increased by up to 30 per cent due to delays brought about by the CFMEU influence. Let's think about that: 30 per cent is not a small increase. Thirty per cent would mean the difference between a young person being able to buy a house or not.

For a government that talks so much about improving the cost and availability of housing for young people, the idea of a 30 per cent premium on top of already high building costs should be unthinkable. Instead, Mr Barr decides that this is the kind of group that he wants in his party.

In my shadow portfolio of health, we constantly have examples of delayed and over-budget infrastructure projects. These are not nice to have either. We are talking about critical health services and the ability to properly treat sick Canberrans. In the most recent budget we have nearly \$70 million allocated over the forward estimates for new health centres, including a much-needed one in my electorate of Yerrabi, in Casey.

The community is right to ask: would they get a 30 per cent bigger centre if it was not for the ACT CFMEU or potentially would it come in around 30 per cent cheaper and allow for more support to our critically underfunded police, medical staff or domestic violence agencies? Surely if Master Builders are suggesting that there can be 30 per cent cost increases, this would be enough to consider suspending ties? Yet the Chief Minister takes no action.

This is not the first time that there have been allegations of poor behaviour by the CFMEU ACT branch. In 2015 we had the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. For the Assembly's benefit, I will read part of volume 3, on the CFMEU. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, there was a whole volume just for one union. It is worth noting that the ACT CFMEU gets its own section, in part 6. Let me quote from the introduction of the royal commission report, ACT CFMEU, section 6, page 3. This is relating to participants not wanting to speak up or take action against the CFMEU.

The participant might legitimately fear further disruption to their business as a result of litigation or involvement in it. The smear campaign planned by the CFMEU against witnesses to appear in this commission, referred to later in this report, suggests such fears would not be unfounded.

This is going back to 2015. Does the Chief Minister also have a fear that the CFMEU might smear him or his government? Is he putting his own political interests ahead of serving the community? These are the questions that the community is asking.

We now have the opportunity, as an Assembly, to take a stand, to do the right thing and to send a strong message that corruption, organised crime and poor behaviour will not be tolerated. This motion calls on the Chief Minister to immediately take action and do the right thing: to suspend the ACT branch of the CFMEU from ACT Labor. It is what is happening across Australia and it is what the community rightly expects. Now is the time for this Chief Minister to show leadership. I commend Ms Lee's motion to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.30): I thank Ms Castley and Mr Cain for their contributions to this debate. I think that we saw very clearly that once again Mr Barr has entirely missed the point of this motion. Once again we see that he points to the actions of others—always—because, of course, he is not responsible for anything and there is nothing to see here. It is straight out of the Andrew Barr ACT Labor playbook: “When confronted, deflect because it is never my responsibility.” He

is always looking to point fingers elsewhere and deflect by nitpicking about how branches of the CFMEU are organised, which is not the entire point of the motion. It does not matter whether they are organised by joint jurisdictions or not. Is that the best that he has got to offer?

The fact is that every other Labor leader in the country has been clear, has been unequivocal and has been strong. He also deflects by making veiled threats about defamation action and issuing warnings about what might happen to me. If his delusional response to this entire murky saga does not send shivers down the spines of Canberrans then let his words today do that, because the message is loud and clear: “Call out unacceptable behaviour, call out unacceptable influence and ties to the ACT government and you have been warned.” That is what we heard in the contribution from the Chief Minister of this territory. When given yet another opportunity to assure the Canberra community that this kind of serious allegation has no place in our community, that it is unacceptable, instead of showing leadership and making it very clear that ACT Labor will not affiliate with the ACT CFMEU, he failed the Canberra community again.

Mr Gentleman went on to say, “Your motion calls on Mr Barr to do something he has already done,” which is outright laughable because Mr Gentleman’s own amendment states that it was the national ALP that made the call on that, which is not the point. My motion calls on Mr Barr to take action. Mr Gentleman is somehow comparing a profit margin of five per cent to the reference that Master Builders ACT made that CFMEU influence could add up to 30 per cent to construction costs, I have literally never heard anything so dumb from Mr Gentleman, and that is saying something. Who pays—

Mr Barr: Point of order. I think that is an unparliamentary reflection on another member of the Assembly.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have not been through the list, and I am not sure whether it is unparliamentary, but Ms Lee—

MS LEE: Mr Deputy Speaker, on that point of order, I said that what he said was dumb. I did not call him dumb.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Deputy Speaker, if it might assist, phrases like “you are a dud”, “that was a dud” and “that was dumb” have been withdrawn in the past.

MS LEE: On that counterpoint, many members in this place have said, “That is the stupidest thing that we have ever heard.”

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I am going to let it stand.

MS LEE: Thank you. Who do you think, Mr Gentleman, pays for the projects that end up costing 30 per cent more? To compare that to a profit margin shows exactly why Mr Barr demoted him. It is typical of Mr Gentleman to make grand statements that are just plain wrong about the Canberra Liberals and our relationship and attitude to unions. Unions have an incredibly important role to play in our society but criminality in unions does not. It has no place in our society.

We have worked with and continue to work with many unions on serious concerns that they have for their members, especially on the very serious issue of this government's incredibly poor track record as the worst employer in town. Our firefighters, our police officers, our nurses and our teachers have been utterly let down by this government. We have worked collaboratively and we have worked closely with those unions to fight for better working conditions for their members, because of this Labor-Greens government and its very poor track record when it comes to how it treats its frontline staff. Mr Gentleman's contribution, as usual, is utterly baseless and is nothing more than an attempt to smear the Canberra Liberals in an election year. As usual, his contribution is an utter and worthless waste of time in this chamber.

The fact is that I have moved this motion because the Canberra community have every right to ask, given the seriousness of the allegations that have been levelled at the CFMEU and given the strong and unequivocal statements that have been made by every other Labor leader in this country, why it is that Mr Barr is the only one who has still refused, who has still failed, to call it out. The fact is that Mr Barr is letting down every Canberran who has afforded him the privilege to govern and make decisions in the best interests for them, their families and their hard-earned taxpayer dollars. Once again, when given the opportunity to put the Canberra community at the heart of his government, he has utterly failed.

We will not be supporting Mr Gentleman's amendment. Canberrans have to see the true nature of this tired, stale, arrogant Labor-Greens government that stopped governing in the best interests of Canberrans a long time ago. This October is their opportunity to show it at the ballot box.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

AYES 15		NOES 8
Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall	Leanne Castley
Yvette Berry	Suzanne Orr	Ed Cocks
Andrew Braddock	Marisa Paterson	Jeremy Hanson
Joy Burch	Michael Pettersson	Elizabeth Kikkert
Tara Cheyne	Chris Steel	Nicole Lawder
Jo Clay	Rachel Stephen-Smith	Elizabeth Lee
Emma Davidson	Rebecca Vassarotti	James Milligan
Mick Gentleman		Mark Parton

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Building—public sector certifiers

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.41): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) in July 2020, the Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Gordon Ramsay MLA, announced that the ACT Government would establish a team of public sector certifiers to restore confidence in the Territory's construction sector;
- (b) ACT Labor, ahead of the 2020 ACT election, committed to "establishing an expert team of publicly funded building certifiers within the ACT Public Service"; and
- (c) the ACT Greens, ahead of the 2020 ACT election, committed to "bring[ing] back government building certifiers for multi-unit residential developments, and for all projects where the builder or major subcontractors have been the subject of regulatory action by Access Canberra or WorkSafe. This will be revenue neutral, funded by regulatory fees"; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to establish an expert team of publicly funded building certifiers within the ACT Public Service.

I rise today to talk about an element of the construction industry that has long been a cause of community concern; that being building certification. This is a policy area that has largely been set in stone by governments of all persuasions since big waves of privatisation swept across the country through the 1990s and early 2000s. As a result of these changes to relax regulatory settings, a toxic dynamic has been allowed to foster between some private certifiers, builders and developers, to the detriment of consumers.

Let me be very clear: overwhelmingly, private certifiers in Canberra are diligent in their work. They are good people, doing good quality work, and I commend them for their contribution to our building and construction industry. However, there is no denying that the current privatised certification system means that private certifiers are incentivised to certify projects because their future income is reliant upon getting the future work. When the certification of a project means more money and more work for a certifier, the interests of the consumer do not always come first.

There is an obvious conflict of interest here that exists with all privatised regulatory services. You cannot be a tough cop on the beat if you are reliant on the people you are policing for your income. Unfortunately, we know that many Canberrans have experienced the consequences of this system firsthand. Tales of shoddy developments being approved by building certifiers are plastered across the local news on a semi-regular basis. They have been shared with us all, as local members, and even taken to court.

A notable example comes from a case heard two years ago in the Supreme Court of the ACT. The case was brought forward by an owner who sought to assign responsibility for defects in their newly built home, to recoup the losses. Interestingly, during the trial the private certifier cited his deference to the builder as a factor which contributed to his decision to issue the final certificate to the builder, despite numerous and obvious defects present in the home. This is just one example of many where a private certifier

ignores their statutory obligations, to the detriment of someone who just wants somewhere to call home.

Everyone in this place knows that Canberrans have been begging for something to be done about building certification for many, many years. Over that time, the confidence that our community has in our building and construction industry has faltered. To be very clear: this is not an issue that is unique to the ACT. Other jurisdictions around the country have faced a similar crisis of confidence.

In 2020 Gordon Ramsay MLA, the then Minister for Building Quality Improvement, announced that he would establish a team of public sector certifiers, operating on a fee-for-service basis, to restore confidence in the territory's construction sector. In concert with Mr Ramsay's announcement, ACT Labor also committed to delivering a team of public service certifiers ahead of the 2020 election, pushing back against the tide of privatisation. ACT Labor took a bold step to put an essential service back into public hands.

The Greens followed our lead, announcing that they would deliver government building certifiers for multi-unit residential developments and for all projects where the builder or major subcontractors had been the subject of regulatory action by Access Canberra or WorkSafe. Like ACT Labor's model, the model promised by the Greens was revenue neutral and funded by regulatory fees.

A consensus was formed that public building certifiers would make a real difference to improving the quality and integrity of the ACT's building and construction industry. It would break the nexus between developers, builders and certifiers. It would put a tough cop back on the beat and rebuild trust in the construction industry. It was a view that was endorsed by Canberrans when they voted for our respective policy platforms at the October 2020 election.

I have been waiting with bated breath throughout this term for any updates on this election commitment. It was in August that I saw a policy proposal announced. To my frustration, it was not the one that we took to the last ACT election. It was not going to deliver public building certifiers. Instead, the announcement was that the government would employ a team of trained professionals within Access Canberra to review building design documents for quality assurance and attend mandatory inspections at each stage of the construction process.

Unfortunately, this is not public building certifiers. It is not public certifiers operating on fee-for-service basis. To be very clear from the outset, I do not think this is a bad announcement. More resources and more involvement for the existing regulator is a good thing, but I do not believe it goes far enough. It fundamentally props up a system that Canberrans want changed. Employing a team of public servants to review the work of qualified private building certifiers is merely expanding upon the existing regulatory oversight role of the ACT government.

It does not change the system; it embeds it. It doubles down on the idea that privatised regulatory services are better than publicly run ones. It accepts the neoliberal premise that government cannot do things, that public servants are inefficient or incompetent. I will not accept an outsourcing ideology that says that the government cannot provide

services effectively and that public servants are somehow less able. For me, this proposal is seemingly a strange pathway step. It says that we cannot trust private certifiers to do the right thing all the time, so we will have someone from government to look over their shoulder the whole time. But we do not trust the government employee overseeing the private certifier to actually just do the work of certifying it themselves. Further, the nexus between private building certifiers and developers or builders is clearly preserved.

I sat on the inquiry into building quality last term. It does not go to the recommendation for a rotating panel on certifiers, and there are also questions as to how it should be paid for. This decision means that taxpayers, everyday Canberrans, will effectively foot the bill for this increased regulatory oversight. To be clear, that is not necessarily a bad thing, but I do not think it is as good as a fee-for-service model. This means either higher rates or an increased building levy. Conversely, the public certifier model will pay for itself over time, with full fee recovery.

It is clear to me, when I look around the country, that public certifiers are actually commonplace public policy. That is why New South Wales has them. That is why Tasmania has them. That is why Victoria has them. That is why South Australia has them. We know from the schemes in other jurisdictions that public certifiers are achievable here in the ACT. Famously: “If they can do it, why can’t we?”

I have been frustrated at how this policy proposal has moved through the Assembly this term. I had hoped that we would have more opportunities to discuss and debate this idea. That is why I have moved this motion here today: I did not believe that there was going to be another opportunity to talk about public building certifiers. So I am grateful that we do have this opportunity here today.

In recent times, I have received briefings from the minister and accessed information about this proposal once it was released to the media. I do have some concerns about the proposal and some of the information that was relied upon to make the decision.

For me, looking at some of that information, I find it strange that: a view was formed that public certifiers are not viable or feasible in the ACT, when they exist in most jurisdictions; private certifiers with government oversight improve confidence more than public certifiers; and private certifiers with government oversight provide more public protections than public certifiers. Why was the ongoing viability of private certifiers a criterion in assessing public certifier models? How do private certifiers with government oversight “mostly” meet the criteria of breaking the nexus between developer, builder and certifier.

I believe that essential public services, like building certifiers, should be provided by government. Labor believes that essential public services should be provided by government, which is why Labor remains committed to establishing an expert team of publicly-funded building certifiers within the ACT public service.

To be clear, I believe that the reforms announced in August will help improve private certification in the ACT. But this reform work needs to go further. It needs to break the chain between certifiers, developers and builders. And it should have been delivered faster—not on the eve of an election with no Assembly debate.

Back in 2020, both Labor and the Greens committed to delivering this. I am hopeful that in the next Assembly we can do that.

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) (3.53): I move the amendments that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all text after paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

- “(d) to address these commitments, the ACT Government has implemented a suite of reforms to improve building quality and enhance consumer protections. These have included:
- (i) a Nation leading Property Developer Licencing Scheme;
 - (ii) a registration scheme for engineers;
 - (iii) universal accessibility standards;
 - (iv) improving energy efficiency standards;
 - (v) reviewing and improving building warranty programs; and
 - (vi) developing a plan to enable the ACT’s buildings to meet world’s best practice in relation to sustainability;
- (e) in addition, under the leadership of the Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate undertook a program of work to explore and consider a range of options to strengthen building certification services, including public certifiers;
- (f) analysis informed by independent expert advice, the experience of other jurisdictions and the impact of other building reforms introduced to the ACT since 2020, led to the conclusion that the most effective way to reduce building defects and improve consumer protection would be to establish a public service team of building surveyors, engineers and other professionals responsible for a number of additional steps to improve the certification process. This includes additional requirements at the documentation stage, onsite inspections by public certifiers through the construction phase and additional checks prior to providing a certificate of occupation; and
- (g) the new building certification reforms were agreed to by Cabinet, funded through the 2024-25 budget, and were announced by the ACT Government on 13 August. The reforms will be implemented by July 2025; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) continue to implement these reforms from July 2025; and
 - (b) commit to monitoring the effectiveness of the changes, evaluate the outcomes and share the findings publicly by 30 September 2027, including any recommendations for change.”.

As Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, I am really proud of the reforms that the government has delivered over the last four years—proud because of the

protections that they provide to the people of the ACT but also proud of the way that they were formulated: with expert advice, evidence-based policy options, consultation with industry and the broader community; and collegiate decision-making with my ministerial colleagues. This has allowed real change to occur.

The ACT government's building reform program has a common goal of reducing building defects. Building defects cost Australians approximately \$2.5 billion annually, with class 2 apartment buildings alone accounting for \$1.3 billion, or 52 per cent of the total. These issues can lead to high rectification costs and increased safety risks and can diminish property values and income, often impacting on consumers' confidence in the building and construction industry.

A key focus of mine has been to make sure that those working in the building and construction industry are held accountable for their actions, enhancing protections for consumers and community and lifting standards across the sector. Strengthening the ACT's building certification system is an important part of the broader reform agenda, and I would like to explain to members the background around some of the recent announcements on changes to building certification services here in the ACT.

The starting point for these latest reforms lies in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement of the 10th Assembly, which did include, in Appendix 3, a commitment to establish an expert team of publicly-funded building certifiers within the ACT public service. As noted in Mr Pettersson's motion, both parties of government made similar commitments in the lead-up to the previous election. At the time, I, for one, thought that this was the path that we should follow.

Since then, through a detailed scoping and analysis of options—including taking into consideration other significant reforms that have been progressed—the exemplary work of our building reform team and experts did make it clear to me that there was a better way to improve outcomes from the certification process, particularly if we are solving the problem of building defects. It is incumbent on us, as political decision-makers, to engage with expert advice and recognise that there is sometimes a better way to get the outcomes we have committed to. For me, this seems to be a case in point.

Fundamentally, we have a question that we need to answer. What is the problem that we were trying to solve? It comes down to two main points: reducing defects in construction and protecting against the risk, real or perceived, arising from a developer appointing and paying a certifier.

To reduce defects in construction, we must identify defects at the earliest possible time, focusing resources on the design and construction phases rather than post-completion and rectification. To protect against the conflict that may arise from the developer appointing and paying the certifier, we need to make sure that the certifier is performing their statutory role and is assessing compliance, rather than facilitating poor construction outcomes.

On the conflict issue, I do consider the Property Developer Licensing and Regulation Scheme, which was passed by the Assembly in June of this year, to be a game changer. The Property Developers Act 2024 makes property developers accountable for the building defects within their development. This removes any incentive for developers

to push certifiers to approve defective work, as the developer, including directors, can be held liable for the defective work. This means that developers have an incentive to support the certifier to identify defects at the earliest time, so they can be fixed by the developer at a lower cost.

In April 2023, the directorate engaged a consultant to support the development and analysis of options which would deliver on these outcomes. They included a public certifier model, a panel model and an oversight assurance model. This process involved consultation with industry and community stakeholders as well as considering the experience of other jurisdictions and the impacts of other building reforms introduced in the ACT.

We found that there are significant barriers and risks to bringing certification in-house within the public service. While there are public servant certifiers in other jurisdictions, these days around 90 per cent of the work occurs in the private sector. Public certification schemes run by councils struggle to attract staff and meet market expectations around salary, create significant liability risk for authorities and are not immune to integrity risks.

Also, while a public certification model does deliver on the exact wording of the election commitments of our parties, and is an option for addressing a risk of conflict, advice is clear that it is not actually likely to materially impact on the reduction of defects. It turns out that just getting a different group of people to try and do the same thing is not going to address the problem we are trying to solve.

At 4 pm debate was adjourned pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly, and resumption of debate made an order of the day at the conclusion of the valedictory.

Valedictory

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.00), by leave: As I approach the end of my time here in the Assembly, I want to reflect on the journey that got me here. It might surprise some people to know that it started back in 1996, when there was a terrible shooting at Port Arthur and 35 innocent people were killed and 23 were injured. At that time, John Howard, who was a brand-new Prime Minister, worked with the states and territories to change the gun control laws. He had to work with the states and territories because, under our Constitution, gun control is not a federal issue; it is a state and territory issue. So he had to bring them along with him.

Then, in 2002, there was another shooting, at Monash University, where a student armed with six loaded handguns and extra ammunition opened fire in a small tutorial room. Two died and five were injured. When the shooter stopped shooting and moved to switch weapons, the injured lecturer at the front of the room went to the back, grabbed the shooter's hand as he reached into his jacket, and the injured lecturer and another student restrained the shooter and held him there until police and emergency services arrived. Once again, John Howard tightened our gun control laws.

I reflected a lot on this because, as a small-L Liberal, I do not believe in the government controlling everything in our lives. I do not want the government to tell me what to do and when to do it. But in many areas there is a tipping point where it is absolutely right

for the government to step in for the greater good. I think we can all agree that, given the trajectory of the United States with their mass shootings, compared to Australia, this was an excellent decision.

This affected me greatly, partly because my brother was one of those injured in the Monash University shooting. He was shot twice, in the arm and the leg, and he received a lot of bravery medals because he was the injured lecturer who helped to restrain the shooter. He was in hospital for some time, in intensive care. One night when I was sitting there, wondering in a way whether he would live or die, whether he would lose his leg and what would happen, I had one of those lightbulb moments. I thought, “What if that was me there and I died? What would people say about me at my funeral? What have I done with my life? What difference have I made?”

That is not when I went into politics. I was in the public service at the time and I moved to the community sector because I felt that was a genuine way I could make a difference in our community. Firstly, for a few years I worked in the disability sector and then the homelessness sector. When you work in the community sector—and many of us here know from our prior experience, and some in the gallery will know—you are always knocking on the door of the government. You want more money, more programs, more services and more resources. It is like Oliver with his begging bowl saying, “More, more, more.” At one point when I was approaching the government, I thought to myself, “Who is making these decisions? I think I could do a better job,” and that is when I decided to go into politics, which is another genuine way to make a difference in your community. I mentioned that I am a traditional liberal, in the small-L liberal sense. I come from a Defence family. I believe in the individual, their rights and their enterprise. I strongly believe in freedom of choice, personal effort and responsibility, and reward for hard work, as taught to me by my parents.

Robert Menzies, our longest-serving Prime Minister, said in his 1942 seminal speech “The Forgotten People” that he had a vision for a free and prosperous nation in which individuals would be empowered to fulfill their dreams through education and hard work. That defined the shape of post-war Australia. When he made that speech, Australians were fighting in the Pacific, and it was hard to imagine a free and prosperous Australia at that point, but he did. Of course, there are some in my party who, in my view, want things to remain as they were when Menzies made that speech. I am not one of them. I know we need to move on, but we can still maintain our liberal ideology without being stuck in the middle of the last century. I have often said that I am about as far to the left of the Liberal Party as you can get without being a Labor supporter. Consequently, I have struggled with internal party politics at times, and I suspect they have struggled with me at times too.

When I first approached the Liberal Party, I expressed an interest in federal politics, and the powers that be told me I had to run in a local election first for name recognition. I said, “But what if I get in?” He said, “Don’t worry. You won’t.” Here I am, 12 years later. In fact, I think I was the token woman on a ticket of four other men in my electorate. I was unsuccessful in that first campaign. I was back to work in the homelessness sector on the Monday following the election. At this point, I would like to mention Mitch Clout, my first campaign manager, and the whole team of supporters and volunteers who helped me in that campaign.

Eight months after that 2012 election, Zed Seselja resigned from the Legislative Assembly and a casual vacancy came up. I agonised over it: did I want to put my hat in the ring; did I want to do it; did I actually want to become a politician? I was quite scarred by the campaign. I am sure anyone who is or has been a candidate understands what I mean: the physical and emotional toll in the Hunger Games that is the Hare-Clark system. In my first campaign, there were the three chosen candidates that the party obviously wanted to get elected. They worked together most of the time. They went to the shopping centres together and I was sent elsewhere on my own. Val Jeffery, who was banking on his name recognition, did not really campaign at all. The three would go to Lanyon and I would be told to go to Farrer, for example.

In fact, the only effort to include me came from Brendan Smyth, who would actually ring me and say, “Hey, we’re going to Lanyon today. Do you want to come?” and I would say, “I’ve been told to go to Farrer.” As a natural rule-follower, I followed the rules of the party. I presumed—perhaps rightly; perhaps wrongly—that the campaign director had a good reason for sending me elsewhere. In retrospect, I feel that it was never intended that I would get elected. There were the three golden boys who were always intended to get elected, and their plan worked. Is that the paranoia of a candidate in the Hare-Clark system? Or is it true? Who knows? I certainly do not.

When the casual vacancy came up, with prompting from my husband, I decided to follow it through to its conclusion, and, with my volunteers and supporters who helped me in that election campaign, I put my name forward to fill the casual vacancy, with no real expectation of getting elected. In fact, on the day when the casual vacancy was announced, I was away in Melbourne at an NDIS conference. When my husband rang me to say that I was the successful candidate, I did not believe him. I thought he was joking. I won by eight votes. When your party tells you that every vote counts, this is so true. Eight votes is such a slim margin. Every single vote is important. My family referred to it as my Steven Bradbury moment—the ice skater who got the gold medal at the last minute when everyone else fell over and he got the gold medal at the last minute.

I want to reflect on a couple of the more enduring memories of my time here, many of which were in my first term, perhaps because it was all new and different then. I like knowing that in 2013, Canberra’s centenary year, I was the only MLA elected to the ACT Assembly. I well recall that, in 2014, Ms Berry, who was a backbencher at the time, called me a cow! Moo!

Also in 2014, I received a letter from a constituent about a very annoying bird that was starting to creep into the ACT: the eastern koel. The constituent from Bonython complained to me that it was making loud noise at 3, 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning. He told me it was a non-Australian bird and should be trapped and removed, like the Indian myna bird. I duly wrote to the Minister for the Environment, expressing the concerns of my constituent, who then promptly went to the media claiming I wanted to kill all the birds. The eastern koel is, in fact, a migratory species that arrives in Australia to breed in spring. This was a great lesson to me: do not simply repeat in letters what my constituents said. Over the years, I have often reiterated that to my staff regarding the letters that they write. For some time, I was public enemy No 1 of all the birdwatchers in Canberra. Also in 2014, I shaved off all my hair for charity. That was pretty dramatic and, may I say, quite cold.

On a much more serious note, in 2015 we saw the horrific murder of Tara Costigan. Tara Costigan had taken out a DVO against her ex-partner. Tara Costigan was murdered by her ex-partner with an axe as she was holding their week-old baby, and in the same room as her nine-year-old and 11-year-old children. It was absolutely horrific. Whilst it is difficult to say that something positive can come from something so terrible, I feel it was really the start of bringing domestic and family violence much more into the open here in the ACT, and it started a lot of important conversations for us.

In 2016, we saw the murder of Bradyn Dillon, who was nine years old, after months of torture at the hands of his father. This was a failing on many levels of various ACT government directorates, who blamed confidentiality and privacy. This led to the Glanfield review. So, again, if you can say that anything positive can come out of something so terrible, I hope that the Glanfield review has resulted in enduring changes for ACT government directorates.

As all of us do, I did quite a bit of doorknocking, especially in the early days when I was trying to get my profile up a bit. I was always amazed at the way people would open the door—for example in their undies or with a towel around them. You think, “Who were they expecting when they answered the door?” Another time when I was door-knocking in Gordon, right at the edge of the suburb and with rural leasehold land behind it, a lady answered the door really quickly with a very sick, or perhaps dead, cat in her arms. She was on the phone and said, “What do you want?” I said, “I’m your local member. I’m here to ask whether there’s anything that you want.” She said, “My cat’s just been bitten by a snake. I’m on the phone to the vet.” I said, “I have you at a bad time. Maybe another time. I’ll let you go.” She said, “Just one thing before you go. When is the ACT government going to get rid of all the snakes in Canberra?” I am still waiting for someone to give me Saint Patrick’s phone number so I can ask him to get rid of all the snakes in Canberra, as this lady requested!

In 2016, I had a big decision to make: whether I would run again. I was not really enjoying my time as a politician. For a start, no-one goes into politics expecting to be in opposition. I was unable to make changes, especially in the areas of disability and homelessness, which were the drivers for my going into politics in the first place. The government was not interested in my ideas, and I thought I might be more useful back in the community sector. But I thought I would give it another go, just in case we won government and then perhaps I could make those changes. Of course, we did not win government in 2016, but, surprisingly, in 2016 I became Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Again, it seems like it was a bit of a Steven Bradbury moment, being the last person standing! Perhaps I was the person least objectionable to most, rather than the preferred candidate of many. But my hope in agreeing was to provide a counterpoint to the leader: one of us was more conservative, one of us was more progressive. You be the judge as to which one is which.

When it came to the 2020 election, I thought, “I can’t leave now. I’m the deputy leader. If we lose the election by one seat, especially in Brindabella, it will be all my fault,” so I felt obligated to run again. Of course, 2020 was the start of COVID, which had a huge impact on our community and the Assembly itself and I will not forget.

This time, for the 2024 election, I felt no obligation to run again. I feel I have done my

part. I am not the smartest person in our party room. I am not the most cunning. I am not the most aggressive or assertive. I am not the most adversarial, although I know many in my party would like me to be more adversarial as the whip. I am not the most media-savvy or media-hungry. I am not the most quick-witted. But what I felt I had to offer our party room was real-world experience in the public, private and for-purpose sectors, and common sense and loyalty. Loyalty is a trait I wish more of our team ascribed to. I also offer complete confidentiality. When you tell me something and tell me that it is confidential, you can be 100 per cent assured I will not pass it on, mostly because, Elizabeth, if you whisper, I cannot hear you! I just nod wisely and pretend I know what you are saying! So, rest assured, I will never tell anyone your secrets.

I have especially focused on, and enjoyed focusing on, a few issues, including: water quality, especially in Lake Tuggeranong, which is beautiful but suffers badly from blue-green algae; Tuggeranong issues generally; helping my constituents and working with community groups in Tuggeranong; deafness issues, including introducing changes to the standing orders to allow an Auslan interpreter onto the floor of the Assembly; other advocacy for Canberrans who are deaf or hard of hearing; older Canberrans, after all, we will all become one, and the alternative is even less attractive; and women's issues.

Throughout my life, I have seen changes in the economic empowerment of women and improved safety, but there is still such a long way to go—a long way before I feel my granddaughters will be on a level playing field with my grandsons. We are doing well in our parliament in terms of the representation of women, and I thought that having more women in the Assembly would lead us to a more gentle, more collaborative time. But I have been wrong. There has been little collaboration on women's issues. In fact, in one instance, when I brought a motion forward about women's safety, a government member attacked me and said they did not trust the Liberals to talk about women's safety—nothing about the merits of the proposal itself.

More generally, I fear for the state of our parliament here in the ACT. There appears to be declining respect for our democratic institutions. For example, we have ministers who refuse to answer letters, or ministerial representations as they are known. As opposition members, we used to be invited to many of the government's events—for example, the launch of Floriade or the ACT Women's Awards. These courtesies are long gone, let alone the one of acknowledging other MLAs by name at events. It seems to me that it is arrogance. And now we get from the government, to quote my father, three-fifths of bugger all. I point out that I have invited all members here to many events, which, incidentally, I pay for out of my own pocket. I do that because that is what community members say they want. They want a bipartisan or tri-partisan approach. They want access to all members at the one time. They do not want just one side of politics.

We have elected people who seem to have no respect for our democratic institutions. Protecting democratic institutions is vital for maintaining a fair and just society. I believe we should fight to protect the institutions that are important and work for us, and we should work to change the ones that are not working—the ones that need to change—not wilfully break the law or break the rules because we do not like them. We must be respectful. Inappropriate politicisation and disrespect of the parliament is, I believe, appalling. It is a move to performative politics and being a politician at the expense of being a parliamentarian.

Having said that, for me, it has been such a privilege to serve, and it has only been possible through the support of the party, the volunteers, staff and, of course, most importantly, my family. Over the years, I have had some amazing staff, some good staff, and a couple of quite ordinary staff, but they have all contributed in their own way, and I thank them sincerely and wish them all the very best. I cannot mention everyone by name, because I know I would miss someone and then I would be in trouble, but I especially want to mention just a couple of much longer term employees who also helped with my campaigns: Angela Inglis, Nikki Macey and Nicola Crampton, who were amazing.

I will give you a little anecdote about one of my staff, who was very matter-of-fact, black-and-white; there was no grey in her life. I was constantly asking her to be a bit more warm and fuzzy in the letters that she wrote for me. I want the constituent to know I care about their issues. She would write something like, "I wrote to the minister. The minister replied. Here it is. Regards, Nicole." That is not what I want. I tried putting a sticky note on her PC, saying, "Remember to be warm and friendly." No; that did not help. I gave her a little teddy bear to put on her desk. They are warm and fuzzy. No; that did not help. So, finally, after one letter she had written to a constituent, a lady who lived in a caravan in a caravan park—it was such a matter-of-fact letter—I said, "No; you need to be a lot more caring in your letter back to her." I said, "Just imagine, for example, if your mum got a letter like that. How would she feel?" She said, "Oh, no; my mother would never live in a caravan!"

Another time, a staff member said they probably would not be able to letterbox the next day because their phone was not working. I said, "While you are here in the office, why don't you print out a map on the printer and take it with you?" She said, "But how will I know when I get there?" I had to explain that, once upon a time, we all used paper maps and we still got to places, and it would probably be a good skill for her to learn.

Also, I have enjoyed becoming known as the "brooch lady", with my collection of brooches. There are around 1,000, although, if you ask me in the company of my husband, I would say there are probably only 100 or so. Just ignore that bit!

I would like to thank OLA staff in all areas of the Assembly for their professionalism and support. It has been invaluable, especially more recently in this term when I have been the whip and I have had a lot of questions. Thank you for all your help. To my many wonderful volunteers over the years, to whom I will be eternally grateful, and many of you are here today: every leaflet letterboxed and every constituent spoken to has had an impact, so thank you. Many volunteers who helped on my election campaigns really put in an enormous effort, and I thank you all.

Family members have all done their share of letterboxing and other campaigning, including at our polling booths over the years, including our children, Damian and Shan, Shane and Sarah, Amanda and Karl, Catherine, Alex and Tanya and my wonderful grandchildren, who also are very skilled at letterboxing. They have worn t-shirts and got used to seeing corflutes of their nanna around the place. Sometimes they have even blown raspberries at the corflutes of people from other parties! Thank you Ryan, Annie, Alice, Brianna, Cooper, Jasmyn, Isaac, Dylan, Lachlan, Jayde, Angela, Evie and Marlee. At the time of my inaugural speech, I had nine grandchildren. Now I have 13.

Jayde, Angela, Evie and Marlee have joined our family since I was first elected. Sadly, a few family members have passed away since they came along to my inaugural speech, including my mother-in-law, Traudel, my mother, Joan, who passed away just a few months ago, and my son-in-law James, who also passed a few months ago. All are sadly missed.

My mum always said it was her job to bring up good Australians, and I hope I have made her proud in that regard. I have loved my job, I have loved representing the people of Tuggeranong, and I wanted to leave while I still loved it, not wait until I became jaded and cynical. There may be some others in this place who have reached that point and should think about leaving under their own terms.

I believe that democratic renewal is important. I would like to think that I would be re-elected if I had chosen to stand again, but I am happy to call time and give someone else a go. It has, all in all, been a fantastic experience, a privilege, and it is great to contribute to my own community, including those I have never met and even those who have not yet been born.

In my inaugural speech in 2013, I said that, in the future, I wanted Canberra to be a dynamic vibrant city, where all of our children and grandchildren will be able to find jobs and create new business opportunities, have the best possible health care and education system, have a stable economy and affordable housing with a reasonable cost of living, and have excellent amenities in the built environment, while still being responsible caretakers of the beautiful natural environment which surrounds our city. I spoke about people with disability, the aged, visitors, migrants, tourists, those on low incomes and those on high incomes.

I mentioned that, immediately prior to my election to the Legislative Assembly, I worked in the national peak body for homelessness and that housing affordability was a key issue, with housing being the single greatest cost-of-living expense for households. I mentioned that, in the previous five years, I had been a member of the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council and a ministerial advisory council to the federal government about the introduction of the NDIS, and I mentioned the risks involved with implementing and operationalising the NDIS in the ACT.

I spoke about the ACT's ageing population, with the percentage aged 65 years and older predicted to increase from approximately 10 per cent in 2007 to 14.3 per cent by 2019, and that we needed to meet their needs. I spoke about the people I met during the election campaign who wanted the focus back on the basics—the three Rs: roads, rates and rubbish—and that we need to be constantly vigilant about delivering excellence in these basic services. I also spoke about the lack of parking and the inability of the public transport system to meet the needs of large numbers of Canberrans to get to work, especially from Tuggeranong.

I said that Canberra has a high business insolvency rate and the lowest business survival rate of any Australian state and territory. I said that Canberrans have the right to expect the best possible health care and that this was another area we needed to improve on. I said that, while we spend vast amounts of money on our hospital system, it is clear there is still a lot of work to be done, including on the emergency department waiting times.

That was all from my inaugural speech. I am sad to say that, over the course of three terms, little has changed for ACT residents on these issues. As my mother was fond of saying, it is what it is. But there is, of course, a fresh opportunity in October where things might change after all this time. It has been such an honour to represent the people of Brindabella and Tuggeranong all these years. Thank you for putting your faith in me. I have tried my best to be a good local member. That is really all I ever wanted to be, and I hope to continue to be useful to you in one way or another in the future.

Someone once said that you can please all the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time but you cannot please all the people all the time. While I have received many lovely messages from people expressing their appreciation for my efforts as their local member over the years, not everyone is happy. For example, last weekend, I heard from John at Monash. Years ago, John wrote to me about a lady who had tripped on a damaged footpath in Monash, near Goodwin Village. She had broken her arm and was taken to the hospital via ambulance. I went over to Monash and I met John at the scene and I took photos and wrote to the minister. Not long after, a nearby section of footpath was fixed but, unfortunately, not the spot where the lady had fallen. John contacted me again. I went out there again and met him, took more photos and again wrote to the minister. But nothing was ever done about the section of footpath where the lady fell over.

When I sent out my monthly newsletter on the morning again, John wrote back to me and he said. “Well, I might say it is good to hear from you after a time. I am still wondering why you haven’t got around to fixing the footpath in Barraclough Crescent, Monash. I don’t know how long it is still I reported it to you and you also took a photo of where the older lady fell and an ambulance had to be called for her. Very sorry, but you’re just not good enough for the problems we have. So I will have to vote for the same party but not for you. Thank you, John.” Well, John, I have to say I am not too concerned that you are not going to vote for me this time. But I am glad to hear that you are still going to vote Liberal.

Many people have asked me what is next after politics. I have enrolled to undertake a PhD on a politics topic at the ANU. If any of you are unsuccessful at the upcoming election, I will be in touch regarding a survey for my PhD. I look forward to starting work on it in earnest in November. I will also be looking for a job, perhaps in board positions. I do like to be busy and I feel I still have plenty to offer our community. If there are any great jobs going, perhaps like commissioner or international engagement, I would like to hear about them—asking for a friend.

It was a big decision initially to not re-stand but I feel very comfortable with it now, and each passing day I feel more and more comfortable with it, especially since I have not had to be out campaigning over winter and this windy spring. I would like to wish all the very best to all candidates for this year’s election, including the sitting members who are re-standing. Obviously, I wish more good luck to some than others. But if I can give just a tiny bit of advice to any incoming MLAs: remember to keep your perspective. Do not neglect your family and friends. Do not lose sight of the reasons you went into politics in the first place and the things you wanted to achieve. And know when your time is up. Make your own decisions. Have agency in your life.

Thank you once again to the people of Brindabella, staff past and present, the party and my colleagues, my volunteers and donors and, most especially, my family and friends, especially my husband Peter, my greatest critic and greatest supporter. Thank you and goodbye.

MADAM SPEAKER: Well done, Ms Lawder. We might take a break but, if I can, I would just acknowledge a couple of people in the Assembly. Former Chief Minister Gary Humphries and former Leader of the Opposition Alistair Coe. Welcome back. I also acknowledge the former President of the Senate and Senator the Hon. Margaret Reid. It is a pleasure to have you all here. Well said, Ms Lawder.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (4.33), by leave: On behalf of the Canberra Liberals team, I pay tribute to our colleague, our confidante, our whip and our friend Nicole Lawder. Nicole was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in mid-2013 as the member for Brindabella, filling a casual vacancy created by the resignation of the then Leader of the Canberra Liberals Zed Seselja, and Nicole was subsequently re-elected in 2016 and in 2020.

Prior to entering the Assembly, Nicole had a long and distinguished career in the community sector and public service. She started in Canberra in 1989 at the Tidbinbilla Deep Space Communication Complex, where she managed the public affairs and the visitor centre. Nicole held various roles in a very promising career in the Australian Public Service, but her life took a pivotal turn when her brother Lee was seriously injured during the 2002 Monash University shootings where Lee had been working as a lecturer. Like today, I have actually heard Nicole tell that story a number of times, the important point in her life that led her to where she is today, and each time it is just as touching, as she thought to herself, “If I was lying there, what would I want people to say that I had achieved with my life?” and how this was the moment that she chose to use her experience and her expertise to go and work in the community sector. Nicole served as CEO of Deafness Forum of Australia from 2006 to 2010 and was then appointed Chief Executive of Homelessness Australia in 2011.

It was during her time in the community sector where she found herself lobbying the government for funding for the important work that they were doing that she realised she wanted to be at the decision-making table. That is why she put her hand up to be a candidate for the Canberra Liberals in the 2012 election. I think the biggest regret is that she did not get to serve in government and actually get to make those decisions.

During her time with the Assembly, Nicole held numerous shadow ministerial portfolios, including Arts, City Services, Environment Heritage, Water, Family and Community Services, Housing, Women, Veterans and Seniors, just to name a few. Nicole served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition from 2016 to 2020 and has been our whip from February 22. She has also sat on a number of Assembly committees, including Education and Community Inclusion, Economy and Gender and Economic Equality, Justice and Community Services, Safety, Environment and Transport and City Services, Planning and Urban Renewal, Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services and, most recently, very valiantly, she chaired the 2024-25 Estimates Committee while we were able to go out and campaign as well.

Nicole is, and has always been, a very active member of her local community. She served as a board member for the Tuggeranong Football Club, as a volunteer for Ronald McDonald House, also for her local community fire unit and the Red Cross. Nicole is also a very strong supporter of local businesses. You just have to check out her Instagram to see how many photos that she takes at local cafes.

Hands down, I would say that Nicole is the one responsible for hosting the most community events in the Assembly—most recently, having hosted the teams from Lids for Kids, Men’s Shed, the Canberra Women in Business, the National Association of Women in Construction—and, most of the time, she is incredibly generous and gracious and invites all members from across the political spectrum to engage with these communities and organisations.

This term, and especially this year, I have had the great privilege of being able to visit regularly Brindabella as I have been supporting our members and candidates. Each time I am down there it is incredibly clear that Nicole has done so much for her constituency as a local member. A number of times I have had Tuggeranong locals come up to me and say, “Nicole is the ultimate local member. She is an absolute champion”, and a number of people have said, “I am not a Liberal voter”—that is always a good start when you are out there talking—“but I always vote Nicole No. 1,” and it is because she is a true local champion.

I think everyone will agree with me when I say that Nicole is an incredibly conscientious member. She is always humble and whip smart—I think she sells herself short in her speech—but never assuming. When she told me that she had decided to leave this place, it was so peak Nicole. She said to me, “I am not retiring. I am not retiring,” and I said, “Okay.” She definitely still wants to work and contribute to the community, as she has always done. But, as she has said today, she knew that it was time. She knew that it was time for democratic renewal, to give someone else a chance to have the privilege of being in this place. That sums up Nicole’s character. She has given 10 years to this chamber, and the only regret is that she did not get a chance to serve as a government minister.

Those who do not know Nicole very well will probably not have had the chance to see firsthand her incredible dry and quick wit and sassy humour. I know that there are many notable moments and quotes. A couple of the ones that stand out in my memory at least was I think one time Nicole had asked Ms Berry a question about the Tuggeranong basketball courts, and Ms Berry said something like, “Oh, yes, and I have seen Ms Lawder dribbling around the basketball court,” and Nicole, quick as a flash, goes, “And I play basketball too sometimes.” And, of course, who can forget the time that she stood in this very spot and accused Labor and Greens members of orchestrating a break-up so that they could go and have “hot monkey sex”, or her regaling a tale during estimates—and I think Mr Barr was present—when she told us the story about how the revolving restaurant up at Telstra Tower holds very, very special memories, because it was when she proposed to Pete at that restaurant and he rejected. But, as you can see, as is the case with any good love story, there is a happy ending. Given that Pete has joined us in the chamber today, it does have a very happy ending, and I hope that it will be even happier after Nicole has departed. Pete, on behalf of the party, thank you for sharing your wife with us over the last 10 years. I know that she is looking forward to spending so much more time with you, with your children and with your grandchildren.

Nicole is one of those politicians that I think we all strive to be: a true local member. From the moment she stepped into this place, she has always worked hard for the people of Tuggeranong—indeed, the people of Canberra. In her inaugural speech back in 2013, Nicole outlined the vision for Canberra that she was really hoping that she would be able to contribute to. She went on to say:

In working towards this vision for Canberra, I want a Canberra that is accessible and inclusive of everyone. This includes people with disability, the aged, visitors, migrants, tourists, those on low incomes, those on high incomes—in fact, everyone from all walks of life. I want a city and a territory with a real sense of community and connectedness. I want us to build on our pride in our city and take on bigger and better things, not just as the hub of our region but as our nation's capital.

Madam Speaker, I think you will agree with me that Nicole has certainly made Canberra a better place. She has certainly made this Assembly a better place, and she will be very sadly missed. When you have a look around at everyone who has joined us to bid Nicole farewell from the Assembly—and I can see members from the community organisations that she has engaged with, members of the party and her family, friends and loved ones—the reach that Nicole had throughout her time here is abundantly clear. She served Alistair as leader in his time here really, really loyally, and that is something that Alistair talks about often and I know that it meant a lot to him and to the team.

On behalf of the Canberra Liberals: Nicole, thank you. Thank you for everything that you have done, your incredible record of service to the Assembly, to the party and to the people of Canberra. Do not sell yourself short, and I would be more than happy to fill out a survey for you when you do your PhD if you do not get given a commissioner for international engagement role. Thank you very much.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development) (4.43), by leave: I rise on behalf of ACT Labor and my colleagues in this place, Ms Lawder, to acknowledge your significant contribution to this place. You have spoken today, and it is not the first time, about that moment that changed your life and set it on a different course, a lifechanging moment, one that led you to reflect on the direction that you would take, where that change would take you and how people would remember you.

I would note, and I acknowledge, the very significant contribution that was made by former Prime Minister Howard to respond not only to the Port Arthur issue but also, clearly, that tragedy at Monash University. The federal Liberal government did indeed work with states and territories to strengthen gun laws, and I think that demonstrated the power of effective government intervention to protect the community, and I note and acknowledge the significant impact that would have had on your family and why it would lead you to want to pursue a career in politics.

But, before that, of course, as we have heard, you had a career in the not-for-profit sector, four years as Chief Executive of the Deafness Forum and then as CEO of Homelessness Australia, before embarking on participation in our wonderful festival of democracy that we have in this jurisdiction. Every four years wedged between the Olympics and the US presidential election, the most significant of all of those events of

course is the territory election. Your recollection of the experience of the 2012 election does indeed concur with my perspective on how that played out, particularly in the Brindabella electorate. Whilst you were speaking, I quickly checked how you fared at the Farrer booth—and you held your own, which I think reflects the fact, as you observed, that in Hare-Clark every single vote counts. To have been elected by only eight in a countback, beating Val Jeffery, who was indeed expected to take the seat, was a tribute to all of your hard work. I have been told that, on being advised by your husband over the phone, your first response was, “How’s Val?” You also made very special mention of Val in your inaugural speech, which I think speaks to your reputation as a team player.

You began your time in this place as a backbencher and have held several shadow ministries over your time in the Assembly. I think you have been my shadow minister on several occasions, and I will certainly agree that I have been on the sharp end of your wit and certainly your doggedness in pursuing particular issues. To have risen to the role of deputy leader of a party is recognition of the support of your colleagues and your status in the community. A leadership role, particularly in a parliament this small, is very demanding. I know that and I know every single member in this place who has held a leader or deputy leader role in their party would certainly attest to that extra call that is on top of your responsibilities as a local member. That you held that role throughout an entire term of the Assembly, I would observe, was somewhat unusual for the Canberra Liberals, which I think again reflects the strength that you brought to that task and the support that you must have had amongst your colleagues in that time.

You also have served as opposition whip, which I have to say, together with the other whips keeping all of us under control, is one of the more challenging roles in this place. Madam Speaker, the last couple of weeks have definitely demonstrated that. We also recognise and acknowledge the role that you played as chair of the budget estimates process this year. All of my colleagues—all of them, Ms Lawder—have remarked on your fair and even-handed approach to the hearings, which we have not always experienced from opposition chairs.

There are a number of memories that you have touched upon. One that stood out for my colleagues was that participation in the Canberra Liberals Relay for Life team, where you joined in a world record attempt with, I understand, 200 people who had their heads shaved at the same time. I am slowly losing my hair—I would not want to suddenly have it disappear—so I understand the experience. Particularly in a Canberra winter, it would be very cold.

I want to acknowledge your fierce advocacy for people with disability, especially through your work with the deaf community. We note and acknowledge that this has included significant efforts in allowing Auslan interpreters onto the floor of this chamber, as we have again witnessed today, and that you have employed deaf people in your office.

You have been a passionate representative for Tuggeranong. Your letter-writing to ministers outpaces every other MLA, I am advised. You champion issues like water quality and cleaning up around Fadden Pond. Odour issues at Mugga Lane is another thing that you have raised consistently. Your love for dogs is well known. I had not realised you were so anti bird, though!

You have been recognised across the arts community as a genuine supporter of the arts, with a deep interest in all artforms. You have been consistent in your attendance at functions, launches and exhibitions of all sizes, and you have always been generous with your time with the arts community.

For my colleagues and me, your contributions on social justice issues have not only been some of the most appreciated—perhaps unsurprisingly—but also the most moving. In particular, my colleagues have singled out your speech in 2022 on a motion in response to *Roe v Wade* being overturned. You gave a stirring and very personal speech about something you had not spoken about before, publicly or privately. You said at the time:

When I did decide to talk about it today, it was because I wanted young women and people to know that this is their body and their choice, and I will support that.

It was a very strong and passionate statement, and we acknowledge and congratulate you for that.

You have been a consistent supporter of territory rights and voluntary assisted dying. You were with Ms Lee, Ms Cheyne and me in the Senate chamber when the territory rights bill was passed and territory rights were finally restored in December 2022. I acknowledge your support for the legislation in this place this year. You spoke from a place of painful personal experience and made a powerful contribution to the debate.

You have been the lion, the champion, of the moderate voice in your party—there is no doubting that—at a time when moderate and centrist positions are diminishing in Australian politics. You have brought interest and passion to this place, which we can all respect. I am reliably told that your choice of brooch each day and the questions that are inspired by that choice and the meaning behind it will be universally missed, as will your editorial skills.

On behalf of the ACT Labor Party, we wish you, Peter and your extended family all the very best for the future. You now join a number of your colleagues who have asked to be Commissioner for International Engagement—more than I probably should declare in a forum like this! I wish you all the very best for the future. You have made a big contribution to this place from the other side of the chamber. May there be many memorable memories to come with you and your family. All the very best, Nicole.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (4.52), by leave: I rise today on behalf of the ACT Greens to acknowledge the service of Ms Lawder, as a member for Brindabella, and wish her all the best for her next steps.

I was sorry to miss the start of your speech today, as I was on a national ministerial video call. I was very pleased that the call finished early because it enabled me to arrive in time to be reminded of the fantastic story of the desire to exterminate koels in this territory. Whilst it is entirely inappropriate, it is probably quite a popular opinion in this city as they start to arrive again with their annual migration!

I was pleased to arrive in time to hear the bulk of your very warm speech and be reminded of that wit and humour we have seen, particularly at a number of annual end of year speeches, which, if memory serves me correctly, have included poems and songs over the years that have provided a great deal of entertainment.

As has been noted, Ms Lawder entered the Assembly in 2013 to fill a casual vacancy and has served in a range of roles since then. She has held a number of different shadow portfolios and served on the full range of committees that a member can in this place. I do not intend to further detail these formal roles, as they have already been touched on in the discussion today.

Rather, as I prepared to make these remarks, I decided to reflect on a couple of areas of passion that I have seen Ms Lawder work on that exemplify her willingness to pursue an issue, work with stakeholders and seek to get the best possible outcomes for the community. Interestingly, they have been consistent themes throughout this afternoon's discussions, and they were in fact your first two.

The first is Ms Lawder's advocacy for the Deaf and hard of hearing community here in the territory. Across various motions, speeches and other interventions, Ms Lawder has exposed the rest of the members in this place to the particular needs and experiences of Canberrans with hearing difficulties. In the process, we have had Auslan interpreters in this place for various debates over the years, including again today, opening those discussions up to a broader range of Canberrans.

The second issue, and particularly as the minister for water, I did want to touch on is Ms Lawder's advocacy for improvements to Lake Tuggeranong. I also had a look at Ms Lawder's first speech in this place and she recalled moving to Canberra in 1988, noting that, and I quote:

Back then, Lake Tuggeranong was empty, and the Tuggeranong Hyperdome had only just opened.

I did appreciate the historical reference. It will always be the Hyperdome. Since then the lake has of course filled and, as the years have passed, the lake has done exactly what it was designed to do, which is to trap the various pollutants flowing down the system and prevent them from continuing into the Murrumbidgee River. The consequence of that has been a deterioration in the water quality and aesthetic of Lake Tuggeranong. While the lake was designed as a pollutant trap, community expectations have changed over the years, with a desire from the community to be able to use the lake for a range of recreational purposes. With more residents moving in to live around the lake, issues of poor water quality and smell have certainly come to the fore in the public's mind.

As members will know, this is an issue that I am also passionate about, with my desire to see people getting out and making use of our lakes, for swimming in and kayaking on, to go rowing and to let their dog have a swim. Ms Lawder has been dogged in her questioning of our progress to fix the lake. Whether in estimates, annual reports or here in the chamber, you can count on Ms Lawder to be following up on the state of the floating wetland or various other experimental technologies being tested on the lake and to be firing questions on notice that seek detailed data results from water quality

testing or simply highlighting that still more needs to be done. I am happy to reflect today that we are making progress on Lake Tuggeranong, but there is indeed more to be done.

While I am on the subject of estimates, I will pick up a point the Chief Minister made. I would like to acknowledge Ms Lawder's role as the chair of the estimates committee this year. It is a long slog over two weeks to sit in that room and to hold those hearings together in some sort of orderly manner. I think it is appropriate to reflect that Ms Lawder brought an especially firm yet fair approach to the role this year. I think it made for a better process for all involved.

Since the announcement of her intention not to recontest the poll in October, and I think especially in the last few weeks, particularly as we sit just across the chamber here, I have noticed a bit of a glint in the eye, perhaps a spring in the step from Ms Lawder, as she contemplates life beyond her time as a member of this place. No doubt she is contemplating having to work fewer hours, having the opportunity of uninterrupted weekends and the delight at spending more time with her family.

As happens in politics, I have had the good fortune to run into Ms Lawder and her husband, Peter, at various community events over the years. We have talked about a range of activities outside of politics, particularly outdoor pursuits. Having a little insight into their collective sense of adventure, I am confident that some fun times lie ahead for both Ms Lawder and Peter, after she exits this place and starts to embark on a different phase of life. On behalf of the rest of my colleagues in the Greens, I wish you all the very best for those new adventures. I hope that you do have an excellent time catching up with all those missed hours of family opportunity and leisure pursuits. I wish you all the very best for your future.

At 4.59 pm, the sitting was suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The bells having been rung, Madam Speaker resumed the chair at 5.03 pm.

Building—public sector certifiers

Debate resumed.

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) (5.03): Previously, I was saying that it turns out that just getting a different group of people to do the same thing is not going to address the problem we are trying to solve. Therefore, another option was developed to better address the problem we are trying to solve while delivering on the public service oversight element of the original commitment.

The changes I announced will involve employing a team of trained professionals, including building certifiers, within Access Canberra to deliver the features of oversight of the private sector workforce. They will review building approval documentation, focusing on structural drawings; review government attendance and reporting on stage inspections; review certificates of occupancy and use application documentation; and advise the Construction Occupations Registrar on issuing a certificate of occupancy and

use at this critical approval point. These changes will build on the existing regulatory oversight role of the ACT government by establishing a specialised team within Access Canberra and providing new design documentation, audit and construction inspection functions, initially focused on class 2 buildings.

Funding for these positions within Access Canberra has been secured in the 2024-25 budget. These reforms will provide additional assurances so that private building certifiers identify defects at the earliest possible time in the design documentation and during the construction phase, when defects can be most easily and cost-effectively rectified, with relevant professionals and trades still engaged and on site. This will be of benefit to future home owners and increase community confidence.

Fundamentally, this approach is a solution that addresses both aspects of the policy problem. It is cost and time effective and complements other reforms that have been progressed over the last four years. The new approach to certification services will take effect from 1 July 2025. It does seem prudent to allow time for implementation of these changes, monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness and then consider the next steps. We are very happy to consider continuing to contemplate and look at the possibility of having publicly funded building certifiers within the public service, but we need to find a model that is workable and solves a problem that we see is there.

What I have learned over the last four years, as Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction, is that it is important to look at the whole system and at how different parts work within it. We need to be clear about the problems that we are trying to solve and the best ways to solve them. As part of this, we need to go to the root of problems and identify practical and workable solutions.

The regulatory system for residential buildings and constructions is vastly different to what it was four years ago, when I took on the role. We have delivered significant reform, focused on improving quality, reducing defects and providing consumer protection. There is still more work to be done, and we do need to continue the work in areas such as trade licensing, implementing the 10-year Sustainable Building Pathway and further improving consumer protection. Given that we have just announced and are implementing enhanced measures to improve certification processes over the next 12 months, we do need time to embed these systems and assess what more we need to do and, importantly, understand the problems we are trying to solve. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.07): Is it not fascinating that so much of the business being done in this chamber in the final sitting week involves a stand-off between the two governing parties? At the end of the day, this is another one. In this motion, Mr Pettersson, somewhat politely, shines a light on a broken promise from his own government because he believes that he can lay blame on his governing partners, the Greens. The motion is a call to the voters of Canberra from Mr Pettersson to say, "We are better than them." It is another suggestion from Labor that everything that is wrong with the government is the fault of the Greens. Conversely, we are seeing the Greens trumpet loudly that everything that is wrong with the government is the fault of Labor. It is almost bizarre.

This is the sort of motion that you would have expected to come from the opposition, to some extent. It clearly articulates promises that the government has made and then not fulfilled. The Canberra Liberals have been in two minds as to how to actually respond to this one. One of the avenues, Madam Speaker, was to get one of those large popcorn combos and just sit back. Just sit back. I do not know who is up for choc tops, but I think the popcorn is the go, and just sit back and watch them slug it out.

We, of course, have long had the conversation in our party room and with stakeholders about public certification, because the premise behind it is very sound. Unfortunately, as Ms Vassarotti has discovered and has articulated, it is not quite as simple as it sounds. There are some complications. It is still fascinatingly entertaining to watch the two governing parties have a crack at each other in this space. Again, at its core, Mr Pettersson is calling out failures of his own government.

The amendment from the minister is not a knockdown-rebuild of the motion. This is the minister admitting that she has not lived up to the promise and suggesting that she will try harder. When your own government members are calling you out for having failed, it is difficult to arrive at any other conclusion than that these things are not working. We are not likely to support the amendment from Ms Vassarotti, but that is in part because we made the call not to just get a big popcorn combo; we made the call to inject something else into the debate. I am keen to move an amendment at some stage, after we have dealt with this first one. That is all that I have to say at this stage. We will not be supporting the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment negatived.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.10): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

- “(d) Labor and the Greens have failed to improve building quality in the ACT;
 - (e) in 2019, the NSW Government appointed an independent Building Commissioner to restore trust in the construction industry
 - (f) jurisdictions across Australia have introduced or sought to introduce a similar Building Commissioner including Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria; and
 - (g) over the term of the 10th Assembly, this Government has introduced more than 125 law and regulatory changes in a failed attempt to improve building quality in Canberra. These changes have instead resulted in a significant amount of construction insolvencies; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) appoint a Construction and Strata Commissioner to ensure building quality standards in the ACT; and
 - (b) task the Commissioner with establishing an expert term of publicly funded building certifiers within the ACT Public Service.”.

Despite the brave faces and the enthusiastic words, things are a little broken in building and construction in the ACT. Those in the game could be forgiven for believing that the government is working against the entire industry, and there are grave fears that the sector will dramatically reduce in size over the next few years because it would appear that the string of insolvencies will continue. I have had a stack of conversations—as have all those that have participated and are participating in this debate—with members of the sector, including a roundtable that my office conducted earlier in the term. This is a complex area and it is going to take some fixing. Needless to say, things cannot continue the way that they are.

In the first instance, the newly elected Liberal government in the ACT will follow the lead set by New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria by appointing a building commissioner. In my discussions with Mr Petterson, his assertion initially was that such a position sort of already exists in the form of the registrar. We are not of that view. In the course of this afternoon we have had some fruitful discussions about it, and certainly after consultation and discussions that we have had in this space, we prefer the New South Wales model of building commissioner, and that position holds more power than our registrar. Additionally, as our jurisdiction is much smaller than most, we have also made the suggestion to appoint a commissioner who oversees construction but also the complex area of strata.

So, in essence, through this amendment, we are suggesting that this is the right thing to do. Our construction sector is in enormous strife. It is lying on the deck struggling to breathe, and it is a little difficult to know from opposition whether it means a defib or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. In government, the Canberra Liberals pledge to fully address our long history of building quality issues but additionally to revive the struggling sector, and that will require some very strong action. That action is likely to require a building commissioner.

This debate is very fluid. It has certainly come up in a week where there has been a lot to discuss from all parties. But, at this stage of the game, depending on the nature of the conversation that is going on at the moment at the other side of the chamber, I remain confident that we can all arrive at a point of agreement. I commend my amendment to the chamber.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.13): There is nothing quite like a live parliamentary debate with amendments flying and negotiations live as we debate. I appreciate the intent of Mr Parton's amendment. Apart from a couple of cheeky notes, which I do not necessarily accept the premise of, I appreciate his shared enthusiasm to see a better construction industry here in the ACT and his support for establishing an expert team of publicly funded building certifiers within the ACT public service.

I understand that this debate has caused some consternation and many conversations back and forth. While conflict is not necessarily the goal in politics, sometimes it does happen. However, more important than conflict, I think, are good outcomes. As I sit here somewhat filibustering, there is work on, I think, an agreeable tri-partisan amendment that could see this entire chamber express support for a better way forward. It expresses a commitment to continue the work of public certifiers here in the ACT. It allows the government to consider the proposal put forward by Mr Parton for a

construction and strata commissioner. I think the examples he points to in New South Wales are good ones to look to. So I am comfortable with that being included as something the government does look to do.

But it makes it very challenging in this place when amendments are circulated on the fly. It makes it very hard to negotiate and get amendments sorted. I think we are now looking at an amendment to an amendment to an amendment, but we will get there. I have been surprised at some of the contributions so far today, but I am hopeful that Canberrans, at the end of this debate, will be very proud of where their politics here in the city is heading and that there is a shared commitment to make the construction industry even better.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (5.16): It is hard to put into words just how much trying to live with a defective building can affect a person or a family. It has been clear over a number of years now that the regulatory system we have to look at the quality of our buildings has not been working as it should. It is hard to convey just what it feels like when you are sitting in your living room and a crack opens up in the ceiling, or for a group of people living in a strata complex to find out that they are going to be saddled with hundreds of thousands of dollars in a bill for waterproofing work which was not done correctly at the outset. It is hard to imagine just what an impact having to outlay that sort of money might be, and it is something that should not be necessary in a system that was working properly.

Mr Parton and I have had discussions over a long time now about how best to deal with that. It is not simply a question of who employs a certifier. It is not simply a question of insourcing, outsourcing or different ideologies. It is a question of making sure we are appropriately enforcing our building regulations, that people understand those building regulations and that, where there is bad behaviour, we are targeting that behaviour.

There is a very clear example of a place that this has worked, and that is New South Wales. If you look at the track record of the Building Commissioner in New South Wales, what you will see is an entity which has a 90 per cent success rate at targeting the right projects and the right people. You will see a successful policy position, structure and system which are making sure, from smaller-scale residential developments to large-scale developments, people can be confident that someone is making sure that they get what they paid for. This is an absolutely critical path to go down.

Just recently I visited a complex where the residents are currently undergoing repair work. Having discovered that there were problems with waterproofing in the complex not long after it was built, they were then told by the ACT government, "Sit tight; we have got it covered. You do not do anything, because we are going to make sure everything gets fixed up." Because of that step, these people have been left hanging to the point where their insurance will no longer cover them. That is just not acceptable. We need a system which can take swift action, where people can be confident that the building that they have paid for will be adequate for them, will be safe and will meet every requirement. That is exactly what the proposal that Mr Parton has brought today is about. I think it is absolutely essential. It is a key step, as we set out, to make a genuine

improvement in people's lives as they build their homes, the places that they will live and spend years in.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.20): I would like to speak to the amendment and flag that I will be moving an amendment to Mr Parton's amendment.

MADAM SPEAKER: But you are just talking to Mr Parton's amendment at this stage.

MS ORR: I am just going to talk if that is okay, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Okay; we will see how we go.

MS ORR: I will move my amendments when I finish and will be speaking to Mr Parton's amendment right now. Building quality has been a topic that I think we have discussed quite a bit throughout the two terms that I have been here. I sat on the inquiry into building quality. I believe Mr Parton was on that committee. Mr Pettersson definitely was on that committee. We have heard from countless Canberrans and, as Mr Cocks has alluded to and as the minister herself has said, we know that there need to be improvements to our building system to give people confidence in the quality of the building that is becoming their home. Not to take away from what the minister has done—because I acknowledge she has actually done a significant amount of work this term to improve confidence and regulatory function of our building and construction system—as she said, there is still a lot of work to be done, particularly in regard to licensing of trades. I support that work to continue happening.

What I think needs to be remembered in this debate over public certifiers is that it was quite strongly raised throughout the community inquiry that we sat on that Canberrans wanted an option for a public certifier. The trust was so low in the dynamic of private certifiers and the way that it currently works that people wanted that option. This is something that happens in a number of jurisdictions. The ACT is unique in that we do not have public certifiers. This is something that ACT Labor has been committed to for a long time and realise. I completely acknowledge that it is not the easiest reform to make, but sometimes we have to do the hard things.

The amendments that I will be moving in my name amend Mr Parton's amendment—taking away some of the more political stuff that is in that amendment and putting in place some minor wordsmithing that will allow us to get to a point where—

MADAM SPEAKER: You need leave to move all of your amendments together.

MS ORR: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move my amendments to Mr Parton's amendment together.

Leave granted.

MS ORR: I move:

Omit paragraph (1)(d).

Omit paragraph (1)(g).

Omit in paragraph (2)(a) “appoint”, substitute “investigating appointing”.

Add new paragraph after paragraph (2)(b): “continue implementing reforms that are already underway.”.

I am trying to be efficient in my moving of amendments by moving them all at one time. Reflecting on Ms Lawder’s valedictory speech that Canberrans would like bipartisan and bipartisan action on issues, I think where we are headed towards is something that all parties can get on board for in improving this aspect of our building regulation system. I look forward to continuing to make change because, in my humble opinion, there is no shortage of change needed in the building and construction sector to ensure that people in Canberra have confidence that their homes are built well.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Orr’s amendment to **Mr Parton’s** proposed amendment agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question now is that Mr Parton’s amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

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) (5.24): I seek leave to move an amendment, which has been circulated in my name, to Mr Parton’s amendment, as amended.

Leave granted.

MS VASSAROTTI: I move:

Omit paragraph (2)(b), substitute:

“(b) task the Commissioner with exploring establishing an expert term of publicly funded building certifiers within the ACT Public Service.”.

The amendment suggests a small tweak—and I apologise for my appalling writing in scrawling this amendment. What I am seeking to do is enable the commission and the people supporting the commission to continue the work of working out how to get to a workable model, given the work that has been done to date has been quite significant and has seen significant barriers and challenges. I am seeking that we do a tweak to the wording so that we get to that position where we do have a tripartisan agreement.

I think we are all in agreement that there is still much work to be done in the area of building reform. We are really committed to this. In terms of the amendment brought by Mr Parton, looking at the issue of strata is an important thing. We did look at the issue of a building commissioner four years ago, but, with the things have happened in New South Wales, it is certainly worth exploring again. I commend my amendment.

MADAM SPEAKER: The question now is that Ms Vassarotti’s amendment to Mr Parton’s amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.26): I rise in support of the amendment because I think it is a reasonable one. In bringing this motion here today, my intent was to put back on the agenda a public certifier for the ACT. When the recent reforms were announced, it was clear to me and the stakeholders that, seemingly, the intent of the minister was to close the door on a public certifier. I do not think that was in line with Canberra's expectations. I think Canberrans genuinely want to see a public certifier and want to see a government put in that work to deliver a model that allows them to access a public certifier or to allow high-risk builds to be the target of government attention.

In this debate this evening, I think we have seen a new shared spirit to investigate this work moving into the future. I am comfortable with the idea of investigating it. I know that there will be commitments from different political parties outside of this space, outside of this sitting week. But, for this Assembly, I think it is a very good thing in this final sitting week that we can find this shared common ground.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Vassarotti's amendment to **Mr Parton's** amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Mr Parton's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, agreed to.

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 1.11—Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.28): I speak as the shadow minister for sustainable building and construction. There are significant problems in this space, some of which we have just discussed in the previous debate. Our view is that a lot of the problems are of the government's making. I have communicated with many stakeholders in this sector during the term, including a construction round table that we conducted at Eastlake Football Club.

Rather than me construct a speech to convey those problems, all I am going to do is read one of the many emails that have come to me from an industry participant, de-identifying this person. This came to me very recently:

Dear Mr Parton, I trust this email finds you well. I am reaching out to you in hopes of securing your assistance in addressing some critical challenges that have been plaguing the construction industry in the ACT. As the owner and

director of several businesses, I have been experiencing a range of issues that not only are affecting my business but are also symptomatic of wider problems within the industry.

Over the past few years, I have witnessed a significant deterioration in the efficiency and responsiveness of the regulatory and administrative processes that govern our industry. The impact of these challenges has been profound, creating bottlenecks that delay projects, inflate costs and, ultimately, erode the confidence of clients and contractors alike.

Despite my best efforts to navigate these hurdles, it has become increasingly clear that the system is broken and urgent action is needed to address these issues. I have written to the Chief Minister to express my concerns, but, given the magnitude of the issues at hand, I am concerned that my voice alone may not be enough to drive the necessary change.

The specific issues I have raised include building approvals. In my business, we handle approximately 50 building approvals annually. Over time, the process of obtaining these approvals has become increasingly protracted, with some approvals taking far longer than what is reasonable or acceptable.

The associated costs have also ballooned, with certification of planning expenses now consuming up to 30 per cent of the total budget on smaller projects. This is not sustainable, particularly in a competitive market where clients are acutely aware of costs and timelines.

ACTPLA's resistance to collaboration.

My team and I have found it exceptionally challenging to work with ACTPLA. The agency appears to be resistant to engaging in meaningful collaboration with industry stakeholders, which is crucial for streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary delays. The current approach is not only inefficient but also detrimental to the success and viability of many construction projects in the ACT.

Certifier overload.

The role of certifiers is critical in ensuring that projects meet all necessary regulatory standards. However, the current workflow of certifiers has reached unsustainable levels, resulting in significant delays and a lack of timely communication. This has a cascading effect on project timeliness and contributes to cost overruns, which are often borne by clients and contractors alike.

Tree protection unit delays.

The delays associated with obtaining approvals from the tree protection unit have become a major hindrance to our operation. The typical six-week waiting period is simply unmanageable, particularly for businesses like mine that have a high project turnover, and when many projects involve minimal impact on trees. Despite our best efforts to engage constructively with the unit, the lack of responsiveness and care from the officers involved is alarming and exacerbates the challenges we face.

Confusing pool fencing regulations.

The recent introduction of new pool fencing regulations has caused widespread confusion within the industry. The requirements are unclear and there is very little guidance available to ensure compliance. This is particularly troubling

given that there has not been a recorded swimming pool drowning in the ACT for over 30 years, yet the regulations seem to be becoming more onerous rather than more streamlined. It raises the question: Why are things becoming harder, not easier?

This particular gentleman goes on to say:

The excessive regulation and red tape are creating an environment where even simple projects, such as building a pergola in someone's backyard, are becoming unnecessarily complicated and time consuming. The people of Canberra are increasingly frustrated by these delays. As a result, public confidence in the construction industry and in the government's ability to manage it effectively is diminishing.

I am hoping that we can make significant strides in addressing these issues and bringing about the much-needed reforms that will benefit not only the construction industry but also the broader community.

I thought that this correspondence I got from someone in the sector was an amazing summary, in quite succinct terms, of what is wrong. There is not really much need for me to say anymore, because this particular hardworking, high-vis wearing individual has absolutely nailed it.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (5.34): The ACT's population grew by over 123,000 people between 2008 and 2023. Over the same period, Labor and the Greens restricted the supply of new dwellings to under 60,000. This stark reality highlights this Labor-Greens government's failure to address housing supply, despite experts nationwide repeatedly emphasising that supply—or the lack of supply—is a key factor in affordability when it comes to housing.

This failure is even more damning when you consider the fact that Labor and the Greens have a unique opportunity to address the housing crisis by having access to both state and local government policy levers. The ACT government controls land supply, planning laws, building regulations, taxes and charges—all of which have an impact on housing—and supply and accessibility, which in turn has an impact on affordability. However, the ACT's housing prices remain amongst the highest in the country, with very little signs of improvement.

When I am out and about talking to Canberrans in the suburbs, I am consistently hearing from members of our workforce who cannot afford to live near their jobs, young renters who doubt that they will ever own their own home and longtime residents who are leaving Canberra due to the increasing unaffordability of housing.

This Labor-Greens government, either through inaction or through deliberate policy decisions, has contributed significantly to this housing crisis, and it is affecting every Canberran. You really do have to wonder why and how this Labor-Greens government has failed so spectacularly when it comes to housing affordability, and whether it is actually done on purpose or through sheer incompetence.

Andrew Barr's tax reform has failed on its promise to be revenue neutral. At just over the halfway point, the revenue for the ACT government from general rates has more

than doubled, whilst stamp duty has continued to increase. The profitability of this tax reform agenda is linked to the unimproved value of land, which has steadily increased while the government has restricted the supply of new land.

Over the past decade, we have seen the number of properties in the lower AUV bracket decline, whilst properties in the top three brackets have tripled. For this Labor-Greens government, more properties with higher values means more rates revenue each year for the government coffers. This is why you have to question whether the government has prioritised housing affordability or whether the government has intentionally restricted the supply of housing to increase their rates revenue to fund their program of waste and mismanagement.

The Suburban Land Agency has consistently failed to meet the land release targets and development targets each single year. Only 60 per cent of development application decisions were made within statutory timeframes. This government introduced a whopping 125 new pieces of legislation in 2023 targeted at the construction industry, which the Master Builders Association said have contributed to construction costs increasing three times above the national average in the ACT.

We now have fewer public housing dwellings than we did a decade ago, despite the increase in our population by almost 25 per cent. We saw this Labor-Greens government's abysmally poor copy of the Canberra Liberals RZ1 policy, which has only seen five people take up the opportunity. Whether by design or by incompetence, the Labor-Greens government's failure when it comes to housing affordability, housing choice and housing accessibility means that it is Canberrans who pay more and are denied the right to dream of home ownership.

This is not the route that the Canberra Liberals will go down. We will not tax Canberrans to the point that they leave the ACT. We will deliver genuine choice when it comes to housing options, because we believe that Canberrans are best placed to make decisions about what homes suit their needs. We have already announced a cap on rate increases at 2.2 per cent, which will leave the average Canberra household almost \$2,000 better off under a Canberra Liberals government. This will not only provide cost-of-living relief for hundreds of thousands of Canberrans but will also reduce the ongoing costs of owning a home that are creating more barriers on ownership.

The Canberra Liberals continue to take action on housing. We will release more land for residential development, increasing the supply of housing and reducing prices. We will reform ineffective planning laws, streamlining the development process to reduce delays. We will cut red tape and unnecessary regulations imposed on the construction industry. We will introduce policies to incentivise more housing in sensible density by not arbitrarily limiting the size of second dwellings on RZ1 blocks, as long as planning rules are followed.

We will review the Lease Variation Charge to encourage Canberrans to take up this policy and reduce the significant cost barrier that it creates. We will continue to phase out stamp duty, and we will not double dip, as this Labor-Greens government has been doing for so long. We will establish the independent valuation office to ensure accurate and transparent property valuations. We will use the available policy levers and resources to provide a fresh opportunity for housing for the ACT.

This October, the choice could not be clearer: Labor and the Greens, who will continue down the path of unaffordability and a double dipping tax agenda, or the Canberra Liberals, who will provide a fresh opportunity and a new direction that prioritises housing affordability and genuine choice for all Canberrans.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.39): I rise to speak to Appropriation Bill 2024-2025 as it pertains to planning and land management under the EPSDD, in part 1.11 of the bill. After 23 years of complacency and neglect by ACT Labor and the ACT Greens, planning in Canberra is no longer fulfilling community expectations. The ACT is suffering from a severe housing affordability crisis. We have a lack of developable land and appropriate infrastructure. Land release planning laws, investment in the right skills and tax reform are all levers we can use to give our future generations the best chance to own a home.

Canberra's population is forecast to grow to over 750,000 by 2060, so our city's planning system, social infrastructure and supply of homes must develop as our population does. Our planning laws today affect the Canberra of tomorrow, which is why we must address the primary problems with planning in our city now—problems that have persisted and been propagated under ACT Labor and the ACT Greens, including housing unaffordability, a shortage of developable land, inappropriate urban infill and a complete lack of trust and confidence in our planning administrators.

The measures contained in this budget reflect the tiredness and complacency of the Labor-Greens government and the planning minister. Labor and the Greens are failing Canberrans on land release, they are failing Canberrans on housing affordability, they are failing Canberrans by delivering disrespectful infill rather than responsible urban renewal, and they are failing Canberrans with a poor environmental track record.

This budget should speak volumes to Canberrans who want to know what Labor and the Greens will do in the next term of the Assembly if they are returned to government. Labor and the Greens, as we can see, want to bulldoze thousands of hectares of pristine and ecologically significant land on the western edge. Labor and the Greens want to continue choking land releases to artificially elevate land prices. Labor and the Greens want to oversee a confusing and overly complex planning system that hurts industry and the community, not helps them.

Canberrans deserve a planning system that provides genuine opportunities for home ownership, protects what we love about our city, our bush capital, and promotes responsible renewal for the Canberra of tomorrow. Canberrans should not trust Labor or the Greens to manage our planning system. As always, this untrustworthy Labor-Greens government is planning for profit, not planning for people. Our city needs a fresh opportunity and a fresh approach to ensure Canberra's planning is the best it can be. Only the Canberra Liberals will deliver responsible urban renewal, encourage more housing choice—

Ms Cheyne: Madam Speaker, a point of order, please.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is a point of order, Mr Cain.

Ms Cheyne: Mr Cain just used the word “untrustworthy”. That is definitely unparliamentary. In your absence, Madam Speaker, he also persisted with a whole lot of comments that he was required to withdraw, but I am not sure that the Deputy Speaker understood that Mr Cain was already on a warning.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Cain, I ask you to be very mindful of your language. Do not use words that should just be held in a proper full motion to someone’s imputation. So please be very mindful and recognise you are warned.

MR CAIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, our city needs a fresh opportunity to ensure Canberra’s planning is the best it can be. Only the Canberra Liberals will deliver responsible urban renewal, encourage more housing choice and realign planning with community expectations. We will build more homes and make them more affordable. We will create a minister for housing affordability and choice. We will release more land for detached housing and we will work with the federal government to finally access CSIRO land for housing. We will establish a town centre in Molonglo. We will undertake a feasibility study into land at West Tuggeranong so that Housing can assess the viability of completing Tuggeranong as it was originally planned. And we will allow separately titled dual occupancies on RZ1 blocks without any arbitrary size restrictions on second dwellings.

Elizabeth Lee and the Canberra Liberals are ready to form the next ACT government and provide a fresh opportunity for planning in Canberra. For the sake of the future of planning in Canberra, Canberrans must elect an Elizabeth Lee led government this October, for the sake of a better planned city and for the sake of our bush capital.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Planning, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for Transport and Special Minister of State) (5.44): I rise to speak in support of the appropriation for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. The ACT government continues to plan for our growing population and to build a compact, efficient, liveable and inclusive city.

Canberra is one of Australia’s fastest growing cities. We are expected to reach a population of almost 700,000 by 2050. Planning to meet the challenges of this growth is vital to maintaining and building on the quality of life that we currently enjoy, and, accordingly, housing a key priority in the planning portfolio for me and the government. In addition to housing, we also need to create employment opportunities, support vibrant and sustainable communities and better places for people, and ensure that current and future residents are supported by quality infrastructure and services.

The budget provides the necessary funding to support investigations for future land supply in the short to medium term with a land supply pipeline in the future. A key focus of the next 12 months is to increase density by building at least 70 per cent of our new housing within Canberra’s existing footprint and along major transport routes, while supporting housing diversity for greater choice and more housing for more Canberrans in places that they want to live.

The government has committed to a program of infrastructure capacity studies to better understand how infrastructure networks can support development within existing districts. The studies over the coming year include Woden, Belconnen and the inner

north of Canberra and will include an assessment of transport, storm water, water supply, sewerage and electrical energy networks. As both Minister for Planning and Minister for Transport, I will be focusing on the integration of land use planning and transport planning to achieve these outcomes. Through our new planning system, we have strengthened our strategic planning focus at a district level and have adopted an outcomes focused development assessment to inspire new development that does more than just tick boxes; it creates communities and a more liveable Canberra, with better planning outcomes.

To progress the outcomes contemplated in the district strategies and deliver on the statement of planning priorities, the ACT government is investing in strategic planning work which includes the establishment of a strategic planning projects team to support increased strategic planning work to deliver planning outcomes, including housing in key sites and change areas identified within the district strategies and around shopping centres and transport corridors, consistent with the planning strategy. Commencing planning work on the southern gateway corridor is also part of those plans, looking at the future Light Rail Stage 2 corridor and opportunities to enhance public spaces, connectivity and also, potentially, opportunities for housing in this area.

We will also continue to progress the implementations of actions under the City Plan 2023 and we have already commenced the development of a missing-middle design guide for Canberra. Our government's approach is that we want to see more housing that is well designed, sustainable and affordable for Canberrans to live in. This new design guide will be supported with community consultation and work with local planners and architects with design expertise to support better design outcomes for missing-middle housing in the territory. We have large numbers of single residential homes and also large numbers of multi-unit sites in the town centres, but we do not have huge numbers of townhouses, row houses and other low-rise multi-unit buildings in Canberra. These can be delivered in a way that supports good design and community outcomes, and I am really looking forward to that work commencing now that we have appointed Urbis as a consultant to support the development of the guide.

Delivering planning outcomes, including more housing through opportunities in and around local group centres, is also a priority, especially in areas where we have seen some shops that are currently untenanted—for example, Richardson shops. All of this work contributes to the ACT meeting our commitments under the National Housing Accord, contributing to the additional 100,000 homes and associated employment and community facilities required in the ACT by 2050, including our commitment to support 30,000 new homes by 2030, which Labor has announced as part of our election commitment.

I want to reflect on that because the ILRP has set out the support for 21,000 homes. Labor is taking a comprehensive housing plan to this election. We are the only party that has actually released a housing plan before the election. It goes to many of the key elements that both the community and the industry want to see when it comes to supplying more homes, which is a priority of the government and the community, particularly around missing-middle housing. We have committed to making changes to the Territory Plan once we have completed work on the design guide, so it would be a design-led approach.

Some announcements have been made by the opposition and the Greens in relation to this area, but even today we still have not heard from the Canberra Liberals about whether they would allow townhouses, whether they would allow duplexes or whether they would allow row houses—the sorts of missing-middle typologies on RZ1 blocks in Canberra. They still have not committed to that.

What is more extraordinary is that we just heard that the Canberra Liberals would have a much smaller housing program than both us and potentially the Greens at this election, opposing—and Mr Cain spoke to this—work to investigate future development on the western edge of Canberra. What he is basically saying is that the Canberra Liberals would not support new estates on the western edge of Canberra once Molonglo has been developed as the last area beyond the remaining suburbs in Gungahlin.

So, despite all the rhetoric that comes from the Liberal Party, we see the opposite in terms of what they have committed to and their actions. Another example of that is in relation to members of the Canberra Liberals who are campaigning actively in their campaign material to oppose the development of more housing on transport routes in Canberra. Jeremy Hanson is claiming that we are going to make Adelaide Avenue like the Northbourne corridor. Of course we are looking at opportunities for more housing along transport corridors in Canberra, and it is pretty clear that the Canberra Liberals oppose any housing within the existing urban footprint. Today they have opposed housing in greenfield areas as well. Where are they going to supply it? It is pretty clear that they would have a smaller housing program than Labor is bringing to the election.

We are going to deliver an ongoing pipeline of housing development opportunities to meet Canberra's anticipated growth and provide that growth efficiently, sustainably and equitably. It is a significant priority for our government and the appropriation bill to make sure that we have the funding that we need across a variety of areas to ensure that this continues to happen. I commend the Appropriation Bill to the Assembly and our plan for a liveable, efficient and inclusive Canberra to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5. 53): Today I wish to speak about the government's performance in addressing environmental concerns and recommendations, as outlined in the estimates report. We have been promised progress, but what we have received are some unfulfilled commitments that speak volumes about the government's approach to environmental management—for example, the government's response to recommendations from inquiries into environmental volunteerism and grants management. Whilst they acknowledge the need for reform, their actions, or lack thereof, tell a different story.

Recommendation 4 of the estimates report urges the government to provide small wildlife and environmental NGOs, with clear and early indications of future funding. While the government have the review principle, their response remains vague. Without concrete and timely financial support, these organisations struggle to maintain their crucial operations. This is not just a minor oversight; it is also a systemic failure that impacts the environmental efforts at a fundamental level.

Recommendations 66 and 67 call for a review of the EPA, the role of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and the development of policies relating to data requests. The government's response was a disappointing "noted", with no substantial action taken.

Despite ongoing reviews, there is a conspicuous lack of urgency for a commitment to meaningful reform. Our regulatory bodies need not just reviews but also tangible changes to ensure they are effective and independent.

I now want to make a few points about heritage. The Heritage Council, which is tasked with safeguarding our cultural and natural heritage, has been left under-resourced and overwhelmed for many years. Despite calls for funding and better management, the government continues to ignore the critical need for investment in our heritage resources. We cannot protect our past with empty coffers and overstretched management. The government's failure to provide enough resourcing to the Heritage Council is not just a bureaucratic oversight; it is also a direct threat to the preservation of what makes our community unique.

Recommendation 68 addresses the complaints process for the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, which also met with a tepid response. The process remains shrouded in secrecy, with no move towards increased transparency or public accountability, which is another glaring example of the government's reluctance to embrace openness and improve the system for the betterment of the public.

On water quality, programs like Healthy Waterways have become little more than window dressing. Despite investing millions, water quality issues persist with pollutants and organic debris still plaguing our lakes and rivers. This is not just a failure of policy; it is also a failure to safeguard one of our most precious resources. Our community expects a beautiful, clean and healthy Lake Tuggeranong and other lakes and waterways in the ACT, not just token gestures that do little to address the real problems beneath the surface.

Finally, recommendation 57, to increase street sweeping to reduce organic material in our waterways, the acquisition of new street sweeper and some operational tweaks do not address the scale of the problem. We continue to see organic debris clogging our lakes and rivers, and the government's incremental measures are not sufficient. It is not just about machinery; it is also about a comprehensive strategy to protect our waterways, and so far we have seen only piecemeal efforts.

The government's track record on these recommendations reveals a troubling pattern: ambitious promises followed by lacklustre implementation. They have failed to deliver on their commitments and to address the urgent environmental issues facing our community. Our environment deserves more than half-baked measures, promises and statements that things are noted; it demands decisive and well-implemented solutions. We will continue to push for the change we need, holding the government to account and ensuring that environmental protection is not just a talking point but a reality.

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 5.57 to 7.30 pm.

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2023-2024]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Part 1.11—Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Debate resumed.

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) (7.31): I will be talking in a few different portfolios. First of all, as the Minister for Environment, Parks and Land Management and Heritage, I am deeply passionate about the leadership, advocacy and positive outcomes that the ACT government has consistently delivered for our community in the realm of environment and heritage protection. This budget represents a continuation of the government's efforts to safeguard, conserve and enhance the ACT's natural environment, cultural heritage and ecological values for the benefit and the wellbeing of all Canberrans.

These are challenging times, both economically and environmentally. We are living through the reality of climate change and our need for action to protect what we have and restore what we have lost has never been so important. Despite being a relatively small jurisdiction, the ACT has consistently demonstrated leadership in various environmental areas. One recent example is our strong advocacy for the protection of the Australian Alps from the detrimental impact of feral horses, ensuring the preservation of our fragile environment and our water catchments.

As we know, we have more work to do, to scale up on-ground actions and position ourselves effectively to address the medium and the long-term challenges posed by the pressures of a growing city and climate change. This budget continues to prioritise investment for the environment to do all of that. It builds on, and focusses on, the investment that has been made by the government in the 2023-24 budget, which really focussed on conserving Canberra's threatened species, fighting predators and invasive species, uplifting the ACT's biosecurity capabilities and strengthening the ACT's agricultural program.

This budget also provides further funding in response to the government's own review of heritage arrangements and the Assembly inquiry into this area. In detail, in the area of heritage, this budget represents one of the largest investments in protecting the ACT's heritage and supporting the work of the ACT Heritage Council, and builds on the investment made in the previous year, which is seeing positive results. The 2024-25 budget reflects the continuation of the government's priority and recognition of the community's strong interest in our heritage. An additional \$1.9 million in expenses and \$8.8 million in capital over the four years from 2024-25 is invested and will fund the provision of a new heritage database.

I have announced that the government has begun work on the plan to phase out wood heaters by 2045 to help improve the health and wellbeing of Canberrans. This phase out was prompted in part by the 2023 Commissioner for Sustainability and

Environment's comprehensively researched special investigation report into wood heater policy, as well as the 2022 Your Say panel survey that explored behaviours, motivators and barriers to the removal and replacement of wood fire heaters and found that 52 per cent supported the gradual phase out of wood heaters. The government has engaged an environmental consultant, AECOM, to undertake an air quality assessment to inform the approach. This budget allocates \$115,000 for the delivery of a regulatory impact assessment, including consultation with the community and industry to guide the implementation.

In the area of conservation, conserving the ACT's threatened plants and animals represents one of the greatest environmental challenges faced in the ACT. The government has made a major investment over two years in the ACT budget of 2023-24 towards habitat restoration, and to date it has delivered a range of restoration projects. This work will continue in the 2024-25 budget. Additionally, the current trajectory of the Canberra Grassland Earless Dragon is poor and most concerning. To address this decline, the government has invested over \$100,000 towards emergency action to conserve this species.

The 2003 Canberra bushfires and the Orroral Valley bushfire of 2020 are stark examples of the damage that bushfires can cause in the ACT, not only to communities but also to the environment. The devastation of the 2020 Orroral Valley fire led to the development of an extensive program of ecological work to help understand and address the impacts of this bushfire on our native fauna, flora and ecosystems. Projects have included recovery activities and monitoring for upland bogs and fens and their threatened species; the trial of recovery interventions such as nesting boxes; the assessment of impacts on fire sensitive vegetation; and the monitoring of threatened fish affected by landscape sedimentation after the fires.

The government continues to recognise the risk of fire and has invested once again to address this risk. This budget provides \$1.395 million for the bushfire safety risk reduction work, including additional measures to mitigate the health risks to firefighting staff from bushfire smoke and the purchase of additional equipment to manage the unsealed management trail network. Current modelling of the residual risk after the 2023-24 prescribed burn program has resulted in a reduction of the residual risk from 37 to 31 per cent.

During this term the Legislative Assembly has examined and made recommendations through the inquiry into environmental volunteerism. The ACT's environmental volunteer groups continue to give their time and personal resources to protecting, conserving and enhancing the ACT's environment. It simply would not be possible for the government to do this work itself, and it is something that all Canberrans should be eternally grateful for. The government is really pleased to continue to support the work of the ACT's volunteers through investments including \$830,000 over four years, indexed, to continue the Adopt-a-Park grants program in TCCS, and this will have a specific focus on weeds; \$235,000 to enhance weed control management programs; \$125,000 to continue and enhance the Canberra Nature Map; \$74,000 over two years to support the ACT Wildlife with their veterinarian needs; and \$50,000 to provide additional support to Landcare ACT. We also remain very pleased to continue to invest in the ACT Environmental Grants program, which has delivered over \$350,000 towards 234 community projects in 2024-25.

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve continues to play a critical role in the ACT's ongoing nature conservation effort. Tidbinbilla also provides a place for Canberrans and visitors alike to connect with nature and enjoy this beautiful location. We continue to invest in Tidbinbilla with funding appropriated to demolish and restore, in a culturally appropriate way, the former visitors centre. Funding has also been provided for the development of a master plan for Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve that will provide a long term vision and plan to ensure that Tidbinbilla continues to be cared for and is a place that Canberrans continue to enjoy.

The tragic deaths of two people at Gibraltar Falls prompted the government to see what else could be done to educate and encourage visitors to keep safe. This review has delivered a new plan for Gibraltar Falls and woodlands reserve areas that will strengthen safety and increase the visitor experience to this wonderful location. Funding has been provided to provide this work.

I was also pleased, after considerable work throughout the term of this government, to have launched the Canberra Region Local Food Strategy to guide future planning and management of our region's agricultural production. The ACT is the first Australian state or territory to launch a plan to support and grow its local food system. Funding for the first year of the strategy's implementation has been included in the budget and will deliver a local food chain infrastructure study. This aims to explore opportunities to support small and medium size local food producers in Canberra and the surrounding region who struggle to compete with larger commercial providers. It will provide a focus on areas of food packaging, processing, distribution, storage and networking, and also explore opportunities for increasing the supply of local food produce to local marketplaces and grocery stores. Funding has also been secured to examine opportunities to utilise ACT government land to support local food production and help to educate the community on how to grow food in the ACT.

Moving quickly to the area of building and construction, I am, as we have talked about today, committed to continuing to act to protect home owners and the community from poor building quality, building safety and addressing unsafe practices in the building and construction industry. Through these measures, we are aiming to improve community confidence in building and construction by delivering policy and regulatory settings that are current, appropriate and effective and that deliver sustainable and climate resilient buildings. Over the 2023-24 financial year, there has been a significant amount of work commenced around the regulatory system.

Initiatives described in the 2024-25 budget continue to strike an appropriate balance between consumer protection, industry regulation and addressing the real threat of the climate emergency. The ACT government recognises that the national affordability and availability crisis is real. However, addressing this issue does not mean that we should lower quality or the efficiency of the housing we are building today. The ACT government recognises the significant cost that building defects can have around high rectification costs, increased safety risk and diminished property values and income, and that it does really undermine consumers' confidence in the construction industry. As we know, we have delivered a commitment to licensed property developers and will hold them to account for residential development activities they take out. Parts of the Property Developers Act 2024 came into force on 11 July 2024 and are already making

a difference to the way developers approach their developments. This budget contains important funding to implement the scheme and commence the licensing and compliance framework.

On Monday 26 August, I launched the ACT Sustainable Building Pathway delivering on another PAGA commitment to commence the ten-year pathway for sustainable and climate resilient buildings. This pathway is a direction-setting policy framework to help Canberra's building and construction sector to transition towards world's best building practice focusing on climate resilience and environmental sustainability. This pathway provides a plan for a sustainable building sector which is underpinned by an engaged industry sector and national building standards to support innovation and continuous improvement, with the government leading by example. This budget has provided funding to support and progress the implementation of this foundational piece of work. We have talked today about the work that has happened around introducing new requirements to improve building certification processes and to reduce building defects in the ACT. This budget provides funding to support the implementation of this work.

Over all of the areas that I work with within the EPSDD, we have great public servants, people committed to their profession whether it be the built or the natural environment. They are working to improve things for our local environment, for our local community and for community members that are to come. As a small jurisdiction, we have big challenges but we strive to be a national leader, a beacon and a light to the nation on what is possible. Thank you to all of those great public servants for coming on the journey, pushing yourselves and your colleagues to achieve the extraordinary results that you have achieved. There is more to be done and I look forward to seeing it progress.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (7.45): I am speaking in my capacity as the ACT Greens spokesperson for planning. The budget continues the ongoing changes that have been underway since 2019 as a result of the review into the planning system. The ACT Greens support the need to properly fund the planning agency to deliver on the outcomes-based planning system that has now been adopted in the ACT. We Greens are committed to creating a city that supports our community needs, green space and urban heritage. We know the way we shape our city shapes our lives, and a truly liveable city supports people to live a healthy and fulfilling life and is one that is inclusive and cares for our planet at the same time.

Planning is by its nature complex, and this new system is different. It presents challenges. People have talked about the need for trust in the planning system, and the need for it to deliver better outcomes. Moving from a rules-based system to an outcomes-based system requires a different outlook. I am encouraged that some of the foundations that have been laid will deliver good practices and good design, particularly the Housing Design Guide, the Urban Design Guide and the Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide. These encourage proponents to think about how buildings and spaces can work better together and in harmony with our natural environment. They can create a city that is sustainable and climate-wise.

A key issue raised with me has been making sure that we get the decisions right, and that we get them done quickly. This means that our decision-makers must be properly trained. That includes funding the enforcement and compliance arm so that we can be

sure that decisions that are made are complied with, and that appropriate enforcement action is taken where those decisions are not complied with. The Greens have worked hard to have additional resources directed into those areas.

We have also worked hard to improve the supply of green spaces, both on individual blocks and in the environmentally sensitive areas throughout our city, especially at the edge where green fields development is still under way. The controls the Greens have initiated to provide more trees and open spaces on individual blocks are continued in the new planning system. Urban sprawl needs to stop so that the loss of natural spaces that both surrounds, and is a much loved part of, our city stops. We cannot keep trading off the issue of environment for housing. We can have both. We can have a city that incorporates the environment in our suburbs. We need to protect many special areas, like Bluetts Block, which have really high environmental values. Decisions about the future of lands at the western edge and the Eastern Broadacre areas need to be looked at carefully and then concluded so that clear lines can be drawn to establish city limits.

Canberra has been progressing compact city planning principles in our planning strategies for some time, but in this housing crisis we find ourselves in, it is clear the initiatives put in place so far have not gone far enough. Funding is proposed to establish a missing middle design guide. That is a really good outcome but funding should have been allocated earlier and that work should have been undertaken as part of the five year planning system review.

The Greens have proposed that we recreate RZ1 to the RZ2 standard to provide more missing middle housing while using site coverage restrictions to ensure we keep enough green space around homes. We have also proposed up-zoning land close to local shops, community facilities and public transport to allow low-rise medium density housing of three to four storeys with shared green spaces. That is the way that everybody can have a backyard in the city.

These policies provide the opportunity for landowners to increase development on their blocks. The Greens believe setting up an urbanising agency will also deliver a broader range of outcomes by buying blocks and consolidating them. This can give us homes with shops, schools and parks nearby. We have really good examples of this sort of development in our recent past and in our distant past. We have Wybalena Grove in Cook, Urambi Village in Kambah and many, many other developments like this. We need to create the right conditions for those developments to occur again. Engaging with the community to understand what they know about the area and how they see their suburb changing and diversifying is critical to making sure we deliver the outcomes people want to see under this new planning system.

Right now, more people than ever are struggling to put a roof over their heads. We have more than 3,000 on the public housing wait list. We know we need 10,000 publicly-owned affordable and high quality homes that are provided by a publicly-owned developer and builder. We also need a planning system that will support that bold initiative; that will tell us where we can put those homes; and that allows land to be sold for public and community housing at a rate that Housing ACT and community housing providers can actually afford.

We need to make sure the actual delivery of our compact city policies are delivered on

the ground. We need to make sure that those provide a range of housing types and tenures. We need to make sure that we have enough public and community housing. We need a city with large green areas around our homes and access to green spaces for everyone. We need great public transport. We need all these things to address the climate crisis, the extinction crisis and the housing crisis. We can bring all this together in a comprehensive vision, but we do need to move on these matters quickly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (7.50): Conscious of the hour, I will not speak for very long at all. Obviously as the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction, I have a number of portfolio responsibilities in this area, and this budget continues to progress key initiatives in this space.

In particular, the ACT Zero Emissions Vehicle Strategy receives further funding in this budget. The government will continue to deliver on commitments set out in the ACT Zero Vehicle Emission Strategy 2022-2030 that will reduce barriers to entry and enable the community to adopt zero emissions sooner. This builds on recent government actions in this area, including budget initiatives associated with the strategy, which introduce financial incentives to support the purchase of EVs and the roll-out of public charging infrastructure across the territory. The budget sees commitments to zero interest loans for EV ready multi-unit developments, DC charging hubs, ACT government fleet EV charging infrastructure and a business EV charger rebate.

The budget also focuses on safeguarding the territory's water resources. The government continues to work to preserve and enhance the quality and sustainability of our water resources. The 2024-25 budget includes funding to support the work of the Office of Water to safeguard the territory water resources through a range of initiatives including: refreshing the ACT and Region Catchment Strategy discovery phase to develop a Water Information Hub; developing, monitoring and reporting and an improvement framework for environmental flow guidelines; implementing a water science plan; and the design of the water efficiency program.

Finally, there is important funding and resourcing in the budget for the Integrated Energy Plan. The government is, of course, committed to electrifying the city and phasing out the fossil fuel gas network. To that end, we have provided \$5.2 million across two financial years for a pilot program to electrify the appliances of low-income households that are experiencing sustained financial hardship. This is a very deliberate choice to make sure we are looking after some of the households in our city who do it the toughest, through delivering genuine cost-of-living savings for them, as well as more comfortable homes to live in.

We also have funding for: coordinated regulatory measures, so that we have fit-for-purpose energy network regulatory frameworks; measures to support electrification and the phase out of fossil fuel gas; and finally, work on complex buildings, essential apartment buildings, which are more technically complex and more organisationally complex because of the shared nature of their infrastructure. The government will develop a pilot support program to deliver education, advice and technical assessments of multi-unit buildings. No-one across the country has really worked out how to do these kinds of buildings yet, but this preliminary work will make sure we are developing

the capability, the experience and the models to enable it to happen. With those few brief remarks, Madam Speaker, I commend this line item to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.12—Housing ACT

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) (7.54): The ACT government’s mission is to ensure that every Canberran has a safe, comfortable and affordable home, and that continues a pace in this budget.

This budget contains \$285 million for housing in the ACT. This includes a planned spend of \$60 million on repairs, maintenance and upgrades of public housing homes. I wanted to share some of those with you, on that spend, in the 2023-24 budget, so you can get a sense of the sheer scale of work that is being done to maintain and improve public housing properties. Nearly 500 domestic violence security upgrades or repairs have been completed; 639 disabled modifications, ranging from lever taps to ramps and major bathroom modifications; 207 wet area upgrades, bathrooms, toilets and laundries; 125 kitchen upgrades; 690 flooring replacements; 660 homes painted internally or externally; and 434 vacant property upgrades. As well as these works, Housing ACT has responded to more than 10,000 urgent jobs, which are completed in under four hours and almost 6,000 priority jobs, which are completed by the next day.

Investing in repairs and maintenance is essential to ensuring the quality of homes that our public housing tenants live in. The total facilities management contract, with Programmed Facilities Management, is one of the biggest contracts this government has, and is currently how these services are delivered. Continuous improvement in this space is necessary, not only to meet the needs of tenants but also to ensure value for money. That is why this government has set up the Public Housing Repairs and Maintenance Taskforce. This taskforce will assess some of the major components of the contract to see how we might be able to bring that program inhouse, including how requests for repairs and maintenance from tenants are handled and allocated to tradies. The taskforce is also looking specifically at how we might do disability modifications and domestic violence safety upgrades more efficiently.

Alongside the taskforce the ACT government has launched a trial of insourcing at two public housing multi-unit complexes. This pilot program is an important way for us to test the challenges and benefits that might arise as we look to expand direct delivery of repairs and maintenance services to public housing tenants. This government’s position is: if a job can be done by a public servant, it should be. I did it for school cleaners and now I am doing it for public housing. The insourcing taskforce is a pillar of this budget. It is what Labor governments are all about: being progressive; social justice values; and practical decision-making.

But it is not just the repairs and maintenance of the current stock of public housing this budget continues to progress on. Increasing the amount of public housing available to support Canberrans experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage continues to be of the

utmost importance to this government. As everyone knows, building homes is a long game. I am proud to say that of June 30, 2024, the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program has built 614 public housing homes and bought a further 176 homes. Just last month, construction was completed on a further 29 public housing homes. That is not to mention the more than 450 homes currently in the pipeline, either under construction, being designed, awaiting development application approvals or in the procurement process to secure builders. It is those projects that will benefit from the \$46 million in the budget to continue the delivery of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program. It is here that I want to acknowledge the work of Housing ACT and the incredible work they have done overcoming a range of different challenges so that we are now seeing that growth in our housing portfolio.

Public housing is not the only card we have to play in helping Canberrans secure a home that they can afford. Last year the government launched the \$60 million Affordable Housing Project Fund. This fund has already supported community housing providers to start work on 280 new affordable rentals around the territory. In this budget, we have added another \$20 million to the fund. As well as supporting shovel-ready projects, this fund will help community housing providers buy land, enabling them to access the Commonwealth's Housing Australia Future Fund. This is just one of the ways the ACT government is supporting the community housing sector and providing innovative ways to increase affordable housing supply.

The government is also encouraging landlords in the private market to rent their homes through community housing providers at affordable rates by exempting them from paying land tax. More than 200 landlords have taken us up on this offer already. If anybody has any spare homes, and they would like to be a part of that program, then please go to the Housing ACT website or contact the community housing providers that are providing those homes at that affordable rate.

This government is also innovating in terms of sustainability and housing typology. One of my favourite examples is the North Wright Compact Housing Project. This is a medium density precinct and it shows passive housing design standards, prefabrication and a minimum of eight-star energy efficiency. The 43 net zero townhouses will be on compact blocks of 200 metres square to 250 metres square, but they will come with room to grow. This means if the family grows, they can add another room onto the dwelling. Two display homes are set to be up and running by the end of 2024, which is something I am looking forward to seeing. Housing ACT is also getting innovative. In July, Housing ACT unveiled a four-bedroom concrete precast home they have completed in the Inner North. It is a real ripper! It is just one of the things the government is trialling to bring public housing online more quickly.

The ACT government knows that having a decent and stable home provides the foundation for so many aspects of a person's life; for health, education, work, family and so much in between. It is why we continue to invest in a range of initiatives and programs across the housing continuum, from public housing to affordable housing to land release for residential development. It is why we will continue to think outside the square about the different ways we can develop and deliver housing. This budget proves yet again that this government is willing to roll up its sleeves and keep working even when the going gets tough.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (8.01): We know that managing housing and homelessness is a difficult task. How do we know? Because there are two ministers trying to pull this one off and I am not sure that they are actually nailing it. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Directorate, including the Executive Group Manager of Housing ACT, all of the housing managers and all the staff in Housing ACT, who must on a daily basis deal with many challenges. I would also like to extend my thanks to the community groups who support tenants and help those most in need. It is because my office has the pleasure of dealing with these people a lot and we understand that everyone in this space is doing their best.

When it comes to providing an appropriate budget which supports the lives of people who have the right to be housed and housed in safe, suitable accommodation, you would think that the government as a social landlord, would be required to spend the taxpayers' money effectively. But what I see constantly in this space is money running out for basic maintenance and repairs. This results in homelessness. It results in properties being left vacant for months and years; squatters; antisocial behaviour that goes on for years with no reprieve; and less public housing now than there was a decade ago. Maybe we just surpassed that, but it has taken us a long time.

I hope this budget will see the money spent appropriately to achieve the targets and goals of the city, but to also see people living tough seeing a difference made. I do not have a great deal of confidence that this will be delivered, notwithstanding the difficulty of the task. Given the increases in this budget we hope we will actually see outcomes achieved and less correspondence from constituents and tenants who wait in limbo, not knowing what their future holds because of the lack of communication and support they currently receive in housing and maintenance.

Up until this point the budgets have not successfully achieved outcomes that see a decrease in pleas for help. That is not an exaggeration because my office still gets a continuous stream of tenants pleading for help. As I continue to highlight, the once again projected housing stock leaves a lot to be desired. The constant argument in this place is that the process is not linear and that stock will grow over time. I remind everyone again that the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement stated very clearly that public housing stock will grow to 400 additional dwellings by 2025, which was a centrepiece of this contract. We know this achievement once again—well, we are certainly dubious that it will be achieved.

There are so many questions as to why there are numerous failures in this housing space, but what we all want to achieve is positive outcomes for those who need and use this service. One of the questions that I keep pushing the government on is the less than one housing inspection per year. We hear so many stories of dilapidated properties, tenants living in squalor and uninhabitable properties, to name just a few. The physical inspections of each property once a year is not an outcome they wish to achieve. If this were an outcome they wanted to achieve, I cannot help but wonder if properties would ever reach these dire straits or if tenants would live in conditions that do not benefit themselves or their neighbours.

We know that not all tenants—in fact, as a per capita scenario, very few tenants cause issues. It is a small proportion. Surely it is in the interest of housing to inspect their properties to ensure they are in good condition, so when the time comes to re-tenant the

properties, less work is required to turn a property over to new tenants. The government must be held accountable, and I think it is clear that they must do better.

I do want to say that it has been a blessing to hold this portfolio for a couple of terms because, as the shadow, my office has been able to assist hundreds of individuals as they either fall through the cracks or hit a bureaucratic brick wall. I would suggest that three quarters of the work of my office is around housing matters. We have been able to get a lot of outcomes, which is good, but it should not really be the way to get a result. We should not live in a city in which public housing does not quite work and the only way you can get a result is to contact the opposition.

After advocating in this space for eight years now, I can truly say that—it is not a trumpet blowing exercise—but without my advocacy there would be tenants, many more, living in extremely bad conditions. I have been able to achieve some fantastic results in this space. I would like to pay tribute to Elyse Heslehurst, who does so much wonderful work in this space, working in my office.

It is almost comical how many people comment on Minister Berry's posts on social media, praising the work of the growth and renewal program every single time a new property or properties are developed and opened. These tenants comment on the lack of response, or even no response, to their emails seeking assistance with maintenance work. The Minister continues to say that she did not receive any correspondence and, I do not know, we just get a bit over it. With the money allocated in the budget, I truly hope that people who need this money to be spent to assist them will actually be heard and have their concerns fixed. We all know that I could go on for days, but Madam Speaker, I will not. I will not!

The Ministers' can come at me all they want and say what I am doing or what I have done, but let me remind them, I am not the one in government currently holding the power to do anything. What I am doing daily is advocating for tenants and constituents waiting to be housed to ensure they are heard and that we advocate as much as possible to achieve positive outcomes. In closing, I think the government must do better. There must be a more streamlined process for applying, seeing updates on applications, communications from housing and maintenance being performed. It is all well and good to keep adding more money to housing in the budget, but it has to be spent appropriately to ensure positive outcomes for all.

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) (8.07): As the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, I am proud of the ACT government's commitment to reducing homelessness in the ACT. The reality is we are in a housing crisis, with a severe lack of truly affordable homes for a growing proportion of our community. As a result, we are seeing more demand for homelessness services as they work tirelessly to support Canberrans experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. With more people than ever in need, and with increasing complexity, it is critical to ensure that services have the funding and the support they need to respond effectively.

The ACT government has committed over \$140 million in total funding over the next four years for the specialist homelessness sector. This demonstrates an ongoing

commitment to increasing funding for the homelessness sector. In the 2024-25 budget, the government has committed to an additional \$6.5 million in new funding initiatives. This new funding addresses areas of need in the system with targeted funding for priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This funding includes: \$3.5 million over four years to support the Youth Foyer; \$666,000 over two years to support community inclusion at Oaks Estate; \$300,000 for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations providing specialist homelessness services; \$540,000 to support transition of the central intake service to a new provider; \$856,000 in hotel brokerage for funding to support the central intake service and domestic violence crisis service; and \$671,000 to support the ongoing sustainability and funding to the sector.

The Youth Foyer is a proactive initiative based on advantage thinking, a strengths-based approach that has shown to break the cycle of homelessness. The foyer provides stable housing and supports for young people to engage with education and employment, connect with the community and plan for their future. With the foyer in place, the ACT government is working to reduce the number of young people who go on to engage in other homelessness services. This additional investment draws on the findings of the commissioning engagement process that was held with homelessness sectors over the past few years to ensure we deliver a service system that is strong, sustainable and offers responsive accommodation pathways for all Canberrans who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

The total investment includes the commitment in the PAGA of the \$18 million that has been committed over the last four years. This funding has been used to expand specialist homelessness capacities through implementing new funding initiatives to both meet increasing demand for service provision and allow the sector to continue their vital work in an environment of increased costs. I would like to finish by thanking all the incredible people that work in this area. The specialist homelessness sector has been working in an environment of extraordinary need and every day provide support to some of the most vulnerable in our community, people who find themselves without a roof over their head.

I would also like to thank the staff of Housing ACT who have done incredible work, again in an extraordinarily tough environment. We have seen escalating need. The work everyone has done to respond to this need is deeply valued. Thank you for your care, your professionalism and your optimism that together we can reach a future where homelessness is rare, brief and non-reoccurring.

Finally, as proud as I am to have increased funding of homelessness services over the past four years and to have seen an increase of services, we cannot rely on band-aid solutions to the core problem, a lack of truly affordable housing. More public housing remains the only long-term solution to addressing homelessness and we must continue to work to achieve that reality.

Debate interrupted.

Standing order 76—suspension

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (8.11): I think for the first time this term we will have a few late

nights and suspending the standing order will mean we can get through our business.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I would encourage that, given it would be dealing with the Office of the Legislative Assembly. I think that is a grand idea.

MS ORR: Me too!

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

That standing order 76 be suspended for the remainder of the sitting week.

Appropriation Bill 2024-2025

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2023-2024]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Part 1.12—Housing ACT

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.13—Canberra Institute of Technology.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.14—City Renewal Authority.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.15—Legal Aid Commission (ACT).

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.16—Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.17—ACT Executive.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.18—ICON Water Limited.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (8.14): When the ActewAGL Joint Venture was established in October 2000 under the Humphries government, and I might add despite the objections of the Greens and Labor Party members of the day, it was a single joint venture with the Australian Gas Light Company—a very old company founded in 1837, which supplied coal-derived gas to the first public street lamps in the city of Sydney.

With such a noble and commendable history, it would have felt to some like the ACT government was entering into a joint venture with a good Australian company. However, that was not to remain the case. Five years later, in October 2006, Alinta Energy, which was created from the privatised gas assets of Western Australia, acquired AGL's gas and electricity distribution assets. With it, the ACT's Joint Venture with AGL turned into two joint ventures; one with Alinta Energy for distribution services, and one with AGL Energy for retailing services. Then, in August 2007, Alinta was acquired by a consortium of Singapore Power and Babcock & Brown, with subsequent restructures creating Jemena in August 2008, the company people might know of today.

Babcock & Brown subsequently sold their stake in Jemena to Singapore Power, and then in 2014 the State Grid Corporation of China acquired a 60 per cent stake with Singapore Power retaining the remaining 40 per cent. Questions by Ms Nuttall in estimates confirmed this. She also asked:

These are companies with fossil fuel interests; am I correct?

The response from Mr Billing was:

Yes, they are. Yes, that is correct.

This series of events has resulted in a situation where, not due to any action by the ACT government or the Assembly here, our energy assets are now owned by off-shore companies with fossil fuel interests: 30 per cent in Singapore and 20 per cent in China. Half of the profits from the ACT's joint venture no longer remain in the Australian economy and are going off-shore. I think this is a problem. I wanted to put that on the record and I would like to invite other members to reflect on that.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.19—Cultural Facilities Corporation.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.20—ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee) (8.16): I wanted to put on the record Mr Kasurinen's legacy. Mr Kasurinen killed himself in 2020 as a result of significant debts he had accrued in respect of his gambling. His family made a complaint to the Gambling and Racing Commission. We are four and a half years now and there has been no resolution to this complaint. I would like to put on the record that I think this is unsatisfactory. I have written to the minister about this. The minister has responded and said that he agrees and that there needs to be reform in this space, but I want it on the record that this needs to happen. I think there needs to be a lot of work done with the Gambling and Racing Commission to improve transparency in reporting of many of the legal requirements around gaming, and potentially improving some of the reporting through annual reporting. I think there is a lot of information that is collected, particularly through the gambling incident register, which could easily be publicly

available and increase transparency around the issues relating to harm. I hope next term there is some serious work done to improve some of these things.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (8.18): I wanted to rise to say that I have filled pages and pages of Hansard this week, with more to come in this particular area. We were happy to get a win—a part win—in the Braddock motion earlier on. There is more to come tomorrow. I do not know that I really need to entertain people further in this particular line.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.21—Public Trustee and Guardian.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (8.18): Members of this Assembly will be aware that the Public Trustee and Guardian has recently come under scrutiny following the publication of yet another audit into procurement within this government. Report No 6, this year, published on 2 August, audited the planning, implementation and use of a Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) within the Public Trustee and Guardian.

The new CRM system was a feature of PTG's broader business transformation program commenced in 2017. The CRM aimed to develop and renew the authority's ICT infrastructure capability through the creation of an ICT business solution that would increase organisational efficiency and management. However, critically to the program's failure, PTG failed to provision the structure and elements conducive with conventional project management to implement the business solution as a concerted program. To even call this a program lends undue credit to CRM's implementation.

The Auditor-General's report focused on a particular theme that I have spoken about at length, and like Mr Parton, have probably filled many pages of Hansard about the flaws in the procurement processes within this government. I speak, of course, about the procurement of ICT programs.

The CRM had initially received a budgeted amount of \$150,000 to \$200,000 that included a procurement component. However, it quickly ran over budget. Crucially, the Auditor-General finds that, like HRIMS and other government projects:

Actual expenditure on the CRM cannot be identified with certainty...

The Auditor-General produces a figure in excess of \$1.46 million between 2017 and 2023, but this likely captures only a fraction of the true cost. All of the hundreds of millions of dollars wasted by this government uncovered by the Canberra Liberals, the Audit Office and media, only scratch the surface of the true wastage that has happened. As found in the report:

It is questionable whether the PTG's use of funds from the Guarantee and Reserve Account for its ICT renewal activities was legal.

And

...PTG officials have asserted that the *Government Procurement Act 2001* did not apply to the PTG in certain circumstances.

And, final quote:

Between August 2017 and September 2022...A review of documentation associated with the procurement of the three software vendors shows non-compliance with the requirements of the *Government Procurement Act 2001*...

This is a damning finding and an indictment of the Attorney-General's leadership. Mr Rattenbury has territory authorities under his own administrative arrangements that believe the laws of this territory did not apply to them. Just like CIT, we have more instances of territory authorities going rogue. How can this be time and time again?

What is more alarming and significant is the litany of failures and wasted government expenses that this contract forms part of—all under this government's control. The PNTG reports both Minister Steel, who has been spoken about at length regarding the failed of the HRIMS project, and Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury, just seem not to take the responsibility that I think is appropriate for these failures.

This government has begrudgingly amended procurement to only reflect a procurement environment that considers value for money while the procurement reform program is underway and will seek to implement some of the Auditor-General's recommendation made in this Assembly to legislate enhanced efficiency and value for money. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of transparency, particularly on the Special Minister of State's agenda. We do need to see an improvement in procurement practice in the territory, and it is my submission to this Assembly that the best improvement is an Elizabeth Lee led Canberra Liberals government from October.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.22—Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Total appropriated to territory entities.

Total appropriated to territory entities agreed to.

Part 1.23—Treasurer's advance.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.24—Capital works reserve.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Total appropriations.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Remainder of the bill, by leave, taken as a whole agreed to.

Question put:

That the bill be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 15		Noes 8
Andrew Barr	Laura Nuttall	Peter Cain
Yvette Berry	Suzanne Orr	Leanne Castley
Andrew Braddock	Marisa Paterson	Ed Cocks
Joy Burch	Michael Pettersson	Jeremy Hanson
Tara Cheyne	Shane Rattenbury	Elizabeth Kikkert
Jo Clay	Rachel Stephen-Smith	Elizabeth Lee
Emma Davidson	Rebecca Vassarotti	James Milligan
Mick Gentleman		Mark Parton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to.

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.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Tourism and Minister for Trade, Investment and Economic Development) (8.30), in reply: I take the opportunity, as we conclude the debate on the appropriation bills, to both commend the Office of the Legislative Assembly bill and you, Madam Speaker, for the role you play in this part of the appropriation each year.

I ask Assembly members to support this bill so that the Assembly can continue to function. I take the opportunity to particularly thank all of the team at ACT Treasury, all of the finance areas across the ACT government directorates, and the entities contained within this particular bill, for their contributions to the annual budget process. I particularly thank my staff, who have worked for months to support the preparation of the budget.

It is a thankless task being Treasurer of the Territory, I can say from experience. But I do commend—

Ms Lee: I am ready to take it whenever you are ready.

MR BARR: Boom, boom! I do commend this bill to the Assembly.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Statements by members

Government—human resources and information management system

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Planning, Minister for Skills and Training, Minister for Transport and Special Minister of State) (8.32): Madam Speaker, following your statement issued yesterday relating to question time last week, I wish to make a statement to clarify the events that occurred before the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025 on Monday, 29 July, in my capacity as Special Minister of State.

As you stated, *Hansard* has not been able to determine what was said. For the record, and in anticipation of the finalisation of the *Hansard* for that hearing, I wish to make it clear that during the hearing, when Mr Cain asked me his question, I said, “Do not believe so,” and followed up this statement by saying, “Though I am not the person to be able to comment on that anyway.” I believe that, when taken in the context of the entire answer I gave to the committee, it is clear that the response was, “Do not believe so.” I hope that this statement makes it clear to members that the answer to Mr Cain’s question on Monday, 29 July was no.

Kurrajong infrastructure

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) (8.33): I rise briefly to follow up on my adjournment last week, in which I said the traditional thankyou. Tonight I want to thank the people of Kurrajong for their support. It is a great privilege to represent the heart of Canberra in this place and it is one that I have not and will never take for granted. Tonight I want to provide a quick update on ACT Labor’s regional plans for the inner north and inner south, which were announced on Sunday and respond to what we heard from our local community.

The regional plans include significant commitments which many local residents will already be familiar with, and some will just be catching up on as the election approaches, such as expanding services at the inner north walk-in centre, a new health centre in the inner south, the Garden City cycleway, a new destination playground in Watson and ongoing work on the Acton waterfront.

But the things I was most pleased to see announced were those responding to what we have heard from local communities: upgrades at local shops in Griffith and Kingston, as well as the work that is already underway in Narrabundah; and new public toilets at Downer shops and Red Hill shops—Red Hill still being part of Kurrajong for another six weeks. In Downer in particular, I know the community has lobbied long and hard for a new public toilet. When you see how the place is humming on the weekends, this

is a great thing to be able to announce. This is what it is to be a local member in this place. Thank you to the people of Kurrajong.

Government—taxation

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (8.34): Canberrans are sick of the rates rises under this government. They are really sick of that. A Canberra Liberals government will provide certainty and relief to Canberrans by capping annual rates increases to 2.2 per cent, so rates will rise less under a Canberra Liberals government than they will under a Labor-Greens government. That means that Canberrans, on average, will in some cases be up to \$2,000 better off under a Canberra Liberals government when their rates bill comes in the mail, while my constituents in Ginninderra will be up to \$1,500 better off.

The Canberra Liberals want Canberrans to be able to keep more of their money in their pocket by delivering lower rates than they will pay under a Labor-Greens government. We will also be transparent about how rates are calculated and establish an independent valuer to calculate rates fairly and without prejudice. We are the party that values integrity, opportunity and community and recognises the pressures of the current cost-of-living crisis. Canberrans will pay lower rates under a Canberra Liberals government, if we are the next government after this October election.

Sport and recreation—women’s sport

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) (8.36): I want to quickly reflect on the summer of women’s elite sport coming up in the ACT. I note that the UC Canberra Capitals will be playing back at home, at the AIS Arena. I encourage members to get along to their first game so that we can fill the house with supporters of the University of Canberra Capitals.

We also saw this week that Michelle Heyman is returning to Canberra United. That is another fantastic opportunity for Canberrans to get behind their elite women’s sports teams. The ACT Meteors women’s cricket team will be starting their season with a bunch of new players as well. I encourage members of the Assembly, and everybody else in our community, to support elite women athletes in the ACT and attend as many games as they can.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Valedictory

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) (8.37): There are many ways to be the change you wish to see in this world, and one of the great things about this Assembly is that every four years we push the democracy reset button and every voter in this city gets to make change.

Over the course of this term in the Assembly I saw inspiring and creative ways of making change from our community sector, who got innovative services like Safe Haven open; helped us understand what a multi-therapeutic response looks like for young people and their families, as part of raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility; and had the courage to speak their truth every time I passed the mic, so that people in power could hear from those whose lives are impacted by the decisions made in parliaments.

I saw members of our community step into the gaps created by economic inequity and social isolation during COVID-19, to make sure that families could put food on the table and that our older people and those with health conditions, and carers, were less isolated, making our community a kinder and more compassionate place.

I saw members of our public service asked to do challenging work during a period of major reform. They showed courage and creativity as they made systems better. I saw OLA staff make this building a more accessible, functional place for everyone and welcome the community into our particular Canberra flavour of democracy.

I saw the volunteers and members of our big Greens family come together to support our community, whether it was at a protest or tidying up a reserve or collecting goods for a donation drive.

I saw the team in our office support each other in hard moments and celebrate in happier moments. Thank you to Julia, Jake, Jillian, Taylor, Toni, Maxine, Mat, Emily and Loi for your ideas, your support and your willingness to put the needs of the community ahead of politics this year. And thank you, Jon, for sharing the load when it was heaviest and for not letting me write a speech composed entirely of Taylor Swift lyrics.

Thank you to my Greens party room colleagues, a great bunch of people who I would definitely invite to my birthday party. Thank you particularly to Shane, for talking me down from getting myself arrested far more times than any party leader should have to. And thank you to my Greens friends outside this building, especially Jordon Steele-John, who is a Jedi master at knowing when to pick up the phone. Thank you to my family for being okay with not seeing me as much. I look forward to hanging out with you soon. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is getting late, and we have all been working hard.

Ms Davidson then spoke Yorta Yorta:

Nginak datin nanyubak guli bayuna. Galnya.

Courts—coronial restorative reform process

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs,

Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (8.39): I rise today to speak about the ministerial statement I made in the Assembly on Tuesday, 29 August, when I tabled the *ACT Coronial Restorative Reform Process and Summary Report*, which was prepared by Alistair Legge, the independent facilitator of that process. It has recently been brought to my attention by Mr Legge, and by Ms Janine Haskins and Ms Ann Finlay of the ACT Coronial Advocacy Group, that they feel parts of my ministerial statement were inaccurate. I am grateful for these matters being brought to my attention and I apologise for any harm caused by that statement.

First, if my statement made it sound as if the government has already decided on a course of action in response to the recommendations in the report, I apologise. It was not my intention to indicate a particular view in relation to any of the recommendations, including by not mentioning specific recommendations that some parties considered to be the most important. While the government has not formed a view on the recommendations, I do note that this very considered report makes strong recommendations, including identifying a data gap and recommending a survey of people and families using the court, as well as the separation of the roles of the Chief Magistrate and Chief Coroner.

My statement was also not intended to convey that the government is aligned to any particular stakeholder position, and I apologise if my expression caused it to be interpreted in this way. When I spoke about the improvements that have been made to the coronial system, I did not mean to imply that there are not further improvements to be made; rather, the government is considering all of the recommendations and is committed to improving the coronial system. I would like to reassure those who participated in the process that your contributions are valuable and will inform the future work of government. I cannot tell you how to feel, but I sincerely hope that you can sense how committed I am to this program of work and how much your perspectives are valued.

Secondly, I stated that the report was not reflective of Mr Legge's views. However, the report makes it clear that the recommended next steps are his and that they are based on his discussions with a range of stakeholders. I apologise for not expressing this in my ministerial statement with the detail that the process merits. I am well aware from my extensive involvement in the process, and as the report itself makes clear, that the report is based on Mr Legge's deep engagement with an extensive range of stakeholders, including the dedicated coroner, other court staff and coronial police unit officers, as well as family members, over a substantial period of 18 months.

To those who feel I dismissed or undervalued the extent of the consultation in my expression, I do regret that. I note that I was under no obligation to table the report in the Assembly; nor was I required to make a ministerial statement. However, I made a deliberate and proactive decision to both table the report and speak to it, because the report is a valuable one that should be recorded as a document here in the Legislative Assembly. I believed that doing so would give extra emphasis and further bring the members' and the public's attention to this document and to the work that occurred to produce it.

I hope I have demonstrated to the parties involved in the construction of the report, by the way I engaged constructively and collaboratively in the entire process, by tabling

the report as an official document of the Assembly and by speaking to it, that I see the tremendous value of their contribution and of the report, and the importance of the restorative coronial work, moving forward.

I met with the parties involved in the report in good faith at every step of the way. It does not sit well with me that they might feel like my ministerial statement did not commit to progressing coronial reform in the same good faith. I hope this statement provides some comfort to those who are dissatisfied with my earlier statement. I again wish to thank Mr Legge, Ms Haskins, Ms Finlay and all of those involved in the report for their contribution to coronial restorative reform processes. These conversations can be difficult, but I remain committed to having them.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. Before we move on, I want to remind Ms Davidson and other members that standing order 42A states:

A Member may, when called by the Chair, rise and speak in any language other than English so long as:

- (a) an oral translation is provided in the English language by the same Member immediately prior to the words spoken in the language other than English; and
- (b) a written translation in both English and the language used is provided to the Clerk within one hour following the contribution by the Member speaking.

Ms Davidson.

Ms Davidson: I was actually just sending an email to Hansard with the translation, which is: “I am tired. I’m going to sleep under the yellowbox tree. Thank you.”

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excellent. Thank you. Could members remember this for the massive term ahead, which comprises just tomorrow.

Valedictory

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) (8.44): I appreciate that I have already had my turn, but I did, in my rush, despite having extra time, miss some important remarks. I also want to take this opportunity to make my remarks about Ms Lawder and Madam Speaker.

First, and most importantly, I did not acknowledge last night—and I realised this at 5.47 am, on waking—our terrific media advisers, particularly those who support me and my team, and that is Tori and Karen. Media advisers play such a vital role but often unseen. I think that is how they like it sometimes. The unseen nature of the role certainly is not equivalent to just how hard they work behind the scenes in setting up opportunities, in making sure that people are properly briefed and at being the person to take my phone off me, or my pass or whatever, for a photo—all of those things that make this job hum and make us look much better than we otherwise would, let alone all of the negotiation in the background in working with directorates.

Tori and Kare are first rate. I particularly want to single out Karen, who I have worked closely with all term, and who has seen some of our most joyous achievements together with some really hard times too. She has been amazing and more than a colleague; she is a friend, and a friend I think that I will have for life.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge Ms Lawder and her contribution in this place. Her speech, in many ways, summed up her. It was quite notable for that. Her loyalty, I think, is her defining characteristic, as well as being a team player, and a steady hand throughout all of this. In just shy of 12 years in this place she has really lent those qualities to the team. She has been an even keel for the team, and she has been an even keel in this place.

Looking around, even though I have only been here just shy of eight years, I see the turnover that has occurred already. Ms Lawder leaving is another example of corporate memory and Assembly memory going. That is something that I know people like the Clerk and Ms Rafferty are very familiar with, but it is certainly dawning on me, Mr Parton, that you and I are among some of the longer serving members here now.

I do want to acknowledge Madam Speaker. I am glad she is not here, because I would cry. I first really got to know Madam Speaker, Joy, at a meeting where Mary Porter, Meegan Fitzharris and Joy were talking about preselection in 2015. 2015 obviously went on to be the worst year of my life, except that I got preselected. Joy has been a fixture in my life ever since. Her kindness and her fairness have shone through. The remonstrance of 2018 is something that will always be a shared moment for us.

Quite honestly, the fact is that we have spent a lot of time here together. Apart from perhaps Minister Gentleman, and of course the attendants and the Clerk and his team, Joy and I have spent most of the last eight years here together. We have had many private moments, many shared looks. Sometimes she has avoided my eyes, which is fine as well. She has also never been afraid to pull me up, and I am very grateful for that. To come to terms with the fact that her presence will not be here—and, again, that Assembly knowledge will not be here next term, whether we are here or not—I think leaves a very, very big hole. I hope she is someone that I will be friends with for a very, very long time. I also know that her family comes first. It is time for her family to come first with her time, and I know she looks forward to that. Thank you.

Climate change

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (8.50): I am here because I am seriously worried about climate change. I am not someone who always wanted to be a politician. I had no lifetime ambition to get here. I was running a recycling company and a climate change project and helping out in climate activism when the Greens needed a candidate in Belconnen. I put up my hand to help because the Greens are the only party taking real climate action. I never expected to win the seat and to be giving a speech four years later, but I did expect to be working on climate change, because we have to; we need to for ourselves and our kids and our climate.

In 2021, when I ran, we had just experienced Black Summer. We had choked through the smokepocalypse and survived hail and fires. We were living the predictions made

by climate scientists and economists like Ross Garnaut. Our young people understand this. I just chaired an inquiry into the barriers to raising children and 43 per cent of our young people in Australia are hesitant to have kids because of climate change.

This week eastern seaboard storms saw wind gusts up to 150 kilometres per hour. Flights were cancelled, Tasmania flooded, Melbourne had hail and the rest of us got hammered. There has been at least one death. Many homes remain without power. It was not as fierce in Canberra but it blew me away, and I do not mean that metaphorically. I was riding home on Monday night and I blew off the road. 2020 was not a blip. It is our world now.

I am immensely proud of some of the climate wins we have achieved this term. We are phasing out fossil fuel gas and we are phasing in EVs. We have got seven-star building standards on new homes. We divested government shareholdings from fossil fuel and we were the first state-level government to sign up to the global fossil fuel treaty. We are also the first in Australia to recognise the right to a healthy environment.

Our office has worked on some non-climate issues too. We have spoken up a lot for transport and waste, and both of those are very, very much climate. We have spoken up for better buses, paths and e-bikes, and we have changed the law to protect people who are walking, riding or wheeling around Canberra. We got commitment to a freestanding birth centre. We secured reforms to address modern slavery and procurement and we worked on FOGO and the circular economy.

We got a ban on fruit tree netting that harms wildlife and we worked on land care and reserve protection for many of our special places. We supported mountain biking, opposed ads in public spaces and led some law to remove fossil fuel sponsorship from government venues. On the horseracing industry, which is half funded by government, we opposed that funding.

We put up a Greens bill to cap and freeze rents. While Labor and the Liberals voted that down, we are really pleased that the Greens Attorney-General got some good reforms through in that space. We have also spent a lot of time on planning. How do we build enough homes for our people without endless sprawl? The Greens have landed in a positive position on that, and we have put up a tangible vision of what we think it looks like.

It has been a really big term. A lot of people helped or ran this work, and there are too many to thank in one minute and 56 seconds. I do want to thank my staff, though. Maverick, by name and nature, is a powerhouse on public transport, and so much more. Aileen has a calendar in her brain, a mind for strategy and an eye for design. Steph, who left, remains a fierce environmental warrior. Peter is a playing major and he makes sure we do good things. Adele is so good with our community. Harry, Jen and Ally have worked hard to tell people who we are. Thank you.

This job has a huge impact on those around you. When I was elected, I mostly worked from home and I looked after my six-year-old daughter; my partner worked full time. They have both now completely rearranged their lives around this job. On Father's Day I asked my daughter what she loved best about her dad. She did not say anything about herself or about him—and there is a lot to say because they are both bloody marvellous.

She said this; “I love how he looks after you, so you don’t burn out.” Politics is a hard job. I am really glad to still be here. I am here with a lot of support. Thank you.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 8.55 pm.