



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 4 September 2024

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of question time proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged with the Hansard office as soon as possible.

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Questions without notice
Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

MS LEE: My question is to the Attorney-General. The Auditor-General's report into the Public Trustee and Guardian's business transformation program reveals that there is no record that the PTG sought legal advice about using funds drawn from the

Guarantee and Reserve Account, when the project began in 2017, until September 2023. Yesterday, during question time you confirmed that you were not aware of these serious issues, despite meeting with the PTG regularly and receiving briefings from them. Attorney-General, did the Solicitor-General ever raise the PTG's request for legal advice on 20 September 2023 with you?

MR RATTENBURY: Not to my recollection—no.

MS LEE: Attorney-General, do you accept that your lack of effective oversight of the Public Trustee and Guardian has enabled the potential misuse and illegal use of funds reserved for vulnerable Canberrans?

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

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

MR RATTENBURY: No.

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

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

The report found:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Land—Belconnen rural block 50

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

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

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

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

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

MS BERRY: Yes, it did.

Public Trustee and Guardian—conduct

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

Attorney-General, I again refer to the Auditor-General's report tabled earlier this year

in relation to the business transformation program ICT renewal activities of the Public Trustee and Guardian. In his report, the Auditor-General said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Industrial relations—CFMEU

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

are in administration because of alleged criminal ties, from accessing construction sites?

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

MS LEE: Minister, have you sought and received advice from your directorate about how the Secure Local Jobs Code and the Work Health and Safety Act could allow the CFMEU to access employees despite being in administration? How does it work?

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

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

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

Public housing—assets

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

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

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

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

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

Some of the ways that the government does this include head leasing more than 700 Housing ACT properties to community housing providers and other housing services to provide specialised accommodation services such as crisis accommodation for

women escaping domestic and family violence and transitional accommodation for people exiting the justice system or the health system; setting aside land for community housing in the Indicative Land Release Program; providing option agreements on land for community housing providers applying for HAFF funding; and the \$80 million Affordable Housing Project Fund that supports new community housing developments.

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

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

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

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

Economy—cost of living

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

MR BARR: That data source lacks any credibility.

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

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

lowest income households in the territory.

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

MR BARR: I know this is Ms Lawder's final week and that will be one of her last questions. She is certainly better than that question. My response to Ms Lawder is that I think she is well aware of the international and national impacts that are occurring in our economy that do have an impact on the cost of living for Canberrans. I would also refer the member to the nearly \$150 million of concessions—nearly \$4,000 per household—to the 40,000 lowest income households in the territory.

Public transport

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Parton: I thought I would try.

MADAM SPEAKER: You can try, Mr Parton.

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

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

Budget—health

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how do these investments align with key government

strategies such as the Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. Our significant investments that I have outlined are aligned with our long-term plan for the future of health care in the ACT, including the ACT Health Services Plan and the Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan, as well as Maternity In Focus—our maternity services strategy. ACT Labor has been focused on the long-term vision that ensures children, young people, women and families have access to a health system that supports the right care in the right place at the right time. Our investments support key actions in the Child and Adolescent Clinical Services Plan, including across areas like leadership, coordination and upskilling across health services. We have been focused on improving access to specialist paediatric services and the linkages with interstate services. We have been establishing new services, such as the Child and Adolescent Hospital in the Home program and the co-designed Paediatric Liaison and Navigation Service.

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

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

Jacka—boundary fences

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS BERRY: The Elm Grove leaseholder is a private resident who is requesting the ACT government fund things that the ACT government would not ordinarily fund for anyone. Now that does not mean that the SLA is not willing to continue to work with the lessee, and I have described that in the answer to the first question.

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

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

Jacka—boundary fences

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

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

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

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

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

MS BERRY: They do not.

Planning—Thoroughbred Park

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, under the Financial Management Act, I understand that you are responsible for approving the establishment of joint ventures. A joint venture is being discussed for the Canberra Racing Club to

redevelop Thoroughbred Park. The club is currently half funded by the ACT government. I am concerned that without this funding they would not be able to continue operations. Treasurer, what financial due diligence is undertaken when assessing joint venture partners before entering into a joint venture?

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

MISS NUTTALL: Would the ACT government's significant, ongoing cash transfers to the Racing Club be considered when entering into the joint venture?

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

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

MR BARR: It would be a cabinet decision.

Government—investments

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

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

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

MR BARR: I reject the premise of the question.

Arts, Culture and Creative Policy

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

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

government has a role in the arts and in creativity.

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

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

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

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

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

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