# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**2024–2025–2026**

# MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**No 69**

**WEDNESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2026**

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**1** The Assembly met at 10 am, pursuant to adjournment. A quorum of Members not being present, the Speaker (Mr Hanson) ordered the bells to be rung. A quorum having been formed, the Speaker took the Chair and made the following acknowledgement of country in the Ngunnawal language:

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

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

The Speaker asked Members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

**2 PETITION—PETITION NOTED**

The Clerk announced that the following Member had lodged a petition for presentation:

Ms Carrick, from 523 residents, requesting that the Assembly call on the ACT Government to commit to replace heating systems at Forrest Primary School and ensure safe, reliable and effective heating and cooling infrastructure (e-Pet 079-26).

Pursuant to standing order 99A, this petition stands referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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The Speaker proposed—That the petition so lodged be noted.

Debate ensued.

*Paper:* Ms Vassarotti, by leave, presented the following paper:

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Dickson—Pedestrian crossing installation on Antil Street—Ms Vassarotti (180 signatures).

Question—put and passed.

**3 ECONOMICS, INDUSTRY AND RECREATION—STANDING COMMITTEE—FUEL PRICES IN THE A.C.T.—REQUEST TO CONSIDER**

Mr Parton (Leader of the Opposition), pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) according to data released by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Canberra is the most expensive capital city for petrol;

(b) Canberra recorded the largest weekly increase in average prices in the week to 16 September 2026 at 17.3 cents per litre;

(c) according to FuelCheck, unleaded petrol is around 10 cents per litre more expensive in Canberra than it is across the border in Queanbeyan; and

(d) according to PetrolSpy, as of 11 am on 21 September 2026, Unleaded 91 was cheaper in Kalgoorlie, Katherine, Broken Hill and Hobart than it was in Canberra;

(2) further notes that:

(a) on 14 February 2019, the Assembly established the Select Committee on Fuel Pricing, which would, among other things, consider reasons for significant price discrepancies between the ACT and other parts of Australia;

(b) in 2019, the Treasurer also referred an investigation of motor vehicle petrol prices and competition in the ACT to the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) which provided a factual analysis of prices and competition in the ACT;

(c) the Select Committee reported in September 2019 following an extensive inquiry and made five recommendations directed towards ongoing market oversight, increased competition, real-time fuel price information, consumer education and examination of the costs faced by ACT fuel retailers;

(d) in its response to the Select Committee report, the ACT Government said that it considers the ICRC is the most appropriate body to monitor fuel pricing and competition in the Territory;

(e) since that inquiry, NSW FuelCheck has been extended to the ACT and continues to provide real-time fuel price information to ACT motorists;

(f) in Question Time last week, the Chief Minister was unable to give a clear answer as to what requests had been made to the ICRC in this regard; and

(g) on 7 May 2026, the Assembly passed the Fuel Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, which among other matters, provided the Government with the ability to better conduct enforcement of price gouging offences under the *Fair Trading (Australian Consumer Law) Act 1992* through a connection with the *Fair Trading (Fuel Prices) Act 1993*; and

(3) requests the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation to:

(a) inquire into and report on fuel prices in the ACT, including:

(i) current analysis of retail margins, terminal-gate prices and ACT versus surrounding market differentials, identifying whether the structural drivers identified by the ICRC and Select Committee in 2019 still exist;

(ii) whether measures implemented following the 2019 inquiry have been effective and existing arrangements for monitoring and responding to unusual movements in ACT fuel prices are adequate; and

(iii) whether existing arrangements for monitoring and responding to unusual movements in ACT fuel prices, including the ICRC and relevant legislated frameworks pertaining to fair trading legislation, are effective; and

(b) produce an interim report on initial findings by 3 December 2026, with full findings published by 26 February 2027 if it decides to conduct an inquiry.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

**4 ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING—STANDING COMMITTEE—E-PET 044-26—FORMER BRADDON BOWLS CLUB SITE—PROTECTION—STATEMENT BY CHAIR**

Ms Clay (Chair), pursuant to standing order 246A, informed the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning had resolved not to conduct an inquiry into e-Pet 044-26 concerning the protection of the former Braddon Bowls Club site.

**5 ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING—STANDING COMMITTEE—PETITIONS—WODEN TOWN CENTRE—CIT PLAZA—ACCESS OF TRAFFIC—RECONSIDERATION—STATEMENT BY CHAIR**

Ms Clay (Chair), pursuant to standing order 246A, informed the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning had resolved not to conduct an inquiry into e-Pet 024-26 and Pet 061-26 concerning access to general traffic in CIT Plaza in the Woden Town Centre.

**6 INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND STATUTORY OFFICE HOLDERS—STANDING COMMITTEE—CONSIDERATION OF STATUTORY APPOINTMENTS—STATEMENT BY CHAIR—PAPER**

Ms Lee (Chair), pursuant to standing order 246A and Continuing Resolution 5A, made a statement concerning consideration of statutory appointments by the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders.

*Paper:* Ms Lee, pursuant to Continuing Resolution 5A, presented the following paper:

Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—11th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2026.

**7 LEGAL AFFAIRS—STANDING COMMITTEE—CONSIDERATION OF STATUTORY APPOINTMENTS—STATEMENT BY CHAIR—PAPER**

Mr Werner-Gibbings (Deputy Chair), pursuant to standing order 246A and Continuing Resolution 5A, made a statement concerning consideration of statutory appointments by the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs.

*Paper:* Mr Werner-Gibbings, pursuant to Continuing Resolution 5A, presented the following paper:

Legal Affairs—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—11th Assembly—Period 1 January to 30 June 2026.

**8 APPROPRIATION BILL 2026-2027**

The Assembly, according to order, resumed consideration at the detail stage—

*Detail Stage*

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure—

Consideration resumed at Part 1.5—Justice and Community Safety Directorate—

Debate continued.

Mrs Morris, by leave, was granted an extension of time.

Debate continued.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Part 1.6—Health and Community Services Directorate—debated.

Debate adjourned (Ms Cheyne—Manager of Government Business) and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

**9 QUESTIONS**

Questions without notice were asked.

**10 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SKILLED MIGRATION—SUPPORT**

Mr Werner-Gibbings, pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) international education is one of the Territory's largest export industries, worth around $1.4 billion a year and accounting for more than half of the Territory's services exports, with international students making up nearly half of Canberra's 40,000 tertiary students and contributing significantly to the local economy, workforce and community life;

(b) according to Study Australia, Canberra welcomes nearly 20,000 international students from over 100 countries each year, reflecting its reputation as Australia's education capital;

(c) international students help meet workforce needs while studying, build careers in Canberra after graduation and help make Canberra a more welcoming, inclusive and multicultural city;

(d) skilled migration addresses shortages across sectors including health, education, IT, construction and professional services, and the Territory's long-term prosperity depends on attracting and retaining such workers, researchers and innovators;

(e) the Australian Government recognises international education as a major national economic contributor, and migration and education policy settings can significantly affect the Territory's economy, workforce and research capability; and

(f) clear pathways from study to skilled employment serve both national migration objectives and the Territory's workforce needs;

(2) recognises that:

(a) the Territory's economy is built on a highly educated workforce, a strong higher education sector and knowledge-intensive industries, with universities among its largest employers and drivers of research excellence;

(b) Canberra offers international students and skilled migrants a genuine point of difference with recognised institutions, strong graduate outcomes, a safe community, valuable post-study work rights, affordability relative to other capitals and real career prospects;

(c) retaining international graduates strengthens workforce development, productivity and business growth, and gives employers access to globally connected talent;

(d) through Study Canberra, the Government has identified opportunities to deepen education, talent and economic links with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and

(e) recent Australian Government migration reforms preserve exemptions for ASEAN students and higher degree research students, including PhD candidates, recognising a contribution vital to Canberra's research capability, innovation and future workforce; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) continue to advocate to the Australian Government for migration and education settings that recognise the Territory's unique economic, demographic and research-intensive circumstances, including for higher degree research students;

(b) work with universities, employers and community organisations to attract and retain international students, skilled migrants and researchers, and connect them with employment and settlement services;

(c) identify opportunities to retain graduates in sectors facing workforce shortages and areas of strategic importance to the Territory economy;

(d) continue to promote Canberra internationally as Australia's education capital and expand Study Canberra's engagement with priority ASEAN markets;

(e) make the most of exemptions and priority pathways available to ASEAN students and higher degree research students; and

(f) report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2027 on progress supporting international students and skilled migration outcomes in the Territory.

Debate ensued.

Mr Braddock, by leave, moved the following amendments together:

1. After all words in paragraph (1)(f), insert:

   "(g) international students can face particular challenges relating to mental health and wellbeing, social isolation, housing affordability, discrimination and racism, which can affect their experience of living and studying in Canberra;".

2. After all words in paragraph (2)(e), insert:

   "(f) recent Australian Government migration reforms will restrict the ability of a significant number of international students to be accompanied by family members, with potential consequences for student wellbeing and access to family support;".

3. After all words in paragraph (3)(b), insert:

   "(c) work with universities, international student representatives, health services and community organisations to identify and address gaps in accessible and affordable mental health and wellbeing services for international students, including current barriers to service access;".

4. In paragraphs (2)(e), new (3)(e) and (3)(f), omit "ASEAN students", substitute "students from ASEAN and Pacific nations".

Debate continued.

Amendments agreed to.

Debate continued.

Question—That the motion, as amended, viz:

"That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

   (a) international education is one of the Territory's largest export industries, worth around $1.4 billion a year and accounting for more than half of the Territory's services exports, with international students making up nearly half of Canberra's 40,000 tertiary students and contributing significantly to the local economy, workforce and community life;

   (b) according to Study Australia, Canberra welcomes nearly 20,000 international students from over 100 countries each year, reflecting its reputation as Australia's education capital;

   (c) international students help meet workforce needs while studying, build careers in Canberra after graduation and help make Canberra a more welcoming, inclusive and multicultural city;

   (d) skilled migration addresses shortages across sectors including health, education, IT, construction and professional services, and the Territory's long-term prosperity depends on attracting and retaining such workers, researchers and innovators;

(e) the Australian Government recognises international education as a major national economic contributor, and migration and education policy settings can significantly affect the Territory's economy, workforce and research capability;

(f) clear pathways from study to skilled employment serve both national migration objectives and the Territory's workforce needs; and

(g) international students can face particular challenges relating to mental health and wellbeing, social isolation, housing affordability, discrimination and racism, which can affect their experience of living and studying in Canberra;

(2) recognises that:

(a) the Territory's economy is built on a highly educated workforce, a strong higher education sector and knowledge-intensive industries, with universities among its largest employers and drivers of research excellence;

(b) Canberra offers international students and skilled migrants a genuine point of difference with recognised institutions, strong graduate outcomes, a safe community, valuable post-study work rights, affordability relative to other capitals and real career prospects;

(c) retaining international graduates strengthens workforce development, productivity and business growth, and gives employers access to globally connected talent;

(d) through Study Canberra, the Government has identified opportunities to deepen education, talent and economic links with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN);

(e) recent Australian Government migration reforms preserve exemptions for students from ASEAN and Pacific nations and higher degree research students, including PhD candidates, recognising a contribution vital to Canberra's research capability, innovation and future workforce; and

(f) recent Australian Government migration reforms will restrict the ability of a significant number of international students to be accompanied by family members, with potential consequences for student wellbeing and access to family support; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) continue to advocate to the Australian Government for migration and education settings that recognise the Territory's unique economic, demographic and research-intensive circumstances, including for higher degree research students;

(b) work with universities, employers and community organisations to attract and retain international students, skilled migrants and researchers, and connect them with employment and settlement services;

(c) work with universities, international student representatives, health services and community organisations to identify and address gaps in accessible and affordable mental health and wellbeing services for international students, including current barriers to service access;

(d) identify opportunities to retain graduates in sectors facing workforce shortages and areas of strategic importance to the Territory economy;

(e) continue to promote Canberra internationally as Australia's education capital and expand Study Canberra's engagement with priority ASEAN and Pacific nations markets;

(f) make the most of exemptions and priority pathways available to students from ASEAN and Pacific nations and higher degree research students; and

(g) report to the Assembly by the last sitting day of June 2027 on progress supporting international students and skilled migration outcomes in the Territory."—

be agreed to—put and passed.

**11 RENTAL BONDS—IMPROVEMENT MEASURES**

Ms Vassarotti, pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) around one third of Canberrans are renters and they are paying record high rents, with the median weekly rent reaching $710 for a house and $580 for a unit in June 2026;

(b) rental bond payments in the ACT are generally 4-weeks rent, meaning the median bond payment required is $2,840 for a house and $2,320 for a unit;

(c) the median personal weekly income in the ACT is $1,158, meaning a regular person could need to pay more than a fortnight's worth of take-home pay to finance a bond;

(d) when moving between rental properties, renters are required to pay a bond upfront while waiting for their existing bond to be returned;

(e) the need to finance a second rental bond is difficult for many Canberrans, especially as cost-of-living pressures increase;

(f) a portable rental-bond scheme lets renters transfer their existing bond to a new rental property;

(g) portable rental-bond schemes are available in both NSW and Victoria and a scheme is being introduced in South Australia; and

(h) any measure to reduce moving costs between rental properties would have benefits to different members of our community, including young people, women leaving violent relationships and low-income renters; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) develop and implement a portable rental-bond scheme to allow renters to transfer an existing rental bond from one tenancy to another free of charge, commencing by July 2028; and

(b) report back to the Assembly with progress on the above on the second-last sitting day of February 2027, including an analysis of:

(i) legislative and policy change required to implement a portable rental-bond scheme; and

(ii) challenges and opportunities to implementing an ICT system to support a portable rental-bond scheme.

Mr Cocks moved the following amendment: Omit all text after paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

"(2) further notes that:

(a) according to some data, median weekly asking rents in Canberra increased have increased by approximately 49 percent for houses and 45 percent for units over the decade;

(b) over the same period, the ACT Government has progressively increased the taxation, regulatory and compliance burden associated with providing residential rental housing, including through land tax, restrictions on rental increases, changes to tenancy termination arrangements and minimum energy efficiency requirements; and

(c) measures seeking to address pressures experienced by renters should consider both direct assistance and the effect of government policy settings on the cost and supply of rental housing;

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) investigate options to reduce the financial burden on ACT renters who are required to pay a new rental bond while waiting for an existing rental bond to be returned, including, but not limited to:

(i) a portable rental bond scheme;

(ii) measures to accelerate the return of existing rental bonds where there is no outstanding claim or dispute;

(iii) temporary or bridging arrangements to address the period between paying of a new rental bond and return of an existing rental bond;

(iv) changes to, or expansion of, the existing ACT Rental Bond Help arrangements; and

(v) other legislative, administrative or financial measures that would reduce the need for renters to finance two rental bonds at the same time; and

(b) report back to the Assembly within six months, with the report to include, for each option, assessment of:

(i) legislative, policy, administrative and ICT changes;

(ii) costs, benefits, risks and potential unintended consequences;

(iii) financial risk transferred to the Territory;

(iv) treatment of disputed claims, outstanding tenant liabilities and any debts that may become owing by renters to the Territory;

(v) interactions with existing arrangements;

(vi) evidence from initiatives operating in other jurisdictions; and

(vii) implementation planning for the current term of the Legislative Assembly, including timeframes.".

Debate continued.

Ms Cheyne (Minister for City and Government Services) moved the following amendment to Mr Cocks' proposed amendment: In paragraph (3)(b), omit "six months", substitute "nine months".

Debate continued.

Amendment to amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Question—That the motion, as amended, viz:

"That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) around one third of Canberrans are renters and they are paying record high rents, with the median weekly rent reaching $710 for a house and $580 for a unit in June 2026;

(b) rental bond payments in the ACT are generally 4-weeks rent, meaning the median bond payment required is $2,840 for a house and $2,320 for a unit;

(c) the median personal weekly income in the ACT is $1,158, meaning a regular person could need to pay more than a fortnight's worth of take-home pay to finance a bond;

(d) when moving between rental properties, renters are required to pay a bond upfront while waiting for their existing bond to be returned;

(e) the need to finance a second rental bond is difficult for many Canberrans, especially as cost-of-living pressures increase;

(f) a portable rental-bond scheme lets renters transfer their existing bond to a new rental property;

(g) portable rental-bond schemes are available in both NSW and Victoria and a scheme is being introduced in South Australia; and

(h) any measure to reduce moving costs between rental properties would have benefits to different members of our community, including young people, women leaving violent relationships and low-income renters; and

(2) further notes that:

(a) according to some data, median weekly asking rents in Canberra increased have increased by approximately 49 percent for houses and 45 percent for units over the decade;

(b) over the same period, the ACT Government has progressively increased the taxation, regulatory and compliance burden associated with providing residential rental housing, including through land tax, restrictions on rental increases, changes to tenancy termination arrangements and minimum energy efficiency requirements; and

(c) measures seeking to address pressures experienced by renters should consider both direct assistance and the effect of government policy settings on the cost and supply of rental housing;

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) investigate options to reduce the financial burden on ACT renters who are required to pay a new rental bond while waiting for an existing rental bond to be returned, including, but not limited to:

(i) a portable rental bond scheme;

(ii) measures to accelerate the return of existing rental bonds where there is no outstanding claim or dispute;

(iii) temporary or bridging arrangements to address the period between paying of a new rental bond and return of an existing rental bond;

(iv) changes to, or expansion of, the existing ACT Rental Bond Help arrangements; and

(v) other legislative, administrative or financial measures that would reduce the need for renters to finance two rental bonds at the same time; and

(b) report back to the Assembly within nine months, with the report to include, for each option, assessment of:

(i) legislative, policy, administrative and ICT changes;

(ii) costs, benefits, risks and potential unintended consequences;

(iii) financial risk transferred to the Territory;

(iv) treatment of disputed claims, outstanding tenant liabilities and any debts that may become owing by renters to the Territory;

(v) interactions with existing arrangements;

(vi) evidence from initiatives operating in other jurisdictions; and

(vii) implementation planning for the current term of the Legislative Assembly, including timeframes."—

be agreed to—put and passed.

## 12 LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO MEMBER

Mr Cocks moved—That leave of absence be granted to Ms Barry for this sitting due to personal reasons.

Question—put and passed.

## 13 APPROPRIATION BILL 2026-2027

The Assembly, according to order, resumed consideration at the detail stage—

*Detail Stage*

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure—

Consideration resumed at Part 1.6—Health and Community Services Directorate—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.7—Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.8—Superannuation Provision Account—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.9—Housing ACT—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.10—Digital Canberra—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.11—Canberra Institute of Technology—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.12—Canberra Health Services—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.13—City Renewal Authority—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.14—Cultural Facilities Corporation—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.15—Legal Aid Commission (ACT)—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.16—Office of the Work Health and Safety Commissioner—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.17—ACT Executive—agreed to.

Part 1.18—ICON Water Limited—debated and agreed to.

Part 1.19—ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—debated.

Debate adjourned (Ms Cheyne—Manager of Government Business) and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

## 14 MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

No Members' statements were made.

## 15 ADJOURNMENT

Ms Cheyne (Manager of Government Business) moved—That the Assembly do now adjourn, requesting that the question to be put forthwith without debate—

Question—put and passed.

And then the Assembly, at 10.32 pm adjourned until tomorrow at 10 am.

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**MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE:** All Members were present at some time during the sitting, except Ms Barry* and Ms Berry*.

*on leave.

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**Hamish Finlay**
Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly