



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 4 December 2024

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Ministerial arrangements	1
Questions without notice:	
Government—procurement.....	1
Transport Canberra—bus driver safety	2
Transport Canberra—bus driver safety	3
Education—public schools.....	4
Transport Canberra—MyWay+	5
Sport and recreation—funding	6
Ginninderra electorate—roads	8
Domestic and family violence—safer families levy	9
Planning and development—Hawker group centre.....	11
Education—building and construction courses.....	11
University of Canberra—governance.....	13
Crime—Kippax shopping centre.....	13
Domestic and family violence—safer families levy	14
Planning and development—Ainslie Volcanics.....	15

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade) (2.01): Minister Cheyne will be absent from part of question time, as she is currently in a ministerial council, which she hopes will finish by about 2.30. If members have questions for Minister Cheyne and could hold them back to the second half of question time, that would be appreciated. If they cannot and must ask them in the first half hour, then I will endeavour to assist members with questions in Minister Cheyne's portfolios.

Questions without notice Government—procurement

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Treasurer.

Treasurer, both you and your government have overseen major projects that have come in over budget and failed to fully deliver for the community, including the \$78 million Human Resources Information Management System project and the \$64 million MyWay+ system.

Treasurer, what needs to change to ensure public money is better managed?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question, which does ask for an expression of opinion. We will, of course, ensure that as we make expenditure decisions in relation to new projects, and also on existing projects, that we have the appropriate expenditure controls in place as we go through the entire lifecycle of those projects.

We will make sure that there is appropriate design at the beginning of projects to make sure that they are setting out to achieve what they intend to—and the purpose of the project—right through procurement and into the contract stage, to make sure that any partners that we are working with to deliver those projects are doing so in accordance with the requirements of the contract.

There is no doubt that in the infrastructure sector in particular there have been large increases to the costs of materials required—and, indeed, of labour—to support those projects. Each of those needs to be considered, and they will of course be considered through the budget process as appropriate, as we have done on a range of projects—as demonstrated in the last budget. Of course, we will continue to work to deliver in a fiscally responsible way the agenda that we took to the election.

MS CASTLEY: Treasurer, will you support a charter of budget honesty to better safeguard the management of public money.

MR STEEL: We have a range of processes that we have put in place to properly scrutinise expenditure. We have an expenditure review committee. As a result of Labor forming government in minority, that committee now consists of four ministers, including me, as Treasurer; the finance minister; the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. I think that will provide robust scrutiny to expenditure proposals and other budget decisions that need to be made. The ability that we have—working in minority—is that we will not have the calls on the budget that we have perhaps had

when he have had to form government with another party. We will certainly be working to make sure that we deliver on the election commitments and the commitments that we have made in the parliamentary agreement—to make sure that we deliver those in a way that is fiscally responsible.

MR COCKS: Treasurer, given your government's track record, will you commit to any stricter oversight measures, such as mandatory milestone reporting, to protect against future financial mismanagement?

MR STEEL: With each of our ministers, and through the expenditure review committee, there are expenditure controls in place and oversight of projects. Infrastructure Canberra has certainly played an important role in having greater oversight, particularly of the capital program and infrastructure delivery. That, together with the project's boards and governance, does provide the scrutiny necessary to support good outcomes on projects.

Of course, we will need to consider individual projects from time to time. We will do that with the appropriate scrutiny of ERC and the cabinet.

Transport Canberra—bus driver safety

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. The government finally announced safety changes two weeks ago, a number of years after safety concerns for bus drivers were raised. Dozens of drivers and passengers experience verbal and physical abuse on Canberra's buses. Why has it taken so long for the government to agree to these changes and begin their implantation?

MR STEEL: I note that we were the only party at the election that took forward a plan to address occupational violence through the introduction of transport officers, in our transport policy. That is something that we have committed to based on discussions that we have been having with the workforce, and it directly addressed their major call for action, which is about having a visible presence on public transport to deter occupational violence and to also educate the community. That is something that we committed to again after discussions with the drivers over the last few weeks. We have already begun discussions, including today when Transport Canberra met with representatives of the workforce to discuss the development of the model that will be used for those transport officers. We have committed to a legislative review of powers that they can use as well.

Ms Castley: Point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker. I did not ask the minister about their election commitment but said that they have known about this for such a long time. It has been two years. Why has it taken so long to address this?

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms Castley. I do believe that the point of order here has merit. The question was very specifically about why it has taken so long. I am wondering if it is possible for the minister to give an answer to that.

MR STEEL: I had not finished giving my answer, Mr Speaker. I am happy to continue in the short time that I have left. Of course, the occupational violence issues are not new; they have been raised by the workforce in the past. That is why Transport Canberra

has an occupational violence management plan that was put in place with the workforce. We have committed to additional measures with the workforce, and that includes the four that I mentioned yesterday in the Assembly that we are working closely with the workforce on to design and deliver.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, isn't it true that you only agreed to these changes because of the driver strike—serious action?

MR STEEL: No. And that is proven by the fact that Labor took to the election a commitment to introduce a team of transport officers that would deter that sort of violence on buses and also at our interchanges, as well as a legislative review to give them the powers, the tools, that they need to be able to tackle that violence as well, such as move-on powers. Those are two actions that we have undertaken of the four actions. We had already started work on procuring screens to retrofit on some of the old buses for drivers. I understand those have been arriving, and we will be testing those with the workforce and their representatives to make sure that they are fit for purpose before the rest of the screens are ordered to fit to the buses. We have been talking with the workforce for some time. I note that, at the election, your party did not commit to do anything in relation to transport officers or a legislative review. We did. We are committed and we are getting on and delivering on it.

MR CAIN: Minister, does this mean the government is only going to fund public safety measures when there are issues reported on the front page of the *Canberra Times*?

MR STEEL: No. I refer the member to the answer that I just gave, where I said that, clearly, at the election we committed to address things that had occurred, before the industrial action, the strike, that occurred after the election.

Transport Canberra—bus driver safety

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. On 16 November, the day after the bus driver strike, you told ABC Radio that the government had only been in office for “a number of weeks.” Isn't it true that you had been the Minister for Transport for 280 weeks when you made that comment?

MR STEEL: That was in the context of the election commitment that we had made around the transport officers, which was the specific ask that had been made by the Transport Workers' Union. I met with them in August. They made that specific request of the Labor party and me at the August meeting. We then committed to it. The meeting was actually in June—my apologies. The meeting was in June, I believe, or July, and then we made the commitment I think in August, just before the election.

We then had the election period, the caretaker period; then the caretaker mode finished and the government was appointed. I was re-appointed as the Minister for Transport, and we are getting on and delivering that commitment. There was a specific incident of occupational violence that occurred on a bus which obviously triggered the strike and the industrial action. That was very concerning for us and it is why we are absolutely committed to getting on with that commitment, and I welcome the representations from the Transport Workers' Union and their support for the four actions that we have agreed to do.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, did you make this comment to avoid taking responsibility for the government’s failures on workplace safety for Canberra’s bus drivers—that you have known about for years?

MR STEEL: No and you never committed to deliver the transport officer commitment, which is what I was referring to. Only the Labor party did. We are getting on with designing and delivering it.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what engagement have you had with WorkSafe ACT regarding providing a safe working environment for Canberra’s bus drivers?

MR STEEL: When we become aware of incidents they are made known to WorkSafe ACT, including the incident that triggered the strike earlier this term. We will continue to work with them, but what WorkSafe ACT wants to see is that we are taking action to address the issues as they arise. We do have an occupational violence management plan for Transport Canberra, which identifies a range of different actions and we have now undertaken further actions—

MR SPEAKER: I have a point of order Mr Steel, if you could just be seated. Mr Cocks.

Mr Cocks: The point of order is on relevance. The question was very specific about what engagement the minister has had, not a broad, general “we” have had.

MR SPEAKER: I am not sure there is a point of order. Mr Steel, are you done?

MR STEEL: I have answered the question, thank you.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you.

Education—public schools

MS TOUGH: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, how is the ACT Labor government working with the federal government to build a better and fairer school system?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Tough for her question. On 19 November, I signed an agreement with the commonwealth to provide more funding to ACT public schools. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement commits the Australian government to increasing its funding to ACT public schools by an extra 2.5 per cent of the School Resourcing Standard, SRS, by 2026. This amounts to an extra \$110.5 million to ACT public schools over the first five years of the agreement and over \$250 million in additional funding over the 10-year life of the agreement.

This funding builds on the ACT government’s already strong investment in public education, making sure every student in Canberra gets ahead with a great education. It is great news for ACT students, families and teachers as well as school communities. This funding boost will mean that extra resources are directed where they are needed most, with funding tied to practical initiatives that will ensure ACT public schools continue to be great places for students to learn and great places for staff to work.

MS TOUGH: Minister, what initiatives will this additional funding go towards?

MS BERRY: To support learning outcomes, part of this additional funding will add to the ACT government's existing investment in the new literacy and numeracy reform program Strong Foundations. This will include implementing multi-tiered systems to target supports for students and schools that need the most, year 1 phonics and numeracy checks, school literacy and numeracy coaches, professional learning and quality assured curriculum resources to support teachers. To support student wellbeing, some of this new funding will go towards establishing more community coordinators and mental health professional roles in ACT public schools; improving supports for schools to address bullying and complex student behaviours, using the most up-to-date and latest research and evidence; and expanding flexible education offerings. For our invaluable workforce, this funding will provide additional investment in principal health and wellbeing programs as well as the implementation of workload reduction initiatives.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what else is the ACT government doing to ensure every public school student, like my three children, can engage fully in their education?

MS BERRY: I thank the member for the supplementary question. ACT Labor believes that every student, regardless of their background and circumstances, should have access to a great education. That is why we are supporting all students to fully engage in their education, regardless. It is why I established the Future of Education Equity Fund, which supports more than 5,000 students each year with payments of up to \$750 to cover the cost of educational expenses like uniforms, excursions, camps and extra curricula activities. It is available to low-income families or families experiencing financial stress in all school sectors. So far this year, over \$3.3 million has gone to families and students to support educational expenses.

In response to parent and carer feedback, the ACT government has already opened applications for the 2025 round of the equity fund, which started earlier this week. This will help families to manage back-to-school costs and ensure their children can start the year with the items that they need. It supports families by addressing cost-of-living pressures before the new school year begins. Payments will be made available to families as early as 6 January to help them with the start of their school year.

Transport Canberra—MyWay+

MR BRADDOCK: My question is for the Minister for Transport. Minister, community members provided feedback that they believe the MyWay+ system does not meet website accessibility standards, potentially making it harder for those with a disability to access and use the system. Can you confirm whether or not the MyWay+ system is compliant with website accessibility standards and hence accessible for those with a disability?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. I am happy to come back on notice around the specific access requirements that he is talking about. Certainly, we have been working closely with the accessibility reference group that I established in

Transport Canberra and City Services on the design of MyWay+. There has been considerable effort gone into, particularly, working with community groups, like the Council on the Ageing, in the lead up to the launch of My Way+ over the past year to make sure their feedback was provided into the design and in relation to providing those community groups with information about how to use the new system as well.

I note that the system, particularly in terms of the physical media that is available, like the traditional travel card, is a world leading system, where we do actually have a Braille component to the card. So those sorts of things have been, in partnership with NEC, delivered with the system, but I'm happy to come back with some direct confirmation in relation to the accessibility standard.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, did the contract specify website accessibility standards to NEC?

MR STEEL: Again, I am happy to take that on notice.

MISS NUTTALL: Minister, what is being done to address community feedback that on-board bus screens are too small, can be confusing and often lack audio announcements?

MR STEEL: Sorry, I did not hear the first part of the question, but I think it was something about the small screens, which I am assuming are the validators—the hardware within the buses.

MR SPEAKER: You can repeat the question, Miss Nuttall.

MISS NUTTALL: What is being done to address community feedback about the on-board bus screens, so the ones up the front, and the other—

MR STEEL: There are a range of aesthetic improvements that have been identified and raised with Transport Canberra, and those are being addressed and will be progressed through further improvements to the system. We are, obviously, prioritising measures that go directly to the functionality of the system at the moment, and then some of those other features, whether they are aesthetic or accessibility related, will be then rolled out in further updates to the software. I noted yesterday in my ministerial statement that there are some programmed updates that are due to occur in relation to some of the on-board screens, particularly as they relate to the live, real time information for customers as well. We will be continuing to respond to that customer feedback and making improvements to MyWay+ as the rollout and transition continues.

Sport and recreation—funding

MR EMERSON: My question is to the Chief Minister, primarily in his capacity as the Minister for Tourism and Trade. I appreciate the commercial imperatives to boost Canberra's tourism and the government's efforts to build our city into a more dynamic and vibrant place, which is why it is disappointing to see such a large disparity in the funding afforded to our elite sporting codes. Earlier this year, we saw the near-collapse of Canberra United, which, thanks to community fundraising and a temporary injection from the government, has been able to stay afloat for another season. This was after

Tillies fever rocked the nation, breaking national television records in 2023. While an interstate AFL team, the Greater Western Sydney Giants, receives around half a million in ratepayer dollars for each match it plays in the ACT, our only women's soccer team, which has produced more than its fair share of Matildas, receives a little over \$20,000 per game. Does the government see the writing on the wall for elite women's soccer in Canberra? When will the government seriously invest in elite women's soccer, both to encourage community sport participation and to support the growth of women's sport as a commercial product?

Ms Orr: On a point of order, I note that there were two questions asked. The first asked for an expression of opinion, and there was also a lot of preamble.

MR SPEAKER: I am not sure that it was, Ms Orr. I think that both ministers, who are contemplating which one will answer it, are quite happy to answer the question.

MR BARR: Most of the question is not in my portfolio areas, but I can answer in the context of the reference to tourism. I do not know the level of understanding that Mr Emerson will have about the nature of the commercial arrangements with the AFL and the Giants, but I can certainly correct for the record that the way he presented the match fee is not the nature of the commercial arrangements with the Giants—not to that quantum. There is a significant component of the government's partnership with the Giants that is not sport and recreation related but is indeed in the tourism context, and it relates to marketing Canberra in our biggest market, Sydney, in partnership with the Giants and the AFL.

In relation to the other questions around viability of the W-League and Canberra United, there are obviously a considerable number of issues associated with professional football codes in Australia. Rugby Union and soccer are the least financially viable of the four. I think that is well understood.

MR EMERSON: Chief Minister, will the government similarly partner with Canberra United, lift its gaze beyond the current commercial dollars earned and develop an investment plan focused on the commercial potential of elite women's sport so that they can receive the level of funding that they deserve?

MR BARR: Certainly, the government, through sport and recreation, and through our National League Team Program, does support teams in national leagues. The commercial opportunity, I understand, could be there, but it is very strongly linked, of course, to broadcast arrangements and market reach. There is then another factor around the level of government funding; that is, broadly the ACT government does not want to be a whole owner of a sporting team. The cost of running a team in a national competition varies dramatically, depending on the sport, the number of players and the level of travel associated with a team's participation.

Of course, there are clearly significant differences in the level of media exposure in our key tourism markets. Brand Canberra, CBR, which you would all be familiar with, is the principal mechanism by which we seek to utilise jersey sponsorship, for example, to promote Canberra, and that is broadly consistent across a number of different sporting teams, whether they principally play their games in Canberra or, indeed, play only some of their games in Canberra.

I do not think that you can draw parallels between different sports or, indeed, the size of audiences. I have to fundamentally disagree with the direction of the question, because our decisions in relation to promotion of Canberra in our key interstate markets must necessarily be driven by their commercial returns and the capacity to reach key tourism markets, which is an entirely different proposition from supporting community sport or ACT teams in national league competitions.

MISS NUTTALL: Chief Minister, when will the government act on the sport sector's input to the government request in early 2023 relating to facilities upgrades, which revealed that 267 community sports facilities across the ACT are also in need of upgrades?

MR BARR: It does not really relate to the first question. It is not in my portfolio, but I will take that on notice for Miss Nuttall.

Ginninderra electorate—roads

MS BARRY: My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, a number of constituents have raised concerns about traffic issues along Pro Hart Avenue, Drake Brockman Drive and William Hovell Drive. These are exacerbated by increased development at Ginninderra Estate and the single exit from Pro Hart Avenue onto Drake Brockman Drive. I expect it will be made even worse by upcoming roadworks. Minister, what plans do you have to mitigate the traffic chaos experienced by my constituents?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. This probably relates more to my transport planning portfolio but is very much tied to land use planning as well. We continue to work closely with the Suburban Land Agency, who are part of the joint venture in Ginninderry and the work that is being undertaken that Mr Barry alluded to, around upgrades to Drake Brockman Drive in particular, which will support the growing population in Ginninderry and provide an access point for them to William Hovell Drive.

The government—overseen by Minister Cheyne, who, as the Minister for City and Government Services, is responsible for roads, including new road infrastructure—has been investing in the infrastructure required to support those growing populations. The duplication of William Hovell Drive is a project that continues to be a commitment of the government to deliver—to provide that capacity for traffic that will eventually come onto that road from the growing areas of Ginninderry.

Of course, other road connections into Ginninderry will be required as well in the future, and a significant amount of planning work has been going on. I know that those proposals are active, in terms of the design and development approvals process, and I expect that construction will then follow to provide that augmentation that is needed for the community.

At the election, Labor brought plans forward to deliver a new rapid bus service, which would replace the small bus service that we delivered into Ginninderry through to Kippax early in the life of that suburb. This will also provide extra capacity on our

transport network for those who want to use public transport.

MS BARRY: Minister, will you commit to prioritising the development of an alternative access road, given the single access road from Ginninderra Estate along Pro Hart Drive and the potential for risks in the upcoming fire season?

MR STEEL: Yes, there is transport planning underway looking at alternative access points. That work is continuing with the Suburban Land Agency and the joint venture partner, with a view to continue work to design those and get approvals for those alternative access points into the future developments and estates in Macnamara.

MR CAIN: How are you going to prevent even worse congestion in this area, given the upcoming years-long roadworks along Drake Brockman Drive and William Hovell Drive, and your promised decade of disruption?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question, even though, on the one hand, he is criticising us for not doing anything, but also then acknowledging that we are doing something in making significant road augmentations—

Mr Cain: A decade of disruption!

MR STEEL: Which do have a disruptive effect; there is no doubt about that. But they are necessary to provide the capacity on the road network to connect new communities. That is the work that we are committed to doing. It will be disruptive. We will continue to work with the community and provide them with the communications they need to make sure that their travel around the transport network is as easy as possible. But those are important investments to provide the capacity to connect those growing communities. And, of course, we will continue to invest in public transport as well. That will also provide additional capacity for the transport network overall.

Domestic and family violence—safer families levy

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Minister, following the release of the Auditor-General's report on the safer families levy, the ACT government said that, from 1 July 2024, the levy was almost entirely directed to frontline services. Minister, exactly what percentage of the levy is currently being directed to frontline services?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member. Thank you very much for giving me my first question in this place. The Auditor-General's report was released last week. The levy, over years, has matured in what it has funded. One of the discussions in the audit report went to the levy not funding any non-frontline ACT government employees. That was a decision that was made by the ACT government on 1 July. That does not necessarily mean it does not fund non-frontline services. Some of the programs that are funded through the levy include enhancing access to justice for non-English speakers. This is largely—

MR SPEAKER: Dr Paterson, could you take your seat. There is a point of order.

Mr Cocks: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is on relevance. I thought the question was fairly

clear. It was about the percentage of the levy currently dedicated to frontline services.

MR SPEAKER: Dr Paterson, I think there is a fair point in the point of order, because it was a fairly specific question on the percentage directed to frontline services. You have a minute to get to that answer.

DR PATERSON: I will take that question on notice.

MS MORRIS: Minister, why hasn't the government directed 100 per cent of the levy to frontline services?

DR PATERSON: The levy directs funds to domestic and family violence initiatives. From 1 July last year, the government decided to ensure that the levy was not funding any non-frontline ACT government employees. Because of this decision, the levy funds are now almost entirely committed to frontline services delivered by either the community sector or areas of government that directly provide victim services.

MR SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Cocks?

Mr Cocks: A very similar point of order. This question was about why the government has not directed 100 per cent of the levy. It goes to something different.

MR SPEAKER: Mr Cocks, I do not know that there is a point of order. I think Dr Paterson is getting to the answer to that question.

DR PATERSON: These are some of the services, depending on your take on them, that are funded by the levy that would not necessarily be considered frontline services. There is the domestic and family violence information sharing scheme. This is a centralised training package for information sharing entities, which include our frontline service providers like police, Victim Support and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. There is the Safer Families Collaboration, which has \$60,000 per annum for child and youth services to train child protection workers through their Safe and Together program. Responding to coercive control training is provided to frontline service providers like ACT Policing and our courts to better detect, assess and respond to coercive control. Section 8 of the budget papers clearly articulates where all of the funding for the levy is spent.

MR COCKS: Minister, has the government undertaken any analysis of the number of people turned away from frontline family and domestic violence services over the life of the levy? And, if so, how many have missed out on these important supports?

DR PATERSON: We know that there is a crisis of violence in our community. We hear stories all the time about how domestic and family violence victims are struggling to get the supports that they need. What we know is that the levy contributes about 20 per cent of whole-of-government funding that goes to addressing domestic and family violence. This is something that the government acknowledges is a significant problem. What we are trying to do is support the service sector to work with victim-survivors to address this problem.

Mr Cocks: Point of order. Again, it is on relevance. The question was very clearly about the number of people who have missed out on services over the life of the levy and any analysis provided to the government. I am not convinced that the minister got to that.

MR SPEAKER: I am not sure that she did either. Dr Paterson, I do not know whether you have finished or if you want to have a—

DR PATERSON: I do not have any more to add.

Planning and development—Hawker group centre

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Woolworths submitted an application for the direct sale of land at the Hawker Group Centre in March 2024. The government has started site studies about trees, engineering and geotechnical constraints, for strategic planning opportunities for this group centre, but the government has not released any of those studies. Many members of the community have asked me to put community interests ahead of the developer's interests and to make sure this process is transparent. Are you considering a market process for the site or are you only considering a direct sale to Woolworths?

MR STEEL: That advice has not been provided to me yet. I have provided extensive information to Ms Clay in the previous term of the Assembly in relation to the process that we undertake in relation to direct sales. The point that we are up to is that I have not yet been provided advice on the direct sale application from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. I cannot answer the broader question that she has. I will be able to answer that after I have received the advice and will be able to make a decision.

MS CLAY: Will you publish the government's site studies about trees, engineering, geotechnical constraints and other issues?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I will have to seek advice on that. We are of course looking at the opportunities for the renewal of many of our shopping centres, including group centres, around Canberra. We are also looking at the opportunities for more housing as part of that process, consistent with the election commitment we brought forward around 'shop-top' housing, for example. We are looking at a range of different group centres at the moment. Hawker is just one of those. Other group centres are also included in due diligence work undertaken that would then inform future decisions. I am not sure of the status of that information, so I will not commit to providing it at this point in time.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, why would you not provide these government generated reports to the community for their information?

MR STEEL: Because it may inform a cabinet decision.

Education—building and construction courses

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: My question is to the Minister for Skills, Training and

Industrial Relations. Minister, last week you announced additional free TAFE places for construction. How will this benefit our city and our economy?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank the member for the question. It is my first question as minister—so thank you. Last week I joined with the commonwealth minister for skills, Andrew Giles, to announce an additional 340 free TAFE places in construction, including 80 in pre-apprenticeships. This has been made possible by an additional \$1.5 million investment in the ACT's vocational education system and will make around a dozen construction-related qualifications and short courses available for eligible students.

Free TAFE reduces the barrier to entry to vocational education and encourages more people into the workforce, particularly in key sectors like our construction industry. This initiative will get more Canberrans into our construction workforce, with a particular focus on women, First Nations Australians, young people who have left school, jobseekers, unpaid carers, people with disability and veterans.

As the ACT's population grows, our city will need more housing, more schools and more civic infrastructure to ensure the ACT remains a great place to live and work. For students who take up the offer of free TAFE in construction will have plenty of work here in Canberra as we deliver against our \$14 billion infrastructure pipeline and build 30,000 more homes by 2030. Initiatives like free TAFE in construction will ensure Canberrans get the valuable skills required to build the homes and community infrastructure that our growing city needs.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Minister, what other courses are available through free TAFE?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank the member for the question. There are a wide range of courses available, with a particular focus on areas of skills needs in the ACT. Free TAFE supports the health and care sectors by enabling students to have fee-free access to qualifications and courses like a diploma of early childhood education and care, a certificate IV in mental health, a certificate III in individual support, specialising in aged care or disability support. It also supports the tourism industry through offerings like a certificate III in hospitality, a diploma of travel and tourism and hospitality and compliance skills sets.

There are also opportunities in our key and emerging industries, including through a diploma and certificate IV or certificate III in information technology, a certificate IV in cybersecurity or a skills set in battery electric vehicle inspection and servicing. There are also courses to support core and specialist workplace skills, including literacy, numeracy, communication in the workplace and project management. I would encourage anyone interested to visit CIT's website to learn more.

MS TOUGH: Minister, have many people taken up the opportunity to enrol in free TAFE at CIT?

MR PETTERSSON: I thank the member for the supplementary. As you would expect, there has been very strong interest in free TAFE. Over the past two years, we have seen more than 3,700 enrolments. Further to the 340 construction places I recently announced,

CIT will offer an additional 1,200 places in 2025 and another 1,200 places in 2026. We anticipate that there will be strong demand for these places, and I would once again encourage anyone interested to visit CIT's website to learn more and submit their application.

University of Canberra—governance

MISS NUTTALL: My question is to the minister for education. Amid a wave of lay-offs for university staff, the University of Canberra is set to have their third interim vice-chancellor in under a year. This has come as a matter of significant concern to the ACT Greens, who have been backing the National Tertiary Education Union's call for a review into UC's governance.

I was encouraged to see the Chief Minister propose to the Auditor-General that he conduct a performance audit of UC's governance arrangements. Minister, will you commit to a review, in some form, of the governance of the University of Canberra in the near future?

MR SPEAKER: Mr Barr, I understand you are taking this one.

MR BARR: For the benefit of members, higher education sits within my portfolio responsibilities—the university sector. I take the point of Miss Nuttall's question. That is why we have already begun a number of processes. The University of Canberra itself will be undertaking further governance reviews. The chancellor will take such a proposal to the university council on Friday. They have already undertaken a number of reviews through calendar years 2023 and 2024, and I would, of course, remind members who were here in the last Assembly, and advise those who are new, that the government brought forward an amendment bill to University of Canberra governance in this calendar year, 2024. It did pass unanimously with the support of all members.

MISS NUTTALL: Chief Minister, have you met with the NTEU, or UC staff, directly to understand the support recently laid-off staff require?

MR BARR: I have had engagement with the NTEU, with the chancellor, with the last interim vice-chancellor and the incoming vice-chancellor in relation to the university's budget, its governance and the way forward for the University of Canberra.

MS CLAY: Have you made representations to the federal government for increased oversight of the university administration in light of these job cuts?

MR BARR: Yes, and, in fact, the ACT Labor position going into the election was that the governance reviews that would be necessary would include engagement and alignment with the federal governance reviews that the federal education minister, Jason Clare, is leading.

Crime—Kippax shopping centre

MS BARRY: My question is to the minister for police. There has recently been a sharp increase in violence around the Kippax shopping centre, particularly at the end of the school day. I have heard from constituents who have been threatened and even had

rocks thrown at them. The shopping centre have employed additional security, at significant expense to them, but this has not restored public confidence. What will you do, Minister, to protect residents of suburbs surrounding Kippax?

DR PATERSON: I thank the member for her question. ACT Policing do an incredible job in protecting our community. I can definitely provide that feedback to ACT Policing. I am also happy to go and chat to the Kippax shop owners about their experiences. We can see whether there is extra support that can be offered.

MS BARRY: Minister, will you agree to arrange a stronger, regular police presence around the shopping centre, to keep the community safe? I understand that you have committed to meeting with them, but would you make that commitment?

DR PATERSON: I cannot direct police on operational matters, but it is definitely feedback that I will raise with them, and I am very happy to hear their concerns myself.

MS MORRIS: Minister, will you agree to recruit more police officers than your predecessor did to enable better and more proactive policing across the ACT?

DR PATERSON: ACT Labor invested in the most resourcing of ACT police that there has ever been, in terms of increasing police numbers. I will get the exact budget number in terms of the number of ACT police that will be recruited. Ultimately, there will be about 107 new police officers recruited over the next five years. ACT Labor took an extra year commitment, to see more recruitment to our police. I have had the pleasure of attending recruitment ceremonies for both AFP and ACT Policing over the last couple of weeks. We have some pretty incredible new recruits coming into our system.

I think that ACT Policing is a fantastic place to work. It offers far more opportunities for our police than other jurisdictions, in terms of working nationally and internationally, and on very specific areas of crime prevention. I encourage anyone who is keen on a job in ACT Policing to go to their website. They have open recruitment. We have had full recruitment numbers, as well as sergeant recruitment, just over the last few weeks. I am very keen to keep talking about that.

Domestic and family violence—safer families levy

MS MORRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Minister, in the Auditor-General's report on the Safer Families Levy, the Auditor-General confirmed that more than \$46 million has been raised since the levy was introduced in 2016. Minister, where did the \$46 million go?

DR PATERSON: The money went to the prevention of domestic and family violence.

MS MORRIS: Minister, why did it take eight years for the ACT government to direct revenue generated from the levy to frontline services when frontline family and domestic violence services have been crying out for more resources for years?

DR PATERSON: I reject that. If Ms Morris has read the Auditor-General's report, it is very clearly articulated in the appendix that money from the levy, from the very beginning, has always been provided to frontline services. What we also see in the

budget papers of this year is that, actually, the levy funding is a small amount of the whole-of-government funding. That includes extra resourcing to domestic and family violence frontline services.

I very much appreciate the Auditor-General's report. There are four recommendations, and they very much speak to the ACT developing a strategy. That strategy has been really clearly articulated through expenditure from the levy, and I look forward to working on that.

MS BARRY: Minister, how much of the \$46 million granted from the Safer Families Levy was used to train public servants on domestic and family violence awareness?

DR PATERSON: The levy has funded multiple programs to train the frontline sector in their response to domestic and family violence. We have really committed to supporting the sector and to resourcing them to be able to work with our communities to better address this really complex issue—

MR SPEAKER: Dr Paterson, we have a point of order from Mr Cocks.

Mr Cocks: On relevance. Dr Paterson may not have heard the question properly, but the question was about how much was used to train public servants, not how much was used to train the sector.

MR SPEAKER: I think that there is relevance in the point of order, Dr Paterson, if it is possible for you to be relevant to the question.

DR PATERSON: I feel like I answered the question in a relevant way.

Planning and development—Ainslie Volcanics

MR RATTENBURY: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development. Minister, despite community opposition and ecological values, the Territory Planning Authority has approved a development application for Indara to build a telecom facility on the site known as Ainslie Volcanics. Minister, what environmental studies were undertaken on the site to determine that the approved development will not impact the site's ecological values?

MR STEEL: I am happy to come back to the Assembly with some further information about that. Obviously, the broader Ainslie Volcanics area has also been subject to an application in relation to provisional registration as a place of heritage in the ACT. I am happy to come back with some specific information for the Assembly about that matter.

MR SPEAKER: That is taken on notice?

MR STEEL: Yes.

MR RATTENBURY: Minister, did any ecological studies undertaken on the site take into consideration the significant efforts that community groups, such as Friends of Ainslie Volcanics Grasslands, have undertaken to restore the quality of native temperate grassland habitat?

MR STEEL: I am happy to come back in relation to whether the authority considered those matters and how they addressed them. I note that Mr Rattenbury is referring to the independent Territory Planning Authority. They obviously assess those at arms-length from me as minister. As minister, now under the new Planning Act 2023, I have no direct role in making decisions on planning applications or the conditions attached to them.

MS CLAY: Minister, have you received briefings from EPSDD or the Conservator of Flora and Fauna about environmental values on the site and environmental impacts from the proposed development?

MR STEEL: I have not received any direct advice that I am aware of at this point in time. However, I am aware of the heritage matter that I raised earlier in my answer.

Mr Barr: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.