Matters of public importance

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***Non-sitting and sitting weeks—28 August to 15 September 2017***

**Issue 9/2017**

**Government business**

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

***Bills introduced***

**Electricity Feed-in (Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generation) Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will amend the *Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act 2011* and the *Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Regulation 2017* to prescribe matters the Minister must consider when confirming a FiT entitlement surrender. The bill will also provide for the Minister to oversee the amount(s) that the ACT electricity distributor passes on to ACT electricity retailers as compensation for the FiT support payments. In addition, the bill will enable the Minister to require the electricity distributor to commission an audit of the FiT support payment information provided by the distributor.

**Firearms and Prohibited Weapons Legislation Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill makes amendments to improve the operations of firearms and prohibited weapons legislation to allow for better administration of the legislation and greater access to firearms for legitimate users under specified circumstances.

**Nature Conservation (Minor Public Works) Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will streamline the processes for obtaining planning approvals to enable Territory entities, or groups working on behalf of the Territory, to carry out minor works in reserves.

**Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will amend the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to improve consumer protections for tenants and lessors entering into a commercial guarantee or indemnity contract.

Copies of bills presented to the Assembly and associated explanatory statements can be accessed from the ACT Legislation Register at [www.legislation.act.gov.au](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au).

***Bills debated***

[**Statute Law Amendment Bill 2017**](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/b/db_56730/default.asp)**—**

*Summary:* This bill will make minor and technical amendments to a number of laws to enhance the Territory’s statute book.

*Proceedings*:Debate resumed on this bill on 12 September with all parties indicating their support for the proposed legislation. The bill was agreed to in principle.

The bill was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

[**Holidays (Reconciliation Day) Amendment Bill 2017**](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/b/db_56690/default.asp)**—**

*Summary:* This bill will amend the *Holidays Act 1958* to make 27 May a reconciliation Day public holiday in the Australian Capital Territory or, if that day is not a Monday, the following Monday; and omit Family and Community Day and its definition.

*Proceedings:* Debate resumed on this bill on 14 September with all parties indicating their support for the proposed legislation. The bill was agreed to in principle.

The bill was passed by the Assembly without amendment.

A full record of the debates can be accessed from the Assembly [*Hansard*](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/hansard) site.

***Ministerial statements***

The following ministerial statements were made on 12 September 2017.

The Minister for Health and Wellbeing made a statement providing the Assembly with an update on the **Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm**. The Minister informed the Assembly that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is now open and has commenced its client intake processes which will support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Minister for Mental Health made a statement on the **establishment of the Office for Mental Health**. The Minister provided an outline of objectives for the office which included oversight and increased understanding of the ACT’s mental health system and improved coordination of services and facilities for all Canberrans.

The following ministerial statement was made on 14 September 2017.

The Minister for Multicultural affairs made a statement providing an update on actions implemented and outcomes achieved under the **ACT Multicultural Framework 2015-2020**. The Framework sets out three key objectives in relation to Canberra’s multicultural communities, they are; accessible and responsive services, citizenship, participation and cohesion, and capitalising on the benefits of cultural diversity.

Other ministerial statements made on 12 September 2017 related to:

Maintaining ACT Health assets—Minister for Health and Wellbeing

ACT Active Ageing Framework 2015-2018—Minister for Veterans and Seniors

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care in the ACT—Minister for Disability, Children and Youth

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

**Private Members’ business**

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

***Motions debated***

Mr Steel MLA moved a motion concerning the international ratings agency, Standard and Poor’s reaffirmation of the **Territory’s AAA credit rating** after reviewing the 2017 ACT Budget. The motion noted that the ACT is one of just three States or Territories in Australia to hold this rating. The motion acknowledged the ACT Government will maintain a focus on delivering Budgets consistent with a AAA rating while continuing to invest in Canberra’s growth and delivery of the services the community expects and deserves.

The motion was agreed to by the Assembly.

Mr Coe MLA moved a motion concerning the observation of **International Mother Language Day**. The motion noted that about 170 languages are spoken in Canberra. The motion called on the Government to observe International Mother Language Day in the ACT to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by the people around the world through promoting the active participation, revitalisation and maintenance of local indigenous languages. The motion also called on the Government to continue the ACT Heritage Library’s collection of oral history as a means of preserving the multi-lingual inheritance of the ACT.

The Government moved an amendment during debate suggesting that the Government’s ACT Languages Policy encourages the learning of a language other than English. The amended motion was then passed by the Assembly.

Mr Parton moved a motion concerning ways to improve **Mount Taylor’s** car park accessibility. The motion noted that the use of Mount Taylor is growing noticeably as more residents discover its ease of access, the variety of its walking trails and views of the ACT and that accessing Mount Taylor from Sulwood Drive has become increasingly popular with many dozens of vehicles parked adjacent to the Mannheim Street Kambah entrance for lengthy periods of the day and evening. It also noted that there is significant and growing concern over the safety of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians accessing Mount Taylor from the parking area. The motion called on the Government to create dedicated, visible and safe entry and exit points to the Mount Taylor car park on Sulwood Drive with dedicated and clearly defined safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists and to install lighting and a bin in the parking area.

The Government moved an amendment during debate suggesting the Government investigate the improvements to Mount Taylor car park. The amended motion was then passed by the Assembly.

Mr Pettersson moved a motion concerning **Major Events Tourism**. The motion noted that data from Tourism Research Australia indicated growth in visitor numbers to the ACT. The motion also noted a 9.1 percent increase in the number of international visitors and the important role major events play in attracting both international and domestic tourists to the Territory. The motion called on the Government to explore options including, implementing the Major Events Strategy to implement a new festival celebrating Canberra’s innovation, strengths and global outlook and to establish a new music festival.

The motion was agreed to by the Assembly.

Other motions debated on 13 September related to:

Schools for All report—Mr Wall MLA

Rates reform—Mr Coe MLA

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

**Matters of public importance**

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

**The importance of Men’s Sheds in enhancing community wellbeing and social inclusion**—Ms Lawder MLA

**The importance of supporting VET students to contribute to the wider ACT economy**—Mr Steel MLA

**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***

***Bills introduced***

**Legislative Assembly Legislation Amendment Bill 2017**

*Summary:* This bill will amend provisions of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, the *Electoral Act 1992*, the *Financial Management Act 1996*, the *Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Act 2012*, the *Legislative Assembly Precincts Act 2001* and the *Ombudsman Act 1989,* which have a bearing on the effective operation of the Office of the Legislative Assembly and Officers of the Legislative Assembly.

Copies of bills presented to the Assembly and associated explanatory statements can be accessed from the ACT Legislation Register at [www.legislation.act.gov.au](http://www.legislation.act.gov.au).

**Papers presented**

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

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act—Independent Reviewer—Reports for the period 1 January to 30 June 2017 (*presented by the Speaker on 12 September 2017*)

National Environment Protection Council—Annual report 2015-2016 *(presented by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage on 12 September)*

Petition—Out of order—Pill testing trial (*presented by Mr Rattenbury, MLA on 14 September)*

Review of Display of Nutritional Information for Food—Review Report 2017 *(presented by the Minister for Health and Wellbeing on 14 September)*

**Committee activities**

***Committee report presented***

**Scrutiny Committee**

[**Scrutiny Report 9**](https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1100479/Report-9A.pdf) *(presented 12 September)*

This report contained the committee’s comments on seven bills, 19 pieces of subordinate legislation, three government responses and one regulatory impact statement.

***Committee statements***

**Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee**

The chair of the committee made a statement relating to an Inquiry into the Lower Cotter Catchment Reserve Management Plan 2017.

**Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee**

The chair of the committee informed the Assembly that, following consideration of petition No 6-17 which requested the Assembly to stop the proposed development of a KFC drive through at the Gold Creek Village, along with the Minister’s response. The Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal had determined not to conduct an inquiry into the matter at this time.

***Committee inquiry***

[**Independent Integrity Commission**](http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/in-committees/select_committees/an-Independent-Integrity-Commission)**—Select Committee**

On 1 September 2017, the Select Committee on an Independent Integrity Commission held its third public hearing inquiring into the establishment of an independent integrity commission.  The Committee heard from witnesses appearing on behalf of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)—PSU Group and ACT Bar Association; and three individuals who had made submissions to the Inquiry—Quentin Dempster, Tony Harris and Rhyl Hurley.  The transcript for the hearing can be accessed at: <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2017/comms/iic03.pdf>

On 7 September 2017, the Select Committee on an Independent Integrity Commission held its fourth public hearing inquiring into the establishment of an independent integrity commission.  The Committee heard from witnesses appearing on behalf of the AFP/ACT Policing, Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) and the Accountability Round Table.  The transcript for the hearing can be accessed at: <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2017/comms/iic04.pdf>

**Education Activities**

On 17 August, the Assembly welcomed Greenway Lanyon Probus Club. Participants met some of their local members and attended Question Time. Later that same week Gold Creek Probus Club participated in a mock election run by Elections ACT, had a tour of the Assembly and then the Clerk of the Assembly gave a presentation regarding what happens in the Assembly.

A number of schools, including Burgmann Anglican School, Weetangera Primary School and Daramalan College visited the Assembly during August and September to take part in various programs. The programs consisted of the passing of mock bills through the Assembly. The mock bills covered topics such as installing two waterslides at every public pool and lowering the voting age to 16.

As part of the ACT Public Service Graduate Program graduates complete a course through CIT Solutions and, in connection with this course, attend two half-day sessions at the Assembly. On 7 September 2017, 36 graduates attended the second half-day session which covered Committee processes, ACT Elections and what is a typical day in the Assembly.

On 1 September 2017 the Assembly hosted the Year 9/10 Interschool Parliamentary Debates during which 66 students from nine schools debated a wide range of topics including that the drinking age should be raised to 21 and that gun control laws should be relaxed. The following week the Assembly hosted the final day of Interschool Parliamentary Debates for the year with 64 students from nine schools in Years 7/8. Students debated a variety of subjects, including whether the voting age should be lowered to 16 and whether zoos should be banned.

Finally, on 11 September, Year 6 students from Wanniassa Hills Primary School participated in a mock election followed by a Committee role play that investigated the issue of no junk food in school canteens. The students then passed a mock bill on public pools and waterslides followed by a Q&A session with MLAs.

Information on our various program offerings are available on the website.

**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, 19 September 2017.**

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