LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

2024–2025

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

No 10

THURSDAY, 6 MARCH 2025

1 The Assembly met at 10 am, pursuant to adjournment. The Speaker (Mr Parton) 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 TOURISM AND EVENTS—SUPPORTING COMMUNITY, LOCAL JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH—MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—PAPER NOTED

Mr Barr (Minister for Tourism and Trade) made a ministerial statement concerning the ACT Government's efforts to support community, local jobs and economic growth through tourism and events, and presented the following paper:

Supporting community, local jobs and economic growth through tourism and events—Ministerial statement, 6 March 2025.

Mr Barr moved—That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question—put and passed.

3 NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL—2025—MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—PAPER NOTED

Mr Pettersson (Minister for Multicultural Affairs) made a ministerial statement concerning the 2025 National Multicultural Festival and presented the following paper:

National Multicultural Festival 2025—Ministerial statement, 6 March 2025.

Mr Pettersson moved—That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question—put and passed.

4 MINISTERIAL STAFFING EXPENDITURE—ORDER TO TABLE

Ms Castley (Leader of the Opposition), pursuant to notice, moved—That, in accordance with standing order 213A, the Assembly orders the Chief Minister to provide the Assembly with a breakdown of ministerial staffing expenditure for the current and last five financial years, including staffing expenditure per ministerial office (including his own), staffing expenditure per shared resourcing arrangement, and any other staffing expenditure.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

5 BETTER REGULATION (REPEAL OF LEGISLATION) BILL 2025

Ms Cheyne (Attorney-General), pursuant to notice, presented a Bill for an Act to repeal certain legislation.

Paper: Ms Cheyne presented the following paper:

Explanatory statement to the Bill, incorporating a compatibility statement, pursuant to section 37 of the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

Title read by Clerk.

Ms Cheyne moved—That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Debate adjourned (Mr Cocks) and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

6 TOBACCO AND OTHER SMOKING PRODUCTS (VAPING GOODS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

Ms Stephen-Smith (Minister for Health), pursuant to notice, presented a Bill for an Act to amend the *Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1927*, and for other purposes.

Paper: Ms Stephen-Smith presented the following paper:

Explanatory statement to the Bill, incorporating a compatibility statement, pursuant to section 37 of the *Human Rights Act 2004*.

Title read by Clerk.

Ms Stephen-Smith moved—That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

Debate adjourned (Ms Castley—Leader of the Opposition) and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.

7 CRIMES (CHILD SEX OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

The order of the day having been read for the resumption of the debate on the question—That this Bill be agreed to in principle—

Debate resumed.

Question—That this Bill be agreed to in principle—put and passed.

Detail Stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole—

Mr Rattenbury was granted leave to move an amendment that had not been considered or reported on by the Scrutiny Committee and had not been circulated in accordance with standing order 178A.

On the motion of Mr Rattenbury, new clause 2A (his amendment No 1—*see* Schedule 1) was inserted in the Bill, after debate.

Ms Morris, by leave, moved her amendments Nos 1 and 2 (*see* Schedule 2) that had not been considered or reported on by the Scrutiny Committee, together.

Debate continued.

Question—put.

The Assembly voted—

AYES, 8	NOES, 15	
Chiaka Barry	Yvette Berry	Marisa Paterson
Peter Cain	Andrew Braddock	Michael Pettersson
Leanne Castley	Fiona Carrick	Shane Rattenbury
Ed Cocks	Tara Cheyne	Chris Steel
Jeremy Hanson	Jo Clay	Rachel Stephen-Smith
James Milligan	Thomas Emerson	Caitlin Tough
Deborah Morris	Laura Nuttall	Taimus Werner-Gibbings
Mark Parton	Suzanne Orr	

And so it was negatived.

Bill, as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Question—That this Bill, as amended, be agreed to—put and passed.

8 QUESTIONS

Questions without notice were asked.

9 PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

Ms Cheyne (Manager of Government Business), pursuant to standing order 211, presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2023-2024—Justice and Community Safety Directorate—Corrigendum, undated.

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to section 21—Auditor-General's Reports—Government response to Reports No 9/2024—2023-24 Financial Audits Overview and No 12/2024—2023-24 Financial Audits Financial Results and Audit Findings—Correspondence from the ACT Treasurer to the ACT Auditor-General, dated 3 March 2025.

Children and Young People Act, pursuant to section 501T(4)—Therapeutic Support Panel for Children and Young People—Report—2024, dated 17 December 2024.

Freedom of Information Act, pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—Community Services Directorate—Freedom of Information request—Decision not made in time (FOI-CYF-22/41), dated 27 September 2023.

10 MOLONGLO VALLEY—ROAD NETWORK—TRAFFIC CONGESTION ALLEVIATION

Mr Cocks, pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Molonglo Valley is the ACT's fastest-growing region, with its population projected to increase from approximately 15,000 residents today to more than 70,000 by 2050;

(b) Federal Government infrastructure modelling in 2019 predicted significant traffic congestion in the Molonglo Valley, a forecast that has now materialised as a daily reality for residents;

(c) the 2010 ACT Government Infrastructure Plan identified the need for a new bridge over the Molonglo River at John Gorton Drive and an East-West Arterial road to support Molonglo Valley residents;

(d) federal funding for the Molonglo River Bridge was announced in 2020 by then ACT Senator Zed Seselja, with ACT Government funding allocated in the 2022-2023 budget with a promised completion date of December 2025;

(e) planning for future Molonglo Valley suburbs of Bandler and Sulman cannot progress prior to the design of the Bindubi Street Extension being finalised; and

(f) the 2024-2025 budget committed to progressing the Molonglo Parkway Connector, however, no funding has been allocated for its construction and included no funding for the design work of the Bindubi Street Extension;

(2) further notes that:

(a) the Cotter Road and John Gorton Drive serve as the Molonglo Valley's only arterial road connections to the rest of the ACT, currently carrying 35,000 vehicles per day and experiencing severe congestion;

(b) traffic congestion on these roads is now affecting surrounding areas, leading to delays on key routes such as Streeton Drive and William Hovell Drive; and

(c) increased congestion is diverting traffic through school zones and residential streets, raising safety concerns for children and other community members;

(3) acknowledges that:

(a) dividing the Molonglo Parkway Connector into multiple stages risks creating Canberra's largest cul-de-sac, failing to provide meaningful congestion relief; and

(b) without the necessary road infrastructure, Molonglo Valley residents will continue to experience worsening congestion, longer commutes, and increased safety risks; and

(4) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) provide an update on the timeline and cost of the Molonglo River Bridge construction;

(b) develop a costed plan and timeline for the delivery of the full East-West Arterial Road with connections to the Tuggeranong Parkway;

(c) develop a costed plan and timeframe for the delivery of the Bindubi Street Extension;

(d) develop a comprehensive roads and traffic infrastructure plan to address congestion in and around the Molonglo Valley, including:

(i) consideration of expanding the Cotter Road to improve traffic flow;

(ii) strategies to manage congestion while major road projects are underway; and

(iii) identification of short, medium and long-term infrastructure solutions to alleviate traffic congestion in the region; and

(e) table the East-West Arterial Road plan, Bindubi Street Extension plan and the roads and traffic infrastructure plan by the end of the first sitting day in September.

Debate ensued.

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

1. In paragraph (3)(b), after "without the necessary road", insert ", public transport and active travel".

2. In paragraph (4)(d)(iii), after "in the region", add ", including through public and active transport infrastructure improvements".

Debate continued.

Mr Emerson's amendments agreed to.

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

1. Insert new paragraph after paragraph (1)(d):

"(e) the Molonglo Valley District Strategy identifies several major transport projects for the district, including the Bindubi Street Extension, the Molonglo Parkway Connector/East-West Arterial Road, future rapid public transport connections to Belconnen, Woden and the City Centre, and three new active travel bridges across the Molonglo River;".

2. In paragraph (1)(f), after "Bindubi Street Extension", add "the latter of which will serve as a critical public transport corridor connecting the Molonglo Valley to Belconnen; and".

3. In paragraph (2)(b), after "William Hovell Drive" add "and impacts to the speed and reliability of rapid bus services in the Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek".

4. Add new paragraph after paragraph (3)(b):

    "(c) the Molonglo Valley's long-term needs will be best addressed by delivering a multi-modal transport network, including arterial roads, dedicated bus lanes, rapid public transport and active travel connections to the surrounding districts".

5. Omit all text in paragraph (4)(d)(i), substitute:

    "(i) options for augmenting the Cotter Road to improve traffic flow and bus reliability".

Debate continued.

Mr Braddock's amendments agreed to.

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

1. In paragraph (4)(d), omit "comprehensive roads and infrastructure plan", substitute "comprehensive transport plan".

2. In paragraph (4)(e), omit "the roads and infrastructure plan", substitute: "a Molonglo Valley Transport Plan".

Debate continued.

Mr Braddock's amendments negatived.

Question—That the motion, as amended, viz:

"That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

    (a) the Molonglo Valley is the ACT's fastest-growing region, with its population projected to increase from approximately 15,000 residents today to more than 70,000 by 2050;

    (b) Federal Government infrastructure modelling in 2019 predicted significant traffic congestion in the Molonglo Valley, a forecast that has now materialised as a daily reality for residents;

    (c) the 2010 ACT Government Infrastructure Plan identified the need for a new bridge over the Molonglo River at John Gorton Drive and an East-West Arterial road to support Molonglo Valley residents;

    (d) federal funding for the Molonglo River Bridge was announced in 2020 by then ACT Senator Zed Seselja, with ACT Government funding allocated in the 2022-2023 budget with a promised completion date of December 2025;

(e) the Molonglo Valley District Strategy identifies several major transport projects for the district, including the Bindubi Street Extension, the Molonglo Parkway Connector/East-West Arterial Road, future rapid public transport connections to Belconnen, Woden and the City Centre, and three new active travel bridges across the Molonglo River;

(f) planning for future Molonglo Valley suburbs of Bandler and Sulman cannot progress prior to the design of the Bindubi Street Extension being finalised; and

(g) the 2024-2025 budget committed to progressing the Molonglo Parkway Connector, however, no funding has been allocated for its construction and included no funding for the design work of the Bindubi Street Extension, the latter of which will serve as a critical public transport corridor connecting the Molonglo Valley to Belconnen;

(2) further notes that:

(a) the Cotter Road and John Gorton Drive serve as the Molonglo Valley's only arterial road connections to the rest of the ACT, currently carrying 35,000 vehicles per day and experiencing severe congestion;

(b) traffic congestion on these roads is now affecting surrounding areas, leading to delays on key routes, such as Streeton Drive and William Hovell Drive, and impacts to the speed and reliability of rapid bus services in the Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek; and

(c) increased congestion is diverting traffic through school zones and residential streets, raising safety concerns for children and other community members;

(3) acknowledges that:

(a) dividing the Molonglo Parkway Connector into multiple stages risks creating Canberra's largest cul-de-sac, failing to provide meaningful congestion relief;

(b) without the necessary road, public transport and active travel infrastructure, Molonglo Valley residents will continue to experience worsening congestion, longer commutes, and increased safety risks; and

(c) the Molonglo Valley's long-term needs will be best addressed by delivering a multi-modal transport network, including arterial roads, dedicated bus lanes, rapid public transport and active travel connections to the surrounding districts;

(4) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) provide an update on the timeline and cost of the Molonglo River Bridge construction;

(b) develop a costed plan and timeline for the delivery of the full East-West Arterial Road with connections to the Tuggeranong Parkway;

(c) develop a costed plan and timeframe for the delivery of the Bindubi Street Extension;

(d) develop a comprehensive roads and traffic infrastructure plan to address congestion in and around the Molonglo Valley, including:

(i) options for augmenting the Cotter Road to improve traffic flow and bus reliability;

(ii) strategies to manage congestion while major road projects are underway; and

(iii) identification of short, medium and long-term infrastructure solutions to alleviate traffic congestion in the region, including through public and active transport infrastructure improvements; and

(e) table the East-West Arterial Road plan, Bindubi Street Extension plan and the roads and traffic infrastructure plan by the end of the first sitting day in September."—

be agreed to—put and passed.

11 DICKSON SHOPS TASKFORCE—PROGRESS REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT

Mr Rattenbury, pursuant to notice, moved—That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) community members from Dickson, including the area's residents' association, have raised significant concerns about the current physical state of the Dickson shops and issues of anti-social behaviour and community safety;

(b) issues highlighted by residents include general safety concerns and a lack of maintenance in the shopping precinct's amenities, from footpaths to graffiti;

(c) the local community is concerned that the high cost of living is playing a significant role in causing the issues in the area, from homelessness to struggling businesses; and

(d) these issues have been compounded by high commercial rents leading to a significant increase in vacant shops around the original Dickson shopping precinct;

(2) further notes that:

(a) government has a responsibility to ensure local shops are hubs for the community, providing services and amenity for the residents;

(b) there is a need for improved homelessness support services to ensure people can thrive in our community;

(c) there is also a need for better planning and business support to ensure a sustainable business environment;

(d) local community members are against a "law and order" approach to homelessness and similarly do not want a "band-aid" solution for the business issues in the area;

(e) the challenges faced by Canberrans at Dickson shops are systemic and are a result of increasing social and economic inequality, which the Government must address;

(f) the ACT Government has committed to and has run consultation on delivering a new Dickson Place Plan which seeks to revitalise much of the shopping area; and

(g) following advocacy from community groups, the ACT Government has agreed to establish a much needed cross-directorate task force to create meaningful and lasting improvements in the Dickson shops precinct; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) report back to the Assembly and the Dickson community by August 2025 on the progress of the taskforce and what meaningful steps have been taken to make lasting improvements for people and businesses at Dickson shopping precinct;

(b) ensure the taskforce engages directly with affected communities and operationalises feedback directly into work undertaken at Dickson shops;

(c) enhance targeted homelessness, drug and alcohol, and mental health services in the Dickson precinct to ensure a place-based approach to support services;

(d) meet with the landlords of the shopping centre to discuss mechanisms to lower commercial rent in the shopping precinct and lower shopfront vacancies;

(e) enter discussions directly with shop owners in the Dickson shopping precinct to ensure any future works in the area do not compound these current issues; and

(f) use experience gained in this approach at Dickson to assist with problems at other shopping precincts across Canberra.

Mr Barr (Minister for Economic Development), by leave, moved the following amendments together:

1. Omit all text in paragraph (1)(d), substitute:

"(d) these challenges have been exacerbated by businesses grappling with the cost of commercial rent, which may be contributing to the growing number of vacant shops in the original Dickson precinct;

(e) the departure of a number of financial institutions have resulted in increased tenancy vacancies".

2. Omit all text in paragraph (2)(g), substitute:

"(g) through consultation and following advocacy from community groups, the ACT Government has agreed to establish a much-needed cross directorate working group to create meaningful and lasting improvements in the Dickson shops precinct".

3. Omit all text after "(3) calls on the ACT Government to:", substitute:

"(a) report back to the Assembly and the Dickson community by October 2025 on the progress of the working group and what meaningful steps have been taken to make lasting improvements for people and businesses at Dickson shopping precinct, including any available government data;

(b) ensure the working group engages directly with affected communities and operationalises feedback directly into work undertaken at Dickson shops;

(c) enhance targeted homelessness, drug and alcohol, and mental health services in the Dickson precinct to ensure a place-based approach to support services;

(d) meet with the landlords of the shopping centre to discuss how they could better assist business owners to deal with cost pressures;

(e) enter discussions directly with shop owners in the Dickson shopping precinct to ensure any future works in the area do not compound these current issues; and

(f) use experience gained in this approach at Dickson to assist with problems at other shopping precincts across Canberra; and

(4) calls on Dickson commercial landlords to consider how to better assist small business to deal with cost pressures, lower shopfront vacancies and increase stability of tenure for business.".

Debate continued.

Amendments agreed to.

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

1. Add at the end of paragraph (2)(d): ", although an increased police presence in Dickson may enhance feelings of community safety, including with respect to non-criminal antisocial behaviour, until such a time as the benefits of wraparound place-based support services take effect;".

2. Insert new paragraph after paragraph (2)(e):

"(f) community members have also raised concerns about the inaccessibility of the Dickson shops for residents with mobility restrictions due to the area's poorly maintained and incomplete footpath network;".

3. Insert the following new paragraphs after paragraph (3)(e):

"(f) engage in sufficient forward planning to maintain and improve pedestrian access to the Dickson shops, particularly for community members with mobility restrictions;

(g) ensure that any construction works in the area address community concerns about pedestrian accessibility and enable foot traffic to, and throughout, the Dickson shops;

(h) report back to the Assembly again in the first sitting week of 2026 with available data trends demonstrating the impact of the cross-directorate working group, such as statistics showing the level of local health, mental health and homelessness service provision; police complaints about antisocial behaviour, security incidents and bicycle thefts; and commercial vacancy rates at the Dickson shops; and".

Debate continued.

Amendments agreed to.

Question—That the motion, as amended, viz:

"That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) community members from Dickson, including the area's residents' association, have raised significant concerns about the current physical state of the Dickson shops and issues of anti-social behaviour and community safety;

(b) issues highlighted by residents include general safety concerns and a lack of maintenance in the shopping precinct's amenities, from footpaths to graffiti;

(c) the local community is concerned that the high cost of living is playing a significant role in causing the issues in the area, from homelessness to struggling businesses;

(d) these challenges have been exacerbated by businesses grappling with the cost of commercial rent, which may be contributing to the growing number of vacant shops in the original Dickson precinct; and

(e) the departure of a number of financial institutions have resulted in increased tenancy vacancies;

(2) further notes that:

(a) government has a responsibility to ensure local shops are hubs for the community, providing services and amenity for the residents;

(b) there is a need for improved homelessness support services to ensure people can thrive in our community;

(c) there is also a need for better planning and business support to ensure a sustainable business environment;

(d) local community members are against a "law and order" approach to homelessness and similarly do not want a "band-aid" solution for the business issues in the area, although an increased police presence in Dickson may enhance feelings of community safety, including with respect to non-criminal antisocial behaviour, until such a time as the benefits of wraparound place-based support services take effect;

(e) the challenges faced by Canberrans at Dickson shops are systemic and are a result of increasing social and economic inequality, which the Government must address;

(f) community members have also raised concerns about the inaccessibility of the Dickson shops for residents with mobility restrictions due to the area's poorly maintained and incomplete footpath network;

(g) the ACT Government has committed to and has run consultation on delivering a new Dickson Place Plan which seeks to revitalise much of the shopping area; and

(h) through consultation and following advocacy from community groups, the ACT Government has agreed to establish a much-needed cross directorate working group to create meaningful and lasting improvements in the Dickson shops precinct;

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

(a) report back to the Assembly and the Dickson community by October 2025 on the progress of the working group and what meaningful steps have been taken to make lasting improvements for people and businesses at Dickson shopping precinct, including any available government data;

(b) ensure the working group engages directly with affected communities and operationalises feedback directly into work undertaken at Dickson shops;

(c) enhance targeted homelessness, drug and alcohol, and mental health services in the Dickson precinct to ensure a place-based approach to support services;

(d) meet with the landlords of the shopping centre to discuss how they could better assist business owners to deal with cost pressures;

(e) enter discussions directly with shop owners in the Dickson shopping precinct to ensure any future works in the area do not compound these current issues;

(f) engage in sufficient forward planning to maintain and improve pedestrian access to the Dickson shops, particularly for community members with mobility restrictions;

(g) ensure that any construction works in the area address community concerns about pedestrian accessibility and enable foot traffic to, and throughout, the Dickson shops;

(h) report back to the Assembly again in the first sitting week of 2026 with available data trends demonstrating the impact of the cross-directorate working group, such as statistics showing the level of local health, mental health and homelessness service provision; police complaints about antisocial behaviour, security incidents and bicycle thefts; and commercial vacancy rates at the Dickson shops; and

(i) use experience gained in this approach at Dickson to assist with problems at other shopping precincts across Canberra; and

(4) calls on Dickson commercial landlords to consider how to better assist small business to deal with cost pressures, lower shopfront vacancies and increase stability of tenure for business."—

be agreed to—put and passed.

12 PAPERS PRESENTED ON 6 MARCH 2025—PAPERS NOTED

The Speaker, pursuant to standing order 211A, proposed—That the papers presented under standing order 211 during the presentation of papers in the routine of business today be noted.

Debate ensued.

Mr Pettersson (Minister for Children, Youth and Families), by leave, was granted an extension of time.

Question—put and passed.

13 MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Members' statements were made.

14 ADJOURNMENT

Ms Cheyne (Manager of Government Business) moved—That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

And then the Assembly, at 5.43 pm, adjourned until Tuesday, 18 March 2025 at 10 am.

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

*on leave.

Tom Duncan
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

SCHEDULES OF AMENDMENTS

Schedule 1

CRIMES (CHILD SEX OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025
Amendment circulated by Mr Rattenbury

1
Proposed new Clause 2A
Page 2, line 6—

insert

2A Review date

A legislative review is to be presented by the ACT Attorney-General that ensures relevant stakeholders are adequately consulted and also the potential expansion of 'child-related employment' to other legal professionals and other professions. This is to be tabled by the last sitting day 2025.

Schedule 2

CRIMES (CHILD SEX OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

Amendments circulated by Ms Morris

1
Clause 4
Proposed new section 124 (1) (sa)
Page 2, line 12—

omit

, provided by Legal Aid ACT

2
Clause 5
Page 2, line 17—

[oppose the clause]