



# Matters of public importance—your Assembly @ work

**Sitting week—10 to 14 May 2021**

**Issue 4/2021**

## **Anniversary of ACT Legislative Assembly**

At the beginning of the sitting on 11 May, the Speaker made a statement concerning the **32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary** of the first sitting day in 1989 of the Legislative Assembly.

## **Government Business**

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

### ***Bills introduced***

[Civil Law \(Wrongs\) Amendment Bill 2021](#) *(presented 12 May)*

*Summary:* This bill will amend the *Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002* to enact, in the ACT, the Model Defamation Amendment Provisions 2020 to ensure that defamation law aligns more closely with community expectations in relation to what should and should not be allowed. The amendments will include introducing a serious harm threshold and a single publication rule and will also provide for certain individuals to be counted as employees of a corporation. The bill also includes amendments clarifying the concerns notice procedure, the procedure for offers to make amends and introducing a new public interest defence. The amendments will also clarify that the cap on damages for non-economic loss operates as a scale and that aggravated damages are awarded separately for damages for non-economic loss.

[Road Transport \(Safety and Traffic Management\) Amendment Bill 2021](#) *(presented 13 May)*

*Summary:* This bill will amend a number of laws and regulations to allow for the use of mobile device detection cameras on ACT roads. The bill will amend the legislation governing the use of fixed and mobile speed cameras to be more flexible and responsive.

### ***Bills debated***

[Domestic Animals Legislation Amendment Bill 2021](#)

*Summary:* This bill will amend legislation about domestic animals by introducing a requirement for dogs to be registered annually in the Territory from July 2021.

*Proceedings:* Debate resumed on this bill on 13 May. During debate all parties indicated support for the proposed legislation with the bill being agreed to in principle.

The bill was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

#### [Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021](#)

*Summary:* This bill will amend a number of laws on the ACT statute book to improve the operation of tax laws. The bill includes the removal of the current expiry date of 30 June 2021 for the affordable community housing and land tax exemption. The bill will also provide for: a conveyance duty concession for pensioners with a disability purchasing residential shares in not-for-profit supportive housing properties; provide for the application of penalty tax provisions under the Taxation Administration Act to overdue and unpaid rates on land owned by corporations and trusts; and will also make a number of minor and technical amendments.

*Proceedings:* The bill received the support of all parties when debate resumed on 12 May and was agreed to in principle.

The bill was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

#### [Utilities Amendment Bill 2021](#)

*Summary:* This bill will amend the *Utilities Act 2000* by introducing a required reference price framework to provide ACT consumers with a consistent benchmark to compare alternative offers and make informed choices regarding electricity contracts.

*Proceedings:* Debate resumed on this bill on 11 May with all parties supporting its passage through the Assembly. The bill was agreed to in principle.

The unamended bill was passed by the Assembly.

#### ***Ministerial statements***

The Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence made a ministerial statement on 11 May relating to the **ACT's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program**. During the statement the minister highlighted the fact that the approach taken to prevent and reduce the instances of sexual assault in the ACT is a tri-partisan approach across all parties. A number of members addressed the Assembly in relation to the statement.

The **coronial inquest into the death of Braydon Dillon** was the subject of a ministerial statement made by the Minister for Families and Community Services on 11 May. During the statement the minister acknowledged the work and findings of the Coroner and noted the key findings in the Coroner's report. The minister went on to state that it was important to take the opportunity to identify how the systems that work with children, young people and their families can be improved to better respond to similar circumstances when they arise.

**Nurses and Midwives** was the subject of a ministerial statement made by the Minister for Health on 12 May with the minister highlighting the immeasurable contribution made by the nursing and midwifery profession. A number of members addressed the Assembly in support of the statement.

Other ministerial statements made during the sitting week related to:

**ACT economy recovery**—Treasurer (12 May)

**ACT Transport Recovery Plan**—Minister for Transport and City Services (12 May)

**Age-Friendly City Plan—Statement of Progress**—Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services (13 May)

**Better Regulation Taskforce**—Minister for Business and Better Regulation (12 May)

**Disability Policy**—Minister for Disability (13 May)

**Nature: the foundation of Canberra as a liveable city and the wellbeing of the ACT community**—Minister for the Environment (13 May)

**Planning for the Gungahlin Town Centre**—Minister for Planning and Land Management (11 May)

**Update on the Government's response to the COVID-19 emergency**—Minister for Health (11 May)

The full text of the statement made by Minister can be accessed from the [Assembly Hansard](#) site.

## Assembly Business

*Includes any business relating to the establishment or membership of a committee or the proposed referral of a matter to a committee. It also includes business which proposes to amend, disallow, disapprove or declare void any instruments which are made under specific Acts agreed to by the Assembly. Assembly business also includes any notice or order of the day which deals with the administration of the Assembly or how the Assembly conducts its proceedings*

### *Motion debated*

On 13 May a motion was moved, referring to the Commissioner for Standards, the actions of a member in relation to correspondence with constituents. The motion was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

The full terms of the above motion can be found in the [Minutes of Proceedings](#).

## Private Members' Business

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

### *Motions debated*

**Care and protection orders** for young people over the age of 18 was the subject of a motion moved by Mrs Kikkert MLA on 11 May. The motion included noting that there was a growing national consensus that support for care leavers needs to include the option to remain in care until age 21 and called on the Government to, among other things, commit in principle to support the extension of care to age 21, including for those exiting residential care and those unable to remain in a foster or kinship care placement. During debate an amendment was moved by the Government that sought to highlight steps the Government had taken to extend the continuum of care subsidy payments for eligible care leavers up to the age of 21 and also included calling on the Government to explore options to enact a presumption that the continuum care subsidy automatically extend to young people up to at least 21

years of age. A further amendment moved by the Opposition to the Government's amendment was negated following debate. The Government's amendment was agreed to by the Assembly.

The amended motion was passed.

Development of the **Gungahlin Town Centre** was the subject of a motion moved by Mr Braddock MLA on 11 May. The motion included noting that a number of blocks were being auctioned by the Suburban Land Agency on 12 May and also included calling on the Government to outline how the sale of the blocks meets the conditions specified in a resolution passed by the Assembly on 10 February 2021 in relation to the Gungahlin Town Centre. The motion also included calling on the Government to not proceed with any other sales of land in the town centre for the purpose of mixed-use development until certain variations were incorporated into the Territory Plan.

Following debate, the motion was adjourned to a future sitting of the Assembly.

Mr Pettersson MLA moved a motion on 12 May concerning **support for trans and gender diverse students** in the education system. The motion included acknowledging that the ACT Government is committed to ensuring that the education system is welcoming, affirming and inclusive for all children and called on the ACT Government to continue its work supporting trans and gender diverse students within our education system. The motion also called on the ACT Minister for Education and Youth Affairs to write to her counterpart in the NSW Government expressing concern about the effect of debate on One Nation's Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill (NSW) on trans and gender diverse children in the ACT and urging the NSW Government to vote against the bill. All parties within the Assembly indicated support for the motion during debate.

The motion was passed without amendment.

Further motions debated during the sitting week related to:

**Support for Canberra Indian-Australia and other South Asian communities**—Ms Orr MLA

**Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services**—Mrs Jones MLA

**Parking near Yerrabi Pond**—Ms Castley MLA

The full debate on the above motions can be accessed from the Assembly [Hansard](#) site.

## Petition response

The following ministerial response to petitions was lodged—

- Giralang shops—Update from developer on progress (*Minister of Planning and Land Management*)

A copy of the petition response can be found on the Assembly [Hansard](#) site.

## Papers Presented

The following are papers of interest that were presented by the Speaker and the Manager of Government Business during the sitting week:

- ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2020
- A Step Up for Our Kids—Snapshot Report Update
- Our Booris, Our Way—Implementation Update

- Out-of-Order Petition—Gungahlin—Union Land Playground shade sail
- Progress update on the implementation of the ACT Children and Young People’s Commitment 2015-2025
- Report on COVID-19 measures, pursuant to section 3 of the *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020*—Report No 10 for the period 1 January to 31 March 2021
- Review of Children and Young People Who Have Died as a Result of Intentional Self-Harm—Government response
- Review of Terrorism (Extraordinary Temporary Powers) Act
- Statement of leases granted for the period 1 January to 31 March 2021

## Committee Activities

### *Committee report*

#### **Scrutiny Committee**

##### [Scrutiny Report 4](#)

This report contained the committee’s comments on four bills, 16 pieces of subordinate legislation and two government responses.

### *Committee statements*

#### **Public Accounts—Standing Committee**

The chair of the committee made a statement on 11 May in relation to **reportable contracts** for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. At the conclusion of the statement the chair presented the list of reportable contracts for the relevant period.

On 11 May the chair made a statement in relation to those **Auditor-General’s reports** the committee had noted but would not inquire further into. The chair made a further statement outlining the Auditor-General’s reports that the committee had resolved to inquire into.

A further statement made by the chair on 11 May informed the Assembly that the committee had resolved to refer Auditor-General’s Report 7 of 2019 entitled ***Referral processes for the support of vulnerable children*** to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing.

#### **Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee**

On 13 May, the chair informed the Assembly that the committee had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the **future of the working week**, in particular, what a four-day work week would look like and whether it is the future of work. During the statement the chair advised that the committee would release a discussion paper in mid-June 2021 to assist those wishing to participate in the inquiry.

## Members of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT

### *Electorate of Brindabella*

Ms Joy Burch (Australian Labor Party)  
Mr Johnathan Davis (ACT Greens)  
Mr Mick Gentleman (Australian Labor Party)  
Ms Nicole Lawder (Canberra Liberals)  
Mr Mark Parton (Canberra Liberals)

### *Electorate of Ginninderra*

Ms Yvette Berry (Australian Labor Party)  
Mr Peter Cain (Canberra Liberals)  
Ms Tara Cheyne (Australian Labor Party)  
Ms Jo Clay (ACT Greens)  
Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert (Canberra Liberals)

### *Electorate of Kurrajong*

Mr Andrew Barr (Australian Labor Party)  
Ms Elizabeth Lee (Canberra Liberals)  
Mr Shane Rattenbury (ACT Greens)  
Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith (Australian Labor Party)  
Ms Rebecca Vassarotti (ACT Greens)

### *Electorate of Murrumbidgee*

Emma Davidson (ACT Greens)  
Mr Jeremy Hanson CSC (Canberra Liberals)  
Mrs Giulia Jones (Canberra Liberals)  
Dr Marisa Paterson (Australian Labor Party)  
Mr Chris Steel (Australian Labor Party)

### *Electorate of Yerrabi*

Mr Andrew Braddock (ACT Greens)  
Ms Leanne Castley (Canberra Liberals)  
Mr James Milligan (Canberra Liberals)  
Ms Suzanne Orr (Australian Labor Party)  
Mr Michael Pettersson (Australian Labor Party)

**Next Sitting**

**Wednesday, 2 June 2021.**

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