Matters of public importance
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Sitting week – 26 March to 30 March 2012
Issue 4/2012

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

Bills introduced

- Duties Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Duties Amendment Bill 2012 (No 2) (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Rates and Land Tax Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Land Rent Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Human Rights Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Statute Law Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Road Transport (General) Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)
- Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) (Security Industry) Amendment Bill 2012 (presented on 29 March 2012)

Bills debated

Electoral Amendment Bill 2012

Summary: This bill will amend the Electoral Act 1992 to introduce a new regime for election funding and donations. The bill will also seek to refine public funding provisions.

Proceedings: Debate on the bill resumed on 29 March 2012. The Opposition indicated that they would reluctantly agree to the bill in principle but that amendments were required. The ACT Greens stated that they were pleased to support the bill in principle and looked forward to working with the Government and the Opposition to improve the proposed legislation.

The bill was agreed to in principle and debate was adjourned in the detail stage.

Electronic Transactions Amendment Bill 2012

Summary: This bill will amend the Electronic Transactions Act 2001 to strengthen the existing regime on the use of electronic communications in international and domestic contracts.

Proceedings: The legislation received support from all parties in the Assembly.

The bill was passed without amendment.

Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2011

Summary: This bill will amend the Freedom of Information Act 1989 to enhance public sector transparency and open government and will facilitate public access to information held by Territory Government agencies.

Proceedings: Debate resumed on the bill on 27 March 2012. During debate the Opposition and the ACT Greens stated that they would agree to the bill in principle however both parties indicated that they would be moving amendments at a later stage.

The bill was agreed to in principle and debate was adjourned in the detail stage.
Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2012

Summary: This bill will make a number of amendments to laws administered by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. The legislation will also repeal the Fair Trading (Australian Consumer Law) (Transitional Provisions) Regulation 2011.

Proceedings: Both the Opposition and the ACT Greens indicated their support for the bill when debate resumed on 27 March 2012. In closing the debate the Attorney-General thanked Members for their support.

The bill was passed without amendment.

Private Members’ business

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

Bills introduced

Animal Welfare Legislation (Factory Farming) Amendment Bill 2012—Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA (Molonglo—ACT Greens)

Planning and Development Legislation (Public Notification) Amendment Bill 2012—Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA (Molonglo—ACT Greens)

Bill debated

Financial Management (Cost of Living) Amendment Bill 2012—Mr Brendan Smyth MLA (Brindabella—Canberra Liberals)

Summary: This bill will amend the Financial Management Act 1996 by inserting provisions to require the Government to prepare, as part of the annual budget, an analysis of the effect of proposals contained in the budget on ACT residents.

Proceedings: During debate on 28 March both the Government and the ACT Greens stated that they would support the bill in principle, however, they stated that they would be seeking to amend the bill during the detail stage to ensure that the analysis provided is useful and meaningful.

The bill was agreed to in principle and debate was adjourned in the detail stage.

Motions debated

Ms Mary Porter MLA (Ginninderra—Australian Labor Party) moved a motion on 28 March concerning funding and tourism during the 2013 Canberra Centenary.

The terms of the motion included calling on the Government to work with the business and tourism industries to leverage opportunities to bring interstate and international visitors during the Centenary year. The motion also called on the Government to work with others to secure international flights to Canberra Airport. During debate the Opposition moved amendments which included noting the contribution proposed to be made by the Federal Government to the programs planned for the Centenary. The amendments also called on the Speaker to write to leaders of all political parties and independents in the Federal Parliament advising them of the terms of the motion. The amendments were passed by the Assembly.

The amended motion was then agreed to.

On 28 March 2012 Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA (Ginninderra—Canberra Liberals) moved a motion relating to a proposed childcare centre at Holder. The motion noted that the Government had identified land on Dixon Drive in Holder for the centre. The motion also included calling on the ACT Government to reconsider the decision to develop the facility for retention as an asset of the Government. In speaking on the matter Mrs Dunne stated that the motion was not stating that the Opposition didn’t want to build a childcare centre, but that they believed it was not in the ACT taxpayer’s best interest for the centre to be built by the Government. During debate both the Government and ACT Greens stated that they would not be supporting the motion and indicated that they believed it would delay the provision of further childcare places in the Territory.

The motion was not agreed to by the Assembly.

A suicide reduction target was the subject of a motion moved by Ms Amanda Bresnan MLA (Brindabella—ACT Greens) on 28 March 2012.
The motion noted that suicide is the leading cause of death for men under the age of 44 and women under the age of 34 in Australia. An amendment moved by Ms Bresnan also called on the Minister for Health to consult with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Mental Health and other relevant stakeholders about what ACT suicide reduction target is appropriate for 2020 and report to the Assembly biannually until the end of 2020 on that target. Further amendments moved sought to outline the important role that mental health workers and local community groups play in suicide prevention in the ACT.

The amended motion was passed by the Assembly.

Other matters discussed on 28 March related to:

**University of Canberra and Canberra Institute of Technology Collaborative Venture**—Ms Meredith Hunter MLA (Ginninderra—ACT Greens)

**Interactive Entertainment Sector**—Mr Zed Seselja MLA (Molonglo—Canberra Liberals)

### 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*

### Motions debated

On 29 March 2012, the Assembly established the **Select Committee on Estimates 2012-2013**. The committee was established to examine the expenditure proposals contained in the Appropriation Bill 2012-2013 and any revenue estimates proposed by the Government in the 2012-2013 Budget. The committee is to report back to the Assembly by 13 August 2012.

A motion seeking to adopt a number of standing orders of the Assembly relating to e-petitions was agreed to on 29 March.

### Papers presented

**The following is a list of papers of interest that were presented**

- **ACT Public Service Workforce Profile 2010-11** *(presented by Chief Minister on 29 March 2012)*
- **Asbestos in ACT Schools**
  - Asbestos removal and remediation works
  - Schedule of funding allocations
- **Hazardous Material Survey and Management Plans**—Various schools *(presented by Minister for Education and Training on 27 March 2012)*
- **Breast Cancer Awareness—Statement** *(presented by Minister for Health on 29 March 2012)*
- **Calvary Network Agreement** *(presented by the Minister for Health on 29 March 2012)*
- **Government response to Auditor-General’s Report No 8 of 2010 entitled Delivery of mental health services to older persons** *(presented by Minister for Health on 27 March 2012)*
- **Human Rights Act 2004—The First Five Years of Operation—A report to the ACT Department of Justice and Community Safety** *(presented by Attorney-General on 29 March 2010)*
- **Government Responses**—
  - **Australian Capital Territory Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Research Project**
  - **Provision of Specific Consultancy Services to Review ACT Corrective Services Governance including in relation to Drug Testing at the Alexander Maconochie Centre** *(presented by Minister for Corrections on 29 March 2012)*
  - **Progress report into the management of food safety in the ACT** *(presented by Minister for Health on 29 March 2012)*
  - **Progress report No 2 on achievements against recommendations of Auditor-General’s Report No 1 of 2011 entitled Waiting lists for elective surgery and medical treatment** *(presented by Minister for Health on 27 March 2012)*
Study options and feasibility study for a community legal centre hub (presented by Attorney-General on 27 March 2012)

Statements by Ministers

The Treasurer made a statement and presented papers on 27 March 2012 relating to the Enlarged Cotter Dam Project. The statement was in response to a resolution passed by the Assembly on 21 March which called for certain information in relation to the project.

On 27 March the Minister for Health made a statement updating the Assembly on progress regarding the finalisation of the review of the need to expand drug and alcohol rehabilitation services in the ACT.

The Minister for Women made a statement on 29 March in relation to gender pay equity. The Minister indicated that the statement was seeking to provide the Assembly with an update on progress towards improving women’s economic and financial independence.

Ms Meredith Hunter MLA (Brindabella—ACT Greens) also made a statement in relation to the comments made by the Minister.

A statement was made by the Minister for Education and Training on 29 March relating to English as a second language (ESL) in schools. The statement was made in response to a resolution of the Assembly of 7 December 2011 which called on the Government to undertake a review of ESL services and report back to the Assembly by April. The Minister informed the Assembly that as it did not meet in April he would provide the information to Members while the Assembly was not sitting.

Committee inquiries

ACT Supermarket Competition Policy—Select Committee

The Assembly agreed to amend the reporting date for the committee’s inquiry into the ACT Supermarket Competition Policy on 29 March. The committee is now to report by the last sitting day in May 2012.

The select committee has published 24 submissions on its website and is finalising arrangements for public hearings in April. The submissions are available for viewing here.

Education, Training and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee

On 27 March 2012 the Assembly agreed to amend the reporting date for the committee’s inquiry into the future use of the Fitters’ Workshop, Kingston. The committee is now to report by the last sitting day in May 2012.

Further information on the committee’s inquiry can be found here.

Election Commitments Costing Bill 2011 Exposure Draft—Select Committee

The committee, which was established as a collaborative committee, is considering its reference and intends holding discussions in April on issues arising from the exposure draft bill, including any recommendations on amending provisions of the draft legislation.

The Assembly agreed to amend the reporting date for the committee’s inquiry into the exposure draft on 29 March 2012. The committee is now to report by the last sitting day in May 2012.

Matters of public importance

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

The importance of the social compact—
Ms Meredith Hunter MLA (Ginninderra—ACT Greens)

The importance of sustainable planning in the ACT—Ms Amanda Bresnan MLA (Brindabella—ACT Greens)
Parliamentary Education

Members of the Canberra Blind Society recently attended the Assembly, visiting the chamber and listening to Question Time. This is the first time this group has been to the Assembly and the feedback from members was extremely positive with members expressing interest in returning to the Assembly to engage in future events.

The education office offers two seminars annually to the University of the Third Age (U3A) and the recent seminar involved Members and staff of the Assembly. This event is always well attended with lots of questions about the Assembly to the presenters. A visit to Question Time and a tour of the Assembly highlighting the art works were well received by the 30 participants from U3A.

The Speaker, Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA (Molonglo—ACT Greens) also welcomed a number of visitors to Question Time including CIT diploma students and recent graduates undertaking employment in the ACT Government directorates.

Next sitting

The Assembly will sit again on Tuesday, 1 May 2012.