



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

10 April 2025

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office no later than **Thursday, 24 April 2025**.

Thursday, 10 April 2025

Absence of Speaker.....	1071
Petition: Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre—petition 17-25	1071
Motion to take note of petition.....	1072
Veterans—commemoration and reflection opportunities (Ministerial statement) ..	1076
High-risk weather season—summary (Ministerial statement)	1078
Leave of absence.....	1082
Government—order to table documents	1082
Government—order to table documents	1085
Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre	1085
Standing orders—suspension	1085
Education Amendment Bill 2025.....	1087
Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2025	1095
Questions without notice:	
Government—transparency	1101
Government—budget	1102
Transport Canberra—MyWay+.....	1103
Schools—recruitment	1104
Schools—Whitlam.....	1104
Planning—Weetangera childcare facility	1105
Vocational education and training—Training Fund Authority	1106
Agriculture—Canberra food strategy	1107
Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme	1108
Aged care—respite care.....	1109
Taxation—Revenue Office reassessments	1111
ACT Policing—response times	1112
ACT Deafness Resource Centre	1112
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Commissioner for International Engagement.....	1113
Agriculture—Canberra food strategy	1114
Vocational education and training—Training Fund Authority	1114
Planning—Weetangera childcare facility	1114
Transport Canberra—MyWay+.....	1115
Planning—Ginninderra Falls	1116
Taxation—Revenue Office reassessments	1116
Roads—rural roads	1117
Papers.....	1118
Human Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill 2025	1119
Planning and development—urban growth boundary	1125
Schools—staff safety	1140
Standing orders—suspension.....	1153
Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre—order to table documents	1153
Motion to take note of papers:	
Libraries ACT—resourcing	1159
Statements by members:	
Environment—climate change	1160
Legislative Assembly—visitors.....	1160
ACT Senior Woman of the Year—Ms Jayanti Gupta	1160

Mental health— <i>Life in mind</i> 2024 report	1161
Florey shops—development	1161
Adjournment	1162
Interchange Health Co-operative	1162
Bruce Early Childhood centre	1163
Waste—Tarago waste-to-energy incinerator	1164
Arts—AusDance ACT	1165
Office of the Legislative Assembly—artworks	1166
Middle East—conflict	1167
Housing—housing insecurity	1167
Yarralumla Nursery—110th anniversary	1168

Thursday, 10 April 2025

MR ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Braddock) (10.00): Members:

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

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

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

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

Absence of Speaker

Clerk: In accordance with standing order 6, I inform the Assembly that the Speaker will be absent from the Assembly today and that the Deputy Speaker, as Acting Speaker, will perform the duties of the Speaker during his absence.

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre—petition 17-25

By Ms Carrick, from 818 residents:

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

The following residents of the Australian Capital Territory draw the attention of the Assembly to the proposed closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett.

There is already an acute shortage of respite places in the ACT. The Burrangiri Centre offers a day care program and short stay respite for up to 3 weeks without requiring an ACAT assessment.

Day care programs and respite facilities allow carer's respite so they can support older Canberrans to stay in their homes for as long as possible.

A petition in similar terms has been referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in

Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

Motion to take note of petition

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

That the petition so lodged be noted.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.03): I rise to present the petition on the closure of Burrangiri Age Care Respite Centre in Rivett. After only seven weeks it has 672 online signatures and 818 on paper, plus another 125 that were not in order. We have around 1,500 signatures.

The community is in full support of the facility and the respite services it provides. We have not heard even a whisper that anyone is unhappy with the facility or the services. The Assembly, aside from the government, is in full support of keeping Burrangiri open, as per the motion I co-sponsored with the Liberals.

The health minister tells the community to use the Carer Gateway; however, they already have an acute shortage of respite beds. Six people inquired through the gateway yesterday, asking when they could access respite care. The answer was: “There is a significant shortage of availability across all residential respite in the ACT, so we can’t really have wait lists. It may be going to take some time to get you support.” Some callers were told, “There are no beds.”

We do not know where Burrangiri’s 4½ thousand bed-nights will be replaced. There is no plan for the carers. We do not know how much it will cost to keep people in hospital when there is very limited respite to go to. There is no costing.

This is policy for convenience, not for the people in our community. It is buck-passing to the federal government, which will limit access to hard-to-access residential aged care facilities. Carers look after people for a variety of reasons and are really important to keeping down the cost of care to the taxpayer. We value carers and their contribution, especially as they sacrifice other parts of their life to be a carer.

Respite care is for carers. It is for carers to have a break. Burrangiri is the only facility in the ACT that does not need an ACAT assessment and is truly for carers, for respite care. When Minister Stephen-Smith talks about “step-down care”, she is talking about a service for people coming out of hospital, not for all types of care.

Carers prevent people going to hospital. This is what will be taken out of the community with the closure of Burrangiri’s 4½ thousand bed-nights per year. This is a lot of carers’ respite to be lost. Carers need time to attend to their own needs so they can keep going, whether it is a one-day trip away for a family birthday or three weeks getting a knee replacement and recovering.

Carers need to respite and that is what will be lost. Without an ACAT assessment, there is no access to residential aged-care facilities. Respite for these carers will be lost with the closure of Burrangiri, and those with an ACAT assessment will be on long waiting

lists.

I firmly believe this government could find a way to keep Burrangiri open if they wanted to. All the excuses we hear lack substance and, more importantly, empathy. I thank the community, some of whom are here today, for spreading awareness and coming forward to show how important this service is.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH(Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.06): I thank Ms Carrick for tabling this petition today. I do recognise those in the gallery who are here to support Ms Carrick.

I would say, again, to them and to Ms Carrick, through you Mr Acting Speaker, that this was not an easy decision to make. This is one of those decisions that reflects the challenges that ministers have in making decisions about allocation of resources across the breadth of their portfolios.

I have spoken a number of times in this place already about the background to this decision and the multiple reasons why the decision was taken at this time—those reasons being the need for maintenance of the facility, significant maintenance to be undertaken, including electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning work.

Ms Carrick continues to claim that the evidence of this is not available, but the report that supports this has, in fact, been provided to the Legislative Assembly. It clearly indicates that, within one to three years of the report being undertaken in 2023, this work was going to be required.

I have met with the Salvation Army a couple of times in relation to this matter. In my first meeting with them last year, they understood that this facility was going to need to close for a period of time to undertake those maintenance works, and there were a number of conversations about potential alternative options during an inevitable closure of the facility. The other factor, though, that was taken into account was the fact the Salvation Army's contract was coming to an end, so the Health Directorate did a considerable amount of work in considering the potential alternative options that could be funded by the ACT government in terms of access to respite care.

As Ms Carrick has indicated, the ACT government, alongside the commonwealth, does already fund a number of options, particularly for step-down from hospital, and the CATS Program to provide specific support to people who are transitioning out of hospital. There are residential places and community places for support under the Transitional Therapy and Care Program, which is a short-term rehabilitation program for up to 12 weeks to assist eligible people 65 years and over, or 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, after being in hospital. And I recognise Ms Carrick's point that Burrangiri does not only provide services and care for people coming out of hospital.

As Ms Carrick has indicated, the Carer Gateway does exist and is funded by the commonwealth, and we are working with Carers ACT to identify a site in relation to them establishing a respite facility that they have clearly indicated would not require ongoing ACT government funding.

This is probably a key point in relation to the alternatives that we have considered. We are talking about the ACT government funding a commonwealth responsibility to the tune of \$1.8 million a year. I note that Mr Rattenbury has said, “I have heard \$1.7 million; I have heard \$1.8 million.” That is GST exclusive and GST inclusive.

There are opportunity costs for that funding. That funding being used to support Burrangiri, a clear commonwealth responsibility, means that it cannot be used to support other ACT government responsibilities. So part of my consideration as minister was the maintenance required on the facility itself; the fact that the existing contract was coming to an end; the opportunity costs associated; and the responsibilities that the ACT government has compared to the responsibilities the commonwealth government has.

As I indicated yesterday in question time, I also considered the broader environment, an environment in which the Albanese Labor government’s investment in aged care—the reforms they have undertaken to aged care, after a decade of neglect—are seeing significant new investments in aged-care facilities in the ACT, with at least two new aged care facilities due to open by the end of this calendar year and another one next calendar year. The LDK facility at Amberfield is due to open quite soon. We have seen before in the aged-care sector that when new facilities open, that does open up opportunities for additional services in aged care. These things do tend to come in waves, and we are about to have a number of new aged-care facilities open in the ACT, including the new facilities in Aranda and Wright that are due to open by the end of this year. That gives me a level of confidence that new opportunities for respite will open up that are appropriately funded by the commonwealth government.

It is my understanding that around 80 per cent of those who currently use the Burrangiri facility do have access to commonwealth funding through My Aged Care. So it is a relatively small proportion of people who access that service without aged care funding, and they probably are eligible for aged care funding; so I again encourage people, if they have not already had an ACAT assessment, to seek that ACAT assessment.

I do understand this is a difficult issue. I do understand that people have a connection to Burrangiri and that it has for 35 years delivered an excellent service. I understand Ms Carrick’s advocacy for it, and I understand that she does not agree with or support my decision and that a majority of Assembly members do not. But ministers have to take difficult decisions. This was one of those difficult decisions, and with the opportunity costs, when I went back to first principles and looked at it, I simply could not make a different decision in this case.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.12): I wish to speak briefly on the petition, and I would like to thank Ms Carrick for bringing it and the people in the chamber today for taking the time to come. I also will fight to try and keep Burrangiri open. The minister talks about maintenance that needs to occur within one to three years, and contracts. These are processes that could be dealt with, surely, in the short-term to ensure that the 4½ thousand people that are using Burrangiri now—

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is not 4½ thousand people!

MS CASTLEY: It is not 4½ thousand people?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is 4½ thousand bed-nights.

MS CASTLEY: Bed-nights—for all of the families that need that respite care; it is not just the elderly. Sure, 80 per cent of them may have access to commonwealth funding, but for the people that do not, where do they go? And what happens to those families? Do they get to a crisis point where they end up in hospital? The person that needs care has also got nowhere to go and ends up in hospital. What is the cost of that to our community? I believe that we need to fight for people that need help. That is what we are here for: to support the vulnerable people in our community.

My grandfather—we popped him in Burrangiri, and he loved it; he would not go anywhere. My gran was so old and desperately needed help. Mum was a nurse working shift work, and she would work four days on in the hospital, and she would go to the farm for her four days off, and then she would go back to work. She was trying to help my gran. And there are many, many families in Canberra that desperately need that help as well. They are not just aged people either.

I fully support Ms Carrick's petition, and I am very grateful to be supporting her in this quest to keep the respite care centre open. Obviously, it is not going to happen, and I think that is a shame on the government. Yes, hard decisions have to be made. Unfortunately, there are people who are going to miss out at the end of that very hard decision that the minister has made, and I think it is a shame.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.14): Just briefly on the petition; I thank Ms Carrick for bringing the petition and everyone who has been working on this issue. The Greens are very concerned about access to respite care for Canberrans. We remain concerned, from everything that we have heard.

I am not completely reassured by government promises of future facilities and contracts to come. We are talking about Burrangiri; so I am not going to list-off a very long list of infrastructure that was promised by a certain date and has not been delivered, nor will I talk about the roll out of MyWay+, which was delivered on time and possibly should not have been. I think when we do not yet have the service operating, we are right to be concerned that that service may not be available for Canberrans the day after Burrangiri closes, and really that is the only thing that happens.

We also do understand the difference between ACT and federal government health funding. We talk a lot about it in here. It is true and real that the ACT cannot collect the tax and is not responsible for paying for all of the same things that our federal government is responsible for paying for. We do have a Labor federal government. It would be excellent if we could pick up the pace and make sure that we are getting the services we need.

At the end of the day, when people end up in our hospitals the ACT government is paying for it anyway, and it certainly does sound like, if we do not have enough respite care beds available in our community the day after Burrangiri closes, that is what is going to happen. People will go to hospital, where we will pay for it, or they will stay at home in quiet misery, and I am very, very worried that we are about to see that play

out.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (10.16): I will speak briefly on this as well, and I thank Ms Carrick for tabling this petition today, and I thank those in the chamber, and those who are not here, for signing it and for their efforts in bringing this forward. I appreciate the minister's explanation of the decision, which we are all across now. It has come to light this week that this closure removes 56 per cent of the respite beds in the ACT, and—Ms Clay's point from before—that some 70 people are in hospital beds, as we speak, waiting for an aged-care placement. So on the cost of the decision—the saving is \$1.8 million per year, but what will be the cost on our hospital system of those bed places that are now in hospital rather than the respite centre?

I am reassured by the minister's confidence "that new opportunities for respite will open up", but I do think that that should have been covered before this decision was made. This is really my concern: the lack of planning to ensure there is no gap in service provision when Burrangiri closes. I do not think it should be on the people who need respite, who need a break, and the people that they are caring for to have to then stand up and ask that question and go public and mount this kind of campaign to save the centre from closure. If it is the case that the centre needs to close, I do think the decision could have been made differently and communicated differently, rather than creating the uncertainty that it has.

It is good to see that we have a federal senator who is pushing for federal cooperation on this issue, and I am sure the health minister is as well. It would have been great to have had that happen before this decision was announced publicly so that people who are in the gallery today did not have to be here and could be getting the rest that they need.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Veterans—commemoration and reflection opportunities

Ministerial statement

MS ORR (Yerrabi—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (10.18): I am pleased to speak today in my role as Minister for Seniors and Veterans. This sitting week will be the last opportunity to acknowledge Anzac Day in advance of 25 April. This is one of our nation's most significant days for veterans and their families.

Anzac Day is a national day of commemoration. It is an important day to pause and remember the sacrifices made by our armed forces, those who paid the ultimate price and those who returned with scars both seen and unseen, and those family members who supported our service men and women through these times. It is not a day of celebration but rather a solemn occasion that allows us to honour the bravery and courage of those who have served in the armed forces.

While Anzac Day is a time to pay tribute to the bravery of those who fought and died for their country, it also serves as a reminder of the devastating impact of war on families. For families who have lost loved ones in war, Anzac Day can be a particularly

difficult day, and it can bring back memories of the loss and pain they have endured. For these families, Anzac Day is a time to come together with others who have suffered similar losses and to honour the memory of their loved ones.

The ACT stands as a powerful symbol of our nation's enduring respect for those who have served. From the solemn grandeur of the Australian War Memorial to the dawn service atop Mount Ainslie, the ACT lives and breathes the Anzac spirit and, here, remembrance is not reserved for one day; it is part of our city's soul, woven into its daily rhythm.

This year, Friday 25 April will mark the 110th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, as well as the commemoration of all Australians who have served in times of peace and war. Here in the capital, we have the privilege of being the home of the Australian War Memorial and the opportunity to attend national services, as well as local ones.

Mr Acting Speaker, I will briefly outline some of the 2025 Anzac Day commemorative program opportunities, including the following commemorations at the Australian War Memorial, which I encourage everyone to consider attending. The dawn service commences at 5.30 am, with the commemorative address to be delivered by Deputy Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Matt Buckley AM CSC RAN.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Services Association Commemorative Ceremony, hosted by members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans and Services Association, will commence at 7.30 am at the *For Our Country* sculptural pavilion.

The National Commemorative Service will begin at 9.30 am, including the RSL ACT Branch Veterans' March, beginning on Anzac Parade. The Anzac Day Address will be delivered by Major Angela Uphill.

The Last Post Ceremony will be held at 4.30 pm, which will commemorate the service and sacrifice of Captain Edward Frederick Robert Bage.

The ACT has the highest veteran population per capita in our nation. It is more than our capital; it is a living community of service. This Anzac Day, families, veterans, students and visitors will gather once again, not out of habit but out of a deep, shared commitment to honour the courage, sacrifice and mateship.

I note many local veteran organisations will also be holding commemorative services in their local area and that a range of educative resources are available to teachers, parents and carers. For curious school-aged children, through the federal Department of Veterans' Affairs Anzac Portal website, you can get lots of information.

I understand that the Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their Families will lay a wreath on behalf of ACT veterans and their families during a Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in the lead up to Anzac Day.

Mr Acting Speaker, I will conclude by sharing a quote from Charles Bean regarding the Australian War Memorial, which is always poignant and significant, especially in regard to Anzac Day:

Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made.

Again, I encourage everyone to take time this Anzac Day to commemorate and reflect in your own way on the sacrifices of the veteran community to keep our country and region safe. As we pause, our thoughts turn to war's enormous cost and the toll it takes not only on those who fall but on all those who serve and everyone who loves them. Lest we forget.

I present the following paper:

Opportunities for commemoration and reflection in advance of ANZAC Day 2025—Ministerial statement, 10 April 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

High-risk weather season—summary Ministerial statement

DR PATERSON (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (10.23): As the official 2024-25 high-risk weather season closed on 31 March this year, I rise to provide the Assembly and our community with a summary of the season.

Emergency management is a combined effort across the ACT government, our community partners and our broader ACT communities, as we all have a shared responsibility for the safety of our region. I would particularly like to call out our dedicated emergency volunteers and staff of the ACT Emergency Services Agency for their efforts in preparing for emergencies here in the ACT, for responding so promptly and for travelling interstate to help other Australian communities. I express my sincere gratitude to these men and women for giving up their time to protect others, and I extend our heartfelt thanks to the families of these emergency responders.

Leading into the 2024-25 high-risk weather season, the ESA undertook significant work alongside national colleagues to understand the climate conditions that we were going to face over the summer months. Indications from the Bureau of Meteorology and analysis from our own weather specialists indicated that the ACT would likely face an increased risk of thunderstorms, flash floods and above-average temperatures. The forecast conditions came after a winter period of below-average rainfall and above-average temperatures.

In practical terms, this meant that there would be a heightened likelihood of above-average rainfall, and particularly an increased risk of severe thunderstorms during spring and early summer. Low-intensity heatwaves and potential for greater bushfire

risk towards the end of summer and into autumn were also significant factors in the planning for emergencies. These climate conditions were compounded by other emergencies that influenced this season, such as the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate led response to the avian influenza outbreak at a poultry facility and in other areas of the ACT.

Prior to the season beginning, and across 2024, the government and our community partners engaged in a significant amount of structured and planned preparation work. Led by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate Security and Emergency Management Division, all government directorates undertake a thorough readiness program to ensure we are ready to respond, recover and support our community in the event of an emergency.

The ESA undertook a detailed program of preparedness to ensure that the four operational services were ready to respond. Before the start of this high-risk weather season, ESA worked to improve the intelligence-gathering capability for incident management, call-out procedures and systems for volunteers, as well as implementation of the Australian Warning System, which streamlined the approach to community warnings for floods and heatwaves. This work was in addition to the regular training and exercising undertaken to skill emergency responders and incident management personnel.

Significant work was undertaken across directorates to improve the coordination of services in recovery, including services provided through our valued sector community partners, coordination of information to ensure effective responses from partner directorates, such as Transport Canberra and City Services, and significant training and exercising to ensure that the government was ready to respond.

Over the season, the ACT recorded 42 grass and bushfires in rural areas of the ACT, the largest of which was just under a hectare. While the weather undoubtedly played a role in this outcome, we cannot overlook the dedicated work of the ACT Rural Fire Service, Parks and Conservation Service and ACT Fire & Rescue in reducing the risk of ignitions and in responding quickly when ignitions did occur. These conditions also allowed the ACT Rural Fire Service to lead 14 hazard reduction burns that contributed to larger efforts to reduce available fuels across the ACT and manage the risk of bushfire.

Our firefighters have also been kept busy throughout the summer period assisting their colleagues in almost every state and territory. Firefighters from the Rural Fire Service and Parks and Conservation Service deployed to the Northern Territory, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania to assist local crews with firefighting and incident management expertise.

Worthy of special mention, in December the Rural Fire Service deployed an aerial firefighting specialist and our firefighting helicopters into New South Wales to help coordinate aviation firefighting for a bushfire in Wee Jasper. Earlier in the season, the Canberra Airport large aerial tanker base was operational in October 2024 to assist in the refill and dispatch of aerial firefighting aircraft fighting a fire in South Australia. This close cooperation and sharing of resources and expertise further highlight the professionalism and dedication of our ACT firefighters.

Over summer, the State Emergency Service experienced another busy period, building on consecutive years of significant operational activity. At the close of the high-risk weather season, the ACT SES had responded to more than 1,000 requests for assistance from our communities.

While there was no one single storm that was behind these requests—most of them were associated with three significant storms across the summer—each response lasted for multiple days. Cross-government resources, led by ACT SES, were dedicated to the response in each case, and it was rewarding to see these resources come together to assist the community. Recognition should go to not only our SES in responding, but also our RFS, Parks and Conservation, and Transport and City Services teams. We also extend our thanks across the border to colleagues in the New South Wales State Emergency Service for assisting the ACT community.

I note that, in all cases, the recovery efforts continue long after the immediate response. Efforts in infrastructure repair, tree assessment, debris removal and whole-of-government recovery coordination should be commended.

I also mention the dedication of our ACT SES volunteers, who deployed to Queensland to assist local crews in the response to the Townsville floods and to both the Queensland Sunshine Coast and New South Wales Northern Rivers regions in response to Tropical Cyclone Alfred. It is a testament to these volunteers that they would take time out of their work and family life here in the ACT to assist communities so far away from home.

During the past high-risk weather season, staff and volunteers from the ESA and Parks and Conservation travelled to every state and territory, with the exception of Western Australia, to assist their colleagues and communities in times of need.

Following consecutive years of below-average temperatures, the predictions of above-average temperature over summer promoted increased planning for heatwaves and the widespread effects that extreme heat has on the ACT. Looking back on the summer that was, the ACT experienced more than double the average number of days over 30 degrees. While we did not experience extreme spikes in temperatures, the number of days in low-intensity heatwave conditions strained our communities and infrastructure.

Prior to summer, significant work had been undertaken through ESA, ACT Health and the Security and Emergency Management Division to ensure that the processes and systems in place to communicate heatwave conditions and to manage the effects of heatwaves were as robust as possible. This advanced planning proved to be of value during the season, with detailed planning undertaken for specific heatwave events, provision of invaluable information provided to the community, and work undertaken to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable during these events. I thank all of those who worked in our community to keep us safe from heatwaves over the summer.

It is worthwhile, as always, to have a special call-out to our emergency volunteers. Across our emergency service volunteers from the ACT SES, ACT RFS and community fire units and our community sector volunteers coordinated by the Community Services Directorate, and those who give up their time for specific events,

it is a tribute to the character of the territory that we are so well supported by volunteers. More than 25,000 volunteer hours have been given freely over the high-risk weather season to train and prepare, and to undertake community engagement and respond to the emergencies. These efforts to keep our communities safe should be acknowledged with the greatest appreciation.

Of course, we recognise that emergency management is a shared responsibility with our communities, and the information we provide is essential in ensuring that we are all well prepared to respond and recover. The ESA, through the “Be Emergency Ready” community education campaign, shared information with our community through social media, the ESA website and our local media outlets to promote these essential preparedness messages. Targeted in-person community engagement with specific groups and at the National Multicultural Festival, with representation of all four ESA operational services, helped to reinforce these important messages.

Further afield, significant cross-government efforts from ACT Health, TCCS and Education reinforced preparedness messages with specific community groups. The ability of all government communications teams to work together to promote essential messages and build resilience in our community will continue to be a vital part of our comprehensive approach taken in the ACT.

It is also important to recognise this role of building resilience in our communities to withstand the effects of all emergencies. I am proud to note the release of the ACT Disaster Resilience Strategy in September last year, as the ACT’s first strategy to unite all government efforts with community and business sectors as we seek to build our capacity to withstand the effects of emergencies.

Each high-risk weather season presents our ACT community with challenges and opportunities, and this season just closed has been no exception. We face challenges in the emergencies that climate hazards present, but there are also opportunities to work collaboratively across government and with the community to prepare to the best of our ability, respond effectively and recover to a stronger position. It is the cross-government, cross-sector and whole-of-community effort that keeps us safe before, during and after these emergencies.

Although this high-risk weather season has closed, attention has already turned to this year’s high-risk weather season. Emergencies can occur at any time, and it is incumbent on the whole community to work together and prepare for the risks that we face, and then respond and recover. Government and our community partners have started work to prepare for the next weather season, and I urge all Canberrans to play their part. Information on emergencies in the ACT and how to work to become more resilient is available on the “Emergency and Safety” page of the government, or through the ESA website.

In closing, I extend my sincere thanks for the dedication of all of our emergency service staff and volunteers, the dedication of ACT government personnel across our directorates and our community service partners who dedicate so much time to keeping our community safe. I thank them all for their unwavering commitment to the safety of our territory.

I present the following paper:

End of high-risk weather season—Ministerial statement, 10 April 2025.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Miss Nuttall**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Rattenbury for this sitting due to illness.

Motion (by **Mr Cocks**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Parton for this sitting due to personal reasons.

Government—order to table documents

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (10.36): I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 213A, the Assembly calls on the Chief Minister to table all handover briefing documents prepared by:

- (1) the ACT Health Directorate during the 2024 caretaker period for the incoming Minister for Mental Health;
- (2) Canberra Health Services during the 2024 caretaker period for the incoming Minister for Mental Health;
- (3) the Community Services Directorate for the incoming Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services; and
- (4) the Education Directorate during the 2024 caretaker period for the incoming Minister for Education and Early Childhood.

This motion seeks the release of documents previously requested by the Standing Committee on Social Policy during its inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2023-24. I move this motion on behalf of the committee and draw members' attention to the 246A statement that I delivered on Tuesday, addressing this issue.

The committee considers that requiring it to submit FOI requests or questions on notice in this chamber in order to access executive documents requested during inquiries is contrary to the views and findings of the 2010 Select Committee on Privileges and continuing resolution 8B.

It would also appear to be inconsistent with the spirit of the motion passed by the Assembly in the last sitting week, which acknowledged that there is no requirement for

members to seek information under freedom of information prior to requesting an order to produce documents. I ask that the Assembly support this motion.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (10.38): I thank Mr Emerson for raising this matter. I can advise that six incoming portfolio briefs have been requested, assessed and released under the FOI Act and are now publicly available, and that the directorates that Mr Emerson has listed have also been FOI-ed and have expected release dates this month to the applicant and public release in early May.

I take the point that the Assembly can, of course, seek to access documents through this standing order, and that is what it is. The issue for the government is that the FOI process allows for an appropriate independent assessment of personal information and other matters that should not be in the public domain to be redacted from documents before they are publicly released.

This mechanism for document release requires me, as the motion is requesting me to table the documents, effectively, in order to ensure that no personal information is released, to claim executive privilege on the document. The Clerk will then be required to hire a retired judge to make an independent assessment, if anyone seeks to contest those elements of the documents where executive privilege has been claimed. It is an expensive and time-consuming way to access documents that have already been FOI-ed and will be released in an appropriate form in a matter of weeks.

I will not oppose the motion today, but I will potentially have to claim executive privilege in order to ensure that information that should not be in the public arena is not inadvertently released through this process, because under this standing order you cannot redact information unless you claim executive privilege, which I will have to do, and it is a very expensive way of going through this process. That is why we are recommending using FOI, because it does allow for an appropriate assessment of information that may or may not be in those incoming ministerial briefs that should not be in the public arena.

For the purposes of today's exercise, we will not oppose this proposed resolution; but, pending the timeframe that I need to assess these matters, and having regard to when the FOI documents will be available, for the first time in this process so far in this parliamentary term—I will alert the Clerk—I may have to call on executive privilege. I hope that the retired judge is lined up for this one, noting that this is a very expensive way to access information that is coming in a matter of weeks. Having said that, the government will not oppose the motion.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.40): I would like to rise on behalf of the Greens to indicate our support for this motion. It is interesting that the social policy committee resorted to the use of a 213A order for the production of documents, as it provides oversight of the ACT government. In some ways I am saddened that it has come to this point and that the committee was not able, in combination with the minister, to resolve this matter. I also note that the freedom of information requests that I have submitted surrounding the information provided during caretaker would not cover these particular documents.

I want to go to some comments made by Minister Stephen-Smith on Tuesday, raising concerns about the short timeframe to answer questions on notice following a hearing, and that this short timeframe precluded the government from being able to provide information requested, due to the need to review information, contact external parties mentioned in the information and conduct redactions as required. Whilst it is a valid point, I think it was simplistic and missed another element.

In my experience, there have been many examples of answers being provided to committees later than the deadline specified. Sometimes the minister requested the committee for leeway regarding those deadlines, which, in all cases, from memory, was readily agreed to by the committee. If a minister writes to the committee saying they need additional time to undertake these processes and committing to provide a response when they are complete, I would suggest that most, if not all, committees would fall over their chairs in appreciation and bend over backwards to enable that to occur.

The only times when it cannot be accommodated involve some of the ridiculously short turnaround timeframes imposed on committees—for example, the estimates committees in the last term—which may have precluded the committees from being able to provide this level of flexibility.

I also remind members of the executive and committee members that means exist by which sensitive information in the possession of the executive can be shared with committees in a confidential manner. I have been involved in at least two instances where commercial-in-confidence information has been shared with committees. The confidentiality of that information was respected by those committees, and that information helped those committees in their understanding and consideration of the issue in front of them. I would encourage this option to be utilised more within this Assembly to ensure members are fully informed and have a full appreciation of the issue at hand.

Another option may be to follow the New South Wales upper house process for the order of production of documents, which enables all members to view the documents on an in-confidence basis until the independent arbitrator has declared that they may be publicly released. Of course, this requires members to respect the confidentiality of the information; but, given the experience in committees here, as well as what is happening in the New South Wales upper house, this seems to be well respected by all sides of politics.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (10.43): I want to add a few words of support for this motion. There has been a constructive discussion this morning. I have sat on eight parliamentary committees and chaired three of them, and I have only one gem of wisdom from that experience: pick up the phone and talk to us. We have excellent secretariats. They work really hard. They try so hard to work with ministers' offices and DLOs. Pick up the phone and talk to them. We can always work it out.

If you cannot make it to a hearing, please do not just ghost us or fail to attend the hearing. Pick up the phone and let us get a hearing date that we can all attend. We have never failed to find a hearing date on which we can all attend when that process works. If you find that requests for information are onerous or unreasonable, or it is somehow otherwise not in the public interest to put that information in the public domain in the

way that we have asked, pick up the phone and talk to us. We will do a briefing. We will accept it in camera. We will have a look at our deadlines. We will work it out. There is an ability for statutory committee inquiries and self-referred inquiries to come back to parliament and say, “We need an extension.” There are so many options; just pick up the phone, have a chat to us and we will work it out.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Government—order to table documents

Motion (by **Ms Castley**) proposed:

That:

- (1) this Assembly orders the Chief Minister to table, on the last business day of each month, for the duration of the 11th Assembly:
 - (a) a list of decisions made under section 8 of the *Government Procurement Act 2001* in the preceding month, where the decision or function relates to a procurement worth more than \$250,000, and where the decision was made without a business case, economic appraisal, or similar evaluation that credibly demonstrated the benefits of the procurement exceeded the cost;
 - (b) the written record of each such decision worth more than \$5 million, as required under section 8(5), with appropriate redactions for private or commercial-in-confidence information (noting the relevant Minister must make unredacted records available to any interested Member, on the condition any sensitive information is used responsibly); and
 - (c) a statement from the responsible Minister for each such decision worth more than \$5 million, stating the basis by which they are satisfied the procurement represents value for money; and
- (2) any Member may take note of any documents tabled under this motion on the next day of sitting.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Barr**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre

MS CARRICK(Murrumbidgee) (10.48): I seek leave to call on Assembly business notice No 3.

Leave not granted.

Standing orders—suspension

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (10.49): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Ms Carrick from moving a motion concerning the production of documents relating to Burrangiri Respite Care (Notice No 3, Assembly business).

I will now speak to the motion. I am seeking to suspend the standing orders because we need to debate the documentation that underpins the decision that the minister has made to close Burrangiri. There is an acute shortage of respite beds, a loss of 4½ thousand bed nights, and we need to discuss the documents that underpin this decision.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH(Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (10.50): I understand why Ms Carrick is of the view that this matter is time-critical, but she has known for some time that her petitions would be tabled this week and that this would be a matter of discussion this week.

There is a process for putting motions on the notice paper. She had plenty of time to put this matter on the notice paper in a timely way last week, or in time for the deadline, which I believe is midday on Monday. There is no reason that she should be bringing this forward at the last minute and then seeking a suspension of standing orders.

I totally understand that we will lose this vote and that the Assembly is minded to suspend standing orders to enable the motion to be debated, but I think it is an important matter of principle that people should be expected to abide by the processes of this place.

I recognise that Ms Carrick is relatively new, but there is plenty of advice available to members of the Assembly, and she has been here for long enough to know what the deadlines are for putting motions on the notice paper; so, on a matter of principle, we are opposing the suspension of standing orders.

I will say to Ms Carrick, as I have said to her before, that we are happy to have conversations and we are happy to help. I think my office has a pretty good reputation regarding being happy to work with other offices in this place to work through processes and solutions where we can.

I will speak on the substance of the matter when we get to the debate on Ms Carrick's motion, assuming that standing orders are suspended. But Ms Carrick should note that there are processes in this place and there are timeframes that are expected to be abided by. There is no reason why she should not have done so in this case.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (10.52): The Greens will be supporting the suspension of standing orders, noting that Ms Carrick placed her motion on the notice paper yesterday evening and due, to the time-critical nature of the call for the production of documents, that is why it needs to be debated.

I will correct Ms Stephen-Smith on one point. I believe that the number needed to pass a motion for the suspension of standing orders is 13. Given the number of absences from the chamber today, that will not be achieved. It is disappointing that we will not have the opportunity to debate the actual motion.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (10.53): The Canberra Liberals support the motion for the suspension of standing orders. We understand the concerns from the government about procedure. We have had extensive discussions recently around exactly what the requirements are. Indeed, I have been engaging with Ms Carrick regularly around this

motion and the appropriate way to deal with it.

The reason we came to the conclusion that it is entirely appropriate to debate this motion today is that there has been a shift through the week. Through the week, Ms Carrick has attempted to get further information and has asked a number of questions that have given rise to matters which need to be considered now, and the information is needed now, not weeks away. The Canberra Liberals are very happy to support this suspension.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12		Noes 8
Chiaka Barry	Jeremy Hanson	Tara Cheyne
Andrew Braddock	James Milligan	Suzanne Orr
Peter Cain	Deborah Morris	Marisa Paterson
Fiona Carrick	Laura Nuttall	Michael Pettersson
Leanne Castley		Chris Steel
Jo Clay		Rachel Stephen-Smith
Ed Cocks		Caitlin Tough
Thomas Emerson		Taimus Werner-Gibbings

Mr Assistant Speaker declared that the motion had not been carried as an absolute majority of members had not voted in its favour as required by standing order 272.

Question resolved in the negative.

Education Amendment Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 8 April 2025, on motion by **Ms Cheyne**, on behalf of Ms Berry:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.59): The Canberra Liberals support the intent of the Education Amendment Bill 2025. At the outset, I would like to thank the minister's staff who gave me and my staff a briefing, as well as Ms Nuttall and the Greens staff. This is a bit of an urgent bill and we have had to scramble a bit. It is a small but important bill, but we have an amendment that has been pretty well articulated in the media. The current problems with the administration of Brindabella Christian College require a solution. We agree that reducing the time required to allow for submissions about the application for a registration amendment is needed and that doing so will help to solve this issue. However, we cannot support leaving in the hands of the minister an interpretation of what is a reasonably necessary shorter period of consultation without implementing a minimum period. We have a precedent to be concerned about. I will explain why.

The bill changes the conditions for the required public notice when a minister receives an application from proprietors to change their school's registration. There are three requirements in issuing the public notice: an application has been made; the proposed change day, as well as the name of the proposed new proprietor and the name and contact details of each key individual for the proposed new proprietor; and how a person may make a submission about the application to the minister, including the date, at least 60 days after the notice is given, by which a submission must be made. The requirements in place ensure that all stakeholders of a school are informed that a change is happening, what the change is and that they can have a say on that change.

In our view, we need a minimum period for stakeholders to have their say. The previous actions of the government make it necessary, unfortunately. What we saw with what the government did to Calvary hospital in 2023 sent a shiver down the spines of catholic and independent schools. I will quote from what they said at that time. In May 2023, the director of Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Ross Fox, in response to the Calvary takeover, said:

Therefore, if it occurs for the operator of a public hospital is that a sort of precedent for those who operate non-government schools in the ACT and particularly Catholic schools?

He went on to say:

There are pressures on school capacities ... I guess people have looked at some of the arguments put forward by the ACT government for why a compulsory acquisition is justified ...

And the possible interpretation is the same principled policy arguments could be applied to other services, other community services, other community institutions, including schools.

The vicar general of the archdiocese, Richard Thompson, said:

The archbishop or the archdiocese has not been consulted in any way, as I understand it ...

It opens up the question for us—does that now mean that all institutions in the ACT [are] now potentially open for a government acquisition?

This is an issue of consultation, not necessarily acquisition. The government sought to compulsorily acquire a non-government institution with absolutely no consultation, under the guise that it was necessary. I hope the government and the community would forgive us for being concerned when a bill is presented that potentially removes the requirement to have any defined consultation period. We simply do not trust the government, based on the precedent. I acknowledge that a change like that cannot be initiated or imposed by the minister or the ACT government under these circumstances, but parents and staff deserve to be consulted when their school registration will be amended. They deserve to have the peace of mind that the government will listen.

An amendment that I will move in the detail stage is about legislating a safeguard for

parents, staff and the broader community to ensure that they can have a say about the future of their school. I have said that 21 days should be the minimum period for a couple of reasons. Firstly, that is in consultation with parents who have reached out to me and with staff of Reform Brindabella Christian College, although I think they have gone from 21 days to 14 days. But we certainly need a period of consultation that genuinely allows the parents, in particular, but also staff to be engaged in that process. That is with concern to Brindabella College but also the fact that we are changing this act in an ongoing way. If we are going to change it in an ongoing way, it is a safeguard to have 21 days in the legislation so that the minister cannot, at a whim, make decisions about the next institution. We think 21 days is reasonable, and I will move that as an amendment in the detail stage. That is still a substantial cut. We are going from the existing 60 days—that is, 8½ weeks—down to three weeks.

I understand that is not going to be supported by the minister or the Greens. I think the solution will be in the detail stage. A sunset clause is a good solution, because that allays my concerns about ongoing issues and how this might be imposed on other schools. I still think seven days is too short, to be frank. I would prefer a longer period. I have said 21 days; others have said 14 days. It seems the government and the Greens will support seven days, and we will not oppose that. But I certainly have concerns. I foreshadow that, if that amendment is passed, there will be a sunset clause for this legislation. We will come back next year to deal with it. We cannot keep seven days as the period. It has to be a more substantial period, whether that is 21 days or something else.

It is a bit messy because of the short time frame, but let me be very clear: we understand the issues with Brindabella Christian College and we understand that the administrator has time lines and the issues involved with that. I appreciate the correspondence I have had from the minister's office, but I am very concerned about the unintended consequences and I am very nervous about giving the government power to essentially remove consultation in the change of registration of a non-government school, given that the government are saying, 'Trust us. We would never do the wrong thing,' when I look back at what happened with Calvary. Maybe Ms Berry would not do that, but who knows who the education minister might be down the track. We saw through the actions of Ms Stephen-Smith that she was prepared to ride roughshod over an organisation and remove the ability for that organisation to have consultation.

It is our job to make sure that safeguards are in place and that the government cannot do those sorts of things. I think that 21 days, as an enduring period, is right. That has to be balanced with the requirements of the administrator and Brindabella Christian College. We will have that debate in the detail stage. At the end of the day, regardless of what happens with the amendments, we will support the bill today.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.07): Straight out of the gate, it is important to say, and I think we all agree, that the kids at Brindabella Christian College do not deserve to be caught up in the middle of all this. Students need continuity of education, so I deeply appreciate why this bill is necessary. I appreciate the distress that the last couple of years have held for parents and carers who faced the uncertainty of whether their children will be safe and supported at school. And I appreciate the distress of staff who were not being paid for a while during the cost-of-living crisis. That is inexcusable.

There is a genuine problem that needs to be solved. The Education Amendment Bill 2025 has come about because, as Mr Hanson mentioned, the current consultation time frame for changing a school's registration would jeopardise our ability to keep Brindabella Christian College afloat as it transitions to a new proprietor. I think all members in this place would agree that, if a school closes because of a technicality or red tape, we will only get chaos, and it would be deeply unfair on the students, staff and school community.

While we appreciate the urgency of this bill in the context I have just mentioned, the Greens have lingering concerns with the bill as written. Specifically, the bill makes an enduring change to the act rather than a temporary solution to solve a specific problem. This change is to the time frame for consultation. I am worried about how the provisions for this bill might be misused in future situations, so I am wary of adopting it without going through the full suite of the usual stakeholder consultation exercises. It is for this reason that I will later move amendments that will be circulated in my name. I will speak to those amendments now in the interest of efficiency.

Amendments Nos 1 and 2 will set a minimum consultation period of seven days, which I believe is the best balance between the legitimate concerns of the community and the Canberra Liberals about appropriate consultation and the practicalities and the risks of the current situation, as will be outlined by the minister. The minimum consultation period has been of particular concern to the community, and understandably so.

I will walk through why we have been convinced that seven days is the safest option. Given the uncertainty facing Brindabella Christian College in terms of the longevity of its finances, and given the information available to me as a non-executive member—I appreciate I do not have all the information—I am satisfied that seven days is the safest absolute minimum time frame that would allow the administrators to move quickly to find a proprietor, while minimising the risk that the school closes. This does not mean that the consultation period for a change in registration in this case must be seven days. To this end, my office has sought and gratefully received confirmation from the minister's office that, when the school changes its registration, it will provide the maximum possible consultation period it can with the most up to date information at hand. For example, if the minister received advice from the administrators that they would be able to allow a month, I would expect them to allow close to a month for public consultation. Personally, I would be very eager to see, at the very least, two weeks given. It is my hope that, by securing this assurance from the minister, the community is given the proper consultation period that is rightly due.

Granted, in these circumstances, the ACT government relies on the administrators' transparent representation of the school's finances, which the ACT government and parliament are not necessarily privy to, but, so far, I believe that all parties currently involved in this very swiftly moving feast have been operating in the best of faith. I encourage the administrators to continue to operate in good faith through this whole process, because, now more than ever, after everything that has happened, Brindabella Christian College needs and deserves certainty and transparency. My amendments will also place a sunset clause on this capability so that the provisions will automatically end on 1 January next year.

I want to stress this: it will be open to the government to come back with a more

enduring solution to any structural problems they see. We can definitely handle those in the normal way. In fact, I encourage and welcome that. Specifically, I would like to see the enduring iteration of this bill specify the test for ministerial discretion. Under what circumstances could a minister reasonably reduce a consultation period? I have heard from the community that they place a lot of value on the consultation period. Erosion of the need to consult should never be taken lightly and it should be incumbent on the minister to justify it in each case. But, for now, this will give us a temporary solution for a temporary problem and it will facilitate the government doing what is necessary to deal with the current circumstances.

Before I conclude, I sincerely thank both the minister and her office, and Mr Hanson and his office, for their constructive and, frankly, exemplary engagement. I am also very grateful to the folks at the former BCC and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT for their similarly insightful and constructive engagement. These people have helped keep my finger on the pulse of the community. Some of them have been available at entirely unreasonable hours. I really hope we all come away from this satisfied that we have worked through this in the very best way we could, given time constraints. I hope you all get a proper rest tonight.

My heart goes out to all students, parents and staff at Brindabella Christian College. None of you deserve the uncertainty that this brings. I want to reassure you that, right now, ensuring the continuity in your education is my highest priority.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (11.11): I would like to thank the minister for introducing the Education Amendment Bill 2025 this week and also thank her and her office for the regular briefings I have been provided to be able to reassure community members about what is happening in this space. Obviously, this is a really troubling matter that has been going on for far too long. Hopefully this gives us an opportunity to look at whether our Education Act is sufficient to protect us from what was obviously an unforeseen reality.

The issue at hand needs resolution as a priority, so I of course support the bill. I also thank Mr Hanson and Miss Nuttall for bringing forward sensible amendments to place some safeguards around the proposed change. It is my view that the Assembly needs more time to consider whether this change is appropriate and needed on a more permanent basis, so I thank Miss Nuttall for her amendment to introduce a sunset clause, which I will support. To me, it makes absolute sense to revisit this when there is less time pressure, and I echo Miss Nuttall's comments in that respect.

Given understandable anxiety in the school community about any future potential proprietors, I would, as Miss Nuttall has, implore the minister to opt for the longest consultation period that is financially feasible for the administrators. Some community members believe that the magic number is 14 days, and, although we do not have any amendments in front of us stipulating that feedback, it sounds like that might be where we end up.

This issue has had significant impacts on many people in my electorate. I thank members of the school community, public servants and members of the Assembly who have worked hard to advocate for the school and to give students certainty about their education moving forward. This is a matter that has progressed since before my time

here. I will not speak for any longer. Again, I thank everyone in the Assembly for working collaboratively to seek a solution.

MS BERRY(Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (11.13), in reply: I am pleased to have the chance to debate Education Amendment Bill 2025, which amends the Education Act 2004. I wish it were not the case that we need to be here to make this urgent amendment; however, the situation is so dire that we need to take this urgent action.

In 2022, chapter 4 of the act, relating to non-government schools, was updated to introduce a new regulatory framework. Division 4.3.4 of the act refers to an amendment to the registration of a non-government school and includes transferring the school's registration to a new proprietor. Section 98, which sits under division 4.3.4, refers to the application process for a registration amendment and outlines that there must be a period of no less than 60 days for public submissions on a registration amendment application.

The bill responds to an identified issue where, in certain circumstances, the 60-day period would have a significant impact on the operation of a non-government school. This is currently the case for Brindabella Christian College, which requires a timely transfer to a new proprietor in order to remain open. In this case, observing the full 60 days for public submissions would mean that the school would be forced to close. The government does not want this to happen, and I do not think anybody in this place wants this to happen either. As minister, it has always been my intention to keep all schools, public and private, open and operating to ensure young people's learning can continue with minimal disruption and we can continue to support and value our teaching staff across our school system in the ACT.

Schools are an essential part of our community. Updating section 98 would enable the reduction of the public submission period associated with an application for a registration amendment when it is reasonably necessary in the circumstances. As a human rights jurisdiction, we value the public's contribution to shaping our city. I know that, by limiting the time associated with public submissions, it will also limit Canberrans' right to take part in public life, which is why we have added a safeguard to ensure that a shorter period can only be approved if it is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

In the case of Brindabella, the limit on the right to take part in public life through the reduction of a 60-day public submission period needs to be balanced with the right to education for all students at the school, as well as the rights of those who are employed at Brindabella. In considering the appropriate time frame for submissions, the urgency of the matter must also be balanced with the intent to ensure that the public have an opportunity to express their views on the specific registration amendment.

As stated in my presentation speech, a shortened public submission period does not mean that there will be no submission period, as the registrar must still give public notice of the application and advise how a person must make a submission. It will instead, in extreme circumstances such as this one, enable a shortened period—for example, when time is critical to prevent the closure of a school. The registrar would

ensure that there is greater opportunity for community feedback during this shortened period of time. To be very clear, the reduction in consultation should only be considered in circumstances where the non-government school has requested a change to their registration.

The critical amendment in the Education Amendment Bill 2025 is of great urgency and need as it will assist in protecting the continued delivery of education to the ACT community at Brindabella Christian College and will assure the employment of staff at the school. The amendment also establishes safeguards for non-government schools that require time-critical registration amendments in the future, while ensuring the important role of public submissions continue to be valid in that process.

It has been a very busy week. I acknowledge that the Assembly has two amendments to my amendment to consider this morning: one from my colleague Ms Nuttall and another from my colleague Mr Hanson. I thank them both, along with Mr Emerson and Ms Carrick, for their engagement in this bill over such a short period. The briefings, negotiations and discussions have been respectful, productive and always with the students and staff at the centre. While the drafting of my amendment was informed by human rights advice and feedback from stakeholders, the government can support a minimum consultation period and a sunset clause in order to reach an agreement in these urgent and extreme circumstances.

However, we cannot support a minimum consultation period which might put the school at risk. For that reason we will not support Mr Hanson's amendment of 21 days. The situation with Brindabella Christian College is so urgent and it is at risk of closure. Ms Nuttall's amendment of seven days is supported. We are confident that a seven-day minimum gives us the flexibility required in this circumstance. With the information in front of us, we cannot be confident that any minimum period greater than seven days would guarantee the school's continuity, and this is on the advice of the administrators, Deloitte.

As per my original amendment, I am committed to have the longest consultation period possible for Brindabella Christian College's change in proprietor. The community should have their say when the time comes, which I am advised will begin immediately after the bill's amendment is made.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank everybody who has been involved in these discussions, including the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT for their support and guidance through this process. In addition, I acknowledge and thank the Catholic Education Office; the Independent Education Union; the Association of Parents and Friends of Act Schools, APFACTS; Reform BCC; and all community members who have taken the time to get in touch with me and my office.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clauses 1 to 3, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 4.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.20): I oppose this clause.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.20): I also oppose this clause.

Clause 4 negatived.

Clause 5.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.21): I thank Miss Nuttall for allowing me to go first. It allows this to be a bit cleaner procedurally. I seek leave to move an amendment that was not considered or reported on by the scrutiny committee.

Leave granted.

MR HANSON: I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name:

Clause 5

Page 2, line 17—

omit

shorter period under subsection (3) (c) only

substitute

period of less than 60 days, but of at least 21 days, for subsection (3) (c)

As foreshadowed in the in-principle speech, this amendment requires a minimum consultation period of 21 days and dispenses with the 60 days. There are a couple of reasons. Firstly, the parents of students at Brindabella Christian College deserve a period of consultation, and we have come up with 21 days. The other reason is that, ongoing, we cannot give the minister, whoever it is, a blank cheque to decide on a period of consultation without some baseline minimum. Ongoing, 21 days is reasonable, but it would appear that we will have a different way of dealing with it, and we will probably have a debate at some stage next year on what that period is.

I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

Amendment negatived.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.23): I seek leave to move an amendment that was not considered or reported on by the scrutiny committee.

Leave granted.

MISS NUTTALL: I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name:

Clause 5
Page 2, line 17—

omit

shorter period under subsection (3) (c) only

substitute

period of less than 60 days, but of at least 7 days, for subsection (3) (c)

I have already spoken to this, so I will not rehash in detail. This amendment seeks to put in place a consultation period of a minimum of seven days. It is the presumption that 60 days will still be the default, and it is incumbent on the minister to justify why it would need to be any less than 60 days. We would be concerned if it were any less than seven days, so we are putting this in as a minimum safeguard and are reassured that the minister will take the position of the maximum possible consultation period she can give with the information available to her at the time.

Amendment agreed to.

MISS NUTTALL: I move amendment No 3 circulated in my name:

Clause 5
Proposed new section 98 (5)
Page 2, line 18—

insert

(5) Subsection (4) and this subsection expire on 1 January 2026.

This is the sunset clause that will phase out the amendment at the end of the calendar year, at which point we may want to re-prosecute.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing)
Amendment Bill 2025

Debate resumed from 8 April 2025 on motion by **Dr Paterson:**

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS MORRIS (Brindabella) (11.26): I rise to speak on the government's Domestic Violence Agencies (Information Sharing) Amendment Bill 2025 which seeks to delay

the commencement of a desperately-needed information sharing scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to better protect children and families at risk of domestic violence by enabling agencies to better communicate with each other to identify, assess, manage and reduce the risks of family and domestic violence. It is something that the Canberra Liberals have been calling for for almost a decade.

Naturally then, the opposition is disappointed that we are here today talking about delaying the commencement of the scheme for another 18 months. The family violence information sharing scheme was wholeheartedly supported by the Canberra Liberals when the laws were passed last year. At the time, then-shadow minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence, Leanne Castley, described the scheme as, “a tool in the war chest to combat domestic and family violence.” During the same debate the former Member for Brindabella Nicole Lawder said:

If we have better information between ACT government directorates and agencies as well as interstate and other jurisdictions, that is only going to improve outcomes for vulnerable people. We need to ensure better information sharing between ACT government and other jurisdictions, directorates and agencies, because that is what will ensure the best interests and the safety of our most vulnerable people.

Even then, at the passage of the laws last year, the Canberra Liberals were concerned at the delays and slow progress to get the scheme into law and up and running. It has been a decade since recommendations for the scheme—better communication and education between agencies—were made in the 2015 Extraordinary Meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, and then also in the 2016 Glanfield inquiry following the tragic death of Bradyn Dillon. Also in 2016, the Canberra Liberals moved a motion in this place calling for the ACT government to allow information-sharing between agencies.

So, when it is almost a decade later in 2024 that the ACT government legislated the scheme, the Canberra Liberals were fully supportive of the passage of those laws, despite being very concerned at the slow progress to get there. At the time Ms Castley also said:

The ACT government says it could be up to May 2025. Frankly, I think domestic and family violence victims are sick of waiting for this, after initial consultation was run in 2022 and a draft bill and listening report published in 2023. I will say it again for the minister’s benefit: 2022, two years to progress this domestic violence initiative, never mind how long there have been calls for one in the ACT—well before this—and that it might not be operating until next year.

You can imagine then our disappointment that here we are again. Once again, this critical reform has been kicked down the road for another 18 months. Also disappointing is that the fact that the government has waited until the eleventh-hour, just over a month before the laws were due to take effect, to tell the community that the scheme will need to be delayed. An information sharing scheme between agencies is not a novel concept, it has been adopted federally and is found in other jurisdictions. So, we do have to ask why it is so difficult to do it here. What makes the ACT so unique that it takes more than a decade to get this up and running? So, while the opposition will be supporting this amendment bill today, we do so with a heavy heart.

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (11.29): I do not think it will come as a surprise to anyone here that I stand to express disappointment in the delay in bringing this legislation forward. As someone who spent months and months working on an information sharing framework, I do have some understanding of the importance of information sharing. The problem we have in the domestic and family values space—especially around information sharing—is that agencies hold specific information, and because of our secrecy laws that apply to some information, those agencies cannot talk to each other. For example, if someone were to move from New South Wales to the ACT, their information cannot be shared. Even within the ACT, you cannot share that information with agencies to help protect young children, people experiencing domestic and family violence and victims of domestic and family violence.

So, this legislation is critically important. It is very important that it does not continue to be delayed. Even the government expresses that importance in their explanatory memorandum for the legislation, where they say:

...the *ACT Domestic Violence Service System Final Gap Analysis Report* (Gap Analysis) each highlight significant barriers to information sharing in the ACT. This includes a lack of clarity about when and how agencies can share information, and institutional cultures which emphasise privacy and secrecy protections.

We know that it is important that this legislation is expedited. To have another delay of 18 months it to say to the Canberra community and to these victims, “Hey, we will keep allowing this lack of information sharing,” or “We will keep allowing agencies not to understand how we can help you or how we can better protect you.”

The minister made a comment on Tuesday when she introduced this bill saying that she has spoken to agencies and agencies have assured her that the current settings are sufficient to manage existing information sharing responsibilities until the bill passes. So basically, what the minister was saying to the family of Bradyn Dillon—where the coroner found that there had been a sliding door opportunity during the times CYPS were involved in providing services to the family where they could have recognised that there was a risk of abuse to Bradyn—what she is saying is that what we currently have in place is sufficient to manage that risk.

It has taken the government years to bring this legislation forward. Delays that we have rightly criticised, and we continue to criticise. Again, just reflecting on the conversation we had yesterday—where the government rushed through the Crime Legislation Amendment bill—the government is willing to rush through bills and programs when it suits their political agenda, but when it comes to protecting women and children, there is no urgency.

If the current settings we have are perfect, why are we doing this then? What is the point? Let us just go on with business as usual. I understand that the minister is thinking that the delay is 18 months, but I would really implore her not to get to that 18 months because this is critical legislation that is required. We cannot have another Bradyn incident here in the ACT. We cannot continue to put vulnerable people, victims of abuse and children at risk of an incident occurring. Whilst I support, and we support, this legislation going through, please, I implore you, do all you can before that 18 month period lapses.

MS CASTLEY (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.35): Let me begin by saying that I am incredibly frustrated by this bill. More than frustrated, I am angry. How is it that this bill was passed after almost a decade of talking about how we need better information sharing with a 12-month lead time, and that 12 months was not enough? How is it that we need another 18 months to get this done?

I am angry about the mismanagement and incompetence of the government, and I am angry that this has been withheld from us for so long. I am angry that the government is using the safety of victims of domestic and family violence as their excuse for these delays. There is no excuse. None. This should have been done by now. A decade—more than a decade! It should have been done long ago. Another delay, another 18 months, is not good enough. Why is domestic and family violence not an absolute priority for Labor? Someone please tell me. Why is it that I had to be the one to make this government and the Assembly finally agree to take action on coercive control? Am I going to have to be the one also to make Labor act on information sharing too, because I will do it if I have to!

I should not have to, Mr Assistant Speaker. Action on domestic and family violence is something you should already want to do. Something that you are moving heaven and earth to do because what on earth is more important than this? Why do you not care? It is time for you to act, not in 18 months' time, not next year, now. We have to get this done or we will go and get it done for you because women, men and families at the risk of domestic and family violence cannot afford to wait for this government to get their act together. It has been long enough. I am tired of waiting.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (11.37): Regretfully, my colleague Mr Rattenbury could not be here this morning, so I will be speaking in his stead. Look, the Greens are frustrated. We will be supporting this bill today. We are somewhat comforted by the existing measures that have been identified in the explanatory statement, like the fact that existing mechanisms for information sharing between agencies remain open to them. It is clearly vital that critical domestic, family, and sexual violence information sharing remain unaffected by this reform, such as the Family Violence Safety Action Program and Wraparound. In addition, agencies can continue to exchange information with other areas under other schemes, as they currently do, such as within child protection and criminal justice statutory schemes. Existing practices and safeguards still exist and will continue to operate.

However, the Greens are concerned that, as set out in the explanatory statement, the bill's delay of the scheme may impact victim-survivor safety by not being in operation. In effect, the bill postpones the realisation of positive human rights impacts and benefits for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. In this way, it may limit the promotion of important human rights, such as the right to life, protection of family and children and security of the person. At the same time, the Greens appreciate the proper operationalisation of the amendment act is critical to realising the intent of the new information sharing scheme. We accept there is a risk that commencing the amendment act without its foundational elements could negatively impact the rights to safety and confidence of victim-survivors.

The fact that we are here today does invite questions about why the government has not ensured the adequate development of this project since the passage of the legislation in May 2024. We are now nearly 12 months down the road and on Tuesday, Minister Paterson outlined that there are still procurements underway, procurements that have not commenced, and we are not looking at a short delay to the commencement: we are being asked to extend the commencement date by 18 months. This will mean that the scheme will not come into effect for 2.5 years after the passage of the legislation. For such an incredibly pressing issue, this is an incredibly disappointing delay. The Greens will support this legislation today because there is really no choice but we will continue to monitor the progress of the implementation so that we do not find ourselves back here in 18 months facing another delay.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (11.40): I will support this bill today, but I also urge the government to implement the foundational elements promptly, before the 18 months' time frame is up. This is an incredibly important issue. No more delays.

DR PATERSON(Murrumbidgee—Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Gaming Reform) (11.40), in reply: Just to speak in closing, I thank members for their contribution to the debate and support of this. I want to assure them that this is a priority for the government and it is very disappointing that these delays are occurring. It is something that I intend and hope to have implemented before the 18-month mark. It was a very difficult decision to ask the Assembly to delay this but I view it as a priority because I think there is serious risks to the safety of victim-survivors as the sharing scheme is not currently ready for operation.

When the scheme commences, we will be able to be confident that all information sharing entities are prepared and supported to implement the scheme effectively, consistently and safely, in line with best practice. This delay will support the ability to make arrangements with the sector to articulate their role and position in the scheme and to provide sufficient time to establish and deliver the necessary foundational elements alongside its commencement in legislation.

The ACT already has information sharing arrangements in place. These programs embody the shared commitment and responsibility of all parts of government and response services to work together to prevent, reduce and respond to violence. Over the past few years we have seen the success of information sharing through the Family Violence Safety Action Program, or FVSAP, at victim support. FVSAP brings together a range of government and non-government agencies to respond to the needs of victim-survivors and their children in complex and high-risk cases of domestic and family violence. This work is continuing to increase the visibility and accountability of domestic violence perpetrators.

We have also recently established the Wraparound support program, which provides similar cross-agency information sharing and a case coordinator in the sexual violence space. FVSAP and Wraparound will continue to operate across the next 18 months until this legislative framework is in place. Commencing the scheme in May poses significant risks to the effectiveness of existing programs like FVSAP and Wraparound due to the mixture of government and non-government organisations involved in

operating these programs. This is one of the key reasons why I bring this bill to the Assembly to delay commencement.

The information sharing scheme that is the subject of this bill intends to build on these existing mechanisms by supporting a broad range of new entities, including education and health services, to accurately and collaboratively identify and respond to risk and keep people safe. The scheme covers a broad range of agencies because we know that a range of government services regularly interact with victim-survivors. From police, victim support, corrections, child protection, housing, health and education—all government services have a responsibility to support victim-survivors to prevent violence and stop it from escalating.

The act identifies diverse agencies as information sharing entities. These entities can use, collect and share information for the protection purpose, which means establishing and assessing the risk of domestic and family violence occurring and taking action to prevent and reduce this risk. The safety, consent and agency of victim-survivors is central to this scheme. Whenever possible and safe, a victim-survivors' information can only be shared with their full, voluntary and informed consent.

The scheme also importantly recognises the intersectional dimensions of violence. Family violence occurs in the context of both gender inequality and multiple other forms of structural and systemic inequality, oppression and discrimination. All of these intersect to influence the perpetration of violence, including the distinct forms and dynamics a victim-survivor may experience. Recognising this, the act requires agencies to take into account these intersections when working with victim-survivors. For example, when engaging with victim-survivors who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, entities must promote their right to self-determination and consider their family and community connections. Agencies must also take into account the victim-survivors cultural, sexual and gender identity, any religious or spiritual beliefs, and if the victim-survivor is a child or young person, their age, maturity and decision-making ability. This legislation will ensure agencies are well equipped to put these requirements into practice, which is critical to ensuring the scheme is responsive in responding to the overlapping dimensions of violence and inequality.

Between now and November next year, we will work with stakeholders to progress and finalise the critical accompanying work to see this scheme implemented fully: appointing an information sharing coordinator to oversee and facilitate this scheme; updating the risk assessment management framework to be used by all agencies, both government and non-government; and rolling out centralised training to service providers on the information sharing scheme and the risk assessment tools.

This comprehensive and complex work program, which is already underway, will build capacity and consistent understanding across frontline services, which will support an effective integrated and collaborative systems response to domestic and family violence. This approach is what will better enable systems to safely support victim-survivors, as well as ensuring that services can keep the perpetrator in view. After all, the overarching objective of information sharing, and in fact all of our domestic and family violence prevention and response work, is to improve the quality and integration of service responses. For example, rolling out the updated risk assessment management framework, with training, will support agencies to have consistent understandings of

domestic and family violence risk and to adopt best practice approaches in managing and responding to this risk. It is crucial that all agencies have this shared understanding and are speaking the same language so frontline services can work together and share relevant information. This bill is a consistent and effective response across the broad service system.

This government is committed to building a holistic and multifaceted domestic family and sexual violence response and prevention program. The new information sharing scheme is one important component of this, but there is a lot of other work going on as well, including updating the risk management framework and developing a comprehensive 10-year evidence-based ACT Domestic Family Sexual Violence Strategy. These additions will complement existing components of the territory's multifaceted prevention and response, for example, the last budget provided \$12.246 million in new investment towards domestic family and sexual violence initiatives, with 92 per cent going directly to frontline services. We have funded five Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations for programs tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This government has supported various innovative pilot programs, such as the Health Justice Partnership Program, which has transitioned from a pilot to a program.

The Death Review function highlights systemic gaps in service responses and makes recommendations to prevent or reduce homicides in the future. Women's Health Matters is currently piloting the Victim Survivor Voice Project to consult victim-survivors on a range of government programs. We are delivering coercive control training and public education to raise awareness and build understanding and support consistent service responses. We will continue to work with the commonwealth and other jurisdictions to progress work to achieve the vision of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022 to 2032.

We know there is a lot more work to do and I am deeply committed to continuing to work alongside victim-survivors with the dedicated specialist service sector and across government to enhance responses and the prevention of violence. By delaying the information sharing's commencement I am confident we can deliver an information sharing scheme that will better enable these services to assess and respond to the risk and keep people safe.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.49 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice
Government—transparency

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Chief Minister. Under the Freedom of Information Act, the Chief Minister is required to publish information about each cabinet or cabinet committee decision, unless the release of that information is contrary to the public interest, but the Open Access website has not been updated this year, meaning no information about any cabinet or cabinet committee decisions has been published as required under the act. Chief Minister, why is it taking as long as four months to release this information?

MR BARR: It is not. There were no cabinet meetings in January, certainly in the first four weeks of January, so not before Australia Day. There is process, obviously, for the release of that information. It would be timely now, I would imagine, for the very first cabinet meetings of the year to be updated; that would be imminent. I will check with the cabinet office as to when that update will be provided. I would be very certain it will be before the Assembly next sits.

MS CASTLEY: Chief Minister, will you undertake to ensure the Open Access website is updated within 30 days of a cabinet or subcommittee meeting occurring?

MR BARR: No, I cannot do 30 days, but it will be as prompt as we possibly can. There are often periods during the year when cabinet would not meet for a period of 30 days or more. That would include, obviously, over the Christmas holiday period, and often, due to a combination of the estimates or annual report periods, cabinet meetings tend not to occur then, unless there are urgent items, because ministers are unavailable because they are in hearings. So there will be times when 30 days is just not possible, but there are other times, obviously, when updates can be provided, and they will be.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, will you table a list of cabinet subcommittees, including names, membership and terms of reference?

MR BARR: I can advise, because members would be aware, that there is an expenditure review committee, and the membership of that committee is myself, the Treasurer, the finance minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. There are some cabinet working groups, particularly in relation to infrastructure and social policy. Cabinet subcommittees are open to all members, with the exception of the ERC, which obviously has that structured membership. So that is the answer. There is, I believe, three: ERC, infrastructure, social policy. And there is a quarterly meeting of the security and emergency management cabinet, which includes officials and particularly ACT Policing, the Emergency Services Agency and others. That is the totality.

Government—budget

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Treasurer. In past years, the amount and presentation of information in the budget papers has been criticised by stakeholders, including the budget reviews prepared for the Assembly by Pegasus Economics. Is it the government's intention to address these concerns within this year's budget?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Castley for her question. Without addressing any specific issue that she would like to see, I will certainly take that into account, as the new Treasurer, as we prepare the budget. Of course, we have not done that for 2025-26; that

process is underway. There may be changes to the format of the budget to address the context in which we are delivering the budget. We will look at the format and presentation of financial information.

MS CASTLEY: Treasurer, will you agree to provide the Assembly with information about the structural position, medium-term forecasts, a scenario analysis for key aggregates, and a program-level spending profile in the budget papers?

MR STEEL: I will not be committing to that today, but I will certainly take that into account as we prepare the budget.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, will you agree to provide the Assembly with more information about the reliability of the government's forecasts, given the poor performance of the budget forecasts in recent years?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. As he well knows, Treasury, based on the information that they have, make the best assumptions possible in the budget. There is information in the budget papers about those assumptions, and officials and I make ourselves available for questions as part of the budget estimates process, which may include questions about the basis for those assumptions.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, in a media release in November last year, you promised the Canberra community that no-one would be left behind with the launch of MyWay+. Do you accept that you broke your promise and that many Canberrans, especially those with a disability, have in fact been left behind?

MR STEEL: No. That was referring to the policy that we had when go live occurred for MyWay+ that people would be picked up by buses and dropped where the planned routes were scheduled to arrive. We acknowledge that there has been a transition period for the Canberra community in using public transport—particularly in paying for public transport—and we are still in the process at the moment of educating the community on the different ways to pay to use public transport. Yes; we did make the commitment, which we have honoured, that no-one would be left behind literally by a bus during that process. We wanted to make sure that people had time to examine the various ways to pay and choose the easiest option for them. We have been doing that and we will continue to do that until the end of the transition phase. As I said in question time earlier in the week, then we will move to the next phase of embedding MyWay+.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, would people being left behind not include people with a disability who are unable to use the service, irrespective of whether the bus came on time?

MR STEEL: No-one will be refused service. That was the point that was being made. People would be able to use public transport if they were not familiar with the ticketing system. For example, we have given a transition period to seniors, where they can flash their Seniors Cards rather than get a MyWay+ card. Of course, we are encouraging them to get a MyWay+ card, because that period will come to an end at a point, but

no-one has been refused service under the MyWay+ system, because we have had the policy of literally no-one being left behind.

Schools—recruitment

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, from the beginning of the year, the ACT public service has been put on a hiring freeze for all non-essential workers. This supposedly excludes the direct provision of teaching services that support student wellbeing, safety and school operations. However, I am hearing from principals that they are frustrated with the process to hire much needed teaching staff due to the hiring freeze and the need to pass all new hires via strategic finance. To quote an ACT principal, “It’s needless bureaucracy which is impacting schools, students and school leaders. I think most schools are experiencing the same issue.” Minister, are you aware of the delays being experienced in recruiting teaching and education support staff in our schools due to the ACT government staffing freeze, even though they are meant to be exempt?

MS BERRY: Thank you for the question Mr Hanson. Yes, I am aware that there has been a process where schools that have been needing to hire additional staff, like learning support assistants to support their teaching services in their schools, have experienced some delays as the government works through the pause of recruitment. It does not mean that those staff will not be engaged. It is just that there is a more definite process that the Education Directorate is working closely with our schools on, to ensure the staff are appropriate and meet the needs of the school community and do not interfere with the ACT government’s pause on recruitment for jobs that might not be absolutely required in our schools.

MR HANSON: Minister, can you confirm that it currently takes longer than six weeks to fill a classroom teaching position, and explain what issue that is having in our schools?

MS BERRY: Yes, I can say that it has been taking a little bit longer whilst the government works through the challenges that we are facing. However, I have asked the Education Directorate to work with schools to expedite that process and to ensure those staff who are needed and are required as part of our schools services are employed within an appropriate timeframe.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what is the government doing to streamline the process for essential teaching staff?

MS BERRY: We are working with our schools to make sure we get it right and that the staff that are required and are appropriate are employed within an appropriate timeframe. Importantly, we are working with our schools through that process to make sure there are not delays in the employment of those staff, understanding that this is a new process, so we are trying to work through a way which is best for everybody, but also meets the needs for our students and our teachers.

Schools—Whitlam

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood.

Minister, the primary school and early childhood centre in Whitlam was meant to be open for the 2025 school year. It was then delayed to 2026, and then in March it was announced that it would be delayed again until 2027. The Education Directorate has said that all students in the priority enrolment area would be able to attend Evelyn Scott School in Denman Prospect. However, Evelyn Scott School is listed as a category A school because it is already in high demand.

Minister, can you guarantee to parents who are planning to send their children to the new Whitlam school that they will not see yet another delay of its opening?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for his question and for his interest in the new school in Whitlam. It is disappointing, I know, for the Whitlam community and those in that area that the school has not proceeded at the pace that we would have liked. There have been some challenges with regards to the construction industry and the procurement of that project.

At this time we are now able to confirm with the community that the construction will not be completed until into 2027, but we will work with the community to ensure that there are places at their local schools.

MR HANSON: Minister, why did you announce that the school would be open in 2025 in the first place, when, if you go out to the current site, you will see it is still untouched grassland?

MS BERRY: Certainly it had been our intention to have the school opened at an earlier time. However, as everybody in this place knows, there are challenges existing within the construction industry as far as actually being able to deliver a project, and also with procurement and the difficulties on particular sites of building a school. This is not a flat site, so it comes with some different challenges which meant that the procurement has been a little bit more complicated.

We are continuing with that work and engaging with the community to make sure that there is a great school there—and there will be in 2027.

MR COCKS: Minister, how will sending more students, who were supposed to be at the Whitlam school, to an already category A school—Evelyn Scott School—impact that school?

MS BERRY: It will lead to more students at that school, quite obviously, and that will be the first immediate impact, and we will work with the school to ensure that they can deliver the best possible education, regardless of whether those students are in the direct priority enrolment area or will be there as a result of the delays at the Whitlam school.

Planning—Weetangera childcare facility

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Several constituents have raised the lease use change that will allow development of an early childhood education centre in Weetangera. The centre has a capacity of around 80 children. I understand the plans have 26 car parks, but 18 are for staff and only eight are for parents and carers. Residents are generally supportive of the need for more child

care in Belconnen and the benefits of redeveloping such a large block. But some of them have flagged concerns with how traffic will be managed, particularly at drop-off and pick-up times, near what is already a busy school. How many car parks will the development provide for parents and carers to drop off their kids?

MR STEEL: I encourage community members who are interested in a development application to have a look on the Territory Planning Authority's website and have a look at the documentation that is presented on notification and for those community members to have their say on developments. Of course, those are, as we have been discussing this week, assessed independently by the independent Territory Planning Authority. Those are relevant matters that would be considered by the Territory Planning Authority when it comes to considering changes to leases, including the addition of a use such as for childcare purposes. Traffic matters do come up in those discussions quite often, and I would certainly encourage the community to have their view put.

I am happy to provide an answer on notice. I will seek some advice from the independent Territory Planning Authority about the specific question around the number of car parks being proposed.

MS CLAY: Minister, what are the next steps in this lease use change proposal from the point of view of the community?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I will seek some advice about where that particular development application is up to in the process. But the process for development applications and their assessments generally are set out under the Planning Act 2023.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what requirement is there for the developer to consult with the community on this development?

MR STEEL: There is a notification process under the Planning Act 2023 where the community can have their say on a development application. That is then taken into consideration by the Territory Planning Authority when assessing the application and making a decision. There is then, of course, the potential opportunity of review of that decision.

Vocational education and training—Training Fund Authority

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations. The ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority is funded through a levy on building approvals. While demand for approvals remains high, the government's chronic delays in processing building approvals has impacted the training fund authority's income, and it recently advised that it will be reducing training rebates by 50 per cent from 1 May as a consequence. Some of these courses are essential for apprentices to complete their training, meaning they or their employers will have to cough up even more to get qualified. During a cost-of-living crisis, housing crisis and an industry-wide skills shortage, the last thing we need is to disincentivise apprenticeships by making their career choice less attractive and more and more unaffordable.

Minister, will the government intervene to ensure the current rebates continue to be available in full for local apprentices?

MR PETTERSSON: I do thank Mr Emerson for the question. I am aware of this issue. It has been recently brought to my attention. I am seeking a briefing on this matter. The structure of the TFA is such that decisions on funding are decisions for the board—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR PETTERSSON: Mr Acting Speaker.

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please keep the interjections to a level so that we are actually able to hear the minister answer the question.

MR PETTERSSON: Decisions of the TFA and the decisions they make about what funding is given to each particular available training course are decisions for them. I am, of course, seeking further advice on this recent decision they have made to reduce funding.

MR EMERSON: Minister, when and how did you find out about this, given it was communicated to training providers on 28 March?

MR PETTERSSON: I will take that on notice.

MS CLAY: Minister, have you or your colleagues modelled the impact of this cut on the government's commitment to deliver 5,000 public, community and affordable homes?

MR PETTERSSON: No. As I have said, I have only just become aware of this decision by the TFA, and I am seeking urgent briefing on the matter.

Agriculture—Canberra food strategy

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the minister for agriculture. Minister, when will the implementation plan for the Canberra food strategy be released?

Members interjecting—

MS ORR: As has been noted, “minister for agriculture” is not a title, but I do hold the responsibility under my portfolio, so I am very happy to answer the question.

Members interjecting—

MS ORR: After all the chatter and so forth, I have forgotten what the question was. Can Miss Nuttall please repeat it?

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Members, can those at the centre table please refrain from interjecting and having a discussion with each other?

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the minister for the environment. Minister, when will the implementation plan for the Canberra food strategy be released?

MS ORR: I thank the member for her question. I note that I am halfway through the time allotted for the answer, so I am happy to have a chat with her after this. The policy has gone out. The implementation plan continues to be progressed. There is not a fixed date. We will continue to work through those considerations. Obviously, we will have to take things to cabinet for approval prior to their release.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, when will the ACT get an agriculture strategy, given that you have expressed that the ACT should be in line with the national initiative?

MS ORR: An agriculture strategy would be announcing a new policy initiative, which I am not at liberty to do during question time.

MS CLAY: Minister, what other measures are you or your colleagues currently undertaking to recognise the value of agriculture within government policy?

MS ORR: There is a range of commitments that go to implementing agriculture, noting that the ACT is not necessarily the largest farming jurisdiction in Australia. However, we do have a range of initiatives that sit there, and I am happy to take the detail on notice and get back to Ms Clay.

Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, what is the Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Werner-Gibbings. The Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme, or SRIS, is the annual funding program that supports sport and active recreation in the ACT community. There are four funding options that are available through this scheme. The first is the Community Sport Facilities Program. This supports the development of new high-quality sustainable facilities or the upgrade of existing facilities to maintain or increase physical activity in Canberra.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS BERRY: The second is the Club Enhancement Program, which assists sport and recreation groups to further develop their local services and programs by purchasing equipment, upskilling coaches and officials, and improving club governance. The third is the State Organisation Support Program, which provides funding through three-year agreements to improve organisational capacity and capability. And, lastly, there is the Industry Partnership Program, which allows the ACT government to co-invest with state sporting organisations in innovative and collaborative projects that are scalable and sustainable.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, how many sporting organisations were successful in the recent round, and which of those were in my electorate of Brindabella?

Opposition members interjecting—

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Members, please refrain from interjecting.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Members, I have asked you to refrain. Members, the minister is unable to answer due to the interjections. If you continue to interject, I will be required to warn you.

MS BERRY: Thank you very much. This scheme has provided an incredible amount of support for not-for-profit sport, recreation and community organisations in developing fit-for-purpose, sustainable and accessible places and spaces for sport and recreation. Through the latest round, 38 applications were successful. Canberra sporting and recreation clubs will share over \$3.2 million in this funding.

There were two successful applicants who received funding through the 2025 Sport and Recreation Investment Scheme in Brindabella. The Tuggeranong BMX Club received \$47,000 to replace their BMX start gate. I had the chance to go to the club last month, and I know that they are absolutely thrilled with this funding and the difference it will make to their sport. It will significantly improve the sporting experience and safety of club members, particularly children and beginners. The Canberra Southern Cross Club also received \$246,000 to fund the Southern Cross basketball stadium's bathrooms and fan upgrade.

MR EMERSON: Minister, when will the government develop a long-term community sport infrastructure plan to provide certainty to the community sector and keep sporting organisations from having to fight it out for funding at every turn?

MS BERRY: They do not have to fight. These are grants that organisations apply for that meet the needs of their sporting communities. The government is committed to ensuring that these grants remain fit for purpose. We have already increased them to make sure that they provide the funding that sports need. We work very closely with sports, particularly around partnerships that work really well with these funding grants and alongside work that sports clubs or communities may have done themselves to raise money for particular purposes across their sports. Of course, sport is competitive by its nature, so there is competitiveness amongst sports to have the highest participation rate or be the most popular sport. That is probably a game that nobody is ever going to win, so we try to make sure that every sport gets what it needs to ensure that organisations can meet the needs of their particular sporting communities.

Aged care—respite care

MS CARRICK: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, this morning you mentioned that new aged care facilities will add new respite capacity. These are at Aranda, Wright, and the new LDK Amberfield facility in Weston Creek. How many dedicated respite beds are currently available in the ACT and how many new dedicated respite beds will be available at these new facilities and when?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Carrick for the question. What I actually said this morning and yesterday—and certainly clarified in question time yesterday—was that

the past experience in relation to aged care was that the development of aged care facilities seems to come in waves, depending on commonwealth government policy. The Albanese Labor government, of course, has significantly invested in aged care and has undertaken aged care reforms that are now seeing, for the first time in more than a decade, new aged care facilities being built. What I said in relation to that was that the experience is that when new aged care facilities are built that increases capacity across the sector. So I accept that there is a shortage of currently dedicated respite beds. There are a range of aged care facilities that do provide respite. I understand that most of those aged care facilities provide respite on the basis of a kind of “try before you buy” model, but also that there is a service through the ACT Carers’ Carer Gateway to support people to identify opportunities and I also appreciate—

Ms Carrick: Point of order.

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Ms Stephen-Smith, would you please take your seat, there is a point of order.

Ms Carrick: Point of order on relevance. My questions was: how many dedicated respite beds are currently available in the ACT and how many new dedicated respite beds will be available from these three new facilities.

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Ms Stephen-Smith, in the remaining time, if you might be relevant to the question.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think I was being relevant. I did say that it is often not the model of aged care facilities to open dedicated respite beds, but as there is new aged care facilities opening, we can expect that there will be additional capacity across the aged care sector that is likely to open up more opportunity for respite beds to be available, whether they are dedicated or one off.

MS CARRICK: Minister, through the Carer Gateway, how long is the current waitlist for dedicated respite care beds in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I recognise that there is a wait for respite and it is a challenge. That is part of the reason the Albanese Labor government has invested so much in aged care and undertaken significant aged care reforms to expand the availability of aged care services, which are a commonwealth responsibility, after a decade of neglect under the previous coalition government. I appreciate Ms Carrick’s advocacy. I appreciate the feedback from Carers ACT that there is a challenge in finding respite services. I had a decision to make as minister with a confluence of events.

Mr Cocks: Point of order.

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Point of order. Stop the clock please.

Mr Cocks: It is on relevance. The question was very short and very straightforward about the quantity of beds in the ACT. I do not believe the minister has actually gone to what the actual waitlist is at this stage.

MR ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, in the one minute 20 seconds remaining, if you

could refer to the number of beds.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Mr Acting Speaker, that would not be information that is available to me as minister. This is an area of commonwealth responsibility, that is funded by the commonwealth.

MR COCKS: How then did you make your decision to remove Burrangiri's annual capacity of 4,500 respite care bed nights, without understanding the wider context of respite care available in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I think the fact that I cannot provide a specific number of specific things that are available on this specific day in an area of commonwealth responsibility does not indicate that I do not understand the wider context. I have been talking about the wider context in this place for some time, and I would refer Mr Cocks to my, now many, previous statements and responses to questions in relation to this matter. It was not one thing. It was a confluence or a progress of decision making that resulted in this decision. I recognise that there are people who do not agree with the decision, but this is a decision that was mine, looking at the broad sweep of availability of ACT government resources and commonwealth responsibilities, and the timing of the maintenance that was required on the facility and the ending of the TSA contract.

Taxation—Revenue Office reassessments

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Finance. Minister, during annual reports hearings the Commissioner for ACT Revenue stated that reassessments of conveyance due to concessions could occur at any time, essentially without a limit on how long after a stamp duty concession was granted. However, both the self-assessment terms and conditions and section 9 of the Taxation Administration Act state that such reassessments are limited to a five-year period.

Minister, could you please clarify what the timeframe for reassessments is?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Cocks for the question. I will take the question on notice to get a clarification of what the legal situation is in relation to the legislation. I suspect the commissioner was referring to the legal limitation under the act. In practice, it seems very unlikely that they would go back further than five years. In fact, I have asked my office to talk to the Revenue Office about whether it would be sensible to put a specific legislated limit on the timeframe for how far those can go back. I certainly know—I am aware from looking at the website—that there is definitely advice that you should keep your records for at least five years. If Mr Cocks would like to provide me with the references that he is looking at as well, I will take that into account in my conversations with the revenue commissioner and office.

MR COCKS: Minister, have any Revenue Office reassessments been undertaken later than the five years the Revenue Office tells Canberrans they need to keep records for?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, under what authority would reassessments beyond that five-year period be conducted?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I refer Ms Castley to my first answer, in relation to the legislative limit, which I have taken on notice. I think what the revenue commissioner was saying in the hearings earlier was that the legislation provides no limitation on how far they can go back. But it is clear that some of the information provided to the community indicates that records should be held for five years. That is why that is now a conversation with the Revenue Office.

ACT Policing—response times

MR COCKS: My question is to the Minister for Police. Minister, why in Tuesday's debate on the Molonglo police motion did you only use priority 1 response times when priority 2 response times average 18 minutes and priority 3 response times can take up to 48 hours?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for the question. Because priority 1 response times are the most important response times. That is where we want to see police get to an emergency, and they are below their target. So ACT Policing are doing really well.

MR COCKS: Minister, why did you use response times for the entire ACT in your amendment rather than providing data specific to the Molonglo Valley?

DR PATERSON: Because that is the ACT average. That is how they measure the average for the ACT.

MS MORRIS: Minister, are you concerned that some residents are giving up on reporting crimes altogether because they are left waiting up to 48 hours for a response?

DR PATERSON: No, I am not concerned. I think residents are reporting crimes. There are multiple ways that they report crimes. They can report through the 000 phone number; they can call the 131 444 number; they can report online; and, as part of providing multiple avenues for people, they can report to Crime Stoppers. A priority 1 is an emergency, and that is when you want to have police attend. The lower priority callouts are triaged, assessed and prioritised by police. I will also say that residents in the Molonglo Valley are serviced by patrol zones from Belconnen, the City Police Station and Woden.

ACT Deafness Resource Centre

MS BARRY: My question is to the minister for community services. Thank you for advising me of the outcomes of your government's effort to comply with my motion calling on the government to ensure timely and proactive support for the Deafness Resource Centre and other community services providers. Given the DRC closed and the government only found reasons not to help this important community sector, how confident should the community organisations be with your commitment to timely and proactive support?

MS ORR: I do not agree with the member's characterisation that the government did not provide support to this particular organisation. As I outlined in my letter to her, we listed all the actions that had been undertaken and the engagement that we had tried to

have with the organisation, without success in some points.

The government does remain committed to working with the sector and across our community to support people with disability and the services that support them. There are a range of measures that are going on across a range of different types of disability, and we will continue to look at how we can also improve our own practices, including putting in Auslan interpreter services across our public facing service provision here in the ACT government and continuing to transition our own practices over a longer term to be inclusive of everyone with disability.

MS BARRY: When CSD was not able to contact the Deafness Resource Centre, why didn't you contact me or my office to facilitate a meeting?

MS ORR: In some respects, the same question could be put to Ms Barry: knowing that the letter went out quite a while before question time, why would you not contact me if you had these questions?

In working this through, there was contact with the Deafness Resource Centre; CSD did follow up, as it is appropriate that they would. I think the way Ms Barry has characterised it, that there was no contact, is taking bits out of what has been given to Ms Barry. I do not think it is showing the full context of the situation or the follow up that was there. I am a little bit concerned at the questions, and in the selective presentation of aspects of it, that they are not painting the full picture and that whatever I might say might be twisted or misinterpreted.

Ms Barry, the offer is always there to work with you collaboratively, should you have an issue. I think that has always been the case in what has been done to date, and I am happy to continue to do that and work in good faith. I would just ask that you do the same.

MR CAIN: Minister, what are you doing to address what you have acknowledged as loss of local knowledge and expertise?

MS ORR: There are a range of measures going on. I have already referenced some of them, which include looking at how we can improve ACT government services across our whole community, and there are a range of organisations within Canberra that will do this. In the letter that I provided to Ms Barry, too, there was an acknowledgement that, yes, certainly, the Deafness Resource Centre closing does mean that there is a little bit more work to do in maintaining service provision, and we continue to look at what we can do with that. The Deafness Resource Centre is an organisation independent of government. They are governed by a board. The board made the decision to close the organisation, and in responding to Ms Barry's motion, we had discussions with them. Their decision remained the same.

Mr Barr: Mr Acting Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Commissioner for International Engagement

MR BARR: Yesterday Ms Castley asked me questions in relation to references to

Taiwan on ACT government web pages, specifically the first question related to the Commissioner for International Engagement. I am advised that on the CMTEDD website for the Office of International Engagement there is no specific webpage for the commissioner, so I take this to be a reference to the Office for International Engagement. I am advised they have never referenced Taiwan on that webpage. It has also never been referenced in any iteration of the International Engagement Strategy.

I am aware though that there are mentions of Taiwan on other ACT government webpages. I have an example that I will table now where Taiwan is listed as a country where sharing of information could occur on a CSD website around privacy statements. I am also aware from a Google search that on an Access Canberra webpage there is a reference to Taiwan as a country where a holder of a full drivers licence would be recognised. Taiwan is in a long list of countries.

I can advise the Assembly that the Office of International Engagement met with representatives of the Chinese Embassy in November 2024, who raised concerns with the reference to Taiwan on the CSD website, which presumably relates to its description as a country. These references still remain on those websites. The commissioner advises me that he has not made representations to any member of the executive or their staff about this matter.

Agriculture—Canberra food strategy

MS ORR: In relation to Miss Nuttall’s questions around agriculture in the ACT; just for clarity, the Canberra Region Local Food Strategy will guide the region’s agriculture production. Work arising from this and guided by the strategy is already underway. Miss Nuttall, in her supplementary question, expressed, I think a paraphrasing of a view that apparently I have, although I have been unable to identify what it is she is referring to or what I apparently said. So I am a little bit unsure. I endeavoured to answer the question as best as I possibly could, but as I said in my original questions, I am happy to have a discussion with Miss Nuttall. I think we will be able to clarify what the intent of the information is that she is looking for and I will be able to provide her with the answers.

Vocational education and training—Training Fund Authority

MR PETTERSSON: Earlier in question time, I was asked when I became aware that training rebates from the TFA were being reduced by 50 per cent: that was on 3 April, in correspondence from the MBA.

Planning—Weetangera childcare facility

MR STEEL: Earlier in question time, Miss Nuttall asked me about a development application in Weetangera, which I assume related to 60 Southwell Street, Weetangera. On an examination of the Planning ACT website, there are actually two development applications that relate to 60 Southwell Street. One of those applications does relate to a proposal for lease variation; varying the Crown land purpose clause to add “early childhood education and care limited to a maximum of 86 places”. That development application 202443694 is currently under assessment. The lodgement date was 4 February 2025, with the representation date starting 13 February 2025 and the

representation end date being 5 March 2025. So it is currently under assessment by the Territory Planning Authority.

However, there is a second development application for the site which relates to a proposal for a new childcare centre, including:

Demolition of the existing dwelling and structures, tree removal, construction of a new childcare centre, outdoor area and storage, car park and new driveway verge crossing, landscaping and associated works

That is 2443691. It was lodged on 20 March 2025. The period for representation started on 27 March and the date for the end of that representation is 23 April 2025. So there is still opportunity for the community to have their say in relation to that development application. My reading of the development application plans, and the associated traffic report which was on notification, shows there are 26 carparking spaces in the development. I understand there is further information in the documents about what the specific purposes of those car parks are. So that information is available on the planning website and I, again, encourage the community to have their say as part of the notification of those DAs.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MR STEEL: I would now like to address another matter that arose in question time yesterday in response to questions on notice from the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services. My office was informed yesterday by NEC and Transport Canberra of two incidents of minor data breaches involving MyWay+. The first incident relates to further work undertaken by NEC following evidence provided in the current MyWay+ inquiry from a responsible disclosure of a potential cyber security issue. That is the issue that was referred to in question time yesterday.

I would like to thank the committee for the provision of further information about the incident. My office was informed yesterday that NEC has found that personal information relating to around 61 MyWay+ accounts has potentially been seen through the course of the responsible disclosure, which occurred on 5, 6, 9 and 10 December 2024. Early indications are that this is also a minor incident with a mixture of details collected, such as first name, surname, postal address and MyWay+ account number, though the matter is continuing to be investigated. There is no evidence that data has been accessed in a malicious manner or that there were other attempts made to exploit the vulnerability. As has previously been provided, in terms of information to the inquiry, this vulnerability was addressed on 13 December 2024.

I would like to thank the ANU students who reached out to the committee about the responsible disclosure and the provision of additional information that allowed NEC to further investigate that matter and I am pleased to provide that additional information. Transport Canberra will provide a further update when the investigation is completed and this is expected to be within 30 days of it being notified.

I can also advise of a second incident, in March 2025, that involved the release of some information, such as first names, to one email address about other MyWay+ holders'

account details. This totalled 297 instances with 110 of those containing first names. Other details released in some emails included a combination of concession type, concession expiry date and/or a truncated credit card or debit card number. This has been notified and been evaluated as minor by the office of the Information Privacy Commissioner. Now that the investigation has been completed, as part of the process, Transport Canberra will shortly be writing to the 297 account holders to inform them of the incident. There is no further action required for these account holders. Their accounts have not been compromised.

Planning—Ginninderra Falls

MS BERRY: As I was not here on Tuesday, I understand the Chief Minister took some questions for me on notice with regard to Ginninderra Falls. In answer to the question about subdivision consultation, yes, the ACT government has been consulted by Riverview Developments as part of their New South Wales Parkwood rezoning process that occurred in 2020. With regard to a public access road, involvement by the government in any future land purchase or subsequent development would be a matter for future government consideration. With regard to working with the New South Wales government around ecological values, the Ginninderra Falls area is protected through its 2020 rezoning to E2 conservation land and this protects the land from development.

Mr Cocks asked a question around the town centre and the Urban Forest Act and I can confirm that there has been an impact, including a significant increase in the number of tree surveys, from 300 to around 1,400. Site analysis work is currently underway around design and planning works to determine whether requirements of the Urban Forest Act 2023 will impact on the delivery of the master plan.

Taxation—Revenue Office reassessments

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Firstly, I go to a question that I was asked today by Mr Cocks in relation to the limitation on time for reassessment of a tax liability. Section 9 of the Taxation Administration Act covers this matter. It states:

- (3) The commissioner must not make a reassessment of a tax liability—
 - (a) more than 5 years after the initial assessment of the liability, unless—
 - (i) the purpose of the reassessment is to give effect to a decision on an objection or appeal as to the initial assessment—

that is, a subsequent decision, or—

- (ii) at the time the initial assessment or a reassessment was made, all the facts and circumstances affecting the liability under the relevant tax law of the person in relation to whom the assessment or reassessment was made were not fully and truly disclosed to the commissioner—

That is what the current legislation states. So it is generally, five years, but the commissioner was accurate in saying that it can be longer than that. Mr Cocks, we will review the *Hansard* of the hearing to ensure that no further clarification is required of the commissioner's comments in the hearing.

Yesterday, I was asked a number of questions around the same matters. I was asked when I was most recently briefed on individual matters. As I advised the Assembly yesterday, I receive updates from the Revenue Office on individual matters via my office, including when preparing responses to representations from or on behalf of individual constituents. When available, the Revenue Office provides information to my office and they pass that information on to me and to relevant enquiring MLAs when it is appropriate and legal to do so.

Most recently, yesterday morning, my office provided me with an update on one constituent's matter. As I mentioned yesterday, I regularly request information on individual matters of constituents via my office, including on Monday in relation to one of the constituents that I understand Mr Cocks was referring to yesterday. And, on Tuesday, in relation to Mr Cocks's inquiry about another constituent, following question time yesterday I requested, via my office, an update on the progress of several matters of individual constituents. I was provided with advice on those matters, again via my office, and I provided some further advice to both Mr Cocks and Mr Braddock in relation to one of those matters and in relation to the broader advice that I had received—that several individual matters are expected to be finalised early next week.

I was also asked about advice that I had received about the independence of the Revenue Office and my capacity to intervene. For the sake of clarity, I interpreted that as capacity to intervene. The question said “in revenue matters”. I interpreted that to mean individual decision-making in relation to revenue matters. Mr Cocks is nodding. In my capacity as Minister for Finance, I have been briefed on the incoming government brief for the finance portfolio. I was advised by the Commissioner for ACT Revenue that the Commissioner for ACT Revenue is an independent statutory officer and powers to administer taxation are provided to the commissioner under various taxation laws, including the Taxation Administration Act. I table for the Assembly the relevant page of the government brief that includes that information.

I also met with the revenue commissioner on 29 November, where the functions of the Revenue Office were further discussed, including in relation to his independence. During the last term of government, I also met with the revenue commissioner to discuss matters, including payroll tax, where we again had a conversation about his independence. This advice has been reinforced through responses to questions on notice in the Assembly, correspondence and policy briefings.

Again, while I take a strong interest in policy matters and systems management, decisions on tax administration are the responsibility of the revenue commissioner. The independence of the revenue commissioner from ministerial interference is actually critical to maintaining the integrity of our taxation system, and that is, of course, supported by taxation legislation. Under that legislation, the revenue commissioner is afforded the powers to impose, remit, waive or vary duties, penalties and interests under the act. The minister also has responsibilities that are set out in those acts, but they do not relate to individual matters.

Roads—rural roads

MS CHEYNE: This refers to questions from you, Mr Acting Speaker Mr Braddock, and Miss Nuttall yesterday about Smiths Road. In terms of Miss Nuttall's question

about any luck in getting it reclassified as regional, the question is moot because the ACT government signed a new agreement that commenced in the 2024-25 financial year and replaced the agreement to which she referenced: the 80-20 funding split. This is the agreement on land transport infrastructure projects. The notes on administration and relevant subprogram guidelines provide details relating to the co-funding. My understanding is that it was informed by the strategic review into the Australian government's Infrastructure Investment Program, which recommended that the Australian government adopt a policy of generally a 50-50 funding split for all new projects, while allowing the Australian government to retain flexibility to apply other funding splits, particularly in smaller jurisdictions. Locations are noted.

Regarding your question, Mr Acting Speaker, about accessibility of Smiths Road to emergency vehicles, because Smiths Road services the demand for local traffic, the traffic data does not support the sealing of that segment of road. Other projects simply rank higher for improvements. However, Roads ACT has recently inspected the road and they are currently arranging a contractor to undertake maintenance work on the vegetation around the alignment to improve visibility around the bends on this section of road. Roads ACT has also installed signage advising road users that no advisory speed has been posted and to drive to conditions. That is to make drivers aware that conditions of unsealed pavements can rapidly change at times and to be vigilant of potential hazards.

Papers

MR ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Braddock) (2.58): I present the following papers:

Ethics and Integrity Adviser for Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Appointment 2025, dated 10 April 2025.

Legislative Assembly Commissioner for Standards—Appointment 2025, dated 10 April 2025.

Non-executive Members—Travel, staffing and meetings reporting—Order to table—Assembly resolution of 9 April 2025—Speaker's response—Non-executive Members' staff salary allocation and non-executive Members' employment agreements—2020-2021 to 2024-2025 to date.

Members, I wish to advise that in the documents that I have just presented, pursuant to the Assembly's continuing resolutions 5AA and 6A, the Speaker has appointed the Honourable Dr Ken Crispin QC as the Legislative Assembly's Commissioner for Standards and Mr Stephen Skehill as the Legislative Assembly's Ethics and Integrity Advisor. The appointments follow a national expression of interest process, consideration and recommendations by an independent appointment advisory panel and consultation with party leaders and independent members. I wish the commissioner and the ethics advisor well in performing their important roles on behalf of the Assembly.

Also, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly on 9 April 2025, I present a breakdown of non-executive members' staff salary allocation and a breakdown of members' employment agreements for the current and last four financial years.

Ms Cheyne, pursuant to standing order 211, presented the following papers:

ACT economic performance—Impact on housing and construction sector—Assembly resolution of 5 March 2025—Government response.

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual report 2024—Canberra Institute of Technology, dated 31 March 2024.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 21—Auditor-General's Reports—Government responses—

No 13/2024—Invoicing and Payments for Digital Health Record Hosting Services, dated 13 December 2024.

No 14/2024—Facilities management and support services for ACT Courts, dated 20 December 2024.

Inspector of Correctional Services Act—Report of a Review of a Critical Incident by the ACT Inspector of Correctional Services—A serious assault of a detained person resulting in admission to hospital at the Alexander Maconochie Centre 13 December 2023—Government response.

Libraries ACT—Strategic plan and resource improvement—Assembly resolution of 19 March 2025—Government Response.

London Circuit—Business disruption—Mitigation—Assembly resolution of 5 March 2025—Government response.

Remuneration Tribunal Act—

Pursuant to section 10—Determinations, together with accompanying statements for:

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal—Determination 10 of 2024 (amended), dated 31 March 2025.

Full-time Statutory Office Holders—

Auditor-General, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Electoral Commissioner—Determination 3 of 2025, dated 31 March 2025.

Determination 2 of 2025, dated 31 March 2025.

Head of Service—Directors-General and Executives—Determination 1 of 2025, dated 31 March 2025.

Part-time Public Office Holder—Chair and Members, Voluntary Assisted Dying Oversight Board, Part-time Public Officeholder—Chair, Deputy Chair and Members, Disability Advisory Council—Determination 5 of 2025, dated 31 March 2025.

Pursuant to section 9—Members of the Legislative Assembly—Determination 4 of 2025, dated 31 March 2025, together with an accompanying statement.

Wellbeing Framework—Ministerial statement—Andrew Barr MLA, Chief Minister, dated April 2025.

Human Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill 2025

Ms Clay, on behalf of Mr Rattenbury, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.00), by leave: On behalf of Mr Rattenbury, I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am speaking on behalf of Mr Rattenbury, who is very sad that he cannot make it today. I am really pleased to present this bill on his behalf.

Today, the ACT becomes the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce legislation to make housing a human right. The Human Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill 2025 that I am introducing today amends the Human Rights Act 2004 to include the right to adequate housing in the ACT's human rights framework. It inserts a new section into the economic, social, and cultural rights of the Human Rights Act and provides explicit statutory recognition that everyone has the right to adequate housing.

By enshrining the right to adequate housing in the Human Rights Act 2004, the ACT will pioneer a human rights based approach to housing in Australia. This reflects the reality that more people than ever are struggling to keep a roof over their head. In Canberra, around 5,000 people cannot afford a home and are on the public housing waitlist. Meanwhile, hundreds of our essential workers are locked out of a rental market designed to prioritise profit over a place to sleep. Public housing tenants are waiting too long for urgent repairs, and that is at an unacceptable cost to their mental and physical health. We need to think differently about housing. We need to reframe our decisions about housing through the lens of social need, not private profit.

I thank the stakeholders who have championed the call for a right to housing. There are many stakeholders. I will list just some of them: Better Renting, ACTCOSS, Canberra Community Law, the ACT Human Rights Commission, and ACT Shelter. Thank you all for your considered feedback on this exposure bill, and thank you for helping to bring us to this point of tabling the bill.

I had the pleasure recently of door-knocking at Ashton's house and speaking to his mum, Claire. They live in my electorate, not Mr Rattenbury's. When I asked Claire and Ashton what they were most concerned about, I am really pleased to say that Ashton instantly said, "When are you going to make housing a human right?" That was impressive because Ashton is 12 years old. It is really encouraging to see young Canberrans engaged with politics, but it also broke my heart, because somebody that young should not need to ask this of their government. Housing should already be a human right in the ACT. We agree with you, Ashton, and we are really pleased that today we are taking a step towards that.

I also thank the formidable intellects in the Parliamentary Counsel's Office for their drafting prowess, as well as everyone who visited the ACT Greens' website to submit their own experiences about housing. We have read all your stories. They have helped inform our approach to the bill and they have helped us shape the bill.

Housing is one of the most important policy challenges of our time. At a federal level, the National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024 proposed recognising housing as a fundamental human right. Its reception demonstrated wide support for a human rights based response. The right to adequate housing has been recognised by international law and, as such, Australia has an obligation to protect the right to adequate housing. The right to adequate housing is enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is a treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly way back in 1966. As a party to this treaty since

1975, Australia has an obligation under article 11 to take steps to realise the right to adequate housing. That includes three components to an adequate standard of living: food, clothing and housing.

Here in the ACT, we recognise that the housing and homelessness crisis has been decades in the making. Its structural drivers are complex. We cannot solve it on our own. Legislating a right to housing will not solve the crisis overnight. Addressing housing and homelessness will involve long-term whole-of-government approaches. But, by ensuring the right to adequate housing in legislation, current and future governments will be required to consider the right to housing when making decisions. Incorporating this right will ensure that housing impacts are given proper consideration in the exercise of all public authority functions, including in the development of legislation, policy and decision-making. This will institutionalise greater understanding of human rights and housing considerations right across government. It will help us build and strengthen our ACT human rights culture.

I was disappointed today to hear comments in the media made by some of our ministers that enshrining the right to housing might be virtue-signalling. I was quite shocked to hear that. The ACT is a human rights jurisdiction. We have been quite proud about the fact that we have a very strong framework to protect human rights. The right to housing is recognised internationally. This is absolutely essential. I was genuinely saddened and shocked to hear that some of our ministers apparently do not take our Human Rights Act seriously enough or take the right to housing seriously enough. This is not virtue-signalling; this is the logical next step for a human rights jurisdiction. I ask people to think a bit more carefully about their roles and their words.

The impact of the bill would be that the government would need to consider housing as a human right through a number of existing processes that require an assessment against the Human Rights Act. For instance, when the Attorney-General assesses and signs a compatibility statement to inform the Assembly that a government bill has been assessed for Human Rights Act consistency, the Attorney-General needs to sign off on that. The bill will require consideration of the right to adequate housing.

We also have the scrutiny of bills committee which reports to the Assembly on the Human Rights Act. They record all the issues raised by government and private members' bills. If this bill is passed, all those reports will need to report on issues of housing adequacy that are raised by bills. The bill will also require government authorities to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights, including the right to adequate housing.

This bill will impact on the Human Rights Commissioner, who has a mandate to review the impact of laws on human rights, to monitor the operation of the Human Rights Act, and to provide human rights education. Given government annual reports and public authorities must report on the steps taken to implement the Human Rights Act, this bill will also impact on that reporting.

The right to housing is one of our fundamental rights. It helps people realise all their other rights in the Human Rights Act. Without adequate housing, it is very challenging to live a safe, healthy, fulfilling life and reach one's potential. Currently, some housing rights are partially protected already in ACT policy, strategy and legislation, but these

do not include an explicit protection of the right to adequate housing.

Some people may be listening to this speech and thinking, “What will this actually do in practice?” Let me illustrate how the right will work in reality to change lives. I want to tell you about some of the clients of Canberra Community Law and Victim Support ACT. These advocates use the Human Rights Act every day in their work. While they find that human rights arguments can be powerful, since there is no right to adequate housing the protection they currently can access is insufficient.

Once Mr Rattenbury released the draft bill for community feedback, he heard a story from Canberra Community Law about a woman who we will call Brenda. I would like to share this story with you today. Brenda is a single mother and a survivor of domestic and family violence. Brenda fell into a rental arrears because she got sick and her ex-partner started using violence against her. Brenda was hospitalised because of this violence. For the past few years, Brenda has been unable to work because of her illness. She has been in severe financial hardship, trying to pay the rent on her own while undergoing treatment and caring for her children. Brenda’s housing provider was aware of her circumstances. They applied to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, ACAT, to evict her for rent arrears. The eviction proceedings went on for several months and they caused Brenda a great deal of distress.

Brenda told Canberra Community Law that, if she got evicted, she had nowhere to go. She would have no choice but to move back in with her abuser. Canberra Community Law advocated with Brenda’s housing provider, urging them to withdraw their application to evict her. Canberra Community Law argued that the housing provider had obligations to Brenda and to her children under the ACT Human Rights Act 2004 and that evicting Brenda in her circumstances was conduct that was incompatible with the protected human rights of Brenda and her children. Those rights are in section 12 of the Human Rights Act. In response, Brenda’s housing provider withdrew their application to evict her and the family was able to stay in their home. A properly framed right to housing would have strengthened Brenda’s case. Brenda’s housing provider may have had a clearer understanding of their obligations to Brenda and her children with regard to housing. That may have prevented them from taking action to evict her in the first place.

Although the existing ACT framework protects housing rights to some extent, Canberra Community Law consistently represents people like Brenda who slip through the cracks. We need to have clearer and more explicit protections to ensure vulnerable people in our community, like Brenda and her kids, are not evicted. A right to adequate housing is consistent with the ACT’s existing law and policy framework around housing. This bill builds on that framework and gives us more comprehensive protection. It is the next logical step. We know that having inadequate housing is frightening and dangerous. It exacerbates mental and physical health conditions, it causes severe emotional and financial distress, and it creates feelings of helplessness.

Canberra Community Law assisted another client—and let us call her Delia—whose case demonstrates how a right to housing could have prevented her health issues. Delia has lived in a public housing property for a decade. For the entire period of her tenancy, Delia has dealt with a leaking roof, severe mould, an ununlockable front door, broken windows and an unstable electricity supply. Delia has consistently reported these issues

to her housing provider, but to no avail. The maintenance issues in Delia's home are affecting her mental and physical health. Her pre-existing respiratory illness is aggravated by the mould. Delia has experienced anxiety and poor sleep because she cannot secure her home against potential intruders.

Canberra Community Law assisted Delia to apply to ACAT for compensation for her housing provider's failure to make repairs to her home. Delia accepted a settlement on the basis of her loss of quiet enjoyment of the property and a retrospective rent reduction, and the housing provider is finally repairing her home.

A right to adequate housing might have prevented Delia from having to live in inadequate housing for 14 years. If Delia had been able to realise her rights to adequate housing, she might not have suffered the adverse health impacts, and the taxpayer might not have had to bear the cost of her compensation and the structural repairs to a significantly deteriorated property.

I would like to share the story of another Canberra Community Law client, a young First Nations man who we will call James. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans face housing issues like affordability, overcrowding in public housing arising from a lack of suitably sized homes, and public housing decisions being made without consideration of the role of being informal carers providing support to extended family members.

We know that housing stock for larger public housing properties is located in the north of the ACT, while many of our support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are located in our south. It is a matter of national and local shame that First Nations people continue to be over-represented in our incarceration system. This is the context for James's experience.

James is a young Wiradjuri man in jail. James has lived with complex mental health issues since he was a teenager and is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Prior to entering the prison system, James lived in public housing. James had served 12 months of an 18-month sentence and had just become eligible to apply for parole when the public housing authority applied to ACAT to terminate his tenancy. Without a home to be paroled to, the Sentence Administration Board would not grant parole, as an approved residence is a requirement for parole. Without a home to return to, James would have to compete for scarce, short-term transitional housing and face an uncertain future.

Canberra Community Law represented James at ACAT, asserting that ACAT should not terminate James's tenancy as his protected rights under the Human Rights Act were engaged and had to be taken into consideration in deciding whether to terminate his tenancy. Canberra Community Law argued that termination of James's tenancy placed him at risk of being arbitrarily detained, as he may have to serve six months more than he otherwise would if his tenancy was not terminated.

Canberra Community Law also argued that termination of his tenancy was an unlawful interference with his protected right to privacy, reputation and a home, as it would also likely result in James becoming homeless on release. It would place him at higher risk of relapse and recidivism. After receiving Canberra Community Law's submissions,

the public housing authority withdrew its ACAT application. James was granted parole, and he was released to his home, with community and family support nearby.

Victim Support ACT is another agency that supports vulnerable people. It has told us about several instances where housing did not meet the safety needs of Housing ACT tenants who were victims of violence. These included instances where it appeared unclear what obligations Housing ACT had to assist the tenant. Enshrining the right to housing would avoid this confusion.

Victim Support ACT have assisted people in these situations. I will read out a few examples here. A Housing ACT tenant was subjected to sexual violence and could not return home due to safety fears and the impact of the trauma resulting from that crime. Another Housing ACT tenant applied for a housing transfer due to being subjected to family violence. While Housing ACT offered two properties, they were unsuitable due to the tenant's safety needs. One of those properties offered to them was in the same suburb where the perpetrator resided, and the other was a long way away from the tenant's support network. Despite this, Housing ACT removed her from the priority application list, required her to submit a new application, and did not advise of a date when she could be housed in a transition or a new property.

A third Housing ACT tenant lived in a top-level unit. This person was the victim of violence by the occupant of a bottom-level unit. The female tenant had to walk past the perpetrator's unit to leave her own unit. She became trapped in her unit due to the fear of being assaulted. Housing ACT was aware of the risk but made no attempts to prioritise moving her. Despite advocacy from agencies, Housing ACT only responded when the matter was raised through a minister. These are good examples of where somebody's right to adequate housing has not been respected.

What does adequate housing mean? It is more than just a right to shelter. It is the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity. It is a recognition that a house is a home, and a home is a fundamental pre-requisite before you can enjoy any of the rest of your human rights.

Adequate housing should mean there is security of tenure, and that there are services and infrastructure, like safe drinking water, heating and lighting, and sanitation. Adequacy also means housing must be affordable, habitable, accessible, and located in places that allow access to jobs, health care, education and social facilities, and it must be culturally suitable.

Enshrining of a human right to adequate housing should be considered through the frame of this being a step forward in strengthening our institutions. It will help us to protect these rights for people who need them. This broad, principled statement of a right to adequate housing will allow the right to evolve and develop consistently with the very well-established international law on this. The interpretation of the scope and the content of the right will be informed by international human rights case law and by commentary from UN treaty bodies and domestic jurisprudence.

The new right in the bill will be included in part 3A of the Human Rights Act. Under international law, economic, social and cultural rights have aspects that are immediately realisable and aspects that are required to be progressively realised over time. This is

one of those rights that can be phased in gradually, over time.

Progressively realisable aspects require governments to take reasonable steps within their available resources to achieve these rights and not to take any backwards steps. For example, this bill should operate to guarantee that the ACT will not go backwards in terms of how many public and community housing dwellings there are in proportion to our population. It will require ongoing investment to fulfil and meet our obligations, and it will require us continuously to improve our performance. This obligation will require us to take deliberate, concrete, targeted measures to meet our goal, but states like the ACT will have some discretion in deciding which means are appropriate within their available resources.

There are some aspects of this bill that we can do immediately, and that are immediately realisable. Everyone is entitled to enjoy this right without discrimination. No-one may be unlawfully or arbitrarily evicted from their home. No-one may have an essential utility service to their home unlawfully or arbitrarily withdrawn. With all of these rights, we can already entrench, recognise and implement them immediately, and we should.

This means, because we are already part of the way there, it is easier for our government to recognise this right. It is easier for us to take some active steps towards the bigger picture of making sure that we recognise universally the right to adequate housing for all.

Canberra Community Law have also identified that inadequate housing comes with great cost. They have submitted to us that protecting the right to housing has economic and social benefits for the whole community, including reducing the burden on the healthcare system. The housing and homelessness crisis in the ACT comes at a bitter individual, social and economic cost.

Homelessness has been described by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing as “a profound assault on dignity, social inclusion and the right to life”. It is a *prima facie* violation of the right to housing and it contravenes other rights, such as the right to life and to health.

With this bill, we have the opportunity to change that. We can change people’s lives, and we can protect some of our most vulnerable community members. The ACT Human Rights Act was the first Australian law to explicitly protect human rights, and today we have the opportunity to lead the nation again. We all deserve the right to adequate housing, and it is within our reach to make that right a reality. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Planning and development—urban growth boundary

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (3.21): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the *ACT State of the Environment Report 2023* detail “continued, relentless degradation of the natural environment”;
 - (b) the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment’s first recommendation in that report was to legislate an urban growth boundary;
 - (c) putting homes near jobs, shops, community infrastructure, parks and public transport encourages active travel and public transport, reduces the cost of transport and cost of living, and reduces climate emissions;
 - (d) urban growth boundaries have been established in Adelaide, Melbourne and cities overseas including Portland and Vancouver; and
 - (e) the ACT Greens and ACT Labor agreed to set an urban growth boundary this term as part of the confidence and supply agreement;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) Canberra’s urban footprint spans a distance equivalent to Greater London (population 9 million) or Sydney (population 5.3 million) but with a fraction of the population;
 - (b) between 2006 and 2022, Canberra’s urban area increased from around 22,230 hectares to 24,990 hectares;
 - (c) greenfield development costs Government more than infill as it requires new roads, sewage, stormwater networks and schools, with the average cost to Government in Whitlam of \$68,600 per dwelling versus \$6,500 per dwelling in Woden; and
 - (d) ACT Government already has a compact city policy, and work from District Strategies and the Missing Middle project will show where and how to deliver more infill homes;
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to protect the Western Edge and Eastern Broadacre Area by:
- (a) committing to full nature protection for the whole of Bluetts Block including Block 402 Stromlo;
 - (b) outlining any further studies needed to allow the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to designate Block 402 Stromlo as a nature reserve;
 - (c) removing the Future Urban Area overlay for Block 403 and part Block 12 Section 2 Denman Prospect and implementing this by releasing an amendment to the Territory Plan by 30 June 2025;
 - (d) committing to release the Eastern Broadacre Strategic Assessment by 31 July 2026; and
 - (e) publishing a report on these measures by 31 July 2025 and tabling this report in the first sittings after that; and
- (4) further calls on the ACT government to:
- (a) set an urban growth boundary this term;
 - (b) when setting this boundary, consider the need to preserve land of environmental value, the future land needs of the Territory, the need to protect the Western Edge, and the need to preserve agricultural land use as established in the Eastern Broadacre study;
 - (c) conduct public consultation to establish the urban growth boundary based on the good consultation principles established in the *Planning Act*

2023;

- (d) release an amendment to the Territory Plan to establish the urban growth boundary by June 2027; and
- (e) publish half-yearly statements on progress, beginning in the first sittings of 2026.

First of all, I would like to thank the planning minister for our genuinely constructive negotiations. I would particularly like to thank my adviser, Peter, and Minister Steel's adviser, Grace, for the way they ran this. We have, I believe, a great outcome today, and I believe that this motion will be passed.

We made some sensible changes at the request of our colleagues about timing and some of the matters that needed to be considered when setting Canberra's urban growth boundary. That has resulted in a decision that will be delivered this term, following good public and First Nations consultation. It produces a result that both Labor and the Greens can see is in the interests of Canberra and our environment.

It is Greens policy to set an urban growth boundary for Canberra. We spoke a lot about this in the last term, and we took that call to the election. We Greens landed on this policy after a lot of research, consultation and careful thinking. I will speak about one strand of that. There was quite a lot of work done, though, and a lot of people contributed to it.

Setting an urban growth boundary is the very first recommendation from the commissioner for the environment in the 2023 *State of the environment* report. I will quote from the first page of that report. It says:

The findings detail the continued, relentless degradation of our natural environment.

That report discusses the immense environmental costs of expanding Canberra's urban footprint, as areas with high conservation value continue to be lost or fragmented.

The report runs through some difficult truths. Our population is expanding. We are sprawling as we do that. We are losing biodiversity and habitat, and offsets cannot compensate for it. The report looks at Canberra's newest suburbs—Whitlam, Denman Prospect, Taylor, Throsby, Jacka, Moncrieff and Ginninderry. Sustainability is embedded in the design for these, but the problem is that sprawl is inherently unsustainable. Endless growth is not sustainable.

To build those suburbs, we have cleared box-gum woodland and rare grasslands; we have less than one per cent of our grasslands left. We have removed habitat trees used by critically endangered and vulnerable animals like swift parrots, superb parrots and regent honeyeaters. We have cleared golden sun moth and pink-tailed worm-lizard habitat. Run-off has degraded the water quality for Macquarie perch and trout cod. We have destroyed a lot of wombat burrows. We know there are plants, animals and ecological communities in all of these undeveloped areas and that they are all worth protecting.

As well as the direct impacts on our environment, endless sprawl has a huge impact on our climate. Transport emissions are over 60 per cent of our tracked emissions now. They are the single largest source, and they are not decreasing. This is one of the main reasons why planners all over the world are urging us to adopt compact city policies.

Climate adaptation is also easier in a compact city. A city that sprawls makes it harder to deliver the services that will be necessary during climate emergencies. Our government will be unable to provide heat and smoke refuges for an increasingly scattered population. We will not be able to look after our people and meet their basic needs for health and safety if we keep doing what we are doing.

We need to look after and protect our agricultural land. This motion supports the need to preserve the agricultural eastern broadacre area that spans from Majura Valley to Hume. We need to look after our farmers, our farms and our ability to grow food.

I want to pause here and speak positively about some of the ways in our newer suburbs that we have built much better than we used to. I want to speak about the tour that I had recently in North Wright with the Suburban Land Agency. In North Wright, they have built some separately titled freestanding small homes with small, separate gardens and a fantastic, large, shared garden out the back. The homes will have solar panels and heat pumps. They will use 80 per cent less energy to run than the average home. They will be very cheap to live in. Those homes are beautiful; I would love to live in one.

The Suburban Land Agency are doing some genuinely interesting things with some of the sustainable and recycled building materials that they are using, and it is great to see; it is the right way forward. But even those homes have taken away habitat. We need many more sustainable homes for our people, but we cannot keep bulldozing the bush capital to create them.

Of course, it is not simply an ACT problem. Around Australia, our development and our environmental laws are simply not protecting our environment. I will not go into detail on that; I think we have had a lot of conversation about that recently. If members would like to find out more, I would commend the work of the Australia Institute, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Conservation Council and many others.

All of these reasons, I believe, are why that first recommendation in the 2023 *State of the environment* report is to “legislate an urban growth boundary to contain urban expansion and achieve a compact, livable, efficiently designed Canberra”. I am delighted to say that, today, I believe we have come up with the agreed pathway for how to do that and how to deliver that this term.

I want to thank the outgoing Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Sophie Lewis, and her team for their work on this point and for so much other work that the commissioner and her team have performed in that role.

I also want to recognise the many community members who have tirelessly worked on these and other environmental issues. In particular, I want to mention Jean Casburn, who spent her last days on this Earth campaigning to protect Bluetts Block, and Alice Wells and Peter Lindenmayer. I walked Bluetts Block with Jean, Alice and many others,

and I am really glad that, in today's motion, we can protect it. I wish Jean had been here to see it.

I have spoken about the environmental and climate damage caused by urban sprawl. I also want to set out the human damage caused by urban sprawl. Sprawling cities leave our people stuck a long way from their jobs, schools and the services that they need. The average commute time is increasing. That means a lot of us are sitting in cars for a lot of the time. It is a problem.

In a cost-of-living crisis, we cannot afford the time lost on long commutes. We also cannot afford the expense of being locked into owning multiple cars so that every adult drives everywhere they need to go. We cannot even afford the petrol anymore. ACTCOSS gave evidence to the cost-of-living inquiry last term that many households are spending 40 per cent of their income on basic transport, largely on fuel. People are trapped feeding their cars and they can no longer afford to feed themselves.

As well as being expensive to live in, due to the high transport costs that you will pay every single day for the rest of your lives, when you live in those distant homes, greenfield development is also expensive to build. It costs the ACT government significantly more to build than infill, as it requires new roads, new sewerage, new stormwater networks and new schools. The average cost to government in Whitlam is \$68,000 per dwelling, compared to \$6½ thousand per dwelling in Woden. Of course, those costs will be passed on to the buyer.

These are more reasons why it is the Greens policy to set an urban growth boundary. Labor and the Greens have long agreed on a compact city policy. Today's motion is a simple and natural extension of that. The great thing about two progressive parties coming together in parliament is that, where something is so clearly in the public interest—and we can all see that; we have all been saying that—we can work together and deliver a good result.

Canberra is one of many cities that have adopted planning policies designed to create a compact city. We need to deliver on that now. We are pleased to see work coming along on the missing middle. Now is exactly the right time to set the process for our urban growth boundary because we are so far advanced in the rest of the policies that will support it. We are looking forward to seeing the missing middle design guide and the reports about how we can do missing middle better, and where missing middle homes should go. This work is coming to maturity.

Canberra will be in good company by setting city limits. Urban growth boundaries have been set in Melbourne and Adelaide, as well as in many overseas cities, such as Portland. This is a stage of maturity for a city, and it is time for Canberra to reach that stage. It will also give everybody certainty about what to build and where to put it. Urban growth boundaries give us much greater predictability about when, where and how much land we will use and what we will use it for. This will save people a lot of time and anxiety, and it will still give us the homes we need.

We know that we need more homes. We have an anticipated population of more than 695,000 people by 2050. We need more homes. We also need improved shopping areas,

employment opportunities and green spaces to go with those homes, and that will be so much easier to build in a smaller city.

Canberra already has a lot of land identified for development. That is set out in our district strategies. Those district strategies did a lot of work to identify the land that we expect to need to meet our growing population. We are already pretty big. We are comparable to Greater London, but we have a fraction of the population. We have a lot of places that we have already started. We should finish those suburbs that we have begun. We should finish Ginninderry, Gungahlin, Lawson, Taylor, Throsby, Whitlam and the rest of Molonglo.

We should also continue the work on the areas we have identified as possibly suitable for redevelopment, like CSIRO Ginninderra, but we need to do that while looking at all of the environmental and ecological areas within those areas. We need to make sure that we are protecting the areas that need to be protected, and we need to think about the best uses for that land.

We have a great opportunity to do this well this term. Density done well will protect our grassland, it will protect our woodland and bushland, it will limit urban sprawl, it will reduce our travel times and it will reduce our car dependency. It will build more homes for those who need one, with our missing middle homes. It will allow more people to live close to schools, jobs and services, and it will save on the costs of building and servicing new greenfield suburbs.

I am pleased that we have brought this motion today, and I believe that it will be passed. We have included explicit protection for Bluetts Block, including removing the future urban overlay, and the next steps that we need to make sure that we lock down the rest of the protections for Bluetts. We have also included protection for the western edge in this motion.

It is a process that we will need to go through, and this motion sets out some of the steps that we need to go through in that process. We will need to have a conversation with Canberra about exactly where the urban boundary should be. We know that there are some areas that should not be developed. That is very clear; but, as to exactly where the line on the map should be, that is a conversation that we need to have this term. I was very pleased to work with the planning minister on exactly what that process should look like and where our milestones should land to make sure that we can get this work completed and consulted on really well in this term. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport) (3.33): The motion that Ms Clay has brought to the Assembly will be supported by the government. It deals with a number of environmental policies from last term and they were brought up through the election campaign.

Protecting Bluetts's Block, moving forward with the Eastern Broadacre strategic assessment, is part of the government's vision for Canberra. We welcome engagement with the Greens and other MLAs as we continue work on those areas. The motion is

very consistent with the statement of planning priorities I made last year. For those reasons, we will support the motion.

As part of my speech, I want to provide an update as well on some of the topics that are covered by the motion. In relation to Bluett's Block, ACT Labor recognises the strong community support for preserving Bluett's Block. Prior to the 2024 election, we committed to protect the environmental value of the site and to keep that area accessible for people who want to enjoy Canberra's natural beauty. On 14 February this year, the government delivered on that commitment. A minor plan amendment had been made and approved by the Territory Planning Authority to gazette Block 403 in Stromlo and undeveloped areas of Block 12, Section 1, Denman Prospect as a nature reserve. In my statement of planning priorities and at the election, I committed to protect Block 402 in Stromlo. That work is still underway. We will need to consider things like removing the future urban overlay in that area and options for protection, including a nature reserve. A decision has not yet been made in relation to that. Obviously, the other blocks have been incorporated into the Molonglo River Reserve, but there will need to be further consideration about whether that step might be appropriate for that block. It might form part of a broader nature reserve. I will go to that in a second because it is connected with the western edge work.

It is important to remember that Block 402 is privately held. There remains a role for the Territory Planning Authority and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in engaging with the lessee in considering the site. We agree in principle that the block should be protected, but there is an appropriate process to follow and that needs to continue. I can advise that the ACT government is currently undertaking investigations to enable further consideration. We will consult with the lessee of the block regarding the future protection of the environmental values. I am happy to keep Ms Clay and the Assembly up to date as work on Block 402 proceeds.

The motion also calls on us to provide more information about the Eastern Broadacre strategic assessment. I am pleased to say that we will be doing that. We support the calls-on section of the motion. I thank Ms Clay and her office for engaging with us on the time frames. Finalising the Eastern Broadacre strategic assessment remains a priority. It is one that I outlined in my statement of planning priorities. The ACT government has identified parts of the eastern side of the ACT, which is known as the Eastern Broadacre, as a potential area for future employment and industrial and related uses in the corridor. The Eastern Broadacre area extends from the Majura Valley through to Hume and includes parts of Symonston and the Jerrabomberra Valley. This area is subject to strategic assessment under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and this assessment is what the motion is referring to.

Through this process, potential impacts of proposed development on nationally significant environmental values in parts of the area will be assessed, and this assessment will form the future planning and potential rezoning of the district. This will also include the identification of areas to be retained for environmental conservation and their current use and potential new employment precincts to accommodate a range of uses and industries, such as manufacturing, logistics and warehousing—that is, the future long-term needs of the territory.

A draft EPBCA report was submitted to the Commonwealth for review and endorsed in April 2024. It was expected that we would be able to go out much sooner with consultation on the draft with the community, but the Commonwealth, in return, provided some quite substantive comments that were unexpected, and, as a result, it has taken longer than anticipated for the draft strategic assessment to be released for community consultation. The ACT government is currently undertaking due diligence in reviewing these comments and considering the next steps. When the draft EPBCA is finalised, which will require some updates, I will be really pleased to release it in line with this motion and to have a conversation with members here and with the broader community about the long-term future of the Eastern Broadacre area.

The future of Canberra's urban footprint was also a feature in the election and is part of the government's supply agreement with the Greens. The government's policy is to make a change in relation to creating an urban boundary for Canberra after consultation with the community and consideration of future land needs of the territory. This motion calls for a boundary to be set and necessary planning changes to be implemented by June 2027. The consultation and analysis that come with this work are important parts of the government's vision for Canberra.

The territory has a limited amount of land remaining for new suburbs. That is why our government, in the 2017 Planning Strategy, outlined that 70 per cent of Canberra's future development is to be identified within the existing urban footprint as infill development. We cannot rely on new greenfield suburbs alone to house our growing population, and we also cannot accept unrealistic political promises of new far-ranging suburbs to address the future housing needs in Canberra, like new suburbs in Kowen that were proposed during the election campaign by other parties.

In my statement of planning priorities released last year, one priority that was identified was progressing investigations for work around future urban and other uses and environmental protection on the western edge. That includes how the environmental values of the area can be recognised. At the election, Labor had a different view to the other parties in relation to the western edge, and that is that we want to undertake the environmental studies necessary to inform decision-making on the area. We did not want to rule out no change, which could be a change to protect the key areas and environmental values. That is a decision that needs to be based on studies that are underway. This work will be vital as we seek to understand what a future urban growth boundary could look like and begin work on our landscape plan, which was an ACT Labor election commitment. That will be implemented by the environment minister, Minister Orr.

Labor also took to the election a plan to deliver 30,000 new homes by 2030 and enable those across the city. We are getting right down to business on that commitment. As Ms Clay mentioned, we are looking at changes to enable more well-located housing in the existing residential areas and areas within the existing urban footprint. We can supply more well-designed and sustainable housing in existing suburbs while maintaining the amenity that makes Canberra a great place to live. The district strategies provide a plan towards 2038 and beyond to increase the share of dwellings in well-located areas while recognising the need for more housing choice within our established suburbs.

Canberra has a lot of high-density multi-unit housing and a lot more single residential homes, but we have a gap in the middle. This is the missing middle, such as duplexes, townhouses, terraces and low-rise apartments. Filling this missing middle housing gap is important to meet the diverse and changing needs of our population, so the next stage of planning reforms will create a diversity of housing choice within existing residential areas while retaining our highly valued “city in the landscape” character. This type of development requires careful consideration of zoning outcomes and design guidance to ensure that we can deliver these outcomes in a way which meets Canberrans’ expectations for a well-designed and planned city with high-quality buildings and public spaces.

That is why we are undertaking the development of a new missing middle housing design guide which puts design at the centre of our reforms to permit more low-rise medium-density housing. This best-practice design guide will facilitate the next stage of planning system reform and demonstrate to the community how a diverse range of housing may be built, specifically in the RZ1 and RZ2 residential zones, in a way which positively contributes to our existing suburbs. The government is also working with landholders across our commercial centres on opportunities to create vibrant mixed-use precincts. We will also consider industry-led proposals for redevelopment which provide opportunities for employment, housing and recreational facilities for the community.

Another part of the work that we are doing to supply and enable more homes is to undertake planning on transit-oriented developments, particularly along the light rail and rapid bus corridors. That includes work on implementing a northern gateway design framework and also developing a new Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework to support the future light rail extension from Commonwealth Park to Woden. This work will guide development along these important transport corridors by integrating transport and land use planning and providing housing opportunities, infrastructure and community facilities, and also facilitating the release of additional land in the existing urban footprint to enable staged development across key sites identified in the district strategies.

This work around planning reform is really important to consider alongside the idea of setting an urban growth boundary, because the purpose of that boundary is to restrict development beyond the boundary, and that means making sure that there are opportunities for sustainable development within the existing urban footprint that we have. That work is well underway, so it makes sense to now look at what that urban boundary might look like.

The government will support this motion. It is broadly aligned with our existing policy. The government has a realistic plan to deliver housing while preserving what we love about Canberra. I thank Ms Clay again for bringing this motion forward and for her engagement on it. I look forward to updating the Assembly and working with her as we deliver on the plan.

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (3.44): For several reasons, I am very disappointed in this motion. The Canberra Liberals received a copy of this late Friday. As Ms Clay said even during this debate, they have the numbers. We were sent a copy, and that is obviously appreciated, but it would have been nice for a crossbench party to have

consultation that included the opposition in this Assembly. Unfortunately, that did not take place.

We stepped through some of the notes and the calls-on about the concept of an urban growth boundary. Adelaide, Melbourne and the overseas cities of Portland and Vancouver are given as examples. It is not hard to find that Adelaide and Melbourne were established in the 1830s. Portland was established in the 1840s and Vancouver in the 1870s. As members are possibly aware, Canberra was sort of established in 1913, yet Parliament House did not move here until 1927 when the Governor-General's residence was completed. It is hard to see why those cities are comparable to the city of Canberra.

There are some things missing from this important discussion about what Canberra should look like. The minister has been very silent on them. The "missing middle" is a term that is thrown around. The Canberra Liberals believe in exploring sensible and respectful options for filling in the current footprint, but we also believe in exploring the potential for areas around Canberra, without necessarily drawing a line.

Ms Clay mentioned the cost of greenfield development. There is a pretty significant difference. It is nearly 10 times the cost to develop a home in a greenfield area compared to doing so in the current footprint. The examples listed are Whitlam and Woden. Surely, the logic would flow that the government should stop developing in the Molonglo Valley and should stop developing in West Belconnen and Ginninderry. In terms of the sprawl, it is so ludicrous that, particularly last term, the Canberra Liberals were called "the party of urban sprawl". The government has a plan to extend the development of Canberra over the New South Wales border. Who is the party of urban sprawl? It sounds like the Labor minority government is continuing to be that party.

This motion is full of contradictions, I have to say, and, again, there is disappointment in not being involved in what could have been a very worthy motion with some sensible statements about infill and Canberra's potential for going outwards. The government is going outwards. As I have said, it actually wants to develop across the New South Wales border. How more outward could you be: "To grow Canberra, let's go out of Canberra"?

I am really disappointed in this motion. There are some lost opportunities. We will not support it. It is just a token regarding something they agreed to help Labor form a minority government—"Okay. Let's agree to this." It is actually a compromise of what I know was Greens' stated policy leading up to the election—that is, not to develop the western edge. The minister has kind of said, "We will keep investigating and, who knows, it might well be that we will leave it alone as an environmentally-sensitive area." As members would know, the Canberra Liberals, in the lead-up to the last election, said, "Don't develop the western edge." All these things would have been very worthwhile points of discussion, and that opportunity was not taken up.

What do you do within the urban footprint? The most creative thing we saw from the government last term, which they are continuing with, is an RZ1 infill policy that, from latest numbers I have, has delivered approximately 30 applications in nearly a year and a half of implementation. It is an RZ1 infill policy that says, "If you have an 800-square-metre parcel or bigger, you can unit title it, and the second dwelling can only be 120

square metres.” The Canberra Liberals said, “If you have such a parcel, you can separately title it.” That is a much more flexible arrangement for a current owner, and the planning rules determine the size of the dwelling. That is much more flexible. In fact, it is a more progressive infill policy than what the government is offering.

There is no answer to what is happening around our shopping centres, where RZ2 options are available, and the uptake is incredibly low, as the minister would know. The Canberra Liberals recognise this issue and said that the LVC needs to be seriously looked at. We led the discussion on how to make infill happen more realistically. That would have been a nice point of discussion to form a motion on planning, which we were not part of, unfortunately.

As I said, there are some things in the motion that are really contradictory and do not really align with the reality of where we are now. It is disappointing that so much has not been spoken about. This is a missed opportunity. This is simply a tick of something the Greens, in opposition, and the Labor minority agreed to do as part of an agreement to allow a Labor Chief Minister to continue and guarantee supply.

I am really disappointed. I am invested in our bush capital. As members would know, it was the reason I got involved in politics in late 2016. I thought, “What’s happening to our beautiful bush capital—the capital of this wonderful country? What’s happening to this city?” That continues to drive me. I believe it would contribute to a really important discussion about the shape of Canberra, both within its footprint and its potential for expansion.

We will not support this motion. This is a terrible missed opportunity. I express my disappointment at not seeing what it could have been with some genuine consultation.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (3.52): I rise to support Ms Clay’s motion for an urban growth boundary, including the protection of Bluett’s Block. The ecological value of our land is important. I note that, in a compact city, biodiversity has to co-exist with housing within the urban growth boundary, and development needs to consider the protection of places like Yarralumla Creek and Coombs Peninsula.

I am somewhat confused about the definition of the western edge, though. I am sure Ms Clay will explain it to me. It is about more than Bluett’s Block. In the 2018 ACT Planning Strategy, it is a very large area from Belconnen to Tuggeranong. I am sure the discussions will determine the exact size of it. I look forward to contributing to the consultation on the urban growth boundary.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (3.53): I rise to speak in support of this motion, and I thank Ms Clay very much for bringing it forward.

This motion offers an opportunity to consider what kind of story we want to be able to tell future generations of Canberrans about the decisions made in this Assembly. Do we want to tell our children and their children that Canberra used to be the bush capital, that we used to have flourishing wildlife, that what we treasured most in the capital used to be its rich bushlands, rivers and ecological diversity? Do we want to tell future generations that we took a short-term view, opting for endless urban sprawl that increased social isolation, widened disadvantage and destroyed pristine, untouched

lands, when we had other, clear, evidence-based alternatives?

I do not want to have to tell my kids that story. It is on us to have hard conversations in this place about the Canberra we want for future generations. We can develop the housing and infrastructure that our community urgently needs, and we can preserve and even enhance the incredible ecological diversity of our natural environment.

The establishment of an urban growth boundary presents a clear pathway towards this outcome. It encourages filling out the missing middle, sensibly and sustainably increasing the density of our city, building cohesive communities around our local shops and parks, investing in the character of our neighbourhoods, and creating affordable housing options that cater to a broad range of Canberrans, from new families to ageing residents and young professionals.

It is on us to make the decision to build our city in a way that brings people together and protects the threatened species that call our territory home. Establishing a clear city limit can help us to do this. It also makes good economic sense. We know that greenfield developments cost more than infill. A recent report by the New South Wales Productivity Commission found that building a home on Sydney's undeveloped fringes costs \$75,000 more than building in the city centre.

Densification also encourages active travel and, along with the health and social benefits, this too has a strong business case. In Brisbane, London, New York, Toronto and Portland, people who walk or cycle spend more money on local businesses—a vitally important outcome given how tough our small businesses are doing at the moment.

Research also shows that urban sprawl holds down upward social mobility. We need not look beyond our own Oaks Estate to see how distance from services further entrenches disadvantage. Contrast this to the residents of other beautifully densified areas like Campbell, who enjoy easy access to employment hubs, essential services and communal spaces, and who are given a clear feeling that their government cares about the place they call home.

At a time when many Canberrans are facing significant disadvantage, we have to do everything we can to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged community members. This is a sensible policy, and I look forward to seeing this motion passed and the commitments it contains upheld. This is a small step towards ensuring we can tell future generations a story that we are proud of, when they ask about the Canberra we chose to create for them.

Again, I thank Ms Clay for bringing this motion forward today. While I do not share Mr Cain's disappointment, I would love to see more motions circulated on a Friday before our next sitting week. Usually, I get them on a Monday afternoon. I would love to see a genuine commitment in this place to protecting the western edge, and I would echo his comments in that respect. Generally speaking, we do not want to investigate an area that we are planning to preserve, to the extent that we have been. If there is an opportunity to do so in the future, I would very much welcome that opportunity and I would hope for unanimous support for the protection of this part of our territory.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (3.57): I would like sincerely to thank my Greens colleague Ms Clay for bringing forward this motion. It calls on committing to the very necessary steps we must take to protect our environment, our biodiversity and our agricultural land.

Setting an urban growth boundary should be of interest to everyone now, and not just future generations, who would otherwise witness our most precious natural resources systematically eroded in the interests of developer profit margins. Actually, people today see it happening before our very eyes.

I want to speak as a young person who feels acutely the frustration and powerlessness of seeing government let developers ride roughshod over biodiversity that, once gone, will very likely never come back. Both the earless dragon and the legless lizard are very pertinent recent examples of the government not quite doing what it needed to do to safeguard that biodiversity.

With varying degrees of sincerity, I have had it put to me that, if we do not expand out, I will never be able to afford a house. I disagree. To say that we cannot have both affordable housing and a thriving natural environment is the height of cognitive dissonance. That is why our missing middle exists. We can densify comfortably and cleverly within our existing urban footprint and afford the houses there. This government has a strong moral obligation to commit not just to enough housing, but to the kind of housing we need for a sustainable future.

An urban growth boundary provides the reassurance we need so that we develop our city sustainably, and so that my generation, and those even younger, can continue to enjoy the same lush, beautiful bush capital that we all enjoy today.

On Bluetts Block, this has been an area of concern for the community and for the ACT Greens for a while. I had the privilege of going out to Bluetts earlier this term and witnessing firsthand the incredible biodiversity of the site. It is absolutely teeming with life. In fact, the lovely ecologist who guided us through Bluetts that morning had counted 29 species of bird just in that morning, which is pretty impressive.

It really gets to me that there is currently this artificial divide. On one hand we have blocks 12 section 1 and 403, which are currently public land that the ACT government has now designated as a nature reserve, under sustained pressure from the community and the Greens. On the other hand, we have block 402, which the ACT government is currently leasing to the ANU. When I asked about this in annual reports hearings, it was not clear to me that the government had reached out to ANU or set in motion plans to undertake that same rigorous ecological assessment that we had on the other two blocks.

The rufous whistler does not check ACTmapi before he works out which low branch he should alight on. It is an arbitrary, man-made distinction that should not dictate to us what degree or quality of environmental assessment we are prepared to do onsite. Pretty much all evidence that we have suggests a similar ecological value across the three continuous blocks. We absolutely need the government to commit to undertaking that same rigorous ecological assessment on block 402 and move to protect not just some but the entirety of Bluetts Block.

Lastly, the eastern broadacre strategic assessment is long overdue. It was done in 2014; that is over 10 years ago. I was in high school then. Since then, this hypothetical industrial land, with its yet undefined value, has appeared to take precedence over the genuine, tangibly valuable agricultural work being undertaken by the farmers that live and work on this land right now.

The fact that it has taken this long to provide Majura Valley famers with long-term leases is emblematic of the challenge of having such a significant strategy sitting there incomplete for so long. I am very eager to see the eastern broadacre strategic assessment, and our planning system more broadly, properly value prime agricultural land.

Famers in our community have shown themselves to be excellent stewards of the land. I have chatted to farmers doing excellent conservation work, farmers who understand soil quality and how to build it up, farmers who understand what providing food and fibre means, when Canberrans rely on food and fibre to survive and to live well. Our rural land and the work of the people that tend it is incredibly intrinsically valuable in its own right.

I commend Ms Clay for bringing this motion forward, and I hope that this is a sign of a government who will listen to environmental experts and act with gusto on their advice.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (4.02), in reply: I would like to thank colleagues for their contributions to the debate this afternoon. I would like to address a few of the comments made by Mr Cain. I am disappointed that Mr Cain is disappointed. We did, very carefully, make sure that we spoke to every party in our multiparty parliament last week. We did that very carefully because, as everyone here knows, but some of our audience may not know, we circulate notices on the notice paper on the Monday of the sitting week and, if you talk to people before you circulate them, people do not have a chance to say, “I’m not sure,” “I don’t understand,” “Maybe you should do it this way,” or “Maybe this,” “Maybe that.” That is why we did go to everyone—including Mr Emerson, as he pointed out—last week.

We had a great conversation with Mr Cain and his adviser. My adviser thought that it was a good, constructive conversation in which, I gather, Mr Cain said that he did not have any amendments to move. We did not get any follow-up queries from Mr Cain, so we thought that was it when it came to the negotiations. I have not seen any amendments circulated today, so I thought the discussion was over. If that discussion is not over, when we have gone to you the week before the sittings, before we have circulated a motion, please come back to us at any time.

I am really pleased that we have such rigorous agreement on the importance of Bluetts Block and the western edge. I thank my colleague Miss Nuttall for running through the importance of that. I note Ms Carrick’s views about the need for definitions. Last term we used to write longer motions, and the standing orders were changed, I believe, after several motions from my office and one from Ms Castley were significantly longer than 500 words, and the parliament decided that that was a bit long. If the parliament would like to reinstate that, I would be very happy to tell the full story in much more detail next time. It is up to the parliament; I will leave that with the chamber.

We have made it clear that we need to finish what we have started. It is really important that we protect our biodiversity. I want to run through some of the specific calls that we have written here, so that we are all quite clear about what we have agreed to. I think most people understand what we are talking about.

We have gone through a little bit of missing middle work. Mr Cain and others might remember that we brought an earlier motion, in March, that dealt a lot more with the missing middle. Of course, our planning minister has spoken about and is delivering a great deal of work on that. There is mention here of missing middle work, but the motion primarily moves on to the next step, noting that missing middle work is already in train.

This motion, if it is passed, will commit the ACT government to protect the western edge and the eastern broadacre area. It does that by setting out some of the steps that we need to take. It commits to full nature protection for the whole of Bluetts Block, including block 402 Stromlo. It outlines the further studies we need to allow the conservator to designate block 402 as a nature reserve.

It commits to removing the future urban area overlay for block 403 and block 12 section 2, Denman Prospect, and to implement this by releasing an amendment to the Territory Plan by 30 June 2025. It commits to the release of the eastern broadacre strategic assessment by July 2026. We note the planning minister's comments on why that timeframe is the way it is, and we will get a report on all of those measures in July this year. I am very pleased with that.

It also commits the ACT government to set an urban growth boundary this term. When setting that boundary, the ACT government will consider the need to preserve land of environmental value, future land needs of the territory, the need to protect our western edge, as committed to at the start of the motion, and the need to preserve agricultural land use, as established in the eastern broadacre study.

It commits us to conduct public consultation to establish the urban growth boundary based on good consultation principles established in the Planning Act 2023. We will, of course, need to talk to Canberrans, our First Nations people and our stakeholders about where that urban growth boundary is.

This motion most certainly does not draw a line on the map. There is quite a lot of work to go before we can do that. It commits the ACT government to release the amendment to the Territory Plan to establish this urban growth boundary by June 2027. We all think that is a reasonable timeframe. There is quite a lot of work that needs to go into this to get that result.

We will be getting half-yearly statements here about that. Mr Cain, I would recommend that you check your email on the Friday before sittings, to make sure that you see those statements when they come in. That will mean that you have a good opportunity to comment on those and make a contribution.

I would like to thank everybody for participating in today's debate. It has been really constructive. I want to finish by making a few points about future generations. I will do

it quite personally. My daughter is in grade 6 now. She is getting increasingly politically aware. It is a consequence, probably, of living with a politician; it will happen to our kids. She used to come along to a lot of events with me, and she was mostly in it for the cake. I have spent a lot of time in the company of knitting nannas; it does not matter what event or political presence you have, there is always cake, and that is really important when you are three years old.

When you are 11 years old, you have started to think about the issues a bit more on your own. She and I spent a pretty sad Sunday the other week drawing Canberra grassland earless dragons. I very much hope that is not her only chance to see one. She is very sad about that one. She is pretty engaged on quite a lot of issues. She desperately wants to make sure that she and her kids—she is only in grade 6, but they think ahead—have the same beautiful environment, and the animals and plants around them.

She is really happy about this one. She was a bit sad, and I told her about the one that I thought would be passed today, and it very much cheered her up. Miss Nuttall, very much along your lines and your feelings, our young people can see what we need to do.

The exact details and the process are complicated. We have to get the details right, but the goal is simple, and the problem is simple. I think a lot of people can now see that. On that note, I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Schools—staff safety

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.09): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the 2024 Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey (the ACU Report) showed:
 - (i) seven out of 10 Canberra principals reported physical violence in their job, the highest in the country; and
 - (ii) 74.4 per cent received violent threats, the highest in the country;
- (b) the ACU Report further shows parents/caregivers as sources of:
 - (i) threats of violence remains high at 63.7 per cent;
 - (ii) bullying remains high at 58.1 per cent; and
 - (iii) cyber bullying has become high at 87.6 per cent;
- (c) the ACT Education Directorate annual report 2023-2024 notes that “the most significant risk to health and safety of workers in ACT public schools continues to be occupational violence in the form of verbal or physical aggression by students or parents”;
- (d) the Australian Education Union is 2023-2024 ACT Budget submission stated that in the 2021-2022 year, there were 36.55 incidences of occupational violence reported every teaching day, or one violent incident every nine minutes and 51 seconds;

- (e) in response to violence and threats of violence, the Victorian Government introduced the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Protection of School Communities) Act to protect their schools;
 - (f) this legislation enables principals and other authorised persons to issue safety orders that prevent a specified person from:
 - (i) entering or remaining on any school-related place of the relevant school;
 - (ii) approaching, or causing another person to approach, within 25 metres of any staff member or class of staff members within or outside of any school-related place of the relevant school;
 - (iii) contacting any staff member or class of staff members; and
 - (iv) using or communicating on a communication platform owned, controlled by, or established in relation to the relevant school;
 - (g) South Australia introduced the Education and Children's Services (Barring Notices and Other Protections) Amendment Bill 2024 with similar provisions;
 - (h) the South Australian Education Department stated the laws give “better protection against abusive parents at schools”;
 - (i) the Victorian Premier stated the laws will give Victorian schools “the power to ban aggressive and violent parents from entering school grounds, to protect students and staff”;
 - (j) no equivalent laws exist in the ACT to protect staff, students and families;
 - (k) occupational violence in schools has been ongoing for years, and highlighted in numerous reports, including an Assembly inquiry of 2019; and
 - (l) in 2023, the Opposition called for an inquiry into school violence that was dismissed by the Government; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) investigate the school safety order laws in Victoria and South Australia for their applicability and use in ACT schools; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly no later than 2 September 2025.

The motion that I have moved today seeks to address what we have been talking about in the Assembly for many years. Year after year, whether it is in the annual ACU report, whether it is from principals, police or through other revelations in media, comments from the AEU or from what we hear from constituents, we are hearing about this matter of violence in our schools.

Sadly, I have to say, this comes with very little real progress, and we continue to see unacceptably high rates of violence against teachers and principals. There are a range of issues that principals and teachers face, with workload and stress being among them. What I am focusing on here today is a step along the path to restore safety in ACT schools by addressing this matter with the same urgency and seriousness that other jurisdictions across Australia have already done.

In March, the Australian Catholic University released *The Australian principal*

occupational health, safety and wellbeing survey for 2024. For the ACT, it was grim reading. In this report, we see that 74.4 per cent of ACT principals received violent threats throughout 2024. This is the highest level reported in the country. Sixty-nine per cent of ACT principals were subject to physical violence, second only to the Northern Territory.

The *Canberra Times* highlighted that seven out of 10 Canberra principals reported physical violence in their jobs. Again, that is the highest in the country. Sadly, for sexual harassment, the ACT sits at 5.1 per cent, and that is more than double Victoria's 2.4 per cent.

There are a range of sources for this violence outlined by the ACU report; unfortunately, none are more prevalent than parents and caregivers. The report showed that 63.7 per cent of the threats of violence came from parents and caregivers; 58 per cent of bullying came from parents and caregivers; and 87.6 per cent of cyber bullying came from parents and caregivers.

It is clear that, if we want to address the primary cause of harm towards our principals and teachers in the ACT, we must address the minority of parents—and I stress that: the minority of parents—that cause the majority of harm for ACT teachers and principals. The report quoted a male ACT primary school principal. I quote:

Many of my Principal colleagues share with me how difficult it has become to be a school principal in recent years.

The major cause of distress are parents. Parents behave in an unreasonable manner, have ridiculous expectations and think that because they went to school they can therefore run a school. Principals are constantly defending staff from parents.

Parents are rarely told to stop and desist by Education Support offices. The Principal is mostly left to deal with disgusting behaviour from parents by themselves.

The kinds of behaviours regularly displayed in schools by unreasonable parents would not be tolerated in any other workplace. We will lose many good school leaders to this trend in disgraceful parent behaviours.

That is what principals are saying. If this situation does not change, we will see teachers walk out the door. And who could blame them, if they are suffering abuse at this level?

The key problem here is spelt out for us by teachers and principals. Their work is being impacted by abusive parents. More importantly, their wellbeing is being hurt. Teachers want to teach. It sounds pretty straightforward, but teachers and principals themselves feel the need to tell their governments, because they do not feel supported. I will quote another principal from the report:

Things need to change. Let teachers teach and Principals lead.

Far too much emphasis on having to 'make the department or supervisors look good'. They say develop trust but they need to trust that Principal knows their school, students, staff and can do the 'job'.

That is why the Principal was placed in the position because they had shown they could do the job. It is not a blame game but the Principal is blamed when things don't meet expectations the supervisor or department think 'they' want.

Love my job but it has come to a point where it is not worth it anymore and your health suffers. This has filtered down to the coalface where teachers are suffering.

On cyber bullying, the *Canberra Times* quotes Professor Paul Kidson:

"This could be an abusive email, or a really distasteful post on X or some other social media forum, almost with impunity," he said.

"Increasingly the principals are just throwing up their hands and saying, 'I can't control this'."

A further line from the same article says that the media—and I quote:

... tried to talk with principals for this story, but none were willing to speak, mainly because of fear of "blowback from the school community".

Another *Canberra Times* article quotes Simon Vaughan, from the ACT Principals Association:

"I think that nobody would go to their workplaces if over half of them were going to be either threatened with violence or physically assaulted," Mr Vaughan said.

"The truthful thing is that we are living in a community where this happens. It's not some sort of mystical place where this stuff happens. The assaults are coming from parents and students."

"It's in our community, and that's something that's got to be, I think, recognised and reckoned with."

It is not just a feature of the ACT system, Mr Assistant Speaker; I accept that. But when you consider what the ACU report said, it is a particularly dire situation in the ACT.

The ACT Education Directorate annual report for 2023-24 makes it clear that we need to address and improve the health and safety of teachers and parents. In the government's own report, it says:

The most significant risk to health and safety of workers in ACT public schools continues to be occupational violence in the form of verbal or physical aggression by students or parents.

This same line appeared in the 2022-23, 2021-22 and 2020-21 annual reports. The number of occupational violence incidents reported has remained unacceptably high. In 2020-21, the number of reports was 7,315. We have seen that consistently, through to the latest report, with 7,328 reports of violent incidents in our schools.

The Australian Education Union has included a staggering statistic in its reports. In the 2021-22 year, there were 36.55 incidences of occupational violence reported every teaching day. Another way of putting that is that, every nine minutes and 51 seconds,

an educator experiences occupational violence in an ACT public school. If you were to subscribe to that, that means in the time it has taken for me so far to make this speech, an educator has experienced an incident of occupational violence in one of our schools. It is pretty horrifying.

The ACU's report, the Education Directorate's own annual reports and the AEU's budget submission lay out a dire picture. Schools need to be a safe place to work. I think we would all agree with that. For a long time, we have been bogged down in reports, bureaucracy and talk, while teachers continue to be at risk of high levels of violence. We should now be looking to implement some solutions that are tried and tested in other jurisdictions.

The example that I am proposing today is school safety orders. These have been implemented by the state Victorian Labor government, and the state South Australian Labor government has done something similar. Very simply, these laws allow authorised persons, such as principals, to issue safety orders to parents, carers and other people who engage in harmful, threatening or abusive behaviour. This includes on social media.

The Victorian approach enables principals and other authorised persons to issue safety orders that prevent a specified person from entering or remaining on a school-related place, approaching, or causing another person to approach, within 25 metres of any staff member or class of staff members within or outside a school-related place, contacting any staff member or class of staff members, and using or communicating on a communication platform owned, controlled by or established in relation to the relevant school.

If a person breaches that order, schools seek advice from the legal division if they want to initiate enforcement proceedings in the court for one of the following orders: a fine of up to 60 penalty units; an order requiring the person to comply with the order; or an order requiring the person to take specified action. Importantly, a person who breaches an order will not receive a criminal penalty. The South Australian legislation follows a similar approach.

When the Victorian Labor government moved to implement their school community safety orders, it was welcomed across the state. This included the Australian Education Union, the Independent Education Union, Legal Aid, the Victoria Police, and the list goes on.

When the then Victorian Minister for Education, James Merlino, announced this policy in May 2021, he said—and I agree with him:

No one should be threatened or intimidated at work or at school—that's why we're introducing these new laws to protect staff, students and their families.

These vital new measures will empower our senior school leaders to take necessary actions when inappropriate behaviour is being levelled towards people in the school community.

He went on to say:

This important work is about keeping schools safe and supporting staff to make sure schools are places where everyone feels safe and respected—creating an environment where students can thrive.

Everyone deserves to feel safe at work—and I urge families to think about how they're treating their children's school staff, who have given so much to our communities over the past ... challenging years.

The Victorian Labor government moved to implement this policy after a survey reported that four out of 10 principals were subject to violence at schools. We can compare that with the ACT, where it is seven out of 10.

I note that, in the ACU report that was released recently, one of their recommendations was that this should be implemented. I will quote from the ACU report:

Address inappropriate behaviour from parents/ caregivers towards leaders and staff to maintain a safe and conducive learning environment by implementing mechanisms such as the Victorian School Community Safety Order.

They provided nine recommendations in their report and highlighted four in their release, safety orders being one of them. I also note that the Australian Education Union have supported this. I understand they have been asking the ACT government for this measure for some time, and they support this scheme. I have also engaged with the ACT Principals Association regarding this matter. They are part of the solution to this. We want to make sure, in those conversations with them, that any new laws do not give them an additional excessive burden of responsibility.

We can do things a little more uniquely in the ACT compared to Victoria. In Victoria, there are short-term orders and longer term orders. The longer term orders are often implemented by a director, at department level. The short-term orders have to be done more immediately by the principal. That is because Bendigo is a long way from Melbourne, where the headquarters of the department are located. You could do it quite differently here in the ACT, and that is the sort of work that we want the ACT government to look at.

What am I calling on here today? I am calling on this government to take the steps necessary to implement what is a pretty straightforward policy, and it is straightforward in a way because it has been rolled out in other jurisdictions. If you go to the Victorian website—I provided it to the Greens—there is a pretty extensive policy page that outlines in detail how this works. This is a policy that will allow principals to keep their schools, their teachers, their staff, parents and other adults safe, or certainly safer, in an environment where we should be adopting much more of a zero tolerance approach towards this sort of behaviour.

I will ask the minister to go away and look at these laws, if she would, and see what she can do to fit them into our unique environment in the ACT, and come back here by September with a plan, hopefully, to introduce these laws into the ACT. I think we would all agree in this place that we need to do everything we can to keep our principals, our staff and our students safe. This seems to be one sensible measure that has been introduced in other jurisdictions, and I do not think it should be beyond our wit to do so.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Minister for Homes and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (4.24): Everyone has the right to be safe at work, and that especially includes our teachers, school leaders, learning support assistants, administrative staff, cleaners, building service officers and volunteer students—absolutely everyone who works and learns in ACT schools. I acknowledge the experiences of school leaders that have been highlighted in the ACU report. These experiences are not acceptable. They are not acceptable to me and they should not be acceptable to anyone, especially here in the ACT. The ACT government takes occupational violence very seriously. That is why I have undertaken a bunch of measures to prevent and address violence in schools. These efforts range on a spectrum that includes communication campaigns, practical support for schools and legal powers for school principals.

For the benefit of the Assembly, it is already illegal to abuse, assault or threaten school leaders and teachers, or indeed anyone. Laws already exist for these behaviours, both in-person and online. Further, ACT principals are already authorised, under section 147 of the Education Act 2004, to direct a person to leave school premises. This includes people who are behaving inappropriately or are threatening, disrupting or abusing students, staff or teachers at a school and therefore impacting on a school's ability to provide a safe and effective learning and work environment.

In 2022, I established the Safe@School Taskforce to lead a system-wide transformation to improve the safety and wellbeing of ACT public school students and staff. In 2023, the government also rolled out an ACT public service workplace violence awareness advertising campaign: "Aggression or violence: it's not part of the job". In 2024, an ACT school-specific antiviolence campaign was launched after co-design with the Australian Education Union, the CPSU, the ACT Principals Association and the ACT Council of P&Cs. Also, at the last election we committed to invest \$300,000 in principal wellbeing, and we are working with school principals to understand what that fund could do and how it could work to provide better supports for school leaders across our school system.

Of course, there is always more work to do, and I will continue to work with our partners in the ACT education community across public, Catholic and independent schools on practical steps to prevent and address violence in our schools. While the government can agree to investigate—and will, of course—I hold some reservations about the school community safety order laws that have commenced in Victoria and South Australia. I know that there are mixed views in the education community and more broadly here in the ACT.

Violence is never okay. Punitive approaches on their own should not be at the expense of meaningful cultural change within our community, particularly in our schools. We should have respectful relationships and an expectation regarding professional school leaders. Everyone in our community has the right to be safe and heard. Schools are a reflection of the communities and societies in which we live. They do not operate in a vacuum; they are not from a separate world. The violent behaviour we see in schools across the ACT and Australia sometimes echoes the violent behaviour that exists in the world more broadly. We need to bring together a system of change and culture and work together to prevent and address all kinds of violent behaviour across our

community, but particularly in our schools.

I really appreciate Mr Hanson's motion today and his and his office's attention to this issue. It is welcomed. This really is my core work as Minister for Education and Early Childhood, alongside the workers who lead and teach across our schools. We cannot talk about education and children if we are not focused on the educators and the leaders who do this complex work. Education, by its nature, does not stand still. There is always learning, evolving and changing if required, and there is always more that we can do in the system and as a community to support our school leaders and teachers to keep their own and our broader community safe. I remain absolutely committed to this work.

I again thank Mr Hanson for his motion. I understand there is an amendment about consultation. That is fine too. We do not have a problem with supporting this motion today.

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (4.29): I thank the minister for acknowledging that this motion will be supported. It is quite comforting to hear that there is support for this motion. I rise to support Mr Hanson's initial motion and the amendments. The issue of violence in schools is challenging and has defied solution for many years.

I note that the Standing Committee on Social Policy first reviewed this issue in 1996 and the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs reviewed bullying in September of 2019. From reading those reports, it becomes clear that violence in schools has been increasing over time. I acknowledge that the minister has indicated some of the things that have been done to reduce violence in schools, but the reality is that it continues to happen. It is a complex issue. Violence is perpetrated by parents, students and other school members. This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of standard reporting and legislation.

In December 2020, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership was tasked with developing the national strategy to address the abuse of teachers, school leaders and other school staff. The strategy noted that social complexities have altered the role of schools and school staff. As a result, in recent times there has been a growing expectation that schools would provide additional support and help beyond education in the classroom. It is my view that, with this increased requirement, it is only logical that any response to issues facing school staff must account for the evolving complexities and the role of educators.

The reporting of incidents is also affected by the conflicting roles of educators. Of course, teachers would always have the interests of their students as a primary concern and place those interests ahead of their own welfare. However, there is a culture of restorative justice in schools that prioritises repairing harm and maintaining positive relationships. While this is a worthy cause and I do not oppose this approach, it can muddy the waters and delay the reporting of more serious offences. We hear reports of teachers who are discouraged from making reports, as reporting may reflect badly on their school—as Mr Hanson highlighted in his speech—or may have adverse effects on students.

Violence has a serious and pervasive impact in our community. We hear reports that teachers impacted by violence in schools have their self-esteem and mental health

affected. Violence at schools and an inadequate response to it contributes to teachers leaving the profession. We obviously have an issue in Canberra, where we need more teachers, so anything we can do to continue to keep the teachers we have is welcomed.

I believe that we have a collective responsibility to show the teaching profession that we have their back and there are no exceptions when it comes to school being a safe workplace. As acknowledged in ACT school policy documents, it is essential to set out clear standards and expectations of behaviour for community engagement with school staff. While it is an offence to behave in a disorderly, violent or offensive way on school premises or fail to leave those premises if directed to do so, existing measures are clearly not having the desired outcome. Violence at schools is an increasing problem.

The perceived relative lack of regard for the teaching profession is often cited as a contributing factor to the abuse of school staff by both students and parents. This motion gives the Assembly the opportunity to ask the government to consider whether legislation being applied in Victoria and South Australia may be applicable for use in ACT schools. I acknowledge that the minister has indicated that she has some concerns with the legislation in Victoria, but I hope that we can work through those concerns and come to an agreeable position on how the settings will work here in the ACT.

I know that the government does not like place based legislative restrictions and considers them to be inappropriate. While I would generally agree with this position, a specific legislative framework makes a very clear statement of intent. Having legislation about schools sends a very strong message to the community that we do not condone violence in schools. There is a real opportunity for us to make a strong and clear statement to the community that reflects community expectation.

I acknowledge, though, that legislation is not the only answer. We also need to consider whether work health and safety risk assessments and plans are current and robust, the improvement in physical security measures is appropriate, the training of teachers in de-escalation techniques, conflict resolution and classroom management could be considered as well, and mental health support and counselling support could be available and used by teachers who experience or witness violence. Having a robust legislative framework that protects teachers and principals from violence in schools must surely be part of the conversation. I call on the Assembly to demonstrate its values to the teaching community.

Once again, I thank the minister for agreeing to this motion, and I thank my colleague Mr Hanson for bringing this motion forward.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi—Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations) (4.35): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion forward today. I know that he is very passionate about workers' rights and workers' safety, so this motion is not without precedent. I thank Ms Berry for her specific comments about school settings. I rise today to offer broader comments about occupational violence.

Every worker has a right to safety in their workplace. Any act of violence or aggression towards staff in our schools is, to put it simply, unacceptable. The ACT government

takes occupational violence seriously in every workplace. We recognise that it is key to making workplaces in the ACT, including our schools, safe places to be.

For background, nationally harmonised work health and safety laws were passed around the country in 2011. At the heart of these laws is a proactive duty of care. This duty is based on the idea that injuries should be prevented and that, where we see a risk of injury occurring, we take steps to eliminate or minimise the risk. But the nature of safety in workplaces is ever-changing and the challenges and risks we face continue to evolve. We recognise that workplace safety is not a set-and-forget exercise; it is something that needs regular review.

To that end, we amended the Work Health and Safety Regulations to introduce the concept of psychosocial hazards. This change recognises that a person's health at work includes their psychological and social safety. It means that, when we are living up to our duty of care, we are identifying risks to psychosocial safety. We also introduced the code of practice for managing psychosocial hazards at work. That specifically identifies occupational violence as one of the 14 most common psychosocial hazards that must be considered and appropriately managed in workplaces.

These reforms tailored our work health and safety regime to better address psychosocial safety. It is proactive reform, consistent with a scheme that is intended to keep people safe, rather than just responding to injury. Employers are empowered to take steps to ensure safety in their workplaces and should aim to address the risks of occupational violence at their root cause. Our workplace safety laws are among the best in the world and provide a clear framework to address these issues head on.

I am always concerned to hear reports of occupational violence in any ACT workplace, and I am acutely aware of the ongoing challenges our schools face in this space, but I am confident work is underway to manage these appropriately. As Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations, I will always support efforts to make our workplaces safer. Our work health and safety laws remain the most effective and most established way of addressing these challenges.

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (4.38): I move the following amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after paragraph (2)(a), substitute:

- “(b) through this investigation, consult key stakeholders within the education space and ensure that both this consultation and any resulting initiatives are developed to minimise and ideally reduce the workload impost on educators and principals; and
- (c) report back to the Assembly no later than 2 September 2025.”.

In the interest of time, I will speak to both the amendment and Mr Hanson's motion. In this place, we often say that the best investment you can make in an education system is with teaching. We have amazing educators working in the ACT public school system. They are passionate people who aim to give Canberra's young people all the skills they need to have the most fulfilling life possible. I am a proud daughter of a teacher. I think everyone in the Assembly knows how big a fan I am of the profession.

Anyone who thinks they might like to teach should know that it is a brilliant profession. I would encourage them to join up. They will probably know that working with 30, and often more, lively young people and the school community is likely to be rewarding, and anyone who knows teachers knows that it will also be challenging. For starters, I reckon teachers work the same hours that we politicians do, but it should never be challenging to the extent that their workplaces do not feel safe or secure.

As a society, we have become more demanding and have developed high expectations—for ourselves and for our children, and rightly so—but, as in all communities, sometimes there will be disagreements between a teacher and a student, between a parent and a student, and sometimes between a teacher and a parent. In most cases, these disagreements are handled on all sides with respect and are resolved amicably, but, on occasion, disagreements can descend into aggression or violence by parents. The teaching profession reports an increase in such incidents in the past few years.

Earlier this week, members, including my ACT Greens colleague Mr Rattenbury, have commented on the impact that the *Adolescence* mini-series has had on them and the way it may reflect on parental behaviours and the way we engage with social media, sometimes with devastating and tragic consequences. Many of us might be wondering what we can learn from this. How can we ensure that we provide role models that help young people be the best that they can be? What role does social media play? How do we strike a balance that allows young people to have a healthy level of access to technology? How can we help young people have access to trusted sources of information is so important during a federal election season, and also another age of Trump.

All of those things are important, but so is how we engage with others—how we communicate with one another around the house, in families and in our immediate community; how we resolve disagreements; how we might navigate when something goes wrong and how it might best be put right; how we call out behaviour anywhere on the scale from crappy to alarming. By the way, we should all do bystander training and we should all model good bystander behaviour.

It feels weird saying this as a young person: young people learn from us adults. Taking the time to talk across generations and hearing how a young person's day is going—at dinner, over a boardgame, on an evening walk or on a Discord call—can make so much difference in our ability to process challenges in our day and the emotions that so often come with that. In doing this, we teach one another that listening to each other before acting is invaluable, ensuring that we hear all sides of a story before reaching a conclusion. When we do decide to act, we should do this calmly and with respect for the positions of all sides involved. If we do this right, we still might not prevent violence entirely. We inoculate our society against violence if violence is left unaddressed. The broader point that I am making is that, in a society that sees teachers and principals experiencing such high rates of occupational violence, a whole-of-society response is needed to make sure that teachers and principals get the respect that they deserve.

The actions that we take as individuals, with friends and in families, as well as the community as a whole, can help ensure that teachers are able to come to work knowing that they are less likely to face abuse and violence. If we do not tackle this, fewer people

will want to enter or remain in the profession. More people will suffer violence. We would all suffer from the lack of people who would otherwise like to be inspiring educators of young Canberrans—Canberrans who will now, and in the future, ensure that this remains an inspiring, creative and innovative city that looks out for others.

I know that a scary incident involving severe or repeated incidents of violence and aggression would put me off my job. I also note that teaching is a public service job, and I have heard from a number of sources that teachers have some of the highest rates, if not the highest rate, of occupational violence in the public service. I copped it a bit at libraries. I know what it is like to leave your work in tears because someone has hurled verbal abuse at you. Thankfully, for me, it never escalated to physical abuse. Why should teachers, principals and other educators have to face this more than anyone else? Frankly, why would we risk exposing our young people to this either?

For these reasons—and because, following consultation with relevant unions and peak bodies, I believe that the core aims of this motion are broadly supported by school communities—the ACT Greens support the overall intent of Mr Hanson’s motion, which is that schools should have the right powers available regarding adults who pose a risk to teachers and children. I am, however, moving a minor amendment to ensure that there is sufficient consultation with key education stakeholders to ensure that any implementation of this does not add to the workload of teachers through unnecessary red tape or administrative burden. It just makes that explicit.

All in all, let’s send a clear message from the Legislative Assembly: we value our teachers, we respect their work, and we will stand up for the right to a safe and supportive workplace. Every child deserves a great education, and that starts with great teachers who are empowered, protected and backed by their community. Every teacher deserves a great job. Let’s get this right, not just for the sake of our educators but also for the future of every young person that they inspire.

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (4.44): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I will speak very briefly. I appreciate that this is a very important matter. I was shocked and, frankly, a bit saddened to read the statistics. As we all know, the vital role of teachers in our community cannot be overstated. They deliver education and support the growth and development of our children. We often talk about how important it is for our children to feel safe and supported at school, so I am glad that today we are talking about the same for our teachers. They too should feel safe and supported in their workplace.

Some of the work conditions that we are hearing about would not be tolerated here in the Assembly or scarcely anywhere else. At a time when too few people are choosing to pursue the career path of teaching, it is essential that we take some form of action to address these issues. More broadly, we have a responsibility as a community to place a greater value on our educators. I have a German friend who became a teacher. When he became fully qualified and got a job with the government, it was like having made it and being set for life. That kind of value that is placed on educators in other jurisdictions is something that we could learn from and try to replicate here to the extent we can. I cannot say I know why the ACT has the highest rate of violence against teachers in the country. It is very concerning and obviously needs to be addressed through evidence based and carefully considered action that also goes to the root cause

of this behaviour in schools, as some members have been saying today.

I support Mr Hanson's calls to investigate opportunities for reform in the ACT and Ms Nuttall's amendment, which is focused on addressing workload challenges, which I often hear is one of the reasons people do not go into the profession or leave it. Whatever we can do to restore the joy of teaching—and it should be a joyous activity and vocation—we should take those steps. Again, I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (4.46): I thank everybody who has spoken in support of this motion. It is great. I will just respond to a few comments that were made. The Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations outlined the existing laws. I accept those and we have supported the laws along the way, but it is pretty evident that they are not working. The annual report from his directorate indicates that, this year, there were 7,328 incidents. It seems that the level of incidents has pretty much flatlined for the last five years. The ACU report into principals indicates that the situation is actually getting worse. We had an inquiry into this in 2019. We were promised improvement then. We were told things were going to get better. The reality is that it has not. I accept that there is a raft of requirements and laws. Mr Pettersson outlined some of the more general laws, but they are just not working. They are not having the desired effect.

There are the statistics that I outlined earlier and have been highlighted by the Australian Education Union. In the course of this debate, there would have been five or six violent incidents in our schools. It is unacceptable. In 2023, in this place I called for a further inquiry. The minister said, "We don't need an inquiry. What we need is action." What I would say is that this is action. Indeed, this is action that has been called for by the Australian Education Union since 2023. So it is time to act.

I certainly support Miss Nuttall's amendment. It basically just outlines that, as part of the minister's process, there is consultation. I would assume that she would do that. I have a slight issue, though: the amendment says "reduce the workload impost on educators and principals" if this motion is passed. That is worthy, but not at the expense of safety. We are talking about laws about safety. If it might create a little bit more workload, but it will keep people safe, then I think we need to balance that and say that safety has to be the priority. We cannot continue to have our schools being places where so much violence is perpetrated, either by students or by parents.

I accept we will need to engage, we will need to collaborate, we will need to consult and we do not want to create too much administrative burden, but, at the end of the day, if we have to balance that with keeping staff safe, I would contend that keeping staff safe is the higher priority. We will be interested to see what the minister comes back with when she reports.

By the support of this motion today, it would seem that there is broad agreement across the Assembly that we need to do better. I think we all accept that we do not want to see the level of violence continue in our schools. We would not tolerate it in any other workplace. In my view—and hopefully, by the support of the Assembly today, it is a shared view—this is a substantive way in which we can perhaps make a difference. It addresses one part of the problem; it is not a silver bullet. But I am confident that, if the laws that have been implemented in Victoria are adjusted to our unique circumstances,

they will have a positive impact on our teachers and principals. I thank members for their support.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative/negative.

Standing orders—suspension

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.51): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended, especially standing order 136, as would prevent Assembly business Notice No 3 being called on and debate forthwith.

The reason I am moving to suspend the standing orders is that the message from the minister about why she is closing 4½ thousand bed nights at Burrangiri is confusing the community. She says it is about the building, but it is in good condition with ongoing normal maintenance. The minister does not know how many dedicated respite beds there are in Canberra and she does not know how long the waiting time is to access respite. Are we closing half the respite beds? We do not know.

There has not been any analysis to determine whether there will be increased costs in the health system due to people having to stay longer in hospital while they wait for a respite bed. In addition, we do not know what criteria underpin the decision and what the impact will be on the community.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre—order to table documents

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (4.53): I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 213A, the Assembly orders the Minister for Health to provide the Assembly with:

- (1) all briefs (unredacted) about Burrangiri since 1 January 2022, including MIN2023/00918 and MIN2024/00294 with Attachment A;
- (2) documents that relate to the future use of the Burrangiri site, since 1 January 2022;
- (3) documents containing options for extending the contract with the Salvation Army to operate the centre, since 1 January 2022;
- (4) outstanding freedom of information documents that have been requested for Burrangiri;
- (5) the Deed of Grant with Carers ACT;
- (6) the document that breaks down the current maintenance costs (short term);
- (7) the recent review that found that significant and substantial structural work would be required to bring the building up to modern standards and requirements, and the timeframes for the structural work;

- (8) documents produced with respect to ACT Health Directorate investigations of the Burrangiri site to assess its suitability for an alternative health service, and the time frames;
- (9) documents outlining the location and number of alternative respite beds available to the ACT Health Directorate, including the impact on access to respite beds from the closure of Burrangiri;
- (10) analysis of the costs and benefits of closing Burrangiri, including the impact on longer stays in local hospitals; and
- (11) the above material by 23 April 2025.

I rise to speak to my motion on the production of documents regarding the decision to close Burrangiri. This motion is about a quest for transparency. Unfortunately, the minister's message is not clear, and it is confusing for the respite community. The minister states that the decision relates to the condition of the building, but we have been there. It is north facing and very comfortable. The facility has been carpeted and painted, and the asset management plan does not highlight any major issues with the condition of the building.

On Tuesday, the minister said that the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system needed replacement within one to three years, and that there was a requirement for some electrical work. The electrical boards were checked and signed off last December, and it is not clear why heating and cooling requires the facility to be closed for a period of time, and why that means services need to cease. Perhaps the facility has to close down for an unknown major refurb with unknown timeframes. Why does Burrangiri have to close if the major refurb is unknown? It is a mystery.

There is a difference between a step-down from hospitals and the community needing access to respite care. If the decision to close 4½ thousand bed nights was based on the future respite capacity being able to meet the community's demand, we need to be clear about how many dedicated respite beds can be booked and what facilities there are, because people are having trouble accessing them.

A brief from 6 June 2024 about the future options for Burrangiri talks about Arcadia House being an alternative service in Burrangiri. This is confusing for the community. Why is an alcohol and other drug facility appropriate in Burrangiri while respite care, that has been delivered happily for 35 years, is no longer welcome? Is this about commissioning the Burrangiri building for Arcadia House so that the Arcadia House site can be cleared for use by the hospital redevelopment?

It appears that the Health Directorate briefed the minister about the option for Arcadia House to move to Burrangiri before June 2024, because the brief on the FOI log was in response to the minister's request for additional information. The 6 June brief stated that ceasing the contract with the Salvation Army required four months notice. The Health Directorate had missed the opportunity to cease the contract by 1 March 2024, so they renewed the contract for one year to 30 June 2025 to allow adequate time and consideration of other options for the provision of respite care in the ACT.

What are the options that were considered, and is the solution adequate? The community has doubts. It appears that, in June 2024, the plan was laid for the closure of Burrangiri and a new home for Arcadia House had been found.

In the lead-up to the October 2024 election, the Labor Party committed to supply land for a new respite facility for Carers ACT. In December 2024, the ACT government advised the Salvation Army that the contract would not be renewed. The four months notice period was given. The minister continues to claim that Burrangiri is to be closed because it needs a refurb and it is a federal government responsibility—or are these secondary issues?

In questions without notice, it was highlighted that the minister does not know how many dedicated respite beds there are in the ACT, what the waiting time is, or what the impact will be on the community. We need the documents I have requested for transparency to ensure there are adequate respite services available for our carers.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (4.57): The government will not be opposing this motion. The point we were making earlier was one of process. Ms Carrick has known about this matter for a considerable period of time. She had ample opportunity to put this matter on the notice paper in the usual way.

In relation to the use of 213A, the advice that I have—and I note that paragraph (1) refers to “all briefs (unredacted)” —for the information of Ms Carrick and other members who might not be aware of this—and I hope this advice is correct—is that, under 213A, the only option is to provide it unredacted or not provide it at all. There is no option to redact, and that is one of the reasons that alternative options may be more appropriate in circumstances like these—alternative options like freedom of information.

There are two freedom of information requests currently in train in relation to documents that relate to Burrangiri. The first one is due to be released to the applicant by 29 April. Neither of those applications, I believe, are from MLAs. That process has been available to people since they became aware of this issue and, as far as I am aware, it has not been used by MLAs.

That process, for example, would enable the directorate to redact information that was commercially confidential to the Salvation Army. If there is information that is commercially confidential to the Salvation Army in these documents, privilege will potentially need to be claimed, and they will not be able to be tabled under 213A, but they could be released under an FOI in redacted form that removed that commercially sensitive information.

I would encourage members of this place, particularly new members, to look at, think about and consider all of the options that are available to them in seeking information. Do not run straight to 213A, because it has significant restrictions associated with it. It is a yes or no answer. There is no capacity to remove sensitive information, whether that is commercially sensitive information or information that is currently informing a cabinet decision and is, appropriately, executive confidential information.

That is why we have been saying that there are alternative options available. A question on notice would have been another alternative option that was available to Ms Carrick to seek this information and, despite the earlier conversation about responses to annual

report hearings, where we do take the deadline seriously and try to meet that as much as possible, because we know the committee has a report to finalise, there are options available other than 213A. This is not an appropriate mechanism to use to seek this information. We are perfectly happy to let it go through and let the process go through, but other mechanisms have been available for some time.

I can advise Ms Carrick up-front that I am not aware of any deed of grant with Carers ACT. It is an election commitment that we work with Carers ACT to provide land. If that is the type of deed of grant she is talking about, there is no existing deed of grant available for that. If she is talking about the Carer Gateway, that is a commonwealth service, as I have talked about earlier.

In relation to the document that breaks down the maintenance costs, that document has been released in response to a question on notice—an appropriate process to ask for that, and it was released under that process.

I will not go back through all of the conversations we have had, except to say, as I have said multiple times this week, that this decision was not a simple decision. It was a decision made after a series of briefs, conversations and receipt of advice about various options.

One of those was: what are the potential alternative uses for the Burrangiri site in future, recognising that, whatever use, whether it is respite or something else, it will require significant refurbishment to meet modern standards? One of the pieces of advice that will come out, and that has not been available in the documents that Ms Carrick has already seen, for example, is that the Department of Veterans' Affairs had ceased funding respite at Burrangiri because it was not registered as an aged-care facility and it was not governed by the commission for aged care.

I am very happy to release documents in an appropriate form, with the redaction of information that should be appropriately redacted. That may reduce the capacity to release information here. That is not a decision for me to make. Having said all of that, I am very happy to allow this motion to be passed.

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.02): The Greens will be supportive of the motion seeking the papers as identified, regarding the Burrangiri respite centre, as Ms Carrick has specified. It is very interesting that the government voted against the motion this morning; suddenly, today, when they realised they did not have the numbers—

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, we did not vote against the motion; we voted against the suspension of standing orders.

MR BRADDOCK: Okay, fair enough. It was for the suspension of standing orders. It is very interesting that, when the government knows it can actually win a vote, it will vote against it; but, when it knows that it will lose a vote, it will let it go through.

We are supportive of the motion seeking the additional information, particularly given the importance of the issue to the local community. The fact is that it is already on the

notice paper, despite what was previously stated, and that the impending closure of the service creates a time pressure; therefore we will be supportive.

MR COCKS (Murrumbidgee) (5.03): Firstly, I would like to make it very clear that the Canberra Liberals support this motion. The request seems quite reasonable, from what I can see in front of me.

I want to touch for a moment on the suggestion that the minister has just been making around appropriateness, and whether attempts have been made to use other tools in order to gather the information that we are talking about—indeed, to gather any information about the process around Burrangiri more broadly. Ms Carrick, along with Ms Castley, has been attempting to work through and get the information that we need in order to understand what has gone on, from the government’s perspective, for quite some time.

This is not the first that the government have heard about it. They did not miraculously hear just this week that Ms Carrick wanted to see what has gone on in respect of the Burrangiri decision. This has been a subject that we have talked about consistently for quite some time. It should be no surprise to the minister, and it should be no surprise to the minister that Ms Carrick has made consistent attempts to understand what has gone on.

It is probably important to point out that, when Ms Carrick discovered that she could not get a slot to bring forward a motion—I never saw her original motion—to order the production of documents, she decided to embark on different mechanisms to try and find out what was happening. She asked questions without notice this week, as is entirely appropriate. If we had seen adequate responses from the government, we would not be sitting here and working through this issue in this manner.

Ms Carrick and I had extensive discussions about what bar would need to be passed in order to get our support, because we want to see this place work in an orderly fashion. It is not the way this place works to bring something on willy-nilly, at the last minute. That is not what has happened here. An issue came up. Ms Carrick attempted to get information through other mechanisms. That was not successful, so she has used this mechanism, which is entirely within the capacity of this Assembly to determine.

I congratulate Ms Carrick on her continued efforts, along with Ms Castley, on behalf of the people who have an interest in Burrangiri. I will say that it goes beyond just those people who avail themselves of the services. It goes absolutely beyond just those people, because this impacts the entire community. Everyone who knows someone who has gone through care in that place is impacted. Everyone who will have people going through a situation that Burrangiri could have supported them through is affected by this decision. It is entirely appropriate that the government provide the documents that Ms Carrick has requested.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (5.07): I want to take this opportunity to provide some clarification and an apology, particularly to those in the chamber, regarding what

happened this morning, in general.

What you said is not true, Mr Acting Speaker, about the government allowing this through now because we did not think we had the numbers. In fact, I had no idea that someone had called Mr Rattenbury to come in when he was sick. If someone had asked me, I would have said, “No, of course we will allow this.”

What happened this morning was that the whip and I were very much of the view that we would lose that vote, but we were making a point about the suspension of standing orders. But we all anticipated that the motion would be debated at the time. That is not what happened, as we all know, because maths is not my strong point. But it is regrettable how it came about, and I apologise to Ms Carrick as well. I appreciate that she has put a lot of work into this motion and into having people here today.

I appreciate that it has also been incredibly disruptive for the people who have had to come back—who have been here and then had to return. I know they have been here for some time. I know they have been here for some time this afternoon as well. I want to recognise that, when we are trying to negotiate things on the floor, this can have very real impacts for people in our community. On behalf of the government, I apologise.

As has been heard, we are supporting this motion today. If you will indulge me, Mr Acting Speaker, I also want to apologise to Ms Castley. We have had some good engagement between relevant officers about what happened with that. Again, there was no “mal-intention”—I am just making up words now. Certainly, it is a matter of trying to negotiate things on the run. I understand that we have landed in a decent place. This morning was not this Assembly at its best, and that was witnessed by a whole stack of people. We can, and we will, do better. I think we can all do a bit more talking to each other. I am sorry that Mr Rattenbury felt that he had to come in, but he can just come and talk to me about what we might do, if something is being brought back on. Thank you, Ms Carrick; again, I apologise.

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.10): I am pleased to hear that genuine apology from the Labor minister; it is genuinely good to hear that. I am sorry that we seem to have trouble counting. We do not all need to count, but somebody in the party needs to be doing the counting.

I have been shocked by a number of revelations today. I am not leading the charge; Ms Carrick is, and Ms Castley and other players have been much more instrumental in this than me. I was genuinely shocked to hear that the ACT health minister was closing Burrangiri and did not have the numbers regarding people on the waitlist. I understand that it is a federal matter, but I had assumed that the numbers might be available if an ACT Labor minister had been speaking to a federal Labor minister—perhaps not the personal details, but what the likely impact would be on the population. I hope, if we get a clarification, that that will be cleared up, because that has genuinely shocked me.

There are a number of other things that I have learned about Burrangiri. Burrangiri, apparently, is possibly one of the few—quite likely, the only; again, I am very happy to be corrected, if Labor has counted this—facilities that will provide a respite care service to somebody who has not had an ACAT assessment. I do not know how many people here have been through that process, but it can take months. It can take up to six months.

If you need it urgently, and if you do not have an assessment and you do not have any access to respite care, it is a pretty desperate situation.

Pushing people into services that only adhere to that process certainly means that there are a number of people that will miss out. I do not know what the numbers are, but numbers all around worry me quite deeply on this one, because those numbers are people.

MS CARRICK (Murrumbidgee) (5.12), in reply: In closing, I would like to clarify a couple of issues. We keep talking about maintenance. The numbers that we are getting are old. We need updated numbers on maintenance. With respect to the issue raised, Minister, about the deed of grant with Carers ACT, Carers ACT receives \$10 million in grants; Burrangiri receives \$1.7 million. With the deed of grant, it would be nice to know, of that \$10 million, how much of it is from the ACT government and how much of it is from the federal government. I cannot work that out from their annual report.

I would like to thank the minister and all the MLAs who have supported this motion, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Greens.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Motion to take note of papers

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 211A, I propose the question:

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

Libraries ACT—resourcing

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.14): I want to speak briefly to the government's response to the paper titled "Libraries ACT—strategic plan and resource improvement". It is in response to the motion that I brought forward to this place last month. This is only part of the response to the motion, and it addresses the part of the motion which stated, "Update the Assembly by the April sitting period for the release timeline for the co-designed Libraries ACT strategic plan."

This is important in that the last strategic plan for ACT libraries was released in 2015, 10 years ago, when Mr Rattenbury was the TAMS minister at the time. That strategic plan ran out in 2019. In 2025, 10 years later, we are still waiting for a strategic plan on a direction for our libraries.

In terms of the response from the government, at least it outlines a timeframe which says that in quarter 4 this strategy will be released. It is heartening to see, after 10 years, that we will finally have a new strategy for ACT libraries. I will be really keen to see that because we can no longer let our libraries strategically drift. They need a vision; they need a direction going forward.

I also look forward to the response to the remainder of the calls in the motion, which will be coming in the May sittings, because that will provide far more detail in terms of the modelling to ensure that we can provide a library service that Canberrans can be proud of.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Statements by members

Environment—climate change

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (5.16): This excellent 90-second statement once again comes from my work experience student, Nakapo, who is killing it with the speeches.

Climate change is not some far-off issue, it is happening right now, and it is something that we are all affected by and must live with. We are the generation that will inherit the world shaped by today's decisions. Climate change is a very serious issue. It is deadly, it affects everyone and a lot of the time it is happening without people even realising it. Temperatures are rising, bushfires are becoming more frequent and intense, and the amount of energy required to keep family homes cool in Canberra might double by 2027. This issue impacts our survival, our health and the future of our planet. Pollution is having real impacts on people's health, and we cannot forget that this is our only Earth.

The good news is that something can be done. The first step is spreading awareness about the problem; then taking the required action that is needed, whether it is supporting sustainability, spreading the word or pushing for policies like the ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. There is a whole lot that can be done.

It is easy to get the impression that it is too late and that nothing can be done, but it is not. We still have time to make it right and make a difference. We just need to act before it is too late.

Legislative Assembly—visitors

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.17): In my inaugural 90-second statement, I would like to acknowledge a couple of people in the Assembly today who came from Queensland and London to visit the ACT Assembly. They had some reason to do so. One is my mother, Wendy Hanson, and the other one is my brother, Simon Hanson. They were very impressed with what they saw here today—and not just me, might I add. They were very impressed with what they saw today. They met a lot of very friendly staff and members from all sides of the political spectrum. I very much thank those who engaged with them. Thank you to my mum and my brother for making the effort to come along and sit through question time and the debates this afternoon.

ACT Senior Woman of the Year—Ms Jayanti Gupta

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.18): Today I want to acknowledge the achievement of Canberran Jayanti Gupta, who has been named ACT's Senior Woman of the Year. Jayanti has said that she likes to fight for the underdog, and that ticks a few boxes for

me, in terms of sport, gender equality and the wider world.

Her work in founding and co-founding the Integrated Women's Network and Integrated Cultures ACT also speaks to matters of great importance. The world is facing huge challenges in so many areas. If we cannot work together, if we cannot integrate our efforts and recognise the things we have in common, and if we cannot build strength in numbers, we are never going to solve them.

Jayanti has shown her understanding of this and has responded with practical action. We need more people like her here in Canberra, and more people find inspiration in her example. I am so pleased to see the value of her work acknowledged by this award, which follows being honoured with the ACT Volunteer of the Year award in 2017. That was eight years ago; she is still here, and she is still going strong in delivering for the Canberra community. Congratulations, Jayanti. This is a very well-deserved award.

Mental health—*Life in mind* 2024 report

MR EMERSON (Kurrajong) (5.19): I rise to reflect on the findings of the 2024 *Life in mind* report, and what it means for the wellbeing of our community here in the ACT. While the report highlights areas of concern, particularly rising anxiety and workplace stress, it also offers encouraging news—a significant reduction in suicide rates in our community. The suicide rate in the ACT dropped by 44 per cent between 2021 and 2023, giving us the nation's lowest rate of suicide.

This decline is a testament to the tireless work of our mental health professionals, the willingness of Canberrans to chat with their mates about how they are tracking, the relentless efforts of people working in our community sector, the positive impact of government work in both early intervention and crisis support, and growing community-building initiatives like Running for Resilience, whose goal is to make Canberra suicide free by 2033.

This reduction shows that when we take mental health seriously, when we foster open conversations and when we stand together as a community, lives can be saved. While this progress is heartening, we cannot afford to become complacent. Too many Canberrans still struggle in silence, and we must build on this momentum to ensure that everyone, particularly young people and those experiencing disadvantage, can access the support they need when they need it.

Let us take this positive step forward as motivation to continue improving access to care, reducing stigma, and making mental health a priority. We can create a suicide-free Canberra where every person feels supported, valued and hopeful for the future.

Florey shops—development

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.21): I rise today to speak about the current development application at the Florey shops for a new building, which appears to significantly impact both the residents and the established businesses within the community.

While I acknowledge the need for development, the proposed DA has raised significant concerns from residents over the potential lack of parking. It has been difficult to ignore

the number of complaints that I have received from concerned Florey residents, many of whom are worried that the current development plans fail to allocate any parking for the new shops and office tenancies. This is a serious issue affecting not just Florey but Ginninderra.

Without proper parking, these developments risk undermining the success of the very businesses that they aim to support. I strongly urge the ACT government to consider these issues as part of the DA approval process, to ensure that adequate parking and improved access to and from the car parks are provided.

I also encourage all concerned residents of Florey to submit representations on this DA to ensure that they express themselves on this matter. Of course, any of them may reach out to me with any concerns or for any assistance in understanding the process, at cain@parliament.act.gov.au.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Cheyne**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Interchange Health Co-operative

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service) (5.23): Like many in the community, I was disappointed and saddened when the Interchange Health Co-op advised earlier this week that it has appointed a voluntary administrator and cannot continue operating due to its financial position. The appointed administrator, RSM Australia, will now determine the best course of action for the co-op and propose a plan for its future. There are details on the administration process and contact details on the RSM Australia website for any interested parties.

I acknowledge and thank all who have provided quality and accessible care as clinicians and support staff over the six years that Interchange has been operating in Tuggeranong. I assure the Assembly that the ACT government's focus is now on the co-op's consumers and ensuring they can continue to receive the care they need. The Interchange Health Co-op provided bulk-billed GP services to the community and it has advised that it had approximately 2½ thousand active patients, many with complex health needs. While the Health Co-op's financial position is a matter for its board and the ongoing funding for primary care is not a territory responsibility, both the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services will work closely with the co-op, the administrator and the Capital Health Network to ensure patients are safely transitioned to other services.

We understand that the closure of this important service is distressing. Current clients of the co-op who are receiving opioid maintenance treatment support and need urgent access to treatment or a prescription before next Friday—that is, Good Friday—are encouraged to call Canberra Health Services' Alcohol and Drug Service to arrange

alternative support. That service can be contacted on 5124 9977 between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm. For non-OMP patients, Capital Health Network, in collaboration with the ACT Health Directorate, is working to identify alternative options to support Interchange Health Co-op's clients in the short to medium term. More information will be available shortly. For issues like patient records, I understand that the co-op is staffed to answer those queries.

Notwithstanding the commonwealth's responsibility for primary care, the ACT government has several initiatives and funding streams to support the availability of free or affordable care to vulnerable communities. Under those programs, we have provided significant support to the Interchange Health Co-op since its inception in 2018. This totals more than \$1.4 million, excluding GST, including an initial payment of \$500,000 in 2018-19 to support the establishment and fit-out of the clinic space. There has been more than \$350,000 provided over the last financial year in support of business sustainability and infrastructure and there has been additional funding for discrete projects and services over the years.

Yesterday, Mr Parton read some comments that have come from the community about how much they valued the Interchange Health Co-op's services and care and their concerns about being able to find an alternative bulk-billing service. They are concerns we share. One of the comments claimed Interchange's situation would have been affected by the imposition of payroll tax on GP contracts. I want to clarify that, as a 100 per cent bulk-billing medical practice, the Interchange Health Co-op has not been and would not be subject to payroll tax on GP contract payments. As members would be aware, the ACT government was the first provider to complete an unconditional waiver on retrospective payroll tax on GP contracts for those who had not been paying payroll tax on these contracts up to 30 June 2023. Then, under the government's GP medical amnesty from 1 July 2023 to 30 of June 2025, a payroll tax waiver has applied in relation to GP contracts for GP medical practices that bulk-bill at least 65 per cent of consultations, subject to registration requirements. The Interchange was 100 per cent bulk-billing. From 1 July 2025, the government's policy will mirror arrangements in Victoria and South Australia, under which income earned by GPs for bulk-billed services will be exempt from payroll tax.

Affordable access to primary care is and always will be a Labor priority. It is an essential part of the ACT government's and, indeed, the federal government's approach to integrated health care. We continue to advocate to the Australian government for improved access to GPs and bulk-billing in the ACT. We welcome the Albanese Labor government's recent commitments to triple the bulk-billing incentive and its \$8½ billion commitment to Medicare—the single largest investment in Medicare since its creation over 40 years ago—as well as training and incentivising more doctors in general practice and increasing rates of bulk-billing. We will continue to work with the re-elected Albanese Labor government, as well as with local GPs in our community, to ensure more Canberrans can get the care they need when they need it.

Bruce Early Childhood centre

MR CAIN (Ginninderra) (5.28): I rise today to speak about the closure of the Capital Region Community Services' Bruce Early Childhood Centre at the CIT Bruce campus, which is expected to take place on 9 May. The announcement of this closure has

shocked many families in my electorate. I have been disappointed by the lack of community and family consultation surrounding this decision. On 24 March, parents were informed that the centre would close, with staff being notified less than an hour before the parents. This abrupt notification has left many families scrambling to find alternative childcare options, which is no small task, especially at a time when families are already under immense pressure from rising cost-of-living expenses. This adds a level of stress that many are struggling to manage. What has frustrated families and staff the most is the lack of transparency throughout this process. There has been no meaningful community consultation, no inquiry into how this closure will impact the families who rely on these services, and, perhaps most concerning, no plans to replace the 25 childcare places that the Bruce centre currently provides.

This childcare centre has been a beloved and essential part of our community for 40 years and its closure will undoubtedly have a ripple effect on the families who depend on it. While I certainly support the importance of the opportunities provided by CIT Yurauna, it is crucial that this process is carried out transparently and fairly and with proper notice. It is essential that decisions are made with community input and that concerns are fully considered. Community consultation is not just a formality; it is a necessity and it ought to be comprehensive and genuine. Families deserve better than being left in the dark. It is vital that this process is done in a way that prioritises their needs and their wellbeing.

I strongly urge the ACT government to reconsider its approach to this development by prioritising clear communication and meaningful consultation with the families of Ginninderra.

Waste—Tarago waste-to-energy incinerator

MS CLAY (Ginninderra) (5.30): In December 2022, I lodged an ACT Greens' submission on Veolia's proposed incinerator for Tarago. At the time, New South Wales was running consultation about this. The Greens have long opposed thermal incineration. Burning waste is too harmful to our health and the environment. It pollutes our air and water. It is also an unnecessary way to generate electricity. The ACT is proudly powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity, primarily sourced from solar and wind, and we do not need incineration. Here in the ACT we banned incinerators and we do not want to see the harm of them in and around our region. We do not want to inflict that on other people. We have also introduced the human right to a healthy environment here, and it is really important that we respect that.

The Greens are worried about the direct impact that any incinerator might have on the clean air and clean water in our region. Canberra's food growers and wine makers are worried. They have spoken out publicly about their fears. Incineration simply does not support our environment and it does not support our agriculture. We are worried for the residents of Tarago and we are worried for any other town where a waste incinerator is built, and we are worried for our future generations.

Last term, I sponsored a community petition opposing the incinerator in Tarago and 919 Canberra residents signed it. A community group, Communities Against the Tarago Incinerator, published modelling that showed air pollution from the incinerator could reach Canberra, Queanbeyan, Yass and our whole region. I am sorry to say that this

issue is still a live one in our community. Both the ACT and the federal government have adopted circular economy visions. This is fantastic. We need national leadership on product stewardship and local leadership to build really good recycling facilities, and that will help us deliver on these visions.

The New South Wales EPA has pointed out that Sydney's landfill will run out of space by 2030, so they are taking public feedback on their "Energy from waste—options paper". They have some new proposals to deal with waste. The New South Wales EPA is considering adding new locations where energy from waste facilities can go. The new sites include Tomago and another site in West Lithgow, in addition to Tarago. They are also considering new processes and other changes. I have heard a lot of concern from community members about this. Burning our waste is not the answer. There is an answer: we need to step up the circular economy. We have all agreed to that answer; we just need to delivery it. We need governments at all levels to help us tackle overconsumption, help us to deliver the facilities we need to recycle, and make sure that industry is paying for their pollution.

I encourage anyone who has a view on this issue to get in touch with Communities Against the Tarago Incinerator, CATTI, or share their views with the New South Wales EPA's "Energy from waste—options paper". They are taking comments until 16 May. They have put up the discussion paper that you can read. If you have a view, you should submit it.

Arts—AusDance ACT

MS BARRY (Ginninderra) (5.33): I would like to speak today about the incredible value of the arts in the ACT and the organisations that work tirelessly to enrich our community. Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting with AusDance ACT, the Stellar Company, the Canberra Theatre and Gorman Arts Centre. These organisations play a vital role in supporting arts, artists, performers and creative communities. As a dancer myself—although my children will disagree—and as a mum of a dancer, I have seen firsthand the power of the arts in fostering creative connections and wellbeing.

I would also like to recognise the work of one of our remarkable organisations, the Mill Theatre, which is led by a passionate constituent of mine based in Scullin. Like so many in our arts sector, they create space for storytelling, learning and belonging. These organisations do not just put on performances; they empower young people, spark imagination and create pathways for confidence and leadership.

In the lead-up to ACT Youth Week next week, it is important to acknowledge the role that arts play in supporting and uplifting young people across our territory. The arts contribute significantly to our mental health, physical fitness, social cohesion and cultural identity. In an environment where the cost of living has seen so many parents pull their children from sports because they cannot afford it, it is important that we continue to support things that will not cost us too much.

The arts bring people together, help us understand each other's story and provide powerful avenues for expression and healing, yet many of our arts organisations continue to be under-resourced. They deliver exceptional programs while working on shoestring budgets. This is why I urge all of us, in whatever way we can, to support the

arts by attending events and buying tickets, whether it is for a dance performance, a theatre production or a community arts festival. Showing up matters. By embracing the arts, we invest in a more vibrant, inclusive and connected Canberra. Let's celebrate and support the arts, not just in words but also through our actions.

Office of the Legislative Assembly—artworks

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS (Brindabella) (5.36): I also have a few words to say on art, beginning with a question: if a tree falls in a forest but no-one sees it, did it fall? Perhaps in the same vein, if art is purchased by the Legislative Assembly for its collection but no-one sees it, is it art?

In our world of classical physics, the nature of art is perhaps as close as we can get to the nature of quantum mechanics. In the quantum world, particles can be in two different states at the same time. In our world, art has two different sakes at the same time: art is for art's sake and for our sake. The creation of art by the inspired is for art's sake. People's consideration, enjoyment, enrichment and provocation of and by art is for our sake.

The ACT Legislative Assembly has a wonderful collection of local and regional art. It is not a museum or a gallery collection, but the works in the collection are expected to reflect on and interact with the political and democratic processes of government in the ACT. I believe it represents very well the diversity of best artistic practice. While it is not a comparatively large art collection, it is the Assembly's second most valuable asset after the Assembly building. However, as members would be very well aware, only some of the art collection is available for public viewing, generally along the London Circuit corridor, in committee rooms and other public areas. Otherwise, a significant component of the collection festoons the walls of our offices and the non-public corridors. Many artworks are in storage. Many of the works in the Legislative Assembly collection are works on paper. Works on paper require a period of rest in blackout conditions as part of their conservation management strategy. So the laws of physics, security needs and the dimensions of certain artworks work against ACT citizens being able to take in the entirety of the Assembly's collection of art. I believe this is to the detriment of all of us.

That is why I was delighted by recommendation 7 of the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders' report on its inquiry into annual and financial reports, which was ably tabled by Mr Cocks in this chamber on Tuesday. Recommendation 7 states:

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Legislative Assembly explore means of improving public accessibility to the Legislative Assembly's art collection through an online portal or website.

This is a recommendation I wholeheartedly endorse.

An online portal or website, such as the ACT LA online gallery, will give the people of the ACT—indeed, all the people of the world with a working internet—the opportunity to peruse, critique, enjoy and be provoked by art that they could not otherwise. The Assembly would showcase the creativity, skills and imagination of our talented local

and regional artists on a much larger and more inclusive platform. It would allow international artists to search our collection and benefit from the talent of Canberra's local artists and the region's artists. Showcasing our art collection to the world could lead to international interest and collaboration on all that Canberra has to offer.

Indeed, the Assembly's commitment to local art and my recent visit to the house of Sir John Soane in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in London, has inspired me to turn a weird little room in my office into the "Brindabella pocket gallery". It showpieces the two paintings I purchased from year 11 art students at Lake Tuggeranong College, because the more art is seen the more art means.

I look forward to seeing recommendation 7 of the inquiry's report come to fruition in the near future. Canberra is so much more than a city of public servants, federal politicians and hangers on; it is a vibrant artistic city whose talent should be shared with the world at every opportunity.

Middle East—conflict

MR BRADDOCK (Yerrabi) (5.40): It has been 550 days since the start of Israel's escalation in attacks on the Gaza Strip and Palestine. Three aid workers and three journalists have been killed in Israel's attacks this week. The UN Chief has called Gaza a "killing field" for Israeli forces and said that Palestinians are in an endless death loop. The Israeli Defence Force has shown time and time again that they have no respect for so-called safe zones or ceasefires. This is not a war between equal powers. The evidence is clear, and it has been this whole time. It is thoroughly disappointing to see how skewed media coverage is of this genocide, presenting it like some equal conflict.

The Greens are told we are extreme for being the only party to take an actual stand for Palestinian lives. I am not sure I understand what dictionary this definition of "extreme" comes from. What is not extreme about Israel attacking a charity kitchen where Palestinian civilians are merely waiting for food? What is not extreme about Israel's total blockade of aid, including food, medical supplies and fuel going into Gaza? What is not extreme about Israel cutting off 70 per cent of Gaza's water supply? What is not extreme about Israel bombing right next to medical clinics? What is not extreme about the murder of 50,000 Palestinians and the wounding of over twice as many as that?

We may be geographically far away from these attacks, but the effects are felt right here in our Canberra community. I have heard firsthand about the pain and constant fear that Palestinian Canberrans are living in for their friends, their families and their loved ones back in Palestine. I have heard their concerns about what it means that Australian Labor and Liberal governments, at all levels, diminish this genocide, with the implication that some lives are seen to matter more than others.

This is why the Greens in the ACT continue to rally with Palestinians here in Canberra every weekend. It is why, be it in federal, state, territory or council parliaments, we push governments at all levels to protect human rights and challenge complicity in genocide. We will continue to do so because we are connected; Palestinians are part of our community, and we recognise that.

Housing—housing insecurity

MISS NUTTALL (Brindabella) (5.42): I want to rise to congratulate and thank Mr Rattenbury for introducing the Human Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill today. It is a truly nation-leading bill for the right to access adequate housing to be enshrined in the Human Rights Act. I speak in support of Mr Rattenbury's efforts as the ACT Greens spokesperson for women.

There is a growing, invisible cohort of older women who are experiencing homelessness. Often, women more broadly have fallen outside the statistical parameters of homelessness and, until recently, the data often misrepresented the true nature of the crisis, and this has been particularly true for women experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; and women with disabilities.

Women experiencing homelessness tend to rely on strategies such as partnering up, staying with family and friends, bunking in overly crowded residences, couch surfing and taking on jobs that provide housing. The Human Rights Commission classified some risk factors for women's homelessness as: being single; renting; living alone; experiencing economic disadvantage; experiencing family and domestic violence; having a lack of family support; loss of a partner or relationship breakdowns; mental health issues; and a history of abuse and job loss.

This is the effect of economic inequality and misogyny in this country. Superannuation came into effect in 1992. Many older women have only contributed to this scheme for a portion of their working lives. Amongst low and middle income households, women's superannuation balances are 40 to 50 per cent lower than men's. I will read that again: amongst low and middle income households, women's superannuation balances are 40 to 50 per cent lower than men's.

That is not to mention the gender pay gap, which is of course a major discrepancy between super in the older age groups, in particular. The median super balance of a woman aged 60 to 64 is \$158,806. The ASFA recommends about \$52,000 per annum, at a minimum, to have a comfortable life, although this really only applies to people who own their home outright. God forbid you try renting at any age in the city; it is so expensive. And again, women are statistically overrepresented among people who are needing to rely on the age pension.

This addition to the Human Rights Act is an imperative bill. Everyone deserves access to a well-maintained, stable, long-term and safe home.

Yarralumla Nursery—110th anniversary

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra—Manager of Government Business, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy) (5.45): I rise to congratulate Yarralumla Nursery on 110 years of existence. In 1914, Yarralumla Nursery was established and at its site now in 1915. It was established to raise trees and shrubs locally, ensuring that they were adapted to the harsh climatic and soil conditions in Canberra.

It is hard to fathom, but without this commitment and establishment, we simply would

not be the Bush Capital that we are today. There was a lot of experimentation at the time to try and understand what species would be the most hardy for the ACT, and it is why you can almost map the decades of different trees that have been planted in the city as different thinking evolved. Certainly, exotics were a very big feature of those early decades.

Since first opening its doors it has, unsurprisingly, become a leader in horticultural research and in providing high quality products to Canberra businesses and locals. And for decades now, it has been providing a Free Plant Issue Scheme, giving a plant allocation to new landowners in Canberra's new suburbs. It also has a nursery seed bank. This is what has been used to create Canberra's tree canopy, and the seed bank is a living record of every single seed collected, purchased and stored at the Yarralumla Nursery since 1913.

It is not just a place of growth; it is a place of terrific staff. It is no surprise to me that it won Employer of the Year Award at the 2024 Nursery and Garden Industry, New South Wales and ACT, Awards. It is also on track to become the first nursery in the ACT to be accredited by the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia.

On conservative estimates there is thought to have been about 57 million trees, shrubs and ground cover to have been dispatched in the last 110 years, and there are still around 500 exotic and local species for sale.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I think you experience this regularly as well, when you go and plant trees. Normally, we usually plant something that is really quite little. The tree that we planted to commemorate 110 years needed to be forklifted in, so I am not really sure I can say that I helped plant the tree, but I did scoop some dirt in with my very bad shovel skills. It is a commemorative Yarralumla weeper, which is a semi-deciduous tree—a version of the Chinese elm—that is very hardy to Canberra's winters.

One hundred and ten years is an impressive achievement by any measure, but it truly is the dedication of the staff and their expertise that has made the biggest contribution every single day of those 110 years. Happy anniversary to Yarralumla Nursery. And with that, let's get out of here!

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.49 pm until Tuesday, 6 May at 10 am.