Matters of public importance

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—your Assembly @ work

***Non sitting and sitting weeks—20 February to 24 March 2017***

**Issue 2/2017**

**Statement of Condolence**

On 23 March the Speaker made a statement concerning the incident that occurred at Westminster Parliament in London.

**Government business**

***Includes all business items presented to the Assembly by the Executive including bills, motions, and papers***

***Bills introduced***

**Liquor Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will make a number of amendments to the *Liquor Act 2010* and the *Liquor Regulation 2010* to reduce alcohol related harm, improve the administration of the liquor legislation and reduce regulatory burden.

**Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will make a number of amendments to compliance information requirements contained in the *Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act 2012*. It will amend the reporting requirements of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna contained in the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. The bill also makes technical and editorial amendments to Territory legislation relating to planning, building and the environment.

**Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will amend the *Duties Act 1999*, the *Land Tax Act 2004* and the *Rates Act 2004*. The amendments will change the method for calculating rates and land tax for residential unit subdivisions, repeal insurance duty legislation and make a technical change to the rebate on rates for pensioners.

***Bills debated***

The following bills were debated during the sitting week and were passed by the Assembly without amendment.

**Commercial Arbitration Bill 2016**  
 (21 March 2017)

[**Co-operatives National Law (ACT) Bill 2017**](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/b/db_55499/default.asp)  
 (21 March 2017)

***Ministerial statements***

The following ministerial statements were made on 21 March 2017.

The Minister for Women made a statement concerning **International Women’s Day 2017**. During the statement the minister highlighted the announcement of strategies adopted by the Government to work on building a better city for women and girls with the release of the ACT Women’s Plan 2016-26.

Ms Cheyne MLA and Ms Orr MLA also made statements in relation to matter.

**Key priorities for ACT Policing** was the subject of a ministerial statement made by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. During the statement the minister provided an overview of ACT Policing’s achievements.

The Minister for Multicultural Affairs made a statement concerning **Harmony Day** and outlined the aims of the activities to be held in the Territory to celebrate Harmony Day.

Mr Steel MLA, Ms Orr MLA and Ms Cheyne MLA also made statements in relation to Harmony Day.

Ministerial statements on the following matters were made on 23 March 2017.

**Extended Throughcare** by the Minister for Corrections.

**The role of the ACT Government under the National Disability Insurance Scheme** by the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth.

The full text of the statements made by ministers and members can be accessed from the [Assembly *Hansard* site](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/hansard/debates).

**Private Members’ business**

***Includes all items presented to the Assembly by all non-Executive Members, including bills and motions***

***Motions debated***

**Vacant land tax** was the subject of a motion moved by Ms Le Couteur MLA on 22 March. The motion included calling on the ACT Government to review the current taxation treatment on vacant properties and provide details around the number of properties that are left vacant for a period of six months or more. The motion also called on the Government to report back to the Assembly on issues raised in the motion by 21 September 2017.

During debate an amendment was moved by the Government that included, among other things, calling on the Government to undertake research to measure the number of long-term vacant properties in the ACT considering the complexities in obtaining accurate data. An amendment moved by the Opposition sought to include, in the Government’s amendment, calling on the Government to assess whether the current ACT land tax regime provides a disincentive to renting vacant properties. Both the Opposition and Government amendments were agreed to by the Assembly.

The amended motion was then passed by the Assembly.

Mrs Kikkert MLA moved a motion on 22 March concerning **childhood vaccinations**. The motion included calling on the ACT Government to embrace uniform “No Job, No Play” principles that would prevent unvaccinated children, without specific medical exemptions, from enrolling in Territory childcare centres.

The Government moved an amendment during debate that included calling on the Government to support in‑principle the implementation of a “No Job, No Play” policy and also continue to strongly argue for a nationally-consistent approach to immunisation.

An amendment to the Government’s amendment was then moved by the ACT Greens that included, among other things, calling on the Government to work collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government to develop and implement a proactive public education and communication strategy especially in areas influenced by anti-vaccination groups and where coverage is low, to promote the benefits and encourage uptake of immunisations. The amendment moved by the ACT Greens was negatived following a vote of the Assembly with the amendment moved by the Government being agreed to.

The motion, as amended, was then passed by the Assembly.

**Social, economic and political equality of women** in the Territory was the subject of a motion moved by Ms Cheyne MLA on 22 March. The motion included seeking the acknowledgement of the Assembly that there was a need for continued commitment to further building the social, economic and political equality of women. During debate an amendment moved by the Government was agreed to. The amendment included addressing a number of areas to ensure further support for women in the ACT.

The amended motion was then passed by the Assembly.

Other motions debated on 22 March 2017 related to:

**Self Help Organisations United Together (SHOUT)**—Ms Lee MLA

**Penalty rates**—Mr Pettersson MLA

**ACT Heritage Council assessments**—Ms Lawder MLA

The full debate on the above motions can be accessed from the Assembly [*Hansard*](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/hansard) site.

**Executive Members’ business**

***Includes all items presented to the Assembly by Executive Members, including bills and motions***

***Motion debated***

Community legal centres was the subject of a motion moved by Mr Rattenbury MLA on 23 March 2017.

The motion sought to note the important role that community legal centres have within the justice system and called on the Federal Government to reverse planned cuts to community legal centres. The motion also called on the Speaker to write to the Federal Attorney-General communicating the terms of the motion.

An amendment to the motion was moved by the Opposition that sought to, among other things, highlight the funding provided by the Federal Government for frontline legal assistance services. The amendment was negatived after a vote of the Assembly.

The original motion was then agreed to by the Assembly.

**Matters of public importance**

The following matters of public importance were discussed in the Assembly this week—

**The importance of income security for Canberra shift and weekend workers**—Ms Cheyne MLA

**The importance of renewal in the Woden Town Centre**—Ms Cheyne MLA

**Papers presented**

The following are papers of interest that were presented during the sitting week:

ACT Auditor-General—Report 1/2017—Worksafe ACT’s management of its regulatory responsibilities for the demolition of loose-fill asbestos contaminated houses—**Government response** *(presented by the Speaker on 21 March)*

Final Report on the review of the Domestic Adoption Process in the ACT—**Government response** *(presented by the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth on 21 March)*

Report on the **ACT Legislative Assembly Election 2016** *(presented by the Speaker on 21 March)*

**Retrospective: Progress in the ACT between 2004 and 2013**—Report by the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee *(presented by the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth on 23 March)*

**Petitions**

On 21 March the following petitions were lodged—

KFC Restaurant—O’Hanlon Place, Gold Greek Village shopping centre (2)—lodged by Ms Le Couteur MLA and referred to the Minister for Planning and Land Management

Petition 6-17 was also referred to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal.

A copy of the terms of the petitions can be accessed from the [Assembly’s *Hansard* site](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/hansard/debates).

On 21 March the following ministerial response to a petition was lodged—

Cannabis medicines—Safe and adequate access.

A copy of the response can be found [here](https://epetitions.act.gov.au/Responses/Pet%201-16%20response.pdf).

**Committee activities**

***Committee report presented***

**Scrutiny Committee**

[**Scrutiny Report 3**](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-committees/standing-committees-current-assembly/standing-committee-on-justice-and-community-safety-legislative-scrutiny-role) *(presented 21 March)*

This report contained the committee’s comments on three bills, 52 pieces of subordinate legislation, two national regulations, one government response and four regulatory impact statements.

***Committee statements***

On 21 March 2017 the following committee statements were made.

The chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism made a statement informing the Assembly that the committee has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the proposal to construct a new Canberra **convention centre**.

The chair of the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services informed the Assembly that the committee had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the **employment of people with a disability**.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety’s consideration of **statutory appointments** was the subject of statement made by the chair of the committee. At the conclusion of the statement the chair presented the following paper:

Schedule of Statutory Appointments—9thAssembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2016.

***Committee inquiries***

**Economic Development and Tourism—Select Committee**

Inquiry into a new convention centre for Canberra

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism has resolved to hold an inquiry into a new convention centre for Canberra. The Committee will inquiry into:

. the level of demand from business and clients for a new centre and the likely economic impact of a new centre on Canberra;

. whether the “Australia Forum” proposal has the support of stakeholders;

. the amount of work required to take the proposal to an investment ready stage;

. the appropriate source of funding (federal, territory or private sector) for each stage of the project;

. the level of priority that should be given to a new convention centre in relation to other infrastructure projects in the ACT; and

. other matters arising during the course of the inquiry.

The committee is seeking submissions which should be lodged by **8 May 2017**. The committee intends to hold public hearings in May 2017.

**Independent Integrity Commission—Select Committee**

On 27 February 2017, the Select Committee on an Independent Integrity Commission [called for written submissions](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1036766/24-02-17-Final-call-for-public-submissions-ver-2.pdf), from interested organisations and individuals, to its inquiry into the establishment of an independent integrity commission for the ACT.

Submissions should address some or all of the Terms of Reference and should be lodged by close of business, **Friday 19 May 2017**.  Further information on how to prepare and lodge a submission is available [here](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-committees/select_committees/an-Independent-Integrity-Commission).

**Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee**

[Inquiry into 2015–16 Annual reports](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-committees/standing-committees-current-assembly/standing-committee-on-justice-and-community-safety/inquiry-into-annual-and-financial-reports-2015-16)

On 7 March 2017, the Committee held its first public hearing into referred 2015–16 annual reports. The Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections, and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, along with officials from ACT Policing; the Human Rights Commission; the Justice and Community Safety Directorate; Legal Aid ACT; Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions; and the Public Trustee and Guardian, appeared as witnesses.

The proof transcript for the hearing held on 7 March 2017 can be accessed at [here](http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2017/comms/justice01.pdf).

On 8 March 2017, the Committee held its second public hearing into referred 2015–16 annual reports. The Attorney General, the A/g Electoral Commissioner, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, along with officials from the Australian Electoral Commission; Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate; Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the Sentence Administration Board, appeared as witnesses.

The proof transcript for the hearing held on 8 March 2017 can be accessed at [here](http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2017/comms/justice02.pdf).

**Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee**

On Friday 10 March 2017 the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal held a public hearing for its inquiry into annual reports 2015-16. The Committee heard from the Minister for Planning and Land Management and the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, together with officers from portfolio agencies.

Among other things, in the course of the hearing questions were asked and answered regarding:

. a development application process at Hume;

. purchase of rural land by the Land Development Agency (LDA);

. community consultation on development applications (DAs);

. DAs under the Merit Track process and the operation of the Development Application Gateway Team;

. potential developments in Gungahlin;

. exempt DAs and responses by the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) where development varies from an original proposal;

. loose-fill asbestos, including publication of a list of affected houses, community engagement; properties not covered by the ACT government scheme, sales of affected properties, and 'first right of refusal' for previous owners of affected properties;

. urban renewal in Northbourne Avenue;

. improvements to Haig Park;

. the City Action Plan and the City Activation Team;

. operation of the Asset Recycling Initiative;

. the City to the Lake project, including the acquisition of a paddleboat business and buildings;

. design aspects of urban renewal projects;

. purchase by the LDA of land at Glebe Park;

. the Ginninderry development;

. transfer and ownership of particular parcels of land in Dickson;

. the balance between multiple and single dwellings in new developments;

. operation of the Land Release program;

. proposed development on CSIRO land;

. public housing and affordable housing; and

. the 'salt and pepper' policy on the distribution of public housing in the ACT.

**Education activities**

March 2017 has been busy with a wide variety of visitors to the Assembly. School students from years 3-8 have participated in mock elections and role plays on the opening of a sitting day with the replica mace, debating an MPI and the passage of legislation through the Assembly.

The first of our public service seminars for 2017 has been conducted where participants learn about the role and function of the Assembly, how Members are elected and what happens in a typical sitting week. There are three more public service seminars scheduled for 2017—The Committee System (17 May), The Budget Process (18 July) and The Legislative Process (20 October).

The public tour program has commenced operation with a weekly tour offered to the public on Wednesday’s at 1.30pm for an hour. The tour for this week was promoted as part of seniors’ week with a number of people attending to get a behind the scenes look at the Assembly, visitors were able to stay and watch question time on Wednesday, 22 March at the conclusion of the tour.

The Assembly fact sheet series has been updated and is now available on the website at <http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/learn-about-the-assembly/resources/fact-sheets>

**Members of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT**

***Electorate of Brindabella***

Ms Joy Burch (Australian Labor Party)

Mr Mick Gentleman (Australian Labor Party)

Ms Nicole Lawder (Canberra Liberals)

Mr Mark Parton (Canberra Liberals)

Mr Andrew Wall (Canberra Liberals)

***Electorate of Ginninderra***

Ms Yvette Berry (Australian Labor Party)

Ms Tara Cheyne (Australian Labor Party)

Mrs Vicki Dunne (Canberra Liberals)

Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert (Canberra Liberals)

Mr Gordon Ramsay (Australian Labor Party)

***Electorate of Kurrajong***

Mr Andrew Barr (Australian Labor Party)

Mr Steve Doszpot (Canberra Liberals)

Ms Elizabeth Lee (Canberra Liberals)

Mr Shane Rattenbury (ACT Greens)

Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith (Australian Labor Party)

***Electorate of Murrumbidgee***

Ms Bec Cody (Australian Labor Party)

Mr Jeremy Hanson CSC (Canberra Liberals)

Mrs Giulia Jones (Canberra Liberals)

Ms Caroline Le Couteur (ACT Greens)

Mr Chris Steel (Australian Labor Party)

***Electorate of Yerrabi***

Mr Alistair Coe (Canberra Liberals)

Ms Meegan Fitzharris (Australian Labor Party)

Mr James Milligan (Canberra Liberals)

Ms Suzanne Orr (Australian Labor Party)

Mr Michael Pettersson (Australian Labor Party)

**Next sitting**

**Tuesday, 28 March 2017.**

***This document is produced by the Office of the Legislative Assembly for information*.**