



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

3 September 1998

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MR SPEAKER (Mr Cornwell) took the chair at 10.30 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

PETITION

The Clerk: The following petition has been lodged for presentation:

By **Mr Moore**, from 789 residents, requesting that the Assembly call on Mr Osborne to withdraw the Health Regulation (Abortions) Bill 1998 and if the Bill is considered to vote “No” to the Bill and show respect for women’s abilities to make informed decisions about reproductive health matters.

The terms of this petition will be recorded in *Hansard* and a copy referred to the appropriate Minister.

Abortion Legislation

The petition read as follows:

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

The following residents of the Australian Capital Territory draw to the attention of the Assembly: that the Osborne ‘Health Regulations (Abortions) Bill 1998’ if passed by the Assembly would effectively amount to a ban on abortions being performed in the ACT and would lead to the closure of the Reproductive Healthcare Services clinic. This would have the effect of drastically reducing the status of women in the ACT.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to:

1. Call on Mr Osborne to withdraw the tabled Bill from the Assembly’s consideration; *and*
2. In the event of the Bill being put we urge members to ‘Vote No!’ to the Osborne Bill and show respect for women’s abilities to make informed decisions about reproductive health matters.

Petition received.

CRIMES (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. 5) 1998

MR STEFANIAK (Minister for Education) (10.33): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 80, on behalf of Mr Humphries, I present the Crimes (Amendment) Bill (No. 5) 1998, together with its explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

MR STEFANIAK: I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

The Crimes (Amendment) Bill (No. 5) 1998 makes changes to the Crimes Act 1900 relating to the order in which the defence and prosecution address the jury in a Supreme Court trial. The Act includes procedural provisions relating to trials upon indictment. In general terms, indictable offences are offences which are punishable by imprisonment for a period exceeding one year. They are offences at the more serious end of the scale.

There are provisions for some indictable offences to be dealt with by the Magistrates Court. However, for the most serious crimes, such as murder, and in cases where the accused does not agree to an indictable matter being dealt with in the Magistrates Court, or the Magistrates Court does not consider it appropriate for such an offence to be dealt with by that court, indictable offences are tried in the Supreme Court.

Unless the accused agrees to trial by judge alone, the offence is tried before a jury. At the end of a jury trial it is the practice of counsel for the defence and counsel for the prosecution to make a closing address to the jury. Presently, the Act contains no provisions in respect of the order in which the defence and the prosecution may address the jury at the end of a trial. The practice in the ACT has been for the defence to make its address first and the prosecution to address the jury last. There has been some variation between Australian jurisdictions as to the order in which the prosecution and defence may address the jury at the end of a trial. Until relatively recently, the ACT position followed New South Wales.

However, with the amendment of the New South Wales provisions on order of address in 1994 the ACT became the last jurisdiction in Australia where the prosecution routinely addresses the jury last. The New South Wales amendments dealing with the order of address were included in a package of legislative amendments primarily to remove the right of an accused to make an unsworn statement. It is fair to say that there was a view in the legal profession that the opportunity for the defence to address the jury last was something of an offset for the abolition of unsworn statements.

When changes were made in 1994 to the ACT Crimes Act and the Evidence Act to remove the right of an accused person to make an unsworn statement to the court, they were not complemented by any provisions dealing with the order of closing address.

This Bill inserts a new provision into the Act to provide that the defence may address the jury last in a Supreme Court trial. The enactment of this amendment will bring the ACT into line with the practice in other Australian jurisdictions.

While the amendment is seen as potentially beneficial to defendants, in giving them the opportunity of having the "last word" before the jury, it is supported by those representing both defence and prosecution interests - the ACT Bar Association, the ACT Law Society, the ACT Legal Aid Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions. While the Bill may mean that the defence is able to address the jury last, it contains a safeguard against possible abuse of that procedure. The Bill provides that where, in the closing address for the defence, relevant matters are asserted which are not supported by the evidence before the jury, the prosecution is able to address the jury in reply to any such assertions. This will only be able to be done with the leave of the court. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Stanhope**) adjourned.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1998
Leave to Present

MR MOORE (Minister for Health and Community Care): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to present the Director of Public Prosecutions (Amendment) Bill 1998.

Leave not granted.

Suspension of Standing Orders

MR MOORE (Minister for Health and Community Care) (10.37): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Moore presenting the Director of Public Prosecutions (Amendment) Bill 1998.

Mr Speaker, I am very disappointed not to be given leave to introduce this Bill. It is not as though there was no notice of this. Last week I tabled a legislative program, which is a very appropriate way of dealing with such issues. In doing so, I actually explained what this Bill was about so it was very clear to members what would happen.

Mr Speaker, on a previous occasion when I sought to table a Bill those opposite denied me private members time to introduce such legislation. I have accepted that. In the legislative program that I have presented to the Assembly matters are included that do not have government agreement. Indeed, a precedent has been set in previous Assemblies when other government members have tabled personal Bills - one example being Mrs Carnell.

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Mr Speaker, ironically, considering the denial of leave - I hope I get support for the suspension of standing orders when members have had time to think about it - this particular Bill is about enhancing the power of the Assembly and diminishing the power of the Executive, as you would know from the legislative program. That is what this Bill is about.

Mr Berry: Relevance, Mr Speaker, to the suspension of standing orders.

MR MOORE: It is interesting that Mr Berry sits in his seat and calls things out, including reference to standing orders. He does not even have the politeness and appropriate behaviour to stand and take a point of order if he has one. Mr Speaker, to deny me leave or to not support the suspension of standing orders would, at the very least, be churlish. Those opposite who denied me leave in the last few minutes, including Mr Berry - they were all Labor members - are the very people who say to me, "Moore, you are the most adversarial person here".

Mr Speaker, whenever I have sought to do things in a slightly different way since the beginning of this Assembly and since being appointed a Minister, those opposite simply have not been able to stand the change. They have sought to prevent me introducing legislation, and have attempted to deny me this prerogative. Mr Speaker, I agree that it is a little different from how things happen in other Westminster systems and in an adversarial system it is appropriate for them to say, "No". But in a system where we are trying to at least work together and allow members a right to pursue their interests, it is appropriate to allow me this time.

I would like to put it very clearly on the record that, contrary to what Mr Stanhope indicated when he responded to my legislative program, I have not used any of the department's time on these issues and I have not used the extra staff members, beyond what I had as a crossbench member, in preparing this legislation. In fact, Mr Stanhope has significantly more staff than I do anyway. I suppose we will be seeing his legislative program, or the Labor Party's legislative program, shortly. I do not know whether the Labor Party is just embarrassed, Mr Speaker.

I request the Labor Party, having listened to what I have had to say, to allow the suspension of standing orders so that I can introduce a Bill which, I think you will agree, is a useful piece of legislation. In the meantime, I make a commitment to members that I will seek to get a paper to the Administration and Procedure Committee to establish another area, perhaps called general business, in which such issues can be dealt with. We ought then to consider what other issues might be dealt with at the same time in general business as do not fit easily into other categories. I would seek your support of this motion.

MR BERRY (10.42): The most important aspect of this is to get it on the record what Mr Moore is on about. I do not accept - and neither would anybody with any sense - the limp arguments that Michael puts about adversarial politics. As soon as anybody disagrees with Michael Moore, they are accused of being adversarial. When he is being at his most adversarial best, he is just being objective. I mean, let us get the interpretations right. It was not long ago that Mr Moore and many others were having a shot at Mr Osborne for seeking leave without due notice.

Mr Moore: It was not on the daily program, Wayne. You know that. You are such a slimeball.

Mr Corbell: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Moore should be asked to withdraw that comment.

MR SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections.

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask you to request Mr Moore to withdraw the term he used a minute ago. I think it was totally unparliamentary and totally unwarranted.

Mr Moore: Mr Berry is not even a slimeball.

Mr Corbell: Mr Speaker, that is quite unacceptable. Mr Moore should withdraw; not repeat the allegation.

MR SPEAKER: Unequivocally, Mr Moore.

Mr Moore: Mr Speaker, I said he is not even a slimeball. Mr Speaker, I will withdraw any imputation.

MR SPEAKER: Gentlemen, we have a long day ahead of us. If you do not want to be here at 5 o'clock tomorrow morning, I suggest we stop this childishness.

MR BERRY: The fact of the matter, Mr Speaker, is that there is no procedure through which such an approach is taken. For example, everybody that puts up a Bill for private members business should go through the appropriate procedure. Every private member should put it through the Administration and Procedure Committee. And they do. In Executive business it is usual form, Mr Speaker, for these matters to be raised at the government business meeting. Mr Moore's approach is to fly free; do as you like; catch as you can.

Mr Moore: My whole legislative program was tabled in the Assembly last week.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Moore, you have spoken already.

MR BERRY: If the Government are to endorse this for you to put forward your Bills, that is fine. I would like to hear from the Government on this. If they are prepared to make the point that they endorse the fact that you are bringing up your particular ideas in Executive business, that is okay with me. But we need it on the record where the endorsement comes from. There is no procedure for you to do this, Michael. It is fine if you can raise this at the government business meeting on Friday.

Ms Carnell: No.

MR BERRY: "No, it cannot be done", Mrs Carnell says; but that cannot happen. Are you saying that it cannot happen?

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MR SPEAKER: Order! Mrs Carnell is saying nothing because the only way she can do so is by interjection and interjections are out of order, Mr Berry.

MR BERRY: The point we make is that to get a Bill on the notice paper the usual procedure is for it to go either to the Administration and Procedure Committee, which is not open to Mr Moore - that is true - or the government business meeting and onto the notice paper. Has the Bill gone through that procedure? Or does there need to be another procedure developed where the catch-as-catch-can approaches can result in Bills finding their way onto the notice paper? But there is not a procedure now, except to waltz in here and seek leave. I just do not think that is an appropriate course.

Mr Moore: It is on the daily program. Firstly, it is on the daily program and, secondly, I tabled a full legislative program.

MR BERRY: I know it is on the daily program.

MR SPEAKER: Order!

MR BERRY: But, when you take a look at the administrative arrangements issued by the Chief Minister, you find there is no leeway for you to do these sorts of things because it is not within your administrative responsibility to do that. Something has to be put in place to allow these things to happen - if that is the Government's wish. If the Executive, including yourself, have a wish to set up a separate procedure for your little foibles, well, set it up. To have an unofficial approach - - -

Mr Moore: I just indicated I would go through an approach to do that.

MR BERRY: If you have an official approach which only suits the whims of individuals on the Executive side, why have a set of administrative arrangements at all? Why have a government business meeting at all? Why not save the time? Then you can all leap up here and seek leave to do things - - -

Mr Hird: Well, you do from time to time.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Hird, be quiet!

MR BERRY: - - - in each other's areas of administrative responsibility. Why bother with it at all? Why not save all the money from Ministers' salaries? Why do we not let you just do what you like?

MR SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

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

In-Principle Stage

MR MOORE (Minister for Health and Community Care) (10.47): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and members. I appreciate the support. I was disappointed by Mr Berry's speech. Mr Speaker, I present the Director of Public Prosecutions (Amendment) Bill 1998, together with the explanatory memorandum.

Title read by Clerk.

MR MOORE: I move:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Mr Speaker, this Bill makes one simple amendment to the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1990. Under section 20 of the Act, the Attorney-General may make directions of a general nature to the Director of Public Prosecutions "with respect to matters relating to the performance and exercise by the Director of his or her functions or powers".

The effect of this is to have an impact on the laws which this Assembly has passed. Already we have had one situation where a directive was issued to the Director of Public Prosecutions under the Act. Those members who were here at the end of the last Assembly may remember that Mr Humphries consulted widely and received agreement from all members to issue a directive to the Director of Public Prosecutions concerning passive euthanasia - the withdrawal of life support systems.

The history of that situation is that, when the Andrews Bill passed through the Federal Parliament, there was legal advice that one unintended impact of the Bill may have been to make the withdrawal of life support systems, passive euthanasia, rendered illegal in this Territory. As I recall, when the Prime Minister was approached by the Chief Minister about this concern, the Prime Minister's suggestion was that a directive be issued to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and indeed that is what followed.

But what that does, of course, is set out a precedent where the Director of Public Prosecutions can be given a directive. I think members will no doubt consider that is an appropriate method of dealing with the law under certain circumstances in the public interest. If that is the case, it should always be the prerogative of this Assembly to overturn the decision. When a matter is made a disallowable instrument, as in this legislation, it means that the instrument can be either disallowed or amended. Under that circumstance, the Assembly still has control over the laws and the way the laws are implemented in this Territory.

Members would also be aware that a director of public prosecutions has his or her own prerogative - his in our case - to make a decision on a prosecution. There are two grounds that are recognised internationally as to why a director of public prosecutions would decide not to proceed with a prosecution. The first is lack of evidence and the second is when it would not be in the public interest. That is a decision available to a director of public prosecutions, in addition to the ability of the Attorney-General to issue a directive.

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This Bill inserts the standard legislative clause to make the ministerial direction disallowable. It is a fairly standard clause that members have seen on many occasions. What the Bill does, in summary, is empower the Assembly to maintain control over its own legislation. As such, it is a piece of legislation that I would have thought all members would be not only willing to support but also keen to support.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Stefaniak**) adjourned.

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY - STANDING COMMITTEE Inquiries - Joint Service Centre Proposal and an ACT Prison

MR OSBORNE: I seek leave to make a statement relating to two new inquiries to be undertaken by the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety.

Leave granted.

MR OSBORNE: Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the Assembly that, on 13 July 1998, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety resolved to inquire into and report on the joint emergency services centre, JESC, proposal with particular reference to: The effectiveness of the consultation process used in developing the proposal; the implications of the proposal for ACT police, fire and ambulance personnel, facilities and services; the likely effects on the Woden-Weston communities if Woden Police Station is replaced with a shopfront; the viability of police relying more on upgraded information technology in police cars; the adequacy of space allocations in the new accommodation proposals; the cost-effectiveness of the proposal, including asset management issues; the management of any implementation stage, including staff consultation; and any other related matter.

I further wish to inform the Assembly that, on 24 August 1998, the committee resolved also to inquire into and report on the establishment of a prison in the ACT with particular reference to: The justification for the prison, a very important issue, Mr Speaker; the process used by the ACT Government to establish the prison, including the use of consultants; the philosophical approach of the prison and whether it should be publicly run or privately run; community involvement in the development, design and siting of the prison, a very hot issue, Mr Speaker, Australian and international best practice models for prisoner rehabilitation and avoidance of deaths in custody; cost-effectiveness issues in the establishment and running of the prison; and any other related matter. Mr Speaker, these are two very important issues which have received an amount of publicity recently and it is very important that the justice committee look at them.

EXECUTIVE BUSINESS - PRECEDENCE

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer): Pursuant to standing order 77(d), I move:

That Executive business be called on.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1998-99

[COGNATE PAPER:

ESTIMATES 1998-99 - SELECT COMMITTEE - REPORT ON THE APPROPRIATION
BILL 1998-99 - GOVERNMENT RESPONSE]

Detail Stage

Schedule 1 - Appropriations

Debate resumed from 2 September 1998.

MR SPEAKER: I remind members that we have previously resolved to debate this order of the day concurrently with the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 1998-99 on the Appropriation Bill 1998-99. Therefore, in debating order of the day No. 1, Executive business, they may also address their remarks to order of the day No. 1, Assembly business, relating to the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 1998-99 on the Appropriation Bill 1998-99.

Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this Bill will be considered; that is, in the detail stage, any Schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the Schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. I remind members that we have previously agreed to consider Schedule 1 by part, appropriation unit and departmental totals, then the clauses prior to Schedule 2 and the title.

Part 10 - InTACT

Proposed expenditure - The InTACT Group, \$80,000,000 (comprising capital injection, \$80,000,000)

MR CORBELL (10.55): Mr Speaker, the Government's efforts in relation to the InTACT Group are, from my perspective and the perspective of the Opposition, very much a mixed bag. It is certainly pleasing to see that the Government is taking steps to address the year 2000 problem or the millennium bug, as it is often called, within the ACT government service. There is a significant amount of money allocated within the ACT government service and within this area to deal with that problem.

I must say, Mr Speaker, that one of the concerns that we did raise during the Estimates Committee process, and which was outlined during questioning in those committee hearings, was the merging of the InTACT Group with CanDeliver and the potential concerns that we saw for that later down the track, particularly in relation to potential for privatisation or, indeed, for requiring the InTACT Group to operate on a commercial or a competitive basis with other information technology providers outside the ACT government service.

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Mr Speaker, the Government reassured us on the point at the time; nevertheless, I do want to place on the record the Labor Party's concerns at what this may mean for the provision of information technology services by InTACT in future years. The InTACT Group is a group that has been shifted from pillar to post for a period under this Government. This latest move to CanDeliver was certainly something that did appear to us to have come from quite out of the blue.

The ACT Government has assured us that the outsourcing, if you like, of information technology services will not occur, with InTACT continuing to provide that role, even though it is within the CanDeliver structure. Mr Speaker, we would certainly view very dimly any moves by the Government in future budgets - and I place that on the record now - to require InTACT to compete with outside providers for the provision of such services. We believe that InTACT is an effective and professional organisation and we would not want to see any move by the Government to force InTACT effectively to compete on its own ground. We believe that the services it currently provides are effective and are very much sufficient.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the upgrade of services being provided in this budget for the InTACT Group. A wide range of services and information technology equipment was going to be upgraded through this budget allocation. It seems to me that the timelines on assessing those upgrades and allocations are going to be fairly tight for the Government. I understand that it will be the end of this financial year, which is the middle of next year, before all of those assessments are done in relation to the upgrade and implementation.

That leaves a very tight timeframe if we are to make sure that the ACT is year 2000 compliant. Year 2000 compliance would then have only six months left to run before the dreaded date - 1 January 2000 - came around. For that reason, I hope the Government will meet the commitments it gave to the Estimates Committee to make sure that the assessment of upgrades occurs as quickly as possible.

Mr Speaker, the other thing that I think should be noted is the Government's commitment to establish an office of multimedia - I think it is called - which is a welcome step. We welcome that because there is no doubt that the area of information technology, the processing of information, is the area of the economy of the future. Those societies and those communities that are able to manage information effectively, that are able to digest, interpret, process and distribute information, are going to be those economies that are able to survive and prosper into the next century. In that regard, the Labor Party does welcome the Government's proposition to establish that office.

Mr Speaker, the InTACT Group has a considerable amount of money allocated - \$80m. The Labor Party, as I say, will be keeping a close eye on implementation of the year 2000 compliance and the overall upgrade. We will also be keeping a close eye on this to make sure that the Government maintains its commitments to keep InTACT as the pre-eminent service provider for the ACT government service.

MR QUINLAN (11.01): Mr Speaker, this particular exercise within the budget does demonstrate where we need to get our act together a little bit more in clearer reporting. It states within the budget that InTACT will become part of CanDeliver, yet those statements have not been put together and we see a separate line in the budget for the InTACT Group. Alarm bells begin to ring a little when we read that the move has not been reflected in CanDeliver's or InTACT's financial statements as a final scoping and due diligence review has yet to be completed. I am a bit concerned as to what might be the ultimate objective of scoping and due diligence. I would have thought it was a relatively simple exercise to incorporate the two entities into one line, or one entity within the budget, to reflect what they are going to be in the future - if that is what they are going to be in the future - after the review.

Ms Carnell: Yes.

MR QUINLAN: Right. That is all I would say on InTACT other than, concerning the money that we have set aside to address the millennium bug problem, I do hope we have moved quickly enough to address that problem. I have asked a couple of people about it. I used to be a programmer once, but I have forgotten all about it.

Ms Carnell: We might need you.

MR QUINLAN: Yes, that might need to be. I understand that some of the problems are deeply embedded in some very old source code in some of the systems that are used within government. Very little has been done, even by the machine companies and the software companies, in digging down into the systems. I think most of them have decided that the ultimate solution will be that we can all buy new software from Microsoft, and we do not really need to address the problem at all. I hope and trust that we have moved soon enough and that we are not caught in that obsolescence vice of having to toss out a lot of the software because we do not have anybody that remembers how it was put together in the first place and what algorithms were used. I do trust that we have moved quickly enough and that, because it is so critical to what we are doing within the government service, we can maintain full government control of the operations of InTACT, despite the fact that it is planned to be inserted within CanDeliver.

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (11.05): Mr Speaker, I thank those opposite for their generally quite constructive comments in this area. I think the experiment of InTACT - I suppose it is a long way beyond the experimental stage now - has been a great success. What it has shown as a model is that there is a capacity to keep in-government and in-house expertise and at the same time partner with private sector companies to achieve the efficiencies, the better buying power and so on that probably are some of the benefits of outsourcing. I suppose it is a way to get some of the benefits of outsourcing without actually doing it, while still keeping the core processes or the core functions internal and ensuring that we keep information or IT expertise in the ACT Government. That is something that is really important.

One of the good things is that some other States are now seeing InTACT as a model that maybe should be looked at rather than some of the wholesale outsourcing approaches that have been used. The approach that we have taken, or that InTACT has taken, with regard to the Y2K issue and also modernisation is innovative and sensible. Some of the

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problems that Mr Quinlan raised with regard to some of our very old systems are real. But of course a lot of those very old systems are no longer coping anyway and need to be replaced over the next few years. One of the more silly approaches would be to make all of our systems Y2K compliant and then replace them a year or two later. I think that would be a significant waste of taxpayers' money.

InTACT have put forward a proposal to roll Y2K compliance and modernisation of a number of our systems, such as the hospital system and revenue - quite a number of our systems - into one package. That is the basis of the possible \$80m expenditure. It does mean that the ACT Public Service will end up, as a result of modernisation and Y2K compliance, really at the pointy end of information technology excellence for governments in Australia and will achieve the clever government-clever city approach that is the basis of this budget.

It is important to point out to members opposite that on page 141 of Budget Paper No. 4, it does make it quite clear that the move of InTACT to CanDeliver is not reflected in CanDeliver's or, for that matter, InTACT's financial statements, as final scoping and a due diligence review have yet to be completed. Fairly obviously that would be an essential part of the move from the Government's perspective and also from the perspective of the CanDeliver board for them to discharge their responsibilities. Under corporation law, those sorts of processes would have to happen.

Mr Speaker, I think it would be inappropriate for the Government to pre-empt the outcomes of those particular reviews by somehow presenting the budgets as if InTACT had already moved. Those things do need to be addressed. You could never, and nor should you, ever predict the outcomes of reviews. Generally, I thank members for their comments - the good ones - about InTACT. It comprises a group of extraordinarily committed people who are doing a good job under what are pretty tough conditions at the moment.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 11 - ACT Housing

Proposed expenditure - ACT Housing, nil

MR WOOD (11.09): Mr Speaker, we need more than nil expenditure; I have no doubt about that. Indeed, it is going to be very necessary because, as I read the ownership agreement of ACT Housing, the agreement is quite open and points to a significant problem within ACT Housing. I quote from page vii of the appendix to the agreement:

Funds available for repairs and maintenance is limited to rental receipts from tenancies. In view of the current level of funds available and the age and condition of the stock, it is expected that the condition of the stock will continue to decline.

That is not a good picture. I do not think there is anything new in this circumstance in ACT Housing. The Commonwealth over many years tended to let the condition of its stock run down. We certainly inherited that position. But it is alarming to be advised that the condition is going to get worse in future years. ACT Housing undertook a housing maintenance census some three years ago and that was commendable. Certainly it would give Housing a clearer picture of the condition of its property. It identified a backlog of maintenance and repairs worth \$65m. Early this year Housing found that 1,948 properties were classified as being below standard due to a variety of circumstances - perhaps the condition of the bathroom, kitchen or paintwork, inside or out.

A very large number of properties need attention, and they are just not going to get it. Mr Smyth put out a media statement, and it makes great reading, stating that the residents at Allawah and, I think, Bega complexes were going to be delighted with the considerable amount of upgrade that was going to be done there. That is good news. Congratulations, Mr Smyth. But I have not seen a media statement that says that residents in other places remain bitterly disappointed because there is little prospect of upgrades where they are needed in those places. I want it acknowledged that there is a problem.

We do not get high rents for our housing properties. I am one that stands up and argues the case that we have to consider the income of the tenants. Even the increased rental of 25 per cent which was flagged in this budget will be an imposition on a lot of people. A great problem is presented to us when we see the data that has been given. It seems to me that there is an element of cannibalism being conducted here, and that is not desirable. It is inevitable when there are not funds to do what we want.

By "cannibalism", I describe - and I think others do - the situation that applies in some Third World countries where they may have a fleet of buses and they cannot afford to maintain them, so two or three buses that are off the road already are cannibalised, pulled apart, and those parts are used to keep other buses going; and then two or three more off the road are used later on to keep other buses running. It means that you are knocking down current stock, in this case houses, to keep other stock going. It is not a good practice.

Arising out of this data, the community, and especially those who rely on ACT Housing property, need to hear a clear statement from the Government about the long term. We have facts and figures in this budget about the next year or two and upgrades, improvements, new properties and the like, but I do not have data about the long term, about our policies into the future, how we will both maintain a high level of public ownership of housing, which is desirable, and perform the difficult task of keeping it in good condition while attending to the needs of low-income families at the same time. Minister, I do not want to say that is an easy thing to do, but there is a very clear and significant problem. At some stage in the not too distant future - I do not expect it to be today - we need some clear indication of how we are going to take this over into the next century.

There are a number of other issues that I would raise and one of them is related to this matter. I refer to insulation in ACT housing. My memory tells me that in an answer the Minister gave to one of my questions, since 1977 the Government automatically has been putting insulation into its new properties, but there is still a very, very large backlog

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that has been attended to at the rate of some 500 a year. Again, people are in a bind. The tenants are in a bind. I often approach the Minister's quite helpful office with the case of people who have high heating bills or rising damp - they have all sorts of problems in their houses - and in part it is due to inadequate insulation. They do not want to pay high electricity bills. I had the case of one person who had installed, at a cost of about \$2,000, some heating. There was piping through the ceiling from the stove and so on. It did not work very well, unfortunately. Lots of tenants go to some considerable trouble and expense to try to improve the heating in their home.

It would be an ideal situation if that program of 500 installations of insulation a year were expanded so that quite rapidly most of the homes were insulated and most of the heating bills for those families were reduced.

Quite a number of families - I do not know if anybody has figures - have installed insulation at their own cost. I have been to the Minister's office on some occasions seeking full payment or half payment or desperately, in the end, any payment to support that. I suppose not unnaturally, I get the answer: "Sorry, we cannot do that. You can take the insulation when you go, you people. It is your property. You can take it". But these people generally are long-term residents. It is not too convenient to put it in in the first place, and nobody wants to pull it out. Minister, I understand the difficulties. As with the first problem I mentioned, there is a need to see whether the insulation program can be installed more rapidly. I will not split my speech. I might seek an extension of time shortly as I want to raise another matter.

MR SPEAKER: You have another 10 minutes, Mr Wood, after this one.

MR WOOD: Yes. I might put them both together and then the Minister has to respond only once.

MR SPEAKER: As you will.

MR WOOD: I was approached by some residents of a complex in Ainslie. I might indicate that there is quite a deal of money being spent by ACT Housing at that place. As part of the upgrade there was a conversion to gas heating, which was welcomed. But there was a slip-up in the process in that the residents of the complex were not advised that they would need to make a security deposit to the gas firm. I think that was only a glitch in the process that went on and I think ACT Housing would now add that to their list of protocol when this sort of thing happens again in future. (*Extension of time granted*)

Mr Speaker, I have raised a number of times the condition of properties, the level of maintenance by individual tenants in this case. From time to time you see shock-horror stories about government housing properties that are in a very bad condition as a result of considerable neglect and a lack of living skills on the part of tenants - usually after they have left. I lump into the same basket the fact that tenants leave owing rent or, more commonly, tenants get strong letters, perhaps justifiably, from ACT Housing because they are behind in their rent.

We have had this debate before, but I am not sure there has been a clear resolution. I make the point that ACT Housing needs directly to provide guidance, counselling or assistance to people who are having trouble, whether in their living skills, in their ability to maintain a clean and good environment around them, or in their financial skills, in their ability to keep up the payments.

This budget does have \$50,000 allocated for such a purpose. I do not know the specifics of it, but that is, I think, the general purpose of that money. In other circumstances, Housing relies on other government agencies to provide help. I appreciate that. I know that at times when I have approached Housing they have contacted other agencies when some sort of guidance, some sort of counselling, has been needed. But I still think there is a need for a direct involvement, because that is so much more immediate; it is there when you need it. I think steps are being taken to improve the strategies to ensure that rent is collected and there are not large amounts of overdue rent.

I have to say that, from time to time, I save the Minister's office some time. When people come to me looking for a government rental property, we now ask them the question: "Do you have a debt with ACT Housing?". I can say to those people, "Well, until you pay your debt, until you cover that, you are not likely to have success". Now, that is probably a normal commercial transaction. It does not cover every one of the difficult circumstances that may arise from time to time. It is very important that steps be taken early to stop unpaid rent building up.

I have been staggered to hear of the amount of debt that occurs with some people. I think that is a thing of the past as steps are now in place. Sometimes those steps are fairly blunt and the circumstances are not always understood. I had a case recently where a person owed only a very small amount of money after a long and good tenancy but received a very threatening letter. Again, I raise the point that you need immediacy; you need a personalised approach. The computer automatically spits out stuff, but it does not always recognise the circumstances behind it.

The basic premise of government housing, of course, is that governments have responsibilities. Those are to provide good housing in sufficient numbers to meet the public demand for that housing. Historically, the ACT has had a high level of public housing by virtue of its government town status and the need to bring people in. The circumstances of government housing have changed over the years. Where once it was substantially to provide accommodation for incoming public servants, it is now increasingly what might be defined, for lack of a better word, welfare housing. It is not a good term because a lot of the people in the housing are not on welfare; they are well enough off. Given the conditions, if you are not already in government housing and you need to acquire one, you need to be on a very low income. We have a responsibility in that regard. I trust that this Government will never get away from the obligation to provide good housing in good numbers to those people in the ACT who rely on it and who deserve it.

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MR QUINLAN (11.25): Mr Speaker, in relation to the housing budget and in particular the estimates hearing, my concerns relate to the policy parameters employed in deciding whether tenants are permitted to purchase their government home or not. The policy articulated in estimates by the Minister was replete with economic reasoning and attention to market forces. However, it was quite alarming that there was no consideration of the people themselves, the human consideration, the desire of tenants to have the security of home ownership and also to stay in the location with which they have become familiar, the microcommunity in which they live. Some of them are dependent on the support networks of the location with which they are familiar. It is where they have built up a social and a support network. If they wish to purchase there may well be problems in the process of relocation. In fact, from what I heard in estimates, there was a complete absence of humanity in the policy.

The example I used then and the example I will use again is the Causeway, which has a unique community. It is a community where in one street, a very short street - it is no longer than this chamber - there are four generations of one family. It is a community where, 40 or 50 years ago - I cannot remember which - they built a preschool and 50 per cent of that preschool was paid for by the community, by the people. There are still people there that remember that particular construction and there are people there that associate very closely with that area.

Times are changing for them, as they have changed for many of us. I accept the fact that many of them have lived in rented premises for many years, and lived happily in rented premises. But in modern times they see the pressure of the Kingston foreshore development and the pressure on their properties. They foresee the pressure on them to move as the area goes upmarket. At the other end of the spectrum, with the social problems that are building, they can see areas, and possibly their area, degenerating much as areas like Burnie Court have degenerated with the co-location of a number of people with common problems.

Now, all that these people really desire in the long term is to maintain their patch, to maintain their territory, and to maintain the quiet enjoyment of their particular area. Even though they have not bought their homes, they believe they own the territory, the territory on which they stand. In that respect and in respect of what came out in the Estimates Committee, I strongly suggest that there be a revision of the policy on the sale of government housing, and I suggest that that review have the intent of injecting some humanity into it.

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services) (11.29): Housing is a very important issue for the Government, and the Government takes its commitment to public housing very seriously. We are, by quite some measure, the largest landlord in the ACT and, with that, we are committed to ensuring that standards are maintained, that choices are widened and that the stock of houses that ACT Housing controls, as quickly and as best we can, matches the needs of the tenants. It is very important that we maintain that stock. This year some \$19m will be spent on repairing and maintaining our properties. There is an improvement and upgrade program - worth about \$20m - and to meet the special needs of the aged, the disabled and crisis accommodation, there is some \$11m.

To improve the appeal and the livability of ACT Housing's larger complexes, there is some \$5m. There is a very firm commitment in those figures that says we will endeavour to do the best we can to keep the stock in the best condition we can. There are some dilemmas. A large amount of the stock is rapidly ageing, and we have to spend our money wisely to ensure that we meet the needs as best we can.

Mr Speaker, I turn to some issues that Mr Wood raised, particularly the one concerning insulation. There is an insulation program going on. I appreciate the manner in which Mr Wood has raised these issues with me and I thank him for his constructive suggestions on some of the things that he would like to see done, particularly in rent and rent management. You should be aware that this year the Government has allowed direct debit to ensure that people do not get into dilemmas when they fall behind. We would all appreciate that, once you fall behind, it is often very difficult to catch up and get ahead, particularly for those with quite fixed incomes. So we will be encouraging all tenants, where it suits their needs, to go to direct debit, simply because it will make life much easier for them. They will not have to go to the post office or wherever it is that they pay their account and it will ensure that they never fall behind in their rent.

Mr Speaker, in regard to the upgrade of the heating at Ainslie, as I have already indicated to Mr Wood, there was a slip-up there. Mr Wood brought it to our attention that tenants were being asked for a bond and had not been informed. The officers of the department have been made aware that, when any matter concerns tenants, we should take utmost care to ensure they are fully apprised of what is going to happen and of any obligations and implications for them.

It is curious, Mr Speaker, that we return to the issue of the Causeway, and again the drum is beaten to suggest that there is something untoward happening at the Causeway. It is symptomatic, I think, of Labor's lack of appreciation of what it is to manage the assets of the Government of the Territory for the people. It is curious that I am yet to receive an application from any resident at the Causeway to purchase their house. The last time that applications were made to purchase houses was back in March 1995 by two tenants, and neither of those proceeded.

The Government must have in place a policy that will best manage for all Canberrans the asset that some 12,000 houses represent and to ensure we meet the needs of all the tenants. So, with that in mind, the policy is quite clear: We build new houses and we do not sell them for a minimum of, I think, five years. It is the same for renovated houses. Where we have put money into upgrading these premises, it is most important that we who have put that money in get value for what we have done and that we have them available for tenants so that they get value for what has been done.

Mr Quinlan says that we should look at the policy. The policy, I believe, is quite reasonable. All applicants who wish to purchase have to have had five years or more continuous tenancy in ACT housing; only properties that are separately titled will be available for sale; properties acquired or upgraded within at least the last five years will not be available; properties identified for redevelopment will not be available; properties in areas that are difficult for ACT Housing to replace may not be available; and applicants whose property is not for sale may be offered alternatives for purchase.

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It is curious that Mr Quinlan would speak of all those people that have lived in the Causeway for so long. Some have but, as I look down this list, I see periods of four months, four months, 15 months, four years, 10 days, 16 years, 16 years, two years, four years, five years, two years, six years, six years, four years and 15 years. That is just a sample - the first dozen or so from the list - Mr Speaker. Again, it is this financial irresponsibility that the Labor Party continually preach that we must react to them without managing the whole stock. Mr Wood asked about the future of housing. To sell unwisely jeopardises the way in which we can care for all tenants in the long term. But I get back to the first point that I made in referring to the Causeway. Two applications were made in March 1995. I am told that we have not had any applications since. Mr Speaker, I thank members for their comments on housing and I commend the appropriation to the house.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 12 - ACTION

Proposed expenditure - ACTION, \$4,280,000 (comprising capital injection, \$4,280,000)

MR HARGREAVES (11.37): There has been much debate in recent times about the bus fare system in ACTION. There seems little point in going over old ground when some members clearly are not prepared to consider the points raised nor, in some cases, even prepared to be present when those points are presented to this chamber. The points we have made relate to the inherent inequities in the zonal fare system and we pointed out that there were and are three groups being adversely treated. The first group are those people living on the borders - evidence the outcry from the people at Palmerston. The second group are commuters who live in Tuggeranong or Belconnen, who work in Civic or in another zone. They have no choice but to cough up double the fare. The third group are school bus travellers or, more properly, the families of those students.

The motion from Ms Tucker, and vigorously supported by the Labor members, sought to address these inequities. The watered down motion resulted in the freezing for the time being only - the time being only - until the standing committee has looked into the fare structure for schoolchildren. The Government has no intention, in my view, of doing anything other than introducing the zonal fare system for schoolchildren, but has agreed to wait a bit. The publicity showing the Government and Mr Osborne is not a picture of the truth. It has misled the public into thinking that the zonal system for schoolkids is off. It is not! It is merely being delayed.

Mr Speaker, the budget shows an expectation that there will be a cut of about \$10m. Congratulations are appropriate to Mr Thurston, the ACTION general manager, and the Transport Workers Union on negotiating an outcome, currently ongoing, which will be as close to this figure as is reasonable. But I would make two points here. The first is that these negotiations are being conducted in an atmosphere of savage cuts and these cuts are not new. So far in previous years over \$20m has been cut from ACTION's budget. And we have to find another \$10m. When will this savagery stop? The second point is that I believe, in the outyears, ACTION will be required to find another \$5m.

I suspect that this Government will require ACTION to achieve the \$10m saving in the years 1998-99 to 2000-01 and, Mr Speaker, another \$5.1m in the year 2001-02. How can any manager or union agree on a restructure in an atmosphere like this? It is just not fair on either of them.

Mr Speaker, the budget cutting imperatives will be implemented by stealth if overt processes are thwarted. I know, for example, that once we had four people repairing damage to seats in the buses, we now have one. I accept that perhaps four was a bit more than we could afford, but none is really not acceptable. I believe that when this officer retires, and that will not be that far away, the repairs will be outsourced because he has no trainee and there is no multiskilling applied here. I am also convinced that this Government believes we have more than enough mechanics. It does not acknowledge that the down time for bus repair is considerably higher than benchmark best practice; that replacement buses are on the routes within half an hour; and that a reduction in the number of mechanics and apprentices will result in replacement buses not being available for about a half a day.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that Labor members watch with interest the Government's negotiations with the Transport Workers Union and note the Government's fraudulent partnership with Mr Osborne over the zonal fare fiasco.

MS TUCKER (11.42): We had extensive debate on ACTION yesterday in this place but I will, for the record, make a few other comments. Basically, I repeat that public transport is a vital community service for those people who do not have access to their own transport. It does seem the Government is hell-bent on making sure that ACTION is as unattractive as possible to potential customers who may have a choice. Over the last decade, ACTION has been caught in a downward spiral of decreased services, increased fares, and decreased patronage.

The Graham review found that ACTION needed a radical overhaul of all aspects of its operation to make it a more viable and attractive service. Unfortunately, the Government has failed to deliver on effective improvements to ACTION. We are still waiting for details of the new route structure and timetables, but we do know what the new ACTION fare structure will be and it is very worrying. I have very grave doubts that it will increase bus patronage.

There has been a significant increase in student and concession fares, which does not seem to have anything to do with the introduction of the zonal system and which goes against the objective of making the public system more attractive to use. It just seems to be a measure to raise more revenue from those people who have no transport alternative. The promotional material for the new fares states that it makes similar trips in distance equal in cost, regardless of any requirement to change buses. This is obviously not going to be the case for many people, especially those people who live close to zone boundaries. They are particularly disadvantaged.

A particular anomaly is that travel between town centres has been set as a one-zone fare through the use of shared zones, except for Gungahlin. Travel from Gungahlin to Civic is regarded as a two-zone fare, but Gungahlin to Belconnen is a one-zone fare.

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To be consistent with the other zones, the central zone should have been extended to the Gungahlin Town Centre, including Palmerston and Mitchell, with a shared zone around Palmerston and the Gungahlin Town Centre. It is particularly surprising that Gungahlin of all areas should be so badly treated when it has been consistently badly treated regarding transport.

In terms of the development of the town centre, this is indeed an irony and it is of grave concern. It is almost as if the Government has done this on purpose, putting so much pressure on Gungahlin that all the people will definitely get behind the John Dedman Parkway because the bus system is going to be unbearable for them. And this is a real worry. I cannot understand how the Government feels it can stand up in this place and claim to be a caring government, or a clever government, when obviously it is not taking into account fundamental issues when designing the fare system for ACTION. This will have a negative impact not only on our society and our community but also on our environment, as I have said so many times in this place.

What we had yesterday in this place was a debate which was ludicrous and would be funny if it were not so tragic. We ended up getting protection for one particular group in the community from the zone system - that is, children going to schools out of area - yet the rest of the community is just left to deal with it. What this shows is that the system does not work. The Government has said the system does not work because it supported Mr Osborne's amendment to my motion, which basically sought protection from the system for a particular group in the community. So the Government has said that the system does not work. But the Government is still claiming that it is doing the right thing, and it will continue to do so. What that shows is that it does not care about the rest of the people in the community who use buses and do not have a choice. Lots of people who have a choice do use the buses, but they will probably choose not to do so when it becomes so incredibly expensive for them.

The other arguments that keep coming from government, which I raised yesterday, concern the cost implications of actually getting in and providing an attractive bus service. As has been demonstrated clearly time and again in many cities around the world, when you get in there and invest - note that I am not using the word "subsidise" - in a good public transport system, you end up not needing to put so much money into it because you get money back from the increased patronage. We actually support the public transport system more, because in cities which have much lower fares and time-based fares people use the buses. They are an attractive alternative, more attractive than using their car. That has to be the basic and fundamental aim of any government that claims to be vaguely responsible about the environment or social equity in our community.

MR CORBELL (11.47): Mr Speaker, I know that this morning's debate is not one which is gripping media attention or the attention of anyone other than those who are directly involved in it. Mr Speaker, I would have thought that those people upon whom the Government relies for the passage of this budget would at least be down here putting on the record their comments as to why they are prepared to support this budget, and indeed what concerns, if any, they have about aspects of the budget.

It is very disappointing, Mr Speaker, that not just this morning but for the last two sitting days that this Assembly has been discussing the budget those two members of this Assembly on whom the Government relies for the passage of this budget have barely contributed to the debate. They have barely said a word about this budget, yet they will be the two people who will give the Carnell Government and the Canberra community the budget - a budget which, as the Estimates Committee and many members on this side of the chamber have highlighted, contains many basic and obvious flaws.

Mr Speaker, I want to put that on the record. I think it is enormously disappointing. If the Osborne group are prepared to support this budget because of the commitment they have made to the electorate in relation to stability of government, fair enough; they should abide by that. But they should also meet the obligation they have to raise issues of concern about this budget, or at least put on the record why they are going to be supporting this budget, and at least make some attempt to put their view, as Independent members, on what this budget is all about. But they have not done that. They are not even here this morning. They have not been here for the great majority of this debate and they have certainly not contributed to this debate in any substantial way. Yet it is their votes that will result in this budget being passed.

Ms Tucker: Mr Rugendyke is at a funeral.

MR CORBELL: Ms Tucker interrupts and says that Mr Rugendyke is at a funeral this morning. That is understandable. I do not want to suggest in any way that he is neglecting his responsibilities by attending that event this morning. But for the great bulk of this debate those members have not been present and they have certainly not contributed.

Mr Speaker, in relation to the ACTION budget, the concerns that Ms Tucker has raised in this debate are, I think, legitimate ones and they are concerns that the Labor Party shares. The concerns that were raised in the debate we had yesterday on the ACTION fare structure are equally important and should be placed on the record again today when we are considering the ACTION budget. The fare structure is the most important element, or one of the most important elements, it would be fairer to say, in encouraging people to use the public transport system.

As I said yesterday, this Government has professed a concern about dealing with the effects of greenhouse gas emissions. It is laudable that the Government has acknowledged that is an issue of concern and there needs to be a strategy in place to deal with it. But to actually get people to stop using private vehicle transport for commuter trips, which is where we produce most greenhouse gas emissions, you need to have an attractive fare structure. I can only reinforce the comments that Ms Tucker made in relation to the residents of Gungahlin. As a Gungahlin resident, as the only member of this Assembly who lives in Gungahlin, I think it is disgraceful what the Government has done for residents of Gungahlin in relation to public transport.

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I campaigned during the last election, before the last election, and I have done so since the last election, on the issue of buses in Gungahlin. I urge the Government to put in place an equitable fare structure for Gungahlin residents that means there is no discrimination between suburbs. I urge the Government to look at making sure that the significant advantages that residents of Palmerston have in using public transport, particularly in travelling to and from Civic, are in place across the rest of the suburbs of Gungahlin.

For those members who are not aware, currently if you live in Palmerston it will cost you \$2 to get a bus to Civic, and \$2 to get home again. That is a very attractive fare structure, and it is a very effective service that currently runs between Palmerston and Civic. If you live in any of the other suburbs in Gungahlin, you have to pay \$4 to get to Civic. Now, that is just absurd. It is an absurd discrepancy, so I campaigned. I spoke to the executive director of ACTION, I spoke to the former Minister for Urban Services and I have spoken to Mr Smyth as well about this issue. I have urged them to look at the prospect of making sure that the fare structure across Gungahlin is equitable and that the obvious advantages for catching buses that residents of Palmerston have are included for other residents of Gungahlin, so that if you live in Ngunnawal, Amaroo or Nicholls you should also have to pay only \$2 to get to Civic.

But, instead, what have we seen in this budget in relation to the new fare structure? We have seen the Government decide that what applies to everyone else in Gungahlin - those residents who live in Ngunnawal, Amaroo and Nicholls - should apply to Palmerston residents as well. So Palmerston residents now face a 100 per cent increase in their fare. I do not see how that takes cars off the road. There is an enormous debate in the inner north of Canberra about transport and about increasing traffic congestion. I get complaints almost every week from residents of Gungahlin who are concerned about the transport links between their town centre and Civic. The constant complaint is that the arterial road structure is not sufficient and the bus system is a joke.

Mr Speaker, I do not see how increasing the bus fare for residents of Palmerston, a 100 per cent increase, which makes it cheaper for them to drive to Civic and pay for parking every day rather than catch a bus, is going to be a way of getting cars off the road. Far from alleviating the traffic congestion that now occurs every morning along Gungahlin Drive, Gundaroo Drive, the Barton Highway and down onto Northbourne Avenue and other roads in that area, it will exacerbate it because residents of Palmerston have told me that they will stop catching the bus. Why? Because it will cost too much; it is cheaper to drive.

That, I think, is a stunning indictment of the failure of the zonal fare system. It is unacceptable for this Government to continue to argue that they are putting in place equity for Gungahlin residents. It is not equity at all. It is simply imposing on residents an arbitrary distinction about where a zone should go in a suburb and making them pay the cost, and damn the consequences. I would invite Mr Smyth to travel from Gungahlin to Civic in peak hour on any weekday morning so that he can see for himself the congestion problems that exist in that area, because it is a significant problem.

He does not fully appreciate what this decision in relation to fares for residents of Palmerston will mean. Palmerston is one of Gungahlin's largest suburbs. Even a slight drop in the number of people using the commuter service from Palmerston to Civic is going to have a significant impact on traffic congestion in the Gungahlin area. That is the most obvious and glaring example of the impact of the zonal fare structure on commuters and on people who choose to use the bus service.

Mr Speaker, quite clearly the Government is not interested in developing a fare structure that is going to get people onto buses. I repeat what I said yesterday: The Government did not consult with the community about the fare structure. They did consult about the route structure, and that is to be commended - there have been some significant improvements, I believe, to the route structure - but they did not consult about the fare structure. I do not want to hear the Minister saying in this debate that the fare structure has been implemented after significant community consultation because there has not been consultation about that fare structure.

Indeed, ACTION informed residents who attended public meetings held as part of the community consultation on the new network that the fare structure was a matter for the Government and the Cabinet to decide. It was not a matter for them; it was a matter for the Cabinet and the Government, because it had to do with revenue. Mr Speaker, I think that answer from ACTION sums it all up. This Government is interested in the revenue aspects rather than actually getting people onto buses.

MR STANHOPE (Leader of the Opposition) (11.57): We debated ACTION and the public transport system to some extent yesterday so I will not take up too much time. I would like, in the context of this debate, to reinforce how important the debate about ACTION and public transport is. I have a real concern about public transport in Canberra. I have a real concern about transport in Canberra. I think some of the arguments that Mr Corbell and Ms Tucker have advanced go to the heart of an issue that does not receive the attention of government that it deserves. We are on a slippery slope in relation to public transport and transport in Canberra.

In our efforts to achieve some economies or to address the bottom line in terms of ACTION services, we risk exacerbating the slide that ACTION has experienced over the last decade. I understand ACTION patronage has decreased by something in the order of 27 per cent, and that is incredibly dramatic. It is frightening. One response to that course is to actually say, "Well, 27 per cent less patronage. We cannot afford to subsidise this service at all. We really must make it pay for itself. We must reduce services. We must cut staff".

I have this fear that there is a touch of panic underlying the Government's approach to ACTION. Associated with that touch of panic is a feeling that if we do not fix it this time, the game is up; this is ACTION's last chance; it is now or never. People have to come back onto the buses. We have to do something about increasing incredibly low numbers of people that use ACTION services to travel to work, particularly those who work in Civic. I understand the number of people that actually travel to work by ACTION is 12 or 15 per cent. It might be 5 per cent. I take the point the Minister has made.

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The point I make is that, in the public transport systems of many major cities around the world, there is probably a variable between the number of people that travel to work by public transport as opposed to those that travel to the civic centre, the hub. One of the real problems that we have in Canberra with ACTION is that those of us that do work in the city centre choose, for whatever reason, not to use ACTION services.

Much of my concern has to do with an attitude within government to public transport. It is not an attitude that actually embraces the public benefit, the social advantages that accrue to so many people within the community - those people at that edge of the community who rely absolutely on the provision of an effective public transport system, whose quality of life is determined by their capacity to access transport, and whose mobility is dependent on public transport. I am concerned at the level of commitment by government to a vigorous and good public transport system. That underlines the whole debate that we need to have about this, in addition to questions as to the environmental impact of our dependence, and continuing and unquestioned dependence, on the motor car in Canberra. This is a car city. But it does not need to be to the extent that it is. There are so many more things that we can be doing. The point has been made repeatedly - and it is appropriate for it to be made in the context of this debate - that one of the groups that are major users of public transport is, of course, schoolchildren. The worrying aspect of the zonal system, the one that has been highlighted most graphically and which we dealt with yesterday in a significant debate, is the very negative impact which the zonal system would have on schoolchildren. The Government has now grudgingly accepted that perhaps that is worth a revisit, though without any real commitment at all.

It is of concern to me that the Government will not even accept the impact of the zonal system on schoolchildren and the capacity that it has to alienate one of those groups that so strongly support public transport in Canberra - namely, schoolchildren. It seems to me a real reflection of the Government's strategies and thinking on this that it puts at risk its strongest customers, its most loyal customers - namely, schoolkids.

Ms Tucker: A captive market.

MR STANHOPE: It is a captive market, and it is being threatened. It seems to me incongruous that one group, that one identifiable group that is the most loyal supporter of public transport - namely, schoolchildren - has been targeted under the new zonal system. It just beggars my understanding. I will not go over that now. I just wanted to make the primary point about the need for a commitment from government - not the nervous, panicked response that ACTION is such a drain on the public purse that we have to keep rationalising it, that we have to make these incredibly stringent demands for further staff cuts.

The staff cuts that are being imposed on the maintenance staff at ACTION in this latest round are extreme. In some of the workshops the staff numbers are being dropped by almost half. When one visits the Belconnen ACTION depot in particular, one is incredibly sad to see the under-utilisation of the infrastructure, the capacity, at that site.

We have had it there and we are losing it. We have basically got rid of all the staff. There is nobody left in the maintenance depot at Belconnen. It is an almost empty warehouse. It is quite frightening to visit the Belconnen ACTION depot and to see what has happened to that depot over the last few years. There is nobody left. It is just empty.

Underlying this is a lack of a commitment to public transport and to those people that rely so heavily on public transport; the need for us, as a city, to get off the roads and to stop building more expensive road infrastructure. We need a much more cohesive and coordinated response to the problems that we face as a city. This city cannot continue to maintain the roads we have. They are such an appalling drain on our purse. If we do not look to public transport and if we do not inject some vision into the debate, I fear for us in the future.

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services) (12.05): Mr Speaker, I take on board the points that all have made here today. I have to say, yet again, that I do not think the whole public transport debate is being taken in totality. The only area of contention for adults in the three-zone route would appear to be Palmerston, which would indicate that in the work done by Guy Thurston and his staff it probably means we have got it 99 per cent right.

Mr Corbell raised questions of equity. The distance from, say, Gungahlin Town Centre to Civic is the same as, perhaps, Pearce to Civic, yet I cannot remember a time when the people of Pearce have not paid two fares to travel to Civic. His option was that everybody in Gungahlin would pay one fare, and he clearly acknowledged that currently three-quarters of the suburb of Gungahlin pay two fares. It would be nice if everything was cheap and it would be nice, perhaps, if everything was free.

But it is the ability to pay that those opposite would choose to ignore in addressing the all-up operating debt that this city has. That is not a nice subject to come back to and we are often beaten up for simply saying we get back to the economics every time. But what we ask of ACTION is that ACTION at least perform as well as some of its peers. We are not asking ACTION to be the best bus company in Australia. Why it cannot be, I am not sure. But what we are asking is that ACTION be at least up there in the playing field.

You have to say that over recent years the staff, the union, I think the management, and the former Minister have all done well to bring ACTION to where it is now, but we have one last hurdle to cross. It is important that we put it into perspective. Around the country most bus services operate at a break-even level. You would certainly expect that the private bus systems would be making some profit, otherwise they would not be doing it. Around the country most bus services pick up about 44 to 54 per cent of what they need to operate through their fare box. We do not. We pick up half of that amount. There is something fundamentally wrong in that we pick up so much for all of us to contribute back to the service.

For many years, before I started this political life, I lived in Tuggeranong. I used to catch the 126 to Woden and the 333 to the National Library. I am very aware of how our public transport system is and where it fits, because for years I was able to sit on the bus, morning and afternoon, and observe those that use and rely on the bus service.

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I believe that an effective bus service that meets the needs of the users is the thing that will encourage people back onto the buses. Our new zone system does that. Most people travel within their zone. We should make it cheap for them to travel within their zone. That is fair and that is reasonable, and we will do that.

We look at the schools issue and, yet again, there is no appreciation of the all-up picture in regard to schools. We have about 31,500 boardings on our buses in Canberra each day by schoolchildren. Only 14,000 of those are on direct service buses. They are the ones that get a particularly good service because, in the main, they are picked up on a bus route near their house and they are taken straight to the school of their choice. What no-one opposite raises is the case of those 17,500 who have to rely on the route services, the ordinary buses, which may necessitate, for far shorter journeys, having to cross through an interchange, or exchange buses. So already we have a large number of students who do not get a direct bus service, already pay two fares and travel within their zone.

When those opposite answer the call of a noisy drum, they should look at the whole picture in regard to schoolchildren and their boardings. It is unfair to say simply that the Government has panicked. It is a curious panic attack because it has taken us at least a year. We have had the Graham report, we have had the Booz Allen report and we have had nine months of consultation which finished in about May.

Since then we have had the budget. Then it was June, July and August, with the new route structure coming in in September-October. So there was hardly a panic attack. As started by previous Ministers, we have looked at this across all options. We have considered the options; we have had the studies done; we have had the reports; we have had the inquiries; and we have had community input and consultation.

What we do not get acknowledged in this debate is that the Labor Party's time-based system would simply push adult fares to \$3.10 if you are paying cash and to \$2.70 if you are buying a Fare Go ticket. There is no acknowledgment of that. If you want a disincentive for adults to use our bus service, you put the fare to \$2.70 or \$3.10, and they will be driven off the buses in droves. There is no understanding by those opposite that what they do in that system is to end ACTION. I cannot believe that the Labor Party that espouses this support of the public transport system would ask us to take the route that ends ACTION, because the patronage will drop dramatically.

Ms Tucker raised the point that we should have a time-based transfer system with no zones and that it should be revenue neutral. Well, that would be ideal. Then there would be two options. We could have a time-based, revenue neutral, in terms of fares, bus system - and to do that we have to find another \$4.3m for the Government to add to the \$10.5m, taking it to \$15m that they pay ACTION as an inefficiency dividend - or we could cut services. Ms Tucker can answer that question. Does she believe the Government should continue to pay \$15m for ACTION to run inefficiently? This is before we talk about investment in infrastructure and getting the value.

We understand the value of infrastructure. We understand the value of investing in a good public transport system. But it does not mean you have to have one that is inefficient. It does not mean that you have to have one that the public will continue to have to subsidise. Opposition is easy. You make your points and you run away.

In putting together a budget we have to address the need of each constituency. In the ACTION appropriation we address the needs of not only the bus users but also the entire city and the benefits of a bus service to the city. Then we have to take it in the all-up context of how we run our city.

That only approximately 5 per cent of people use buses to travel to work, I think, is unfortunate. I commend Guy Thurston and his staff for the work that they have done - and the union and the workers for their participation in this - to ensure that they have a bus company, a bus service, that they can be very proud of and that the people of Canberra might actually use. It is important that we get these facts on the table and consider them in the totality of a bus service. Bus services are not a bit here and a bit there. What we have in a bus service is a bus network that straddles the city and provides real service for those that choose to use it. What we need to do is make sure that more choose to use it.

The majority of us travel within our zone. Under the current system we all pay the same fare, whether we travel from Chisholm to Tuggeranong or whether we travel from Tuggeranong to Belconnen. That is fair. I am surprised and I am unsure what the definition of fair is that we are using here. All we are asking in this reform package is that ACTION be allowed to play the game like the other bus services around the country, that ACTION be given the opportunity to raise its revenue. We are not asking for a profit. A profit would be wonderful. There is no reason why bus services cannot make profits, and that profit can go back into providing more services, providing more routes and looking after the needs of those that need a public transport system.

It is easy for those opposite to say, "Spend more money, do not increase fares, give them everything they want", without acknowledging that the money must come from somewhere. You have to remember that 95 per cent of Canberrans choose not to use the ACTION bus service. That is a different argument; it is a planning debate argument. But you have to keep it in perspective with the schools. Seventeen and a half thousand out of the 31,000 boardings a day do not have access to direct routes and many of them currently pay two fares. Where is the access, the equity, the justice for them? (*Extension of time granted*)

You have to understand that all we are asking is that ACTION get up to near where it should be - that it would do better would be ideal. I believe that what Guy Thurston and the staff have done is come up with a system that will answer those needs. There has been no panic attack here. The panic attack that we are being accorded with has taken the length of the Graham report, the Booz Allen analysis, nine months of consultation and four or five months since then. That is hardly a panic attack. This is a considered approach. We have looked at the options. The figures have been done on all of the other options and they do not stack up. That is why I can say to you that the Labor Party's time-based, one-zone system means an adult fare of \$3.10. Ms Tucker's system of keeping the fare structure but making it time based means another \$4.3m. These things have to be on the record.

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Mr Speaker, I think that after a long reform process we do need to say well done to the staff at ACTION. It has not been easy and they are to be congratulated. To the union that has participated, to management, to the former Minister - to all those that have got us to this point, and where the new network and the new fare structure will complete the journey - I say thank you. To those that would stop the journey from finishing, for reasons unknown and unclear, I say that you should reconsider what you are doing because this is an excellent opportunity for ACTION to become the bus service that it can become. This is the opportunity for ACTION to become the bus service that the people of Canberra deserve.

MS TUCKER (12.17): I am amazed that Mr Smyth thinks the arguments against his proposals are unclear. Obviously he has not listened to the community or the debate in this place. They are very clear. They have been articulated over and over again. I refer particularly to Mr Smyth's comment that they get "beaten up" when they talk about economics. I am happy to talk about economics. Let us do that right now, about ACTION.

First of all, it is interesting to me that, when Mr Smyth talks about the costs of ACTION, he insists on saying that if we have a time-based system, it will cost \$4m and that is it. That just shows how incredibly negative the view of government is on the possibilities of supporting a public transport system and getting it so that it is well supported - so that, in fact, the amount of money that goes into it is reduced. I have said this many times, but obviously I need to repeat it.

We have said there will be a short-term cost to government in changing the fares in the way that we have suggested, but what we argue and what is supported, as I said, by the experience of many cities around the world, is that that money will be made up and you will not need to continue to support the system in the same way.

Mr Smyth does not talk about the cost of roads. Building John Dedman and upgrading Majura, with the overflow onto other roads that will be necessary in the long term, will impose a totally impossible cost on the ACT Government. I heard Mr Humphries say that in the last Assembly and he has put it off for 10 years. He may be able to do that because he is counting on not being here in 10 years' time, no doubt moving on to greater things. What is really worrying about that is that, if we do not get in now, there will be an enormous cost to this society, this community, in the ACT in having to build major freeways.

It will not be just one. The figures and the modelling have been done. It will be John Dedman, it will be Majura upgraded, it will be other roads expanded or made larger and there will still be a great overflow. When you look at the figures, the modelling that has been done, that is quite clear. We are going to have to pay millions and millions of dollars. The community will be demanding that we do that because everyone is going to be so upset by the lack of any transport planning in this town, any coordinated approach to how we move people from A to B. Constantly we are seeing from government a short-term approach to this. If we want to talk economics, the Government has to acknowledge those costs and the long-term costs of building roads.

Of course you could also talk about the costs and the economics of having a city whose air quality is decreasing - the cost to the health system of increasing respiratory problems in Canberra. The facts are clear enough in Sydney and other cities. There are already problems for people in the ACT who have respiratory illnesses at certain times of the day and in certain locations. This involves a cost. It may not be to Mr Smyth's department - it may not affect his budget bottom line - but it is a cost to someone else's bottom line. But, once again, we have individual Ministers defending their turf, defending their bottom line, and no whole-of-government approach taken to this.

If I were to get really esoteric in the discussion, which is what it appears to be in the context of this parliament, I would also talk about global air pollution. What are the costs of that to our society and the general society? Of course they are huge. That is why we have convention after convention now being signed by all nations to do something about greenhouse gas emissions. But that never comes up in this argument, until it suits the Government and they are trying to look wonderfully green by talking about their greenhouse gas targets and so on.

The Minister also said our motion mentioned a revenue neutral system. We actually took that from the Government's own language. What we were saying in our motion basically was that the fare structure should be developed, not developed with the aim of actually increasing revenue. That was all that meant, and that is pretty clear if you look at it. You know how governments use that term. That is exactly how we used it. We took it from their own language.

The economics are a big part of this whole discussion. We do not shy away from that at all. The Government has a very narrow view in its argument on the economics. Future generations of this city, future parliaments of this city, will condemn this Government and past governments for their lack of forward planning, their lack of a transport plan that actually takes into account the needs of present and future people in the ACT.

Question put:

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 8

NOES, 6

Ms Carnell

Mr Berry

Mr Cornwell

Mr Corbell

Mr Humphries

Mr Hargreaves

Mr Kaine

Mr Stanhope

Mr Moore

Ms Tucker

Mr Osborne

Mr Wood

Mr Smyth

Mr Stefaniak

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

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MR SPEAKER: Order! It being almost 12.30 pm, the debate is interrupted, in accordance with standing order 74.

Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Periodic Detention Centre

MR STANHOPE: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Justice and Community Safety. It is in relation to allegations of misconduct at the Periodic Detention Centre. Can the Minister say whether the Magistrates Court hearings he referred to in answers to questions over the past two days relate to the alleged misconduct itself or to subsequent or peripheral matters?

MR HUMPHRIES: No, I cannot. Members opposite are obviously very keen to pursue this matter. I am almost tempted to suggest to them that they should make an application themselves to lift the suppression order if they are really keen to be able to pursue this matter in the Assembly. I repeat what I have said several times in this place already this week. There is a very comprehensive suppression order operating in respect of these matters.

I know that some members in this place would love to have me provide details, because the details that I would provide in this place would be privileged and would be reportable without being, I think, in contempt of the Magistrates Court. By the same token, it is a very serious issue of breaching the principles of separation of powers for parliament to exercise the prerogative to make those sorts of comments under privilege and cut across decisions already made by the Magistrates Court to keep the matters under suppression. I say to members that if they plan to ask other questions about this matter at least come and talk to me beforehand about what you can and cannot get away with pursuant to the suppression orders. If you want information, that is the best way of getting it.

Mr Speaker, I will make one other comment in respect of this matter. I was accused in this place both last week and this week of breaking the law. I am aware that members of the press gallery, of the media, in this Assembly are aware of a number of details concerning the matters presently before the Magistrates Court, matters which have been subject to suppression orders. I believe that those members of the press gallery are being supplied with the information by some members of this place. I would have thought that acting in breach of a suppression order of the court is itself a very serious breach of the law. Members of this place ought to be careful about that before they make such statements in breach of the law.

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, I take a point of order. Mr Humphries made an imputation against the reputations of all members of this place by saying that he believed members in this place supplied the information. I would ask that he withdraw the imputation.

MR HUMPHRIES: No, Mr Speaker, I have not made an imputation against the reputations of all the members of this place. I simply made an assertion which I believe to be true. If members individually wish to own up to such behaviour, then I am very happy to withdraw the imputation in respect of them, simply because it would be unparliamentary. It is not true to say that all members of this place have had their reputations badly affected by this matter.

Mr Berry: That is an imputation, Mr Speaker. You cannot let him get away with that nonsense.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Berry, I do not want to enter into the argument. Mr Humphries did say "members of this place". I am not sure whether he was referring to this chamber, this Assembly or the building itself. It could be anything.

Mr Moore: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order. Mr Humphries, in answering this question and a series of other questions, has raised the sub judice issue, which I think really requires a ruling from you. The sub judice rule can be breached in a series of ways - either by one question that leads to an answer or by a whole series of questions which leave no doubt as to what the answer is. I believe that, as an Assembly, we are on particularly thin ice in terms of the important principles of separation of powers. I think it is appropriate for you to consider very carefully whether or not these questions are in order.

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, Mr Moore is trying to put a blanket right over the questioning of the relevant Minister in relation to important matters. It is not for this Assembly to put a blanket over the questioning processes of this Assembly by misuse of the standing orders.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order. *House of Representatives Practice* at page 516, sets out the form and content of questions. Among other things, they are related to a Minister's public responsibilities. However, this Assembly, or any other parliament for that matter, cannot override a suppression order of the courts.

Mr Berry: Indeed, and nobody has set out to do that.

MR SPEAKER: The fact is that the Minister had indicated that there is a suppression order. I am not in a position to decide what can be answered and what cannot, but the Attorney-General is and he has made the point - - -

Mr Berry: Let him argue the case of whether it is suppressed or not.

MR SPEAKER: You can ask your supplementary question, Mr Stanhope. Whether you get an answer or not is entirely up to the Attorney-General.

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MR STANHOPE: I accept that, Mr Speaker, absolutely. In asking my supplementary question, I note that I am aware of the suppression order that covers the proceedings in the Magistrates Court and I note that I do not know the details. I assume the Attorney does. Accepting that, can the Minister, under the terms of that order, tell the Assembly under what section of which Act the proceedings before the Magistrates Court were initiated?

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, I am not aware that I can answer that question without being in breach of the suppression order.

Goods and Services Tax

MR QUINLAN: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. Budget papers put out this year estimate that grants received from the Commonwealth for the year 2000-01 will be \$616m.

Ms Carnell: Based upon current deals.

MR QUINLAN: Right. Of that, we can be reasonably assured that about \$166m would come from specific purpose grants, which we would continue to get under a GST. That would leave a balance of \$450m. Recently published figures under your name, Chief Minister, show that the Office of Financial Management estimated our take from the GST at \$450m - something of a coincidence. Can we have some insight into the logic used by the Office of Financial Management to estimate our take from the GST?

MS CARNELL: Thank you very much for the question, Mr Quinlan. The \$450m is the estimate of what Canberrans would pay in GST, based upon such things as retail sales, service sales, and so on and so forth. The basis of the figures that I gave was that the ACT would be better off in terms of about \$200m in tax cuts. In other words, ACT taxpayers would pay some \$200m less, so that would be in their back pocket. As I think I said in answer to a question yesterday, there would be some \$70m not paid in some eight or nine ACT taxes such as FID and BAD that would be abolished. Then wholesale sales tax would be abolished. All of those things would add up to some \$600m. You have to take away from that the amount that would be paid in GST on things like retail sales, service delivery and so on, which was estimated at some \$450m. That made the ACT some \$150m better off under the GST package.

MR QUINLAN: I ask a supplementary question. In terms of government revenue, in embracing the GST are we actually putting complete faith in a combination of the Grants Commission and the Howard Government to look after Canberra?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, the ACT has two forms of revenue. One is own-source revenue, as Mr Quinlan, I assume, knows, because they have spent the last week attempting to undermine our own-source revenue. That makes up about half of our revenue. The other half comes from the Commonwealth in the forms of, at the moment, financial assistance grants and SPPs. They make up the other half, give or take a bit.

Mr Speaker, the fate of that side of the equation - the FAGs and the SPPs - has always been in the hands of the Grants Commission and the Federal Government of the time. Over the last couple of years it has been the Coalition. For the previous seven years it was the Labor Party. I suppose over the nine years since self-government those two entities, predominantly Labor, have managed to cut funding to the ACT by 50 per cent in real terms. I think it is important to remember that seven of those nine years were under Federal Labor.

I do not particularly trust any of them, which is the reason that I am very positive about having access to a growth tax such as the GST, which will come directly to the States, then certainly be allocated on the basis of the equations that the Grants Commission put in place - again, something based upon our submissions to the Grants Commission. It determines what States need to provide an average level of service. If you can move the Federal Government out of the equation, no matter what colour they are, the ACT has to be better off.

International Hotel School

MR BERRY: My question is about conflict of interest and is directed to the Chief Minister, through you, Mr Speaker. In answer to a question asked at the Estimates Committee the Chief Minister revealed that a number of government and related agencies had paid part of the rent for the ACT Government's Sydney office. One such agency was the International Hotel School. Will the Chief Minister confirm that Mr Ian Knop was the chair or a member of the board of the school when the contribution was approved?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, it is interesting in a budget week, the week that we are actually passing the budget, that Mr Berry has spoken as much about conflict of interest - - -

Mr Berry: Mr Speaker, that may be of interest but it has got nothing to do with the question that I asked.

MR SPEAKER: Just a moment. The Chief Minister has just begun to reply.

Mr Berry: I would refer you to standing order 118(a), Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: It says that an answer shall be concise and confined to the subject matter of the question. There is no point of order. Go on, Chief Minister.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, the answer to that question is yes. Mr Knop is the chair of the Hotel School. Yes, the Hotel School did use the Sydney office. Yes, Mr Knop is the person who rented the Sydney office to the ACT Government. Yes, Mr Knop is the person who has managed to turn the Hotel School around from an absolute disaster under those opposite to an entity that is starting to look like it might break even.

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MR BERRY: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Chief Minister concede that the International Hotel School, the board of which is chaired by Mr Ian Knop, rented the office from Mr Ian Knop's company in Sydney?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I think I have answered that question already. Mr Knop is the chair of the Hotel School and yes, they did use the office in Sydney. Is Mr Berry suggesting that they should have rented another office that was not the ACT office because Mr Knop was renting the current Sydney office to the Government?

Mr Berry: Will the Chief Minister just confirm in ordinary straightforward language for everybody to understand whether it is true that he rented the office from himself.

MR SPEAKER: You do not have to answer that, Chief Minister. The question has been answered. You do not get three questions, Mr Berry.

Roadworks

MR KAINE: Mr Speaker, I would like a bit of hush so that the Minister can hear my question. My question, through you, Mr Speaker, is to the Minister for Urban Services. I am sure he has already got his answer ready, because I am sure he will have been warned that I would be asking a question such as this. I will not tell you how he will know, but he will find it under "M" for Monaro Highway. In the budget for 1997-98, in the capital works program there was provision for the expenditure of \$2.95m on a stretch of the Monaro Highway between Royalla and Williamsdale, of which \$694,000 was to have been spent in last year's budget and the remainder of which, around \$2.25m, was to have been spent this year, because the completion date was May 1999. Minister, this year's capital works program makes absolutely no reference to that project whatsoever. It has disappeared from the face of the earth. Minister, is it a fact that that project that was in last year's capital works program had so little priority attached to it that it can completely disappear out of the works program between last year's budget and this one?

MR SMYTH: I thank the member for his question. No, that still is a priority. That is something that we will do. It is now programmed to commence in August-September 1999 and to be completed in April-May the following year.

MR KAINE: I ask a supplementary question. Minister, where does that appear in this year's capital works program? I have a copy of the capital works program in front of me. It is not mentioned. It has completely disappeared from the capital works program. It does not show as works in progress, it does not show in the forward design list - it does not show anywhere.

MR SMYTH: It is not included in the budget papers this year because they cover year 1998-99 projects only. It is included in the capital works program in the outyears.

Floriade

MR WOOD: My question is to the Chief Minister. During springtime in Canberra many Canberra parents spend their lunchtimes visiting Floriade to see and hear their children from primary and secondary schools and colleges entertaining the crowds, free, through dance, song and music. The audiences in the past have enjoyed the shows. The children certainly enjoyed the chance to perform. This year, however, the schools and children have not been invited to participate. Is it the case that the reason for this decision is to save the Government the embarrassment of having thousands of parents complaining about having to pay to get in?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I can guarantee that that is not the case. When that came to my attention yesterday, I sought a briefing from CTEC, but I have not got that briefing yet.

Mr Wood: I take it you will tell me when you get your briefing.

MS CARNELL: Absolutely.

MR WOOD: I will put a plug in. It is great to go over there and listen to the school choirs, bands and so on. It shows what a good job our schools are doing.

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I do not know that that was a supplementary question. It was a comment, I think. I agree. Obviously, the decision on who performs at Floriade is made by the organisers of Floriade, not by the Government. Mr Humphries and I do not get in there and say, "Who will we have on the agenda this year?". We do not do that, as those opposite will know perfectly well. I have sought a briefing, and I will be interested to see the basis of the decision as well.

Miles Franklin Primary School

MR RUGENDYKE: My question is to the Education Minister, Mr Stefaniak. Minister, I raise this question on behalf of the community of the Miles Franklin Primary School. Presently the children there do not have an oval at their school fit for use. How does this comply with your compulsory physical education policy?

Mr Stanhope: Good question, Dave.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, it is a good question, because you lot started it, Mr Stanhope, making 27 ovals low maintenance.

Mr Corbell: And how long have you been in government, Mr Stefaniak?

MR STEFANIAK: Quite a while, Mr Corbell. I think if members opposite realised - - -

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Mr Corbell: You have been in government for four years now, have you not?

MR STEFANIAK: Shut up, will you.

MR SPEAKER: Order! Mr Minister, answer Mr Rugendyke's question, please.

MR STEFANIAK: I would remind members opposite of the fact that between 1992 and 1994 they made some 27 ovals, 16 of which were next to primary schools, low maintenance. We are now seeing some of the problems in relation to that. Members will be well aware too of the budgetary problems this Government has. Mr Rugendyke, that has been one of the more significant, annoying problems that I have faced in that area. I would love to be able to say that we will bring them all back to full maintenance. The fact is that we do not have enough money for that. Questions were asked in the Estimates Committee about that. That is just a sad fact of life. With a lot of effort over the last three years, I think I have managed to bring about 1½ ovals back to full maintenance.

As a result of steps I took towards the end of last year and earlier this year, a number of people, including some principals in the Department of Education, along with people from the Bureau of Sport and Mr Wheeler's area, are looking at this question to see what can be done within our current financial constraints to ensure that schools have adequate access to recreational and sporting facilities, and especially to see what can be done to fix up problems at ovals such as the one at Miles Franklin. I am well aware of the problem at Miles Franklin. I was out there only a few months ago. The oval is basically a paddock. That is a real problem. Some schools on low maintenance have some areas of playing ground which are not too much of a problem but a number have what I regard as a very serious problem, hence the fact that I have a group of people, including school principals, going through that at present. I would hope to be in a position within the next few weeks to be able to make an announcement. I understand that that group is going through various schools looking at questions of access and equity and looking at what can be done within available funds. It is a problem that my people have been working on for about eight months to rectify. I say again that that situation goes back to what I think was a most regrettable decision taken between 1992 and 1994 by the previous Government.

Estimates 1998-99 - Select Committee

MR HIRD: Mr Speaker, through you, my question is to the chair of the Select Committee on Estimates. It relates to the report presented last week by the majority of the committee. Did you determine what the recommendations your committee put forward would add to the bottom line of the budget?

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, I am pleased to receive this question, because last evening the Chief Minister was on television saying the Estimates Committee had given her budget the tick. Of course, it was far from that. Indeed, this Estimates Committee report was the most substantial ever. It had more recommendations in relation to the Chief Minister's budget than ever. Fifty recommendations were critical of the Chief Minister's budget.

MR SPEAKER: Relevance!

Ms Carnell: I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

MR BERRY: If you want to face the music on your budget, the best way is to put it - - -

MR SPEAKER: A point of order has been taken, Mr Berry. Please sit down.

Ms Carnell: Mr Berry does have to be relevant, as he forever reminds me.

MR BERRY: You asked the question. I will give you the answer that I want to give.

MR SPEAKER: Order! I find it fascinating when the boot is on the other foot. It still fits. Relevance!

MR BERRY: The boot fits and the boot has got a lot of room in it. Mr Speaker, the Estimates Committee did not set out to change the bottom line. That is the Government's position. It has been going on with this hogwash that it is the Estimates Committee's role in life to construct the budget and have regard to the bottom line. It is the Government's job to present a budget to the community and to the Assembly, and it is the Estimates Committee's role to scrutinise the budget and to find the flaws in it. We found at least 50 flaws which were endorsed by the majority of members - - -

MR SPEAKER: It sounds like a high-rise, but go on.

MR BERRY: Indeed. The 50 recommendations included some recommendations about quite significant issues. I will go to the 50 recommendations, Mr Speaker.

Mr Moore: Mr Speaker, I raise a small point of order. It does not have to do with relevance. I am asking that the question be treated in exactly the same way as I treat questions; that is, the answer should be consistent with standing order 118(a), which provides that answers to questions shall be concise and confined to the subject matter. As members opposite will know, that is exactly how I seek to answer questions, and I think it is appropriate for Mr Berry to do so too.

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, if I can - - -

Mr Moore: I raised the point of order, Mr Speaker, because Mr Berry said that he would now proceed to the 50 recommendations of the Estimates Committee, which under standing order 118(a) he is not entitled to do, because that would not be concise and it would not be confined to the subject matter of the question.

MR SPEAKER: I am sure that Mr Berry will be guided by standing orders. He is, after all, something of an expert on them.

MR BERRY: Indeed, but not as expert as you, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you.

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MR BERRY: That is why I will rely on the conventions and rulings that you have given in this place up to this point.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, in which case you will be concise, will you not?

MR BERRY: I will in particular rely on your ruling that Ministers can answer questions how they like.

MR SPEAKER: Yes, indeed.

MR BERRY: I would expect the same leniency in the way that I respond to this question that has been quite properly put.

MR SPEAKER: As long as you are relevant.

MR BERRY: Oh, a note. I must read the note. It reads:

This is the same as giving you unlimited speaking time.
Go, Bernard Collaery.

MR SPEAKER: Fair enough. Touche!

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, I must say that I am lusting for the opportunity to press on with a full and comprehensive answer to the question that has been asked, but I think it can be most easily answered by dealing with one issue that was dealt with in the Estimates Committee process; that is, it is the Government's job to put forward a budget which is acceptable to the Assembly. It is the Assembly's job to scrutinise it and find flaws where they exist. The majority of us found 50 matters which were worth commenting on. It is up to the Government to satisfy the Assembly in respect of its budget. Colleagues on the Estimates Committee with me made certain recommendations, and a couple of motions have been passed as a result. One motion passed related to a recommendation in the majority report about the Floriade fee and one other - - -

Mr Moore: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. I recognise your previous rulings about the amount of freedom Mr Berry has, but the question was: "Have you costed the recommendations that you made?"

MR SPEAKER: A very simple question.

Mr Kaine: Mr Speaker, I want to comment in connection with the point of order raised by the Minister. My comment is simply this: Who in fact wrote the question that was asked? Was it Mr Moore or was it Mr Hird?

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Mr Kaine. Mr Moore's point of order is upheld. Please remember, Mr Berry, that the question that was asked related to costs, as I recall.

MR BERRY: I am coming to that, Mr Speaker. You always remind us that we should come to the point of the question at the end of the day. There was a recommendation by the majority of committee members in relation to the Floriade fee. As a result of a motion passed yesterday, with an amendment, the recommendation was accepted by the Assembly almost word perfect. As I explained to the Chief Minister, it is not the role of the Estimates Committee to construct budgets. I would be quite happy if that role was given over to the Estimates Committee, because I am certain that we could do a better job of it than the Government has, but that is not our role. We do not present budgets.

Mr Humphries: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question was pretty concise. It was: "Did you determine what the recommendations your committee put forward would cost?". Nothing Mr Berry has said in his 10 minutes so far has actually addressed that question.

MR SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order.

Ms Tucker: I wish to comment on that ruling, Mr Speaker. When I asked last week that you insist the Chief Minister answer my question you did not insist on it, and as Ms Carnell sat down she said, "I will answer it how I bloody-well like". Why do we not have a little bit of consistency?

Ms Carnell: No, I did not say that, Mr Speaker. I ask for that to be withdrawn.

MR SPEAKER: I hope you withdrew the word if you used it.

Ms Carnell: I did not say that.

MR SPEAKER: I will have to check *Hansard* on that one.

MR BERRY: If the Chief Minister did say that, she was taking your lead, and it is another one of your expert assessments of the standing orders.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Be careful.

MR BERRY: In relation to the Floriade fee, the decision of course was taken by the - - -

Mr Humphries: I rise on a point of order again.

MR SPEAKER: Order! We are now dealing with irrelevance to the question.

Mr Humphries: I think we are, Mr Speaker. You have already ruled that the answer has to be relevant. Floriade is not the question. The question was about all the recommendations and the budget.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, Mr Speaker: The Floriade recommendation is one of the recommendations of the Estimates Committee, and it relates directly to the question Mr Berry was asked as chair of that committee.

MR SPEAKER: No, the question was: "Did you cost it?".

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MR BERRY: I am coming to that.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Berry, if you are dealing with Floriade, perhaps you can answer the Government whether you costed Floriade.

MR BERRY: I have already said, Mr Speaker, that it was the Government's job to construct the budget. It was never the role of the Estimates Committee to do that. Let me give you an example of what might occur arising from the Estimates Committee. For example, my colleagues sitting on the crossbenches over there, Mr Corbell and I agreed on the issue of the Floriade fee. A motion was carried yesterday calling on the Government to do something about that. Reinstating the gold coin fee was Mr Osborne's idea. We thought it should be free, but with compromise and consensus we came together and we came up with this decision. A motion put before the chamber was agreed to. Mrs Carnell was out in the media yesterday saying she was not going to take any notice of it. The weight now falls on my colleagues from the crossbenches to decide what they might do about that. If the Government was not so arrogant about the issue, it could go away and adjust its budget to deal with those issues.

MR SPEAKER: Order! We are now well away from the question.

MR BERRY: The costing and the reconstruction of the budget which flow from Estimates Committee recommendations are not the role of the Estimates Committee. We do not have our hands on the levers. It is the role of the Government to do that and it is our job to look at the bottom line.

MR SPEAKER: Order! The question has been answered. A question fully answered cannot be renewed.

Mr Rugendyke: Mr Speaker, I take a point of order. I draw your attention to standing order 202(a), (d) and (e), and I call on you to name Mr Berry under that standing order.

MR SPEAKER: That relates to persistently and wilfully obstructing the business of the Assembly. I think the question has been comprehensively answered.

MR HIRD: I ask a supplementary question. I do not want to let him off easy. Mr Berry, I take it from your answer that the answer to my question was no. You said in a media release dated 17 February this year, in relation to Labor's discredited costings before the ACT election:

Labor will add an average of less than \$10 million a year over three years to the ACT's operating expenses.

Mr Kaine: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is a supplementary question, and there is not supposed to be a preamble. Why do you not tell him to sit down while I take my point of order?

MR HIRD: How do you explain the Estimates Committee report, which, if adopted, would add \$83m to the budget's bottom line over the next four years? Or is it, as your leader says, all care and no responsibility?

Mr Kaine: Mr Speaker, I tried to take a point of order but the member just spoke over the top of me. I was trying to draw your attention to the fact that supplementary questions are not supposed to have a preamble, let alone a long one.

MR SPEAKER: The preamble was certainly germane to the question.

MR BERRY: There is a preliminary matter I must deal with, Mr Speaker, before I go to the central issue of Mr Hird's question. He did mention Labor's costings before the last election. There was a stark contrast between Labor's costings and those of the Liberals opposite. We were accused in the election campaign, and we have been accused since, of not understanding accrual accounting, which is of course a very straightforward accounting system which most people associated with government these days are beginning to understand. It seems that, whilst the Liberals were accusing us of not understanding it, they had a difficulty themselves. Labor came forward with some costings which were in complete accrual terms right down to the last dollar. Nobody could criticise them. They were spot-on to the last dollar. Who was it who did not put forward an election budget in accrual terms? Kate Carnell. Kate Carnell put forward her election budget in cash terms.

Mr Stanhope: Did that include the Belconnen pool, Mr Berry?

MR BERRY: Of course, it did include the Belconnen pool. One costing that I can be confident that was considered by the Estimates Committee was the gold coin donation to Floriade. That was one costing we did. We thought that was a reasonable one, but it would be difficult to know what the full outcome would be at the end of the day, because it would be a donation rather than the compulsory fee which people visiting the ACT will be confronted by when they turn up. I hope they dig deep, pay the fee and go and see the beautiful Floriade, because it will be a joy. It was opened today, incidentally. The free Floriade was opened today by the leader of the Labor Party, Mr Stanhope, and we recommend that people go to the free Floriade and perhaps they will go back for the one that you have to pay an entry fee to get into. Of course, we would recommend it.

I go to the second motion that we passed as a result of the Estimates Committee report. This arose from a minority report, although in the end it was supported by other members of the Estimates Committee as well. It might well have been a majority report. Members might think about that.

Mr Moore: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. First of all, the questions were all about the Estimates Committee report, not about a minority report. My second point is relevance under standing order 118(a). Mr Hird asked whether Mr Berry would add the \$83m to the operating loss. It is about the amount of money.

MR BERRY: No, we would not, because that is not the role of the Estimates Committee to add \$83m to the bottom line.

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MR SPEAKER: Standing order 118, apart from paragraphs (a) and (b), has a tail that reads:

... and the Speaker may direct a Member to terminate an answer if of the opinion that these provisions are being contravened or that the Member has had a sufficient opportunity to answer the question.

Mr Wood: You have never done it with this lot.

MR SPEAKER: This lot, as you call it, has never spent 20 minutes answering a question, or trying to answer one.

MR BERRY: I beg your leave, Mr Speaker. All I am trying to do is make up some of the lost ground that - - -

MR SPEAKER: You will be begging my pardon very shortly, I can assure you, if you keep going on with this.

MR BERRY: I just want your leave at the moment. I would welcome these questions each day. I quite enjoy them because they give me the opportunity to traverse ground which ultimately will be traversed in the course of this Assembly. Important issues arose from the Estimates Committee report. It was a good report, with 50 recommendations critical of the Government's budget. It did not add anything - - -

MR SPEAKER: You are not answering the question.

MR BERRY: It did not add anything to the bottom line.

Mr Hargreaves: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek a ruling from you. We have heard those opposite run points of order complaining about the time Mr Berry has taken to answer these questions. During that time they have repeated points of order, they have interjected and they have talked over the top of him. I seek your assistance. If in accordance with the standing orders you seek to quieten them down and keep them from interjecting, the answer will be over in a fraction of the time.

MR SPEAKER: The answer is going to be over in a fraction of the time anyway, because Mr Berry has about one minute before I close it down.

MR BERRY: That is just about long enough. No, it did not add anything to the bottom line, because that is not the role of the Estimates Committee. It would be an exciting new role for the Estimates Committee if we were given that responsibility. We would not need a government then. We would not need an Executive. We could save all that money and use it for things like Floriade. We also recommended things like the retention of the voluntary redundancy provisions in the public sector award. That will not cost anything more than last year.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Berry. Please resume your seat.

Drugs in Sport

MR OSBORNE: My question is to the Chief Minister and it is in relation to the Olympics. I know that you have been a big supporter of sport, so my question to you is this: Do you support the call by the Australian Olympic Committee, and I believe SOCOG, that drug cheats be gaoled for life?

MS CARNELL: No.

MR OSBORNE: That is interesting. Have you let SOCOG and the Australian Olympic Committee know that you disagree with their views on drug cheats?

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I do not think I have ever kept my views terribly secret, but the reason I do not think I would support gaoling for life is that at \$54,000 a year the cost would be a bit heavy. I am sure that everybody in this Assembly believes that sensible and very stringent rules with regard to drugs in sport must be part of this Olympics. This must be the drug-free Olympics.

Salaried Medical Officers

MR HARGREAVES: My question is to the Minister for Health and Community Care. Yesterday the Minister confirmed that the contract with ACTION to transport rehabilitation patients to Canberra Hospital had been cancelled as a cost-cutting exercise. Can the Minister confirm information given to the Estimates Committee that a 14 per cent increase for salaried medical officers has been negotiated and that savings generated through service program changes in the hospital will contribute the cash to address this increase?

MR MOORE: Mr Speaker, in answering this question I will seek not to go back to my days as a member on the crossbenches when the Labor Government was in. I was reminded of it so clearly when Mr Berry stood to answer his question. The way Mr Berry answered his questions today was basically how he answered almost every question when he was a Minister. The negotiations for salaried specialists and VMOs were based on a set of parameters to line us up with New South Wales.

Issues raised by Mr Berry in the debate on the budget and implied in Mr Hargreaves's question today suggest that we should make sure that we do all other negotiations in exactly the same way as we did them with salaried specialists; that it would be just as logical to say that we should carry out other negotiations in exactly the same way as we have with the VMOs and seek to cut in the order of 15 per cent from people's salary. No, Mr Hargreaves, I am not going to be seeking to make the same cuts as I made to VMOs, nor am I going to seek to use exactly the same processes as we have used with salaried specialists, nor am I going to use the same processes as we have used with salaried specialists when we do other negotiations.

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Mr Corbell: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. I think the Minister misunderstands the question from Mr Hargreaves. The question was not about the process of negotiation. Mr Hargreaves simply asked whether or not a 14 per cent increase in pay for salaried medical officers had been negotiated and whether the savings generated through service program changes in the hospital would contribute to the pay increase.

MR SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Mr Corbell. Resume your seat. You are just repeating the question.

MR MOORE: I gave the Estimates Committee quite specific details on how the contracts worked, and there is no change from those details.

MR HARGREAVES: I ask a supplementary question. The Minister has not come even close to the question. He just talked about where he was going to get money from, not about whether it was going to be negotiated at all. I suggest that the Minister check *Hansard* for the question. I will ask my supplementary question slowly, because last time the Minister missed my question. Does the Minister consider it appropriate that, at a time when services for disabled people are being reduced to save money, funds are being ploughed into a 14 per cent pay increase, backdated more than 12 months, for salaried medical officers, one of whom is in charge of those very services?

MR MOORE: The premise upon which Mr Hargreaves asks the question is simply wrong. We are not cutting services to people. In fact, we are providing people who need rehabilitation with a private taxi service from their door to the door of the hospital, with the exception of the people who are able to use public transport. If they are able to use public transport or a private method of transport, then it is appropriate that the money that would have been spent there be spent in other health areas. I am not embarrassed about it at all. As I said yesterday, I am very proud to be associated with an improvement of services for the vast majority of people who need assistance in their rehabilitation. This is an improvement in service, and it is a great saving at the same time. In other words, in your parlance, it is a win-win situation. The quarter of a million dollars that will be saved in this way can be spent in useful ways to improve the health of people.

A simplistic approach is suggested by Mr Hargreaves in his question. He implies that we should cut the salaries of salaried specialists and VMOs. We recognise that there is competition throughout Australia for these sorts of positions and, because it suits the needs of the hospital, we seek an appropriate balance between VMOs and salaried specialists. In my opinion that means an increase in the number of salaried specialists we have employed. We are ensuring that we are able to keep salaried specialists in the hospital to do a fantastic job.

Mr Hargreaves: The disabled are paying for that 14 per cent.

MR MOORE: When those opposite pick on the salaried specialists in this way - - -

Mr Hargreaves: You are using the disabled to pay for this 14 per cent pay rise.

MR MOORE: They ought to be conscious that each and every one of those salaried specialists is entirely capable of becoming a VMO and by doing so would probably treble or quadruple their salary. They would become much better off financially. We have sought to ensure that we can retain those salaried specialists, because it suits us and it suits the community. The best health service we can get will come from retaining those salaried specialists. We have sought to do that.

The interjection that keeps coming from Mr Hargreaves about using the disabled to pay for it is just nonsense. We have improved the service, Mr Hargreaves. I do not know who established the practice of having buses running all over Canberra. I do not know how it could possibly have been thought of when, quite clearly, for about 10 per cent of the cost you can have taxis go to somebody's door, pick them up and take them to the hospital. Quite clearly, this is an improved service. Who knows how somebody could have initiated the original service, although many things in Canberra that have gone on for a long time have not been looked at.

I am excited that we have people within the hospital system, within the department, looking at these issues and saying, "Is this the best, most effective, most efficient way to deliver a service?". An officer, whom I must chase up so I can give credit where it is due, has discovered that we can provide this better service for a much cheaper price. I think they deserve congratulations.

Youth Week

MR CORBELL: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for children's, youth and family services. Can the Minister explain why the ACT Government did not sponsor a youth week for 1998 as it has in previous years and instead chose only to promote a single youth day?

MR STEFANIAK: There are a number of reasons for that. The main one is the fact that in 1998 we were meant to have a nationally coordinated youth week. Unfortunately, that did not eventuate. In consultation with various youth bodies, it was decided that we should still do something, and accordingly we are having a youth day. We are planning to revert to the very popular youth week from next year, at about this time, or even a few weeks earlier. It was mooted a couple of years ago at a Youth Ministers meeting that about August 1998 would be an ideal time for a national youth week. I think you will find that my State and Territory counterparts have all been working towards that. Unfortunately, that did not proceed. I do not know what happened there. I think the Commonwealth, who were meant to be doing something, did not in fact go ahead with that. Accordingly, we decided to have a youth day.

We had only so much time to organise something and for the youth themselves to do the work they would need to do. However, the Youth Advisory Committee, amongst others, were very keen to see something done, and they felt that a youth day would be the best idea. Late this year the Canberra community is going to come together to celebrate

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young people, their contribution and their achievements during a youth-in-focus day of celebration. We have selected a well-known group in Canberra, the YWCA, to coordinate the event. Currently the Office of Community and Youth Development are having discussions with the YWCA on activities, events and timings for the day of celebration.

I think it should be an excellent day. The last two youth weeks, especially the one in 1997, were particularly good. We are getting more and more young people involved. The diversity of activities, especially in 1997, was excellent. A lot of people can be commended for that, including the various people on the Youth Advisory Committee, who put in a lot of effort. Unfortunately, they felt that they did not have the time to be involved to the same extent this year. Hence, when we found out that Commonwealth and State/Territory negotiations about a national youth week event had been delayed, we decided, in consultation with the committee, to opt for a youth day. I am very confident that the result of what will be a very successful day will see the youth week reactivated next year. Mr Corbell, I understand that the idea of a national youth week is still there, although it looks like it may not occur now until 2000.

MR CORBELL: I am pleased to hear the Minister's reassurance that youth week will be restored next year. Can the Minister confirm that youth week this year was a victim of cuts to his department's budget?

MR STEFANIAK: No, it certainly was not a result of any cuts or any efficiencies or anything like that. Youth week has not exactly cost us a huge amount of money. I think last year it was something in the order of \$10,000. A youth day, if my memory serves me correctly, does not involve a huge amount of money. In fact, we get some good support. We try to get support from various sponsors. We are actively involving more of the business community. I think it would have been great had we had a national youth week in August, as was planned two years ago. Canberra probably leads the way in how we organise youth week. It is getting bigger and better. In a way, it is a bit of a shame that we are only having a youth day, but I still think that will be an excellent event. I look forward to a youth week next year. I hope the idea of a national youth week does not go out the window. I understand the year 2000 is now being looked at for that. Regardless of whether that goes ahead or not, we will certainly be having a youth week in 1999.

Cinemas

MS TUCKER: My question, directed to the Minister for Urban Services, concerns his responsibility for planning in the ACT. At the Manuka LAPAC meeting this week, the owners of the Manuka cinema complex presented a proposal to expand the number of its cinemas from three to six. We also have on the table the proposal for eight cinemas in the expanded Canberra Centre. These new cinemas are on top of the large cinema complexes that have been built in recent years in the Belconnen and Tuggeranong town centres. It now seems that we are developing a cinema war in Canberra to match the retail war between the town centres which is exacerbating the oversupply of retail space in this city. In the retail war, the local shopping centres have been the casualties.

In the cinema war we are likely to see the demise of the independent cinemas like Electric Shadows, which will lead to less diversity in the movies shown in Canberra, not more. We will just end up with the same movies being shown in more locations, just as we have the same retail chains in all the malls. Does this Government value having diversity in both cinema and retail industries in Canberra, or do you think we are better served by having these industries dominated by a few major players?

MR SMYTH: This Government does value diversity. I am not aware of the details of what was put to the Manuka LAPAC, but all such proposals will be considered on their merits.

MS TUCKER: My supplementary question is: How do you believe, right now, as planning Minister, that you are ensuring that diversity is retained?

MR SMYTH: The diversity is currently there. A significant number of submissions have been received on the proposed variation for eight cinemas in Civic. We will look at and assess all those submissions as required by the process. We will take them into account before any inner decisions are made to progress any developments.

Ms Carnell: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper. I note that it is 3.30 and Mr Berry took 20 minutes of question time, so the Government did well.

CULTURAL FACILITIES CORPORATION Paper

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present, pursuant to subsection 29(3) of the Cultural Facilities Corporation Act 1997, the third quarterly report, for the period 1 April 1998 to 30 June 1998, of the Cultural Facilities Corporation.

PAPERS

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer): Mr Speaker, for the information of members, I present the following papers:

Calvary Public Hospital - Information Bulletin - Patient Activity Data -
July 1998.

Calvary Public Hospital - Information Bulletin - Patient Activity Data -
July 1998.

Pursuant to standing order 83A, I present an out-of-order petition, lodged by Mr Moore from 358 citizens, concerning the Health Regulation (Abortions) Bill 1998.

SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION Paper

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer): Pursuant to section 6 of the Subordinate Laws Act 1989, I present Subordinate Law No. 208 of 1998, being a reference for investigation under section 15 and specified requirements in relation to investigation under section 16 of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Commission Act 1997 and notified in *Gazette* No. S191, dated 3 September 1998.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Police - Equipment Upgrades

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Speaker, I took on notice a question yesterday from Mr Rugendyke concerning the programs for equipment replacement or upgrade by the Australian Federal Police. I table an answer to that question.

Roadworks

MR SMYTH: Mr Speaker, on 26 May Mr Kaine asked me a question about the Monaro Highway intersection with Johnson Drive and Tharwa Road. I took the question on notice and got information and read that information into *Hansard* on 27 May. Mr Kaine very kindly asked me a question earlier this week about the delays. Upon checking with the department, it would appear that I have been misinformed as to the starting and completion dates. The project should commence in February 1999 and be completed in June 1999. The advice I read back in May, to which Mr Kaine referred on Tuesday, said that it would actually be completed in 1999. I have a letter from the department. I will table that for Mr Kaine's information. Further to Mr Kaine's question this afternoon about the Monaro Highway, I also table two documents which were presented to the Urban Services Committee. They clearly put the position and the timing of the Monaro Highway.

Casino Canberra - Licensed Club

MR SMYTH: I have an answer to a question Mr Rugendyke asked last month in relation to the \$30,000 change of use charge to enable Casino Canberra to have a licensed club within its premises. I refer the member to my letter dated 15 July 1998, in which I explained the calculation of change of use charge for the recent Casino Canberra lease variation. I table that letter, Mr Speaker. In considering the new value of Casino Canberra under the revised lease, the projected income stream from a development

that took advantage of a change of use charge was capitalised using rental figures from other clubs within Civic. Overall, it was determined that the additional purpose clauses added only marginally to the capital value of the property. The casino operates from a premium rather than a rental lease. Because of this, the Government will not receive any proportion of the rent the casino may derive from having a club on those premises as a tenant.

Mr Rugendyke then asked a supplementary question. Again, I refer to my letter to Mr Rugendyke dated 15 July 1998. I can only reiterate that the estimated change of use charge differed from the amount paid as there was a change of valuation approach due to the amendments of the Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991 that took effect on 24 June 1998. Details of the change of use charge are tabled in the Assembly quarterly. When an amount of change of use charge has been determined, an applicant can seek to have the amount reviewed by lodging an appeal with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. During 1997-98 four such appeals were lodged with the AAT. Of the four applications for review, three succeeded in having the AAT direct that the amount be reduced by more than half. I table the details of these lease variations and the AAT decisions.

Canberra Cosmos

MR STEFANIAK: During question time yesterday I took on notice a question from Mr Quinlan about funding for soccer. Soccer in the ACT has been funded from a number of sources, including the Bureau of Sport, Recreation and Racing, Healthpact and various programs in the Chief Minister's Department. For the benefit of Mr Quinlan and other members, I table details of triennial assistance to Soccer Canberra, previously the ACT Soccer Federation, under the sport and recreation development grants scheme. The triennial grant of \$31,000 relates to men's senior soccer and junior soccer, including girls not in the under-16s or above. The grant to the ACT Women's Soccer Association refers to senior women's soccer, which includes under 16-girls upwards.

The rest of the document is self-explanatory. It contains advice I have received not only from my own bureau but also from the relevant areas of the program which the Chief Minister's Department runs, together with details from Healthpact, which is run through the office of Minister for Health.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION Ministerial Statement

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (3.35): Mr Speaker, I ask for leave of the Assembly to make a ministerial statement on community consultation.

Leave granted.

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MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide members of the Assembly with information on the work being done across the ACT Government to improve the consultation which is undertaken with the community. Over the past two years my Government has made a very strong commitment to the development and improvement of community consultation in the ACT. I have been only too well aware that there is always room for improvement, especially in a dynamic area such as consultation with the ACT community.

In response to community concerns raised in January 1997 and an Assembly motion passed on government-community consultation in February 1997, a strategy to improve the way in which agencies, on behalf of the Government, consult with the community is being implemented. The strategy includes the Register of Community Consultation. The register is updated quarterly and provides information on all the consultation processes which are occurring between the Government and the community. You may be interested to know that there were 175 consultations shown on the register as at the end of June this year, involving most government agencies and community, business and industry groups. The register provides information about the nature of the project, the target group, the process employed, the timeframe and the status of the consultation, those consulted and the methods used to provide feedback to the participants. For the information of members, I table the Register of Community Consultation.

Mr Speaker, the strategy includes two other key parts - the agreed consultation protocol, which was developed in 1997 through a partnership with community groups; and a consultation manual, which is a guide for government agencies in implementing the principles of the consultation protocol when they consult with the community. I table the protocol and the manual.

The strategy also includes a program for training sessions for ACT government staff. The first round, for senior government managers, was held in March and April this year and the second round, for other ACT government staff, was commenced in August and will continue into September 1998. The strategy also includes the community consultation database, containing information and contact details of the approximately 5,000 community groups which operate within the ACT. It also includes meetings with community groups and organisations. Since its establishment in 1997, the Customer Involvement Unit in my department has met with over 300 groups in the community, providing them with an opportunity to give government their views on consultation and to raise matters of concern.

This Government has a very strong commitment to effective community consultation, as I believe we have demonstrated with the strategy I have just outlined. Governments are elected to make decisions on behalf of the community and at times decisions have to be made quickly. I certainly do not apologise for that fact. In fact, the one thing that I will not do is go to the community for its views on an issue when a decision has already been made, something that I think many governments have done. Consultation must be genuine. It must not be tokenistic. I want the community to be sure that when it is asked for its views they are being asked honestly and that they really do have the opportunity to influence the decision being made. We will not go to consultation on decisions that have already been made.

I believe that it is important to release this register to show once again that the Government is clearly committed to ongoing consultation with Canberrans and to demonstrably refute claims by some that they do not feel that they have been consulted enough. As you can see, Mr Speaker, with these documents, the Government has produced tangible proof of its commitment to community consultation.

Mr Speaker, I would like to use this opportunity to thank Tina van Raay and her team - Tina is here - for the enormous amount of work that they have done in the Customer Involvement Unit in the Chief Minister's Department. It is a tough job, and one that they have done very well.

I reaffirm to the Assembly that the Government considers consultation to be an integral part of its approach to policy development and to decision-making. I am also very pleased that this approach has been put together in consultation with the community and with the support of such organisations as ACTCOSS.

I present the following paper:

Community Consultation - ministerial statement, 3 September 1998.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1998-99

[COGNATE PAPER:

ESTIMATES 1998-99 - SELECT COMMITTEE - REPORT ON THE APPROPRIATION
BILL 1998-99 - GOVERNMENT RESPONSE]

Detail Stage

Schedule 1 - Appropriations

Debate resumed.

MR SPEAKER: I remind members that we have previously resolved to debate this order of the day concurrently with the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 1998-99 on the Appropriation Bill 1998-99. Therefore, in debating order of the day No. 1, Executive business, they may also address their remarks to order of the day No. 1, Assembly business, relating to the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 1998-99 on the Appropriation Bill 1998-99.

Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this Bill will be considered; that is, in the detail stage, any Schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the Schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. I remind members that we have previously agreed to consider Schedule 1 by part, appropriation unit and departmental totals, then the clauses prior to Schedule 2 and the title.

Part 13 - ACT Forests

Proposed expenditure - ACT Forests, \$840,000 (comprising capital injection, \$840,000)

MR CORBELL (3.41): Mr Speaker, in moving to the appropriation unit ACT Forests, the most notable thing that emerged in the Estimates Committee hearing on ACT Forests was something which actually had nothing to do with ACT Forests because it was a tennis match. Mr Speaker, I am afraid that that says a lot about what exactly is going on in this Government. The Estimates Committee was very surprised to learn that ACT Forests had sponsored a tennis match in Canberra - a tennis match between the two Woodies, as they are known.

Ms Carnell: It was really good too.

MR CORBELL: The Chief Minister says, "It was really good". I was not there so I do not know whether it was really good. I am not much of a tennis aficionado myself. I would not think foresters would be tennis aficionados either, at least in their professional capacity, Mr Speaker, but obviously they are. What was most concerning was that, when we discovered that ACT Forests had sponsored this tennis match and we asked why, the answer we received was even more extraordinary than the fact that ACT Forests was sponsoring a tennis match in the first place; and that was, there was an obvious connection between Woodies, trees and forests.

Ms Carnell: There is.

MR CORBELL: What an incredibly astute and devastating use of intellect to bring together that answer. Does the Government consider members of the Estimates Committee to be fools? More importantly, does the Government consider members of the community to be fools? It is an absolutely absurd suggestion that ACT Forests would somehow benefit because the tennis players were called the Woodies and ACT Forests obviously grew trees. Mr Speaker, it is a bizarre justification.

Mr Wood: It is a pathetic excuse.

MR CORBELL: As my colleague Mr Wood points out, it is even more than that; it is a pathetic excuse. Mr Wood, you are quite right to say that.

Obviously the Estimates Committee was not prepared to accept this excuse and this justification from the Department of Urban Services and the people at ACT Forests, so we further asked, "What were the circumstances that surrounded this occurring in the first place? How did this come about?". We soon discovered that what had actually

happened was that the Chief Minister, the chief executive officer of the Department of Urban Services and our friend, Mr Ian Knop, who is chairman of the Hotel School and also the principal of a company called Profile Paul Ray Berndtson, were present at an auction that was conducted in Sydney. It was for a charity, and I have no doubt it was for a very worthy charity. I understand that Mr Knop bid, and won, for the use of the two Woodies in what was going to be a practice tennis game, where the winner of the auction could practise tennis with the two Woodies.

Mr Knop, having bid for this and won it, decided that he did not want to do that and would give it to Canberra. Mr Speaker, if he wanted to do that, I guess that is fine; we do not have any particular problem with that. We then discovered that one of the other people who were present at the auction that evening, the chief executive officer of the Department of Urban Offices, was somehow involved in a process which achieved funding from ACT Forests and Environment ACT - two agencies of his department - to sponsor this tennis game which was being put on by the Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation.

Mr Speaker, this was a bizarre and completely inappropriate waste of the Canberra community's money. If there is one thing I can say about the Estimates Committee process it is that it is meant to look at whether or not the Government is spending its money appropriately, wisely and prudently. None of those things apply here. How can this Government justify one agency which is already running under significant financial pressure and having problems in the employment area, and another agency which has barely enough resources to manage Canberra Nature Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Namadgi National Park and all the other functions that it has to undertake, doing this? How can those two agencies that are cash-strapped and are finding it difficult to meet their core objectives spend money on a tennis game just because it has the Woodies, and Woodies have something to do with trees? It is an absurd suggestion. It is a farcical suggestion.

Why was this done? I guess in many ways we will never know, but you can draw a link between the people who were at the auction, the dinner - the Chief Minister, Mr Knop and Mr Gilmour. Somehow all these things connect when you look at who ended up hosting the event in Canberra - the Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation, under the Chief Minister's portfolio. I note that Mr Knop is a member of one of the boards of CTEC. Who sponsors it? It is sponsored by Environment ACT and ACT Forests. And who is responsible for that department? Under the Minister, it is his chief executive officer, Mr Gilmour. This is farcical in the extreme.

If this is the sort of activity that this Government thinks is appropriate it is no wonder there is a growing anger in the community about the arrogance of this Government. This Government thinks that it can get away with anything. Thank goodness for the estimates process. Thank goodness we were able to isolate and highlight this enormous and absurd waste of money. For a government, \$6,000 or \$10,000 may not be a lot of money, but for the ordinary ratepayer it is. If this Government has lost an understanding of that, it is no wonder the community perceives it as arrogant and out of touch.

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I await with interest the Minister's attempt to justify this because what he is doing is justifying the unjustifiable. Just because there is some bizarre link between Woodies and trees, it does not justify in any way whatsoever this absurd waste of money by two agencies that barely have enough money to run their core business, let alone sponsor a tennis match. Mr Speaker, I am sure that Mr Smyth will give a full answer. I am sure he will attempt to justify the unjustifiable, but everyone else in Canberra knows that it is absurd, that these things do not add up, that what occurred in this instance in relation to ACT Forests was a sham and, more than that, a disgrace to public administration in the Territory.

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services) (3.50): Mr Speaker, it is curious that any attempt to promote the great natural attributes that we have in the ACT seems to fall foul of all the marketing experience that obviously has been accumulated over the years in the ranks of those opposite. And it is curious that a group like Planet Ark could use Pat Cash, a tennis player, to promote some of their programs to interest young people in the environment - to interest young people into doing their bit for the environment. We then get this ridiculous mock horror that Environment ACT and ACT Forests would actually spend some money to promote a healthy lifestyle and the fine environment that we have. It is odd that, clearly, Labor cannot see the connection between wood and trees, Mr Speaker, and it is odd that, in all Mr Corbell had to say, there was no acknowledgment that later in the year when promotional material featuring the Woodies is produced it will be provided to the committee and they will see more value for what we have. There is simply one thing to say, Mr Speaker: It is quite obvious that Labor fails to see the Woodies for the trees.

MR BERRY (3.52): Mr Speaker, I just heard this frail justification for an absolutely mind-boggling decision by the Government to purchase the Woodies tennis team. They are fine tennis players and they do Australia proud, but it is not them that we are talking about here. We are talking about the way the Government managed this affair and how it dragged them into some deplorable management arrangement which might reflect badly on them. It is the Government that is under scrutiny here. I suppose we ought to be thankful, Mr Speaker, that they never engaged Pat Cash - because they would have gone to Treasury as it has more money and would have spent more on it - or Rafter.

They might have gone to Housing and received money from Housing. This is bizarre.

This whole episode has been bizarre since that gathering of senior officials and the Chief Minister at a fundraising do, enjoying the social environment of the event, as one would - and, I suspect, absorbing the ambience and perhaps taking a few other things on board as well. One can imagine that those that looked like bidding on this matter were becoming braver and braver by the minute.

At the end of the day, the Territory is stuck with a \$30,000-odd bill. That is what it boils down to. My colleague Mr Hird, I suggest at the insistence of some political genius in the Chief Minister's Department, asked me a question about how we would fund the bottom line. I can tell you what: The bottom line would be improved by a long shot if we did not get involved in these sorts of silly things.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 14 - Department of Justice and Community Safety

Proposed expenditure - Justice and Community Safety, \$144,358,000 (comprising net cost of outputs, \$78,094,000; capital injection, \$2,116,000; and payments on behalf of Territory, \$64,148,000)

MR HARGREAVES (3.55): Mr Speaker, I will make a couple of general comments and then some specific ones regarding policing. As with other parts of this budget, I found it quite difficult to make cost comparisons because of the way in which the document was presented. I would urge the presentation of more simplistic formatting so that members can actually get an idea of what has happened in years gone by. Indeed, I had to rely on questions on notice at the Estimates Committee. I am grateful to those officers who did the number crunching, but perhaps it was not really necessary.

I would like to see, within the budget papers, better and more relevant performance indicators, particularly for the AFP. I understand it has been very difficult, in a system sense, to provide this information. I know the Minister and his department have been working with the AFP to try to get some systems up so that we can get detailed information. I encourage them to keep that up. I am sure there is agreement that we are trying to make value judgments on the AFP in the dark in terms of the numerical information we have, and I appreciate the difficulty there.

Mr Speaker, I now turn specifically to the AFP. I am concerned that the number of police that we have - and I had to get this information from the Estimates Committee - and the number we should be having are two different things. Earlier we talked about being 20 down. I understand we are probably still 20 down. But if we are a quarter of the way through the year, that actually makes us 25 down - according to my calculations - and as the year rolls on the number gets higher.

For the record - and this information comes from an answer to a question on notice in the estimates - in 1996-97, the number of full-time police was 624. Advice in that answer was that the attrition rate was 3 per cent - that is, 19. That reduced the number, of course, to 605. The success rate of the recruits at 90 per cent was 34, so that bumped the number back up to 639. There was no lateral entry during that year. When we asked what the full-time equivalent, or actual, number was for that year, we were told it was 619. According to the attrition rate - those leaving - and the rate of recruits, we should have kicked off this year with 639 operative police officers, and that is not counting the support staff. I accept also that a proportion of those look after Federal and not ACT matters.

I also understand from Mr Palmer, I think it was, or Mr Stoll - I do not recall which one - that, when we have a downsurge in numbers, it is the Federal component of the service which suffers first and not the ACT part. But the difference is 20 officers. If we start the year with that many down, three months in we will be down by 25. In December it will be another five, so we will be 30 down. We would need to have 30 people coming on strength for the rest of the year to average that out so that we were not short.

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I am not suggesting for one moment that we have a massive crime wave. I do not want anybody to infer that from what I have said. But it is fairly clear to me, from reports that I have received from ordinary people in Tuggeranong, for example, with which I am familiar, that the number of police that we have on the beat is insufficient. Of course it is going to be insufficient when we open the batting at 20 down.

We have had a reasonable spate of crimes with the threat of knives. We have had some robberies. We have had some gang-type stuff happening down at Tuggeranong, which is totally unacceptable. I suspect that some of that could have been prevented, and it certainly could have been addressed, had we had more police in Tuggeranong - just a couple of them - on the pushbike patrol that they are so very good at. I might say that a lot of these episodes actually involve young people.

Now, down my way - and I am sure Mr Rugendyke will confirm it is the case up his way - the police on pushbikes are very happily received by the young people. They actually like them being there. They relate to them; they rely on them. In fact, their presence is not regarded as one of coppers threatening people. Their presence is welcomed by the kids. You find that there is a downsurge in unsatisfactory behaviour because of the police presence there. That is something I would encourage. Of course, it cannot happen if we continue throughout the year being 20 down. But I did not see anything in the budget papers, in the explanatory statements, or indeed in the estimates hearings, where there was a significant recruitment drive to pick up that missing 20.

Mr Speaker, the closure of the Woden station is an issue we have debated ad nauseam, but I mention it now because it has often been said that the so-called hot spots around the Woden area - particularly around the social security offices near the cinema, in the interchange - are not really as bad as they are; it is purely perception. I do not believe that for a minute. When departments are putting on private security people to escort people to their cars, the perception is reality. We need to ensure that the services at Woden involve a significant static presence. I am hopeful that, when we see the proposal for the new station - hopefully after a satisfactory trial - we will have that static presence there.

I am concerned that the amount of money that we are paying for the contract has not increased significantly. It was a bit of a worry last year when we had to dip into the Treasurer's Advance to get additional money from all over the place for this. Clearly, I have my doubts whether \$54m is sufficient. I am concerned that getting perhaps a few hundred thousand dollars from somewhere else may not have been a good idea.

Mr Speaker, the Government opened the new police station at Gungahlin. We all heard about the farcical situation when the police at that station had to go outside and watch a car chase go by - real Keystone Cops stuff. Something went wrong. Possibly it was something that could have been satisfied by resourcing it a little better. I suspect that the dialogue with the AFPA was not really satisfactory either. It was probably created in isolation of the serving police officers. We could learn a bit from that and get on with it.

Mr Speaker, I want to mention a couple of other things. One effect of the restructuring and reprofiling that has gone on has been a lowering of morale in the police force. I know that the morale of the emergency services people, in pockets - I make that point:

In pockets; not generally - is not as high as it could be, because of the spectre of the emergency services legislation. There are a lot of people who disagree with it and a lot of people are concerned about it. Morale is down. You might say, "What is the budgetary connection with that?". A decent budget, correctly framed, creates stability. Instability is what frightens people - so does constant and significant structural change.

Reprofiling is another word for slash and burn. That is the way the people are looking at it and they do not like it, and I do not like it. Mr Speaker, I have a press release from the Minister dated 23 July that states:

The AFP's "reprofiling" exercise, which saw 70 AFP members made redundant, has dramatically affected the ACT's community policing function.

That is why people are upset. They agree with the Minister. It further states:

14 officers from the ACT Region became part of the AFP's "reprofiling" and despite assurances that those members' positions would be filled immediately, they remain vacant.

They were vacant, therefore, on 23 July 1998. When the members see that positions are vacant for a long time as a result of a significant restructure, they begin to doubt that they will ever be refilled. (*Extension of time granted*)

I do not want to go on too long about the Ayers report, only to say that I am disappointed that we cannot have a look at it. It is a significant document. We spent \$54m on a contract with the AFP. The review by Mr Ayers is probably the most significant review in the AFP's history. I think it would have been appropriate for the Federal Minister for Justice to have paid the compliment to her ACT counterpart and provided a copy automatically. It may not have been possible to supply a complete copy because, supposedly, there would have been national security implications, but the bits relevant to the ACT could have been extracted and provided to the Minister. The Minister could then have made a judgment about whether or not it was appropriate to reveal those extracts. We would not be arguing about a whole document; we would be arguing only about its relevance to the ACT.

This was a significant review. If I had a contract with somebody to come and do something with my house and I knew that they were doing a significant restructure, I would want to know about it so I could decide whether I wanted to continue the relationship. To those people who say, "This is secret men's business. You cannot find out. This is real spook stuff. Too bad, you cannot find out", I would say, "Well, not only can we not find out but also you do not get paid". That is what I would be saying about it.

I would like to conclude on a positive note - if I can take a liberty here with the budgetary process; I am sure the Minister will allow it - by congratulating the emergency services section on the compilation of the fuel management plan. I have a copy of it in my office. This is a very responsible document, it is well compiled and it shows a leading-edge understanding of what is going on in bushfire control, particularly with forests,

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either managed or natural. The Minister and members would be aware that I sought permission during the estimates process to make available a copy of that to a contact I have in Fiji whom I have spoken to on the telephone. To put it in the vernacular, he was blown away with it. He was particularly impressed - so impressed, in fact, that I am expecting him to send one of his subordinate officers over here to talk to our people and I would like the record to show that congratulations are due to those people.

MR STANHOPE (Leader of the Opposition) (4.09): I would like to address a number of issues in relation to the Attorney-General's portfolio and this line item. I do so, in the first instance, by referring back to the Estimates Committee and its report, and the Government's response to the report. A number of significant issues were raised during the Estimates Committee process with the Attorney and officers of the Attorney's portfolio - matters, I think, of some current moment in relation to justice and its administration. I would acknowledge that the officials from the Attorney's portfolio area that appeared at estimates carried out their duties very well. I must say I have perhaps been a little selective in some of my comments about some departments, but in no way do my negative comments apply to officers of the Attorney's portfolio. I believe that they were very open in their responses to members of the committee.

Some of the issues I would like to touch on are ones that we as a community and we as an Assembly, as representatives of the people of Canberra, need to keep under scrutiny. They were discussed at some length in estimates. There was significant discussion on the Belconnen Remand Centre. The Government accepts that the Belconnen Remand Centre has passed its use-by date, and I am pleased that has been acknowledged by all concerned. The Labor Party does disagree with the Liberal Party on a replacement prison for the ACT, but I will not debate that now. We will maintain our view that a prison for the ACT would best be publicly owned and managed. That is perhaps a debate we can have at another stage. I believe that this important community debate has not been conducted fully within the community. I say to the Minister - I acknowledge that it is not an issue that we would debate now - that the Labor Party remains firmly of the view that a prison for the ACT should be publicly owned and managed.

Some of my concerns around the Belconnen Remand Centre go to the treatment of detainees with substance abuse problems. I have a very genuine and deep concern about the treatment of substance abusers in corrective institutions, and I will reiterate those. We were advised informally during the estimates process - it was not a formal, statistical response - that probably 50 per cent of all indigenous detainees at the Belconnen Remand Centre and a significant number of the detainees at Quamby have a significant substance abuse problem. I think it is accepted that 30 per cent of non-indigenous detainees at the Belconnen Remand Centre have a substance abuse problem.

I have a concern regarding the evidence provided during the estimates process by a number of departments, not just the Attorney's portfolio area. This is, to a large extent, a health issue as much as a straight justice issue, but they overlap in relation to the detention of people with substance abuse. I notice from the Government's response to the Estimates Committee report that it is prepared to look more urgently at the needs of addicts who are detained. I acknowledge that that is a very positive outcome of the estimates process - that a particular issue is receiving more urgent attention than it was perhaps receiving.

I think it is fair to link the number of indigenous Australians with substance abuse problems who are detained with our commitment to the recommendations of the black deaths in custody report and its outcomes. It is very legitimate for us to do that. The advice before us from the Department of Health was that there is a waiting period of up to seven weeks for the methadone program. I do not fully understand how it is that a person that is detained and deprived of access to the substance to which they are addicted can, when they are locked out of access to any other ameliorating substance, maintain their sanity, equilibrium or balance in that environment.

I note the response by the Minister for Health that the Government is prepared to look at a program of ensuring that people that are detained who have a significant substance abuse problem are not required to wait that length of time. I do realise there are real issues of equity in when prisoners receive priority treatment over non-prisoners in relation to access to the methadone program.

Mr Moore: Except that they are contained.

MR STANHOPE: Yes. But there are issues that we do need to address and come to grips with. The people that are detained, I think, are in a special circumstance to a large extent. This is a debate that we will have in this place at a later date.

The Estimates Committee looked in some detail at the criminal injuries compensation proposals. It considered the current scheme and the proposals which the Minister has put forward. That is a debate we can have elsewhere as well. There are real concerns about some aspects of the move away from the current regime, though I do have some sympathy for the Minister's desire to put some cap on the cost of that program. I understand the desire, but I am concerned that, if there is to be a new approach adopted, it not be at the cost of victims of crime, particularly that range of victims of crime whose injuries are not physical. A telling example would be victims of sexual assault. There are a whole range of stratagems in relation to criminal injuries compensation that need to be considered. I am not sure that the hard and fast approach that might be adopted would be appropriate. We will need to debate that.

My colleague Mr Hargreaves has raised a whole range of concerns that the ALP has about policing. There are some very serious issues facing the people of Canberra, particularly the residents of Woden, as I am sure the Minister is aware. A significant number of residents at Woden have a belief, held genuinely, that policing services in Woden will be significantly affected by the closure of the Woden Police Station. There are genuine concerns about the level of policing services available to the people of Canberra and their right to feel safe.

My colleague also covered his concerns about the Ayers report. It is a subject that has been raised in this place over the last week or so. I cannot understand, and cannot accept, that the Attorney-General of the ACT, the person with responsibility for the Australian Federal Police and the policing of the Territory, cannot be brought into the confidence of

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the Commonwealth Government on an issue as significant as the future policing requirements of the ACT. As much as I stretch my mind to seek to understand why it is that the Federal Minister chooses not to take the ACT Attorney into her confidence in relation to the future policing requirements of the ACT, or the Commonwealth's intentions in relation to the AFP, I am unable to understand it. I find that completely unacceptable. (*Extension of time granted*)

It is unacceptable that the Commonwealth will not take the ACT Attorney, as a minimum, into its confidence. I regret that, as a result, this Assembly has no way of knowing what the Commonwealth thinks, intends or proposes in relation to the future of the Canberra police. That situation is completely unacceptable. Of course, through that bizarre arrangement, it leads one to wonder what it is the Commonwealth is seeking to hide. What is it that is so frightening in the report prepared by the Commonwealth in relation to the AFP that we, the people of Canberra, whose policing requirements are provided by the AFP, cannot be told? It is quite bizarre. It is outrageous and quite unacceptable.

Legal aid is another issue that received considerable attention. I know it is an issue on which the ACT has been in some conflict with the Commonwealth. I am conscious of the leading role which Mr Humphries took in negotiations with the Commonwealth over its very draconian cuts to legal aid and its new hardline attitude to the funding of non-Commonwealth issues. I think the Attorney led the charge for the States and Territories against the Commonwealth. It remains, however, a very difficult issue. It goes to the heart of the rights of all people to equality before the law and equal access to justice.

We should not be complacent. We have a two-, three-, or four-tier justice system. There is justice for the rich, there is justice for the medium rich, and there is very little justice for the poor. The legal aid system seeks to ameliorate that. It does not go anywhere near to achieving it. We should not be complacent about the fact that we as a community do not provide a justice system that is fair to everybody.

In our consideration of legal aid, a constant area of concern was the representation of residents of Canberra in family law matters. One subject which came up for discussion, which I know has been around for years, was the right which children have to representation in family law matters - an issue which we as a community have failed to grasp and do not deal with well.

There are a whole range of issues in relation to the costs of justice and administration in the courts that we could dwell on at some length. I know these questions are incredibly difficult and they sometimes appear to be intractable - that is, the process of getting faster and more efficient justice through our courts. I recognise that this is a very difficult issue. Governments of all persuasions have been working away at it for years, but it is something on which we cannot give up. Courts are slow; justice is slow; the cost of justice is high; and there are serious issues for governments to deal with.

I conclude by adding my compliments to the Attorney's department. Even the Opposition has a relationship with a number of members of the Attorney's office or department - more so than probably any other office - particularly through the drafting office.

I certainly have no hesitation in complimenting all the officers of the Attorney's department that I come across on their very high standard of work and professionalism. In that regard I note briefings that I have had from the Community Advocate and discussions that I have had with representatives of the Privacy Commissioner and the Australian Government Solicitor's office from time to time. I commend them for the assistance they provide and their professionalism.

MR RUGENDYKE (4.24): I would just like to add my words to this section of the debate on the Appropriation Bill. The areas of justice and community safety, emergency services, police, fire and the services that come under the directorship of Mr Mike Castle are obviously of interest to me. I am pleased to see that the budget contains some good initiatives for policing and emergency services. There is increased funding for our correctional services, which is good to see, to try to deal with some problems at the Belconnen Remand Centre - an institution which is long past its use-by date.

An initiative that seems to be at the forefront is the notion of a community help desk, and that is of concern to me. Mr Speaker, these types of things have been tried before, with little success. I do not see that as a positive step. It seems to take police off the streets. Something that we all try to strive for is having police on the streets doing operational police work. I think that having people answering the phones on this community help desk is not what is required.

I notice - and I talk about this often - that when budgetary conditions are tight, the first things to go are the things that the community really rely on, such as bicycle patrols, community policing initiatives and having people look after Neighbourhood Watch. These are easy targets that are taken away from the community to fill gaps at police stations and front offices. I applaud the Attorney-General for providing the best policing service that the Territory, I believe, can have. The Attorney-General is labouring under great difficulty, effectively having no control over his own police force by virtue of the fact that the AFP is a Federal body under a Federal department. I can appreciate how difficult it would be for the Attorney-General to do his job as Attorney-General under those circumstances.

Another concern I have, and it is an interest that I will keep a firm eye on, is the move to joint emergency service complexes. When the JESC movement was started some time ago, I actually saw it as an extremely positive way of combining all emergency services under one roof. It has to be an advantage, it has to be good for the interaction of the various agencies, and I hope it works well. It is something that I would have loved to have been a part of as a serving police officer.

The idea of closing the Woden station to become part of Tuggeranong, or whatever the plan is, is a strange idea, one that I doubt would serve the community as it should. As a matter of fact, I was down at Tuggeranong Police Station earlier today. There were a large number of people in that station and I can see that if personnel from Woden Police Station were moved to Tuggeranong station, as seems to be the plan, it would be filled up in a very short time. There was not much room to move when I was there earlier today.

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I believe that there are good initiatives in this budget for police and emergency services. It is good to see development work and design beginning on the ACT prison, which is something we seriously need. I have been to Goulburn Gaol on several occasions and it is draconian, archaic and a disgraceful - - -

Mr Berry: I have never been to Goulburn Gaol.

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hird): Order, Mr Berry! Arrangements may well be made. Mr Rugendyke has the call.

MR RUGENDYKE: Thank you, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. I might add that my reason for going there on some occasions has been to take juveniles, young people on the verge of going to the big house, for a look. I believe that gives young people a choice as to which direction they wish to go. I have seen first-hand the conditions of Goulburn Gaol. It is a truly dreadful place. The ACT should have its own prison to look after the whole range of prisoners, detainees and other people destined for incarceration. The sooner we have a facility which is new and much better than Goulburn the better.

I also have concerns with the legal aid situation. As my colleague Mr Stanhope mentioned, there are major problems, as I see it, in the way legal aid money is both handed out and unable to be handed out - handed out for some and unable to be handed out for others who may deserve it. I certainly hope that those sorts of issues can be resolved. Overall, there is positive news, I think, for policing in the ACT and for the emergency services.

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (4.32): Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, there have been some interesting comments made today about this appropriation, or at least about the subject matter of policing and emergency services in the Territory, and other justice issues. We need to be conscious of the fact that the pressures throughout the whole of the criminal justice system in particular and in other areas of our system with respect to the provision of services such as emergency services are increasing all the time.

In the criminal justice system in particular, for example, we have seen an increasing demand for legal aid. We have seen an increasing demand for policing services. We have seen an increase in throughput through the courts and the need for additional resources in the courts by way of judges or magistrates. We have seen additional demands on our corrective service system and we have seen supplementary services for each of those components also placed under extra demand. It has been a major juggling exercise to keep that pressure under control and to ensure that we continue to deliver services in an equitable way.

I think, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, members of the community will see a number of areas where the Government has delivered additional resources in order to meet those demands. In each of those areas I have referred to, members will be aware of additional resources put in to make sure that the expectations of the community are being met.

In particular, in the area of emergency services, members will recall the creation of a fifth and now a sixth ambulance service; training of additional firefighters; provision of new facilities in places like Gungahlin; and so on. That is an indication of the need that we see to continue to upgrade the services of the community.

I agree with the comments made by Mr Hargreaves in this debate in respect of policing, that we need to keep pressure on the Federal Government for a flow of accurate information. I do not disagree with the comments that he, Mr Stanhope or Mr Rugendyke made concerning the relationship we have with the Federal Government. Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, to describe it as unsatisfactory would be a rather large understatement. I think we are all acutely aware of the shortcomings of that arrangement. I was very pleased in that respect to be able to obtain a copy of the Ayers report, in circumstances which have been discussed already in the chamber today, because it allowed me to go to the table with the Federal Government in the negotiations that are now under way about the future of policing in the ACT with something of a level playing field beneath my feet, knowing what it is that the Commonwealth Government knows is contained in that report. I share the concerns raised by members in this place that a copy was not provided officially to the ACT Government.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I have to take issue with a few things that have been said in the debate. Mr Hargreaves made the comment that police numbers and the question of accounting for police in the ACT are unsatisfactory. That, of course, is something I cannot disagree with. He suggested that the projection was for policing numbers to be going downwards as the financial year went on. When one projects a certain number of redundancies or resignations over that period, certainly that would be the case. But members should be aware that there is also a recruitment program under way and 20 officers, I think, are now in the process of being trained. Some, or all, will go onto ACT streets at the end of that training program. A further training course is due to start, I think, next year. That will assist in providing for the needs of this community.

In all, we see the projection being upwards. In fact, we have an undertaking from the Australian Federal Police that the projection will be upwards and that they will compensate for the lack of police numbers in the first half of this financial year by overproviding, under the terms of the contract, for at least part of the second half of this financial year. That is the undertaking I have, Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker. Let us hope that is actually honoured.

I note Mr Hargreaves's comments about there not being enough police on the beat and his doubts that \$54m will be enough to provide for the policing of the ACT. I have some agreement with those comments, but I have to attribute back to Mr Hargreaves and his colleagues some of the blame for the fact that those problems have occurred with both police numbers and police resourcing. Let us look at what the police numbers have been in the ACT over the years since self-government, and in particular at how many of the total AFP contingent in Canberra have been tasked directly to look after the ACT's policing needs, as opposed to the Commonwealth's policing needs. The number was 660 at the end of the financial year when the Alliance Government left office. In 1991-92, it dropped to 618. In 1992-93, it dropped, again, to 611. In 1993-94, it dropped, again, to 600. In 1994-95, the last year of the Labor Government, it dropped, again, to 552. The number went from 660 to 552.

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Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, with great respect, it is a bit rich of members of the Opposition to rise in this place and say, "We need more police on the streets of Canberra". That being the case, I think we should ask them why they cut police numbers over that period. This is the number of police dedicated solely to the ACT policing effort. There were, over that time, some increases in the Commonwealth policing effort for the ACT, but that would hardly improve significantly the needs of the ACT community.

Those reductions were matched by reductions in outlays by the ACT for the AFP. During the last year of the Alliance Government they were at a high point of \$54.6m. In the first year of the Labor Government, 1991-92, they dropped to \$53.6m - a drop of \$1m. In 1992-93, they dropped to \$51.5m. They rose again in 1993-94 but dropped back, again, to the lowest ever figure of \$51.3m. Today, the figure is back up - at least for 1997-98 - to \$54.5m, and it rises again in this budget, as members can see in the budget papers. We are acutely conscious of the fact that we have not outlaid, as Mr Hargreaves has indicated, enough for policing in the ACT. But our struggle over the last three years has been to reverse the effect of four years of Labor government by increasing resourcing to the police, increasing police numbers, and dealing with problems of organisation and morale and so on which were very much a feature of Labor's period in office.

Mr Temporary Deputy Speaker, I want to make one brief comment about what Mr Hargreaves referred to as the "Keystone Cops incident", where officers at Gungahlin JESC watched during a recent car chase. As to the car chase passing them by and their lack of any capacity to get in their car and join the chase inhibiting the operation of that JESC, I think members should know that, at the time the car in question was passing the Gungahlin JESC, or coming somewhere near it, there were, as I recall, 11 police cars in pursuit of that law-breaking vehicle - 11 police cars.

Ms Tucker: Well, it sounded like Keystone Cops.

MR HUMPHRIES: Indeed. Ms Tucker has put her finger on it. I think we have too many cops if that is the case. I have to say I have real doubts about whether we should not have been letting some of those cops drop off and go and do other things. I do not think there is any way that you could argue that the officers at Gungahlin should have jumped in their car, joined in and made 12 cars. I think 11 was quite enough.

Mr Corbell: I do not think that was the point. I think the point was that they could be ahead of the chase rather than behind it because it was heading their way.

MR HUMPHRIES: There was no problem being ahead of the chase. The police were able on several occasions, as I understand it, during that chase to actually overtake the vehicle concerned. But the difficulty was in actually stopping them. You can swing your car in front of them and try to block the road, but there is a great danger in those circumstances to the officers concerned in the car. There are all sorts of problems in being able to identify the routes that might be taken. There are issues about other techniques. I am advised that the best technique for stopping a car that is speeding is to use a special device which is laid across the road where some sort of device rises up and punctures the tyres of the car that is speeding over it. We are looking, at this stage, to provide that equipment to ACT officers.

Mr Quinlan: We do not need it in the Weston Creek area.

MR HUMPHRIES: You do not need it in Weston Creek. Around my street, Mr Quinlan, that is sometimes not the case.

Mr Corbell: Do they not drive slower in Weston? Was that not the finding?

MR HUMPHRIES: What was that?

Mr Corbell: Weston residents drive slower than everyone else.

MR HUMPHRIES: Weston residents drive slowly? I will take your word for that.

Mr Corbell: It was reported in the paper: It must be true.

MR HUMPHRIES: Some of us certainly do, I think, Mr Quinlan. (*Extension of time granted*)

I note the comments made by Mr Stanhope on legal aid, the Ayers report and the need for an ACT prison. I would broadly agree with all the things that he said on those issues. I hope that we can move on all those areas with a degree of bipartisanship. I also think Mr Rugendyke was quite right to identify the fundamental difficulty of our relationship with the Federal Government as a key problem in policing in the ACT. It is a critical problem, it does need to be addressed, and I think that probably in the area of policing the highest priority of the Government for the next three years will be to define a better way of delivering services to the people of the ACT.

If that is ultimately achieved by breaking with the Australian Federal Police and establishing an ACT police force, I say again today - as I have said on a number of occasions in the past - that is an option we will certainly explore. I hope members of this place will, through the Justice and Community Safety Committee, or in some other way, take part in that debate because it is a very important threshold question this community needs to face. I hope we will be able to elect for the right decision when the appropriate time comes.

MS TUCKER (4.44): Having listened to this debate, a couple of things have become clear. As I have listened to this topic being discussed over the last few years, a couple of issues kept coming up. They were probably raised before I became a member of the Assembly. I know this particular Assembly, more so than previous Assemblies, is interested in a law and order response to issues of unrest in our society. This Assembly has supported a number of initiatives that previously have not been supported. It is of concern to me that we see a response from this area only. We do not see an appropriate response from the other departments and areas which should be working just as hard to address these issues of unrest in our society.

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Some members have spoken already about the number of people using abused substances who are found in our prisons - in the Belconnen Remand Centre, Quamby or Goulburn - and that is not news; it is not surprising. I have to ask why on earth it is still the case when we know that most of the young people that go through our courts have a problem with drugs. We know that many people in prisons have a mental illness. We know that people threatening to take their lives represent a major problem as well in prisons because why would they not want to, half the time? We heard Mr Rugendyke describe the horrific place that is Goulburn Gaol. We all know well enough how terribly inappropriate Belconnen Remand Centre is, and Quamby as well, I would suggest.

The question of supporting people in our society at a young age who are in trouble is one that has always to be raised in this debate. It starts right at the beginning when we look at getting support for families. That came out clearly in our report on services for children at risk in the ACT. Those points have been made in that report and in many other reports. I am really concerned when I see the main response coming from this type of department in governments around Australia, in the legal, justice and community safety departments. That is where we still see the main response to this. That is where we see the resources.

Mr Rugendyke says the situation is looking quite good for police now. I am glad if it is. Police also need to be well supported. But I do not think equal attention is being given to these issues in the other departments. That is because, once again, it often ends up that we do not see action until a matter is at crisis point, then the community demands it, it becomes an election issue and an issue about votes. You do not hear such a strong voice from the community for those other prevention and intervention services because the results of those services and the expenditure are not as clear as what some in the community think would be the case from a response which is about clamping down, getting tough and all those sorts of things that people say.

I have always raised the issue of an appropriate mental health facility within the prison as well as appropriate support for people who are addicted to any kind of drug. Legal aid, of course, has come up again, as it always does, as well as the Commonwealth cuts and how they are impacting. We asked a number of questions on this issue in estimates and Mr Humphries said it would be a very serious precedent if we actually stepped in in any way and started funding what should be seen as a Commonwealth function. I believe we have done that with dental care. The precedent has been set and, once again, it is a matter of priorities and what you think is in the interests of the community in the long term, not just the short term. I would suggest, once again, that if our children and families are the ones suffering from these Commonwealth cuts we have a very strong responsibility to act. It is as important an issue as dental health, I would suggest. We have also talked about the children's magistrate. A committee of the Assembly is looking at that now. That is another legal issue that I am glad to see being progressed.

Criminal injuries compensation came up as well. I have had quite a number of letters about that from constituents and there is definitely a concern in the community about what is going to happen. I think there were some quite unfortunate examples used in the Minister's press release which have alarmed people in the community. A burnt doormat was one of them. There are subtleties in that. Depicting someone burning a doormat might be indicative of very serious harassment, and using it as an example of

a compensation payment that is out of kilter with the impact of that burning of the mat on the person is a bit of a simplistic way of raising the concerns that the Government has. It is a bit offensive to a lot of people who are familiar with the impact of harassment and sexual and physical assault. The pain and suffering that can result from that can be extremely intense. It can be so intense that, no matter how much counselling you have, it is quite possible that you may not have a productive life.

Mr Humphries attended the closure of the conference on advocates for survivors of child abuse and said that he was supportive of these issues. If he becomes more familiar with some of the stories that come out through that group he will realise that there are some situations where money is probably all that is going to be really useful in terms of supporting those people to deal with their life situation because it can be so incredibly disabling.

I am also interested in the issue of dispute resolution. I have raised this before as well. The Government has allocated a very small amount of money to cover training for this new dispute resolution process. When people have a dispute and seek resolution via mediation, they will call the service and their dispute will be screened by someone in an intake office and that person will determine, importantly, whether the dispute is able to be mediated. Disputes in which there is any form of violence or a power imbalance between parties should never be mediated. A lot of expertise is needed in this area of work. We are not convinced that a band of community recruits or JPs are going to have that expertise. I am also concerned because currently there is a free service in Canberra that could be further utilised, supported and developed, if that is what the Government thinks should happen. That is a conflict resolution service and it has trained mediators who are selected very carefully and who hold accreditation. It also has an officer that can assess a dispute and provide advice on the most appropriate course of action.

I urge the Government to take seriously into consideration what they are doing here and to consult the experts before they progress this any further. It is difficult to understand why the Government had to reinvent the wheel in this way. A successful service could reduce cost to the ACT community in areas such as courts and policing. For the sake of effective use of taxpayers' money and to ensure a professional service to the community, I repeat: I urge the Government to seriously consider what they are suggesting here and look more carefully at how well this service will work under the current proposal and current funding.

The insurance levy comes up in this appropriation as a source of funding. We have already had a lengthy debate on that in this place. It is clear that quite a number of people in here are very unhappy with it and believe it is inequitable. Mrs Carnell asked me to withdraw something that I said in that debate - and Mr Humphries too. I did say there was a New South Wales report which pointed out the inequity in that form of levy or taxation. There is such a report. Obviously the dates are different. I asked Mr Humphries for clarification on the report he was referring to. It is a more recent report which I have not seen, so obviously I cannot comment on that. There certainly has been a report in New South Wales that did point out the inequity of the particular proposal, but I am interested to look at the more recent one as well.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 15 - Department of Education and Community Services

Proposed expenditure - Education and Community Services, \$513,410,000 (comprising net costs of outputs, \$374,256,000; capital injection, \$41,098,000; and payments on behalf of Territory, \$98,056,000)

MR BERRY (4.55): During the Estimates Committee process it was discovered that there was a \$4.2m net increase in the education budget over 1997-98. That increase represents the forecast increase in the consumer price index. I want to go through some crucial areas in relation to the education budget, because it has become quite clear that there are some cuts that at the end of the day will impact on government education and government schooling. Initiatives such as the \$400,000 to support literacy in schools and the \$1.5m for the computer program are to be paid for from savings within the department. In addition, the department, according to the Estimates Committee report, which everybody will have read, is required to contribute \$1.9m to the Government's operating loss. Of this amount, about \$500,000 is to be contributed to the Canberra Institute of Technology. Further contributions to the operating loss will be required in each of the forward years.

What it boils down to is that these initiatives and the contribution to the operating loss amount to almost all of the net increase of \$4.2m. The end result is that, quite contrary to the Government's promise to maintain education funding in real terms, almost all of it has gone with these initiatives and with funding the Government's operating loss, so that promise has been breached.

Mr Wood: But Michael Moore would not support that.

MR BERRY: I expect at least one member aside from Ms Tucker to be voting with Labor on this issue, and I expect that to be Mr Moore. I think he would be rusted onto us by now in relation to this, after having examined the budget. As a matter of principle and because Mr Moore has claimed time and time again that this is his favourite issue, and one upon which he would never relent - - -

Mr Wood: It is on his list.

MR BERRY: It is on his list, Mr Wood. He will never vote for a reduction in education funding. This is clearly a reduction in education funding. There is no question about it. The Government's response to the Estimates Committee report is quite interesting. It states that the contribution of \$1.9m which the Department of Education and Community Services is making towards the Territory's operating deficit will not affect government schooling. In addition, it states that the department is continually reassessing its funding priorities to meet changing and emerging needs, with more than half of the emerging needs in government schooling, and that schools will directly benefit from the funding reallocations proposed by government. Of course it ignores the fact that the \$400,000 for new initiatives and the \$1.5m for the computer program will have to be found within departmental resources and will have an impact in one way or another on the services which are provided to government schooling.

We discovered in the course of the inquiry that there were going to be 70-odd job losses within the education system. The department advised us that those positions would be lost in the central office. The Minister advised the committee that savings generated by the loss of these positions are expected to be in the vicinity of \$3m. You have to look at the central office functions to get a real grip on what the effect of these cuts will be. The loss of 75 positions will have an impact on the Education Department despite the Chief Minister's promise before the election that the pain is over. We all recall that promise well.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

MR TEMPORARY DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It being 5.00 pm, I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Stefaniak: I require the question to be put forthwith without debate.

Question resolved in the negative.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1998-99

[COGNATE PAPER:

ESTIMATES 1998-99 - SELECT COMMITTEE - REPORT ON THE APPROPRIATION
BILL 1998-99 - GOVERNMENT RESPONSE]

Detail Stage

Debate resumed.

MR BERRY: The Estimates Committee report states:

Central office functions include: workplace planning and management; management of industrial and legal matters; international education; supporting schools through the schools directorate, the student support service, the development of literacy plans, provision of curriculum advice, policy development, career education and work placements and support for indigenous and disadvantaged students; year 12 certification and accreditation; literacy and numeracy assessment; training and adult education; financial services for the Department; facility provision,

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repairs and maintenance for schools, preschools and community facilities; information services; support to preschools; licensing and monitoring of child care centres; care and protection of children; services to young people with developmental difficulties or delays; adoption and foster care services; management of youth justice ...

The loss of 75 jobs from an establishment of about 400 positions in that area will impact on the provision of services to the education system. You just cannot avoid it. Those of us with a memory of suggestions from Mr Osborne that cuts be made to the central office will recall the spirited defence of the entire central office by the head of the department and by the Minister. They are right to defend them, but they are not right to do an about-face on the issue to try to recover cuts in the education budget and pretend that nothing has happened. The facts of the matter are very clear. There are cuts to education. They are significant cuts and they will impact on the quality of education services to future generations.

It is quite disingenuous of the Government to present this budget as a maintenance of funding in real terms for education. It will impact on the services provided to our children, and the overall standing of education in our community will be affected as a result. Mr Moore would surely vote against this budget if he intends to stick with his promise made so often that it became tedious. It was a promise so often repeated that it was like a cracked record. I hope that he sticks to it, though he was reported as making the statement that the \$1.9m contribution to the operating loss was taken out before the budget was balanced to meet CPI increases. At the end of the day \$4.2m was added to the budget. That is around about the CPI increase and some other minor adjustments. Almost all of that was soaked up by the contribution to the operating loss, the provision of extra services for computers, the \$400,000 to support literacy in schools and the contribution to the Canberra Institute of Technology.

It is quite clear that this is a budget with significant impacts on our education system and that it must not be passed unless it is adjusted in accordance with the Chief Minister's commitment to the people of the ACT before the election. As time passes the Government has less and less regard for its commitments and it is thumbing its nose at the ACT community. Once they are ensconced in office they feel that, with the support of the Osborne group, they can thumb their nose at the electorate. Having won the glittering prize, they are saying, "The rest of you can just sit back and smile because we are going to do it to you whether you like it or not". This was a breach of an election promise that cannot be tolerated in the context of a budget debate.

MR CORBELL (5.05): The appropriation unit we are now dealing with includes youth services. It is that particular area that I want to focus on this evening. The issue that I was most concerned about in the Estimates Committee hearings, and am still concerned about in this debate tonight, is the reduction of funding to the Civic and Woden youth centres. This is an issue that I believe underscores what, unfortunately, is becoming an increasing trend in budgets here in the ACT, where we are seeing a focus away from groups with special needs towards a more mainstream approach which ignores people on the margins, particularly young people, who need security and certainty from government that their services will continue to be provided as much as mainstream services need to be. That is not what we saw in relation to the Civic and Woden youth centres.

The Civic and Woden youth centres were assessed, according to the Government's own criteria, as warranting a three-year funding arrangement. That is a fact not in dispute. I should reinforce that. The Government and the Minister's own department assessed the Civic and Woden youth centres as eligible for a three-year funding arrangement. Why was that the case? It was the case because they were seen to provide services of immediate need or of highest priority for young people in the areas where the centres were located.

These are not organisations that are at the fringes. These are not organisations that are providing services that are optional. These are organisations that are providing services that are absolutely essential for young people who, for one reason or another, are unable to spend time at home or who feel alienated from other places in the community but find that the youth centres are a good place to go to interact with other people, to meet and to enjoy each other's company in a safe environment. That is what these youth centres provide. For many other young people, they provide a refuge from the daily traumas of unemployment, homelessness and, unfortunately in many instances, drug abuse.

The Civic and Woden youth centres both provide a wide variety of services to a wide variety of young people. It is not a surprise then that they were a little bit outraged - I think that would be a fair comment - when the original funding offer of three years was changed on the spur of the moment to one year. To underscore just how dramatic this change was, I refer to schedule 2 of the Woden Community Services Woden Youth Centre contract. The contract period is typed in as being from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 2001. In pen, 30 June 2001 has been crossed out and 30 June 1999 has been written in and signed by, I presume, the appropriate officer. That was how rapid and how arbitrary the decision was by this Government to reduce funding arrangements to the Civic and Woden youth centres. The Government did not even have the time, or indeed the decency, to prepare a proper contract. They simply crossed out the bits they did not want and wrote in the bits they needed. That is not a good process by any stretch of the imagination. It also demonstrates quite clearly that this Minister was prepared to treat this centre and the Civic one with little more than contempt. I cannot underscore how serious I think that is.

During the Estimates Committee process, we asked why this had occurred, and it was a very tortuous road we had to go down. We did not get a straight answer from the Minister. All we got was: "It was a decision of the Government". He was not even prepared to say that it was his decision, but he is the Minister for youth affairs. He was not prepared to say, "This was my decision. I am the responsible Minister, and one-year funding, not three, was my decision". He was not prepared to justify it and he was not prepared to say that it was his decision. Well he may not, because we understand that it was not his decision. It was the Chief Minister's.

Mr Moore: That is conjecture.

MR CORBELL: That is not conjecture, Mr Moore. It is not conjecture, because I will trust the word of the Woden Youth Centre and I will trust the word of the Civic Youth Centre far more than I trust the word of this Minister when it comes to this matter.

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They are the parties involved, and they put it to me very clearly. They told me that the Chief Minister's office had instructed officers in Mr Stefaniak's department to offer only a one-year funding arrangement. I cannot understand any other reason why two youth centres would say that. Why would they lie? Why would they lie, Mr Stefaniak? Why would they lie, Mr Moore? They would not lie. I know that the Government is feeling a bit sensitive on this matter. I know that Mr Stefaniak is feeling a bit sensitive on this matter, because it undermines his authority as Minister, whatever is left of it. It concerns me that this decision could have been made in such an arbitrary way in respect of services that were assessed as being eligible for a three-year funding arrangement.

The department has written to the two youth centres concerned and has indicated to them that they believe youth centre funding is contestable. They have also indicated that they believe that a review should be undertaken of the services provided by the Woden and Civic youth centres. The question I ask is: Why are they doing another review of these two centres when one was completed less than 12 months ago? It seems to me that this Government is not particularly interested in giving some certainty and security to the operation of these centres.

The Government says that all youth centre funding is contestable. That is news to the youth centres and that is certainly at odds with the Government's own report from its own consultant that said that funding to youth centres should not be contestable because the centres provide core community services that cannot be provided for in the contestable framework which the Government wants to apply in a whole range of community areas. What is going on with the Woden and Civic youth centres? These are Canberra's two most effective youth centres in terms of the sizes of the populations they reach and the number of young people they serve. I am sure that many of the other youth services in Canberra provide equally effective services, but these are the largest two. What is going on? Is it because they sit on valuable land? Is it because the people who run them have been outspoken? Is it because they are actually interested in issues that affect young people and are prepared to criticise government policy when they see it as failing the needs of young people?

These are the sorts of issues that were raised in the Estimates Committee, and we have not yet seen them answered. I may resume some of these comments later in the debate.

MR MOORE (Minister for Health and Community Care) (5.15): I rise to speak on a couple of issues. Mr Berry spoke about the level of funding to education. I am going to say this very slowly so Mr Berry can understand it. The way Mr Berry counts, he is counting the \$1.9m twice. If you count the \$1.9m twice, you might be able to come to the conclusion that Mr Berry comes to. Unfortunately, Mr Berry is wrong, because he is counting the money twice.

Mr Corbell raised the Woden and Civic youth centres. How that information was conveyed to the youth centres is not necessarily inconsistent with whether or not the Minister personally takes responsibility for it. That decision, like most other budget decisions, was taken by Cabinet. That should clarify any possible misunderstanding for you, Mr Corbell. I do not believe that the people at the Woden Youth Centre or the Civic Youth Centre attempted to mislead you, nor was it inconsistent, when they said that the

information came through the Chief Minister's Department. I do not know whether it did or not, but I would be happy if that were the case. It would seem to me to be quite possibly the case, because it would be consistent with the fact that it was a general budget decision taken within Cabinet. The two possibilities that you put, Mr Corbell, are not mutually exclusive. It is not either one or the other.

There are many issues here that Mr Stefaniak will deal with, I am sure, but the budget decisions that were taken by the Government were taken generally, mutually and by agreement. That is a normal process that I am sure Mr Corbell is quite familiar with.

MR RUGENDYKE (5.18): Over the last few days I have sat and listened intently to the debate on the Appropriation Bill. I have been criticised for not having made an input, I have been criticised for apparently being rusted onto the Liberal Party and I have been criticised for missing this morning's session.

Ms Tucker: No, we clarified that you were at a funeral.

MR RUGENDYKE: I understand that that was clarified, but disparaging remarks were made. It is appropriate at this stage to put my own political philosophies on the record in the light of that criticism. I do not think it is any secret that my political leanings are closer to the right than to the left. In that sense, I do not believe it should be any surprise that I would allow this budget to pass. My view is that the Executive of the Government has control of the purse strings, the budget. It is the Executive that has a right to spend money through the Appropriation Bill as it sees fit, and I believe it is the right of the Government to be given the opportunity to do that. It is all well and good to criticise before the event and criticise after the event if it is seen that that budget was a failure.

It is important to state that I think that this budget is being driven by the desire to get the operational debt down to a minimum. When this Government came to power, the operating debt was \$344m. I have no idea what \$344m looks like, so I would like to just try to visualise what it might look like. I would ask members to direct their minds to the TV ads of the Tattslotto organisation that show about \$1m in a truck. To get to a comfort zone that the Labor Party are happy with, we would need a convoy of 340 trucks loaded with money to drive into the Territory to satisfy that amount of money. Three hundred and forty trucks would have to come down the Federal Highway into the Territory to satisfy what the Labor Party wants to do. I applaud the Government for getting the debt down the \$139m projected in this budget. Of course, there is pain and hardship, but at least we do not need 340 trucks clogging Northbourne Avenue as they head to the treasury full of money. I applaud a reduction of the debt.

We all remember the Labor Party's pre-election budgetary solutions. We remember Mr Berry's Bankcard bill. We remember Mr Corbell's wonderful statement: "What is the difference if the debt is \$150m or \$151m?". That sort of blase attitude does not do anyone any good. It is obviously a matter of how you view what the budget result should look like. The Labor Party, on the one hand, is happy with 340 truckloads of money coming into the Territory. The Liberal Party, on the other hand,

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tries to do it a little bit more responsibly, in my view. Yes, it is difficult, but we need to keep an eye on how you balance things and where you draw the line. But it is up to the Government to do it the way they see fit and up to us to criticise them if they cannot do it right.

Of course, there are a number of areas that are of concern - preschools, the SACS award and arts funding - but I do not think the answer lies in the solution that the Labor Party would have us accept. In the interests of stability, I am prepared to give the Government my support on this budget, with an undertaking to keep an eye on the balancing act.

MR QUINLAN (5.25): I rise to exercise my duty to the people of Canberra and to represent the people who elected me and to challenge what the Government has done in the budget and to challenge their priorities, because that is to a large extent the reason that I am here. For Mr Rugendyke's benefit, we are here to ensure that there is debate on those matters and that we keep the Government honest, as honest as we can. That is our role. That is the function of this Assembly. Otherwise, we should just take the days off, Mr Rugendyke.

I want to make a couple of comments in relation to the sports elements of the budget. I have no particular objection to - in fact, it is good to see in its own right - the promotion of elite sports and national teams and very considerable investment in one particular stadium, although I do think we should have done something about our long-term access to that stadium and the long-term arrangements before we started sinking our money into it, because we have very severely weakened our bargaining position. For the record, I do have some direct experience in negotiating with the Commonwealth on the transfer or sale to the Territory of considerable assets that were in the hands of the Commonwealth. Unless things have changed, they have a few people down there in the Treasury and the Department of Finance who like to build careers on pulling off coups. It just does not seem to me to have been very smart to have done it in the order that we have done it.

I am also concerned that, although we are spending a considerable amount of money at the elite level of sport, there are other priorities within this budget, quite outside the Minister's purview, that seem not to have had the same degree of consideration. Some of those, like the arts, have been laboured to the point that I do not need to repeat any detail.

I am concerned that in the operation of sport we maintain the level of funding to sport at the grassroots and that we have a focus on participative sport for everybody, as firm a focus as we have on elite sports. I recognise that elite sports prompt participation. From elite sports we gain role models who not only draw people into sport but draw young people into the pursuit of excellence within sport. However, we still have to ensure that within the realm of sport we do not deprive those at the bottom of facilities or do not have a disproportionate focus on the provision of facilities.

I am further concerned to see that the Bureau of Sport is being absorbed into the Department of Education and that there is to be a review of the department's central office after it has been plugged in there, which seems again to be putting the cart before the horse a little. I am concerned as to the future of the Bureau of Sport overall.

There are a number of projects incorporated into this budget but there is further concern at the possibility that the Government may be backing away from some of the projects enumerated under the \$6.3m capital injection. I specifically refer to Football Park, Phillip, where there has been a call for the ACTAFL to justify expenditure on lights. I would be happy to see ACTAFL and the Government negotiate on some changes and redirection in that funding if it is necessary, but I would not like to see that funding disappear off the slate.

I do trust that the Government notes the success of the one AFL game that we have had and acknowledges that we will not attract further AFL games unless we have facilities up to standard. We can get into a chicken-and-egg situation in that regard. AFL can come here and say, "The facilities are not up to standard, so we will not bring games here". Then if there are no AFL games coming here, people will ask, "Why are we going to invest in the stadium?". We do not seem to have much of a problem in investing in Bruce Stadium, so I encourage the Government to follow through with negotiations with AFL and with cricket in relation to Phillip and in relation to Manuka Oval to ensure that if those funds are there, if they have been earmarked within this clever and caring budget, they damn-well stay there, and they stay there to the benefit of those particular sports.

In a more general sense, I repeat what I have said in relation to sport for the masses. We should ensure that we do not simply focus on the elite sports and publicised events. I close by repeating my opening remarks. I am in this debate to debate the Government's priorities as much as anything else. I feel that that is my responsibility. I was very disappointed to hear Mr Rugendyke's speech.

MS TUCKER (5.32): I am also disappointed and actually quite alarmed to have heard Mr Rugendyke's speech. It does not surprise me. It clarifies for me what I have suspected and been concerned about. Mr Rugendyke seems to have an inherent respect for government that is alarming in a crossbench politician people thought they were electing to scrutinise the government of the day.

Mr Moore: He is going to scrutinise. He is going to guarantee the budget. It is logical. He has taken responsibility, which you have not done.

MS TUCKER: I like the interjection from Mr Moore. I will answer Mr Moore's interjection in a minute.

Mr Corbell: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Rugendyke was heard in silence by members on this side of the chamber, as was Mr Moore. I think Mr Moore should have the courtesy to hear Ms Tucker in silence as she responds to Mr Rugendyke.

MR SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order.

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MS TUCKER: Mr Moore's interjections do not worry me. I just do not hear them. Mr Rugendyke can say that he has a different philosophy and that he leans more to the right than to the left. Mr Rugendyke can say that he is more likely to support Liberal than Labor. What Mr Rugendyke did not say was that he is in a position of incredible power in this place. He either does not seem to be aware of it or is not willing to use it at all. It is, I believe, his responsibility.

MR SPEAKER: Would you mind telling me what this has to do with Part 15, Education and Community Services?

MS TUCKER: You did not ask Mr Rugendyke that, Mr Speaker. He spoke for 10 or 15 minutes on this subject. If I am not allowed to speak on it, I seek leave to speak on it.

MR SPEAKER: I was not present when Mr Rugendyke spoke. I cannot be a judge of what else is going on, but I am here now and I am saying that this is not germane to Part 15, Education and Community Services.

Mr Corbell: Mr Speaker, it would be most unfair if you did not allow Ms Tucker to speak on this issue, as Mr Rugendyke did not address any issue on Education or Community Services in his speech. A great part of his speech was on overall budget philosophy. He was not ruled out of order or called to order at any time. I think it would be unfair for you to rule Ms Tucker out of order on that.

Mr Rugendyke: Mr Speaker, on that point of order taken by Mr Corbell: I would just like to say that I think it would be the pot calling the kettle black if he expected me to speak specifically to Part 15 when the speeches from the Labor Party have been all over the shop for three days.

MR SPEAKER: I made it quite clear two days ago that I was going to insist on people addressing the part that we were debating at the time. However, I was not in the chair when Mr Rugendyke spoke. I take the advice of other members of the Assembly. You may continue in the same vein, Ms Tucker, with my indulgence.

MS TUCKER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was very interested in Mr Moore sitting there saying so condescendingly, "Hear, hear!" as Mr Rugendyke spoke. As a crossbencher, Mr Moore never behaved as Mr Rugendyke and Mr Osborne have been behaving. He was always clear on what he saw as a priority and he was always consulted on those matters by government, as far as I can determine. What we are seeing here now are two people who basically say they care about the issues, but this Government is acting like a majority government in Victorian style, and I am not surprised, because holding the balance of power are two people who will say yes to whatever they do. The Government does not even consult with these people, yet we do not get an objection. Mr Moore would have objected strenuously if there had been significant cuts to areas without him having any knowledge of them beforehand. It is how you use your position on the crossbench in this place that matters. Mr Moore says it is about the budget. It is not about just the budget.

Mr Moore: I said I always guaranteed the budget.

MS TUCKER: Mr Moore says he always guaranteed the budget. That is correct, but I am talking about what happens before the budget. I am talking about how people use their position in this place to influence a minority government. I can remember that when I first came to this place Mrs Carnell told me that the Greens were irrelevant because at that time she had the support of Mr Moore and Mr Osborne. I found that pretty interesting for a government that I supported at that time, mistakenly, because I believed they were going to be open and consultative with all members of this place. However, what we are seeing in this Assembly is that this Government does not even have to consult with the crossbench they depend on, because they have a *carte blanche*. I think it is very alarming for the ACT, because that is why the ACT has Hare-Clark and supported it, and that is why we keep getting minority governments and that is why now we are seeing this Government totally ignoring motions from the floor of this place that are supported by the majority. Last night is an example. Within five minutes of the conclusion of the debate, Mrs Carnell went to the media and said, "I do not mind. I am not doing it. It does not matter that nine people have just said that I have to reassess what I am doing with Floriade. I am not doing it". She can do that. She is not going to be challenged. I just want to put that on the record. I think it is of grave concern.

I hope that Mr Rugendyke learns to understand the responsibility of his position and insists that this Government consult much more with at least him and Mr Osborne. I would not expect the Chief Minister to consult with Mr Kaine or me or Labor. That would be expecting too much, but I think the responsibility is heavy on the shoulders of these two men. They are not living up to their responsibility, and the whole ACT is going to suffer as a result of that.

Now I will address some of the issues of education. I absolutely agree that an extra strain and an extra burden have been put on the Department of Education. Whether or not the \$1.9m is counted twice, as Mr Moore claims it has been, is not the issue. I know that election promises were definitely made that gave the impression that the money for literacy and IT was going to be new money, and that is not the case. Already, before those promises were made, there were strains in the education system.

The issue of the jobs going out of central office is serious. I notice another inconsistency from government. When it suits them, they want to promote their particular initiatives. It was literacy this time. They produced a glossy document. In that glossy document it said, "We are going to have a literacy team in central office. We need a literacy team because that is going to support and coordinate what happens across schools in this area". The question one has to ask immediately, is why it is necessary only in literacy. Why is it not necessary in all the other key curriculum areas that traditionally people have valued in education? It is not consistent at all.

I am also very concerned about cuts to the Institute of the Arts and the implications that will have for education, for music education and art education in particular. It is in our school system as well as in the general community that that cut will be felt.

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Integrating children with behavioural problems, special needs or disabilities into our education system is another area of grave concern that has come up over and over again. It is an issue across the community, not just in schools, because we no longer feel it appropriate to have people institutionalised. If support is not available when we mainstream, or put children or adults or whoever into the community, then we are very negligent in how we support these people. In the schools, I know it is an issue. I know that in some situations principals have to toilet people who have a disability, who are not able to do it by themselves. There is a serious lack of resources in this area. It is something I hope I will be able to look at in the Education Committee. I am constantly being contacted in my office on these particular issues.

The behavioural issues, as always, are not getting enough support. That came up in the preschool inquiry too. I cannot pre-empt what the committee will say on that issue, but we certainly did get a number of submissions that disagreed with the Auditor-General's comment that special needs children and teachers in that sector were being adequately supported.

I would like to talk about youth, as Mr Corbell did. This is also not just about the ACT Government. This is about the Federal Government and what they are doing in this area. It links to the discussion we had before on the Justice and Community Safety Unit of the appropriations. What is happening across Australia through Federal cuts and lack of local support is that youth are generally falling off the agenda, particularly youth who are vulnerable. They are falling off the agenda in family services. They are falling off the agenda in the legal system. They are falling off the agenda in employment opportunities. They are falling off the agenda in educational opportunities. Youth centres are not being adequately resourced, and all sorts of strange things are happening to how they are funded. Refuges are still underresourced. *(Extension of time granted)* The great rhetoric of the Liberals is that what they put into practice through their policies is about choice, but the important factor here is that it is choice only for those who can afford to pay.

This appropriation unit also covers community services. I was at the ACTCOSS conference briefly yesterday. Talking to some people there, I know the community sector is very concerned about how they are going to fare, what is happening with the SACS award and what is happening with the purchaser-provider model being imposed on them. I believe that once again, through these policies, we are going to see the vulnerable people in our community suffer. The people who care for them are not respected for their work and they will burn out. It has happened in some situations already, and society as a whole will definitely suffer as a result of that.

Mr Rugendyke said that he is interested in responsibility and looking at the operational debt. He said that he supports this Government because that is where they are responsible. Accrual accounting is very simple in its concept, but it does not give a sophisticated picture of the real debt that we are accruing. Because we focus so much at the moment on the budget bottom line, with an obsession about the operational debt, we are accruing a massive debt in the long term. That is because when we continue to emphasise short-term economics and financial responsibility we are losing in the long term, not only socially but financially as well.

I can give a number of examples. Some of them we have discussed today. We discussed buses and public transport. We need to keep ACTION's budget in line. We have to be very careful about how much money we put into it. We do not talk about the cost of building John Dedman Parkway and the Majura Freeway that will have to be built and all the other roads that will have to be built. We do not talk about that in our accounting system at all. It is a short-term focus once again.

We talk about gaol. We are much happier to talk about law and order. We are much happier saying, "Let us put cameras in Civic. Let us have prevalence in sentencing. Let us have move-on powers". That is not going to cost a lot, but in the long term it is going to cost heaps because we are going to have more and more people in gaol. Mrs Carnell has already said that today. At question time, in answer to a question on drugs in sport, she said that she does not want to have a hard line on drugs. She does not want to pay for people in gaol. While we continue to focus on the law and order responses and not the prevention and intervention responses, it might look good right now in the budget, but it will not look good in the long term.

Let us have a low education budget as well. Let us keep the education budget in line. Let us be responsible. What happens in the long term if people are not accessing a high-quality education? You have higher unemployment. What does that mean? It means higher costs for the community. It is also an argument about the environment. You end up not taking appropriate and responsible actions at the present because it might cost more, but the long term repercussions of that will be that you will have an increasingly degraded environment, which will have huge cost implications for everyone in society.

I have just focused on the financial aspects. The other aspect of all this short-term planning is the social cost and the social capital that is being impaired and not being respected and built up in our society. What that means is that our wellbeing as human beings will be continually impacted on in a negative manner and as people we will all suffer. That is the other side of the argument. You argue it just on economic terms. That is what came up at the ACTCOSS conference yesterday and that is the danger of Mr Rugendyke's speech today. He is so conned by this line that we need to get the operational debt in line. Of course we do, but you also have to look at the long-term costs and benefits of policies. That does not happen enough.

MR WOOD (5.48): I want to use the opportunity afforded by this debate to raise two issues relating to the Minister's portfolio. The first is that of Quamby. It has been out of the news in the last few weeks. The heat may be off. I hope it is. I hope things are going well out there. I assume that privileges have been returned to the people there and that some different directions are being taken. That is the point I want to raise. We were circulated with a document entitled "Quamby Youth Detention Centre - A Performance Review". This was a departmental review and no doubt it is attracting a great deal of attention.

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I think the issues around Quamby are so significant and so problematic that this Assembly needs a report, perhaps in the next sitting period, on the Government's response to the 27 recommendations - how it proposes to handle them and whether it accepts them all - and a statement about the changes that may be occurring and the future directions for Quamby. We get an awful lot of mush served up at times in ministerial statements. Some of them seem to be a lot of time-filling. I suggest to you, Minister, that this is one reason for a ministerial statement. I would urge that you do that in the next period so that this Assembly and the broader community can be apprised of what is going to happen there.

The other matter I want to raise is quite a different one. It relates to the education portfolio and the Jigsaw Theatre Co., a company particularly established to provide material to schools. It is not just to give schools a feel for drama and performance, but also to show a message in what they do. There is always sound material there. It is instructive in a very subtle and very effective way to students.

I can give the Minister the benefit of something like 15 years of performance review of Jigsaw from the time I first became acquainted with them as an officer in the then Schools Authority. In my time as a teacher I enlisted them to come to the school I was at, and from that time I was just a part of the audience. This is genuine. I am not just saying this because I am trying to help them or promote them. They do an excellent job. I have always been impressed when I have been to schools. I attend to what the performers are doing, but more than that I attend to what the children are doing. I watch the kids and that tells me. The kids are absorbed in the performances. They absorb what is happening and the messages that are there. Whether it is a message of nonviolence or a multicultural society or whatever, the message is always there. I can assure you that my very objective performance review is that they do an excellent job.

I told the Minister earlier that I wanted to raise this because of the problem they have. The department now is looking at the next contract, and that is fair enough. There is no argument about that and it will be making its own assessments, but in order to have a program up and running next year in the schools the company have to have that program into the schools between now and the end of the year. This is the time when they have to settle on the performances they are going to do. When schools are planning for next year they look at the competing bids coming in to them and decide. So, Jigsaw really needs to know fairly quickly what their future is, and that is the question I have asked the Minister. It is interesting to note that the schools, I think, are voting with their hands up. They seem to me to be still very fond of Jigsaw, and for that reason I think they deserve support. I hope the Minister is able to do something about that.

MR STANHOPE (Leader of the Opposition) (5.53): I rise to make a very small contribution in relation to the sport aspects of the Minister's portfolio. My colleagues have covered very well aspects going to education and some of the Minister's other responsibilities. Mr Quinlan did address some issues in relation to sport. One area that I feel continues to be underrepresented in terms of attention by the Government is the area of women in sport, and I would like to address that very briefly.

As everybody knows, there are very significant areas of discrimination against women in sport. In fact, after political representation, perhaps it is one of the last areas of significant discrimination - systemic discrimination and governmental discrimination. Whilst I think that Canberra has a better record in this regard than any other jurisdiction in Australia, we still drag the chain in relation to most indicators of equality of opportunity for women in sport.

I was reminded of this last Saturday. I had the good fortune to attend the finals of the Women's Soccer Association on Saturday at O'Connor oval. I am happy to record that Canberra City beat Weston Creek in the final of the senior women's soccer championships in the ACT, and that Radford College was the winning junior team for the third year in a row. During the game I sat with Heather Reid, the president of the ACT Women's Soccer Association. I was chatting to Heather about how the sport is going here in Canberra, and she is very pleased with the progress that women's soccer is making.

She made a point to me which I think is very telling in terms of Australians' attitude to women in sport. Of the soccer matches that Canberra has had the fortune to attract for the Olympics, six of the matches are women's soccer matches. The most senior and most significant of the games to be played at Bruce Stadium is a women's semifinal. Yet the ACT Government, for instance, in establishing the ACT Olympic football task force, a very important group of people whose task is to ensure that Canberra's contribution to the Olympics is smooth and successful, does not include any women from the ACT Women's Soccer Association. Six of the games that we have attracted are women's soccer games and the most important of the games we have attracted is a women's semifinal, yet the Women's Soccer Association, the organisation in Canberra principally concerned with women's soccer, was not considered for the ACT Olympic task force. That is, I think, the sort of disappointment, oversight and perhaps unconscious slight that women in sport have suffered perhaps since the Olympics were first created a couple of thousand years ago. It is a discrimination that continues.

Of course, this is not only in relation to women's soccer. I am concerned about the infrastructure development that we embrace so willingly as governments - for instance, the development of Bruce Stadium. The redevelopment has blown out to \$30m or something or other. That represents \$30m of sporting-directed funds devoted almost exclusively to men's sport - to the Raiders, the Brumbies and the Cosmos. That money goes to men's sport. Whilst the facility is available for all sport, it is money going to support those very fine teams that we all wish to see supported, but this highlights some of the difficulties that women in sport suffer.

I raised the other day, and I will raise it here again, the issue that the women at the women's jogalong suffer. The Government, through ACT Forests, has chosen to impose a fee on entry to Stromlo Forest, so women runners who now attend a monthly running event in Stromlo Forest are, in effect, being forced to pay a toilet fee in order to continue to participate in their chosen sport. This discrimination is not suffered by men because of those differences. This area, Minister, requires much more attention. I think there

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is room for the ACT Government to provide far greater attention to the needs of women's sport. I think there is a need for much more positive discrimination in favour of women's sport. I think we need a whole range of new indicators in relation to the funding that is devoted to women's sport and a genuine strategy for ensuring that women in the ACT do achieve a real and fair allocation of the sports dollar.

MR CORBELL (5.59): Mr Speaker, in the spirit of some of the debate that has occurred on this appropriation item, I will take the opportunity to make some comments following on from Mr Rugendyke's comments earlier. I am very pleased to have heard Mr Rugendyke's philosophy about the budget placed on the record. We had not heard that throughout the debate until we reached this point. I am pleased to hear that. I think it is appropriate that he, as a member who is going to be voting in favour of this budget, place his philosophy on the record. Maybe it took a bit of prompting in debate, but at least it is here, and I think that is appropriate.

I think I have to support the comment made by Ms Tucker in the debate - I think this is a view shared by all of my colleagues on this side of the house - that the crossbenchers do have a role in critically inquiring of the activities and actions of the Government, and they were effectively scrutinising its activities. More importantly, as Ms Tucker pointed out, they have an influence that other members in this house do not have. That may not be something that many of us are comfortable with, but it is the reality of this place. I think that is often a point that has been missed in this debate. For instance, I urged Mr Rugendyke to consider that he could oppose the line item in the Chief Minister's Department, if he was so concerned about the cut to the Institute of the Arts, without bringing the Government down, but he was not prepared even to consider it.

The other issue I want to respond to is the issue of debt. Mr Speaker, it is appropriate that governments are conscious of issues to do with debt, and governments must be responsible in managing their debt. I would draw to Mr Rugendyke's attention a series of articles by Mr Fred Argy that have appeared in the *Canberra Times* over the past couple of weeks. He might like to look at these in the library if he has a chance. Mr Fred Argy is not some left-wing loony economist. Mr Fred Argy is a former director of a significant Federal Government body involved in economic planning and he is now the head of the Centre for Economic Development of Australia. He is a respected Australian economist and he has written that governments have become obsessed with debt. They have become so obsessed that they are ignoring the social consequences of cutting simply to reduce debt and balance the bottom line. He argues that a range of things have to be considered in this debate. I think it would be worth while for Mr Rugendyke to read that if he has the opportunity. Maybe that would give him a better perspective on debt, operating losses, and a whole range of things. It is not as simplistic as governments will often attempt to portray it in an effort to get their budgets passed and to justify the decisions they make.

In addressing the appropriation unit directly, I want to continue briefly on the Woden and Civic youth centres. I particularly want to focus on the review that the Government has announced into the Woden and Civic youth centres, despite the fact that this review comes on top of another review on the provision of youth centre services in the ACT, and despite the fact that this review recommends against making the provision of these services contestable, which is contrary to what the Government has decided to do.

I note also that the Government has decided that it is going to provide a mobile outreach component to the Woden Youth Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Mr Speaker, I am concerned about this development but not because of the decision to provide this service, because it is obviously needed. I am concerned because it is a service that should be provided on an effective basis. If there is anything to be learnt about issues to do with providing services to indigenous people it is that they should be involved in the planning and the provision of these services.

The concern I have is that the department has made a decision, and presumably the Minister has made a decision, to require the Woden Youth Centre to run this mobile outreach service for ATSI young people without engaging in any real or effective consultation with the community that it is meant to serve, and that is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of the ACT. I understand it was incumbent on the Woden Youth Centre to go to the community, particularly to Gugan Gulwan, and say, "The Government has asked us to run this service. We just want you to know that they have asked us to do it. We have not pinched it from you".

That seems to me to be clumsy at best, and at worst completely insensitive. I do not know which it is. I hope it is just clumsy. Mr Speaker, you would have thought the Government and the Minister would have had a better grasp of these sorts of issues by now. You would have thought that the Minister would have understood these issues much better by now. He has been the Minister for youth affairs for nearly four years now. Instead of continually placing these centres in further jeopardy and in greater senses of insecurity, you would think that he understood the area and was working effectively in providing better services for young people. Mr Speaker, I hope that the Government does reconsider the issue of three-year funding to Civic and Woden.

Ms Carnell: No.

MR CORBELL: They are entitled to it according to the Government's own criteria.

Mr Berry: The Chief Minister said, "No".

MR CORBELL: The Chief Minister said, "No".

Ms Carnell: We have had a debate on this already. You are reflecting on a vote of the Assembly.

MR CORBELL: It demonstrates the arrogance of this Government.

Ms Carnell: Sorry; this Assembly voted on this and you did not win.

MR CORBELL: It demonstrates the arrogance of this Chief Minister. It demonstrates the completely unfeeling nature of this Chief Minister in recognising the importance of these services. Today I received a petition from 1,500 young people in the Woden and Weston Creek area who are concerned about the future of their youth centre. They request three-year funding. They knew that they were entitled to it. What is worse about this though, Mr Speaker, is that the Minister knew they were entitled to it as well.

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Ms Carnell: Tedious repetition.

MR CORBELL: The Chief Minister may feel it is tedious, but it is true.

Ms Carnell: No, it is tedious repetition.

MR CORBELL: The Chief Minister may feel it is tedious because she does not like it.

Ms Carnell: Mr Speaker, I raise a point of order.

MR CORBELL: I tell you what, Mr Speaker, young people in Canberra do not like the decision she has made to cut funding from three years to one year for the Woden and Civic youth centres.

MR SPEAKER: There is a point of order. Sit down. Sit down or I will name you.

Ms Carnell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. If Mr Corbell has finished, that is lovely. Mr Speaker, tedious repetition has been an absolute basis of this whole budget debate. Things that have been debated and voted on previously in this Assembly have been debated again, as was just the case. I understand that that is contrary to standing orders - whether it be tedious repetition or reflecting on a vote of this Assembly.

Mr Berry: May I speak to that point of order?

MR SPEAKER: No, you cannot. I will rule on it. I have allowed a certain latitude in the debate on the Appropriation Bill. If we applied the rule about reflecting on votes of the Assembly I think we virtually could not discuss anything. I am prepared to allow a certain degree of latitude. Nevertheless, I think, Mr Corbell, you have gone far enough on this one. Have you finished?

MR CORBELL: No.

MR SPEAKER: Very well. Just be careful.

MR CORBELL: I thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker. I should say, Mr Speaker, that I am speaking on the recommendation in the Estimates Committee report, and that is quite relevant to this debate. This is a cognate debate on the budget and the Estimates Committee report.

Mr Speaker, the Government has a commitment to young people, not just to mainstream young people but to people at the edges. For that reason I think the Government should seriously reconsider the issue of funding for those two centres. Young people and the service providers know that they deserve it. What is more important is that the Minister knew it too.

MR STEFANIAK (Minister for Education) (6.09): Mr Speaker, I thank members for their comments. They were quite varied, as one would expect. As I did at the Estimates Committee, as the Government has done since this budget came down, and as my colleague Mr Moore has done in relation to criticism from Mr Berry of him, I will say it again: The Government, in terms of its budget for primary and secondary schools, has provided an extra \$4.2m. That reflects the central plank of our commitment that we took to the election. I tendered this document in the Estimates Committee. It is page 2 of our policy. It is the top paragraph. The heading is "The Future" and the paragraph reads:

The major commitment by a Canberra Liberal Government will be to maintain primary and secondary schools' funding in real terms during the next three years. This will ensure that schools can plan ahead with confidence.

I repeat: We will maintain primary and secondary schools' funding in real terms during the next three years. That is important, and that, quite clearly, is what we have done. Mr Berry has come up with a number of things. He says we should have put in an extra \$400,000 for the extra literacy initiatives. We should have put in an extra \$1.5m for computers, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Our commitment, Mr Speaker, was to maintain primary and secondary schools' funding in real terms during the next three years, and that, quite clearly, is what we have done.

It would be lovely, as Mr Hird, I think, said in his dissenting report, for a government to have the money always to just top up; to always maintain real terms funding and then add a few little extras here and there, maybe an extra \$10m or \$15m a year. Where would it end? Obviously, we do not have the money to do that, and that is not what we said. What we said is quite clear. It is there in black and white. I tabled this in the Estimates Committee and I reiterate it now.

In relation to the \$1.5m for computers, I would remind Mr Berry that that was announced towards the end of last year, well and truly before the election. There was nothing to indicate that that was extra top-up money. That was money that the department was going to fund. There was considerable benefit to the ACT education system through the deal that occurred with InTACT. It involved some \$12m, I seem to recall, over four years, in terms of computer systems. It was about a \$20m deal, Mr Speaker. I think we had to find \$1.25m per annum, but that was a particularly beneficial deal for the ACT Government. It represented over \$20m in terms of benefits to our education system, very little of which we had to find ourselves. I think that was excellent for our government school system. So, I think Mr Berry is quite wrong when he talks about breaches of election promises.

I will turn now to Mr Rugendyke's comments. Mr Rugendyke, this is not just in terms of education budgets because there was an increase of \$4.2m, which everyone seems to be conceding, in terms of primary and secondary schooling. When you compare that with other areas of government where there were some significant decreases, that is a very important factor.

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But Mr Rugendyke was quite right in his comments in relation to the operating loss. I thought it was a very good analogy - that of 344 lotto-type trucks each carrying a million dollars down Northbourne Avenue to pay for that operating loss. He was quite right in his comment and his favourable acknowledgment that this Government is attempting to reduce that operating loss.

Mr Hird, in his dissenting report, I think hit the nail on the head when he quoted Abraham Lincoln, that great American statesman who freed the slaves and also made a number of other very pertinent comments which are still relevant today. That quote reads:

As an individual who undertakes to live by borrowing, soon finds his original means devoured by interest and next, no-one left to borrow from - so must it be with a government.

We have seen that even in Australia, Mr Speaker. We have seen it in Victoria. Surely those opposite would not want us to go down the path of what occurred there under the Cain Labor Government. The Kennett Government had to drag them out of the mire. Take it to a far worse extreme, such as what has happened in Russia where public servants do not even get paid. That is what happens when you have a complete breakdown of the system. It is far better, Mr Speaker, to try to work out these things very early in the piece, and that is something which this Government is addressing. I think the Chief Minister is quite right to say that people expect us to do that. I think they put us in here for our economic management; because we could address the operating loss and go some way towards balancing the books. That is very important. Of course, Mr Rugendyke, I would agree that it is a question of balancing. That is why we have maintained our commitment in terms of increasing primary and secondary schools' funding in real terms. That is why that extra \$4.2m is there.

I come now to some of Mr Corbell's comments. I think I have been a very active Youth Minister. I have thoroughly enjoyed going to a number of functions and actively participating in them. Earlier in question time you mentioned Youth Week 97. I thoroughly enjoyed participating in a lot of that. In terms of the youth centres, we have had the debate and I am not going to go through that. We have comments from both the Government and the Estimates Committee. I am not going to go through that.

In relation to your more recent comments, Mr Corbell, about the Aboriginal program which we are working up, you say the Aboriginal people have not been involved. That is not what I understand to be the case, but I will check that out. I think we have a very good record, not only in the youth area but throughout government, and certainly in anything to do with education, in terms of consulting widely with the Aboriginal community and getting them to be active drivers of the process. I will look into that further, Mr Corbell, because your comments somewhat surprise me. It may well be early days but that would seem to fly against what our practice has been for the last 3½ years. I am happy to follow that up further. I think it is important that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are actively involved at every stage of any sort of process which government is involved in.

Without going through the debate, which we have had ad nauseam, I did have a look at the transcript. It was very interesting to see what the community said when they appeared before the Estimates Committee. There are some interesting points here in relation to the youth centres because there has been criticism about one-year contracts for Civic and Woden. It is not defunding; it is not reducing funding; it is simply a one-year contract as opposed to a three-year contract, for reasons that have already been given in terms of a different service which we are looking at at both those very important youth centres. I was interested to see appearing before the committee Mr Paul Attenborough and Mr Garth Edwards from the Civic Youth Centre. On page 1175 of the transcript of 5 August 1998, the chair welcomed both of those gentlemen and said:

Can I just ask you to address one issue in your address to the Committee, that is, your understanding about negotiations on the three year contract. We are led to understand that you were of the belief that it was a three year contract all the way through and I would like to hear comments in respect of that in particular.

Mr Edwards responded:

In relation to the funding, I can see why it has been done and I understand the reasoning behind it. We are here to put to the Committee that we are prepared to move forward in relation to certain things that are about to take place. We will talk with different organisations and other services groups. Our main area to this Committee is to table if we could a handout that was made and a brief overview of what we actually do at the Civic Youth Centre. The funding issue I think we will live with and we will deal with as it comes up further ...

Then there were a number of other questions. Mr Edwards and his colleague went into quite a wide range of various services that they provide, such as increased hours for youth and the fact that they are there effectively to look after what the youth want. I might refer to that quote because it is particularly helpful. They give out 13,000 meals and provide all sorts of services. Mr Corbell, at page 1180, asked Mr Edwards:

Can I ask one last thing about - getting back to the one year versus three year contract issue, the Government has indicated, both here in Estimates and in the Assembly earlier this year, that the reason for the offer of one year is, there was a review being undertaken of Youth Services provided by your centre, in your area, covered by your centre and also in Woden.

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Mr Berry: Was it a Cabinet decision?

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, and go and read the Estimates Committee transcript. Mr Corbell continued:

What is your view of the appropriateness of that view, and have there been other reviews previously to concern the past 12 to 18 months that have looked at the same sorts of issues that this review is looking at?

Mr Edwards said:

There has been reviews done in the last 18 months that have classified the Civic Youth Centre as a worthy cause, it is needed. Our view on the new style is that, yes, we will fit into and work with any model that comes up.

I will continue for my remaining 10 minutes, Mr Speaker, if I may.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Edwards went on to say:

We will certainly be looking at models from interstate. We know of a couple already that we are keen to look at. We are here to provide the best service we can and the best practices and we will work within the organisation or any committee that is heading in that direction.

MR CORBELL: I realise this is a difficult question to answer but do you feel that there is perhaps a level of duplication in the sort of reviews that are currently being undertaken compared to what has occurred previously, or is that an unfair question?

MR ATTENBOROUGH: This recent information that came through this morning, I think this new review that they are sort of looking at at this stage is best practice on a - an all under one roof, so to speak, where the last one they had was in regards to new centres and their viability, so to speak, and how they perform, what services they perform. I think this one was looking at going under the entire umbrella is a little bit different, it is not going to be the same as what happened before a reliable rating report.

So I just make those comments in relation to that.

Mr Speaker, Mr Quinlan made some comments in relation to another part of my portfolio area, sport, and I must say I very much empathise with much of what he said. He said that the promotion of elite sport was fine, and it was great in its own right, but he did have a concern that there needed to be maintenance of sport at the grassroots level and a firm focus on what we do at the elite level as well as the grassroots level. That is increasingly important, Mr Speaker.

I am pleased to see that in this budget, and it is a difficult budget, the Government is attempting to reduce its deficit. I made the point in the Estimates Committee that the sports budget has been maintained. That, in a difficult budget, is pleasing. It would be lovely, Mr Speaker, if it could have been increased a bit. It would be lovely because of such things as the increased costs of ground maintenance that we have to find within our own budget. It would be absolutely fantastic if we could have a few extra hundred thousand dollars; but it is significant, Mr Speaker, that in a very difficult economic climate, with most government agencies suffering cuts - in some cases fairly significant cuts - the budget was maintained. That, I think, is significant and is very much a plus.

Mr Quinlan also mentioned Football Park, Phillip, and the money in capital works in relation to the development of that park as well as in relation to Manuka. You should be aware, but you may not be, that very shortly after that very successful AFL game on 1 August I had meetings, along with the Chief Minister, with a representative from the Australian Football League. The AFL are currently looking at what needs to occur with Phillip. They are also looking at Manuka. They are doing a number of things in conjunction with the Australian Cricket Board and they are very keen in relation to developing those facilities. They will be getting back to the Government very shortly in terms of what they think is the way to go and what timeframes and priorities they would like to see. So, Mr Quinlan, it may not necessarily be lights initially. I was delighted to see a commitment from the AFL. I was especially delighted as there was a fair bit of nervousness in Canberra after the announcement was made back in May of plans for New South Wales and the ACT. There was some concern that perhaps this would seriously affect our chances of ever, on a regular basis, having AFL games. I think the commitment shown by the AFL in terms of that meeting is very heartening, and I look forward to seeing what they come back with. There is a very positive step there.

Ms Tucker made some comments which I think I addressed in relation to my comments regarding Mr Berry. Mr Wood also made a number of comments and I will deal with them now. Mr Wood dealt with Quamby. The review suggested a number of steps we should take, including altering the staffing arrangements at Quamby. The matters they raised and the suggestions they raised in relation to a better staffing structure and systems are currently being worked through between the Quamby staff, the relevant union, management and the department. There may well be some merit, Mr Wood, in me advising the Assembly in a ministerial statement of how that is all progressing. I will certainly look at that. It may or may not be sensible to do it during the next sitting. I will see what is the most appropriate time in terms of significant developments, but I think you will be pleased that the review also recommended better educational programs.

We have done a considerable amount in terms of better programs over the last three years or so. I was delighted, when the debate was going on in the media four to six weeks ago, to hear the CPSU representative say that there had been very significant improvement over the last four years at Quamby. That is so, but institutions like that are inherently difficult. I think we all accept that. I think Ms Tucker made some very valid comments about institutions such as the various gaols, the Belconnen Remand Centre and Quamby.

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Yes, institutions like that are difficult. There are always going to be problems in running them. That, unfortunately, is just the nature of institutions such as that. However, I am pleased to see that that review does indicate a way forward which will lead to further improvements at the Quamby Remand Centre.

In relation to Jigsaw, that company, as Mr Wood has indicated, has been providing theatre in education since 1984. You are right; it is 15 years Mr Wood. We first came to government in 1995. Jigsaw Theatre, at the end of 1995, won a tender for the theatre for our government school sectors. That period ceases at the end of this year.

The work of Jigsaw, as Mr Wood said, is certainly supported by teachers and the school community. They provide theatre experience, in case members do not know, for about 40,000 students during the term of the contract, and they cover students from kindergarten to college. Like Mr Wood, I have seen several productions. I found them not only entertaining but also very useful. I could see where the educational value could come from.

I understand that the Jigsaw managers have met recently with senior officers of the department to discuss the issue. They have submitted a proposal of services that they will offer to teachers and students, together with estimated costs. That proposal is currently being considered by the Government within our overall budget for government schooling. I expect that the department and those officers will be able to respond to their proposal in the near future. I think the main officer they spoke to comes back from leave at the end of this week, Mr Wood. As a result of your interest, I will be asking that officer how it is all going. I appreciate your comments in relation to the need for some promptness because they obviously have to make their arrangements for next year.

Mr Wood: So you think they do a good job, too?

MR STEFANIAK: I have been to a couple of performances and I have no complaints about what I saw, Mr Wood. I will, of course, take advice from my department on how it is all going. I must admit that I do not think I have seen one for about 18 months, but I have seen several of their performances, and I liked very much one in particular.

Mr Stanhope spoke of women in sport. This is a difficult problem, Mr Speaker. I think we have made significant improvements, and the ACT does lead the way. We have increased participation rates for women in the period from 1993, I think, to the end of 1996 from 22 per cent to 31 per cent. That is an increase of 9 per cent. We have the highest percentage of women participating in sport and recreational activities in the country. It is the highest by a very considerable margin.

One of our main aims is to increase that participation rate by women and girls. We have done a number of things over the last three or so years to do that. We have implemented the active women in sport program. I was going through some figures for Mr Quinlan as a result of that question he asked me yesterday, and I saw that \$50,000 was allocated to the active women program which was aimed at getting more women involved in sport and recreational activities in 1997. We have significantly increased grants to women's sport.

In terms of how you get the media more interested, that is a real problem for women in sport. I think it has improved slightly, but a lot more work needs to be done. I was pleased to see - in fact, I was delighted to be very much a part of this - that two of the teams who will be receiving significant assistance through the teams in national league funding are the Capitals and the Strikers. The amount of money offered to the Strikers, for example, is exactly the same as to the Lakers. I think that is a great recognition in terms of those two women's teams who do so well in national leagues. I think we have done a considerable amount. We have a very proud record in terms of women in sport in the ACT, but it is something we certainly want to build on. I can assure Mr Stanhope that we will be doing all we can in relation to that. I think I will close on that. I think I have addressed most of the concerns raised by members, and I thank them for their comments.

MR BERRY (6.29): Mr Speaker, there are a few things I want to address. I must respond to what Mr Rugendyke said in relation to his position on the budget and the Liberal Party. I was disappointed with that. I thought that Mr Rugendyke might maintain at least some pretence that he was independent, but I think he has made it pretty clear now that there is no chance that anybody could interpret his position in relation to this Government or this budget as being independent at all. The problem with that is that the Government now knows it can rely on his support and need not take into account his position. In effect he has been emasculated, I would think, and that is a disappointment for this Assembly. It would be of most disappointment to those people who elected him thinking that he was an Independent. He clearly is not and is rusted onto the Liberal Government. In many ways his speech was sycophantic, and I must say that I was extremely disappointed.

I do not expect everybody to like the Labor Party, but I at least expect them to be balanced. Mr Rugendyke has said on so many occasions that he has an open mind on matters, but this evening he made it clear that it is closed on most issues. I need not say anything more than that. My colleagues have spoken to the matter adequately.

I should talk, too, about Mr Moore's disgraceful rationalisation of his about-face on education funding.

Ms Carnell: Oh, Wayne. He did not speak slowly enough.

MR BERRY: You should read your own response to the Estimates Committee report, Chief Minister. You will discover a comment on page 36 which says:

CPI funding was based on GPO levels before the \$1.9m contribution to the operating loss was adjusted from the budget -

so it did come out -

and not after as is suggested by this comment. The 1.9m contribution to the operating loss does not affect government schooling ...

Impliedly, it means that it will affect education.

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Ms Carnell: Rubbish!

MR BERRY: Okay, even if it were not to, if what you are trying to kid us on is correct, the fact of the matter is that the \$1.5m for computers and the \$400,000 for the literacy program do. So, in any event you have deliberately created the impression that there was new and additional money going into education, and it is now going to be taken out of central office. We all recall the great, spirited and proper defence of central office that was put up by the head of Education as well as the Minister in the past, but we now note that there has been a strong element of hypocrisy in the Government's approach to this issue.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make a short comment in relation to the youth centre funding. I think what has occurred there has been outrageous. There was clearly a payback. We have seen this before. We saw it in relation to ACTCOSS when the Government made it clear to ACTCOSS that if their director did not disappear their funding might be in doubt; so their director fell on his sword in the interests of community services. We all remember Jobline or Joblink. I think it was Jobline. I think the title was executive director of the Civic Youth Centre. That person was also an active player in that and an active campaigner against the Government's actions in relation to that matter. Well, she has now retired. Ms Carnell smirks about the issue.

Ms Carnell: I did not. I was not even listening to you.

MR BERRY: A gratuitous smirk.

MR SPEAKER: Stop being provocative, Mr Berry.

MR BERRY: Mr Speaker, this episode is just a repeat performance of the vindictive approach that has been taken by the Government to people who challenge them on anything. They call it payback. But they will fight on. There are always fighters in those areas because they have been used to dealing with difficult circumstances for eons. Carnell governments will not bother them much in the scheme of things, except that there are some unfortunate casualties as a result. It was a decision of the Chief Minister. There is no question about that. There have been some casualties but I am sure that they will get by because they are a tough-minded mob and they are concerned about the services that they provide to the community.

Another matter that I would like to deal with, Mr Speaker, is the issue of computers in schools. This has had a significant impact on the education system, and the Government created the impression it was not going to happen. Be that as it may, the Estimates Committee took a look at the provision of computer services to schools and we discovered that there was inadequate equipment, to a hazardous level, I think, with the absence of proper ergonomic furniture for teachers in particular but probably for students as well. We called on the Government to make an early assessment of the ancillary needs associated with the installation of information technology. The recommendation was not accepted.

What a disgraceful position for the Government to adopt. It runs the risk of injuring teachers and students because it refuses to deal with the problems that schools are having with ergonomic furniture. It did not seem to sink in but I thought we made the point that schools and teachers would probably put themselves at risk rather than detract from the services that they wanted to provide to students in school by way of the new computer equipment. It is unfair to have them make that decision. It is unfair.

The computers essentially turned up in boxes and people were advised to get on with it. Of course, teachers, as is their bent, will get on with it, but at the end of the day the Government has steered away from its responsibility to provide ergonomic furniture and has tried to switch it over to the schools. That is a disgrace. The fact is that insufficient resources were put into this computer matter and injuries could result. If injuries do result the Government will wear the responsibility for that and it ought to be subject to some sort of penalty as a result. As far as I am concerned, workplace safety is extremely important. Expediency should not occur as a result of a trade-off in workplace safety. I think the Government's callous reaction to the recommendation of the committee in this respect demonstrates that they are prepared to accept the expedient route rather than the one that is safe.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the funding or the resources that are being taken out of the central office will impact on schools in the long run. There is no doubt that there are going to be effects on the education system as a result. I have listed these, but I will go through the process again. They are the management of industrial and legal matters, international education, supporting schools through the schools directorate, curriculum support, the student support service, the development of literacy plans, the provision of curriculum advice, policy development and so on. The list is quite a long one, but it is crucial that those sorts of resources for government schooling are maintained.

It is impossible to believe that the savage cuts which are being made to the central office will not impact on education in the ACT. The Minister and the head of his department were right to defend attacks on the central office when they took place in the election campaign. They were correct. I think there is a level of hypocrisy that we have not experienced before. There was an immediate turnaround after the election because you felt safe in the coalition with the Osborne group that you would not be under attack if you ripped into central office. You may feel safe from any criticism from the Osborne group in relation to that matter, but who suffers the penalty? Our education system does. Mr Speaker, I will not be voting for this budget.

MR SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

MS CARNELL (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (6.40): You have never voted for one budget ever.

Mr Berry: Yes, I have. Several.

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MS CARNELL: It would be a surprise if you did. I have a very brief statement to make, Mr Speaker. I think I have been very good. Having listened to a lot of the speeches today, yesterday and the day before, Mr Speaker, I suppose the thing that becomes most obvious in this education debate is that those opposite are not interested in attempting to make the central office more efficient or to bring down some of the costs of administration in education so that we can spend the money on educating our kids. Those opposite, and Kerrie Tucker as well, have not supported virtually any of the measures in this budget. Well, they have supported a couple, but virtually none of the revenue measures. It seems also that those opposite have opposed almost all of the expenditure reduction methods. They have suggested that there should not be any reduction in staff in the Public Service, no new revenue, and no expenditure cuts, yet at the same time Mr Berry managed to say earlier today that this approach should not end up adding to the operating loss. Now, Mr Speaker, I would like to know how.

I would like Mr Quinlan or Mr Kaine, who have some experience in this area, to tell me how you can have no new revenue measures, oppose almost all of the expenditure cuts, have no cuts in staff in the Public Service, and not end up adding to the operating loss, particularly as those opposite have suggested that we should spend more money on ACTION buses, that we should have 50 new nurses - that is about \$3m - that we should make sure we address the issues of bypass at the hospital, and that we need more beds. The list goes on, Mr Speaker. So, lots of new expenditure, no reductions, no new revenue, but no increase in the operating loss, according to Mr Berry, or not much. Only a little one maybe. Mr Speaker, Houdini would be proud of that sort of approach. It would require magic, and I have to say that magic rarely happens, it seems to me, with regard to budgets.

Mr Speaker, there seemed to be a lack of understanding of the difference between debt and operating loss. This Government believes that a level of debt is appropriate in any budget and that a manageable debt is quite a reasonable approach. We have no problems with borrowing, as in the InTACT area, for things that will produce a return to government over time. The problem is an operating loss that is ongoing. If we continue to spend more than we make, in the end all that can possibly happen is ongoing borrowings - borrowings that we cannot afford to pay back because they are not for things that will produce either revenue or efficiencies in the longer term. Alternatively, they would mean running down our assets base. Those in this Assembly who have even a basic knowledge of expenditure or of budgets will understand that.

The role of the Government, as some people, like Mr Rugendyke, have said, is to bring down a budget. It is to attempt, even against all odds at times, to do the right thing in terms of financial management and managing our operating loss for the people of the ACT. Let us be fair; that is what we were elected to do. Mr Speaker, that is what we have attempted to do.

I would like to finish by making the point that all on this side of the house negotiate regularly with Mr Rugendyke and Mr Osborne. I have to say that they regularly convince the Government to move in various areas. I would like to put on record that, with regard to the Institute of the Arts funding, it has been Mr Rugendyke's pressuring that has ensured that the Institute of the Arts will have ongoing funding from the ACT in outyears.

MR OSBORNE (6.44): I think I need to clarify one thing, Mr Speaker. I missed Mr Rugendyke's speech. I have to say that, unlike him, I would much prefer to vote for the Labor Party. I had never voted Liberal until I voted for Ms Carnell as Chief Minister three years ago, but I think that says more about - - -

Mr Moore: Yes, but you had Fred Daly.

MR OSBORNE: I had Fred Daly as my local member.

Mr Moore: How could you not vote for him?

MR SPEAKER: Order! We do not want to be here all night.

MR OSBORNE: Fred Daly was one of the people who encouraged me to run. The reason why it has been so hard to vote for Labor is more an indictment of the Labor Party that we have here in the ACT rather than the way that we are inclined. I am pleased that Mr Rugendyke is more inclined to vote Liberal, but I am not. One of the important things for me and, I think, for Mr Rugendyke and Mr Moore, during the three years that Mr Moore was one of us on this part of the crossbench - I will leave Ms Tucker out of that, and Mr Kaine has not been here long enough to be included in the "us", but perhaps after next year's budget we will be able to include him - is to ensure that we have a stable government. It would be very easy to vote against a budget every year and swap governments, but I do not think that is what the people of the ACT want.

There are times when we do negotiate with the Government and we are sometimes successful - more times than Ms Tucker - and sometimes not. But, as I said, one issue for us is the issue of stability. I think the people of the ACT need to know that, apart from gross misconduct or things like that, the Government that is voted in at the start of each term is there to stay. There are a lot of things in this budget that I do not necessarily like, Mr Speaker. I have said a number of times that I have not been involved in the formulation of the budget and it would be very easy to pull a little bit out here and vote against it, but I think it is very important that we allow the Government to govern.

I heard some talk of the operating loss, Mr Speaker. One other thing that I would like to talk about is the unfunded superannuation liability, which I think at this stage is about \$750m. That is a tremendous legacy left to us by a Labor government and, to a lesser extent, the Liberals. It is a terrible legacy that we are imposing on our children. So, addressing the operating loss and spending what you earn is very important to me, and I think to Mr Rugendyke. I am sure it is to Mr Kaine as well.

It is very easy for the Labor Party to sit on the other side of the chamber, Mr Speaker, and say we should vote against the budget. There are two points that I would like to make. The first is this: I wonder how they would feel if they were in government and members of the crossbench voted against their budget? Secondly, I acknowledge that a vote against the budget is a vote of no confidence in the Government, and the thought of some members of the Labor Party being in government still sends shivers down my spine. I have to say, though, in respect of the leadership of Mr Stanhope, that I have a lot more faith in him than I have had in other leaders of the Labor Party in the past.

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I must admit to having been a little bit disappointed with some of the things Mr Stanhope has said in the last week, but I acknowledge that people often get caught up in an issue. I have to say, though, that in the scheme of things I think there is some potential for some members of the Labor Party. There are still some cowards over there, Mr Speaker, but there is some potential.

The reality is that it is very easy for the Labor Party to vote against the budget, but the issue is stability. The issue for us is that earlier this year the people of the ACT said that they wanted Kate Carnell as Chief Minister and - - -

Mr Berry: No, they did not.

MR OSBORNE: They certainly did not want you, Mr Berry. We did not want you either, Mr Berry, and that was our choice. As I said, Mr Speaker, budgets are important, but I cast my mind back to 1995 and the budget that year. The Labor Party and the Government got together when we attempted to amend the budget. I do not see voting against the lines of budgets or things like that as being any different from what we tried to do in 1995. Perhaps procedurally it was a little bit different, but the reality was that the two major parties realised what something like voting against the line or amending the budget means.

Ms Tucker: Rubbish!

MR OSBORNE: It is not rubbish. You know it is not rubbish.

Ms Tucker: It is a matter of choice.

MR OSBORNE: Ms Tucker can recall 1995.

Ms Tucker: I am not disagreeing about them colluding.

MR OSBORNE: They did collude. You know they colluded, Ms Tucker.

MR SPEAKER: Order, please! Let Mr Osborne finish. Some of you may not have homes to go to, but others do. Let Mr Osborne finish, please.

MR OSBORNE: Mr Speaker, at the end of the day this is Mrs Carnell's budget. I have consistently said that stability is very important and that I would allow governments to have their budgets. We attempt to change things and we do negotiate with the Government at different times. Sometimes we have wins and sometimes we do not. I could not distance myself from my colleague, Mr Rugendyke, for a start. I heard the former ACTEW accountant of the year. If he had the attitude that he has at the moment when he was the big accountant at ACTEW, I am surprised they did not go broke. It is very important that we have a stable government, Mr Speaker. I think that is what the people of the ACT want. Not everyone is going to agree with everything that they do. I certainly will not. Mr Rugendyke probably will, by the sounds of things. I thought it was very important to say that, Mr Speaker.

MR HARGREAVES (6.52): I will not take up very much of the Assembly's time.

MR SPEAKER: That is what they all say, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: Well, Mr Speaker, I suggest that you turn the clock on and check it out and measure me against that collective bunch across the chamber. I am a bit sad to see that Mr Osborne is so wounded about events of the recent past that he has to constantly introduce terminology meant to inflict mortal wounds. All I have to say to him is: "It ain't working". I would have thought that Mr Osborne would have had better sense than this. Instead of pontificating about these issues in snide ways, he ought to realise and accept that he is not the only person in the world who can go through the dark days of the soul on the most serious issue he has ever been faced with and - - -

Mr Osborne: I take a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have obviously hit a raw nerve.

MR SPEAKER: I beg your pardon?

Mr Osborne: I did not mention it. I would like to remind Mr Hargreaves that I did not mention his name, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: I am sorry; there is no point of order.

MR HARGREAVES: The point, of course, is that Mr Osborne was talking about how to manage budgets. In his usual fashion, he leaves the chamber or he leaves the arena. I must say that I am not surprised about that. If he wishes to depart, all the better.

The Chief Minister asked: How are we going to do it? How are we going to manage the budget? There are two issues about that, Mr Speaker. Firstly, it ain't our job, and we do not have the barrow-load of staff that she has to do it. That is her job. She has to understand that this chamber is charged with scrutiny. Secondly, when you have a big budget like this - I address my remarks to the crossbenchers, although I do not need to in the case of Mr Kaine and Ms Tucker - the issue in respect of these complaints that we have about the budget is not the bottom line. To suggest that you cannot trim elsewhere in programs to take care of at least some of the concerns that this Assembly has expressed is absolute and complete accounting rot. It can go on. All it needs is for you to listen and to do a little bit of work. It can happen. If they say it cannot happen, they are inefficient and incompetent. That is the first thing.

Mr Hird: It is \$83m.

Mr Smyth: It is only a little bit of work.

Mr Berry: Oh, a bit more cash accounting?

MR HARGREAVES: That is it. You would well know that you can do a little trim here and a little trim there, and the next thing you know you have a bucket; so you do not have to do quite a number of the draconian things that you have done. You could do it. All you have to do is go back for a little while and have a look at it. We have plenty of time. We have been here for three days.

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Ms Carnell: Just sit down. We are very bored.

MR HARGREAVES: Chief Minister, I am surprised that you can say you are very bored because you have been missing for the greater part of this debate. You have been elsewhere. I do not know what you have been doing to get your jollies, Chief Minister, but you certainly have not been getting them here. If you are that bored, Chief Minister, go away and get your jollies somewhere else. Clearly, Chief Minister, you are not interested. I welcome you, but I invite you to leave.

Ms Carnell: Good.

MR HARGREAVES: Off you go. We do not want to see you anyway. Mr Speaker, very briefly, I was not going to do this but I am going to speak about the education budget. I want to express some concern and a little bit of caution about what we have seen. I know the Minister knows full well about this. The implications of school-based management have been very significant. I am not going to stand up here and bag the process because it is quite a good process and I do not mind that. However, it is a process which has to be introduced slowly. We are not going to do as they did in the States and chuck a barrow-load of money at it. In the States they introduced things very quickly because they threw a barrow-load of money at it and it was successful. We are not throwing a barrow-load of money because we do not have it. The answer to that is to introduce it more slowly because a lot of the people out there in education-land do not have the skills to handle it. They do not have the instincts to handle it and they have to be given time to acquire them.

When I was an officer of that department I felt that it was swimming along just a little bit quicker than it needed to, but it was still under control. My concern, which I want to express in this chamber tonight, is that the cuts to the Education central office are premature. I appreciate that there is room to move, not because we can see waste there but because the process of the introduction of school-based management was assisted by some of those people who are going to cop the cuts.

I refer particularly to the area from which I came. It was formerly known as the property management section and it included the school-based management unit. Within that unit there were people who had the corporate history of such things as cleaning contracts and security contracts - all of the administrative things that we are handing over to the schools. I warn the Government that if they eliminate that too quickly the corporate history is going to disappear. By way of example, there are rogue cleaners in the cleaning industry, just as there are in any industry, but those people in the schools do not know who they are. Our central office staff do know who they are. Those sorts of transfers of corporate history and corporate memory require at least two or three years, or maybe five years. Then, and only then, can we cut it out. That is only one example of many where this will work to our detriment. We will be putting our school management under undue duress and strain. We will not get the outcomes we want for a considerable number of years. The sensible thing to do is to have a look at those elements which exist in the central office on which the schools have depended and leave them alone.

Put on a moratorium for a reasonable period. The reasonable period needs to be increased, in my view, because we have not chucked in a barrow-load of money and the training and the assistance needed for the introduction.

I warn the Minister and the Government that we will have a less than satisfactory product at the end of the day. We need to be cleverer about this. If you must cut, fine; I have no problem about that. Personally, I do not think it is necessary in certain areas, but I am not going to debate them today. I put this warning on the table: Introduce it too quickly and it will fall on its face. At the end of the day the people who will suffer will be the schoolkids, in the first instance, and all of our teaching staff and the school management staff. What will happen is that we will get ourselves into such a state of corporate financial ruin in some of the schools that we will have to start paying for increased levels of administrative assistance, at SOG C and B levels, to get us out of it. At the end of the day it could be more expensive than the amounts that we are saving now.

Question put:

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 10

NOES, 7

Ms Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr Hird
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Mr Moore
Mr Osborne
Mr Rugendyke
Mr Smyth
Mr Stefaniak

Mr Berry
Mr Corbell
Mr Hargreaves
Mr Quinlan
Mr Stanhope
Ms Tucker
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Proposed expenditure - Total appropriated to Departments, \$1,514,430,000 (comprising net cost of outputs, \$1,041,007,000; capital injection, \$237,169,000; and payments on behalf of Territory, \$236,254,000) - agreed to.

Part 16 - Treasurer's Advance

Proposed expenditure - Treasurer's Advance, \$15,100,000 - agreed to.

Proposed expenditure - Total appropriations, \$1,529,530,000 (comprising net cost of outputs, \$1,041,007,000; capital injection, \$237,169,000; payments on behalf of Territory, \$236,254,000; and Treasurer's Advance, \$15,100,000)

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MR SPEAKER: The question is that the proposed expenditure be agreed to. Those of that opinion say aye, of the contrary say no. The ayes have it.

Mr Berry: The noes have it.

MR SPEAKER: We have not finished yet.

Mr Berry: Sorry; I withdraw that.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Remainder of Bill, by leave, taken as a whole, and agreed to.

Question put:

That this Bill be agreed to.

The Assembly voted -

AYES, 10

NOES, 7

Ms Carnell
Mr Cornwell
Mr Hird
Mr Humphries
Mr Kaine
Mr Moore
Mr Osborne
Mr Rugendyke
Mr Smyth
Mr Stefaniak

Mr Berry
Mr Corbell
Mr Hargreaves
Mr Quinlan
Mr Stanhope
Ms Tucker
Mr Wood

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

**ESTIMATES 1998-99 - SELECT COMMITTEE -
Report on the Appropriation Bill 1998-99 - Government Response**

Debate resumed from 1 September 1998, on motion by **Ms Carnell:**

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Erindale Police Station : Jindalee Nursing Home

MS CARNELL: I have to answer a couple of questions before we break, Mr Speaker. In question time yesterday, I think, I was asked some questions about what was happening with Lower Jindalee Nursing Home and Erindale Police Station. I am advised that discussions are being held with a facilities management group at Canberra Hospital with regard to a possible health use for Lower Jindalee. I understand that a final decision will be made on this in the very near future.

With regard to Erindale Police Station, discussions are being held with the Tuggeranong Community Service for a possible lease over this property. Tuggeranong Community Service's proposal is to use the facility to house and run multiple community support programs. It is envisaged that the Tuggeranong Community Service will directly manage the majority of these programs. They would, however, also be eager to facilitate other community support programs managed by other organisations run from the same complex. The Government is currently considering this proposal and assessing the community benefits that will be derived from it. I am hoping that a decision will be made in the near future.

Floriade

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, I was asked today by Mr Wood about school band involvement in the 1998 Floriade. Yesterday the *Canberra Times* printed an article by Mr Robert Macklin indicating that school bands were not being asked to play at this year's Floriade. The article omitted significant information that had been provided by Ms Vanessa Dusi from CTEC, thereby providing the reader with a completely false report about the issue. CTEC has already written a letter to the *Canberra Times* expressing its concern that the article misrepresented facts provided to the paper by CTEC on Monday afternoon this week.

The *Canberra Times* has been made aware that, first, an extensive program of professional entertainment and community entertainment is being provided during this year's Floriade. Professional entertainment is being provided each lunchtime and evening on weekdays in addition to major concerts, the festival club and the weekend entertainment program. The weekend program consists of a diverse mixture of community and professional entertainment. Schools requesting the opportunity to perform at Floriade have been offered timeslots either before or after the professional entertainment. To date, 10 schools have approached the Floriade office and have been offered timeslots. At this stage I think 50 per cent of those schools have taken up the offer. It should be noted that the article omitted the last two items of information which had been provided to Mr Macklin. Those items, I am sure, could be construed as being in the public interest, and leaving them out could have been construed as being against the public interest. Copies of the original letter to Mr Macklin and Ray Veldre's response of 2 September 1998 and a list of the bands approved to date for this year's event are tabled for the interest of members.

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Mr Speaker, I would like to make another comment on Floriade. Today it has been said, I think on numerous occasions by Mr Stanhope, that somehow Floriade will be locked off a week before the event. That is not the case. I have here a media release from the Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation. Yes, it is true that the fence is going up a week before, but the gates will not be put on until 19 September. So it seems, Mr Speaker, that the Labor Party was wrong again. I table that for the interest of members.

Report on ACTTAB

MS CARNELL: Mr Speaker, on 1 September 1998 Mr Quinlan asked a supplementary question in which he alleged that the co-authors of the report into the Northern Territory TAB, ABN AMRO, had been chosen as consultants for the review of ACTEW. Mr Quinlan implied that ABN AMRO was selected because we knew that they would not address the issues properly or would come up with the approach the Government wanted.

Mr Speaker, the Northern Territory TAB study was undertaken by a group of consultants including ABN AMRO Hoare Govett and was completed in January 1998. ABN AMRO's current structure was put in place after completion of the Northern Territory TAB report and has arisen from the acquisition by ABN AMRO of the Australian operations of a separate firm, BZW. ABN AMRO Corporate Finance is part of a consortium that was selected to undertake the ACTEW scoping study review following rigorous assessment after a highly competitive open tender process. The individual ABN AMRO employees specified in the contract as the key personnel to undertake the scoping study review of ACTEW were employees of BZW prior to the acquisition. They were not employees of ABN AMRO at the time of the preparation of the report on the Northern Territory TAB. Mr Speaker, they were not employees of ABN; they were not involved in the Northern Territory report. No issue.

ADJOURNMENT

Use of Internal cc:mail System

MR HUMPHRIES (Attorney-General, Minister for Justice and Community Safety and Minister Assisting the Treasurer) (7.14): I move:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of the house what I think is a quite regrettable recurrence of an incident that happened a few weeks ago when one of the members of the Assembly chose to use the internal cc:mail system to deliver a message to public servants in the ACT which could be viewed as being of a political nature. Let us not put anyone under any undue suspense. It was done by Mr Berry, surprise, surprise. He has emailed, as far as I can tell, all the public servants in the ACT with a message about the voluntary redundancy motion that was dealt with by the Assembly yesterday. I will not bother tabling it, Mr Speaker, as members will have it on their own cc:mails.

I simply say, Mr Speaker, that this is a very dangerous game that Mr Berry is playing. Quite apart from the rules we have about these things, which he is breaching, if two of us got into that game, indeed, if all of us in this place got into that game, we would be in serious trouble. We could all do cc:mail messages. We could all be propagandising among public servants in this place. If the Labor Party wants to make it their forte, Mr Speaker, it is a very dangerous precedent, and others in this place inevitably will also start to use it in that way. The Labor Party might not care about the consequences of these things, but if we start to bombard public servants in that way I think we are setting a very dangerous precedent.

Use of Internal cc:mail System

MR BERRY (7.16): One thing for sure that I knew was that the public servants were not going to be told about yesterday's decision of this Assembly by the Government, and it was in the public interest that they be told. Mr Humphries says that I have broken the rules, or something to that effect. I recall some time ago, Mr Speaker, when you sent a press release to all public servants about this Assembly allegedly bagging public servants. At the time I tried to respond to that and I was not able to get access to the same medium as you were.

Mr Speaker, this is about providing some important information. You will note that there was no rhetoric in it; it was just a straight take from the records of this place. It was very carefully put together that way so that public servants would know about it. I did not say that the Chief Minister argued against that motion. I did not say that the Osborne group supported the Government's move to try to water it down. I never said any of that. I lifted it straight as it was and sent it. I will not be using this system unless it is absolutely necessary.

Mr Moore: No; we will just stop you having access to the government link. It is easy.

MR BERRY: That is fine. If it is all right for the Speaker to be given permission by the Chief Minister's Department - - -

Ms Carnell: It is not all right. I have never used it.

MR BERRY: If it is all right for the Speaker - - -

Ms Carnell: You said it was not.

MR Humphries: You said it was not. Have you changed your mind?

MR BERRY: If it was all right at the time for the Speaker to be given access, I am just using the same rules. I am just playing by the same rules. You people refuse to give access to an opposing view.

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Mr Humphries: That is not true. You did not ask for approval. That is a lie, Wayne, and you know it.

MR BERRY: You refuse to give access to an opposing view. I will not be using that facility very often, I can tell you; only when it is in the public interest, and it was in the public interest to send it out this time. I will not be using rhetoric. I will not be sending union notices and that sort of thing.

Floriade : Parent Support Service

MR STANHOPE (Leader of the Opposition) (7.19): I will be very brief, but I want to say a couple of things. The information which the Labor Party received in relation to Floriade was received directly from CTEC, so if CTEC are giving wrong information - - -

Ms Carnell: May I have a look at it? I would love to see it, I really would.

MR STANHOPE: No, it was information received by telephone directly from CTEC. If they did not tell it as it exactly was, I cannot be held accountable for that. The information I have was precisely as I told it.

The other reason why I rose in the adjournment debate, Mr Speaker, was to mention the incredibly good work that the Parent Support Service does for the people of Canberra. The annual general meeting of the Parent Support Service is on next Tuesday and I think it is appropriate that we pause and reflect on the work that that organisation does. The Parent Support Service employs only two counsellors. They take over 1,700 calls a year. Their rate of calls has increased by 15 per cent over the last year. They provide an invaluable service to parents, particularly in Canberra, who are experiencing some crisis in relation to issues affecting their children.

The Parent Support Service is an organisation which is stretched to the limit. I find that ironic in this day of significant insecurity in the community, insecurity particularly relating to jobs and family relationships. If only we could provide some formula for value-adding the work that the Parent Support Service does. Then we would know that the impact in terms of other services that are not required as a result of family breakdown is really quite enormous.

It is interesting, Mr Speaker, that organisations such as the Parent Support Service do not advertise. They are afraid to advertise because they know that if they did they simply could not meet the extra demand that the advertising would generate. I think that is a real commentary on the strain which many community sector organisations are suffering these days. A service such as the Parent Support Service, which exists to support parents suffering some strain as a result of behavioural issues affecting their children, cannot advertise, not because they cannot afford it but because they know that if they did they simply could not meet the demand that their advertising would generate. That is a real concern to me. I would like to place on the record, Mr Speaker, my admiration for the incredibly valuable work that the Parent Support Service does.

Ms Helen Szuty

MR SMYTH (Minister for Urban Services) (7.22): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a short statement in relation to a matter raised by Mr Wood last evening concerning my office and Ms Helen Szuty. In June Ms Szuty sought a meeting with me as an advocate for an ACT Housing tenant who wanted to move from their home into another ACT Housing property. During that meeting, Ms Szuty, a real estate agent, handed me her business card and said that she had found a house for sale. She then asked if ACT Housing would buy the property for this tenant. Furthermore, Ms Szuty later showed the tenant through the property.

I did not consider that behaviour appropriate then, and nor do I now. It also falsely raised, I believe, the expectations of the tenant. I wrote to the Real Estate Institute, the appropriate body overseeing this industry, about my concerns. As far as I understand, the institute dealt with the matter as they saw fit. As far as I am concerned, the matter is now closed.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 7.23 pm until Tuesday, 22 September 1998, at 10.30 am

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

QUESTION ON NOTICE NO 40

Traffic Management Measures

Ms Tucker asked the Minister for Urban Services - in relation to the traffic management measures on Owen Dixon Drive, McKellar -

- (1) What proposals for traffic management measures on Owen Dixon Drive were presented to residents along this road at the beginning of 1998 to address the issue of speeding vehicles and future increases in traffic from the new McKellar soccer stadium.
- (2) What were the results of the public consultation on these traffic management measures.
- (3) What decision was made regarding the installation of traffic management measures on Owen Dixon Drive and when will such measures be implemented.

Mr Smyth - the answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) A traffic management proposal including the provision of a parking lane, concrete islands and a flush pavement threshold treatment (a change in colour or texture of the road surface which is level with the existing pavement) was circulated to residents of Owen Dixon Drive in 1997.
- (2) While elements of this proposal were implemented, the threshold treatment was not implemented due to residents' concerns that there would be an increase in traffic noise. ACT Roads and Stormwater subsequently modified the original proposal to address the noise issue and submitted the modified proposal to residents in May 1997 to obtain their views. The majority of responses received did not support the proposal as it was felt that there would still be an increase in traffic noise.
- (3) ACT Roads and Stormwater are currently finalising the design for a raised concrete platform near the intersection with Boote Street as an alternative traffic-calming measure. Street lighting in the vicinity of the raised platform will also be improved. This work will be implemented in February 1999 as part of my Department's Minor Traffic Works program for 1998/1999. Some additional speed limit signs will also be installed on Owen Dixon Drive during October 1998 to reinforce the 60 km/h speed limit that applies to this street.

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

QUESTION ON NOTICE NO 41

Traffic Management Measures

Ms Tucker asked the Minister for Urban Services - in relation to the Ainslie and Dickson Traffic Management Study -

- (1) What recommendations were made in the study on traffic management measures in Ainslie.
- (2) What traffic management measures have been constructed in Ainslie since that Study.
- (3) What is the timetable for the construction of other traffic management measures in Ainslie.
- (4) What are the Government's current priorities across Canberra for construction of traffic management measures.
- (5) Where are the proposed Ainslie traffic management measures in the Government's order of priorities for traffic management works.

Mr Smyth - the answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) The study, completed in June 1997, recommended a package of traffic-calming measures to be implemented in stages over the next 10 to 15 years. These measures include roundabouts, pedestrian refuges, raised platforms and traffic signals. A copy of the recommended scheme is attached for further detail.
- (2) None.
- (3) The first stage of the recommended scheme will be considered for inclusion in the Government's next Capital Works Program.
- (4) Urban Services is examining a recently completed study of 'Warrants for Traffic Management in established Residential Areas'. These warrants can be used to objectively assess, and prioritise, the nature and extent of traffic activity in residential areas that warrant attention. A submission will then be presented to Government for consideration.
- (5) Ainslie/Dickson is an area of high priority for traffic management measures within the urban area.

Electronic copy of this page is not available but it is included in the printed Hansard.

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APPENDIX 1: Incorporated in Hansard on 2 September 1998 at page 1774

TABLING STATEMENT

I am tabling for the information of members the Workforce Statistical Reports for the third and fourth quarters of the 1997/1998 financial year.

This report reflects the new format introduced in the Fourth Quarter 1996/97 Report. It includes the comparative figures for the respective quarters in the previous two years.

It shows the total number of staff in the ACT Government Workforce at the end of June 1998 as 18,856.

I table this report for the information of members.