

Legislative Assembly
of the Northern Territory

Draft Daily Hansard

Wednesday 26 August 2026

This is an uncorrected proof.

Please contact the Hansard Unit with any queries on
(08) 8946 1440 or LA.Hansard@nt.gov.au.

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Chief Minister

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today to attend National Cabinet.

Leave granted.

Member for Arnhem

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Arnhem be granted leave of absence, as she is attending a funeral for a family member.

Leave granted.

VISITORS
Darwin Skills Development Scheme

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of participants from Darwin Skills Development Scheme accompanied by their educators. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Mr John Halikos

Madam SPEAKER: I draw the attention of honourable members to the passing of Mr John Halikos.

On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to the family and friends of Mr Halikos in the galleries today.

I remind honourable members that on completion of debate I will ask members to stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its deep sorrow at the death of John Halikos in March this year and place on the record our profound appreciation for his life of service and endless contribution to Darwin and the Northern Territory and his home on the Greek island of Kalymnos.

I start by acknowledging some of John's family and friends and welcome those who have joined us in the gallery today: Tony and Nicki Halikos; Kay, Anita and George Halikos; Elizabeth and Simon Ostojic; Maria and Lianna; Jason; and Sean De Souza. We extend our condolences to John's extended family and the larger Greek community for their loss.

John passed away suddenly after suffering a heart attack on 4 March this year at the age of 66. He died surrounded by his loving family. Anyone's sudden death prompts outpourings of grief in those who knew him well and dearly.

John's passing was especially shocking to his family and friends and, indeed, to the wider community because John always seemed larger than life. His was truly a life well lived. With John's remarkable contribution in such a wide range of fields and in so many places around the world, it seemed as if he lived several lifetimes.

John was born in 1959 on the Greek island of Kalymnos, famed for its limestone rock climbing, its rich and ancient history and delicious seafood. Along with his family, John migrated to Darwin in 1960 where his father secured work fixing boats.

After leaving school, John worked a range of labouring and cleaning jobs, including spending three years on Groote Eylandt. No job was too small or too tough for John.

DRAFT

He then moved to Darwin where he started his own business as a hardworking roofer, serving the people of Darwin by literally putting roofs over their heads. That spirit of service and commitment to his local community defined every step of John's career and the many successful businesses he built from those humbling beginnings.

John turned his considerable talents and leadership qualities to building and leading businesses across construction, tourism, real estate and hospitality. Each of those companies were driven by the Halikos ethos of employing local, buying local and reinvesting the profits back into the Northern Territory economy.

John's crowning business achievement was the Halikos Group, which later became the JH Group. The Halikos family business here transformed the Darwin skyline and the Territory construction, hospitality and development sectors for four decades.

John businesses have also reshaped how Territorians see themselves, help them create vibrant towns and tourism destinations that showcase some of our finest produce and hospitality in Australia and the very best of what the Territory lifestyle has to offer.

Despite his success in multiple businesses, John was always focused on what truly is important to life—his beloved family and the community. John was a beloved and active member of the Greek Orthodox community of the Northern Territory. Michael Koulianos, President of the Greek Orthodox Community of the Northern Territory, wished to record the following heartfelt message on behalf of the Hellenic community:

> *John was a proud Territorian and a proud Greek Australian who never forgot his heritage or the community where he came from. He was a man of great generosity who valued family, hard work and community.*
>
> *Most importantly—and this speaks to who he was—they are the values he installed in his family who will carry them forward and continue his legacy.*
>
> *His passing is a profound loss to the Greek community and to the Northern Territory, but his contributions and the values he stood for will be remembered for generations.*

To pick up on Michael's fine words, John's greatest legacy will live through his family, including his beloved wife Kay and his children—Tony, Michael, Elizabeth, Anita and George—and his four grandchildren.

For the rest of us in the Territory, John's legacy will continue to be felt each day through his countless contributions to our communities and the hospitality and tourism institutions he built over four decades. His record achievements are well known and have become icons in the territory, tourism and hospitality industries.

From Crab Coral Island to H on Mitchell Hotel and Apartments, the Heritage, Lizard's Bar and Restaurant, NT Fasteners in Berrimah and now the Voco IHG.

John's family legacy will continue to be felt right across the Northern Territory. Beyond the physical legacies in our environment and the significant transformation of the Territory construction and tourism sectors, countless Territorians will appreciate the personal and the community impacts that John had on so many individuals' lives, careers and organisations.

For the people of Kalymnos, the impact of John's life and legacy will continue to ripple through the generations of that beautiful island. Like Ulysses in Homer's *The Odyssey*, John felt the call for his beloved ancestral home in Greece. Over his lifetime, John demonstrated his deep commitment to his birthplace and his people, returning countless times and investing significantly in the developments and flourishing for his fellow Kalymnians.

John's generous soul and quiet humanitarian spirit meant that the most natural thing for him to do was to give back to his birthplace and to help others. His extensive contributions included funding the Halikos building at the Galantu General Hospital in Kalymnos, which was completed in 2021.

John also, at his own expense, was motivated by the desire to strengthen healthcare and other social services on the island. He also supported countless schools, families experiencing hardships and other vulnerable community groups, often working in partnership with priests and religious orders in Kalymnos.

DRAFT

There are countless stories with John providing hundreds of lambs for Kalymnos families struggling with poverty so they could enjoy Easter Sunday lunches together with their family.

John funded and supported a range of projects providing better healthcare and transportation across the island. It is worth mentioning that Kalymnos holds a special place in the Territory history too. Thousands of Kalymnians, like the Halikos family, left Kalymnos and came after the Second World War in search for a better life. Ninety per cent those people who left to immigrate to Australia came to Darwin. We are grateful that they did and that so many of them strengthened the connection between the different parts of the world.

Kalymnos is a beautiful island of 100 square kilometres; it became Darwin's first sister city in 1982.

Darwin is home to the largest Kalymnian Greek expat community in the world; around 10% of the population is off the Greek descent.

He never forget where he came from or not or what was most important in life, which was his family and the community. John was a man of great character with profound, endless spirit, who left profound legacy in Darwin and the Northern Territory and in his birthplace.

John's legacy of generosity, community spirit and the love for both his homeland and the charity will never be forgotten. He will be remembered as a builder, a businessman, a leader and a devoted, loving family man.

Darwin and the Thai territory, mourned John's passing and remember, remember him into the future. On behalf of this Assembly, we send our deepest condolences to John's family and friends.

May he rest in peace.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I pay my respects to John Halikos, a pillar of the Northern Territory community and a man who remained deeply connected to his beloved Kalymnos throughout his life.

For decades John was one of the Territory's most recognisable business leaders and as mentioned before, his contribution and legacy can quite literally be seen across the Darwin skyline.

To some, John will be remembered as one of the Territory’s great builders and businessmen. To others, he was a wonderful philanthropist who gave so much to so many, both here in the Territory and back in Kalymnos. And to those who knew him personally, he was also a humble and generous man with a cheeky smile, who cared deeply about his family and his community.

John's story represents something very special about the Northern Territory. He came to Darwin from Kalymnos as a young man and made the Territory his home. Starting out as a labourer and roofer, he worked hard, built a life here and as he became successful, gave back to the community that had welcomed him.

The Halikos Group was established in 1987 and grew into a diverse Territory business with interest spanning construction and development, hospitality, manufacturing, property management and real estate.

I learned that at one time, the Halikos Group was one of the Territory's largest employers, providing jobs and opportunities to many Territorians. There was also a strong commitment to employing local people, supporting local businesses and reinvesting back in the Territory.

In fact, while looking back at John's life through articles and social media, I found comments sections filled with past employees and business peers who spoke about John's character, his commitment to excellence and what a great person he was to work with.

You can see the impact of John's legacy not only through his work across Darwin, but through the workforce and the people he supported along the way.

For the Northern Territory Government, businesses associated with John helped deliver many important projects, including the rugby league stadium at Warren Park, Stage 1 of Zuccoli Primary School, Nightcliff Police Station, Holtz Youth Detention Centre and, of course, Charles Darwin University Danala Education and Community Precinct.

His contribution also extended to City of Darwin projects, including the fantastic Casuarina pool upgrade.

DRAFT

All of these projects have contributed to building a better place to raise families and create jobs for local people.

But John's contribution to the Territory was much more than buildings. He was a champion of Darwin's Greek community through the Kalymnian Brotherhood and its events and organisations. He helped build a community that has become such an important part of the social and cultural fabric of Darwin.

I think John's story says something important about why the Territory is such a special place. People have come here from all over the world. They have brought with them their cultures, traditions and stories. They have made the Territory their home, raised their families here, built businesses, created jobs and given back to their communities.

John Halikos was a wonderful example of that Territory story and a wonderful example of what it means to be a proud Territorian.

He made Darwin his home, but he never forgot where he came from. His generosity reached from the Northern Territory all the way back to his beloved Kalymnos, where John funded construction of a major new wing at the island's general hospital and supported schools. He provided assistance to communities on Kalymnos and nearby islands. For someone who built so much in the Territory, it says a great deal about John that he continued to give back to the place where his story began.

I had the honour of attending John's funeral in March this year. The great number of leaders, family, friends and colleagues at Darwin's St Nicholas Orthodox Church was a powerful reflection of the deep respect and affection in which John was held by our community. His legacy will remain in our skyline and across our city. More importantly, it will live on through his family, the community and the many people whose lives he touched along the way.

On behalf of the parliament, the Labor opposition and the people of Nightcliff, I extend my deepest condolences to John's family and friends and everyone in the Territory and Kalymnos who knew and loved him.

May he rest in peace.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, Ioannis (John) Halikos was a man who epitomised the Territory spirit and an icon of the Territory construction industry. To those who knew him best, he was simply John, a man of immense heart, boundless generosity and an unshakeable devotion to his family and community.

While we grieve his passing, we also stand in deep gratitude for the legacy he left behind. Although it is difficult to find the right words for a time like this, today is about remembering John, the person he was, the life he lived and the impact he had on those around him.

Taken way too soon at age 66, John Halikos was a pillar of the Territory's vibrant Greek community. A proud Kalymnian, he made his home in Darwin, raised his family here and built one of the Territory's most successful business groups, the Halikos Group. He was a visionary, and his vision and passion for his adopted home saw him transform construction, tourism, hospitality and development in the Territory. He literally shaped Darwin's skyline.

From the H on Mitchell Hotel to the shores of Crab Claw Island, his work did not just change our geography; it filled our economy and created opportunity for thousands of Territorians. He led by example with a business philosophy underpinned by his commitment to employing local, supporting local and investing and reinvesting in the Territory. John possessed that rare combination of sharp business acumen and, critically, an enduring belief in the potential of the Territory. Where others saw challenges, John saw opportunity and a blueprint for the future. He did not shy away from the hard decisions and was prepared to take a risk and a leap of faith where so many would not.

John was in every sense a builder in not just the business world but also his support of the community. His generosity of spirit was unsurpassed and his true greatness lay in what he gave to his community. There is a risk that in achieving success one loses a sense of self. This was never a risk for John Halikos, who never forgot his roots, always remembered where he came from and never hesitated to pay his success forward.

Not one for seeking recognition or applause, he gave quietly and from the heart. His generosity was limitless, from supporting local families doing it tough to helping local community groups and sporting clubs and funding

DRAFT

critical medical infrastructure and schools back on his beloved island of Kalymnos. John's kindness and compassion knew no borders. He understood that true wealth is measured by the lives that you lift up.

He was fundamentally a man of community, fiercely proud of his Kalymnian heritage. He was also a proud bridge between our two cultures. He carried the spirit, resilience and vibrant heritage of Greece within him, enriching the multicultural fabric of Darwin. His dedication to the Greek community, the Kalymnian Brotherhood and festivals like GleNTti ensured that culture remained alive, celebrated and shared. He showed us that you can be fiercely loyal to your roots while dedicating your life to building the community you call home.

The chasm left by John's passing is deep and our world is lesser for his passing, but his legacy ensures he remains with us. I extend my deepest condolences to those he left behind, his wife, Kay; his children, Tony and Nicki, Michael, Elizabeth and Simon, Anita and George; his grandchildren; his colleagues; everyone at the Halikos Group; the Greek community; and all those who loved him.

Vale John Halikos. Your work is done.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, today we honour a remarkable Territorian and his life. I grew up in the Territory, and I have lived in the city my whole life that John literally helped build. As the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, I am privileged to be able to share in his devotion to the Territory and to building a better future. Whether we realise it or not, generations of Territorians and visitors have stayed in accommodation that he developed. They have worked in businesses he developed; they have celebrated faith, food and family in the organisations and events he supported. The Top End and the Territory would not be what they are without the generosity and vision of John Halikos.

For about 15 years my office sat next to John's office, and I would see him many days, and more often than not if anyone was looking for John, he could be found at the local coffee shop. Funnily enough the coffee shop was located in the building that he built. When I saw him, he used to be meeting tradies, business owners, friends or family, and I had the impression that John always seemed to have time for people. Looking back that says a lot about the man. Success never changed who he was.

I wanted this contribution to be more than a list of John's achievements, which there are many. I wanted to understand the man behind them, his character, so I called one of my mum's closest friends, Marie (inaudible). Marie worked alongside John for 16 years from 1992. She knew him as a boss, a mentor and ultimately a friend. Rather than tell John's story through my own words I asked if I could share some of hers.

Marie said in a message to me: 'I started working for John in early 1992. Coming from a legal background it was certainly different. I was the only one in the office for a year or two. We had a supervisor who did the quotes and organised materials for the roofing crews. John's office was his ute, and once a week I would clean out the ute of paperwork that John had accumulated from remittance advices, invoices, deposit books, contract variations and always parking fines. My bookkeeping skills were really tested when his ute was stolen and found in the bush burnt out.

John would come into the office and tell the supervisor that he had done a quote for a new roof. We used to call them Johnny's drive-by quotes. His words to me when I started with John, that wages had to be paid every fortnight before anything else was paid. He always valued his staff and contractors. John was larger than life and his brain never stopped thinking. He always had a calculator in his hand working out how he could grow the business and writing down numbers. We started manufacturing roofing materials in 1993 or thereabouts. The business started growing bigger and John was buying investment properties, and we won some major contacts, and it was said in the construction industry that there were streets and suburbs in the Top End where Halikos did all the roofing.

John was a great boss and treated his staff as family. He always made certain that at Christmas time we had a party, and I had a busy couple of months arranging the Christmas parties for the staff and organising the kids' parties.

Many of our parties were at Bogart's, Frontier Hotel and Pee Wee's for the staff, partners and contractors. We have wonderful memories of our parties and dinners. We knew the menu by heart at Hanuman, and would order ahead for office lunches. If John did the ordering at many of the local haunts we frequented, he would order the whole menu.

'We also had harbour cruises for staff, contractors and business associates in the Dry Season, and that is whole other story.'

DRAFT

It sounds like there is a story there:

‘I treasure the lifelong friends I have made along the way. John was very generous in the community. We used to work out bush and we would always send out the crew working there with sports equipment for the kids living in the community.

‘John came from humble beginnings as a teenager. Although he could not read or write well, he was totally different with figures. He could add up a spreadsheet in seconds.

‘I always said he ran on raspberry cordial.

‘It was amazing to be part of John’s vision and watch the company grow. I spent the last five years with John looking after his property portfolio, and I loved it. We would provide a fully self-contained property, and shopping to set it up for tenants was great fun.

‘I worked for John for 16 years and there was never a dull moment, but I learned so much on the journey.

‘I was devastated to hear of John’s passing. I was recovering from knee replacement surgery, so I could not fly to Darwin. I will always have a place in my heart for John and his family.’

She also gave me a contribution from another colleague, Angela Mosey, who worked for John for six years. She has also shared her experience:

‘My name is Angela Mosey nee Smith.

‘Firstly, I would like to express my sadness and heartfelt condolences to John’s family. I was deeply shocked to hear of his passing.

‘I worked for Halikos Roofing in 1994 through to the year 2000. Working for John was like being part of an extended family. He was a boss but also a friend and a listening ear in times of need. My time at Halikos Group cemented my passion for working in the building industry. His vision and passion for growth in the NT was second to none.

‘I will always remember John with the same respect and admiration he had for all his employees, past and present.’

I do not think I could have described John any better than that, but while hearing those quotes for the first time, one came to my mind from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.

John lived that every day. Hospitality NT described him as:

… a legend of the Darwin construction scene and a monumental figure in our industry …

… He didn’t just build buildings; he built the foundations of our visitor economy.

That is exactly right. Every hotel he built encouraged people to stay. Every investment he made created local jobs. Every project gave people another reason to visit, stay longer and experience the Territory. Long before tourism became one of the five key pillars of our government strategy to rebuild the economy, John understood something simple: if you believe in the Territory, invest in it.

The iconic Crab Claw Island Resort became part of the Territory story. We have heard today about voco Darwin Suites, which saw an old building transform into proof that the Territory’s best days are ahead, in part because of Territorians just like John Halikos. We were at the opening of those suites where Tony and the Chief Minister spoke.

The Chief Minister sends her deepest condolences to the family. She is saddened to not be here today to contribute because she is in Canberra.

When I contacted Marie and asked whether she would help me to prepare my contribution, she asked about it. I explained that this parliament would be recording tributes to John and that every contribution would

DRAFT

become part of the permanent record of parliamentary history and be bound together and presented to the family as a lasting keepsake. She replied to me straightaway and said, ‘That is lovely, but he would have absolutely hated all that attention’, which sounds about right.

You will forever see John in the buildings of our skyline, our economy, our faith, our communities and our community groups.

To our vibrant Kalymnian and Greek communities, thank you for sharing John with the Northern Territory and for carrying on his legacy.

Thank you so much to his family for letting him do what he did. I know that he loved and valued you so much. We heard that through the contributions today. Tony and Nicki; Kay, Anita and George; Michael; and all of you here today, it is wonderful to see you all.

May John rest in peace. There is a legacy that the family is now carrying on and I hope many more people to come do the same thing.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, you can measure a man by the words people use to describe him after he is gone. From what I have heard, John Halikos was a bloody good bloke; a legend; and a person who was about community, loyalty, generosity and heart. They are the words I hear when I ask about John Halikos. They are the words that I hear when people describe the giant who helped build the Northern Territory.

John Halikos was not just a builder; he was a place-maker. He made Darwin what it is today. We heard the contributions already about the amazing buildings that he built, the places he created, the places he shaped and the places many of us have had the fortunate opportunity to spend time in and to see.

My in-laws are Greek in Melbourne. You know a man has had a big impact when even people in Melbourne, when you first meet him, ask: do you know the Halikos family? Yes, I do. I had the privilege to meet John Halikos with the former Chief Minister Eva Lawler, who is with us in the gallery, and my own interactions, whilst limited, were of kindness, great humour, friendly and that cheeky smile. That is the man we are remembering today—a man who gave so much to the Northern Territory, not just Darwin but to the regions, the bush, the hospitality sector and the building sector.

We are remembering a giant today. As the Attorney-General has spoken about, we are putting this on the record because it is important to acknowledge these contributions.

Another discussion I had when I was talking to people about John Halikos was that someone said, ‘I am surprised that bloke had any money left. He gave it away to everyone trying to support community.’ That is who he was. He believed in making a difference, supporting people and giving everyone a go.

I acknowledge that he was a proud Greek man, but in the eyes of everyone here, first and foremost, he was a true-blue Territorian who called the Territory home by choice. He chose to be here because he loved this place, and whilst he might not be with us today, he is here with us in spirit, and he remains in this place forever. The buildings he built, the lives he changed and the generosity of his big heart will continue to live on every day.

To all the family here today, thank you. You are the legends today because you allowed him to continue the good work to continue to have that big heart and to give up his time to build the Territory and share that love not just with you but with everyone in the Northern Territory.

On behalf of the Labor family, thank you so much for sharing him not only with people in Darwin, but across the Territory. I know that people in the bush know who John is and are thankful for the contributions that John made to Darwin, the bush and the hospitality sector in Alice Springs. I know they felt a great sense of pride in John because that is who he was; he was proud of the Territory. Every corner of the Territory he was proud of, backed and supported and cared about. That is who we get to remember today: a giant in the Territory who will be remembered forever for his contributions, his place-making.

As the Attorney-General and the minister for Tourism spoke about, many of us have stayed in those places. I know that the Members for Namatjira, Braitling and Araluen and I have all stayed in the hotels that John built when we come here for sittings. They are bloody good buildings because that is what Greeks do. They build good buildings, create good places and helped shape the Territory. We are forever thankful of that.

DRAFT

Most importantly, thank you for sharing John with us and for continuing that spirit that John created in the Territory of generosity, loyalty and sense of community. I do not think you can go to a single event in the Territory that has been spoken highly of without the Halikos Group being associated with it. Thank you so much for sharing him with us and for keeping that strong tradition now and well into the future so that his legacy remains one of strength, pride and resilience.

Thank you to everyone in the gallery who made the journey here today to remember a great man and a proud Territorian.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak of John Halikos.

I first pay tribute to the family. Kay is truly a beautiful soul who is always so full of kindness. My deepest condolences from the entire Howe family to Kay throughout this time.

Tony has been a devoted son and brother throughout his life. He was devoted to John, the family business and ensuring it modernised to be the successful business it is today. Tony has been devoted, not just to his father but also to his mother, Kelly, and to Kurt. If I remember anything of Tony, it will be his devotion to family. That is an incredible measure of a man. His incredible wife, Nicki, has stayed by his side and supported him, no matter what.

To Lizzie and Simon, I know Lizzie goes through the joy of growing her family and having her children. Through this incredibly difficult time of losing your father, Alice's and my thoughts are with you. It has been a hard few years with the loss of Kelly as well. Now, both parents are gone, but you have Simon and your growing family.

My thoughts are with, Michael, Anita and George, who have lost their father far too young.

John's grandchildren are here today. I hope, boys, you can look proudly at what your grandfather achieved, knowing that you come from that line. You can be proud of your grandfather, your father, and in this world you can be your own man as well.

I also acknowledge Maria and Lianna who are here today. They are beautiful women with beautiful souls who can support and wrap around Kay throughout this time.

I also honour John's entrepreneurial spirit and his willingness to take risk. After all, that is truly what drives our economy. He was always willing to take a punt, both in business and wherever else he could take a punt. That willingness to take a risk is what our economy relies on. Buildings do not just raise themselves out of the ground and jobs are not just created; it takes men and women who are willing to put it on the line and, at times, risk everything. John Halikos was a man who was willing to risk everything, not just once but multiple times throughout his life. It paid off, but he was willing to take the risk. That is what created those jobs, the Darwin skyline and the many buildings which we now enjoy.

John would agree with me that it is not government's role to create the economy; our job is to create the environment where profit-driven entrepreneurs will do the heavy lifting and the work. John is a perfect example of what one man can achieve when government creates the right settings. In doing so, he created opportunity for thousands of Territorians. The trickle flow of the work he created put food on the tables of thousands of Territorians and allowed many small businesses to grow throughout multiple sectors as well the construction industry—a huge amount of growth there. As we have heard today in hospitality and tourism, there are many people who had a job thanks to the risks he was willing to take.

On a personal note, John was always incredibly kind to my brother and me. I will share a story of when John came down to Melbourne. When we were at boarding school, he took me, Lizzie and my brother out to dinner. We were very impressed because John let us drink as much wine as we wanted. He said, 'Pick anyone you want,' so my brother picked the most expensive bottle, and John told him what a good choice that was. I remember him filling up our glasses and I was pretty amazed at how big that glass of wine was.

That just showed John's generosity. He was an incredibly kind man, an incredibly giving man, a man always willing to take a risk. I also pass on my father's thoughts, who said when John passed what a risk-taker he was. We were sitting on the balcony and he pointed to all the buildings that John created, and he said, 'Only a man willing to really put it on the line can achieve something like that.' He had a huge amount of respect for the businessman that John was and those risks that he took. That is a respect that I share.

DRAFT

To the family—Tony, Kay, Lizzie, Simon and the grandchildren—may you enjoy the memories you have. I look forward to the future of the Halikos family throughout the Territory.

Mr YAN (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to the life of John Halikos, a respected Territorian, a businessman, a developer and a community figure whose contribution to Darwin can quite literally be seen across the city. I was fortunate enough to meet John on a few occasions, but of course, his reputation was known right across the Darwin community.

I pay my respects to John's family and friends who are here today with us in Parliament House.

John passed away in March this year at the age of 66, and his death came as a huge shock to many people across Darwin, across the Territory and within the Greek and Kalymnian communities here and overseas. It spent almost half a century in the Northern Territory, having come to Darwin from his Greek home of Kalymnos, and over those decades he built not only a business but a life, a family and a lasting connection to this place.

His story is, in many ways, a Territory story. He came here as a young man, worked hard, took risks and created opportunities. He started in the building industry as a roofer and went on to become one of the Territory's most prominent developers. Through the Halikos Group and later through the JH Group, John was involved for decades in construction, property development and hospitality.

Darwin today looks different because people like John were prepared to invest in it. That is worth recognising. Developing a city like Darwin has never been easy. We have a relatively small market, construction costs are high, labour and materials can be difficult to source and the economic cycle can turn quickly. We have cyclones, Wet Seasons and all the challenges that come with building and operating a business in northern Australia. But John was one of those people who always continued to back Darwin.

What John saw was opportunity where others sometimes saw risk. He understood that if Darwin was ging to grow, somebody had to be prepared to put their own capital on the line, employ people to actually build things. And that is exactly what he did.

Over many years the businesses associated with John became significant participants in the Territory's construction, development and hospitality sectors. Those businesses created jobs for Territorians, engaged local contractors and suppliers and contributed to major projects throughout Darwin. The construction business that grew from those foundations has described his approach as employing locally, sourcing locally and reinvesting in the Northern Territory economy and community.

John understood this well. His work crossed construction, residential and commercial development and hospitality. In doing that he helped respond to some of the practical challenges that come with the growth of Darwin, the need for accommodation, housing, commercial premises and the infrastructure that supports a growing city.

Even late in life, John was still investing. One of the projects he was closely associated with was the redevelopment of the former Health House at 87 Mitchell Street into what became voco Darwin Suites. The project transformed an existing CBD building into premium accommodation and, ultimately, delivered 88 suites. It was described by his family, after his death, as a particularly personal project for John and one reflecting his continued confidence in Darwin. I was proud to be at the opening with his son Tony and family.

That project is perhaps symbolic of his wider approach. He did not simply talk about the potential of Darwin; he invested in it. He was still looking at what could be done with an existing building, how it could be brought back to productive use and how that investment could contribute to accommodation, tourism, employment and activity in the Darwin CBD. The project generated more than 200 local jobs during its construction, and for a city like Darwin those investments matter. Every major private development has an impact well beyond the walls of the building itself. It creates work through construction, supports hospitality and increases the accommodation available for visitors and business travellers. It brings people to the CBD and gives other investors confidence that there are people prepared to back the future of Darwin, and John was doing that for decades.

Another large part of John's contribution deserves recognition today—that is, his connection to community. Those who have spoken publicly since his passing remembered not only the businessman and developer but also a generous man who supported community organisations and causes in the Territory and back in Kalymnos. Tributes following his passing spoke repeatedly about his philanthropy, his generosity and the

DRAFT

assistance he provided often without seeking attention for it. I agree with what the Member for Port Darwin said, that John would probably be upset that we are all standing here talking about him today.

Like so many migrant families who helped build modern Darwin, John maintained a deep affection for the country and island of his birth while becoming completely committed to the Territory that became his home. There is something very Darwin about that. The Territory has been built by people who came here from every corner of the world. Greek families have played an enormous role in that story, in construction, business, fishing, hospitality, community organisations and civic life. They came here, worked hard, established businesses, raised families and helped build Darwin into the multicultural city it has become today. John Halikos was very much a part of that tradition, but his contributions was also distinctly his own.

He possessed the confidence and entrepreneurial instinct necessary to take an idea and turn it into something tangible. Those buildings, businesses and jobs remain. Families build their lives around the opportunities those businesses create. That is why the contribution of people like John extends well beyond the balance sheet or development approvals. Their contribution becomes part of the fabric of the city itself.

John's passing also reminds us that behind every successful business story is a family. There were decades of long days, business pressures, difficult decisions and risks that inevitably accompany building substantial enterprises, and his family shared that journey with him.

Following his death there was an extraordinary response from the Darwin community, business leaders, government representatives and the Greek community here and internationally. That response says something important about the regard and esteem in which John was held. It was not simply respect for what he had achieved; it was affection for the person.

John was proud of where he came from, his family and enormously proud of the Northern Territory. For those who believe in the future of this place, there is something important in that legacy. The Territory needs people who are prepared to have a go and have a crack. We need people who are prepared to invest, when the economic environment is difficult; willing to employ Territorians; train young people; support local businesses; and have the confidence to look at Darwin and say, 'This place has a future worth investing in'.

John Halikos did that for much of his life. He did not simply witness Darwin's development; he was an active participant. He helped shape it into the place that it is today. There will be buildings in Darwin that future generations will walk place without necessarily knowing the story of the man who helped make them possible.

Those of us here today have an opportunity to place that contribution on the *Parliamentary Record* and to acknowledge a migrant who made Darwin his home, a tradie who became a businessman and then became a major developer. He was a proud Territorian who contributed to the belief in this city and its future and created opportunities for others.

To John's family, friends, colleagues and everyone who worked alongside him over many years, I offer my sincere condolences. I hope they take some comfort from knowing that John leaves behind something very few people achieve. His legacy is visible, not just in the buildings but in the businesses he built, the people he employed and the community he supported. It is a legacy in his family and the development of the city of Darwin and the Territory overall. Most important, it is a legacy of John's family who are carrying on the work of investing in and developing the Territory and our community. Darwin is a different city because John Halikos chose to make it his home, to build his businesses here and to invest in its future. For that contribution, the Territory owes him a great debt of gratitude.

Vale John Halikos. May he rest in peace.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to the life of John Halikos. I extend my deepest condolences to his wife Kay; his children, Tony, Michael, Elizabeth, Anita and George; his grandchildren; extended family; and the many friends and members of the Greek and Kalymnian communities who are here today and continue to grieve his passing. I also acknowledge the presence of Michael Koulianos, President of the Greek Orthodox Community of the Northern Territory, and Alexandra Magriplis, President of the Cyprus Community of the Northern Territory.

John's death was sudden and came as a profound shock. At 66 years of age, he still had so much to give to his family, businesses, the Territory and to the community he loved so deeply. He was, in many ways, one of the greatest stories of being a Territorian.

DRAFT

He arrived in Darwin from Kalymnos as a young man and built an extraordinary life. John's story is not too different from many of what might be known as the third or fourth wave of migrants to arrive in Darwin and the Northern Territory in early 1970s.

We had seen the original early settlers pre-1900, but the first real migration started between 1910 and 1920 with almost 300 Greeks recorded living in Darwin in 1919. Famously, we then saw the pre-Second World War migration, firstly to Western Australia, links to the pearling industry and the shift to Darwin post-war to rebuild our city that had been demolished. It was in these years, from the late 1940s to 1960s, that Darwin saw a huge uplift which also saw many Kalymnians establish their home away from home.

John started life as a roofer in a time where the trade was linked to plumbing. He worked tirelessly and often remotely, including Gove, Groote Eylandt and Tindal, building the Territory. there are many stories of young men with trades and family businesses who joined forces to build a home, a block of units then larger developments.

John Halikos set them apart. He became one of the Territory's more successful builders and developers and through the Halikos Group, and later the JH Group, his work helped shape the physical development of Darwin.

It is important to say that John's legacy cannot be measured simply in buildings, developments, businesses or balance sheets, because John was a builder in the broader sense of the word. We all know he built businesses but he also built opportunities and relationships. He was a big part of building the broader community. Perhaps most importantly, he built a family legacy.

John was immensely proud of where he came from. Kalymnos was never simply the place where he was born; it remained a part of who he was. We all know the deep connection that the Northern Territory has with the island of Kalymnos. It may not be considered one of the well-known destination islands in Greece, but to many thousands of Territorians—now representing multiple generations—it represents their original home. Despite the extraordinary success that John achieved in Australia, he never lost that connection to his homeland. He gave generously to help the people of Kalymnos through his philanthropic work. It is difficult for us to understand how immense that generosity was. I am sure there have been many stories told and there will be many stories told for generations to come.

That same generosity was evident in the Territory. John supported community organisations, sporting organisations, cultural initiatives and people who needed a helping hand. He understood that success carries with it an obligation to give something back, and that is one of the reasons his passing has been felt so deeply across the Northern Territory.

I had the privilege earlier this year of being involved in a Hellenic Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HACCI) event at Parliament House, where the Greek contribution to the Territory was celebrated. It was a particularly emotional evening because HACCI recognised both John and Tony's contribution to the Territory and the Hellenic community. A certificate recognising John was presented to his son Tony, who accepted it on behalf of the Halikos family.

Tony's acceptance speech was one of those moments that stays with you. It was emotional, deeply personal and incredibly dignified. We could see the love and the pride he had for his father, but also the enormous sense of loss that comes with losing someone who has been such a central figure in your life. For me, that moment captured something important about John: for all that he achieved publicly, ultimately, his greatest legacy was not what he built; it was the people he built around him, his family, children and grandchildren, and the values he passed on to them.

We saw another extraordinary expression of that legacy only a few weeks later at the Darwin Greek GleNTi. For a community that knew John so well, it was entirely fitting that his memory should be honoured not simply with speeches, but with music, dance and culture. The Opa School of Hellenic Dance performed an incredible and deeply emotional tribute to John in front of his family, friends and the wider Territory community. John's portrait was displayed as the celebrations paused and the crowd came together to raise a glass in his honour. It was an extraordinarily moving moment.

There was something particularly powerful about seeing John remembered in that setting, because GleNTi represents so much of what John represented himself—family, heritage, community, pride, generosity and the celebration of where we come from while embracing the place we call home. John did exactly that. He was proudly Kalymnian, proudly Greek, proudly Territorian and proudly Australian. He demonstrated that we

DRAFT

do not have to choose between those identities. We can hold on to our heritage while helping to build the future of our adopted home.

John certainly helped build the future of Darwin. There are physical reminders of his contributions across the city, but there are also less visible reminders in the businesses he supported, the people he employed and mentored, the organisations he helped, the courses he contributed to and the countless personal acts of generosity that may never make it into the newspaper or a parliamentary speech. They are often the things that matter most.

John's passing has left a hole in the Halikos family, the Kalymnian community and the broader Greek community, and across the Territory. When a person has lived a life as full and generous as John's, their absence is accompanied by an enormous legacy. That legacy will continue through his children, his grandchildren, the businesses he helped establish, the buildings and developments that form part of our city and the community organisations and courses that benefited from his generosity. I am sure John would have been particularly proud to see his son Tony continuing to carry that legacy forward.

Today we remember John Halikos, not simply as a successful businessman or developer, but as a husband, father, grandfather, friend, community leader, philanthropist and a proud Territorian. We remember a man who never forgot where he came from, who believed in his family, in Darwin and the Northern Territory and that with success came a responsibility to give back.

On behalf of the Northern Territory Government I extend my deepest sympathies to Kay, Tony, Michael, Elizabeth. Anita, George and all of John's family. To the Greek Orthodox and Kalymnian communities, I extend my condolences to you all. John was one of your own, but he was also one of ours. His life became part of the story of the Northern Territory. His legacy will remain part of the Territory for generations to come. May his memory be eternal. *Kalo paradiso*, John. May you rest in peace.

Mrs ZIO (Fanny Bay): Madam Speaker, I also pay my respects to the Halikos family on the passing of John in March this year. I was lucky enough to represent the electorate that the Halikos family live in, in Fannie Bay.

I am proud to say that their house was the first house I doorknocked when I started campaigning. When I knocked on the door it was answered by George and I was told that mum and dad were away at that period of time. I am pretty sure that they were in Kalymnos at that time when I was doorknocking so I did not get the tour of the house that I wanted. I knew it was highly inappropriate to ask George to show me around their amazing house, considering it is the most beautiful house in the Fanny Bay electorate of which they must be proud.

John's story, as we have heard today, is a Territory story. It is a story of migration, hard work, community commitment, giving back to the community, not only to the place he lives, but the place he was born, which he was lucky enough to be able to contribute to as well. While we highly appropriately remember John's achievements, his family will remember something much more personal. John was a father, a husband, an uncle, a brother, a friend, a grandfather and, no matter how successful John was in his business life, I am sure that the relationships are the ones that matter the most when somebody passes.

I am making my speech very short. To John's family: to Kay, his children, his grandchildren, his family, his friends, I extend my deepest condolences. On behalf of the Fanny Bay community in the electorate that he chose to reside in, thank you so much for contributing so much to the Northern Territory community. Vale, John. May he rest in peace.

Madam SPEAKER: I too would like to acknowledge the man and the life of John Halikos. When news of his sudden, unexpected death spread across the Northern Territory to Alice Springs, where I come from, we were all completely devastated. I can only imagine how difficult it is for you—such a well-known, powerful empire, a good man. He had a reputation as being obviously a successful businessman. Personally, I think there is nothing better than hearing stories about how people may keep some money. Good on him.

Good on you all for being the builders, the visionaries that you have been over many decades in Darwin. There is a lot of appreciation in this Chamber and beyond for what you have done and, no doubt, what you will continue to do.

Also, John's love of his community, his generosity and his commitment to his community is profound. It will resonate and be obviously his ongoing legacy forever and a day.

DRAFT

I acknowledge the friends and family who have gathered in the Chamber today. We have a former Chief minister, Eva Lawler, and a former Deputy Chief Minister, Dave Tolner. John obviously cut across all sectors of the community, and that is represented here today.

I give my deepest sympathies and condolences to Kay, his wife, and the children and grandchildren. Our thoughts are with you. It is a difficult time, but you have a lot of love and support within this wonderful community of the Top End. I wish you well.

I would like all members and guests to join me in one minute's silence in honour of Mr John Halikos.

Members stood for one minute's silence as a sign of respect.

Madam SPEAKER: Vale, John Halikos.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: Parliament will now be suspended for 10 minutes. I invite everyone to join us in the Main Hall for some light refreshments.

The Assembly suspended.

NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (NORTHERN TERRITORY) (NATIONAL UNIFORM LEGISLATION) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 75

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I present the Bill titled the National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, Serial 75, and table the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill now be read a first time.

The key purpose of this Bill is to amend the *National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2015* and the National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) (Modification) Regulations 2016 so that they set the version of the National Electricity Rules as at 31 July 2025 to be adopted in the Northern Territory.

The Bill also locks down a number of guidelines and instruments published by the Australian Energy Regulator to the version in place as at 31 July 2025.

As the version of the National Electricity Rules as at 31 July 2025 has a number of rules that are not appropriate for or applicable to the NT, the Bill also disapplies these rules to ensure the framework is fit for purpose for the Northern Territory.

The National Electricity Rules govern the operation of the National Electricity Market, which covers all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory and WA. The National Electricity Rules are maintained and amended as needed by the Australian Energy Market Commission. The National Electricity Rules exist so that market participants understand their rights and responsibilities, and there is appropriate regulation so that consumers do not pay more than necessary for their electricity.

The Northern Territory adopted the National Electricity Rules, through local legislation, to regulate NT electricity industry participants, mainly Power and Water Corporation's electricity network operations, as previous regulation was insufficient and did not encourage efficiencies. Because the Northern Territory's electricity systems are so different from the National Electricity Market, amendments had to be made to the National Electricity Rules to create the NT version.

The Territory's modifications to the National Electricity Rules are extensive, with the National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) (Modification) Regulations 2016 (the NT Regulation) setting out over-riding omissions and replacements for single words, sentences, paragraphs, sections and even chapters of the National Electricity Rules. This makes the NT version of the National Electricity Rules fit-for-purpose for the Territory's relatively small electricity systems.

The National Electricity Rules as adopted in the NT are also maintained by the Australian Energy Market Commission. When changes are made to the National Electricity Rules the Australian Energy Market

DRAFT

Commission typically applies those changes automatically to the NT version, unless it relates to a matter the Territory has modified to have no effect.

This places a significant burden on the Territory to review each change made by the Australian Energy Market Commission to make sure it is relevant to the Territory and, if not, amend the NT Regulation to ensure the NT version of the National Electricity Rules delivers the desired outcome without any inappropriate or unintended consequences.

The frequency and scale of these changes are material; as at 1 August 2025, there were 125 versions of the NT version of the National Electricity Rules and 233 versions of the National Electricity Rules (equivalent to a new version being released every month) and the NT version of the National Electricity Rules has grown from 1053 to 1305 pages over this time. As the National Electricity Rules have developed and been modified, the degree of difference from the NT version has become unmanageable and confusing to industry participants. In mid-2025 the Australian Energy Market Commission recommended steps be taken to better manage the NT version of the National Electricity Rules.

After consideration of options, it has been decided to 'freeze' the NT version of the National Electricity Rules and to disallow further amendment except by the Territory.

This proposal will work towards achieving the goal of rebuilding the economy, by reducing the resourcing required by government and industry participants to manage and comply with the rules governing how the NT electricity systems efficiently operate. This will lead to reduced network and operating costs within Power and Water, which need to be recovered from Territory electricity consumers.

While the proposed freeze of the NT version of the National Electricity Rules, and a later planned cleanup of the NT Regulation and the NT version of the National Electricity Rules, will resolve the immediate issues with the NT version of the National Electricity Rules, a longer-term solution is required that minimises the extensive resourcing commitments required of all stakeholders.

A number of solutions have been identified and will be explored fully during the amendments required under the Northern Territory Electricity Market Reform process with a permanent solution required by 2028 to ensure Power and Water continues to receive effective economic regulation.

In the meantime, a framework has been established that assesses the ongoing rule changes process being undertaken by the Australian Energy Market Commission as well as changes to the guidelines published by the Australian Energy Regulator. The framework will identify critical rule and guidance changes that the Territory would need to apply through an amending regulation.

This Bill will give the Territory and the participants in the NT electricity industry breathing space to assess the regulatory framework and certainty that the regulatory framework remain appropriate to the Territory.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 October 2026.

Motion agreed to.

TRAFFIC LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING AND HOONING) BILL
Serial 76

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Traffic Legislation Amendment (Drink and Drug Driving and Hooning) Bill 2026, Serial 76, and table the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Traffic Act 1987* and the Traffic Regulations 1999 to enhance capability and enforcement practices of the Northern Territory Police Force as they relate to drink and drug-driving and hoon behaviour.

DRAFT

The Towards Zero action plan 2024–2028 aims to reduce road-related trauma, encourage a responsible road culture and motivate Territorians to be part of the solution to improve road safety outcomes. Action item 4 is the review of road safety penalties, including drink and drug driving and repeat offenders. This Bill addresses that recommendation by strengthening some of the drink and drug-driving provisions.

I will first start with outlining the amendments in the Bill relating to drink and drug-driving provisions.

The handheld Alcolizer LE5 has a function where police can conduct a passive breath test. This allow police to use the Alcolizer without a single-use straw and packaging to gain an appreciation if there is alcohol in that person's breath. There is an alcohol hit rate of around 1% to 2%; therefore, 98% to 99% of the time, police will not need to use a straw. It is proposed to make amendments throughout the *Traffic Act* to allow for the use of passive breath tests in addition to current breath-testing mechanisms.

A new combined drink and drug-driving offence with higher penalties is proposed to reflect the increased level of impairment of a driver when under the influence of both alcohol and drugs. The elements for the new offence will be high-range drink-driving and driving with certain drugs in body. A statutory alternative has been included. This means that if only one element can be proven—for example, high-range drink-driving and not driving with certain drug in body—then the person can be found guilty of a high-range drink-driving offence.

For some repeat high-range drink-driving offenders, the current penalties do not deter the offending behaviour. The Bill proposes to strengthen penalties that apply to second or subsequent high-range drink-driving offenders and to new combined drink and drug-driving offenders to impose immediate police impounding of the vehicle for 14 days. Existing mechanisms within the *Traffic Act* will apply to ensure a vehicle can be returned to the rightful owner if it has been stolen. It is also proposed that these vehicle sanctions will apply to second and subsequent offenders of the new combined drink and drug-driving offence.

Currently interstate findings of guilt for similar offending are not counted when assessing whether the offender is a second or subsequent offender. The Bill proposes to include interstate findings of guilt for similar offending in the repeat offender counting provisions across all drink and drug-driving offences.

Amendments to the Evidence Certificate Form for breath analysis results will be made to ensure clarity and avoid confusion between breath analysis measurements and blood analysis measurements currently on the form. To complement the amendment to the form, the timeframe to call a witness relating to the Evidence Certificate will be removed. This will allow the Department of Public Prosecutions the ability to call relevant witnesses at contested hearings without having to provide notice.

I will now outline the proposed amendments as they relate to hoon behaviour. Additional offences will be included as prescribed offences for which the hoon behaviour provisions will apply. The additional offences are dangerous driving as outlined in section 30 of the Traffic Act; driving at dangerous speed as outlined in section 30A of the *Traffic Act*; and dangerous driving in pursuit outlined in section 174FB of the *Criminal Code Act 1983*. The additional offences have been identified by police as prevalent offences in which the ability to seize vehicles is vital as a deterrent measure.

To complement the inclusion of the additional offences, the timeframes in which police can immediately impound a vehicle are being amended. Currently, under the hoon behaviour provisions, police can immediately impound a vehicle for 48 hours. This Bill proposes to strengthen the timeframes and create a two-tier scheme to reflect the seriousness of offences.

Tier 1 will apply to existing hooning offences which are burnouts, damaging road surfaces and speed trials. The immediate police impounding timeframes that will apply are for a first offence, 48 hours; for a second offence, seven days; and for a subsequent offence, 14 days.

Tier 2 will apply to the additional offences which I have outlined previously. The immediate police impounding timeframes that will apply are for a first offence, seven days; for a second offence, 14 days; and for a subsequent offence, 28 days.

Police currently have the ability to dispose of a vehicle which includes sale or destruction when a vehicle has been forfeited from the court or has not been collected after a particular timeframe following impounding from either police or the courts. It is proposed to make an amendment to reduce the timeframes for disposal that currently apply from 28 days to seven days. This amendment will allow NT Police to dispose of vehicles in an efficient manner.

DRAFT

There is also a number of technical amendments to be made. These include repeal of provisions that are no longer relevant due to being covered elsewhere in the *Traffic Act* or review period expiring; and listing relevant offences by section number rather than words for repeat offending counting and ensuring the offences listed for repeat offender counting are categorised based on their penalty.

This Bill will make consequential amendments to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* and the Youth Justice Regulations to include the new combined drink and drug offence in provisions where high-range drink-driving and/or driving with drug in body are already referenced; for example, when the registrar is considering granting a licence with an alcohol ignition lock in the *Motor Vehicles Act*.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 October 2026.

Motion agreed to.

MOTOR VEHICLES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DIGITAL LICENCES) BILL
Serial 74

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill entitled the Motor Vehicles Legislation Amendment (Digital Licences) Bill 2026, Serial 74, and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

This Bill will amend the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* and the Motor Vehicles Regulations 1977 to support the use of digital driver licence documents and other digital documents within the motor vehicle registration and driver licensing framework.

The existing legislation was developed in an environment where licences, registration certificates and other official documents existed primarily in physical form. As a result, many provisions of the Act assume that a document can be physically issued, produced, seized, returned or surrendered. These assumptions are increasingly inconsistent with contemporary service delivery arrangements and community expectations. Territorians increasingly expect to be able to access government services and official credentials through secure digital channels in the same way they access banking, insurance and other government services.

While digital solutions can be developed administratively, legislative reform is necessary to provide certainty regarding the legal status of digital documents and to ensure that existing regulatory, compliance and enforcement arrangements continue to operate effectively when documents are issued and held digitally.

The Bill responds to these issues by establishing a legislative framework that accommodates both physical and digital documents.

A central feature of the Bill is the ability for registration certificates and driver licence documents to be issued in one or more approved forms, including physical and digital forms. Importantly, the reforms do not require Territorians to use digital credentials. Rather, they provide flexibility so that physical and digital documents can operate alongside one another.

The Bill also addresses the practical issues that arise where a licence document exists in digital form. It establishes clear mechanisms for the production, verification, surrender and return of digital driver licence documents, ensuring that obligations that currently apply to physical licences can continue to operate effectively in a digital environment.

The Bill also removes a potential barrier to the use of digital driver licence documents by providing that a person does not commit an offence merely because they use a mobile phone or other electronic device to display a digital licence document when lawfully required to produce it. Together, these measures provide certainty for licence holders, police and other authorised persons regarding the lawful use and verification of digital licence documents.

To support the integrity of the licensing system, the Bill also introduces measures that allow appropriate action to be taken where a digital licence document has been obtained or is being used improperly. These

DRAFT

measures are designed to provide an equivalent outcome to existing powers relating to physical documents, while recognising that digital credentials require different enforcement mechanisms. Importantly, the Bill makes it clear that these powers do not authorise the seizure of a person's mobile phone or other electronic device.

The Bill also provides greater flexibility in relation to approved forms under the Act by recognising that more than one form may be approved for a particular purpose. This will support future improvements in service delivery and allow approved forms to be made available through different channels, including digital channels.

The reforms are expected to deliver a number of benefits. They will improve accessibility and convenience for Territorians, support more efficient service delivery, reduce reliance on paper-based processes and provide greater flexibility in how government interacts with individuals and businesses. The reforms will also support secure digital verification processes and provide greater certainty regarding the legal status and use of digital credentials.

More broadly, the Bill will establish a technology-neutral framework that supports ongoing digital transformation while preserving the existing licensing and registration requirements that underpin the Territory's regulatory system.

I commend the Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

MARINE FACILITIES (ACCESS AND PRICING) BILL
Serial 78

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Marine Facilities (Access and Pricing) Bill 2026, Serial 78, and table the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill now be read a first time.

This Bill will introduce a framework for the regulation of access and pricing for the use of designated marine facilities in the Northern Territory, starting with the Darwin ship lift facility. The Darwin ship lift facility is strategically located within the recently declared Northern Marine Complex at East Arm. The Northern Marine Complex is the Territory's largest public infrastructure investment, developing a purpose-built maritime precinct, expanding the service and maintenance sector and creating job opportunities to enhance the Territory's role in Australia's maritime industry.

This legislation will support the establishment of a long-term common user model underpinned by accountability and transparency for all users and service providers.

The Bill does this by requiring the facility operator to:

- provide the regulated services fairly and transparently
- price the regulated services in compliance with the regulations
- report on activities, noncompliance, access disputes, and any breaches of the ring-fencing requirements within the Bill.

The Bill specifically provides that the operator must not engage in conduct that:

- intentionally or effectively prevents or hinders service users from accessing regulated services at their facility
- unfairly discriminates between service users in a manner that materially disadvantages their ability to compete with others—noting that differential treatment can occur by agreement and in support of differing access requirements.

The operation of the Bill is limited to the provision of 'regulated services' which are defined as:

- wet and dry berthing of vessels

DRAFT

- the lifting of vessels
- providing access to infrastructure and areas within a designated facility
- any other service prescribed by regulation.

The Bill also contains measures to ensure there is no misuse of the management of the facility and subsequent access to information. These measures include ringfencing provisions to manage the confidential information of the facility and its users.

It is proposed that the legislation is overseen by the independent Utilities Commission of the Northern Territory. The commission currently regulates water and sewerage, aspects of the electricity supply industry and the port access and pricing regime, on which this legislation is based. The commission will have the ability to submit requests for information, undertake inspections of records or require the operator to engage an independent auditor to assess compliance with this legislation. The commission will report annually to the minister, and a copy of that report will be tabled in this Legislative Assembly.

The commission will be responsible for making pricing determinations for the regulated services provided at each designated marine facility. The regulations, which will follow on the commencement of this Bill, will include the forms of pricing determination available to the commission and will include models such as price monitoring, fixed pricing, maximum pricing and/or revenue and other forms of economic regulation used by regulatory bodies.

In making these determinations the commission will have regard to the pricing principles set out in the Bill, such as the operator generating sufficient revenue to meet the efficient costs of providing access to the facility, permitting price structures which allow multipart pricing and price discrimination to facilitate the efficient operation of the facility and incentives to reduce costs or otherwise improve productivity.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SAFE AIR) BILL
Serial 73

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a bill titled Environmental Legislation Amendment (Safe Air) Bill 2026, Serial 73, and table the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

The key purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Environment Protection Act 2019* to lay the legislative foundation for industry funded environmental monitoring schemes. The Bill also amends the *Trans-Territory Pipeline and Blacktip Gas Projects (Special Provisions) Act 2005,* the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* and the Waste Management and Pollution Control (Administration) Regulations 1998 to ensure that licence fees are applied consistently across all hydrocarbon operators, and to provide for an increase to annual licensing fees for the hydrocarbon industry.

The Northern Territory's extraordinary natural environment is central to the lifestyle enjoyed by Territorians. This enabling framework is intended to support better environmental data in areas where monitoring is required, including the Darwin airshed.

Environmental monitoring is key to be able to measure and detect impacts of industry on the environment. Having reliable data allows the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority to make informed decisions and act when needed. Environmental monitoring gives the community confidence that development is being conducted safely and responsibly.

Environmental monitoring gives the community confidence that development is being conducted safely and responsibly. Environmental monitoring involve special equipment and expertise, which comes with significant costs. We want to make sure that the industries and sectors impacting the environment are making an ongoing contribution towards the cost of environmental monitoring.

The Bill provides for the legislative power in the *Environment Protection Act 2019* for regulations to establish one or more environmental monitoring schemes. The type of monitoring is not limited. It could be a scheme

DRAFT

for monitoring any aspect of the environment such as air, water, soil or pollutants. The Bill allows for the regulations to provide for the scope of the scheme and the establishment, operation and administration of the scheme. The Bill allows for the regulations to specify who needs to contribute to the scheme and how those contributions will be calculated.

The government has a clear vision of how this legislative power will soon be used. Regulations are currently being developed to provide for an industry-funded, government-operated air quality monitoring scheme. This scheme is being devised in consultation with industry experts, health authorities and community stakeholders. Cost recovery from industry is intended to ensure those whose activities contribute to the need for monitoring make an appropriate contribution to its cost, while ensuring that the monitoring network will remain independent, government-managed and publicly accountable. Subject to those regulations being made, the proposed scheme will support independent, reliable and publicly accountable air quality data for the environmental regulator and the Darwin and Palmerston communities.

There are two further issues related to fees for hydrocarbon operators that are fixed by the Bill. Firstly, fees are applied to the Blacktip Yelcherr Gas Plant near Wadeye operated by Eni Australia BV. This corrects a current anomaly where this project sits outside of the usual fee requirements. The amendment applies a consistent approach across all operators creating a level playing field.

Secondly, the Bill addresses a longstanding concern that the hydrocarbon industry's annual licensing fees for processing facilities have not kept pace with the cost of regulation. The Bill amends the annual fee so it is expressed in revenue units for each tonne of hydrocarbons likely to be handled in the plant in a 12-month period. Revenue units are indexed against inflation, so the fee will remain appropriate. This amendment will ensure that hydrocarbon processing facilities contribute a fair and realistic amount to the cost of regulating their operations.

This Bill corrects these fee matters and sets the foundation for the first environmental monitoring regime of its kind in the Territory. It provides the legislative basis for contemporary, industry-funded monitoring arrangements that will improve data, promote transparency and strengthen public confidence in the environmental regulation of Territory industries.

Industrial activity is vital to economic growth and jobs, but that growth must go hand-in-hand with upholding environmental standards and public confidence and that is what this Bill delivers.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 October 2026.

Motion agreed to.

LANDS AND PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RED TAPE REDUCTION) BILL
Serial 77

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a bill titled Lands and Planning Legislation Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2026, Serial 77, and table the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Lands, Planning and Building Legislation to deliver on government's commitment under the Rebuilding the Economy Strategy, to apply a risk-based regulatory approach, improve certainty and decision-making, reduce approval timeframes and modernise legislation through changes to the: *Building Act 1993* and Building Regulations 1993; *Planning Act 1999; and Valuation of Land Act 1963* and Valuation of Land Regulations 1981.

This Bill aims to reduce regulatory burden by reducing red tape to support local economic growth. It removes lengthy and outdated processes and increases accessibility and transparency in regulatory processes for Territorians.

DRAFT

The reforms in this Bill focus on initiatives that achieve administrative efficiencies through a range of measures, including:

- expanding and clarifying the current occupancy certification pathways for buildings as well as the timing of the NT Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS) inspections as part of the *Building Act* and Building Regulations

- enabling more efficiency in the dealings of two independent statutory bodies under the *Planning Act* by enabling greater use of delegations, longer appointment periods and providing more flexibility about how decisions are made

- removing unnecessary consultation for low-risk place naming whilst effectively managing risks with established guidelines for the *Place Names Act*

- modernising legislation to allow the use of email as a delivery method option to serve notices of valuation under the *Valuation of Land Act*.

The initiatives captured in this Bill are wide-ranging and impact regulatory processes for a variety of projects and actions, ranging from large commercial developments to small home renovation projects. The aim remains the same: simplified and fit-for-purpose regulatory frameworks that support economic growth and reduce red tape.

For example, introducing the ability for building certifiers to request a report from the NTFRS before occupancy certification is granted will allow for any fire safety issues to be identified and addressed before a building is occupied. It is faster and more cost-effective to resolve any issues before a building is occupied, compared to rectification work after occupancy.

Another example, by proposing more flexibility with establishing a quorum for Development Consent Authority (DCA) meetings to cover periods of vacancy and unavailability, ensures DCA decision-making processes remain uninterrupted and efficient. This is particularly important in regional DCA division areas such as Tennant Creek where filling vacancies can be challenging.

The place naming process has been viewed as complex, time consuming and requiring consultation, which is not always necessary. The proposed amendments to the *Place Names Act* provide for low-risk place names to be assessed differently to complex place names. This change will remove unnecessary consultation and reduce processing times.

Territorians are going to be better off as the proposed Bill will create efficiencies and strengthen industry confidence with lands and planning development processes and regulatory frameworks. The Bill supports growth and certainty in decision-making and promotes contemporary land use planning and building systems that improve pathways for industry and consumers.

Changes to the *Building Act* and Building Regulations include changes to address recommendations from the Ombudsman NT's investigation report 'Can we fix it? Building certification in the NT'. These changes include expanding occupancy certification pathways for all building works completed after 1 May 2016, including temporary structures used for public gatherings. The expanded certification pathways will give building owners options of compliance and consumers assurance the building they occupy meets national structural and fire safety requirements.

For events like the Darwin Festival and BASSINTHEGRASS, the changes will no longer require the highest level of certification and will allow temporary structures to be certified for temporary occupancy by a building certifier to confirm that the structure is safe for public use.

The Ombudsman's report also recommended including consideration of the timing of NTFRS inspections in the certification process. The amendments in the Bill provide for building certifiers to be able to request the NTFRS report prior to occupancy certification so that they can be sure that the constructed works meet fire safety requirements.

The amendments in the Bill provide a robust process that strengthens transparency and accountability and clarify requirements.

DRAFT

Amendments to update the fees for services under building legislation ensure charges align with service delivery costs, support efficient use of government resources and maintain fiscal sustainability in accordance with the NTG Pricing Framework.

An example of this is the updated fee for accessing building records. This service is important for anyone buying, selling or undertaking renovations on a home. Fees for accessing building records have remained unchanged since they were introduced in 1993, while the cost of retrieving and providing access to these physical records has continued to increase over time. The change is necessary to cover the increased costs and continuation of the Building Records Scanning Project to make building records more accessible.

These legislative changes to the Building Act and Building Regulations aim to reduce regulatory touchpoints, enable greater discretion, simplify requirements while ensuring building integrity and safety.

This Bill amends the *Place Names Act* by separating low-risk place naming and complex place naming submissions. This change will reduce the time frame to process submissions by reducing consultation required for low-risk submissions. Low-risk place names include roads and neighbourhood parks, which are predominantly named in new developments as they are constructed. Complex place names include suburbs and public infrastructure and will continue to require the views of interested persons to be sought, and a recommendation prepared by the Place Names Committee.

Other minor amendments include transferring the responsibility for the place names register and notification of naming from the committee to the Surveyor-General. The Surveyor-General is a member of the committee and oversees the Place Names Unit within the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. The Place Names Unit already undertakes these administrative tasks on behalf of the committee.

These legislative amendments effectively manage risks and improve operational efficiencies.

The amendments to the *Planning Act* provide new statutory delegation powers for the Northern Territory Planning Commission to enable the Planning Commission's powers and functions to be delegated to the chairperson or other members. The amendment replicates similar delegation powers already established under the *Planning Act* for the DCA and similar statutory bodies that operate under other Northern Territory legislation. This change will support faster and more efficient processing of some planning applications such as amendments to the NT Planning Scheme, commonly known as rezoning applications.

The amendments also more closely align the Planning Commission and DCA statutory hearing and meeting processes for planning proposals. Clarifying the circumstances when hearings and meetings should be held will help avoid unnecessary meetings and hearings about straightforward planning proposals. This supports a more simplified and certain planning system so all stakeholders, including community members lodging submissions, developers and landowners lodging planning applications or local government councils providing comment on proposals, know what to expect when participating in the process.

The *Valuation of Land Act* is over 60 years old. While amendments have been made over the years, some sections are now quite outdated. This Bill will modernise this legislation to include the ability to serve notices of valuation electronically and clarify legislative processes. We are changing how penalties are referenced from dollars to penalty units, as this aligns with other NT legislation. In addition, we are amending the cost to obtain a certified copy of a valuation from dollars to a revenue unit, enabling the Valuation of Land Regulations to be repealed, improving operational efficiencies.

As I have outlined, the amendments to various building, planning, place naming and valuation of land legislation introduce practical and sensible measures to streamline administrative processes. This Bill will enable the delivery of robust regulatory functions with greater time and cost efficiencies for the public, business and regulatory agencies. These efficiencies and red-tape reduction initiatives support this government's commitment to rebuild the economy.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Land, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 October 2026.

Motion agreed to.

DRAFT

Madam SPEAKER: We are approaching midday, but given that we had a break for 10 minutes, you can continue with the next Order of the Day.

ASSOCIATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 72

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, Serial 72, and table the explanatory statement.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

The purpose of the Bill is to make amendments to the *Associations Act 2003* to ensure the legislative framework governing incorporated associations remains robust, contemporary and proportionate to the sector's risks and responsibilities.

The current legislative framework was developed to provide a simple, low-cost incorporation option for small, community-based organisations. However, the operating environment for associations has changed since the Act commenced over 20 years ago. The sector has since grown in scale and complexity.

The Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations—the regulator—has identified governance failures and internal disputes as growing and common areas of concern. Such issues can expose members, employees, funding bodies and the broader community to financial, operational and reputational risks. The Bill seeks to ensure that the legislative framework governing incorporated associations remains effective, contemporary and proportionate to the risks and responsibilities of the sector, without adding any unnecessary red tape.

The Bill introduces several key amendments. Firstly, the Bill removes the audit requirement for Tier 1 associations. These are smaller, lower-risk organisations with annual gross receipts under $150,000 or gross assets under $300,000. Consistent with government priorities, this will reduce red tape and ease the administrative burden on these associations, while maintaining transparency through existing financial reporting and lodgement requirements.

Upholding the intent of the Act, being that incorporation is intended for small, community-based organisations, is key. The Bill introduces a regulatory function whereby the director may assess if the applicant is within the scope and purpose of the Act. Where the director deems this is not the case, that is, where the applicant is a large or complex entity more suited to alternative incorporation arrangements, the Bill introduces a regulatory function that requires the director to refuse to issue a certificate of incorporation under the Act.

The Bill also provides the Regulator with practical and proportionate tools to address governance and compliance issues early, before they escalate. Measures such as special audits, dispute intervention powers and an infringement notice regime have been introduced to promote the resolution of compliance issues quickly and efficiently.

The Bill also clarifies property vesting provisions where an incorporated association has been dissolved, as this area has not been clear under current provisions. The Bill amends the Act to ensure that at the dissolution of an incorporated association, leases under the *Special Purposes Leases Act 1953* and the *Crown Lands Act 1992*, vest with the public body that granted them, rather than vest with the CEO of the department administering the Act.

Lastly, the Bill also provides authority under the Act to publish information relating to an incorporated association for the purpose of public interest. This would assist new committee members, funding bodies as well as the public, to know an association's basic information and compliance status in their engagement with the association.

Overall, the reforms align with government priorities. They are making it easier for associations to do business by strengthening and modernising the regulatory framework for incorporated associations.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

The Assembly suspended.

DRAFT

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh NT – Rakhi Ceremony

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that members from Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh NT will perform a Rakhi in the Main Hall for any members wishing to participate in the ceremony from 3.30 pm to 4 pm this afternoon. That sounds quite nice.

QUESTION TIME

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I advise the Assembly that during Question Time today the Deputy Chief Minister will take questions on the Chief Minister's portfolios.

Member for Mulka – Resignation

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of the CHIEF MINISTER

Yingiya Guyula has represented the people of East Arnhem in this parliament for a decade and earned enormous respect from Territorians and Australians as a Yolngu leader. In announcing his resignation, Mr Guyula said your government has significantly failed to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal Territorians and went on to say in his statement that your CLP government is committing a slow genocide. Do you accept Mr Guyula's damning assessment of your CLP government's slow genocide? If you do not, what does he have wrong?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Mulka has done a great job here for many years. I am sad to see him go because he brings a different perspective into parliament. When we were in opposition we sat next to him. He is a person of honesty and integrity. We are sad to see him go.

I think the question was whether he was wrong. The Member for Mulka was wrong because he should have blamed Labor for slow genocide. Labor had 20 years to make the Territory a better place. Can point out and name some community which become better in the last 20 years? There are come, but there are some that have become worse.

Maybe he was a bit confused talking about the CLP when he should be talking about Labor and its track record in the Northern Territory. For 20 years it had the cheque book and failed Territorians; not only people in remote communities but across the Territory, no matter where they were—Palmerston or the northern suburbs?

Do you know why? Because crime was out of control. Labor let crime get to such a level that people were leaving the Territory in droves. It was an embarrassment. Crime was going through the roof, businesses were failing and people were leaving because Labor dropped the ball and failed Territorians. The slow genocide, if anything, was caused by Labor over the last 20 years.

We have been in office for two years and we have started to turn the tide. People are coming back to the Northern Territory, crime stats are going down and the Territory is becoming a safer place …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. It was clearly a statement from Yingiya that the CLP government is committing a slow genocide. Exactly what is it that he has wrong?

Mr MALEY: What he got wrong …

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, please pause. The accusation of a slow genocide is an incredibly serious accusation to make. The opposition has asked the question using that phrase. The government has accepted that question, but as a Chamber we need to consider whether or not that is an acceptable accusation to be debated in this Chamber.

'A slow genocide' is an incredibly loaded and serious term with major implication and meaning for a lot of people so can I just warn you all, when you use this—and if you decide to respond to a question containing this—that the implications are vast and profound.

DRAFT

Mr MALEY: I will go back to what I was saying is what the CLP has done in the last two years to make the Territory a better place. I will begin with crime. We know that crime is better, and I can go through the stats. House break-ins down by 24%— and remember, in the land of opportunity in the Barkly, under the previous Labor government some of these figures were up 300%.

What we have done, is we have brought things down. Domestic violence is on the way down. It is moving down, it is not as quickly as everyone would like and I get that. We have been in office for two years and we are turning the tide in relation to crime. We resourced the courts. We have over 200 police recruits in the last year, making the police force stronger and giving them the opportunity to keep the Territory safe and to keep the community safe.

We were elected to keep the community safe, rebuild the economy, restore our lifestyle and we are laser focused on keeping the community safe and rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

Beetaloo Gas

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

For eight years under Labor, Territorians were told our resources industry was a problem to be managed. Next week, gas from the Beetaloo flows into the Territory market for the first time in our history and the resources industry arrives in Darwin in record numbers. I am very proud to be part of a CLP government that is responsible for flicking the switch on Territory gas power in Territory homes and businesses.

Territory gas powers Fannie Bay homes and businesses. Can the minister please update the House on the week ahead for the Territory resources sector and what this CLP government has done to give industry the confidence to invest in the Territory again?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Fannie Bay and she knows how important it is to have gas and cheap energy in the Northern Territory. As of next week, when you turn the lights on or when you turn your air conditioner on, it is going to be powered by Beetaloo gas.

Those on the other side tried to stop this. They put the gas industry at least 10 years behind because they flip-flopped around in relation to that. The CLP has been strong. We support the resources and energy sectors because we know how important it is to have cheap energy in the Northern Territory so that people can have air conditioning, charge their electric vehicle, go home and put the kettle on and can watch the footy. That is the result of the Beetaloo gas, which we have delivered in two years. We have pulled off the handbrake that we know the Labor government put on. They do not know what they are doing.

We know the Member for Nightcliff was flip-flopping around, and he is for things and then against things. They do not know what is going on over there. On this side of the Chamber we are focused on the resource industry. In fact, there are 16 developing projects worth $6.2bn online. We have the four nation building projects, including Nolans, a $1.6bn project. The Territory Energy Link, will provide a corridor for energy, data or water up from the Beetaloo into Darwin. The Beetaloo, with gas coming to the Northern Territory.

We have the Marine Complex, we have managed to turn a complete disaster that the previous Labor government did in relation to the ship lift—where there was no business plan, no idea and leaving Territorians on the hook. We have a plan to have the facility up and running to make it a complex and to grow jobs and the economy in the Northern Territory.

We know how important it is to grow our population. We are now leading the nation on population growth because we are sticking to the nitty gritty. We are doing what we said we would do, which is crime, economy, lifestyle. Everything we do is based on those three things.

Those are the three things that the previous Labor government failed to do. It had chaos over there because it is clear Labor cannot be trusted to manage the Northern Territory. It had the cheque book for 20 years, and we went backwards so far it is not funny. That is one of the reasons I am here, because Labor stuffed the Territory. I was born here; the Territory is worth fighting for. I am proud to be a local boy, and I will do what I can to make sure the Territory is a place you can live, work and invest.

Member for Mulka – Resignation

DRAFT

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The Deputy Chief Minister has chosen to bury his head in the sand and deny your government has let down Aboriginal Territorians despite Yingiya Guyula, a respected Yolngu leader who has served in this parliament for a decade, saying that your government refuses to listen and work in partnership with Aboriginal people. Do you agree with the Deputy Chief Minister that there is nothing wrong with your government's approach?

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 109; asking the minister for an opinion. These are not real questions.

Mr Young: He has not finished.

Mr Paech: You will get a chance in Cabinet one day. Just wait.

Madam SPEAKER: Refrain from asking an opinion. Member for Gwoja, we do not need your commentary.

Mr BROWN: Do you agree with the Deputy Chief Minister that there is nothing wrong with your government's approach? Will you acknowledge Mr Guyula's warning and tell Aboriginal Territorians that the Deputy Chief Minister is wrong and that the government needs to change?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Territory is going ahead under the CLP government. Under 19 years of a failed Labor government, there was disaster after disaster after disaster when it comes to Aboriginal communities right across the Northern Territory.

Let us go back to 2005. How many times have we been talking about the Aboriginal Justice Agreement in this place? How long have we been talking about it? Back in 2005, the Labor government scrapped the law and justice strategy in the Northern Territory.

Not only has the Member for Mulka been talking about the Aboriginal law and justice strategy, but I have also been talking about it. The CLP has been talking about it. All we have seen is an absolute failure from the Labor government when it comes to working with Aboriginal communities right across the Northern Territory. That is 73 communities. Labor scrapped the Aboriginal law and justice strategy in 2005.

Let us not stop there because three years later, in 2008, guess what it did next? It got rid of every law and justice strategy community in 2005. It scrapped the funding and the law and justice strategy and three years later it took away every Aboriginal community-controlled council in the Northern Territory. It took away every community government council in 2008. It said to Aboriginal people, 'You cannot look after your own community. We will do it for you. We will form 17 bigger councils. We will look after all these places.'

We have introduced an Aboriginal affairs strategy, something that the Labor government failed to do. Under that Aboriginal affairs strategy, we are focused on a number of key areas, particularly regarding empowering communities. We are focused on empowering communities, returning local decision-making to communities in the Northern Territory which is what Labor took away on 1 July 2008.

It was not the structures that it took away. It scrapped every leadership structure in those communities and those established leaders in the communities. On 1 July, Labor said, 'There is no more role for you. We do not want to see Aboriginal leadership in those communities'. That is what Labor did.

Mr Paech: You brought nothing back.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, can you please cease your interjections? The minister was using a big loud voice, but if he was not, we would only hear you.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Part of the question was, will you acknowledge that Mr Guyula's warning and tell Aboriginal Territorians that the Deputy Chief Minister is wrong and that your government needs to change?

Mr EDGINGTON: Member for Daly, I am telling you and every member on that side that we are getting on with the job. We are working with Aboriginal communities. We are bringing back real local decision-making, policies to empower communities, all of those things that the Labor government took away. We are getting on with the job, and we will continue to do it.

DRAFT

Madam SPEAKER: Deep breath.

Northern Territory Economy

Dr RAHMAN to TREASURER

When the CLP was elected two years ago the Territory's economy was showing effects of eight long years of Labor's economic and financial mismanagement. Labor inherited a net debt of about $1.8bn. By its final full financial year that had risen to around $9bn, with Labor's own pre-election figures suggesting it was heading towards $10.8bn. Despite that enormous borrowing spree, population and employment growth remained very weak, and Territorians were entitled to ask what they actually got for all that debt.

Could you update the House on what the latest economic data tells us about the Territory economy, two years after the change of government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fong Lim has a real interest in economics. I am happy to update the Chamber on this topic.

The latest data shows that in two short years the economic direction of the Territory has certainly changed. Under Labor, net debt rose by 22% per annum and was projected to continue to rise by up to 20% per annum. In that eight years it went almost five times higher. Labor did not deliver five times the number of jobs, population or economic opportunities to Territorians.

There are now nearly 5,000 more Territorians in a job today than there were at the last election. That is real change we are delivering in the Territory. We recently saw employment numbers hit their highest levels in the Territory. That means that in less than two years we have added approximately 60% as many people employed as Labor added during its entire eight years in office.

Population figures tell the same story. Between 2016 and 2024 the Territory added only approximately 10,200 new residents. Between June 2024 and December 2025, we have added 12,400. The Member for Fong Lim is also a demographer and knows that to grow an economy we must grow our population, and this is more evident than ever before. In roughly 18 months, under the CLP, the Territory added more people than Labor did across its entire eight years.

The latest ABS figures confirm that momentum:

- Job vacancies are up 32.8% over the year, the strongest growth of any jurisdiction in the country.
- Housing approvals grew at the fastest rate in the nation over the last 12 months.
- Real household spending recorded the strongest quarterly growth in Australia.
- Owner-occupier housing lending recorded the strongest annual growth nationally.
- Full-time adult ordinary earnings are about 7.5% higher than two years ago.
- We had the second strongest growth in business numbers across Australia over the past 12 months.

Our economy has another advantage, one that the CLP is not afraid to capitalise on. While parts of the national economy are slowing, the Territory has the resources the world needs. We have gas, gold and critical minerals, and we are working with those proponents to deliver those, not just for Australia, but for the nation. We have everything in the Territory that Australia needs, but we also have plenty of things that the world needs. We will continue to invest in the Territory and drive our economy forward.

Local Government Reform

Mr SMELT to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Before the election, the CLP promised to empower bush communities through local government reform. You have repeatedly said your government would work community by community to deliver that commitment.

DRAFT

After two years, what actual work has your government undertaken with communities in the East Arnhem Regional Council area?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our policy is all about empowering the bush because there has been a long history of failures by the Labor government in the Northern Territory. If we go back to 2005, we had established law and justice strategy in the Northern Territory Member for Nightcliff—you probably were not around back then, having come up from Victoria, and trying to apply your thoughts to the Northern Territory. As I have said before, your team, Territory Labor, scrapped the law and justice strategy in 2005.

To compound the problem, in 2008 the Territory Labor government scrapped every small council across the Northern Territory and took the leadership away from every community. Labor did that because it did not want leadership in communities telling the government how the system worked with them; Labor wanted to control the communities. Labor took away every bit of Aboriginal leadership in those communities. That is what we hear every day of the week. I have heard it for the last 15 years. Labor scrapped every Aboriginal community council in the Northern Territory. Belyuen is probably an exception to that.

Each community had an elected mayor or president and elected councillors making decisions about funding, roads, jobs, housing, health and community safety …

Mr SMELT: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The minister is stuck in the past with a history lesson. This was specifically about what he is doing now for the East Arnhem Regional Council area.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have given your context.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am happy to give that context because the Member for Nightcliff obviously has no context for what he is talking about. This is the problem we see: one member of the Labor Party thinks that he knows the history of the Northern Territory, but he does not. Territory Labor took away every leadership structure.

Our policy is empowering the bush. We have been focusing across the Northern Territory on engaging with the community to talk about empowering the bush. We are consulting and engaging with Aboriginal people, and they are reminding us what Territory Labor did in 2008. That is the work that we are doing and are focused on, and we will continue to consult and engage with Aboriginal people to focus on empowering the bush.

Business Support

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

A strong growing economy creates opportunity for the Northern Territory. Over the last two years we worked tirelessly to lay the foundation to rebuild our economy and make the Territory the most competitive place to live, work, visit and invest. Can you update the Assembly on the practical steps this government is taking to further support Territory businesses, cut approval times and ensure our economic growth continues to deliver long-term benefits and jobs for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as a previous small business owner before he took the leap into politics the Member for Casuarina well understands how important it is for a government to back businesses by making sure that it is easy to do business and that we encourage businesses to expand and we encourage investment. T

hat is exactly what we have been doing in the past two years, and the result is phenomenal. Employment has risen by 6,057 positions. Our population is growing. Household spending is up to $10.4bn. We have robust international exports worth $14bn. We have worked to do everything possible to grow the economy and make it possible for businesses to be the best they can be so that people in the rest of the country see that if they want to succeed, progress and do well in business, this is where they need to come.

We made changes to our procurement policy by raising the tier 1 purchasing cap from $15,000 to $50,000, making it easier for departments to do business locally. We doubled the tier 2 cap from $100,000 to $200,000. We introduced a dedicated Territory Procurement Champion who has been working overtime to unlock the potential for our Territory businesses, to get rid of red tape when people stumble across it and make sure

DRAFT

that our government has someone independent who can keep us informed of the best processes we can put in place for our businesses.

By introducing online forms we have made it easier to fill out those pesky forms that people find so frustrating, with more than 5,500 applications lodged online since that was introduced. Territory Business Advisor teams have recorded more than 4,700 business engagements and encouraged and supported small businesses to establish and then expand. We launched WorkerConnect, and have 21,535 people registered as interested in coming to live and work in the Northern Territory. Our DAMA III is the best in the country, with 325 occupations listed.

We are harnessing the opportunities of migration through our HOME (Harnessing Opportunities in Migration Engagement) project, supporting new arrivals to the Northern Territory so that they have a smooth pathway into creating their forever home in the Northern Territory.

There is no question that the Territory is the best place to do business, live, work, invest and have a good time.

Law and Justice Groups – Mulka Electorate

Mr PAECH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Your government has locked up more Aboriginal Territorians than ever before. Your government removed important protections in the sacred sites legislation. You watered down protections for Aboriginal people in the anti-discrimination laws. You have not delivered a single new law and justice group in the Northern Territory and you have cut funding to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

How many remote Aboriginal communities in the electorate of Mulka have you visited? How many law and justice groups in Mulka have you sat down and spoken with in the bush?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I can see where the theme is going today.

The area of Nhulunbuy and Gove is amazing. It is wonderful. I see many tourism opportunities there that were whittled away under Labor during 20 years of disarray. I have been there, so to accuse me of not visiting those communities is embarrassing. It is a fantastic place, surrounded by communities, and there are amazing people.

Our assistant minister Oly Carlson has been going to Nhulunbuy. It feels like the Member for Wanguri is there a lot. She is doing an amazing job. She is getting out there and understanding the concerns about the transition and really moving that town into a position where people can make important decisions for the future of it.

Regarding the question on locking people up, I make no apology for the fact that if you are a criminal, you will be dealt with. Yes, you may end up in jail, and that is exactly what should happen because there should be consequences if you commit serious crimes. What we will not do …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. It was a direct question: how many remote communities, not towns, in Mulka has the Attorney-General visited? How many law and justice groups in that electorate has the Attorney-General visited? It sounds like she has more …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you have made your point.

Attorney General, you have the call and plenty of time.

Ms BOOTHBY: It is embarrassing. I have been to Yirrkala as well. It is an amazing community, and the art centre is next level.

To pretend as though you are the only person who knows what goes on around the Territory is absolutely disgraceful. Our whole team represents the whole of the Northern Territory. We are out and about in our communities and your communities every single day of the week. We were elected as a majority government to do three things—reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle for all Territorians.

DRAFT

We are proud of what we have done in the last two years to ensure we kept our promises to all Territorians about those three important things. We are seeing the results coming through.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Again, I want to know how many remote communities the Attorney-General has been to and how many law and justice groups she has met with in their communities in Mulka?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you have now asked the question three times. Allow the Attorney-General to answer it.

Mr Paech: She is not answering it.

Ms BOOTHBY: He does not like the answer. It is crazy.

Speaking of law and justice groups, Labor brought some in and did not even fund them. How were they supposed to operate, and even start up in some cases, if there was no money to fund them? This government is doing the work to sort that out because you failed those communities, not us—you. You were in government for 19 out of 23 years and you failed Territorians—all of them. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

VISITORS
Essington School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that the presence in the gallery of legal studies students from Essington School, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Law and Justice Groups Mulka Electorate – Supplementary Question

Mr PAECH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

At this rate, your strongest government policy is coming soon. How many remote communities have you actually visited? What is the number? How many remote communities across the Northern Territory have you, as the Territory's first law officer, met with and heard their local issues or concerns, or do you only care about the towns on the bitumen track?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you have asked the same question.

The first question was about Mulka. This is Territory-wide. How many remote Aboriginal communities has the Territory's first law officer bothered to visit?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, hang on a second.

Mr Edgington: Come with me and I will show you around.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly!

Ms BOOTHBY: Why don't I go back through my diary right now and list all the different things that we have been doing as a government over the last two years? It is embarrassing.

Mr Paech: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: No, there is no point of order.

Mr Paech: Well, you must know. You cannot even name one.

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, Member for Gwoja. She has been on her feet for 10 seconds. You have not allowed her to answer the question. Please, Attorney-General, you have got the call.

DRAFT

Mr Paech: No, she is too scared to answer.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are on a warning. Member of Goyder, what is your point of order?

Mr MACKAY: I thought the Attorney-General had finished answering her question. I have a question.

Madam SPEAKER: Can we just pause. Attorney-General, did you answer?

Ms BOOTHBY: I have sat down.

Water Allocation Plans – Katherine and Alice Springs

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

The Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to securing the Territory's water future while supporting economic development and protecting water resources. Minister, can you update the Assembly on how the recently declared Katherine and Alice Springs water allocation plans provide greater certainty for communities, industry and Aboriginal Territorians while ensuring that this incredibly valuable resource is managed responsibly for the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder, being out in the rural area, understands water is life, and when you have got a pet cow and a pet horse, you need plenty of water to keep them. The plans that the Member for Goyder spoke about set out a clear framework on how water is managed now and into the future in the Northern Territory. These plans are backed with some 70 years of monitoring and assessment by the Northern Territory Government's water scientists. I thank the people in the departments.

I was recently in Katherine, and I spoke to those water scientists about the way in which they have been monitoring water and the floods over a very long time.

In relation to my hometown of Alice Springs—Madam Speaker, in your hometown—the Alice Springs Water plan is integral to everything we do. It is important that we have water now and into the future for our communities, development and agriculture. Some key features of the new plan include management zones that were reduced from 12 areas to five to focus on groundwater resources and improve governance, management and efficiency for the area. There is a total of 1,170 megalitres allocated to the aboriginal water reserve for the first time in Alice Springs.

Through doing this, we are ensuring that across those four water management areas, if Aboriginal people who own land want to get involved, utilise that water and trade that water, they can. We on this side of the House are about creating economic development for all Territorians. Public water supply remains the dominant use and key priority. I want to really stress that to the people of Alice Springs. We all understand how important that water is.

What came through with the community feedback was how important the river red gums are. We have taken 1,000 megalitres out of the town basin, moved that out of that area to another management zone to protect those red gums now and in the future under the 10-year plan.

I had better get to my good friend the Member for Katherine's area, because the Katherine water allocation plan has also been developed with input from the Daly River Water Advisory Committee. I thank that committee because it has given feedback over a long period to ensure that the Katherine water allocation plan can be where it is today.

In regard to some of the key features of that plan, we have reduced the plan area to focus on the area around Katherine and ensure that we are giving certainty to growers in that area. Whether it be agriculture or people along the river, the plan provides that 87% …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order `110: relevance. I think I heard part of that question as how much water will be allocated to the Berry Springs data centre from the rural area.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. You are misusing your points of order, Member for Daly.

DRAFT

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important that in the Katherine area this government is ensuring that 87% of stream flows in the Dry Season are protected into the Katherine River. Across the Northern Territory we are ensuring that water is protected now and into the future. I am proud to be the Minister for Water Resources.

Government Employee Housing – Galiwinku

Mr SMELT to TREASURER

In your first budget speech, you promised Territorians a realistic infrastructure program that would prioritise delivery on time, on budget and with integrity. Your own construction snapshot states that five new government employee dwellings at Galiwinku would commence in the third quarter of 2025. Your latest snapshot now says they will not commence until the third quarter of 2026. How can you explain a one-year delay to desperately needed government employee housing in Galiwinku under your watch?

Mr Edgington: Do you know where it is?

Mr Smelt: I do.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, please!

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love to have the opportunity to talk about the infrastructure program and the economy. Look at what we inherited from the previous government and what we are trying to fix. As I said in one of my earlier comments to this parliament, debt was climbing at 22% and we have that down to 4%, the lowest in the country. Our debt trajectory is the lowest of any state or other jurisdiction in the country.

Let us talk about the infrastructure pipeline which was interesting under the previous government. It was full of media release but there was no guts inside that infrastructure program. Labor was always crowing about a $4bn program. I can tell you it was never cashed properly. It was all about announcements, it was never about delivery.

Sometimes when we have to deliver things in remote areas—I have this frustration all the time—you would love to have it delivered next week, next month, next year. However, sometimes you have to do the work with the traditional owners and land councils to get this things across the line. Unfortunately, there are delays.

I thank my department for the work it does working with the land councils across the Northern Territory. There were delays after delays and it seemed as if the former Labor government was not interested in getting projects moving. I saw that when we came in and looked at the infrastructure program. I have a great team now within the department of Infrastructure which is working closely with the land councils across the Territory on our priority projects so we know when we can get those things moving.

We are seeing movement. I hopefully will see the release of a tender for the Santa Teresa Road within the next week or two—something that Labor could not do. For three years it sat on this and could not do it …

Mr SMELT: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110 again; we are specifically talking about government employee housing in Galiwinku.

Mr YAN: The Santa Teresa Road is getting across the line; we will see some movement there. We are seeing some good movement—finally—on the Mereenie Loop. Why are we seeing this? Because this government has a focus, through our department working closely with the land councils to get this across the line.

Yes, we are working to deliver government employee housing across the Northern Territory. We know we have to deliver it. We have a budget line for it. The previous government would just make the announcement and not have any cash for it and things would just sit on a program. That is why the program is completely blown out.

We have a realistic program that we can deliver—and it is cashed.

HomeGrown and FreshStart Grants

Mr O'GALLAGHER to TREASURER

DRAFT

Providing opportunities for young people to put down roots and build their first home in Darwin and across the Territory, delivers many benefits. One being the attraction and retention of skilled workers and staff in key industries. When people see a future here for themselves and their families, they commit, build and invest in their communities and businesses that keep our economy moving. I recently had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of the new LUXXE Estates in Berrimah with the Chief Minister and the Members for Barkly and Sanderson. That estate is delivering 46 new homes aimed at first home buyers.

Can you please update the House on the success of the government's HomeGrown and Fresh Start grant programs, in particular what the latest data tells us about people choosing to construct homes and put down roots in the Territory either at Berrimah or hopefully, Lee Point.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what a great topic to talk about on a Wednesday afternoon. Home ownership, home grants, population growth and economic growth. We know how important these grants have been and are to our priorities as a government because under Labor, home ownership or new home builds was at its lowest point, I think, in our history.

The HomeGrown grant program that we implemented is doing exactly what we intended it to do, helping Territorians build a home, build a future and put down roots in the Territory. I have some numbers I will share with everybody in the Chamber today.

To date, 1,416 grants have been paid. Another 137 have been approved and they are just awaiting payment. That means 1,553 households have already been supported through the HomeGrown and FreshStart programs. With an average build contract of around $528,000 this equates to $315m of direct construction activity and nearly $600m flowing through the Northern Territory economy through the indirect impacts of construction. These are great numbers.

Darwin is leading the way with 670 paid or approved applications, followed by Palmerston with 411. Yes, the Member for Gwoja has been vocal about it; I want to see more of these grants taken up in the bush. We are exploring options in that space because we want to see our regions grow. At least through these grants, some on their homelands can make an application and get a grant. The previous Labor government did not do that but we are giving that opportunity to people who live on homelands because they can apply through their bank to get a loan, access this grant and build their own house on their homelands. That is something Labor never did for them.

More encouragingly is who is taking up the grants. The Department of Treasury and Finance surveyed health professionals who were the largest identified occupational group representing 18% of respondents. That is more nurses, doctors and health professionals buying and building homes in the Territory and staying in the Territory. These are the professionals who are critical to the Territory's future. Nurses, doctors and allied health workers are all putting down roots in the Territory.

Overall, this is good housing policy. It is great for our workforce policy and great for our population policy. We are turning the jobs in the Territory into lives built here and strengthening our communities.

Criminal Offences – Data

J DAVIS to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of the CHIEF MINISTER

On 24 August the Chief Minister claimed in a media release that criminal offences had fallen by 10,000 per year, yet this claim is not backed up by the data publicly available. Given that the claim is not supported by publicly available data will you table evidence of how you reached this conclusion? And if not, why not?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love the opportunity to talk about crime because that is the Northern Territory's number one priority. It is to make sure the Territory is a safe place.

If you have a safe place to live, work and invest that will attract population. That will attract more grants and more housing and more health professionals. That is what we want. We know—and I am going to give the Member for Nightcliff another history lesson here—that under the previous government—and I know he was trying to distance himself from it and saying, 'I am not part of that.'

DRAFT

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; the Member for Johnston asked the question, not the Member for Nightcliff. The minister might want to respond to her.

Madam SPEAKER: Continue, minister.

Mr MALEY: We know there is chaos and that Labor cannot be trusted. There is a classic example over there; they do not know what is going on. They are not sure of left and right and who knows.

Mr Paech: Go and fix Palmerston and Katherine. Crime is out of control there.

Mr MALEY: We are here to make sure the community is safe. The crime stats speak for themselves; they are down.

Mr Paech: They are different from what you are saying.

Under the previous Labor government, there was a 300% increase—sorry?

Madam SPEAKER: Cease your interjections, please.

Mr MALEY: I thought we had some legitimate conversation over there, but clearly it is just fluff.

There was a 300% increase in crime in the Barkly under the previous Labor government …

Mr O'GALLAGHER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The clock is not running.

Mr Paech: He had 10 seconds left.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja!

We now have the clock sorted, please continue.

Mr MALEY: The Member for Johnston is concerned about crime and so she should be, because those to her right rose crime in the Northern Territory. We have been in office for two years and we are fixing it. We have resourced police.

Talking about crime stats, look at the figures …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. It was a specific question: please table evidence of how you reached the conclusion that criminal offences have fallen by 10,000 per year.

Mr MALEY: I do not need to table it because the evidence is released by Police through SerPro. It is publicly available; you can look at the crime figures for yourself. I will take you through some of them now. Across the Northern Territory, house break-ins are down by 24%; commercial break-ins are down by 36%; property offences are down by 16%; assaults are down by 10%; assaults, including alcohol, are down by 13%; and DV-related assaults are down by 12%.

These figures show that crime is on the way down, which is something the previous Labor government could not do.

Mr Paech: Who is right—the police data or the CLP's?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja!

Mr MALEY: The information you are looking for is on the website. You can look at it. Anyone …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I am not asking what the crime stats are. I asked whether the minister would table evidence of the 10,000 fewer crimes that his government has claimed.

Mr MALEY: I know that the Member for Goyder is a mathematician, and maybe the Member for Johnston needs to go to maths school. She can look at the stats.

DRAFT

Mr Paech: Do not insult her. That is disgraceful.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are on a warning.

Mr MALEY: You can look at the stats as many times as you want and do the maths yourself.

We on this side of the House are focused on making sure communities are safe, that we rebuild our economy and restore our lovely lifestyle.

Madam SPEAKER: The interjections this afternoon have been intense. Everyone will be silent while ministers give their responses.

Early Childhood Education and Care – Child Safety

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Our government is unwavering in its commitment to keep every Territorian safe. For our government the safety and wellbeing of Territorians is not simply a priority; it is a responsibility we take seriously. When it comes to our youngest Territorians, we have a particular duty to ensure they are protected, supported and able to thrive. Can you update the Assembly on the strong and practical measures our government is taking to protect our youngest Territorians; strengthen safety and wellbeing in early childhood education and care; and give parents and carers the confidence that while they participate in employment and training, their children are safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, with the impending birth of the Member for Drysdale's next child, he will be needing early childcare services for his child in the future.

After a tragic incident, our government came up with our Early Childhood Safe Start, Strong Futures Plan. We did not sit around idle but made sure that this plan strengthened accountability and targeted investment for continuous improvement and meaningful engagement.

The Early Childhood Safe Start, Strong Futures Plan we put out in December last year. Since then, I am pleased to announce that this time last year 79% of services were meeting or exceeding standards compared with this time 93% meeting or exceeding standards. That is a considerable jump in services meeting or exceeding safety standards. I am happy about that to make sure we put five more people in QECNT to work with early childcare centres to ensure that safety is the number one concern across those centres.

Nationally, last year we were seventh on the number of services meeting or exceeding, and this year I am pleased to report we are third nationally. We are ensuring that our centres are meeting or exceeding—going from seventh to third on a national scale is fantastic, and I thank the department and the QECNT workers and all the early childcare staff who are ensuring that their centres are doing the right thing being safe.

Our plan has been in place for eight short months and there has been significant outcomes in quality improvements. We have strengthened QECNT by five staff members, we also have scholarships for certificate, diploma and bachelor-level early childhood educators.

As of 10 August, this year we have had 27 applications. We have been agitating on the national agenda for strengthening pool fencing and the under-roof ratios and supervision. I was pleased to go to Canberra as it was the first time ever that the Northern Territory has had something on the national agenda which we managed to get that through. Child safety is no accident. We need to make sure that we are holding educators, providing providers and QECNT to account for children's safety and we will continue to do that work.

Gove – Rio Tinto Closure

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER

Rio Tinto will cease mining in Gove in 2029 threatening jobs, businesses and essential services across Nhulunbuy and the Gove Peninsula. Yet, at Estimates when asked why your budget contained no dedicated funding for Nhulunbuy the Chief Minister said that there is no money for the transition because it will not

DRAFT

make a difference. Do you stand by the Chief Minister's claim that the government investment cannot make a difference, or have you simply abandoned responsibility for the planning and funding of Nhulunbuy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have been to Nhulunbuy many times. I have flown and driven there as it is a great location. This government is taking the transition seriously. The Member for Wanguri has been there, and we have spoken about that many times. I have met with the Chief Minister, and the Member for Wanguri recently to discuss what is going on. Work is happening with the traditional owners to secure land tenure because that is important.

The mine is leaving and to have a future for that town—and those two groups over there are doing a great job. A big shout out to the people there who are taking this seriously. Without the support of the traditional owners and the government it is a bleak future. On a brighter note, this government and the traditional owners are supporting the transition. The Member for Wanguri has been there a number of times to work out what can we do to support that, and the work is happening.

It will take some time because it is a big, complex issue. It is a great location, and the traditional owners are working with each other, with the Northern Land Council and with their communities, because they represent their communities. They talk and consult to see what they want also because we need to get this right. We want to make sure that Nhulunbuy is the best it can be with the departure of this mine, because the mine puts a lot into the community—workers, housing and a lot of support services. For example, people who work in the mine have partners who in the local shopping centres or for local government or at the swimming pool or at the tavern. How will we transition all of that because there could be a reduction in workers. That is the work that the Member for Wanguri is doing now, making sure that transition is the best that it can be.

This government will continue to support that transition and work with all the parties involved because we are taking it seriously. It is part of the Northern Territory. The chaotic Labor government forgot about bits of the Northern Territory. It put this in the too-hard bin.

Mr BROWN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Does the government have any dedicated funding towards the transition?

Mr MALEY: We are at the stage of working out how we will do that. We have money to make sure the Territory is a better place. That is all part of the bucket of money that the Treasurer had deals with in relation to this.

It is about making sure that we deal with the traditional owners and the mine, and let them know that we support them, along with the land councils and the community members, and make sure we get this right. We do not want to make a mistake because it is a beautiful town. It is a big transition; there is no question about that. We are working hard to get it right.

Child Protection Legislation Changes

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

In the last sittings you said that you wanted to make sure that carers have whatever they need to care for those kids. The changes to child protection come into effect next week. What have you provided so that the courts, department and legal services can accommodate increased demand on the system, particularly for carers who want to be represented in the system? How much additional funding have you provided for this increased load?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I clarify that the change for carers—putting carers' needs front and centre so that they can make sure that the best happens for the children whose care they have been entrusted with—is that when there is a court case they are a party to that court case, if that is what they want. They will have an opportunity to stand up and speak the truth of what has been going on from their point of view and care of the child as the court makes a decision about a long-term or a permanent care order. It does not cost anything for the carers to do that. They are named as a party to the proceedings. They can elect to be part of the proceedings or not, and they will be allowed to speak and have their voice heard in those proceedings.

DRAFT

Land Availability

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

The Finocchiaro CLP government knows that unlocking land is critical to giving Territorians more choice and making it easier for families, first homebuyers and people looking to move to the Territory to find a place they can call home. Can you update the Assembly on what the CLP government is doing to get more homes on the ground and deliver more opportunities for people to put down roots in the Northern Territory, just like me?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri told me before we came into this Chamber that more people want to live in her electorate. The CLP government is trying to enable that.

No matter where you are, across the Territory we want more options for Territorians to set down roots. That could be through infill development. We are doing the work now. We are consulting with communities to say, 'If you have a large block and want to subdivide it, perhaps you will be able to.' Perhaps more people will be able to move to the electorate of Wanguri and set down their roots, have a family and ensure that they can invest in the wonderful Northern Territory.

We are investing $37m across the Territory for enabling infrastructure. These are the things that are not often seen, such as the electrical cables, sewerage and water connections that go to homes to enable those blocks of land.

There is $4.2m being invested in planning investigations and designs to support land development. It does not matter whether people are in Darwin or Alice Springs, there will be options for them when it comes to land availability. We are also investing in land supply in Katherine and Tennant Creek. Almost 900 planning applications are being assessed by the department. We are getting on with delivering.

The Treasurer said that houses are being built across the Territory. More than 12,500 building permits have been issued under our government.

Significant industrial land supply is being developed in greater Darwin. There is the release of land around Daly Waters to ensure that the Beetaloo Sub-basin can be developed. This is what we are doing. We are not focused on one area. We are looking across the Territory and asking how we can get things moving no matter where people live.

There are 236 titled lots ready for construction of new homes. That is what it is all about; having a vision that says it does not matter where people are across the Northern Territory, they will be able to take advantage of our new home builder grant. They will be able to build a home, set down roots, start a family and stay here just like I and the Member for Wanguri have.

Those opposite are always talking about social housing. At St Mary's in Alice Springs we are delivering. We have worked with the federal government. We have money set aside and work to start constructing will be happening in the next couple of months.

We are delivering land and homes for people who are not as fortunate as the rest of us and need a help up into social housing. We are delivering for Territorians, no matter where they live and we are damn proud of it.

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that any further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 115, I provide the Member for Johnston and answer to the question asked yesterday about the crime statistics.

IK is a software used by the JESS operators to log and manage jobs; it is not the system used by police to track offences. Crime statistics are drawn from SerPro, which is the system police use to record offence information.

DRAFT

MOTION
Independent Review of Data Centres

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls on the government to undertake an independent review to current and future data centre development in the Northern Territory, including its economic, social, environmental and strategic impacts, the use of Territory resources and the long-term benefits to Territorians.

The Northern Territory is standing at the beginning of what could be a significant new economic opportunity. Data centres, artificial intelligence and the digital economy are reshaping investment around the world.

Labor supports new investment, emerging technologies, new industries, stronger telecommunications, new skills and new opportunities for Territorians. If data centres can be developed here sustainably, can generate lasting jobs and investment, can gain the support of our community, strengthen our infrastructure and help diversify the Territory economy, then we want the Northern Territory to share in that opportunity.

However, support for development does not mean writing a blank cheque, and optimism about an industry does not relieve government of the responsibility to plan for it. That is why Labor is calling for an independent inquiry into the future development and regulation of data centres in the Northern Territory.

This is not a call for a moratorium or to stop development; it is a call to do the work that responsible governments are supposed to do before decisions involving billions of dollars, enormous quantities of energy and water and decades of land use becomes difficult or impossible to unwind.

The scale of what is now being discussed should concentrate every members' mind. Darwin already has data centre infrastructure. NEXTDC's D1 facility, which commenced operating in 2024, has capacity of up to eight megawatts and builds on Darwin's growing links into the Australian and Asian fibre networks. The Territory genuinely has geographic and connectivity advantages, but the developments now being proposed are of an entirely different class and order.

Energy North's Project Ares in the Barkly is proposed as a one gigawatt IT campus. Its current project description includes up to four gigalitres of groundwater use each year, around 7,000 hectares of solar arrays, up to 3,000 megawatts peak of solar, 16 gigawatt hours of batteries, gas generation and a preliminary disturbance footprint of approximately 19,150 hectares. The project is now in environmental assessment.

Closer to Darwin, the government set aside 185 hectares at Weddell for a possible integrated gas-to-power and data centre development associated with Beetaloo Digital. That proposal remains in its early stages and is subject to feasibility, funding and regulatory approvals.

These are not simply buildings full of computers; at this scale, they are massive energy users, massive water users and massive land users, yet the CLP government is talking about becoming a global capital for data centres while Territorians have not been shown a comprehensive Territory-wide plan explaining exactly how much development our energy, water, infrastructure and communities can sustainably support.

An inquiry gives us the opportunity to put that information on the table and to learn from jurisdictions that are further down this road. Ireland is one of the clearest examples. In 2015 data centres accounted for about 5% of Ireland's metered electricity consumption. By 2025 that figure had reached 23%. Data centre electricity use rose another 10% in that year alone. Ireland had to develop specific connection policies for these very large electricity users, with security of supply, network constraints, renewable energy targets and carbon emissions forming part of the regulatory response. The lesson is not that Ireland should never have welcomed data centres, but that when an industry can transform the demand placed on essential infrastructure, government needs to plan ahead of that growth.

This week the Australian Energy Market Operator released a report that estimates there are 225 data centres under development in Australia this year, up from 97 in 2025. Electricity consumption from data centres is forecast to be almost seven times higher by 2035, increasing from five terawatt hours now to 34 terawatt hours. This means they would use 13% of power supplied to the system compared with 3% now. These changes will have major implications for energy use and infrastructure management in our nation. That is why we need to take the time to understand these changes and plan for them.

In Virginia in the United States, which is one of the world's largest data centre markets, an independent review by Virginia's legislative audit body found an important nuance. Data centres were paying their existing

DRAFT

cost of service, but future demand could increase the cost paid by other consumers because major new generation and transmission infrastructure would have to be built and energy would become harder to supply.

That is exactly why the question of whether the data centre pays its electricity bill is not enough. The questions are: who pays for the infrastructure that exists because the data centre arrived? Who pays for the new transmission? Who pays for the new water infrastructure? Who pays for the roads? Who pays for the emergency capability? Who bears the risk if projected demand does not eventuate? Who receives the economic upside? Those questions should be answered before agreements are signed, not after the costs have been socialised.

Then there is water. In Chile Google's proposed $200m Santiago data centre became caught in environmental litigation because of concerns about its potential impact on an already stressed aquifer and whether the assessment had properly considered climate change. In this case the approval was partially reversed. Google subsequently redesigned the proposal in regard to air cooling. That experience should be a massive warning sign to us in the Northern Territory.

Just today the *Age* reported that Victoria's environmental watchdog has stepped in to object to a planned $1.1bn data centre in Campbellfield, warning of potential noise impacts and poor site layout. These are real and current issues and highlight the need for proper consultation, proper environmental investigation and necessary regulation.

Community engagement is the same when people discover a major industrial development only after key decisions have effectively been made. Uncertainty becomes suspicion, suspicion becomes opposition, opposition becomes delay, complexity and sometimes litigation. Good proponents do not want that either.

The Commonwealth now explicitly says social licence and early community engagement should form part of major data centre development. So bringing communities along is not an ideological obstacle to investment; it is actually good and proper risk management. But more importantly, it is the right thing to do for our community. Ensuring our community understands and has a say in developments that affect them is a fundamental pillar of our democratic process, and other Australian governments have demonstrated that this work can be done.

NSW has produced a dedicated data centre policy framework. This framework says data centres should meet world class environmental and efficiency standards, impose no net cost on existing consumers and communities, fund the additional water and energy infrastructure they require, enhance host communities, strengthen future industries and supply chains, and invest in training and skills.

NSW is examining mechanisms to recover data centre-driven energy infrastructure costs from operators rather than households, and that is how it should be. It has also asked its independent pricing regulator to consider water pricing and cost recovery. Its guidelines even address demand flexibility and how major centres can reduce their reliance on the grid during periods of peak stress and demand.

Victoria has developed its own whole-of-government action plan covering land connectivity, grid readiness, sustainable water workforce and government coordination. It is examining energy and water availability, including recycled water, to determine where development can occur sustainably. Neither NSW nor Victoria is anti-investment. They are competing for this investment. They understand that a regulatory framework is itself part of the investment proposition.

Investors, communities and utilities value certainty. Governments should value certainty, and the Commonwealth is moving in precisely the same direction. Its five national expectations required data centre proponents to support the national interest, contribute to the energy transition, use water responsibly, invest in Australian skills and jobs, and strengthen research and local capability.

The Commonwealth has since announced that it intends to move towards enforceable national rules requiring additional renewable supply, adequate firming, flexibility and a causer pays approach to new electricity infrastructure.

Gas may play a firming role, but the Commonwealth has been explicit that an entirely gas-powered model will not satisfy its proposed national approach. The CLP government may have a different view; that makes an inquiry even more important, because the Territory government stakes our economic strategy on a regulatory model fundamentally different from the direction being developed nationally.

DRAFT

Territorians deserve to know what the commercial consequences are. Will a gas first project qualify for Commonwealth approval? What will investors require? What happens if national standards apply regardless of the Territory government's objection? What does that mean for the viability of projects currently being promoted? Those are not reasons to abandon development. They are reasons to ask the questions now.

Water deserves the same seriousness. The Commonwealth is developing national principles requiring data centres to minimise water use, prioritise recycled and non-drinking water, pay their fair share of infrastructure, and transparently report consumption. Our own water resources are not infinite merely because the Top End has a Wet Season. Availability depends on the aquifer, the catchment, competing uses, recharge and the location of development. The Territory government acknowledges high demand on water resources in parts of the Darwin rural Adelaide River region.

For Project Ares, the proponent itself is examining a requirement of up to four gigalitres of groundwater each year. That deserves independent scrutiny.

Labor's position is straightforward. We are not asking this Assembly to ban an industry; we are asking it to understand one. We are not asking government to close the door to investors; we are asking government to tell investors clearly what will be expected when they walk through it. We do not support development at any cost, nor do we support saying no to development simply because it is new. On this side, we support sustainable development, where economic benefits are real and demonstrable; water security is protected; environmental impacts are understood and minimised; infrastructure costs are barely allocated; communities have a genuine voice; and where Territorians receive a lasting share of the benefit.

An independent inquiry can examine the cumulative development pipeline; water, energy and gas use; renewable supply and storage; infrastructure and who pays for it; environmental standards; workforce requirements; local jobs; training; and procurement.

The inquiry can hear directly from industry; Power and Water; utilities; regulator; experts; traditional owners; land councils; local government; and communities that may host these developments. It can examine the unpublished work that government has already commissioned and recommend a framework that gives responsible investors a more certain path to development.

There is already a federal Senate inquiry considering broader questions about AI and data centres. But Canberra cannot decide the sustainable yield of a Territory aquifer; the proper location of a Weddell industrial development; the capacity of Territory infrastructure; the terms on which Crown land should be made available; the appropriate local procurement obligations; or how communities here should be engaged. Those are Territory responsibilities. This parliament should discharge them.

The government may say that inquiry creates uncertainty, I say that uncertainty already exists because communities do not know what is proposed; investors do not yet have a comprehensive Territory-specific regulatory framework; national energy and water standards are changing; we have not been shown the cumulative demands these projects may place on our resources; and because government is promoting an ambition before it is publicly demonstrated the plan under it.

The solution to uncertainty is information, community concern is engagement and regulatory risk is good regulation. We have an opportunity to get this right at the beginning. Let us learn from places that waited too long or jurisdictions that are already doing the planning and the right thing. Let us give industry certainty and communities a voice and protect the Territory's water, environment and household interest. Let us make sure that if the Northern Territory does become an important data centre destination, it happened because we are one of the best places in the world to develop responsibly and not because we were the place with the fewest questions asked.

The choice before us is not development or regulation, it is planned development or avoidable conflict. Labor chooses planned, sustainable development. This is why the Assembly should support this independent inquiry.

I commend the motion and look forward to hearing from the government to see if they believe Territorians should get a say on matters that affect them.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I oppose the motion. Not because the subject does not matter, as it matters a great deal, and this motion demonstrates a concerning misunderstanding of both the opportunity in front of the Territory and the work already underway to seize it.

DRAFT

I will start with what a data centre actually is, because this debate too often proceeds as if these are simply large sheds full of plumbing machines—the Member for Nightcliff alluded to that earlier. The fact is that data centres are the physical foundation of the modern economy. Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital government, banking, telecommunications, advanced manufacturing and the whole digital life of the nation runs through them.

I appreciate that the Member for Nightcliff is new to the parliament and in fact is a relatively newly arrived refugee from Victoria to the Territory. I appreciate that he probably carries some scars from living in a jurisdiction that is on the brink of an energy crisis. I am prepared to provide him a little leeway on some matters; calling for review into whether the Territory should take part in the fastest-growing category of infrastructure investment on the planet is not one of them.

Consider the scale of it. JPMorgan expects the world's hyperscale operators to spend in the order of $697bn on capital works this year alone. Moody's puts the figure higher, closer to $785bn. Numbers like that do not describe a passing fashion; they describe critical infrastructure being built out across the globe and a real contest between jurisdictions to attract it.

Here is the difficulty for those opposite: this industry is not hypothetical in the Territory; it is already here. The Territory already hosts a cluster of operating data centres, and most of them took shape under the former Labor government which actively pursued them, demonstrating a serious disconnect between the Member for Nightcliff, who is also the Deputy Opposition Leader, and the platform pursued by those on the other side when in government.

Here is a potted history lesson which may assist in bringing the Member for Nightcliff up to speed. An expression-of-interest process calling for data centres under the former Labor government resulted in NEXTDC's D1 centre being built, the success of which led to D2, which is expected to launch in quarter 4 of this year. Major project status was also awarded by the former government to Inligo Networks for the Darwin Cable Landing Station. Subsea cables are critical in enabling infrastructure for data centres, and the creation of a data highway through the centre of Australia from Darwin to Adelaide is the reason it would be negligent of the Territory not to pursue this generational and transformational investment opportunity.

When the Member for Nightcliff rises to ask whether this development is safe, wise or needs a review before we go any further, he is questioning the record of his own side. Had he been in this place a little longer, he might have known that. If he was not spending time distancing himself from his colleagues who preceded him in this parliament and their less-than-stellar performance during their time in government, they might have taken the time to provide him with a history lesson before he lodged a motion that condemns their own work.

Why is the Territory so well placed to build on that base? The answer lies in why the industry's geography is shifting. Look at the southern capitals. In Sydney, the state's own water utility estimates data centres could take 15 to 20% of the city's water by 2035 because every litre a data centre draws there is a litre contested with several million residents. Their power systems are stretched, their industrial land is scarce and expensive, and that scarcity is the real engine of the anxiety behind emotion like this one. It is a southern anxiety; it is not ours.

The Territory sits in almost the opposite position, and it comes down to energy, water and land. Take energy first, because it now decides more than anything else where these facilities are built. Artificial intelligence has driven the power needs of computing to levels that would have seemed absurd a decade ago. A serious data centre needs firm, reliable, round-the-clock power at a price and scale that keeps the investment standing up. This is where a weather-dependent system begins to strain and why the southern states are nervous about supplying. The Territory is not nervous because the Territory has the Beetaloo. We are sitting on the most significant onshore gas resource in the country—the largest uncontracted gas field in the world. Gas gives always-on computing exactly what it needs: firm dispatchable baseload power that does not wait for wind and is not fussed if it rains.

We are not about to tell global investors that they can only build here if they run on a single approved power source. We will back the right mix for each site, solar and storage where it stacks up, gas where reliability demands it and we will let the engineering and the economics settle it.

It sounds like the federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, may have written the Member for Nightcliff's speech because it clearly demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the challenges faced by other jurisdictions that they do not apply here. It critically misses the point that increasingly data centres are self-powered projects. Proponents are looking to build their own generation right where the gas

DRAFT

is, so the power is produced—a lesson for the Member for Nightcliff—by the facility itself. The demand brings its own supply with it, Member for Nightcliff, so that is who pays for it. That is who supplies it.

Let me turn to water because it is the concern most often raised and it deserves a straight answer rather than a slogan. The truth is there is no single footprint for water at a data centre. Use depends almost entirely on the cooling technology, the climate, the size of the facility and how hard it runs. The water industry's own modelling shows it plainly. The same 100-megawatt facility could use around 0.35 gigalitres of water a year with efficient cooling or 2.19 gigalitres with a water hungry design. Same building six times the water and the only variable is the design choice.

The technology is moving in one direction. Direct to chip cooling delivers cool and straight to the hottest components. Immersion cooling submerges equipment in non-conductive fluid. Closed loop systems recirculate the same coolant instead of drinking freshwater day after day. Microsoft's newest designs in Pheonix and Wisconsin are built to run with near zero cooling water avoiding more than 125 million litres per facility every year. The Member for Nightcliff is an engineer, so he should get that.

One Australian operator now reports water use effectiveness of 0.01 litres per kilowatt hour, saving something like five billion litres a year against conventional cooling. Our advantage in the Territory is that we are not squeezing these facilities into crowded cities. We are planning them from a clean sheet and that means we can require efficient cooling from the very first approval. It means that data centre here need not touch drinking water at all. Depending on the site it can run on recycled wastewater, on stormwater and on desalinated sea water. The Leanyer/Sanderson plant alone treats around 15 million litres a day, much of it currently discharged or lost to evaporation, which could be put to industrial use with the right infrastructure.

Our groundwater is not there for taking. Access runs through statutory allocation plans, licensing and annually announced allocations. Any dedicated water infrastructure will be funded by the proponent—I hope that answers your question, Member for Nightcliff—and it will not push up costs or cut reliability for anyone already relying on the system. We will not make the mistakes that other jurisdictions in this country have made.

Compare that to Sydney competing for a fifth of its water within a decade. We do not have to make that trade off and we should not borrow the fear of a problem we simply do not have. On land the point also makes itself. We have space and we have scale. We can fit a compact facility into an existing industrial precinct, and we can plan a large integrated campus that brings power, water and fibre together in one place. The kind of thing that is impossible to assemble in a built out southern city, and everyone of these projects without exception already has to clear comprehensive Territory and Commonwealth environmental assessment, planning approval, native title and sacred sites clearance and water licensing.

That brings me to the economics and why getting this right matters. Australia pulled in about $10bn of data centre capital in 2024, second in the world only to the United States, and this is where the global money is going. The only question for us is: how much of it lands here? The value goes well past the operational head count, which is the lazy shot these projects always take.

For every ongoing operational job, independent analysis puts around 15 more in construction and the supply chain. The technology sector generates about $12.6bn of value for every terawatt hour of electricity it uses. For mining, the figure is roughly $9.1bn, for manufacturing about $8.8bn; for a Territory that has always known how to turn power and resources into prosperity, that comparison should make us sit up, take notice and get excited.

Data centres also work as anchor tenants; they underwrite shared infrastructure, water, roads, fibre and power that other business and communities then get to use, and the proof is close to home. NEXTDC's D1 Darwin, an $80m investment, opened in August last year with room for around 1,500 racks. It is running now serving Australian and international customers. It is the start of the story; it is most definitely not the end of it.

Beyond the building this is the infrastructure that cloud services, cyber security, FinTech and artificial intelligence all sit on. The Commonwealth owned national AI plan, named advanced data centres and high-speed connectivity as critical national foundations should not be forgotten. Darwin already carries the Darwin, Jakarta, Singapore cables and around 40 terabytes per second of direct international capacity with more subsea and terrestrial links on the way. Data can enter the country through Darwin and be stored, processed and secured right here. Our geography—which has always put us on Australia's doorstep to Asia—is turning into an economic asset in a completely new way.

DRAFT

I will come to the motion. It calls for an independent review into the economic, social, environmental and strategic impacts of data centres and the use of Territory resources. That scrutiny already exists. It happens on every project, one at a time, done by experts and tested against the evidence through the environmental planning, water and heritage processes I have just spoken about.

A broad open-ended review laid over the top of all of that has not one safeguard the Territory does not already have. What it adds is the delay and a message. It tells a globally mobile industry—one that can take its billions to anywhere on earth—that the Territory is hesitant and that we need to go away and think about whether we really want this at the very moment we should be giving this industry certainty and saying plainly that the Territory is open for their business.

We have seen this instinct before when the Territory was handed one of the great onshore gas resources anywhere in the country and the world, Labor's first move was not to develop it; it was to stop it. They put a moratorium on the Beetaloo, they stood up and inquiry that ran for more than a year and they held that opportunity up for years after why the investment and the jobs it promised sat and waited. Moratorium, review, delay, that was and remains the reflex of those on the other side every time the Territory has a chance to build something big.

Here we are again faced with the next great opportunity, the newest member of the team who has only been in the Territory for a minute, the Member for Nightcliff reaches for the very same tool. A review, a pause, a reason to wait. He calls it caution. I would call it a failure of nerves. The right answer to an opportunity of this size is not to commission a review into whether we should want it; it is to do the work, plan properly, hold every proponent to a high standard on energy, water and community benefit and make sure Territorians get the jobs, the training and the local contracts that come with it.

That is the work this government is already doing, and this motion would slow down—the cables, the data centres already running, the connectivity and now the energy and land advantages the southern states can only wish for. Our job is to turn those advantages into investment, skilled work and the certainty that tells global capital the Territory is the place to build. This motion pulls the other way. It manufacturers doubt where the Territory should be showing confidence.

For those reasons I support data centres in the Northern Territory and the benefits they will bring to the Territory and 100% disagree with the motion.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I will speak on this important motion brought forward by the Member for Nightcliff about some of the concerns from my electorate in the rural area and from constituents of the Members for Nelson and Goyder about the huge announcement that this CLP government made in regard to the $40bn Beetaloo digital energy and data centre development at Berry Springs along Finn Road and, more importantly, the growing concerns I am hearing from residents across the rural area about what this project could mean for their water, homes, environments and futures.

The CLP government is making a major decision about the future of our rural communities without properly consulting the people who live there, then failing to provide clear answers when those residents quite reasonably asked what the project will mean for them when it comes to the Berry Springs data centre on Finn Road.

As reported by the ABC, this proposed development could be worth up to $40bn and could involve an enormous 185-hectare data centre precinct, with two hyperscale artificial intelligent data centre campuses and up to two gigawatts of gas-fired power generation.

As I stated earlier, this is not a small development; it is not just a few buildings going up on a block of land. This is a huge industrial energy project that could have significant impacts for water, electricity, roads, noise, traffic, land use, the environment and the people who live in the surrounding rural communities. Yet, from speaking to rural residents and from what I have heard directly in in my electorate office, there is growing feeling that the community has been left out of this conversation.

Constituents from my electorate, along with the Members for Nelson and Goyder's constituents, have come to my office, generally worried about this project and what that could mean for them. They are asking me about water, noise, power, the traffic and the environment, but they are also asking me about what this will mean for their property value in the rural area. They asked me a simple question, 'Why were we not consulted about this announcement?' These are not unreasonable questions. In fact, they are exact questions that any reasonable government should be answering when proposing a development of this magnitude.

DRAFT

In the last parliamentary sittings in Question Time, I asked Gerard Maley, the Deputy Chief Minister and the Member for Nelson, about one of the most important issues associated with this project; which was water. The project has been estimated to require somewhere between 3.5 billion and 43.8 billion litres of water every year, depending on the final design and operation of the facility.

This is an extraordinary amount of water, and the people living in the rural area, including in the Deputy Chief Minister's electorate, water is not an abstract issue. He would know that people rely on their bores and groundwater, and having confidence that there will be sufficient water available for their homes, properties, businesses and future.

I asked a straightforward question to the Deputy Chief Minister, Gerard Maley, the Member for Nelson: where will the water come from?

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 34; I am not sure what the purpose of the Member for Daly is in naming members, but it clearly does not comply with standing orders. He should refer to members by their electorate or title only.

Madam SPEAKER: That is indeed correct. Member for Daly, could you use their formal title?

Mr YOUNG: Just for clarity, could I use his name with his title? They use it all the time.

Madam SPEAKER: We are talking about you at the moment. Yes, people can lapse into that. It has been raised as a point of order, so technically it is correct. You have to use just the formal title.

Mr YOUNG: That is all good.

I asked the Member for Nelson: where will the water come from? I also asked if there was overwhelming community opposition to the project, would the government consider those options? Unfortunately, the Member for Nelson could not answer that directly.

I acknowledge that the minister answered part of that question about consultation, but he said that Beetaloo Energy would be doing that consultation. He admitted in this House that the government had not done any consultation with the rural residents, his own constituency, in the seat of Nelson. The Member for Goyder had no consultation with his constituency. None of the rural residents in my constituency of Daly have been consulted. Therefore, he is saying that the government has made this huge announcement in Berry Springs about this data centre along Finn Rd and that the consultation will be done afterwards.

Part of that question was: if there was overwhelming disagreement on that project, would the government reconsider it? The Member for Nelson could not answer that question. He said that he backed the Berry Springs data centre, though.

They were important questions from people in the rural area. I do not think I have ever had my office blow up as much as it did when the Member for Nelson made that announcement. People had no idea that this was coming. There was no consultation done. They are concerned about water, particularly their bore water. They are concerned about the energy use and what it would mean for the rural area. They are concerned about the value of their property. Unfortunately, this government had not done the work beforehand.

Does consultation mean that the government will listen to rural residents, or does it mean the government will tell residents what is going on, even if they oppose it, and just leave people to scratch their heads? Telling people what you will do is not consultation.

I had many members of the public come to my office to speak to me. It astounds me that people have told me that the Member for Goyder is telling his constituents and my constituents that apparently the Berry Springs data centre will not go ahead. That message conflicts with that of his own Deputy Chief Minister. The Member for Goyder is telling people, 'Do not worry. Trust us. The Berry Springs data centre will not go ahead.' However, the Member for Nelson said that he backs the Berry Springs data centre. The government needs to get that sorted because it seems that—and look, I do not want to deliberately mislead anyone, because I was not in the room for those conversations, but it needs to be clarified by the Member for Goyder if he is going out and telling constituents that this is not going ahead.

Mr MACKAY: A point or order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 31; I do not know if we are allowed to just spread mistruths in this Chamber. I am just not really sure if the Member for Daly has any evidence or such, or if we can just make up stuff as we go along.

DRAFT

Madam SPEAKER: You have an opportunity, perhaps even after the Member for Daly has finished his speech, to correct the record if you feel that there has been incorrect or mistruth, as you said, being spoken. Or you can move a substantive motion to that effect. There are plenty of opportunities within the standing orders to correct the record if you feel that there has been a misrepresentation.

Mr YOUNG: That is completely fine. Like I said, that is what constituents have been saying in my office. I will back that in because they have been coming in and telling me exactly what you have been saying. They have asked me to actually have some clarity with what you are saying.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please. Come on!

Mr YOUNG: You do have the opportunity to respond and that is all I am asking here because that is what the constituents, including your constituents, want.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point or order, Madam Speaker! His commentary should be directed through the Speaker. He seems to be engaged in an argument across the Chamber. He needs to direct his commentary through this meeting.

Madam SPEAKER: You are absolutely right. We will cease all interjections. Member for Daly, you can talk to me through the Chair. Direct your speech through me. Please continue.

Mr YOUNG: As I stated, I did not make this up. People have come to me and spoken to me about it. I am just trying to get some clarity so I can actually get the right information to his constituents, my constituents and the Member for Nelson's constituents to make sure they understand the full scale of the Berry Springs data centre. I think they're genuine questions to be asked if that is what is being said to people in the rural area.

It is a huge project across the Berry Springs community, but more so in particular to the rural community, so it is important that those questions are answered and that the government gets out and does some consultation around this data centre in Berry Springs. I find it quite concerning that there has not been any consultation in regard to this project, particularly when it comes to rural residents who rely on groundwater. The government has not been able to answer where the water will be coming from if this data centre is to be built. But again, that is an 'if'. We need clarity around that, as I stated before.

The rural residents of Berry Springs deserve to know precisely what those water requirements will be. I think that is a pretty fair question to ask and a fair question to be answered by the government—which is going out and building this project—to ensure that there is clarity in how this may impact the rural area, particularly the impact that this may have on local groundwater systems around the rural area, and in particular the Berry Springs aquifer.

Many residents in the rural area rely on existing bore users. When we have dry spells across the Northern Territory in the Wet Season—I think it was two or three years ago we did not have a very big Wet Season—it impacted the bores and aquifers in the rural area, meaning that water restrictions were put in place in the rural area.

I will leave my commentary there, but again, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing forward this important discussion today. As I mentioned earlier, I want some clarity from the government about whether this project will be going ahead and, if it is, some details on the questions that I asked, because it is important. It is a huge issue for many residents in the rural area. I will be having an information session on Monday about data centres. I hope the Member for Goyder can make it and maybe clarify some of the answers for people. I would also hope the Deputy Chief Minister, Member for Nelson, could come out to that information session and answer some of those questions.

I am looking forward to Beetaloo Energy getting out there to answer some questions regarding what this proposed project will look like. I acknowledge it reached out to me last night to look at what the questions may be. I am more than happy to pass those on. This is the important work of understanding what the questions are from rural residents. Many residents, particularly along Finn Road but more so the wider Berry Springs and rural area that goes into the Member for Goyder's and the Member for Nelson's area, are concerned there has been no consultation and the Environment minister along with the Deputy Chief Minister has just sprung this announcement on them without any notification.

DRAFT

I have never seen my electorate office so busy with so many people ringing in to voice their concerns. If you think that is not the case, then you are wrong because my electorate office on that day received so many phone calls and people coming in generally concerned about this project. It is not to say we are against development; it is just understanding what it is.

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: No it is not, and that is not what I have said here. It is about the consultation. We need to be very clear, and the fact that you have not done any consultation with our residents shows that they do not have any trust in you because they are having to come to my office, including constituents from the Member for Goyder's and the Member for Nelson's areas to find out what is going on because you guys cannot be bothered to go out to talk to people.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about the digital opportunities emerging for the Northern Territory regarding data centres. I am very glad the Member for Daly has found his electorate office and has been talking to his constituents about what is happening. I want to be very clear about what has been announced because there is a fair bit of scaremongering by those opposite. I do not deal over a parcel of land; that is just that. It is the Northern Territory Government saying we will not deal with anyone else regarding to that one parcel of land, and if anyone, whether it be Beetaloo Energy or anyone else wanted to actually put in a development application or want to apply for a water licence, all the regulatory frameworks would need to be followed and consultation with the community is part of that.

I might just start there and continue with my remarks to ensure that everyone understands about data centres in regard to the Northern Territory. On this side of the Chamber we do not support an independent review into the current and future data centre development because we have robust regulatory systems that deal with issues raised in the motion put forward by the opposition.

Hyperscale data centres do represent a new type of industry for the Northern Territory. It is very true that many of the things that they bring have been dealt with previously. This coupled with the perception of uncertainty about the size of the data centres, how much water they might use, how much land they might take up, where they will source their power from and the potential impact on electricity prices and the negative impact they may have on local communities; these are all things that have been raised by those opposite and they are all things that those individual proponents will have to work through before they can put a shovel in the ground.

I want to emphasise again that the Territory has robust environmental legislation that ensures any potential negative impacts as well as positive contribution of this type of development are thoroughly considered. That is important for everyone in the Northern Territory to understand. The biggest thing I have noticed through speaking with people on this issue is that people are often afraid of what they do not understand, but when you are able to discuss, when people are able to understand just what the sorts of things these data centres enable, the storage of electronic information.

Every time we go into our Netflix account and download or stream a movie, that is coming from a data centre of some description. Data centres are the physical infrastructure that securely store and process data, connecting organisations and communities to the digital services they use every day. That is important. As I look around this Chamber I see many people on their computers, probably accessing digital information over the World Wide Web; how fortunate we are. They underpin delivery of online government and private industry services and modern communications. Every time you check an email, make an online purchase, submit an application or search the internet, a data centre is working behind the scenes, powering the digital infrastructure that connects you to the information and services that you need.

The NT's unique attributes—this is what I enjoyed listening to in Minister Cahill's contribution—position the Territory as a global artificial intelligence and hyper-scale data centre hub backed by onshore gas and solar projects. I love talking about our solar projects in the Northern Territory because if there is one proponent I've spoken to more than any other, it is SunCable. Its representatives love knocking on my door and giving me the latest update. This government is backing any development across the Northern Territory, including solar projects.

Once again, we hear that Labor wants another review to further stifle economic growth. In the past that has meant years of delay and the people of the Northern Territory missing out on economic development. We on this side of the Chamber want to work with the developers and the community to make sure that we take

DRAFT

everyone along for the journey so that we benefit. As we sit here now, there are roughly 12 data centre developers who are having discussions and consulting, I am sure.

It represents many billions of dollars of investment, and we want to see it turn into reality because this Northern Territory Government is getting on with the job of rebuilding our Northern Territory economy. That needs to be done sustainably so that we do not see the boom-and-bust cycles that we have seen previously. Our government's focus is on not only attracting that investment but also ensuring that the Territory has the skills and capability required to support long-term industry growth to maximise local participation benefits for Territorians.

We are open for business, and large-scale investors see the NT as a safe place to invest under our government. We have the vision and the capability to realise these opportunities. As I said, and I will say it again, we have a robust regulatory regime; the strong water management framework that I spoke about earlier; available land; a services corridor, thanks to the Treasurer, being the Territory Energy Link; subsea and domestic fibre-optic cables that connect the Territory to the rest of Australia and the world; and significant off-grid energy options such as the Beetaloo Sub-basin. I very much look forward to those huge solar capacity projects that we have talked about for a long time.

Some of those key data centre projects have been spoken about a lot. The Member for Daly today spoke about the Beetaloo Digital proposal, and it is just that—a proposal. As I said, there is no development application currently afoot. Many approvals would have to be sought, but as a government we are ensuring that the pathways are clear. If those proponents want to develop here, just like any other developer in the Northern Territory, they will have to go through those processes. Just about all of those processes allow for community consultation and for Territorians' voices to be heard, and that is an important part of any process.

The NEXTDC Darwin data centre is being built. As you drive into Darwin today, you see an extension on the original NEXTDC data centre. I was fortunate to travel there with the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory to view the works underway. There were 37 electricians working on that site the day I visited. As a former electrician, it was fantastic to see tradespeople and apprentices working at that centre, essentially building the future of the Northern Territory. That is a positive thing. As we see further proposals, we will see further need for electricians, builders, concreters and plumbers to work on these projects, which will be positive for the Northern Territory.

We talk about the environmental regulatory system. The Northern Territory has robust environmental legislation that applies to all sectors and can appropriately manage and deal with this emerging industry, as it has many others before it.

In the Territory all proposals that have the potential for significant environmental impact must be referred to the independent NTEPA (Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority). If the NTEPA determines an environmental impact assessment is required, environmental approval must be granted by the minister for Environment before the proposal can proceed.

There are important regulatory processes in place. The process for an environmental impact assessment is legislated under the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act) and the Environment Protection Regulations 2020.

The *Environment Protection Act* states that the environmental impact assessment process is to ensure that a development proposal does not have an unacceptable impact on the environment now or in the future. It is important that as we are developing the Northern Territory, we have one eye to the future. I have a couple of young kids and I want to ensure there are plenty of barra in the rivers and plenty of crocodiles—I do not think we have an issue with that into the future—for them to see.

The NTEPA's environmental impact process evaluates the environmental impacts of development proposals, which include the principles of ecologically sustainable development. The process is transparent and allows public participation—as I have spoken about—with submissions from the community considered by the NTEPA in its advice to the minister for Environment.

Water use has been a big hot topic in regard to data centres. I will talk about the regulatory frameworks in the Northern Territory for water use, because we have pretty strong water regulation in this space. Water is available to support development across the NT. That is important. We want to make sure, that when people come to the Northern Territory, no matter who they are, we have a strong regulatory process that they need to follow to ensure there is water available to support that development.

DRAFT

Although there is interest in data centre development, no application for a water extraction licence has been received by my department. It is important to tell residents of Berry Springs that long before any development took place, an application for a water extraction licence would need to be sought to take any of that groundwater or surface water.

There are large quantities of water available in the Georgina Wiso water plan area, with 170,000 megalitres of water per year currently available for allocation. That is for agriculture, possibly developments like this and other developments. We do not pick and choose in the Northern Territory. We say that water is available for development and we will work with people to enable that to occur. This is backed up by the best available science, which is publicly available; it is that transparency piece.

There is also water available in other regions of the Territory. Seventy thousand megalitres a year is available in the Aboriginal water reserve. It may be that Aboriginal landholders can trade their water and gain an economic benefit from these sorts of data centres coming to the Northern Territory. As the Minister for Water Resources, I want to make sure that Aboriginal people receive a benefit when their water is being used.

The water source for data centres or any industry use will depend on location. That is important. There are water allocation plans across many areas of the Northern Territory, but where there is no water allocation plan, a water extraction licence will still have to be sought.

A data centre would be captured under a beneficial use category for industry. That captures a huge range, including miners, the petroleum industry and beneficial users. They have to make sure they acquire a water licence. Directly sourcing water from groundwater or surface water systems would require water extraction licences, as I have stated before, and standard application processes apply—that is, an application is decided by the independent Controller of Water Resources. That is an important piece of information: it is not decided by me; it is decided by the independent Controller of Water Resources as directed by the NT *Water Act*.

The primary use of water by data centres is to cool information technology equipment. The cooling method drives demand for water. As Minister Cahill said, this technology is constantly evolving and the need for water is reducing all the time as new technologies come online. Air cooling, for example, means low water use and evaporative cooling requires higher water usage.

Hybrid systems have variable water use. As I said before, I have visited the NT Government data centre. A lot of people do not know that the NT Government has its own data centre where it runs and stores a lot of its own information. You probably drive past it all the time—it is just off Bagot Road—but I can assure you it operates and has been for a long time along with other data centres like NEXTDC.

I have spoken about the do not deal, and it is important to touch on what has been spoke about because others have touched on it regarding the federal government. Today the federal government intends to settle new rules for how data centres use energy and water at National Cabinet. The Northern Territory has been clear about this. There has been strong opposition from the Northern Territory and Queensland governments about some of the proposals that Minister Bowen has put forward.

Regarding energy, I have been fortunate to attend national energy ministers' meetings along with the Deputy Chief minister. We have made it clear. The settings in the Northern Territory could not be further away from those that they face on the east coast. On the east coast grid, they are literally dealing with a limiting amount of energy. That is the biggest issue there. They do not have enough energy to plug in data centre after data centre.

We are fortunate in the Territory where through the development of the Beetaloo Sub-basin we are about to become energy rich. We will have a comparative advantage over other jurisdictions as it relates to energy, and when projects like SunCable come to the forefront and are being developed, we will have further energy that is likely to be able to be utilised. We are not picking winners in the Northern Territory; we are saying, 'Bring your business here, speak with these proponents, whether it be Beetaloo gas or SunCable, and see where you can derive the best energy sources for your development'. That is an exciting proposal.

We could have data centres here powered by solar energy, but what the federal government is seeking to do is say that is the only source of power, the majority source of power that you must utilise. In the Territory where we are fortunate to have an abundance of energy, we do not want to pick and choose; we want to leave that up to industry.

Water efficiency guidelines are applied to data centres, and some of what has been spoken about we can work collaboratively with the federal government. We are not wanting to go to war over everything. We are

DRAFT

happy to work with the base of principles, but when the federal government comes in heavy handed and seeks to legislate so jurisdictions cannot make rules for themselves that is where Territorians get their back up. This week we have been talking about where federal intervention has occurred and how much that has upset the Northern Territory. We do not need further legislation restricting what Territorians can do and make choices about their own future.

We know that the Territory allocates water to industry through the water allocation planning process and there does not need to be any further oversight from the Commonwealth. This position has been clearly communicated to the federal minister for Water and the Environment. We do not agree that the Commonwealth should impose requirements on the Territory as to how data centres are powered. We have spoken at length about that.

The Northern Territory is not on the national electricity grid, and all the current proposals are positioning themselves to provide their own off-grid power with significant opportunities to supplement power for NT residents and to help drive down energy costs. That is important because I have seen reports that in other jurisdictions they are pushing up electricity costs. That will not happen in the Northern Territory. Every proponent we have spoken to is bringing their own energy to the Northern Territory, and if they can provide it to the Northern Territory in the way in which we see fit, at a lower cost, it will assist to steady power prices for Territorians.

We are not like the eastern and southern states with oversubscribed electricity grid systems. The Territory is isolated from the east coast and the south, and we have significant opportunities to benefit from these data centres. We reject any move from the Commonwealth to overreach their regulatory role and impose unfair and unjust rules on our economic opportunity, just like we reject the call from those opposite to undertake a costly and time-consuming review into the current and future data centre development in the Northern Territory.

I will leave my comments there. I thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity to speak on this important issue.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I contribute to this debate this afternoon calling for a proper parliamentary inquiry into the development of data centres in the Northern Territory. I will be clear from the outset that this should not be a debate about whether technology or investment is good or bad.

We have heard already in this Chamber from members that data centres are increasingly important as part of a modern economy and society. They support cloud technology, computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, research, government services and almost every part of our digital lives.

The Territory may well have some significant advantages. As we have heard, we are close to Asia and have international subsea cable connections, we have land and extraordinary renewable energy potential and the opportunity to build new skills and new industries in the Territory. The Territory government's own digital industry work has identified opportunities in data sovereignty connections, the Southeast Asia cybersecurity, AI and other emerging industries. There is definitely opportunity here and no-one is arguing against looking at what that opportunity is and how we can leverage the Territory to look at that investment.

However, opportunity should never mean a blank cheque. Right now the Northern Territory Government is saying that as many as 12 data centre proponents are looking in the Territory. I am not saying that is bad; it is good that people are looking at investing in the Territory. Great.

This is not, as the member for Braitling was talking about, a couple of computers in a shed. We are talking about sophisticated, complex infrastructure and, potentially, an entirely new-scale industry in the Territory, which is a new industrial sector with enormous requirements for energy, land, water and infrastructure.

We heard today of one of the proposals at Weddell is contemplating up to two gigawatts of onsite gas-fired electricity generation to support the hyperscale data centres. To support that scale, let me put that into perspective. Two gigawatts is more than six times the maximum demand recorded across Darwin and Katherine's electricity system from 2024–25.

The proponents intend to build their new generation rather than drawing on the power from the existing grid. That is important, but it also demonstrates just how big these developments can be. There is Project Aries, which is proposed, I think, for the south-west of Daly Waters. That proposal includes about one gigawatt data centre campus and a 7,000 hectare solar farm, battery storage, gas-fired generation and the potential extraction of up to four gigalitres of groundwater every year. I think it is from the Wiso basin. When we are

DRAFT

talking about this, those numbers deserve proper scrutiny. We know that water in the Northern Territory is precious. We have heard members of the government say this week alone that water is life.

Water is precious so we need to make sure that when we are talking about the development of this important industry we are understanding just how much water is going to be needed and whether it is a closed system. People have said that some of these systems might be closed—whether they are evaporative or water cooled. It is important. It is not lost on me that in many parts of the Territory, our communities, pastoralists, Aboriginal organisations, agriculture and industry are all dependent on groundwater, particularly as you leave Darwin and get to the more arid environments across the Northern Territory. People rely on groundwater and are taking water from aquifers.

Where I come from, the land of enchantment, Central Australia, we do not get water from a dam; we get water from an aquifer—ancient water, thousands of years old—and we do not get the level of recharge at a high rate. What that effectively means is when you live somewhere like Central Australia, you are effectively mining water. You are taking water sometimes at a rate that it will not be recharged at as much as you are taking. There might be a huge amount there to mine, but we need to bear in mind that we are mining water in some places across the Territory.

Before we build facilities and industries that require significant quantities of water for cooling, I think we all deserve to know how much water these facilities will use, where it will come from, will drinking water be used, can recycled or grey water be used, and can you use water from the Territory sewerage networks? Because it will not be consumed, can that be filtered and can that water be run through these data centres if it is only used for cooling? Is there a level of filtration that can be used to do that? Parts of the Territory do come under immense pressure during prolonged periods of heat or drought. What are the cumulative effects if we have not one data centre but five, 10 or the 12 that we are hearing about?

These are reasonable questions. The Commonwealth is having important conversations, I believe, today at National Cabinet about developing national expectations and standards for large data centres around water, energy, jobs and community benefit. Other jurisdictions are raising questions as well. I think NSW has looked to establish a parliamentary inquiry examining data centres, including their electricity demand, water consumption, noise, air quality, heat, land use, employment, and the economic benefits and impacts on those local communities surrounding these areas. You must ask, if it is good enough for NSW to warrant a parliamentary inquiry and scrutiny, surely the Northern Territory and Territorians deserve the same level of scrutiny to understand our water systems, our electricity grids, climate, population and what the needs are.

Of course energy must be part of that conversation. We must understand the generation needs, how much of that will be renewable, how much gas will be burnt and what are the emissions? Can large new generators strengthen the electricity system and reduce costs for Territorians, or could infrastructure costs ultimately find their way back onto households and consumers if it is not an independent grid?

These are important questions. The motion allows us to look at having that conversation. I think it is important for all of us to come together and have a look. Again, I am not an expert in data centres, and I do not claim to be. Certainly from where I am from in the bush, we do not really understand data centres of that great detail. I do not know if they even make noise. I think these are valid questions that everyday Territorians want to understand.

I am not here to put crap on the government; I am here to say that there are people who just do not know or want to understand what comes with a data centre? Noise, water consumption needs, energy needs, infrastructure needs? These are some valid points that a parliamentary process of allowing us to have an independent inquiry could pick up

I do not often link myself to the Deputy Chief Minister, but I want ‘jobs, jobs, jobs’ in the Territory as well. I want to understand how many jobs actually come with data centres and what the jobs are. Are they jobs in maintaining the actual data? Are they maintaining the machines that maintain the data? Do you need groundsmen on site to maintain that infrastructure …

Mr Maley: All of the above.

Mr PAECH: … or is it a set and forget? Once you build a data centre, does the AI maintain and manage the building itself in terms of the information technology there? It probably is all of the above, as people are interjecting, but I don't know that because I am not a data centre expert and everyday Territorians.

Mr Edgington: Do an AI search.

DRAFT

Mr PAECH: Well, we could do an AI search, but the thing is, you cannot always rely on ChatGPT, people. It just scrapes the internet. You have to still have a human brain to understand complex challenges and have the right information.

Mr Maley: You have one brain between all of you over there.

Mr PAECH: I am not wanting to get into the argy-bargy tonight.

The government has made it clear that it will not support the inquiry. That is okay; that is your prerogative and your choice. We are just putting up tonight that we think that an inquiry is a worthwhile measure because it can answer some questions.

I am acknowledging tonight that the government has said no. I am now asking—given that it will not support that inquiry—the communication piece will be crucial moving forward. There are lots of people out there who really are trying to understand what that means in terms of water, land, infrastructure, amenity, noise, jobs and opportunities; that is stuff we would like to know. It is worthwhile reminding the government that if you get a chance, that stuff could be important to communicate with people in the Territory. We are talking about data centres, and people think that is AI. That could be a component of it, but a data centre is not necessarily just a place for AI.

We need to understand this world that we are now living in with AI, because the demand for data centres will grow. I do not think anyone is disputing that. As people move more into the age of digital technology we will have a demand for storage. How many people in this parliament go through their phone and delete photos? Probably not that many. On my phone I have 27,000 photos, and a few people here are agreeing as well.

Mr Maley: The Member for Barkly has more than that!

Mr PAECH: The Member for Barkly probably has biggest mob. When you do not delete those photos, a data centre backs that up.

Mr Edgington: Are the photos all of you?

Mr PAECH: They are not all of me, Member for Barkly. I might even have a few of you on there.

Streaming services like Netflix, Stan and Prime, as well as those people who have Alexa at home—it all puts pressure on a data centre. We acknowledge that we will need more. As people are using AI to help them write speeches and tidy up documents, I think the demand for data will grow, and I do not think that AI is a bad thing; I would like to make that point clear now.

I come from a remote electorate where AI is helping remote Aboriginal Territorians who have—for a long time—not had the confidence in themselves to put together a letter. Whether it is to a minister, a housing department, health, about a road or even to access superannuation. It has helped them formulate and create documents that give them the confidence to communicate with organisations out there. I am genuinely worried about—I know it is not a Territory government issue—people who use AI to create annual reports and documents and allow AI to manipulate Aboriginal artwork; that is cultural theft. It is breaching copyright and those are stories that need to be created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This extends to other members in this chamber who come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

It annoys all of us when people use AI and they are not using an Aboriginal person or someone from another culturally diverse background to tell that important story. AI is good for making flyers, we all use it, but when it comes to cultural integrity, it is important that strong guidelines are developed to make sure that we are not seeing AI take over that role. AI is good, but we must also have a plan in the Territory, federally and have a conversation globally with the development of AI and the need for more data centres.

We must also think about what the jobs of the future will be, because AI will replace a lot of jobs where it finds or creates efficiencies. We need to understand that so we can create jobs in other areas. The arts, particularly performing arts, is one of those areas. AI will be unable to replace the sheer talent and creativity of a performing artist, singer, musician or dancer. I think we might see a resurgence in that area.

I am telling the government that data centres are good, and we will need more of them across the country, but we need to understand what comes with a data centre that we will need to be prepared for.

DRAFT

I come from Central Australia. I often said, even when we were in government, that Desert Knowledge Australia is a great site for a data centre. Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, in the bush at Desert Knowledge Australia—I think that is in the Member for Barkly's portfolios—would be a great place to build a data centre. It does not flood and you have heaps of sunrays if you want to do renewable projects.

I make the point that good investment needs good regulation, because regulation provides certainty for business regarding what it can work within and how it can work. Good development needs good community confidence. People need to know that it will be good for not only business but also the community.

These are industries that we need to support to make sure they are here for the next 20, 30 and 40 years, but they also need social licence in our community.

This parliamentary debate pushes for an independent inquiry that would allow proponents, traditional owners, scientists, water experts, energy experts, unions, local businesses, environmental organisations, councils, land councils and ordinary Territorians to give evidence and testimony, ensuring that they have the opportunity to put on the public record how they feel about data centres, emerging technologies and growing industries. It would allow us to look beyond an individual project. I am not picking on a particular project; I am saying that if there is opportunity in the Territory, we should collectively do the work to understand the cumulative impacts of a number of data centres.

I think there are 12 potential data centres or 12 different organisations that have expressed interest. Twelve individual proposals at one time does not necessarily tell us what 12 developments collectively carry or mean for our water, power systems, land and communities. We need to understand what that looks like, what it means and how it can work. It is incredibly important that we understand the challenges. It is an exciting time, but also many people in our community are slightly cautious about what this will mean for the Territory. I think there is a lot of anxiety out there.

A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: I promise I will be quick, Member for Nelson; you will like what I am about to say.

The Members for Nelson and Port Darwin spoke about jobs. I want jobs, jobs, jobs because it means money, money, money into the Territory which means we can buy beautiful things and have a beautiful Territory. However, we need good regulation with that so there is certainty for people in the community.

The digital age will help us. We see internationally that where communities connect to the digital age they can lift GDP by 10% to 20%. The more we can do that, the more we can unlock the door for opportunity in the bush. I am interested in that. It would be an amazing opportunity if we could work with Aboriginal communities across the Territory and have data centres operating on Aboriginal land providing an economic development opportunity on country, so we are not constantly seeing the only economic opportunities we get on our country as black fellas is digging country up. Imagine if we would build data centres on country and be part of that investment, so Aboriginal people are part owners in data centres in parts of the Northern Territory.

It would be an amazing story to talk about, if we worked with land councils in the Territory to develop a data centre on an Aboriginal land trust, so that not only do we have the first First Nations data centre in Australia, but in the Northern Territory. It provides economic opportunity for people and is a long-term investment. It is not going to run out when the resources run out. It is a data centre that will continue to grow.

We could do it in Central Australia, in the Barkly, in the Katherine region, or anywhere in the Territory. That is a great opportunity that we should be looking at. That is what an independent inquiry could look at as well: alternative models around delivering and developing data centres in the Northern Territory.

I have heard the CLP Government, that for whatever reason it chooses, it does not want to do the inquiry. That is okay, that is it's prerogative, but I reinforce that communication is key. There are many people who are still iffy, who do not really know what a data centre is. The Member for Braitling spoke earlier about how streaming services puts pressure on data centres, AI puts pressure on data centres, Alexa, Google Nest and basically everything we do in the modern world puts pressure on data centres.

DRAFT

It is an emerging industry; it is a good industry. We need to work with it. There are amazing opportunities. I do not want to see all the opportunity to store data is coming in on the pipeline across the subsea and going out of the Territory. We should keep the investment here.

The CLP are working on it, and certainly it is a great opportunity. We have a differing view on how we can get there: we support the inquiry; the CLP supports other measures. It is an important debate to have. Data centres are being used right now to store everything we do in this place. Thank you for the opportunity, Member for Nightcliff. Good investment always requires good regulation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Gwoja. I just checked, and I have 31,062 photos on my phone. Between me, you, and the Member for Barkly, perhaps we need our own data centre.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, before I begin my contribution, to you and the Member for Gwoja, delete your 50,000 photos because you are putting pressure on the data systems. We have worked it out.

I do not normally agree with the Member for Gwoja, but I do agree with keeping the investment here. That is exactly what this motion will not do. It will create uncertainty, and we know that certainty is the key. We know through the mining industry and the agriculture industry that investors who can invest all around the world will not invest unless there is certainty in relation to their investment, idea or project.

Another review in relation to this will create uncertainty. We already know what the review into the gas industry did: put it years and years behind. Thankfully, in the last two years our government has come into power, turned that around, and gotten gas flowing, which will be flowing next week.

I see that there could be a bit of friction between the Member for Daly and the Member for Nightcliff, maybe because he took his job and he is a bit sensitive about that. The Member for Daly got the sack and then he did not talk about the Member for Nightcliff's motion at all, he just gave a big rant about his electorate of Daly and confused people even more. He made allegations without backing anything up about constituents coming to his office. The story I get from the Member from Goyder is that his office is never open. He is never there. Who knows where he is? Maybe now he has gotten the sack and been demoted, he is there a bit more, but we just do not know.

Coming in here and having a rant shows how much chaos there is and how Labor cannot be trusted. Those opposite cannot even be a team; they do not back up each other up and they stick the knives in. There has been change after change. It is clear from the Member for Daly's rant that he is still sensitive about getting the sack. He did not even back up the Member for Nightcliff whatsoever.

What has changed since 2001 when those opposite ran an expression of interest to bring commercial data centres to Darwin? What has changed since the Labor Chief Minister told Territorians that he wanted the Territory to become the digital hub for industry and investment? I quote former Chief Minister Michael Gunner:

> *America has the silicon valley. Why can't we be the silicon Territory?*
>
> *We've got a prime location on South-East Asia's doorstep, we've got land for data centres, the energy to power them, and smart people to work in the industry.*

I am not sure; maybe it is because, as the Member for Barkly said, the Member for Nightcliff is a spring chicken when it comes to the Territory. He came from Victoria where his Labor colleagues have destroyed that state. I am sure he was part of that Labor Party there. Maybe he has taken a bit of responsibility and left that sinking ship before it sank to the bottom of the ocean. Now he has come up here to sink Labor again. He will sink the ship up here. I am glad that he is on the other side, because the Territory ship does not need to be sunk. The Territory ship needs to be driven forward with dual outboards on the back, full throttle, burning as much fuel as possible to get the Territory economy going and to get jobs into the Northern Territory.

I make it clear that the Member for Nightcliff's motion is not about scrutiny; it is a motion about stopping development in the Northern Territory. It goes back to what I asked: what has changed? The former Labor government called for the Silicon Territory? It did not talk about reviews and independent talkfests. The former Chief Minister was like, 'Let's bring it on'.

Mr Edgington: Listen to your colleagues; do not distance yourself from them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Cease the interjections, please, Member for Barkly.

DRAFT

Mr MALEY: We know that because the Member for Nightcliff has already started saying, 'It is not me. I am not that.' Maybe he is trying to bring himself closer to the Victorian Government. We know where it is going—down the gurgler, real quick. The poor old Member for Nightcliff seems to be a ship with no rudder floating around and flip-flopping everywhere.

That is not what the Territory needs. The Territory needs certainty. We need to make sure that we send a clear message to anyone who wants to invest in the Territory, whether it be in agriculture, tourism, Defence, mining, gas or energy, that we are open for business.

We rely upon our rigorous systems that are already in place. We have environmental protection laws and strict regulations about how to operate. We assess major projects on their merits. You have heard me say 'case by case' a lot. The one-size-fits-all approach that federal Labor is trying does not work. It is clear that the Member for Nightcliff has the playbook straight from Mr Bowen, has been told what to do and has started talking about what suits Victoria. Let us be clear, Member for Nightcliff: what happens in Victoria is not suited to the Northern Territory. We do not need federal politicians telling us what to do and saying that we are not smart enough to make rules for ourselves. We have strong regulation in the Northern Territory.

Will the next step be to call for an independent inquiry into the mining and tourism industries, just to make sure that we know the social and environmental impacts on Defence; or do we send a message that we are open for business and ready to go? We back our strict regulations. If people want to invest in the Territory, they need to comply with all sorts of things.

The Member for Gwoja spoke about Aboriginal land. Bring it on; if the landowners want to do that, just like anyone else, I encourage them to make an application. It would be great for them, to give them certainty, purpose and jobs.

I will use the word 'certainty' a lot in my contribution because that is what it is all about. We need to make sure we get that certainty to move forward.

This is not different from other major projects. This is a project for which we will have to jump through all the hoops. The Environment minister spoke about some of the safeguards he would put in place before any project is started. The Member for Daly, in in his rant, talked about, 'We will consult'.

All we have done in relation to Weddell is give a 'do not deal for one year'. We do not know what the proposal looked like; it is up to the proponent to come back to the community and the government and say, 'This is what I am proposing', just like they would if they were a miner, a tourism development, or if they were to open a new restaurant in Darwin, Katherine or Tennant Creek. They need to say, 'This is what I will do', and bring the community along with them.

If we are to consult, what would we consult about? We do not know what sort of data centre will be there; that is up to the proponent. We are not in business to tell people what they must build. We say, 'These are the regulations. They are strict and strong regulations, and you must comply with them to be able to invest in Northern Territory'. It goes back to that 'certainty'.

The case by case is important because we do not have a big system. Territorians will not wear the cost. On the eastern seaboard in Victoria where the member for Nightcliff is from, they stopped searching for energy and banned it. Now they are wearing the consequences because they are in an energy crisis. It is the same in New South Wales, which has energy issues as well because they stopped it. Unlike QLD, which has been drilling for gas and getting that gas energy up and running. They do not have a energy problem. In the Territory we have an energy problem because Labor stopped it and put us a year behind.

Thank God, next week the gas will be flowing. As I said earlier today, the Beetaloo gas will be turning on the lights and the air cons, allowing people to run their electric vehicles and electric scooters. All those people will be saying thank you to the gas industry and Beetaloo gas.

We do not want to create uncertainty. Unfortunately, the Labor Party, through the feds, is trying to create that uncertainty with its regulations. We do not what they are. I know the Chief Minister is in Canberra now fighting for the Territory and Territorians and putting our case forward. One thing that I know from my limited time here is Territorians do not like to be told what to do by Canberra.

I feel sorry for people like the federal Labor candidates, if they have to follow a line and talk about what their federal candidates will do, because they all will not be liked in the Territory.

DRAFT

These projects we are talking about like the one at Weddell, which I will use as an example, are talking about their own power plants. The one in Barkly is talking about its own power plant. We say that should be a mixture of whatever they choose—let the market decide what sort of energy they want to consume. Provided they comply with our regulations, leave it to the market. We want to open the door to business and let them walk through.

I heard a saying that investment comes where it is welcome; it stays where it is appreciated. We want to tell investors we welcome them here and we appreciate them investing more money. That is the message that we are working hard to send in relation to Beetaloo. We know there has been a lot of investment and we want them to feel that it is welcome and is appreciated, so it stays here. That is what we want to do for any industry.

This is talking about data centres, but I want to broaden it into the mining, the tourism, Defence, gas and energy. If they want to invest here, they are welcome. I have said it many times and I feel like a broken record, but we have to make sure they comply with our strict regulations to they are welcome to spend money here.

The power these generators use—the Member for Nightcliff went through some stats—will be from their own systems. In fact, it could be a benefit to us if we have a problem in our system. We know the previous Labor government failed to invest not only in Corrections, police, courts, health and housing, it also failed to invest in our gas-fired generators. They are old and outdated, and it takes time to get them up and running. If there is some sort of mass emergency and there is a nice new power station sitting there, perhaps we can connect into it to get people back into having their way of life.

Mr Deputy Speaker if we say that we will switch off the grid and not use technology, I say good luck to you; it is very tough to do. I go out camping regularly. We go for a week or ten days at any time and we do not take anything. It is not as easy as you think to live off the land. You must have a very strong gut and spend a lot of time gathering food because it is not as easy as you think. Technology is here, and why would we not embrace it? Why would we not use it?

This thermal load that the data centres—we are talking about are important for us to be able to continue to work through.

The Beetaloo is not Canberra's gas; unlight falling here is not Canberra's sunlight. The jobs that come, and putting them to work here, is not for Canberra to give away. We want the jobs based here in the Northern Territory because we want to make sure that Territorians benefit. I have said this to many people: We are happy to have you here, but we must make sure that our job as government is that Territorians and the Territory get the benefits from that.

We want to put our Territory resources to work, to benefit Territorians and Territory families. Without population growth, without people coming here to the Territory, it will wither and die just like it did under the Labor government. We do not want to deny Territorians the ability to invest in the opportunities for their kids to grow up here and train to have meaningful, well-paid jobs. That is what mining and data centres will do—as I said before—even tourism and Defence.

Labor cannot have it both ways. It put on NEXTDC and said, 'It's great; let's go for it.' Now, Labour is trying to say, 'Woah, let us talk about it'. The Territory does not need any more talking; the Territory is open for business.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker I support this motion which is calling on the Assembly to undertake an independent review into the current and future data centre development in the Northern Territory.

Like some other members in this Chamber I had just had an opportunity an hour ago to meet with the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh group, where this string was tied around our wrist. The history and meaning of it was explained to us. We were told that it was to remind us we here to make law for good. When we are to make those laws, we are here to think about the future. Especially, our future generations. What a wonderful reminder for exactly what we are talking about here today.

I support what this motion calls for. An independent review of this kind, is urgent. I welcome it coming before the Assembly, but a review is not enough on its own. I am calling for an urgent moratorium on all AI data centre planning and development. This is something that many people across the community have called

DRAFT

for. I have hundreds of people who signed a petition calling for a moratorium. I have supported those calls publicly for a pause on hyperscale data centre approvals in the Territory, and I will continue to call for one.

An independent review is only meaningful if the facts on the ground have not already changed by the time it reports. If approvals, land allocations and infrastructure commitments keep proceeding while the review is underway, we will end up reviewing decisions that have already been made, not informing the decisions that are still to come. As the Member for Nightcliff said, questions need to be answered before agreements are signed. That is exactly what this moratorium is calling for. While I support this motion, I want to make absolutely clear that we need to urgently press pause now and not wait another day.

This is a massive decision; there is no Territorian who these projects that it will not affect.

We have just heard—and it might be breaking news for people in this room—the Chief Minister say that she has secured an agreement from the Prime Minister that the NT data centres can be powered by gas from the Beetaloo Sub-basin

That is exactly why we need a moratorium, so we can really understand what the impact will be in the Northern Territory. We already have the highest emissions in the world per capita. We have heard they are going to become even higher. We know our environment and livelihood is already under threat from climate change in ways that are unimaginable to Australians down south. Before we commit to future data centres, which, on current projections, will use more than six times the peak power of Darwin and Katherine combined each.

Members: Shame!

J DAVIS: Yes, shame.

If they are to be powered by gas, we need to know. Will their contribution to our emissions represent an unacceptable risk to our environment and livelihood before we make that commitment.

We heard the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations deliver a speech that was meant to reassure Territorians. Listing all the ways these developments could operate. She said the government must plan properly and hold every proponent to a high standard on water, energy and community development. But she has given no commitments or information about how the government will do this.

The community is not asking for hypothetical examples of how these developments could or could not go ahead. They are asking for concrete protections and transparent agreements consulted on before any deals are struck with these companies.

If the government wants us to believe that proper planning and protections will be in place, they should demonstrate that to Territorians by being open and transparent about plans and agreements already made, and the plan for consultation and protections that the CLP will put in place for Territorians, our water and environment.

If there are robust regulatory systems in place, as the minister for the Environment claims, then show us. Tell us how the Northern Territory will regulate these developments to protect Territorians. We are waiting on the edge of our seats.

When we are talking about developments of this scale, Territorians cannot rely on hypotheticals. We need clear assurances from government with the work to back it up. That starts with a moratorium to allow proper time for proper planning.

The CLP has described the Territory's ambition in terms of becoming a global hub for data centres, with 12 proponents currently looking at data centre development across the Territory. We know that individually, the projects already on the table we have heard about, are enormous.

Project Ares have proposed one-gigawatt hyperscale campus in the Barkly, drawing groundwater from the Montejinni Limestone aquifer, with operational water demand estimated about four gigalitres per year. The Weddell, or Berry Springs, proposal, a reported $40bn facility seeking two gigawatts of power on 185 hectares of Territory land granted on an exclusive basis with up to two gigawatts of on-site gas-fired generation.

DRAFT

The ABC has reported that two gigawatts is more than six times the combined maximum demand of Darwin and Katherine in 2024–25. It is not a made-up figure, Member for Barkly.

No single one of these is a normal development. Twelve of them considered together could reshape the Territory's water systems, electricity grid, land use and emissions profile for decades. That is not a decision any responsible government should make without first establishing the facts.

No decision of this magnitude should be made without transparency, and Territorians do not have it.

The CLP keeps talking about these 12 proponents, but we know nothing about where these discussions are up to, what the government has offered to these companies, what agreements have been made and what those agreements cover.

All of this has been kept from the public. A proper independent review should establish at a minimum: where will the water come from? Which aquifers? What is the cumulative demand if some or all 12 proposals proceed? Where will the power come from and what does that mean for our isolated grid and our emissions trajectory? What land is being committed, on what terms, and what happens to the communities and to the environments around it? Who are these companies and customers? What agreements has the government already entered into on Territorians' behalf? What is the actual net public benefit? In jobs, wages, tax, royalty revenue, once the cost of public infrastructure to support the industry is taken into account, the real figure?

What are the cumulative environmental and climate impacts of pursuing this industry at the scale currently proposed, including on our critical and fragile water systems? What public benefit will Territorians actually receive if development were to go ahead? What will this cost the Territory today and into our children's future? What do we get back for it? If we cannot answer those questions, then we are gambling with everyone's future.

The Territory does not belong to the CLP to sell off; the Territory belongs to all of us. We are caretakers of it; we are dependent on a liveable Territory climate and flowing waterways. We need to know what the cumulative impact of these decisions will be. What will these projects mean for our climate, water and our future generations? If the answer to any of these questions is an unacceptable risk to our environment, our livelihood and our water, then development should not go ahead; it is plain and simple.

We do not need data centres; data centres need us. We should be making sure that any deal that goes ahead protects our critical resources and livelihood and delivers the best benefit to the Territory as possible, not hand over massive amounts of resources before doing basic due diligence These are not unreasonable, anti-business or anti-technology questions. They are questions of basic public accountability, and the available evidence gives us every reason to ask them now, not after the fact.

Jurisdictions that have already gone down this path show us that they are not theoretical concerns, they are exactly the problems governments elsewhere are now scrambling to deal with. In the Territory we have the chance to learn from those mistakes before we make them and we should take it. Water is not an abstract commodity here. It is the foundation of our communities, our environment and our way of life. It keeps our wetlands alive, sustains our incredible rivers and springs that draw people from all over the world to visit, and supports remote communities and pastoralists. In these waterways that are under threat, like the iconic Berry Springs—which we have heard the hyperscale AI data centre requiring billions of litres to cool it—is proposed to be built, they are under threat. When a government describes a Territory as having abundant water, Territorians are entitled to ask why would we give that away to AI companies, and what will that mean for the rest of us?

We also need to recognise that water is not always abundant in the Northern Territory. We have high water use in the dry and the Territory already uses more than twice the national average amount of water per person. We are talking about an industry that can require billions of litres a year to cool computers. If approvals for extraction, land allocation and infrastructure keep moving while a review is underway, the review will be assessing decisions that can no longer be undone.

Project Ares is a useful example. It is a proposed one-gigawatt hyperscale data centre on Murranji Station in the Barkly, drawing groundwater from the Montejinni Limestone Aquifer with operational demand estimated at around 4 gigalitres per year. More—according to Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation's own figures—than Greater Darwin uses in an entire month.

This proposal also includes gas fired generation of more than 1000 megawatts at full build out, enough on its own to more than double the Territory's existing gas fired generating capacity. The Northern Territory

DRAFT

EPA's referral for Project Ares has now been through public consultation. I look forward to seeing the results of those consultations and how they are taken on board by the government.

That is one project, and we know the government said there are 12. What is the cumulative water demand of 12 data centres? What happens in a dry year? What happens to existing users, to environmental water, to Aboriginal water interests and to interconnected groundwater systems drawn on by several projects at once? These questions need answers before approvals are granted, not after.

This is also not theoretical. In Dallas, Oregon, a city of about 16,000 people, Google has operated a major data centre campus for over a decade. For years, the public could not find out how much water it was using as Google treated the figures as commercially confidential. The city went to court funded by Google to keep a local newspaper from obtaining them, and the city eventually lost that fight, as they should have. When companies and governments are making decisions about public assets, the public deserves to know why they are making those decisions and what data they are relying on.

The release records showed that Google's water use in Dallas rose from about 355,000,000 gallons in 2021 to around 434,000,000 gallons in 2024; roughly 30% of the city's total water consumption from a single corporate campus. The public had to fight in court to find that out. Currently, we have no idea what agreements or deals the CLP has entered into with these proposed AI data centres. Have agreements been made? What has been covered by them? What, if anything, is being kept from the public, and why? Will this be released publicly?

Water should not be a trade secret. It is a public resource and Territorians have a right to know who is using it, how much, whether our waterways are at risk because of that use and what these companies are paying to use our water.

There is also the question of whether new water infrastructure will be built to facilitate this industry, which brings us to the Adelaide River Off-stream Water Storage (AROWS) proposal. The Territory already has the Manton and Darwin River Dams servicing Palmerston and Darwin's water needs. AROWS is a massive piece of infrastructure being progressed, it seems, without an end user for the water it would store at a site with genuine conservation value, using storage technology that will lose about 60% of its water to evaporation.

If this development is to go ahead, the government needs to answer a simple question: in terms of AROWS, who will use this water? If the answer is agriculture, which agriculture projects, customers and contracts? What is the economic return? If there is no committed end user, why should taxpayers fund the infrastructure? We should not build a dam first and then go looking for someone who wants the water afterwards. That is not economic planning. If data centres are part of the answer, the government should say so plainly.

If Territorians are being asked to invest millions or billions of dollars in a new massive dam to cool computers in these hyper-scale data centres, the government needs to tell us. A moratorium is not a rejection of this industry; it is the ordinary discipline of good government. Establish the facts, set the rules and then decide, rather than deciding first and hoping the facts turn out to support the decision.

Then there is power, and the American experience is instructive here too. In Georgia the state's largest utility built its latest long-term energy plan around an expected 8,500 megawatts of new load growth over six years, driven substantially by data centres. One consequence is that the coal-fired units at the Bowen and Scherer plants—4,000 megawatts of capacity that have been scheduled to retire—will now keep running, potentially through 2038, in part to meet that demand. So much for the assumption that data centres automatically drive a shift to clean energy. Left unregulated, enormous new electricity demand can just as easily drive the opposite outcome—more fossil fuel generation, more infrastructure, more emissions and higher costs. This should be a warning for the Territory.

The proposed Weddell data centre alone is seeking two gigawatts of power on 185 hectares of Territory, land granted on an exclusive basis. When I asked the government last sittings what evidence, independent advice and public interest assessment justified handing one company exclusive rights over that land, and whether that advice would be made public, the government refused to answer. When the government is making decisions about assets that belong to all of us, we deserve to know why they are being made.

Virginia offers a further warning about who ends up paying. Regulators there had to create an entirely new electricity rate class, GS5, specifically for large data centre customers after realising that speculative demand creates real financial risk. A utility can spend billions of dollars building generation and grid infrastructure for a proposed data centre that is then delayed, scaled down or never built, leaving ordinary ratepayers to cover the cost. Under new rules, qualifying data centres must sign 14-year contracts and pay minimum charges of

DRAFT

about 85% of transmission and distribution costs and 60% of generation costs, win or lose. Virginia had to write those rules after the fact because it did not write them first.

When this government talks about billions of dollars in private investment, I want to know how much of that is private and how much is public infrastructure that Territorians will have to fund to make this possible. A $40bn project is not a $40bn public benefit. The question is: what do Territorians pay and what do Territorians get?

None of this can be separated from the climate question. In 2023 the Northern Territory already had the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita of anywhere in the world, higher per person than petrostates like Qatar or Saudi Arabia. In Estimates we heard that they had risen by more than 60%, and the Environment minister said he believed that they would keep climbing.

According to the National Climate Risk Assessment data, large parts of the Territory are predicted to become unliveable by 2070. We cannot afford to increase our emissions. The Top End is already exposed to rising extreme heat days, more severe Wet Season events and water security pressure under a warming climate. Adding an extremely energy-intensive industry on top of that exposure without first showing how it is compatible with any credible climate trajectory for the Territory is not a risk that any credible climate trajectory for the territory is not a risk that any reasonable government would take.

We do not have to guess how this goes wrong; we can see it happening in real time.

New York has just become the first US state to impose a statewide pause on new hyperscale data centre permits, giving itself a year to build proper environmental, water and cost standards before more projects proceed. Seattle and other cities have done the same. That is not an anti-technology reflex. It is what good governments do when industry is growing faster than the rules meant to regulate it are. It is exactly the kind of ordinary discipline this moratorium asks the government, the Territory to adopt.

Establish the facts, set the rules and then decide. Do not take a punt and hope that the facts will turn out to support us and say we have made the right decision in the end.

I am not saying that every data centre proposal is necessarily bad. I am saying that the evidence currently available points to substantial unresolved risks. I have not seen the evidence of a demonstrated net benefit to Territorians. That is exactly what we need to see before we commit the land we are here to care for, our water, our future.

If an independent review finds a project can proceed without damaging our water systems, the public benefit outweighs the public cost, the developer will meet the full cost of the infrastructure it requires, and communities and traditional owners have been properly consulted and have genuinely consented …

Mr SMELT: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time be granted to the member.

Motion agreed to.

J DAVIS: I am not saying every data centre proposal is necessarily bad. I am saying the evidence that is currently available to us points to substantial unresolved risks and I have not seen evidence of a demonstrated net benefit to Territorians. That exactly what we need to see.

If an independent review finds a project can proceed without damaging our water systems, the public benefit outweighs the public costs, the developer will meet the full cost of the infrastructure requires, and communities and traditional owners have been properly consulted and have genuine consented, then that is the conversation the Territory can have. That conversation should follow the evidence, not precede it. The burden of proof sits with government and with proponents, not with Territorians left to find out after the fact.

This is a David-and-Goliath contest over who Territory, land, water and power ultimately serve. A government that weighs projects like this through without first doing the work is not a government that is putting Territorians long term interests first. The CLP is asking Territorians to trust a massive experiment with our water, power and land while refusing to answer some very basic questions.

There are potentially 12 projects on the table. We should not be making irreversible decisions before we know what they will cost, what resources they will consume, what Territorians will actually get back, and what

DRAFT

it means for all of us here in the long term. A moratorium is not saying no; it is saying stop, do the work, get the evidence and then decide.

This debate is not about Territorians saying Canberra cannot tell us what to do. It is about Territorians having a right to know what is going on in our own backyard and whether the Territory government is prepared to protect Territorians from the cost of getting this wrong.

The motion from the Member for Nightcliff asked for something modest—an independent review into current and future data centres. I support that, so I will be supporting this motion, but I do not want that support to be the end of this conversation. A review without a moratorium risks just becoming a report on decisions that have already been made.

I will keep calling for a moratorium alongside a review and supporting the hundreds and hundreds of Territorians who are calling for this, so we have the time we genuinely need to establish the evidence, investigate the cumulative impacts, set proper water, energy, noise and disclosure standards, work out who pays for infrastructure, make sure Territorians have a real say.

I urge every member in this Chamber to support Territorians having the review that gets the evidence and the moratorium that gives us time to use it before it is too late.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I will recap the debate we had this afternoon, reiterate a couple of key points and respond to a couple of points raised by government members.

I reiterate that today we are calling for an independent inquiry into the development and regulation of data centres in the Northern Territory. This is critical because it is an emerging and growing industry. We encourage new industries, development, innovation and entrepreneurship in the NT, but we must know exactly what we are dealing with. We need publicly available, Territory-wide plans that address the energy needs, water needs, the land, and the impact on the environment and infrastructure.

There has already been a 'do not deal' agreed to with the CLP government and a private proponent, but we know little about what that involves, what the next steps are and, as the Member for Daly said, there has been little consultation or engagement with the community.

While other jurisdictions, particularly Victoria and New South Wales, are developing their own regulatory frameworks and doing the hard work, we are not seeing the same level of effort from this CLP government. There needs to be minimum standards, clear regulations and set ground rules so that everyone knows how the development will proceed.

Critically, this independent inquiry is not about putting a stop to this emerging industry. It is to get all the facts on the table so that Territorians can understand for themselves what is involved, the benefits, the costs, the trade-offs and how it will affect their local community. It is critical that we have this transparency and integrity around the processes and outcomes.

It is important that we know who will pay for the infrastructure, who will pay for use of the resources, the benefits, the procurement rules and what jobs will be created. As the Member for Gwoja reflected, we want the jobs in the Northern Territory, but we do not know whether it will be a FIFO workforce? What jobs will be on the ground for Territorians? Will there be opportunities to partner with remote communities? Will there be opportunities for First Nations-led projects? An independent inquiry could look at that.

Territory Labor supports responsible data centre development, but before agreements are made and support is given, the work needs to be done to ensure there is scrutiny, transparency and, most importantly, consultation. The Member for Daly referenced this several times in his speech. The fact that he has constituents from his own electorate and neighbouring government electorates coming to him seeking answers says everything you need to know about where this project is at.

Regarding a couple of points raised by the Member for Port Darwin, I am not questioning the concept, challenging subsea cables or the critical work that was undertaken by the previous Labor government. We should be proud of that work. But the scale of the water, energy and land these new data centres coming online require has changed. This is not just a building in the Darwin CBD. It is much broader than that, which is why we need to do the work and make the effort to have an independent inquiry, hear from the experts and understand the implications for the Northern Territory.

DRAFT

On the consultation piece, this idea of announcing projects first and consulting with the community later is something that we have seen too often with this CLP government. It is fantastic that the Member for Daly has taken the initiative to hold a public town hall meeting on Monday 31 August.

A member interjecting.

Mr SMELT: I hope that the Members for Goyder and Nelson will be in attendance.

This is a great example of Territory Labor members doing the work of the CLP government. The CLP government should be doing this work and organising the community town hall meetings, but it is left to the Member for Daly who is stepping up and doing the work of the CLP government, which is nowhere to be seen. It shows fantastic initiative, and I hope that CLP members will attend on Monday night in Berry Springs. They might even be able to help answer some of the questions. Who knows? We will see.

The Member for Braitling raised a couple of points about the robust standards. I am glad to hear that he has utmost faith in robust standards and the conditions and processes we have for environmental regulation and project assessment. However, he did not outline what they were. We did not hear the detail of which ones specifically will address these new data centre projects.

A question also has to be asked. It is fantastic that we have this great faith in our existing systems but, as we have seen interstate in Victoria and New South Wales, why are they developing new frameworks and standards? Because this is a new industry. I am proud of the regulations that we have, but they could always be improved, especially when we have new developments like large-scale data centres.

It was also great to hear the Member for Braitling talk about solar power. Renewable energy is terrific—the infinite energy supply of the sun that can power so much in the Northern Territory. I hope that commitment and faith in renewable energy continues and we see a renewable energy zone at Weddell being fast-tracked. That project has gone nowhere under the CLP government and this would be a great time to kick it off.

The Member for Nelson also reflected somewhat on the topic. He reflected on certainty, his word of the day and said he would use lots of it. That is the entire point of having this independent inquiry; so that we have the facts and can interrogate the assumptions, put it out on the table and the community and industry—everyone—can see what is involved with these new developments.

Certainty is what this independent inquiry will help deliver. We have not had a vote on it yet, but I look forward to support from the CLP government on this motion. It would be fantastic to see a bipartisan approach to evidence gathering and hearing from experts and the community. It is that certainty that we need. Industry, the community and our government departments need it. We all would benefit from having this independent inquiry.

It was terrific that the Member for Nelson also wanted to reflect on planning decisions. He referenced the example of a restaurant. Yes, you might want to set up a restaurant. You put an ad in the paper and go through the planning process. However, I put it to you that a large-scale data centre is not the same as a restaurant. There needs to be a greater level of integrity and inquiry when you are building large-scale data centres, when there are new industries being set up in the Territory …

Mr Kerle: There should have been an inquiry before you committed to that art gallery—$100m down the drain.

Mr SMELT: For the member for Nelson …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20. The Member for Blain continues to interject after your ruling.

Madam SPEAKER: There has been a lot of interjections during this debate and it is time to remain silent and listen to the concluding speech by the Member for Nightcliff. Please continue.

Mr SMELT: I hope all that excitement and discussion is leading to a positive vote on this motion. Once again, a data centre is not a restaurant. If that is the level of planning approvals and inquiries this government will apply to this new industry, we should all be deeply concerned.

I also pick up on a couple of points from the Member for Johnston, particularly about transparency. We do not have any transparency about what this future industry will be at the moment. There are so many questions

DRAFT

that remain in the minds of so many Territorians. The Member for Johnston organised a public meeting as well on this exact topic. That had a lot of feedback and questions.

More needs to be done. There needs to be greater public accountability, and we need to know what is in these current agreements.

I will bring you back to where we all started. We are at the beginning of what could be a significant new economic opportunity for the Northern Territory. Labor supports this new private investment. We support emerging technologies, but in doing so we need to know that this development will happen sustainably; that our unique Territory environment will be looked after; that the impacts will be minimised; that the benefits will remain in the Territory and not disappear offshore or interstate; and that it will help diversify the economy, that the jobs that everyone is talking about will actually be here.

This is not about writing a blank cheque. I have a lot of optimism, but we need to know the facts, which is why we are calling for this independent inquiry. We are not calling for a moratorium to stop development; we just need the facts. That is what responsible governments do before billions of dollars are spent on projects like this and before enormous amounts of energy, water and decades of land use becomes impossible or difficult to unwind.

I move the motion.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Paech	Ms Cahill
Mr Smelt	Mrs Carlson
Mr Young	Mr Charls
	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Enterprise Agreement Negotiations

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly calls on the government to:

- negotiate in good faith with employee representatives and finalise outstanding public sector enterprise agreements
- honour its commitment not to sack public servants
- amend its wages policy so that workers are not forced to trade entitlements for wage increases.

This motion calls on the government to do three simple things, and they should not be controversial demands. We have an incredible workforce in the Territory. When we are talking about our public service, we are talking about an extremely capable and competent group of people who work tirelessly every day in the Northern Territory, doing an outstanding job. This motion asks that we do everything we can to support the workforce and the public service in the Northern Territory.

DRAFT

Acknowledging the challenges facing our Territory is important. We must always be prepared to reflect honestly on where we have been, the decisions we have made and the lessons we must learn.

Territory Labor attracted criticism over the public wage sector freeze, and I absolutely acknowledge that criticism. In 2019 the former government introduced a wage freeze for politicians and senior executives. In late 2020 that policy was expanded to the broader public service. It was subsequently scrapped in October 2022 by then Chief Minister Natasha Fyles and replaced with a 2% wage increase. Following that, wages were again negotiated in good faith through the enterprise bargaining process. I acknowledge that, and if I could turn back time and rewrite that decision, I would.

Was it the right decision? No, it was not. I cannot change the past, but I can shape the future. We must learn from our mistakes, and that decision was a mistake. Our public servants deserve better. They deserve to be respected and properly recognised for their service, their contribution and the work they do every day for Territorians.

Enterprise bargaining agreements are important. They require governments to sit down, listen and negotiate genuinely with hardworking employees and their unions. We should have done better then, and governments of all political persuasions must do better now and into the future.

That is why I am concerned about the approach being taken by this government. There appears to be different rules for different parts of the public service. Some employees receive increases of about 5%, while others are forced to fight simply to be recognised with increases of 2% or 3%. That is not fair or reasonable. Every public servant makes an important contribution to the Territory, whether they work in our hospitals, schools, emergency services, courts, correctional facilities or remote communities. Their work matters. Whether they work to support our education, health, environment or park rangers, everyone deserves to be treated fairly, consistently and with respect.

Under this government, there is not a blanket approach or a blanket commitment to standing up for public servants when it comes to EBA negotiations. Before people jump on the bandwagon and say, 'You did this and you did that', I said that the wage freeze was wrong. If I could go back in time, I would not do it, but that was a blanket approach for the entire public service. It was not what this government is doing, which is picking and choosing who it values more than others. That is what you get under this CLP government—'We'll give you 5% over here, we'll give you 3% over here and we'll give you 2% over here'. That is not fair. That is not a good recognition of the amazing work that public servants do.

If you are on the front line in the public service, you need to be valued. If you are in an office, helping run a system, helping people be strengthened, helping kids be looked after, helping the government implement important reforms and systems, you are equally as valued and should be recognised for the work you do.

Under this government we see an ad hoc approach to enterprise bargaining. This CLP government is not even willing to negotiate in good faith; it is simply going to the Fair Work Commission and asking them to do the work that the government should be doing; they are asking them to negotiate.

I bet the Treasurer and his department would be nervous because when you go to the Fair Work Commission, you effectively remove yourself from the negotiations. The Fair Work Commission could come back with an offer that is higher than what this government was offering and they cannot dispute that; Treasury must start paying that. It is a huge gamble that this government takes when they go to the Fair Work Commission rather than sitting down with hardworking public servants, having a chat and negotiating with the unions across the Northern Territory Public Sector. Instead, they simply go to the Fair Work Commission because after a few meetings they get tired and they say they cannot be bothered, they do not want to do it and they move on.

Those are not good negotiation skills or good recognition of public servants, and it causes a lot of disruption across the Northern Territory Public Sector. I acknowledge the amazing work that public servants do all over the Northern Territory and this government's approach to public sector bargaining has become increasingly hostile, rigid and unfair. A wages policy that locks in a real pay cut. The CLP's wages policy offers public servants just 3% a year, and that policy locks in workers to increases that are below inflation. It means that public servants are going backwards in real terms, and at the same time, we have seen this government has imposed a 5.3% increase on power, water and sewerage charges.

The government is telling public servants that they can only raise wages by 3%, but the bills controlled by this government will rise by about 5.3%. That is not a fair wages policy; it is a deliberate pay cut. It means that nurses, teachers, firefighters, corrections workers, allied health workers and other public servants across

DRAFT

the Territory will see less money left over after paying their basic household bills. These are workers who keep the Territory functioning. They care for patients; educate our children; protect our communities; respond to emergencies; keep our prisons operating; and care for our country, parks and wildlife. They provide essential services across some of the most remote and difficult working environments in Australia, yet this government chooses to make them go through this with a 3% increase.

The government says workers can receive more than a 3% increase, but there is a catch. To get higher wages increased, workers must trade away their existing conditions and entitlements. That is not generosity or genuine negotiation, that is asking workers to sell back rights and conditions that they have already earned and fought for. A fair wages increase should not come at the cost of leave, allowances, protections and other workplace entitlements.

Public servants should not have to choose between keeping their conditions or being able to afford their electricity bill. The government must amend its wages policies, so that workers are not forced into making that choice.

It is important to note that the firies should be expecting word to come back any day regarding their deal. You see the amazing work of the midwifery and nursing union, which has been working tirelessly and standing up for their members trying to negotiate a fair deal. What we continue to see and hear across the Territory is that the CLP government is not willing to hear the voices of our hardworking health professionals who say that what you are offering is not enough to keep us here.

When I went through the hospitals recently—I have been through the hospital in Alice Springs a while ago, through Katherine, Palmerston and Tennant Creek. I heard directly from nurses who say that the deal the CLP is offering will force them to leave the Territory's health services and become agency nurses. The entitlements and wages are better for them to become an agency nurse.

This government refuses to negotiate, in good faith, with our nurses and midwives. Refusing to consider a few generous concessions their union put up on behalf of its members, asking them to think about this. Whether it is additional time to do study, an increase in some allowances, a review of the wages they are asking for, the government, through the Office of Public Employment, shoots them down straight away and says no.

If we were willing to have that conversation, to talk to them about flexible workplace agreements, rostering, we would probably save money in the long run. The Territory government is forking out $90m a year on agency nursing in the Northern Territory for agency nurses, who currently get better wages and conditions than our hardworking public servants inside the Territory’s hospitals and clinics.

When you talk to members of the nursing and midwifery union—the nurses running the wards in the hospitals—they say that it is not that hard: ‘If the government was willing to negotiate a few concessions or offers we have made back in return, we think we could land a deal’.

Our Corrections officers do an amazing job. I love Corrections workers. They work every day and do a difficult job in challenging environments. We have to make sure we can attract a workforce in the Northern Territory to keep them.

When we look at people across the health space, Corrections, education—we often do not have difficulty getting them to the Territory; we have difficulty retaining them.

The Education Union has done a huge volume of work negotiating for a number of years on how we can make sure our wages, conditions and entitlements for Territory teachers are good. We do not want to lose quality educators; we want to keep him in the Territory, teaching our kids for the future.

These are measures that can change and can keep people here.

Regarding nursing and midwifery members, you have to look at what the modelling would be for that $90m a year for nurses, midwives and health professionals to make them permanent employees in the Northern Territory Public Service Health department. Ninety million dollars is a huge amount of money.

I acknowledge that a large number of people jumped over to agency nursing during the COVID pandemic. Lots of people went home. When you think about what we are paying our nurses, midwives and doctors—they are saying that a bit more would get us a deal and we would be willing to sign, we have to ask why will those concessions not be looked at?

DRAFT

We have heard that, for a number of people in the Health department, safety is a real concern in the Territory's hospitals. People have put up a number of measures through the EBAs to do that. We have seen the government attack the character and motivations of workers who refuse to accept its first offer.

When police rejected the government's original offer, senior members of the government suggested they were greedy. These were police officers working under enormous pressure, when they respond to critical incidents, work long hours and deal with serious workforce shortages. Instead of listening to their concerns, the government insulted them. This is the same for frontline workers in our Territory hospitals. We need to invest in our staff; having a workforce that is respected and renumerated is incredibly important.

I know that more than 90% of Corrections officers rejected the government's wage offer some time ago. That is not a narrow result. It is not a small group of disgruntled employees; it is an overwhelming rejection by people working inside a prison system under immense pressure. Bargaining with Corrections officers has now dragged on for more than a year. Instead of resolving the dispute, the government has allowed it to become more entrenched, even going as far as moving to block protected industrial action from taking place, arguing it should have been stopped, which we have seen previously,.

It spoke about taking Corrections workers to the Fair Work Commission for intractable bargaining, a process that could potentially leave the government with a worse-off outcome. As I said, it is a huge risk for the government and Corrections officers, because if a worse offer is put on the table, our Corrections officers will not just be worse off financially, they might make a decision to leave the job of their choice, a job that they care about, and find another. It is a shameful display by this government.

It should be listening to those hardworking officers on the front line. It should be addressing retention, safety, workloads and workforce shortages. It should be spending its time and energy working with them, not trying to defeat them.

I said before that any day now we should be hearing back about the firies' offer. Our firefighters deserve a fair and good deal. They do not deserve to be threatened with being taken to the Fair Work Commission for voting down the government's offer because they deem them not good enough and, again, potentially leaving them worse off.

The government wants to take the risk of going to the Fair Work Commission for an intractable bargaining agreement determination, but these workers respond when lives, homes and communities are at risk. They work under extreme heat, in hazardous conditions and traumatic emergencies. They deserve an employer that respects their work and bargains constructively. However, it seems that the minister and the Chief Minister do not give a truck about our firefighters.

We are simply calling on the government to negotiate in good faith with our public servants. The motion calls on the government to honour its own commitment to not sack public servants. That is a commitment this government made and it must keep; that public servants should not be forced under the shadow of a job cut, restructuring or outsourcing to accept inferior wages or conditions because they fear what might happen to their position.

The government always needs to provide certainty. It must rule out job cuts and it must be transparent about proposed restructures, staffing reductions or changes to service delivery.

We all know that public servants are people; they are not an abstract line in the budget. They are people serving the Territory in all our communities. As I said, they are nurses in our hospitals, teachers in our classrooms, firefighters and emergency services officers, Corrections officers, child protection workers, allied health workers and administrative staff keeping government services going. They are also customers of government-owned utilities.

They will be paying the government's 5.3% increase in power, sewerage and water charges while being told their wages can rise by only 3%. The contradiction could not be clearer. The government is increasing what it takes from workers faster than it is increasing what it pays them.

This motion does not ask government to accept every union claim without question; it asks government to negotiate, listen, consider reasonable proposals, make genuine compromises and stop treating the Fair Work Commission as the next automatic step whenever workers reject inadequate offers. The government should return to the bargaining table with the intention of reaching agreements, not simply defending a rigid policy.

DRAFT

It must amend its wages policy so that workers are not forced to trade away conditions for fair wage increases. It needs to finalise those outstanding agreements and to honour its commitment to public servants.

The government should be a model employer; treat its workforce with respect; bargain honestly; recognise the pressures its workers face; and understand that the strong public service depends on skill, experience and properly supported staff. CLP wages policy does not achieve that. It locks in a real wage cut. It forces workers to trade conditions for pay. It contributes to failed ballots and prolonged disputes, and it also damages trust between government and the people who are supposed to deliver essential services on its behalf.

I encourage the government to change its course, stop blaming workers for rejecting unfair offers, negotiate in good faith, protect public service jobs and deliver fair agreements that respect both the wages and the conditions of Territory public servants.

I am not here to recreate history; I have acknowledged that in 2019 the former government introduced a wage freeze that started off for politicians and senior executives. That moved into 2020, and the policy was expanded to the broader public service and subsequently scrapped in October 2022 by former Chief Minister Natasha Fyles and replaced with a 2% wage increase. Following that wages were again negotiated in the good faith enterprise bargaining process.

I acknowledge that, and to borrow a line from a famous pop star, Cher, if I could turn back time I would. I acknowledge that the wages policy of the time, the wages freeze, was not the right decision. I have said that I am sorry to people; that it was the policy of the day, and I am saying to this government, learn from the mistakes of previous governments and do not just send people off to Fair Work. I cannot change the past, I can shape the future, and I encourage the government to learn from the past and make sure we can get to a position where our policy position is to always negotiate in good faith.

We have learnt from our mistakes—the wages policy mistake—but that was a blanket approach. It was a freeze. This government is picking and choosing who gets what percentage. Some EBAs are being negotiated at 5% or higher, some at 3%, and some at 2%. You are pitting public servants against one another for their own conditions and entitlements. That is not fair, it is not equitable. We need to make sure we can have these conversations, and we need to make sure that everyone that gets around the bargaining table can come there being open, clear, transparent and expecting to negotiate in good faith. People need to all come together with the opportunity to talk about things and look at concessions on both sides but listen to people when they come to you with suggestions.

I still struggle with the $90m a year in the Health department spending on agency nurses. I have nurses saying if the Territory government would just give us a bit more, not only could we land a fair and reasonable EBA, but we would also be able to encourage some of those public servants who left and went into the world of agency nursing because they were getting a better deal to come back. People want to come back to the public service if they can look at flexible workplace arrangements in the Health space so they can continue to accrue superannuation, leave entitlements and all the other benefits that come from working for the Northern Territory public service. These are things we need to talk about.

The terms and conditions of the EBAs, particularly where I come from in a remote setting, the housing conditions often need to be spoken about as well. There has been some good work over the years, and I will not say that it was one government or the other. In the history of the Territory there have been good enterprise bargaining agreements where we have seen cultural leave being introduced for sorry business for Aboriginal people and people from other culturally diverse linguistic backgrounds. We have seen domestic and family violence entitlements introduced through enterprise bargaining agreements. These are all important aspects that we need to value.

When I talk to the Aboriginal health workers and health practitioners, they say that under the EBA processes they do not get heard. They do not have enough to entice them to stay in those jobs.

As I said, regardless of who is in government, we often do not have the problem in attracting workers to the Territory; we have an issue with retaining them. We have to look at what we can put in EBAs to attract and retain people in the Northern Territory public service.

When I was the Corrections minister we went through an enterprise bargaining process and there were a few times that our Corrections workers took protected action. I think that is great. Their right to take protected action is important, and we must respect the process. Through that process we negotiated and were able to

DRAFT

secure additional entitlements and benefits to keep workers in Alice Springs because we needed to keep the prison system working in the Territory and retain amazing Corrections workers in that space.

It is important to recognise our public servants, who do an amazing job across the public service. I shout out to the unions across the Northern Territory. Whether it is the United Workers Union, the CPSU, the ETU, AMWU, our AEU or the Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the unions all do a great job in standing up for workers' rights. If people are not a member of a union, they should join because when people go through these EBA processes, the unions are there every day with them to stand up, advocate and lobby so that they get the best deal. That is incredibly important. I have been a member of a union since I was 17 years old and I have been involved in the EBA process.

This is an important motion. I agree that there is a lot of work to be done in this space. I am not having a direct crack at any one individual; I am just saying that the current approach of picking and choosing different areas, agencies or sectors in the public service is not fair. I said tonight that I am sorry for the wages policy. We have learnt from that and Labor will never do that again. We are asking the government to learn from those mistakes and come out with a strong wages policy that backs the public service. That gets deals done, rather than running to Fair Work every five seconds to do intractable bargaining. That is a huge risk to the Northern Territory Treasury department which cannot forecast what the wages policy will be because Fair Work could come back and say that it will give this group who has come through the EBA process a 10% increase and Treasury cannot turn around and say that it will not do that.

A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: It is important that people understand when you go to intractable bargaining and Fair Work, no-one has any control over that, other than the arbitration and the hearings that happen at the Fair Work Commission. Treasury cannot anticipate what the offer will be because it no longer has any control over it. Treasury has given up that right to negotiate and outsourced the EBA negotiations to a third party. It can be incredibly risky for a government to do that because if Fair Work comes back and says that it will give them a huge pay increase of 10%, Treasury just have to find the money to pay them that 10%. Or if their work comes back with an offer that is worse off than what the government originally offered or what the members were originally asking for, that has to be sealed, and then you effectively could lose hardworking public servants because their new negotiated deal as part of their EBA process is weak. Then they go, 'I will look for another job because I do not feel valued' or 'The terms and conditions of this EBA are not serving my interests or my family's interests.'

So I make the point when you go to that intractable bargaining, you get into really risky ground from an economic position because you no longer have any say over what the cost to the Territory will be—or the risk that you potentially erode and water down a potential workforce in the Territory—because they get an offer back that is not good. That will not retain them.

It is an important motion. I acknowledge that we will hear from members of the government, and I think that is important. As I said, I can guarantee you probably 100%—I would probably even bet money that they will all jump up and down and talk about the wage policy and the wage freeze. Talk to us about something of substance now, because I have already said we are sorry for that. We have apologised to the unions and the public servants. We have said that we would never do it again because it was hard and it was not fair.

It was a blanket approach. We did not pick and choose what public servants we valued more than others. I am interested to hear from the government about the wages policy. Again, if you want to regurgitate the wage freeze line, go ahead, but you will be wasting your time because people have already heard about it and lived through it. I am here tonight saying that we are sorry. We do not anticipate doing it ever again.

We need to value our workforce. We need to grow the Territory's workforce, whether it is in the public service or the private sector. We want to create more positions because we want more people to call the Territory home. It is incredibly important. I look forward to hearing other contributions of meaningful substance tonight.

Mrs HERSEY (Public Service): Madam Speaker, I move the motion be amended by omitting the words after 'that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly' and inserting 'reaffirm the CLP government's commitment to protecting public sector jobs and maintaining a strong Northern Territory public service; acknowledge the CLP government's delivery of fair, competitive and sustainable wage increases for Northern Territory Public Sector employees; and condemn the former Labor government for its mishandling of public sector bargaining,

DRAFT

imposing a wage freeze and treating Territory public servants as the scapegoats for Labor's economic mismanagement'.

I think the Member for Gwoja has had an epiphany. He has had a come-to-Jesus moment and realised that Labor will be in opposition for quite some time. He is distancing himself from the Labor government, along with the Member for Nightcliff. It seems that there is a lot going on over the other side there; they are not sure whether they are a team or not. Maybe we will see some Independents coming up.

I just could not believe some of the waffle. As I say, it was a come-to-Jesus moment. Now, all of a sudden, you are sorry about the wage freeze that you did. Come on, give me a break!

Anyway, goodness me. I think I have heard it all. Let me begin by making one thing very clear: our Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to fair, genuine and lawful enterprise bargaining. We take our obligations under the *Fair Work Act* seriously and we remain committed to negotiating in good faith with our workforce while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Territory's finances. Like most things the Territory Labor opposition members do in parliament, we must address their attempts to rewrite history with the ignorance of their own record. We have just heard that. Having been in government for almost 20 years—since 2001—the Territory Labor opposition come to parliament trying to wash their hands of their past failures and attempt to be saviours of all the Territory's challenges, despite being the cause of them.

When will Labor give a formal apology to Territorians for the crippling debt they left us all in or the crime crisis we are having to clean up after them? Now the Member for Gwoja is saying sorry for the wage freeze. It is probably just now that the lightning bolt has struck, and he has realised that endless spending on the credit card sometimes that does not work, because you end up out in the wilderness like they did two years ago at the election.

On this side, we must be honest about the realities we face. The former Labor government left us $11bn of debt. It is hypocritical for the Member for Gwoja to demand everything without care of the fiscal implications. We remain committed to good faith bargaining to reach fair and affordable enterprise agreements, and since coming to government, have delivered a new enterprise agreement for almost 16,000 public servants. It is because of Labor's debt legacy that we must set clear and responsible parameters for public sector bargaining, which is why we have a wages policy.

The 2025-28 wages policy sets a clear and responsible bargaining framework of 3% per annum, which the Fair Work Commission has described as a good pay deal. While the CLP government is offering real pay increases for public servants, the former Labor government froze their wages.

The Member for Gwoja said he was sorry numerous times throughout that speech. He started and ended with sorry, but sorry does not cut it for all the people whose wages you froze for those four or more years. Labor is not the friend of our public servants, and neither are they the friend of the union movement, with Unions NT Secretary, Erina Early, stating in the *NT News* in May this year that the union still did not see a trusted ally in the Labor Opposition. Not even their union mates want anything to do with them.

I have always said we need a strong and capable public service to deliver on our commitments to reduce crime, rebuild the economy, and restore our Territory lifestyle. While the former Labor government under-resourced frontline services while growing back-office staffing, to the contrary, our CLP government has successfully grown our frontline services. Since coming to government, we have an additional 102 assistant teachers, 97 classroom teachers, 101 police officers, 83 corrections officers, 86 medical officers, 83 nursing staff and 21 PPSOs with more coming on soon.

The *Fair Work Act* sets out clear obligations for good faith bargaining. Those obligations include meeting regularly, responding to proposals in a timely way, genuinely considering claims put forward by bargaining representatives and providing relevant information throughout negotiations. Our government has met those obligations. Negotiations for new enterprise agreements commenced at least four months before the expiry of existing agreements, with initial offers made before agreements reached their nominal expiry dates.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment undertakes a comprehensive assessment of each union's log of claims and engages constructively with employee representatives to develop proposals that deliver real wage growth, improved employment conditions and targeted enhancements to allowances. Importantly, this work balances improved outcomes for employees with responsible fiscal management. It is about delivering fair agreements that are sustainable, not just today but into the future.

DRAFT

The commissioner has consistently sought to progress negotiations in a timely and constructive manner because lengthy bargaining benefits no-one. Delays postpone wage increases for employees and create additional financial liabilities for taxpayers.

Where negotiations reach an impasse, the commissioner has appropriately utilised the mechanisms available under the *Fair Work Act* to assist parties in reaching resolution and to avoid unnecessary delays in delivering wage outcomes.

We will not be letting the agreement draw out for 1,056 days, like the previous Labor government did during the last EBA negotiations with the firefighters, where we saw Labor too scared to stand up to its union mates and reach an agreement in a timely manner. I will repeat that. It took 1,056 days for the last firefighters' agreement to be resolved under the previous Labor government—and the Member for Gwoja wants us to continue to negotiate, and he is sorry about what has happened.

We are getting on with doing that negotiating with those groups. I will make it clear: we want to deliver the pay increases to our hardworking frontline public servants, and the unions should stop holding their members to ransom.

We also respect the lawful right of employees and unions to take protected industrial action. When protected action is notified, agencies work closely with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment to ensure contingency arrangements are in place, particularly where essential services are involved, so Territorians continue to receive the services they rely on.

Equally, where industrial action is unprotected or places public safety or lives at risk, the commissioner will seek orders from the Fair Work Commission to stop that action, as provided for under the Act.

Where industrial action results in partial work bans or stoppages, the commissioner applies reductions in pay in accordance with the *Fair Work Act*. That is not a political choice, it is the law. Since coming to government, the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment has been negotiating 10 enterprise agreements under the *Fair Work Act* and two additional agreements under the *Police Administration Act*.

Successful negotiations have already been concluded for the Police Consent Agreement, the NTPS General Agreement, including court service workers, the police public safety officer determination and the Aboriginal health practitioner agreement. Negotiations will continue for Jacana Energy, firefighters, Corrections officers, medical officers, Power and Water, Territory Generation, nurses and midwives, and dental officers.

As I mentioned earlier, since coming to government we have delivered pay increases to almost 16,000 hardworking public servants. That stands in stark contrast to those opposite who froze public sector wages while leaving the Territory with crippling debt. Our CLP government will not repeat those mistakes. The offers made throughout these negotiations have been fair, responsible and consistent with the approved wages framework.

In the case of firefighters and Corrections officers, the final offers reflected recommendations made through Fair Work Commission processes and represented generous overall outcomes. As those offers were not accepted by employees and negotiations have reached an impasse, the matters will now proceed through the Fair Work Commission's intractable bargaining provisions to enable an independent pathway to find final resolution.

Throughout every stage of bargaining, employees receive regular updates through Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment bargaining bulletins. Where agreements expire before new agreements are finalised, existing pay and conditions continue uninterrupted until replacement agreements are approved. The government's 2025 to 2028 wages policy provides certainty, consistency and responsibility across the public sector.

The policy delivers annual wage increases of 3%, while still allowing agencies to negotiate workforce-specific priorities, improved conditions and targeted allowances within affordable parameters. That approach recognises that enterprise bargaining is about more than wages alone. Employees ultimately determine negotiated outcomes through democratic ballots, and agreements continue to reflect the unique operational needs of individual workforces.

The policy also provides a consistent, whole-of-government approach rather than chasing short-term CPI fluctuations or isolated bargaining outcomes. That consistency protects both the Territory budget and the long-term security of public sector employment.

DRAFT

Over successive enterprise agreements, the Northern Territory Public Sector employees have received wage increases that have exceeded CPI across the life of most agreements, delivering real wage growth over time. As has always been the case under governments of every persuasion, outcomes above funded wage parameters must be supported by productivity improvements and workplace reforms. That is standard practice, and it ensures governments do not make commitments they cannot afford and protects essential public services into the future.

We recognise that a strong Territory depends upon a strong public sector. Our public servants are central to delivering safer communities, rebuilding the economy, improving health services, educating our children and restoring our Territory lifestyle.

The evidence speaks for itself. Frontline workers, including nurses, police, medical officers, teachers, correctional officers and other key professional streams, have all grown under this government. Agencies continue to modernise operations, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and focus resources where they matter most, which is delivering better services for Territorians.

Our public servants deserve recognition for the work they do every day on behalf of our community. They deserve fair wages, secure employment and a government that balances those outcomes with responsible economic management, which is exactly what our government is doing.

We are bargaining in good faith, we are delivering a fair and responsible wages policy and we are protecting jobs. We are growing the frontline services Territorians rely on. We remain committed to working constructively with unions, employees and bargaining representatives to finalise outstanding agreements and deliver outcomes that are fair for public service servants and responsible for all Territorians.

In closing, I remind those on the other side that you can come in here and try rewrite history, but that has already passed. Words are pretty cheap when you are in opposition. When you have been in government for the last eight years or almost 20 years since 2001.

You can come in here and say whatever you like because it was very evident that Territorians voted in a resounding result at the last election with 17 members of us in government on this side. As the Minister for Public Service, we will continue to value our public servants and have those negotiations in good faith to provide better outcomes.

Mr BROWN: Madam Speaker, I will be rejecting the amendments and going with the motion we have put forward today on the enterprise bargaining negotiations.

We ask the Legislative Assembly call the Northern Territory government to negotiate, in good faith, with employee representatives and finalised outstanding public sector enterprise agreements, on its commitment not to stack public servants and amend its wages policy so that workers are not forced to trade their entitlements for wage increases.

I shout out all the unions out there doing the negotiations, UWU, just doing the hard yards for their members and workers. A couple of the EBAs are on the way, just to put it on the record. The Correctional Officers NTPS; the Northern Territory Public Sector Fire and Rescue Service; the Medical Officer NTPS; the Power and Water Corporation enterprise agreements are all is still on the way. The Territory Generation Enterprise Agreement and NTPS Nurses and Midwives Enterprise Agreement Unions—all those enterprises are still in negotiations, and the unions are fighting hard.

This motion calls for the government to do three very simple things: negotiate in good faith and finalise outstanding enterprise agreements; keep its promise not to sack public servants; and stop forcing workers to trade away their conditions just to secure a fair wage increase. These are not controversial demands; these are minimum standards Territorians should expect from their government as an employer. This government's approach to public sector bargaining has become increasingly hostile, increasingly rigid and increasingly unfair. It means nurses, teachers, fire fighters, corrections officers, allied health workers and other public servants will have less money left over after paying their basic household bills.

These are workers who keep the Territory functioning. They care for patients, educate our children, protect our communities, respond to emergencies, keep our prisons operating and provide essential services across some of the most remote and difficult working environments in Australia. This government expects them to accept wages that do not keep pace with their living costs. The government says that workers can receive more than 3%, but there is a catch: to get a higher wage increase workers must trade away existing conditions

DRAFT

and entitlements. That is not generosity, and it is not genuine negotiation. That is asking workers to sell back rights and conditions they have already earned.

Fair work wages increase should not come at a cost of leave, allowances, protections and other workplace entitlements that we all enjoy. Public servants should not have to choose between keeping their conditions and being able to afford their electricity bill. The government must amend its wages policy so that workers are not forced into a false choice.

Except for the final police agreement, we see an alarming pattern from this government. The government puts forward an inadequate offer, workers reject it, the government refuses to properly consider a reasonable alternative put forward by unions and employees, so the agreement is voted down. Then the government declares that bargaining was broken down and refers the dispute to the Fair Work Commission. The government tries to present itself as a reasonable party seeking outside assistance but bargaining does not break down simply because workers refuse to accept a bad offer. Bargaining breaks down when the government refuses to move. It breaks down when reasonable proposals are dismissed without proper consideration. It breaks down when government treats its wages policy as immovable and expects workers to carry the full burden of the compromise.

That is not good faith bargaining; that is a strategy to delay frustration and attrition. The government appears to believe that if it waits long enough, workers will become exhausted and accept less than what they deserve. The government has also attacked the character and motivation of workers who have refused to accept the first offer. When police officers rejected the government's original wage offer, senior members of the government suggested they were being greedy. These were police officers working under enormous pressures. They were responding to critical incidents, working long hours and dealing with serious workforce shortages.

The government displayed similar attitude towards Allied Health workers when they rejected an inadequate offer. Workers are not greedy because they want their wages to keep pace with their bills; this is the reality. They are not responsible for bargaining failures caused by a government that refuses general negotiation. The treatment of correctional officers is particularly concerning because this government—as the United Workers Union is labelling it—is embarking on one of the most reckless correctional policy decisions ever proposed in the Northern Territory, by allowing corporations to profit from incarceration.

More than 90% of Corrections officers rejected the government's wage offer. This is not a narrow result or a small group of disgruntled employees; it is an overwhelming rejection from the people working inside our prison system who are under immense pressure. Bargaining with Corrections officers has dragged on for approximately one year and instead of resolving the dispute, the government has allowed it to become more entrenched, even going as far as blocking protected industrial action from taking place, arguing that it should be stopped.

Last sittings the Minister for Public Service said, 'We continue to negotiate in good faith with correctional officers and make sure that we value them'. Now they have taken the correction workers to the Fair Work Commission for intractable bargaining. That is a huge risk for the government and a huge risk for the correctional officers. It should be that the government listens to the officers working on the front line. It should be addressing retention, safety, workloads and workforce shortages, and it should not be spending its energy trying to defeat its own employees.

The same principle applies to nurses, doctors, dentists and Allied Health professionals. The Territory already faces enormous challenges attracting and retaining skilled health workers. The nurses and midwifery EBA negotiation is underway; they received an offer and it was dismal. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Foundation NT branch Secretary, Heidi Crisp, stated that tempers are high and members are outraged at the offer that they have been given. That is a 3% increase for nurses and midwives who have been slugging it out in a system that has been under pressure for months.

Without a competitive wage outcome, the Northern Territory risks falling even further behind other jurisdictions in attracting and retaining our health workforce. NT nurse wages currently sit above South Australia and Tasmania nationally, and with South Australia undertaking industrial action, we may slip further. The Northern Territory cannot afford to lose experienced nurses and midwives to better paying jurisdictions. A wage outcome that merely follows the government's 3% policy will do little to address existing workforces, may further undermine recruiting, and have retention at a time where we need more people in our healthcare services. There is currently a deal in workplace environments, such as the hospitals, where they face verbal abuse, threats, intimidation and physical assault while caring for members of the community.

DRAFT

In a recent an ANMF survey of its members, 57% of respondents experience workplace violence or aggression with 9% of respondents facing these events daily. Only half of the respondents feel safe at work; 40% of them see the same violent behaviours occur repeatedly in the same workplace and 37% report this delayed or inadequate responses. Of the 40% of nurses and midwives who reported their incidents, almost 60% said nothing happens afterwards.

Not only do we need to ensure we offer wages to keep nurses here, we need to ensure an environment where they feel safe and want to work long term.

Northern Territory public doctors also decisively rejected the government's first Medical Officer Enterprise Agreement offer, stating that government's proposal amounts to real-term pay cuts and doctors knew exactly what it meant and that it would drive clinicians out of the Territory at a time when we can least afford it.

The Northern Territory is struggling with chronic health workforce shortages. Cutting the real wage of our doctors would push them interstate, leaving Territorians facing longer waits, fewer services and even more pressure on an already overstretched health system.

Given the current state of NT Health it is staggering what the government believes is acceptable for our health workforce. The government should not make that problem worse by offering wages that fail to keep pace with living costs and treating workplace conditions as bargaining chips.

This motion calls for the government to honour its commitment and not sack public servant. The government made that commitment and it must keep it. Public servants should not be forced to bargain under the shadow of job cuts, restructurings and outsourcing. They should not expect to accept inferior wages or conditions because they fear what might happen to their position. The government must provide certainty. It must rule out job cuts and be transparent about any proposed restructures, staffing reductions or changes to service delivery.

Public servants are not an abstract line in the budget, they are people serving communities across the Territory. They are nurses in our hospitals, teachers in our classrooms, firefighters and emergency workers, Corrections officers, child protection workers, allied health professional and administrative staff keeping the government services operating.

They are also customers of government owned utilities. They will be paying the government 5.3% increase in power, water and sewerage charges while being told their wages can rise by only 3%. The government is increasing what it takes from workers faster than it is increasing what it pays them.

This motion does not ask the government to accept every union claim without question; it the government to negotiate, listen, consider reasonable proposals, make genuine compromises and stop treating the Fair Work Commission as an next automatic step whenever workers reject an inadequate offer.

It must amend wages policy so that workers are not forced to trade away conditions for work increases. It must finalise outstanding enterprise agreements and must honour its promise not to sack public servants.

In conclusion, the government should aim to be a model employer. It should treat its workforce with respect and it should bargain honestly. It should recognise the pressures its workers face and understand that strong public services depend on skilled, experienced and properly supported employees.

The CLP's current wage policy does not achieve that. It locks real wage costs, forces workers to trade conditions for pay, contributes to failed ballots and prolonged disputes and damages trust between government and people who deliver essential services on its behalf. Government must change the course. It must stop blaming workers for rejecting those offers, must negotiate in good faith and protect public sector jobs and deliver fair agreements that respect both wages and conditions for Territory public servants.

I commend our motion to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I talk in support of the original motion and parts of the amended motion, but mostly in support of the thousands of Territorians who work in our public service. In fact, according to the ABS, almost one in three people in the Northern Territory workforce work in the public sector.

As we have heard from everyone who has talked to this motion today, a public servant is not just a budget line or a list on a piece of paper; they are the people who keep our Territory going. They are the nurse beside a patient at RDH, the teacher in front of a classroom, the child protection worker making a decision that will

DRAFT

shape a child's life, the ranger protecting country, the Corrections officer working a difficult shift and the police officer answering a call in the middle of the night. They are the people who turn decisions made in this Chamber into something that happens in the real world, so we have a great responsibility to them.

The Northern Territory economy depends on these people. When a public servant is paid properly, that money does not disappear. It is spent at the local supermarket, on rent, on school fees and at a Territory business. It keeps local businesses open and local workers employed. There is a multiplier effect that comes from people being employed and spending money in a small economy like ours. Where a dollar is spent here, a family can afford to stay here. That genuinely matters. Therefore, when we talk about public sector wages, we are talking about the strength of the Territory economy and whether people can afford to live here.

That is why I support the intent of the original motion. In the new motion I support the concept that the CLP government is committed to protecting public sector jobs, maintaining a strong Northern Territory public service and delivering fair, competitive and sustainable wage increases for Northern Territory Public Sector employees.

To do this requires negotiating in good faith to finalise outstanding agreements, to honour the commitment not to sack public servants and not to force workers to trade away entitlements for wage increases. These are reasonable propositions grounded in the simple principle that if we expect people to deliver essential services, we need to value the people who deliver them.

Valuing people means more than saying thank you and acknowledging them; it means fair wages, reasonable conditions, secure employment, manageable workloads and a workplace free from bullying, harassment and racism. I will be direct about that because I think a debate like this cannot only be about wages; conditions matter and safety matters. I will talk a bit more about that in a minute.

I acknowledge that since notice was given of this motion there has been progress. The Northern Territory Public Sector 2025–2029 Enterprise Agreement was approved by a majority of voting employees in December 2025 and the Fair Work Commission in January 2026, with salary increases backdated to November 2025 and a 3% increase per annum. It was a better outcome than no agreement at all, and I acknowledge everyone who got it there. However, we have heard that it is not enough.

We should learn something from this process, because the question should never be: how little can we afford to give our public servants; what can we get away with? The question should be: what do we need to pay and provide to build the public service the Territory needs? They are very different questions.

As we all know the Territory operates in a labour market unlike almost anywhere else in Australia—small, remote, competing nationally for nurses, teachers, doctors, engineers and tradespeople. These workers have choices. They can work in Queensland, in Western Australia, for the Commonwealth or in the private sector. If we want them to move here, stay here and build a life here, wages are a part of the equation as are conditions and feeling safe at work.

There is a version of this work that is invisible until it stops: you notice the public service when something goes wrong. You do not notice the person who processed the form correctly, maintained the system, made sure the payment went out or made sure the ambulance could be dispatched. That quiet competent work is the foundation of a functioning government, and it depends entirely on people choosing to stay in these jobs.

I will talk about what we have heard about how it is for people working in the public service. The government's People Matter Survey reported employee engagement of 66% and satisfaction of 71% in 2025, which was welcomed, but the same survey told us something far more confronting. More than a third of Northern Territory public servants—responses came from nearly 12,000 workers, so almost half the whole workforce—reported experiencing bullying, physical or sexual harassment or racism at work in the past year. Nearly 3,000 employees disclosed a combined 10,000 separate reports. That is not a wages problem, that is a workplace safety problem. No pay rise can fix that on its own.

It is not a new problem. The 2023 survey recorded almost the same rate. Two survey cycles with the same result, despite the government describing its approach as 'zero tolerance' both times. It is not just about a few bad actors on the shop floor. Of those who reported being bullied, 52% at least one incident involved a departmental executive or their immediate supervisor. That is a leadership problem as much as a culture problem. Less than a quarter of bullying incidents were formally reported, and of the nearly 600 people sexually harassed at work, only 13% reported it. The heaviest load fell on our frontline services: Corrections at 51%; Housing, Local Government and Community Development at 48%; Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and NT Health at 47%; Fire and Emergency Services at 46%.

DRAFT

If we are serious about retention, we cannot talk only about salary and ignore the fact that one third of the people we ask to deliver essential services are telling us, through the government's own survey, that they do not feel safe doing it. A nurse harassed by patient's family will not stay for a pay rise alone. A worker bullied by their own manager with no consequence will not stay for a pay rise alone. An Aboriginal public servant experiencing racism at work will not stay for a pay rise alone.

These are work, health and safety issues. The government, as an employer, has a duty to eliminate or minimise psychosocial risk at work, and bullying, harassment, and racism are psychosocial risks in the same way a faulty piece of machinery is a physical risk. If we would not accept one in three public servants being physically injured on the job two survey cycles running without demanding real action, we should not accept one in three being bullied, harassed, or subjected to racism either.

When I talk about valuing public service, I am not only talking about the pay packet—which is incredibly important—but I am also talking about whether they can come to work and be safe, whether they can report an incident without fear of reprisal, whether they can trust that their employer—including their own executives—will actually act, and whether they can trust that the government will listen when they say they are not safe at work and take action.

To public servants listening to this debate: you do work that matters, and you deserve to hear that more often. You deserve fair pay, decent conditions, to feel safe at work, to be believed and supported if you do not, and you deserve to know that the government understands that retaining you is in the Territory's interest.

There is a temptation to measure value only in dollars—what does this cost? How many positions can we cut?—but government exists to serve people, and the people who serve the public deserve to be treated as people, not as a line item to be minimised. When public servants do well, the Territory does well. When workers can afford to live here, families stay, communities are stronger, and local businesses benefit. When experienced workers remain in government, services improve and the Territory becomes a better place to live, work, and invest. That is the cycle we should be trying to build.

I support this motion. I support fair wages, good faith bargaining, and secure employment. I hope that I will see action from the CLP reaffirming their commitment to protecting jobs and maintaining a strong Northern Territory public service, as well as the delivery of fair, competitive and sustainable wage increases.

I support our public servants and a public service that is properly valued, resourced, and safe to work in. When we invest in the people who keep the Territory running, we are investing in the Territory itself.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the many public servants who work tirelessly day and night, all year round, 365 days a year to ensure people are looked after.

I acknowledge all our emergency services from our police, ambo drivers, doctors and healthcare workers for all the work they do day-in, day-out. I shout out all the unions who represent many of the workers across the Northern Territory. They do an amazing job when it comes to the enterprise bargaining agreements and representing their members right across the Northern Territory.

Ensuring they get a fair go and that these negotiations are done in good faith with governments when it comes to those important discussions and see those agreements in place. What many workers and unions have told me is, unfortunately, it is not done in good faith with this CLP government.

They feel they are being shut out from the negotiations. They feel the government is not wanting to meet with many of the public servants to ensure they get a good, sound agreement to ensure their entitlements are in place. Particularly, for many members who work in remote communities, we know that it can be challenging to work in remote communities. Many people can be away from their families, can be isolated. It is important we support all our public servants in the Northern Territory.

We saw recently the great work done over the Wet Season. I have spoken about this many times because I am in awe of the emergency services and police on the ground to ensure people were safe. They were looking after people, to ensure that when the evacuation came about they could safely get people out to safe grounds in Darwin at Marara and the showgrounds.

We have seen, for example, in Daly River I think it was two police officers on the ground to help evacuate people out of Daly River. I will not go into the details of that; I think we know how that went. The police officers

DRAFT

on the ground worked hard to ensure the safety of people and did their best under dire circumstances when it came to that evacuation.

I shout out the many public servants that were in our evacuation centres who worked overtime, were giving emotional support to many people that have lost everything from their houses.

I know there was an email sent out to all public servants, not just the welfare team, to give a hand to ensure those shifts could be managed at the evacuation centres and the temporary accommodation down in Bachelor Institute and the outdoor recreation centre, and the incredible work they did.

People told me how the lack of communication from the CLP government was hindering the way they went about their day-to-day job. I saw that clearly myself when I was at an evacuation centre where there were mixed messages coming from this CLP government. It was not clear. It put extra pressures on our public servants.

This CLP government could not be clear with their public servants to ensure there were smooth transition. Whether people had to move from Daly River to get into Darwin to be evacuated out, or it was from the evacuation centre down to the temporary accommodation in Batchelor. That is what many people were telling me on the ground. The CLP government did not have a clear plan for those evacuations.

I just cannot understand how they did not allocate a minister to each region. We had Douglas Daly, for example, and we have the deputy Chief Minister who is the agriculture minister. He should have been allocated to look after that area. We could have had the Aboriginal Affairs minister allocated to Nauiyu and Palumpa. We could have had the Tourism minister allocated along Wooliana Road to ensure that when Cabinet met they had an informed decision. It put extra pressures on those public servants who were doing the hard work and who were lost amongst the chaotic CLP government because they could not make a decision.

Then what did they do? They slapped their public servants in the face and said that they would not agree to the EBA agreements. That is how they treat their public servants. It is a shame because they are the people who are out there everyday working for Territorians working in some of our remote parts of the Northern Territory to ensure we can get on with the day-to-day business of running the Northern Territory, but we continue to see this chaotic CLP government who cannot make a decision and cannot clearly communicate why is actually going on.

In Daly River we are still seeing some houses without electricity. We saw Merrepen Arts get a huge electricity bill. They were trying to get in touch with the government but no one got back to them and then they were threatened with turning the power off when there was no power. I do not believe one of the ministers has been down there to speak with Merrepen Arts. I hope I am wrong and can be corrected. I am not sure if the Minister for Arts has spoken to Merrepen Arts since this has happened. I hope he would have, but they are some of the challenges that are still going on down in those communities in Daly River.

It is putting more pressure on our public servants who are servicing those communities to ensure Daly River can get back up on their feet and get on with their day-to-day business. It took the federal minister, Malarndirri McCarthy and the finance treasurer, Katy Gallagher, to go down there and give some assisted funding to many of the organisations in Nauiyu to help them get back up on their feet because the Northern Territory CLP government refused to put in an application to the federal government asking for support from the disaster relief fund in Canberra.

I am not here to politicise this; these are facts, because their counterparts in Queensland—the Liberal government over there—when they were flooded at the same time, they did the work and got that funding. When it comes to this CLP government, I can tell you right now, they could not care less about the people and they could not care less about the public servants on the ground having to talk to people who had been traumatised. Many people had lost all their possessions. Our doctors, nurses and allied health workers had to go and talk to people because this government refused to go out and do the hard work or fill out an application form to send off to the federal government to ensure the disaster relief fund is in place.

Our hardworking nurses are still negotiating their EBAs, which are underway. Some of our frontline workers, our nurses, usually the first people they will see when a person walks into a hospital, Aboriginal health clinic, or a clinic out bush. They are generally the first people to deal with the patient and sometimes the work can be very traumatic, and yet here they are having to negotiate and try to talk. It sounds like they have not come to an agreement yet, but they are having to fight tooth and nail to get anywhere, and the CLP government is refusing to help our frontline workers.

DRAFT

For our electricians and manufacturing workers through Territory Generation, that enterprise agreement is still underway and has not been settled yet. Power and Water Corporation agreements are still in place. The wonderful CPSU is still negotiating those agreements on behalf of its members in Power and Water. Medical officers and doctors are still negotiating. Our firies and Corrections officers are also still working through negotiations. There is a whole list of public servants from different agencies still having to work through those EBAs.

We are not just talking about the individual who is working for the public service; we are also talking about what it means for their family. They still have to put food on the table at night, pay their rent or mortgage and buy fuel. We are seeing the cost of living go up, yet this government refuses to meet our public servants to ensure that an easing of cost-of-living trickles down for them and their families.

Many people speak to us; I am sure that many CLP members of parliament hear these same concerns if they get out and talk to people. We hear loud and clear that there is a cost-of-living crisis in the Northern Territory and people are struggling to put food on their tables, yet the CLP government is ripping the EBA agreements out from under them.

We want to see the 3% rise. Police had an above 3% wage increase. We should have that for our doctors, nurses and firies because we see the hard work that they do. Mr Deputy Speaker, you mentioned that your son is an ambo. These are tough jobs. Sometimes they are first on the scene to horrible accidents, and I acknowledge the work that he is doing. That is a tough job and can be traumatising, but it is also a job where people genuinely care. They are not there for the money or the glory, but because they care. We should pay them correctly and ensure their pay reflects the type of work that they do and that they get the support that they need when times get tough, as well as the incentives as part of those EBA agreements.

I will not go on much further. I thank those members who spoke in this debate. It is a shame, as I sit here and reflect, that no CLP members other than Minister Jo Hersey spoke to this motion. I assumed that all of you would have spoken on this important issue, given that we are talking about our frontline workers, police, Corrections officers, doctors, registered nurses, electricians and Power and Water Corporation workers. It is a shame and it just shows the lack of care that this CLP government has towards our public servants in the Northern Territory.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable members who contributed to debate on the motion. It is incredibly important. I thank the Members for Johnston and Arafura for contributing, and to all those who contributed. The minister did respond.

What we are debating here today is important. It is about the workforce here in the Territory, and acknowledging the Northern Territory Government has made two applications to the Fair Work Commission after negotiations with the unions representing firefighters and corrections workers.

It is a risky move because you lose any ability to have any strong control over that. I acknowledge the union continues to pursue claims that are standing up for workers' rights across the Territory. As the Member for Daly eloquently put, it is disappointing that no other member from the CLP got up to talk about the importance of workers, or to back them in in their quest for fair work, fair pay and fair conditions.

When you step outside of this building, you hear from hardworking people at Territory Generation and Power and Water Corporation, who say the offer the NT Government made them was a joke. They were offered a 2.75% pay increase across the board, which they said was an insult to that workforce.

We have heard time and time again the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the United Workers Union, the CPSU, the ETU, all standing up and supporting Territory workers in their quest for solid pay, conditions and entitlements.

The government put forward an amendment. The opposition does not support that amendment. I will move now, under Standing Order 44, that we put the questions to the Assembly tonight and that this matter can then be taken off the Notice Paper.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

DRAFT

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will talk about the busy arts sector, particularly during August. Firstly, I acknowledge the 27th annual Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award and congratulate all the winners and finalists from this year. I congratulate Territory artist, Katalin Horompo, who took out the $7,000 first prize for *Storytime: Conjuring Artemisia*, a striking portrait of respected Territory playwright, theatre maker, and director, Sandra Thibodeaux.

I also congratulate Alice Cirrottola, who received second prize; Bill Davies, who received third prize; Erika Loose, who received the Young Artist Award; Alicia Scobie, who was highly commended; and Nevanka McKeon, winner of the Selfie with a Senior competition.

I was honoured to host the awards ceremony in Parliament House this month and acknowledge that these awards are about more than art. They celebrate the stories, experiences, and contributions of senior Territorians while providing a valuable platform for Territory artists. The awards encourage emerging artists and create opportunities for Territorians to share their stories across generations. After 27 years, this competition has become an important part of the Territory's cultural calendar.

I thank Tactile Arts for coordinating the award exhibition and ceremony. I congratulate all the artists, organisers, and participants, and thank them for helping celebrate the people and stories that have shaped the Northern Territory. The exhibition is open until 13 September in the Main Hall of the parliament.

I acknowledge the 2026 Northern Territory Performing Arts Awards also held this month and congratulate all the finalists and winners who were recognised for their outstanding contribution to the Northern Territory's performing arts. It was fantastic to celebrate the incredible challenge of our Territory artists, performers, educators, producers and art workers who brought a unique creative spirit to our communities.

I congratulate Central Australian artist Gleny Rae, who won the inaugural Ted Egan Regional Award. Her contribution to music, education and community arts is an outstanding example of the talent we have across the Territory. The inaugural Ted Egan Regional Award celebrates the storytellers, historians and creatives who help preserve and share the rich history of the Northern Territory. It was a pleasure to catch up with Nerys Evans, who continued Ted Egan's remarkable legacy by presenting the award in his honour.

I shout out to Gary Lang, a finalist in two categories—the Impact Award and Ultimate Legend Award. Congratulations, Gary.

I congratulate the other remarkable winners, *Wuyal's Journey* by Banula Marika and Netanela Mizrahi for Production of the Year; Alyson Evans for Performer of the Year; Amalia Baker for Young Achiever of the Year; Netanela Mizrahi for Behind the Scenes – Creative Award; Brad Fawcett for Behind the Scenes – Production Award; Netanela Mizrahi for Inspiring Educator Award; Hannah Illingworth for Impact Award; Anuhas Methnuka Bandara Rathnayake for the People's Choice Award; and last, but certainly not least, David McMicken for the Ultimate Legend Award.

I acknowledge that I know Netanela as the Principal of Milkwood Steiner School in the Sanderson electorate, and I congratulate her for winning three awards.

I will speak about the First Nations international partnership between Artback NT and Taiwan. Our government is proud to support the Taiwan Artists Exchange program through our Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships Arts Grants program from 2026 to 2028. The delegation brought together First Nations artists, cultural leaders and arts sector representatives from the Northern Territory and Taiwan to share knowledge and create opportunities for future creative exchange, residencies, touring and collaboration. I was proud to witness the renewed memorandum of understanding between Artback NT and the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Development Centre of Taiwan. I thank Michelle Bell and the team at Artback NT for their leadership and dedication in bringing this collaboration together.

August has been a wonderful celebration of Aboriginal Territorians, with several events highlighting the incredible talent, culture and creativity of our people across art, fashion and music, and many of which I had the privilege of attending.

DRAFT

I congratulate the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair on reaching an incredible 20-year milestone. The Finocchiaro CLP government was proud to support the 2026 art fair with $350,000, helping bring together artists, art centres, collectors, curators and visitors from across Australia and around the world. More than 75 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art centres, including 40 from the Northern Territory, showcased the extraordinary work of more than 1,800 First Nations artists. The art fair is an important celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, culture and creativity, and provides a valuable platform for artists and art centres to share their work with the world.

It was a perfect August evening at the 2026 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards held on the lawns of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. The NATSIAAs, supported by the Northern Territory Government, celebrate Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and featured some exciting up and coming First Nations talent. It was a fantastic opening performance by Kerkar Kus Dance Team from Torres Strait Islands, followed shortly after by headline act, Drifting Clouds, performing their original songs. There were many great pieces; however, I highlight Vanessa Inkamala, winner of the General Painting Award, and Dr Ryan Presley, winner of the Telstra Art Award.

The National Indigenous Music Awards were held at the beautiful amphitheatre at the Botanic Gardens. Supported by the Finocchiaro government and celebrating 20 years as one of Australia's most prominent music awards honouring Indigenous Australian music, the event saw a packed amphitheatre treated to an incredible evening of performances and award presentations. Well done to everyone, including MusicNT for all their work to bring the Territory to the national stage.

I congratulate Indigenous Fashion Projects on delivering another high-quality Country to Couture show. I thoroughly enjoyed the creativity, craftsmanship and cultural expression on display, with the spectacular set-up at the Charles Darwin University Danala building featuring the beautiful Boab tree as the centrepiece and creating an electric runway atmosphere.

It was great to partake in a wonderful milestone for Arnhem Northern and Kimberley Artists Aboriginal Corporation (ANKA) which celebrated eight graduates from its Arts Worker Extension Program and more than 100 graduates since the program began in 2012. I thank ANKA Chair Dr Marawili AM, CEO Christine Balcombe Davidson, representatives from art and culture centres across the Territory and Western Australia, Australian Government partners and everyone who helped deliver this outstanding program.

The program has played an important role in building skills, confidence and leadership among Aboriginal arts workers, strengthening the future of Aboriginal arts and culture across northern Australia. ANKA supports 34 Aboriginal-owned and community-controlled art and culture centres across the Northern Territory, with funding secured through the department's five-year strategic arts organisation program from 2025 to 2029. The Finocchiaro government is proud to support ANKA and its continued investment in people, remote communities and a strong, sustainable arts sector.

I was fortunate to pop into the Behind the Wire exhibition at the Fannie Bay Gaol and congratulate the Minister for Corrections and his department, in cooperation with MAGNT, for its return. The exhibition demonstrates how education and art support rehabilitation and I must remember to go earlier next year as much of the art was already sold I

I greatly enjoyed my recent visit to the Tiwi Islands as part of the Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final. It was a privilege to visit Ngaruwanajirri—the Keeping Place—and Tiwi Designs to see firsthand how these incredible artworks are created and speak with the artists themselves. The experience provided a deeper appreciation of Tiwi culture and the important role these artists play in preserving and sharing their stories through art.

I acknowledge the Darwin Festival which recently concluded for 2026 and was a jam-packed program. Thanks again to James Gough and Kate Fell for another fantastic festival. I was fortunate to attend some shows including Gapu Nupan which was part of the opening night and also part of the collaboration I mentioned earlier between Artback NT and the Taiwanese Indigenous Centre.

Also, a shoutout goes to the Nanna Effect by Tracks Dance which brought together seniors and young children to explore wisdom, memory and generational bonds. Congratulations to the David, Alyson, Alana, James and the team at Tracks Dance on a wonderful production. Congratulations also to all the wonderful cast.

I also was able to visit some of the fabulous visual art exhibitions that were on as part of the festival including; the Annual Tiwi Exhibition by Jilamara Arts & Crafts Association held at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Julie and Sabrina Nangala Robertson (The Sisters) by Outstation Gallery at the Botanic Gardens, Linda Joy

DRAFT

(Waterlines) by Untitled Gallery+ Studio at Coconut Grove. I particularly enjoyed Linda's exhibition and her attention to detail in the pandanus trees she paints, and Linda lives in the Sanderson electorate.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recognise the Northern Territory Chess Association and congratulate six Territorians who have recently qualified as national chess arbiters—I must admit, I had to look that up on Google. I had the pleasure of attending an event at Casuarina Library to present the certificates on behalf of the Attorney-General, the Member for Brennan. To Ricardo Atanacio, Chris Depasquale, Brodie Driscoll, Trev Samuelu, Rajeev Thayil and Ioanna Thymianidis.

This is a fantastic achievement and reflects the commitment each has made to developing their skills and supporting chess in the Territory. I am particularly pleased that our government, through a community benefit grant fund supported the Northern Territory Chess Association to provide the training needed for the local participants to achieve their certification. That investment is building local expertise in an important timeframe.

From 2 to 11 January 2027 Darwin will host the Australian Open Chess Championships. It will bring players, officials and supporters from across the Australia to the Northern Territory during a traditionally quieter period of our tourism industry. I also congratulate the Northern Territory Chess Association for providing such a welcoming space for people who enjoy chess. Their chess club brings together people of different ages, backgrounds and level of experience. They provide opportunities for newcomers to learn from experts such as Chris and from experienced players such as Rajeev to test their skills, and for everyone to share their enjoyment of the game. Chess develops concentration, patience, strategic thinking and problem solving but just as importantly our clubs build friendships and community. It was wonderful to see the community firsthand at the Casuarina Library.

I again congratulate Ricardo, Chris, Brodie, Trev, Rajeev and Ioanna on their national arbiter qualification and thank everyone involved in the Northern Territory Chess Association.

I shout out to Brodie who taught me a couple of tricks. I ended up winning one of the games, so watch that on Facebook; I will be posting it soon. I look forward to seeing everyone attend the 2027 Australian Open Chess Championships. Get behind it; let us get a big crowd down there.

I recognise a significant milestone for our Tamil community, the first Tamil Heritage Festival hosted by the Tamil Society of the Northern Territory at the Waterfront last Saturday 27 August. I attended with the Members for Brennan, Port Darwin, Fannie Bay and Sanderson. This inaugural festival was a tremendous celebration and a wonderful reflection of the cultural diversity we are fortunate to enjoy in the Territory. I got dressed up as well.

The Waterfront was transformed into a colourful and vibrant showcase of Tamil culture, with music, dance and performances bringing community together throughout the day. What stood out was the way the festival reached beyond the Tamil community. I saw some Vietnamese ladies, who were part of the performances. It was great to see Territorians from many different cultures and backgrounds attending, participating and enjoying all the celebrations.

This is what multicultural events are all about, sharing culture and traditions while creating opportunities for people to come together and learn more about one another.

I was also privileged to provide 300 copies of the Tamil Heritage activity book. See me if you want one and we can learn more about Tamil heritage.

I acknowledge the Tamil Society of the Northern Territory, particularly the committee and volunteers, who worked so hard to bring the first festival to life. Organising an event like this takes considerable time, effort and commitment. They should be proud of what they have achieved.

I acknowledge the performers who took to the stage and shared their talents with the community. Through music, dance and traditional performances, they brought Tamil heritage to life and made the festival a memorable experience for those who attended.

This was more than a successful event; it was an opportunity to celebrate the Tamil community's contribution to the Northern Territory and strengthen connections between the many cultures who call the Territory home.

Congratulations to everyone involved in delivering the inaugural Tamil Heritage Festival. I hope that this is the beginning of a festival that continues to grow and becomes a regular feature on the Territory's cultural calendar.

DRAFT

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I pay tribute to an incredible man who served this Assembly and the Northern Territory for 10 years. For a decade the Member for Mulka, Yingiya Guyula, has worked for his people and the people of his electorate with unwavering strength, integrity and grace. For a decade, he stood steadfast in this Chamber—not once swayed by party politics, backroom deals or offers of jobs for mates—for fairness, integrity and, most of all, justice.

In his resignation statement Yingiya spoke plainly about why he made this decision. He named the changes to the child protection laws made last month without consultation. He described a decade of grief, burying a younger brother earlier this month, with his older brother's funeral beginning this week. As families move from one funeral to the next, he said he could no longer sit opposite a government unwilling to listen or form partnerships, and that as he gets older his focus must return to community-led solutions on country.

For a decade Yingiya stood in this Chamber and patiently reached out his hand and said, 'Let us work together'. To three governments and four Chief Ministers he extended his hand to offer community-driven solutions, but his resignation has shown us that he was mostly ignored. As he said on countless occasions, they say, 'We know what is best for you'.

Sadly, this has been the story from the beginning when, in 2016, the then unknown Guyula defeated a two-term incumbent Deputy Chief Minister in the face of a landslide swing towards his opponent's party. After staring down a petty Court of Disputed Returns claim, he went on to withstand five years of a government that treated him at times like a schoolyard bully, spreading rumours, running procedural tactics and stoking fear. Yingiya stood tall in that schoolyard and kept repeating the calls of his electorate.

Perhaps one of his most telling achievements is that his vote in the mostly non-Indigenous town of Nhulunbuy kept climbing, term after term.

This is Yingiya's political nature in a nutshell. Backed by his Yolngu system of governance, he stands in the middle and brings people together, underscored by his campaign cry of self-determination and self-governance, Yolngu Rom. Yingiya's diplomacy, privileges, participation, fairness and justice, and through this, Yingiya has become one of the few political representatives in this country of any cultural background who has stood successfully on a platform of authentic cultural authority.

His political character and authority are best symbolised by the name he gave his own electorate, Mulka. Mulka refers to a political space for negotiation and decision-making, where people meet as equals with mutual resolve to find agreement. Mulka is sitting together in the shade, working to reach agreement. It is like Yingiya, at once dignified and diplomatic while also being utterly Indigenous.

Yingiya sometimes refers to himself as a *napungawuy*, someone who stands in the middle, not on anyone's side, but as a mediator who helps resolve differences fairly. As he does in his community every day, Yingiya worked tirelessly for this Chamber as a *napungawuy* for fairer outcomes for all Australians. He has never asked for more than a fair deal. It is with great sadness that I see him leave this Chamber without what he sought.

As the gap widens, incarceration expands and voter turnout drops. It was with his sheer presence that at Yingiya pointed out the contradictions at the heart of what it means to be Australian. Yingiya's power is that he shows us the ultimate hypocrisy of this country, but he also offers us his hand to help pull us out of it.

The member for Mulka showed us, three elections running, that authentic First Nations cultural authority and Westminster politics are not incompatible; that a Yolngu leader could hold this place to account on their own terms, but also that true change requires genuine listening and partnership. While many of us are mourning this huge loss, do not mistake his resignation as a sign of weakness, retreat or a surrender.

I know that Yingiya is unyielding in his convictions and his pursuit of justice. He has now only refocused his attention to areas that are more receptive—to his family, his people and his country.

To Yingiya, you came to me three years ago and said you wanted me to stand with you, to support you in your work. I answered that request. It has been my great honour and privilege to sit behind you in this Chamber and learn from you. *Mari*, you will be deeply missed by so many. Thank you for everything you have given. I know your work is not over and I will always stand with you in your fight for justice in this country.

I think everyone here may have read the statement, but I want to read it into Hansard the statement from the member on his resignation.

DRAFT

Today I have notified the Speaker of the NT Legislative Assembly of my decision to step down as the Member for Mulka, effective from today. It is time for me to return to my family and my people on country to provide the leadership for the next generation as my full focus, without the enormous workload that comes with being an Independent member of parliament. I need to focus on the next generation of Yolngu and give the guidance on what it means to be a strong Yolngu leader on our country, for our people and across two worlds.

This has not been an easy decision to make. I have served the Mulka electorate for the past 10 years and I have worked hard over this decade to be the voice of the Mulka electorate and support all remote communities across the Northern Territory. I have been very proud to be an Independent member, accountable directly to the people and speaking for the people.

It has been my aim to come to parliament to try and work with government to fix problems and make things better. I have been sent by my people to work with the government but their answer has always been, 'We know what is best for you' rather than working in partnership with us. What I have discovered is that Aboriginal communities are the political football that gets passed around with no real intention of working with our people to bring positive change for our communities. We are willing, we have called for partnership, we have called for treaty, we are saying come and work together but successive governments are not listening and are unwilling to do so.

Last month the CLP government changed the child protection laws with no consultation with our communities. I appealed to the government to withdraw the Bill and work with communities to bring real changes that will work. Since their election, the CLP have introduced too many laws that are dehumanising, oppressing and destroying our communities and our people. They have significantly failed Aboriginal people and their ongoing actions are contributing to the breakdown of our culture and people in what is now becoming a slow genocide.

I no longer feel that I can be part of the NT parliament and sit opposite a government that is not willing to listen or form partnerships.

We are sovereign people and the only way things will improve is when the Government recognises that and come and sit with us respectfully. We are kindly offering partnership, but instead of diplomacy, the Government are walking all over us.

This is very serious business because people are dying. I buried a younger brother earlier this month and on Friday the funeral for my older brother will begin.

We have people dying avoidable deaths every day. We are physically, mentally and spiritually struggling because of the frequent loss of family members as we move from one funeral to the next.

As I too get older, and have also had health concerns, I need to return my focus to community-led solutions on country and make space for someone else to come in with new energy to serve the electorate and continue to hold the Government to account.

It has been an honour to serve the people of Mulka for 10 years. I will continue to serve my people as a Yolngu leader for as long as I have left, and I will continue to seek genuine partnerships and advocate for our homelands and community-led solutions that are desperately needed on country. I would like to thank the people of Mulka across all clans, Yolngu and Balanda, my family, my staff and all the Yolngu elders of our lands. Thank you for your hard work to make things better and thank you for electing me with a vision of hope for Yolngu communities. We will continue to hold this hope and vision of a better future.

No one thought a Yolngu person could be elected as an Independent Member of Parliament but we did it three times. We showed the world that we are united by a vision of Yolngu rom ngurrungu (our way first) and we must continue to be united through Yolngu rom ngurrungu as we work to protect our people, land and culture.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: On behalf of the whole Assembly, I thank Yingiya, the former Member for Mulka, for his service. We wish him all the best for the future.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge what has been a fantastic Seniors Month across the Northern Territory. Throughout August our senior Territorians had the opportunity to participate in an

DRAFT

extraordinary range of activities through the Northern Territory Seniors Month calendar. These events range from dancing, arts and crafts, lawn bowls, walking football and walking groups to singalongs, live music and Devonshire teas. I enjoyed attending as many of these events as I could.

A particular highlight was attending the Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award, which is hosted in the Main Hall outside, and the Selfie with a Senior exhibition featuring our amazing and talented artists in the Northern Territory. When these pieces of art reflect and showcase our senior Territorians, it gives me so much pride. I give a big congratulations to the Department of People, Sport and Culture; the Crafts Council of the Northern Territory; Tactile Arts; and, finally, COTA (Council on the Ageing), for putting together a beautiful exhibition that not only showcases incredible art, but also the stories of our senior Territorians. A favourite for me was the crochet portrait of senior Territorian Josephine Wynne by Nicola Honan; that one got my People's Choice Award.

I had a lot of fun emceeing the Chief Minister's Seniors Morning Tea a week ago. It was an amazing event attended by more than 500 seniors from across the Top End. We had a great time; they all had a dance. The lovely Grace even graced the front page of the *NT News* with her dance moves; that was a favourite of mine.

I thank the minister for Seniors, Minister Charls, and staff from the Department of People, Sport and Culture, alongside Ms Sue Shearer, CEO of COTA NT and her team, for the enormous effort they make for events like this, and what they do throughout the year to support and advocate for our senior Territorians. COTA NT is not only a key partner in delivering Seniors Month but also provides an invaluable voice for older Territorians through advocacy, aged care navigation, administration of the Seniors Card, Seniors Expos and the Seniors Voice publication and a regular program of activities that continue throughout the year. The impact of that work is significant, and it helps older Territorians remain connected, active and engaged in their communities.

As Seniors Month comes to a close, I find no better opportunity to acknowledge three wonderful women from my electorate, all of whom have turned 100. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate these achievements, experiences and stories of senior Territorians. In my electorate we are incredibly fortunate to have had three special birthdays for Ms Norma Lee; Ms Emilia Finocchiaro—yes, you recognise the name; that is the Chief Minister's nonna—and Ms Emily James. The thing that is special about these people is they turned 100; they are centenarians. That is 100 years, 365 days a year for a century. More than 36,500 days, 876,000 hours and more than 52 million minutes of life, and counting.

Just imagine what someone who has lived for a century has witnessed. These ladies have witnessed extraordinary changes in our community, our country and our world. They have experienced a century of history and have stories that span generations. Norma, Emillia, and Emily, congratulations again on reaching this remarkable milestone. They all received a nice letter, some flowers, and chocolates from me. It was an honour to acknowledge and celebrate those special days; to hear their stories and recognise the incredible contribution they have made to their families and the Fannie Bay electorate.

Our senior Territorians are an important part of the Northern Territory. They helped build the Territory we know and love, and they continue to contribute to our families, our communities and our economy. Milestones like these are a reminder that we should not only celebrate longevity but also celebrate the contribution and wisdom that comes with it.

Over recent months I have attended endless events. Earlier this month, I, alongside my colleague, the Member for Port Darwin, met with the Freemasons SA/NT High Tea in the NT. One of their lodges is in my electorate. The Freemasons may look a little funny from the outside, but I can assure you and the House there were no conspiracies and there was certainly no secret handshake— not for me anyway. What I found was a group of people committed to fellowship, community and the principle of 'making good men better', as their motto suggests. They are charitable, kind and through the Masonic Charities they donate a lot of money to organisations in the Territory, such as Variety NT, Orange Sky, and Dawn House. Those charities and the recipients were there to talk about how that money has supported their work. I was pleased to attend events celebrating our local community and small businesses, including the 10th anniversary of D-Town Coffee in Coconut Grove, as well as the Grand Fondo and the Garma Festival.

In supporting our Chief Minister as the assistant minister for Police, I have taken great pride in attending several police graduation ceremonies, and recruitment ceremonies as well, from constable squads to PPSOs, Aboriginal liaison officers and police auxiliaries. Since coming to government 2 years ago, I am proud to have been a part of a government which has made such a mandate to reduce crime. These ceremonies are always a reminder of the people who put their hands up to serve our community—whether they are recruit constables, auxiliaries, Aboriginal liaison officers, or our new PPSOs, they all do an amazing

DRAFT

job, and I celebrate the work they do. To each of those graduates, congratulations and thank you for choosing a career dedicated to keeping Territorians safe and a career that cements a life to the Territory.

While attending events and representing the electorate at functions is an important part of this role, I have deliberately returned my focus to the people of Fannie Bay and the issues they have been raised with me. On Monday, I held a community consultation with Pizza in the Plaza at Parap, for residents concerned about ongoing antisocial behaviour in and around Parap Road. The message from residents was clear: they want to feel safe in their homes and their community, and they expect their concerns to be heard. That is what electorate work is ultimately about: listening to constituents, identifying problems and working with government agencies and other organisations to find practical solutions. I promise to continue that work for the constituents of Fannie Bay.

I continue to advocate for my constituents on the issue of the City of Darwin's decision to discontinue its pre-cyclone clean-up service. More than 1,000 residents have signed a petition calling for the service to be restored, and I hope to get that into council at their next meeting at the end of September. For many residents, this is not simply about a pile of green waste, or steel or rubbish on the side of the road, it is about preparation, safety and ensuring our community can properly prepare for the upcoming cyclone season. My constituents expect this service, and I continue to advocate on their behalf alongside our Darwin based MLAs—Members in the northern suburbs team and Member for Port Darwin—to challenge the City of Darwin to reconsider its back-door, out-of-session decision that will affect all Darwin ratepayers.

As I hit two years representing the people of Fannie Bay, I have also spent some time reflecting on what this role means. It is easy to measure a parliamentary year by legislation, speeches, questions and votes, but some of the most important parts of this job happen outside this Chamber. They happen when you sit down with a constituent who has nowhere else to turn, at a community meeting, at a sporting club, at a seniors morning tea or over a cup of coffee with a small business owner. They happen when someone comes into the electorate office with a problem and simply needs somebody to listen. That is the privilege of representing Fannie Bay.

I have also been reminded recently that while public life is important, my family must always come first, Last week I deliberately took a slower week—slower in my eyes; probably not in an normal person’s eyes; it was still busy—and spent some important time with my family, including my daughter and my first granddaughter and my mum who travelled to Darwin.

It was a timely reminder that while we love being out in the community and doing everything we can for our constituents, we also need to make as much time for the people closest to us. That is an important lesson that I remind for all of us in this Chamber. We are at our best as members when we look after ourselves, our families and the people who support us, because that gives us the strength to continue serving our communities.

The past two years have been an extraordinary privilege. I am incredibly proud to represent the people of Fannie Bay. There is still plenty to do. There are issues of crime, antisocial behaviour, housing, infrastructure, cyclone preparedness and the cost of living that continue to matter to my constituents.

However, there are also so many reasons to be optimistic. We have incredible community organisations, volunteers, sporting clubs, seniors, small businesses and families who make Fannie Bay such a great place to live. As we approach another year, my commitment remains the same: to listen, advocate and work hard for the people I have the privilege of representing.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, today I recognise and celebrate some of the wonderful students and educators in our local schools who continue to make such a positive contribution to their school communities.

I begin with Larrakeyah Primary School. I congratulate two students who have two students who have recently been recognised for their efforts and achievements.

In Early Childhood, Gupulul Marika has been recognised for making excellent progress in her learning and for showing great determination to achieve her goals. Gupulul, your commitment and perseverance are wonderful qualities, and you should be proud of what you have achieved.

In Middle and Upper Primary, Evie Bairamis has been recognised for being a positive role model for her peers and for always greeting her teachers with kindness. Evie, the kindness and positivity you bring to your school community does not go unnoticed. Congratulations and keep up the fantastic work.

DRAFT

I also extend a huge congratulations to Fathma Mauger, Principal of Larrakeyah Primary School, who was named Primary School Principal of the Year at the Australian Education Awards. This is an outstanding achievement and a wonderful recognition of Fathma's leadership, dedication and commitment to her students, staff and the wider school community. I congratulated Fathma at a recent assembly. When I asked the kids if they thought it was a worthy contribution, one little boy yelled out at the top of his voice, 'Yes, absolutely', which was a beautiful moment.

Those of us who know Larrakeyah Primary School know how much passion Fathma brings to her role and how committed she is to ensuring students have every opportunity to learn, grow and succeed. Congratulations, Fathma, on this well-deserved national recognition. It is an achievement of which you, your school and our entire community can be extremely proud.

I now recognise two students from St Mary's Primary School. First, congratulations to Samuel Dempsey who has been recognised for taking a leading role in his school community as a proud Larrakia person. Samuel, it is wonderful to see you sharing your culture, demonstrating leadership and making such a valuable contribution to your school community. You should be proud.

I also congratulate Benjamin Zhou who has been recognised for consistently showing kindness, including others and making sure everyone feels welcome and valued. Benjamin, these qualities make an enormous difference within a school community. Your thoughtfulness and willingness to ensure others feel included are wonderful examples for your fellow students.

It is always a privilege to recognise the achievements of our young people and the educators who support them. Whether it is through academic progress, determination, kindness, leadership, cultural pride or making others feel welcome, each of these individuals contributes to creating strong and supportive school communities.

Congratulations to Gupulul, Evie, Fathma, Samuel and Benjamin. I look forward to hearing about your continued achievements and celebrating many more successes from our wonderful local schools.

I also had the privilege a week or so ago to attend the Darwin Cricket Club's 50th anniversary. Darwin Cricket Club was established a couple of years after Cyclone Tracy, and I can tell you it was a pretty rip-roaring night. I think most of the blokes who were there for that night had spent the day at the cricket so by the time they got to the gala dinner things were pretty feisty and they were pretty determined to go back the next day and cheer on the Australians hopefully to a victory. We know that did not happen.

I would like to give a special shout out to Jake Weatherald who is a Darwin Cricket Club Alumni and in spite of having a less than great day on the field, he actually made the effort to turn up to the event, say g'day to everybody who supported him through his path to international cricket and it was truly a wonderful night. Well done to Cameron McNally, the president of the cricket club and to everybody who was there for the evening. It was a worthy celebration, and I think it just goes to show that when Darwin takes sport seriously, it takes it very seriously, and they stand tall and keep working. It was unusual to have a sporting club to have the longevity that Darwin Cricket Club has so to everybody who has been involved with that wonderful facility are to be congratulated.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I want to speak about the Wave Hill Walk-off. It was a defining moment in Australian history and a courageous stand by the Gurindji people for fair wages, fair conditions, about dignity and their right to be on and own their country.

What began as a protest against appalling working conditions became a powerful movement for land rights and justice across Australia. Sixty years on this year we honour the strength, the resilience, the determination and the courage of those who walked off. Today we celebrate the generations who have carried on with pride. This weekend I have just come from the Freedom Day Festival out in Kalkarindji and Daguragu on beautiful Gurindji country and it was an amazing celebration to see so many people there. For Freedom Day we did the march on Friday from Kalkarindji across the bridge down to the river with a number of powerful speeches from local Gurindji people speaking from the heart about what it meant. We had two beautiful and powerful ceremonies done by the men and the women in the community and it was a great celebration.

Tonight I want to recognise the board members of the Gurindji Aboriginal Corporation; their chairperson, George Edwards, Aunty Roslyn Frith, Wayne Farquharson, Jamesie Barry, Sonny Smiler, Rosie Smiler, Lisa Smiler, Leah Lehman and Antoinette Bernard who did an amazing job. I really want to thank the Gurindji Corporation for a fantastic Freedom Day Festival, which was important.

DRAFT

I acknowledge the Kalkarindji and Daguragu Local Authority, part of the Vic Daly Regional Council, Leah Leaman, the Chairperson; Pansy Wardle, the Deputy Chairperson; councillor Georgina Macleod; Selma Smiler; Pamela Morris; Maythan Long; Diane King; Robert Roy, also known as Gabala; Aldress Donald; Kira Dandy; Liam Kelly; and Glenda Edwards. The community of Kalkarindji looked fantastic with lots of people coming together and celebrating.

A huge shoutout goes to the art centre with fantastic work being showcased. We had a number of book launches. The kids relaunched a book and did an amazing job doing that. I got to be alongside Leah Leaman and the amazing Brenda Croft, and we relaunched the book *Yijarnie* which means truth and it is a powerful book about telling the truth of the Gurindji. It was such a great time to be together to feel the strength and the power of the community and just acknowledging the incredible moment to come together.

I acknowledge the Gurindji and thank the surrounding families, the Mudburra, Malngin, Gurindji, Warlpiri, who all did an amazing event.

I acknowledge the amazing talent on the stage, the concert lineup: Lazy Late Boys; Justine Clarke & the Gurindji Kids—absolutely amazing; B2M; Drifting Clouds; Tjupi Band; Fejo and the Cruisers; Narbarlek; A4C; Moonlight Reggae; Running Water; White Water Band; Roadblock; Olive Knight; Tilla Band; the Red Flag Dancers; Dodge City Boyz; Sandridge Band; Red Sunset Nangu Band; and of course, I acknowledge Barnsey. Jimmy Barnes played at the Freedom Day Festival. and it was amazing. He got the crowd moving, and it was brilliant. It is great to see family coming together. Where else in the country can you go to a free Barnsey concert with 3,000 fellow Territorians all celebrating and having a fantastic time? It is incredibly important to acknowledge that.

Thank you to everyone who came to the Freedom Day Festival. Thank you to the Gurindji—brilliant. All the footy games, basketball, workshops, stall holders—thank you all. It was incredible; I look forward to the next Freedom Day Festival.

I acknowledge this year that the Australian Mint has released a 50c coin in honour of the 60 years of the Wave Hill Walk-off. Thank you to everyone involved.

I acknowledge and thank Yingiya Guyula, former Member for Mulka, for his amazing contribution to this parliament. I entered parliament in 2016 with Yingiya Guyula and have been on that journey with him over the last 10 years. He has been an amazing member of this parliament. He came in as the Member for Nhulunbuy, fought hard, advocated and got the name changed to Mulka. It is an amazing testament of his work, determination and resilience.

When I came in I was a backbencher. I spent a lot of time with him yarning on the backbench. We were sat quite close together. I had the opportunity in 2020 to enter Cabinet, and one of the first things I did was get on a plane and travel the electorate of Mulka with Yingiya Guyula.

We spent nights camping out on the front porches of schools. We met amazing people in the electorate. I met his family; he taught me how to do the work with the pandanus to make a basket. It was just amazing. He is a man of great calibre, strength, resilience and enormous pride and culture.

As the Member for Johnston has eloquently summed up, Yingiya Guyula is a giant in the Territory. He is an amazing man who has enormous respect wherever you go. Yingiya Guyula travelled through parts of the Western Desert with the former Member for Stuart and Gwoja, Scott McConnell, and everywhere he went he was respected, honoured and cherished, and he always will be. It is incredibly important.

An advocate for Yolngu *rom*—the values, laws and traditions of that part of the Territory he advocated for. If it was not for the hard work of Yingiya—we worked together and were able to get the law and justice group up and running in Ramingining. We sat, spoke with people and heard what they needed.

I recognise that Yingiya Guyula made sure that in every decision in parliament, regardless of who was in government, there was always a space for language, law and culture. He made sure that Mulka was always here first—Mulka first with the former Member for Mulka, Yingiya Guyula.

It is important to acknowledge that he never waivered or stepped away from his people. He has gone back to that community, will be strong in that community and will be missed.

DRAFT

You can jump on Facebook and look at the number of people who are honouring that man for his conviction and passion. It is incredible. He will be missed in this place, but we have an opportunity to honour him. I think it is incredibly important to do that tonight and thank him.

I look forward to seeing you out on country, my old friend. Hopefully we can go out fishing. I have heard you are out on the boat.

In the last few minutes whilst acknowledging he is a giant, I also acknowledge Beth and Lee from his electorate office who have been amazing. Beth has been an incredible support for Yingiya Guyula, but she has also been a friendly face in that electorate office, along with Lee. Thank you for supporting Yingiya.

What an amazing honour and privilege we have all had to work alongside him. No doubt, we will get to see him again across the Territory. He made an amazing contribution. We always say that you can't be what you can't see; Yolngu people can see that they belong in this place because of Yingiya Mark Guyula.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, as Seniors Month draws to a close it is important to reflect and celebrate all the incredible seniors around the Territory and acknowledge the people who have come before us to help build the Northern Territory into what it is today.

Recently in Alice Springs the Old Timers fete was held. The community of Alice Springs showed up to support this time-honoured tradition, supporting our senior citizens. The Member for Namatjira and I cooked Bill and Burgoyne's burger barbecue. Moogie Curtis and Tricia Bruce sold their amazing preserves and jams. Sue Ride with the Girl Guides supplied Devonshire teas, much to the community's delight. The Rotary Club of Alice Springs cooked sausages in bread with Councillor Sean Heenan cooking up a storm, along with his fellow Rotarians. I thank all the volunteers on the day, including Emma Schubert, the Alice Springs Town Band and so many more who made the day a wonderful success. It was wonderful to see once again this successful event after some years when it did not go ahead. It is wonderful to have it back again this year, and bigger and better than ever before.

I recognise the amazing students from Centralian Middle School who volunteered their time to help recently at the Member for Namatjira's and my seniors' lunch. The young students assisted from helping seniors find their seats to serving their meals and cleaning up afterwards. To Mrs Sarah France, the organiser, thank you for your continued support for this event and bringing those middle school students along. The seniors genuinely love having the students assist with the day, and I know their appreciation is not lost on anyone.

I too thank the Member for Mulka, Yingiya, for his tireless efforts over the last many years in opposition. As opposition Whip I worked closely with Yingiya and Beth to ensure that Yingiya was always in the Chamber whenever he wanted to contribute to debates and that he got to ask his questions during Question Time.

One of many fond memories was travelling to Nhulunbuy and having Yingiya drive us around in his Holden Commodore for the day with my fellow colleagues who were in opposition at the time. He took the time that day to take us to the lookout. I have a beautiful photograph of Yingiya and I standing atop that lookout over Nhulunbuy. I genuinely appreciated being on his country and having him explain a bit about where he represents.

Although we had many differences in policy position over the years, I appreciated his work, as I do of everyone in this Chamber because it is a demanding job. I know that Yingiya conducted himself at all times with the utmost sincerity and carried out his role to the his absolute best. Thank you to the Member for Mulka, Yingiya Guyula, for his time representing the people of Mulka.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I attended the Palmerston Magpies Football Club AGM.

The club has a new committee now. Its members have been confirmed and I congratulate the volunteers of this amazing club who have decided to become this committee, the president for another year is Carmine Rauseo; vice-president, Junell Moore; secretary, Jade Ferry; treasurer, Donna Rowe; football operations director, Daniel Murden; sponsorship director, Greg Aldam; grants director, Steven Moore; male player representative, Michael Tedcastle; female player representative, Tiana McCoy; communications officer, Charmaine Jayme; and general committee members, Ben Price and David Miles. I wish them all the best.

I am proud patron of the Palmerston Magpies. The Palmerston local MLAs—being Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro; the Member for Drysdale, Clinton Howe; and the Member for Blain, Matthew Kerle—are big supporters. We try to get out there as much as possible.

DRAFT

They now have a short break and they will be back into it next year. It is looking to be bigger and better than before. Up the Magpies!

Valentine's Fish and Chips is a locally owned business in Rosebery. It is on Granites Drive, right in the heart of my electorate of Brennan. It is a popular little family business there. All of them work there and they employ lots of young people as well and have done for a long time. I have included them often in my newsletters; often when I do competitions and giveaway vouchers because they are popular. I get the most number of entries when I put a voucher up with their name attached to it.

I celebrate the fact that they have been in business for 25 years, which is fantastic. It is such a great, longstanding local business. It is hard work having a small business, especially a fish and chip shop. That is hot and sweaty work and they do a fabulous job. Michelle is the current owner of that business; her parents started it. She now runs it. I have full respect for her for all of the work that she and her team do for the people of Palmerston.

I was delighted to attend the fourth annual Clontarf Billy Kart Derby on Wednesday 19 August at Bunnings Palmerston. There were 28 boys from seven NT Clontarf Academies. We have Driver, Rosebery, Haileybury, Dripstone, Nightcliff, Sanderson and Taminmin join the event for a memorable day of racing self-made billy karts.

With this event being a highlight on the Clontarf annual calendar, academy members arrived in their costumes, proudly presented in their karts and they cheered each other throughout all of the races. Ultimately, Haileybury took the winning title of the derby. All of the teams, though, put in an outstanding effort to make their karts, costumes and race.

The event is growing annually. It has partnerships with Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation and Bunnings Palmerston, bringing together the academy members, staff, partners and the wider community. We had a lot of guests on the day, including me—I went along to watch—the Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro, the Minister for Education, Hon Jo Hersey, Clinton Howe, Matthew Kerle and Khoda Patel, as well as people from many other businesses.

My colleagues all raced in that event. They did a great job. They did not have to race the kids, though. They raced each other and did a great job. We had a fantastic time there. Well done to all of the people who were involved in the Clontarf Billy Kart Derby.

On Sunday 23 August, I attended the Northern Sharks Rugby League Football Club Mini Mods Under six and Under 12s. We had the end of season presentation. I was there with my colleague, Matthew Kerle, the Member for Blain. We were delighted to assist with some presentations of some of team medals.

Again, our Palmerston MLAs, the Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro, the Member for Blain, Matthew Kerle, the Member for Drysdale, Clinton Howe and me as the Member for Brennan sponsor this amazing club. They are fantastic. It is a great family club. They are always helping each other out. This presentation was held at the Palmerston Game Fishing Club and the place was packed full of so many great families. It was only Under 12s down.

Well done to them. I thank the president, Gordon Hownslow; the vice president, Aysha Kay; secretary, Taley Pullman; the registrar Kezie Tilley; public officer, Kalano Zio; coaching coordinator, Ewan MacKillop; and the junior coordinator Health Criddle; senior coordinator, Kalano Zio; social media, Dee Gunne and Aysha Kay; apparel is ordered by Aaron Tilley; and grant sponsorship, Gordon Hounslow does that as well. We have Hildegarde Hounslow, Nigel Doyle and Ben Pullman. Thank you so much to all of those committee members and all the parents who came with all their kids. It was such a fantastic presentation.

They even had one of those blow-up shark costumes. We had photos with them and all the kids had photos. It was great and fun.

On Saturday night we attended the inaugural Tamil Heritage Festival run by the Tamil Society of the Northern Territory Darwin. As the CLP Finocchiaro government, we were proud to commit the funding to that event and have that inaugural festival at the Darwin Waterfront. Thank you to the president, Kavi Vivekananthan, and Sambavi Dinesh, the vice president. They did a fantastic job rounding up everybody to come along for the inaugural event. On the night they were flat out, ensuring that everything was running smoothly—and it certainly was. As a guest of the event, it was amazing. There were so many volunteers helping, the master of ceremonies for that event, Pav, is a great singer, but also a great master of ceremonies as well.

DRAFT

A big shoutout goes to all the performers, dancers, singers, and cooks. I did not get to eat, but I wish I did, because it smelled amazing. I was there with my colleagues, the Minister for People, Sport, and Culture and Multicultural Affairs, Jinson Charls; the Minister for Trade, Business, and Asian Relations, Robyn Cahill; Laurie Zio; and Oly Carlson. We were all able to watch the classical folk dancers, listen to traditional Tamil music, and participate in the parade. There were all sorts of demonstrations and amazing entertainment.

More than 50 multicultural community leaders and organisations were invited to support that festival, and they came out in spades. I was proud to get dressed up in a sari, and I felt like a beautiful princess. It was wonderful; I had a great time. Everyone there was so welcoming. The Tamil culture is so fitting of the Northern Territory lifestyle, in everything they believe in, and I was so grateful to be there and enjoy that. I wish them all the best for planning the next one. I hope they do it again. As a government, we are proud to support that festival and are looking forward to seeing it grow into the future.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, an amazing event was held a few weeks ago at RAAF Base Tindal. Friday night saw a stunning 75 Squadron flight line dinner with F35s in the background and one of the F18s which Tindal was known for after as the home of the Hornet. An auction was held, raising vital funds for the NT Cancer Council. The highlight, along with dining next to the incredible jets, was the fly over and dogfight that happened in the air as the sun set in the background. The following day, an annual rugby game took place with 75 Squadron versus 17 Squadron, and what a game. It was a little testy on the field, but 75 Squadron took home the win in both men's and women's games—a fantastic achievement. It was a great spectacle of a game with the on-field antics.

The greatest victory was not about the game, but the incredible generosity of the Tindal community sponsors, volunteers and officials that raised vital funds for the NT Cancer Council. A whopping $100,075.75 was raised. An incredible effort by our amazing RAAF community. Those vital funds were sent to the oncology day stay area at the Katherine Hospital. A week or so later, I attended as SADFO, Alex Smith, was supported by members of the cancer ward and Renee Daniels, from the hospital, to unveil the cancer treatment completion bell.

Prior to the fundraising, the RAAF had visited the hospital, noticed a small bell up on the wall, and asked what it was for. It was explained it was a completion bell, which is rung when patients complete their treatment. It was only a tiny little bell, so one of the RAAF guys made a larger bell from felled timber from a mahogany tree, with daffodils on the base. It was quite a big bell in the end, and it was on wheels. When people complete their cancer treatment, they can wheel it out into the corridor, ring that bell loudly and let everyone in the hospital know that their treatment had finished. It was fantastic, all those events culminating in the ringing of the cancer completion bell.

Recently, Katherine South Primary School had their amazing science expo event. With so many different experiments and stalls to look at, the kids were able to go around and either make or test out the games and experiments they had on offer. They could make their own bouncy balls, watch magical colour changing tea, balloon explosions, straw painting and even the pencil through the bag of water trick, which amazed many. They were also joined by the military police and paramedics, along with their cars and the ambulance, which was quite exciting for the kids seeing the flashing lights and sirens sounding all afternoon.

North Horizon Heli Adventures landed on the oval to show the kids the inside of the chopper, which was quite a spectacle for some children; it was spectacular seeing the chopper landing on the school oval. They had some special treats around the expo such as pop popcorn and a sausage sizzle. We also have a smoothie bike in the office, so we lent the bike out to the school and the kids had to pedal to make their smoothie to be able to have their drink; it is a great little exercise. Overall, the kids had a lovely time and were so grateful for all they had on offer. I thank all the staff that supported the students during the science week at Katherine South Primary School.

An event around the show was the Green Team Nutrien Katherine. I thank them for their annual event, especially to Jessica Groves, it was her last event as she moved on to go and work for her brother this year. Jessica puts a lot of effort into the Nutrien Ladies Sundowner on the Thursday before the Katherine Show each year. For years, Nutrien has been putting on an event for the ladies in the bush to come together over the busy show weekend, to have a break and catch up with friends and mums they might not have seen in a while. It is a time where like-minded women come together to network and it gives them a break from everyday station life, which is not always easy.

The Nutrien team decided that they needed to showcase our rural ladies a few years ago and give them a moment to let their hair down. In 2018 they came up with the idea to have a luncheon for the ladies on the

DRAFT

Friday of the show with the Kicks—which is the mobile play group—alongside to keep the kids entertained. They started with around 50 women showing up and having three stalls for them to browse through. Over the years since then, it has grown immensely each year receiving more sponsorship, more women interested and more stall holders wanting to be a part of the fantastic evening.

Moving into 2026 they now have it on a Thursday night before the show. It has grown so much and is such a fantastic event. They have 300 tickets on sale, and they sell out so quickly that there are normally people on a waiting list; it is a much-anticipated event. This year, they had 11 stallholders where young ladies were showcasing their small businesses. None of this would be made possible without the amazing sponsors in which they get continuously year after year, who help to create this amazing event for all women across the NT. We were very lucky to have Holly Tapp sing for us on that evening, also thank you to Grazia.

It has been a busy Dry Season, and there have been so many things happening in the Katherine area. I always say that we are the centre of the universe and that certainly comes to life in the Dry Season.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I reflect on a couple of local legends of Nightcliff.

Firstly, I mention the great achievement of Tom O'Neill Thorne. Tom O'Neill Thorne is a Nightcliff local, and he was recently part of the successful wheelchair basketball at the Commonwealth Games. He played a starring role in the grand final where he led the charge and scored five points, nine rebounds and four key assists. They were able to defend their title and, most importantly, he did exceptionally well in the semi-final, where he scored eight points in the 19–12 victory. This is a fantastic achievement by Tom and the team. He was all class, and it was a fantastic achievement to win the men's wheelchair basketball three-by-three grand gold medal final.

It is important to note that Tom is also one of the country's best wheelchair basketballers, including having led the Darwin Salties to three consecutive championships. Congratulations to Tom and the Wombats for that fantastic gold medal performance.

Another person I would like to give a quick shout out to is possibly the oldest member of the Nightcliff electorate. I got the pleasure to meet Elspeth Harvey recently when I was out letterboxing my community newsletter and I was invited in by Catherine, 'I want you to meet Elspeth; she is just about to turn 101.'

She was born August 25—in fact, yesterday was her birthday—1925 in Helensburgh, Scotland. She was a remarkable woman for her era as she had lived across Asia prior to World War II and she had to escape through China, Shanghai, back to Glasgow. When World War II reached Europe Elspeth put her hand up to help on the homefront. She became a forester with the Women's Timber Corps. She was assisting with felling trees and that was her key contribution to the war effort.

After the war Elspeth married Alexander Harvey in Dunoon, Scotland, migrating to Australia in 1951 with their two children, then they had a third child here in Australia. Her husband worked in underwater welding and the business brought the family up to Darwin in 1966 where most of the family has been based ever since. After surviving the war, Elspeth and her family then survived the destruction of Cyclone Tracy in 1974 when they were living in Fannie Bay. Following the cyclone the family decided to stay on and assist in rebuilding the city and the community.

Elspeth is a remarkable woman. She is incredibly sharp, inciteful and if you are not on your toes she will take the mickey out of you as well. I was incredibly honoured to sit with her, and she invited me to her 101st birthday on the weekend, and it was a lovely affair with so many friends across the community.

I want to leave you with a couple of words from Elspeth where she was quoted in the NT News at her 100th birthday last year. She said:

I've really had to work hard all my life …

You're going to have hard times in your life, but you're going to have better times too …

But you have to do it yourself—sometimes you've got to be the one who says, "right I'm not putting up with this", and get on with it.

You don't have to be nasty to people—you just tell them, "no, I'm not doing that".

It's your life, but you've got to do it.

DRAFT

And if you do it, then you can do what you want.

Very wise words from a 100-year-old woman. Happy Birthday, Elspeth, and look forward to many more to come.

A couple of final shoutouts. I was grateful to welcome students who were participating in the Clontarf Foundation from Nightcliff High School. They came down to visit the electorate office recently for morning tea and it was great to have a chat with them about politics and what is happening in our local community. The young men asked fantastic questions of me, and I was really put on my toes about what was happening with the Nightcliff Jetty—which I have now contacted the minister about to get an update. We also talked about housing, healthcare and jobs. They also wanted to know what it is like to be the local member.

It was terrific to hear their perspectives, answer their questions and have a chat about what matters to young people in our community. The Clontarf program is a fantastic program, and they are guided by terrific teachers and mentors. I am excited to see what this cohort will do next and to see them finish their program, finish their schooling and hopefully kick off into great careers and great lives in the Northern Territory.

Finally, it was a pleasure to be welcomed to the Greek Orthodox School in Rapid Creek recently. Michael Koulianos, who was here earlier today for the condolence motion for John Halikos, invited me to meet some of the staff, students and families who are involved with the Greek school. They do wonderful work, and it was terrific to see how they are supporting keeping Greek culture, language and religion alive in Darwin. As was reflected this morning, we have an incredible Greek population in Darwin, and it is fantastic to see that community spirit and that history and tradition being passed on to the next generation.

I thank Michael and everyone involved with the Greek school for the opportunity to visit. I look forward to supporting them in the years ahead.

Madam SPEAKER: I acknowledge the Member for Mulka, my friend and colleague, a colleague and friend to a lot of people in this Chamber. It came as quite a surprise last week to hear that he decided to retire after 10 years.

He came to the Chamber in 2016. I had become an Independent member fairly recently, so we were neighbours upstairs for eight years. It was a peculiar friendship. Sometimes the friendships and connections you make in politics and this parliament are unlikely and not necessarily easy to describe or explain, not that you need to. Yingiya and I were two different people from different political persuasions, but we became friends. I found him to be an incredibly kind generous person. Obviously, he was an inspiration and an extraordinary leader for his people.

For me, he will be missed. I suggest that for the next Member for Mulka it will be an extraordinarily difficult act to follow.

I also acknowledge Beth Harris, his electorate officer. Beth was an extraordinary support to Yingiya. I have not seen two people work in the way they worked. Obviously, Yingiya spoke English as a second language and Beth spoke Yolngu and was able to work so closely with him to help him convey what he needed to in English in this parliament so beautifully, generously and sensitively. Beth Harris is an extraordinary person. I cannot tell you how much I think of Beth.

I feel sad that those two people will not be sharing this part of our voyage together. Sorry about the tears.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

DRAFT