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15th Assembly



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Photographer in Chamber

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have invited professional photographer, Mr Charlie Bliss, to take a group photo of all of us at 12 noon today in the Chamber. I ask you all to remain in the Chamber for probably five minutes so that we can take the photo. We will first take a photo of the Chamber with all members seated, then have a group shot near the bar of the House, which is just in front. Mr Bliss will also be present in the Chamber during Question Time to take photos.

TERRITORY COORDINATOR BILL
Serial 17

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Territory Coordinator Bill 2025, Serial 17, and I table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to create the position of Territory Coordinator to coordinate and consolidate regulatory processes for significant and complex development and projects that have the potential to drive economic growth and accelerate private sector jobs and opportunities for Territorians.

As an independent statutory officer, the Territory Coordinator will support the strategic facilitation and streamlining of assessment processes, ensuring that the Territory is competitive in attracting large-scale investments.

Once established the Territory Coordinator will have the unique capacity to set cross-government strategic direction on projects and development areas of significance.

Key features of the Territory Coordinator Bill 2025 include:

- the 'primary principle', which provides an overarching guide for decision-making
- the designation of significant projects, programs of work and Territory development areas, the declaration of infrastructure coordination areas and the approval of Territory development area plans and infrastructure coordination plans
- a suite of request and notices that the minister or Territory Coordinator may use to coordinate and streamline complex regulatory processes.

There has been extensive consultation in the development of this Bill.

On 11 October 2024 the Territory Coordinator Consultation paper was released to government regulators, proponents, stakeholders and industry peak bodies as a basis to test key provisions and powers being considered for the inclusion in the draft Territory Coordinator Bill.

On 24 October 2024 the consultation paper was publicly released.

On 14 November 2024 my government announced Mr Stuart Knowles as the interim Territory Coordinator and released the draft Territory Coordinator Bill and Guide to the Territory Coordinator Bill to the public.

On 17 January 2025 public engagement on the draft Bill closed.

The changes that we have made to the Bill before us today have been informed by feedback from Territorians, industry leaders and stakeholders, which was gathered through:

- 89 stakeholder consultation meetings with 267 participants, including peak bodies, industry leaders and community groups
- 559 written submissions, including 289 unique and 270 campaign submissions received across both consultation phases

- six community information forums with 321 attendees and 81 community feedback forms.

We have also publicly released a report on the consultation process.

We thank everyone who took the time to provide their views on the Bill. We listened to that feedback, and the Bill I am presenting today incorporates some of those changes that were put forward by the community. This extensive consultation highlights my government's commitment to creating a framework that is robust, inclusive and designed to deliver real results. The Territory Coordinator is a game-changing initiative for the Northern Territory.

The message is very clear: the Territory is open for business. By cutting through red tape, fast-tracking major investments and streamlining processes, this role will boost the Territory's competitiveness attracting large-scale investment to fuel growth and development. This is about creating jobs, delivering results and is key to unlocking the potential of the Northern Territory.

The powers of the Territory Coordinator reflect frameworks that exist or are being developed in other jurisdictions around Australia and have been adapted to the unique circumstances of the Northern Territory.

A key concept in the Bill is the primary principle, which provides that the minister or the Territory Coordinator must consider the primary objective of driving economic development as well as the potential social and environmental outcomes when exercising key powers under the Act.

They must also consider the primary principle when exercising a power or function under any other Act—for example, after issuing a step-in notice—in addition to the objects, principles or considerations of that other Act. This broadens the basis for decision-making and means that the Territory Coordinator or the minister have the potential to make decisions that were not available to the original decision-maker.

Part 2 of the Bill establishes the role of the Territory Coordinator. It sets out the eligibility requirements for that role, the terms and conditions of appointment and the mechanisms to terminate appointment. It also sets out the functions and powers of the role and makes it clear that public entities will be required to cooperate with the Territory Coordinator.

Parts 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide the framework for designating significant projects, programs of work and Territory development areas; declaring infrastructure coordination areas; and approving Territory development area plans and infrastructure coordination plans.

Part 7 sets out the powers that will assist the minister and Territory Coordinator to coordinate and streamline regulatory processes. These powers apply in relation to the Act set out in the Schedule or are prescribed by regulation and can be used in relation to significant projects, infrastructure coordination areas, infrastructure coordination plans, programs of work, Territory development areas and Territory development area plans.

The powers are to:

- request a public entity to prioritise a specific statutory process—a prioritisation request
- request a public entity to start or complete a specific statutory process within a specified period or to pause or continue to undertake a statutory process for a specified period—a progression-related request
- request a public entity to make a statutory decision within a specified period—a decision request
- issue a condition variation notice, varying the conditions imposed on an approval
- issue a step-in notice to a public entity advising that the minister or Territory Coordinator will step in to undertake a statutory process in the place of that entity.

The minister will also have the power to issue an exemption notice to a public entity, on the recommendation of the Territory Coordinator, which excludes or modifies the application of a relevant law in specified circumstances.

Part 8 sets out the power to enter land within the boundaries of an infrastructure coordination area or Territory development area for the purpose of undertaking studies and investigations to inform the development of an infrastructure coordination plan or a Territory development area plan. This Part also sets out the powers of entry and provides compensation to be granted for any damage caused.

In response to feedback we have increased transparency around the exercise of powers under the Act by:

- providing that statements of reasons be published for key decisions
- mandating that all notices be published online
- allowing a longer notice period prior to entering land
- allowing more time for a notice of motion tabled in the Legislative Assembly to disallow an exemption notice.

In response to the feedback we have also revised the Schedule of Acts to which the powers can be exercised. Notably, we have removed the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act 2004.* We also added Acts to the Schedule, including the *Heritage Act 2011*, given its role in the regulatory framework applying to significant projects and development.

The Territory Coordinator will support streamlined regulatory processes to expedite those projects that would deliver significant economic benefit for the Territory. This focus on a contemporary, best-practice approach to regulation and development facilitation is critical to ensuring the Northern Territory offers an even more attractive investment and can-do industry development environment.

This Bill directly supports my government's commitment to rebuilding the Northern Territory's economy. It is about creating jobs, driving growth and making the Territory a place where significant projects can get off the ground.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members and have tabled a copy of the explanatory statement.

There were many people involved in the development of this Bill, which was a commitment we took to the 2020 and 2024 elections.

The final version we landed on has come through the extremely hard work of some special people across our public service, including Tom; Margaret; Jason; Rick; and, of course, our interim Territory Coordinator, Stuart Knowles, whom I acknowledge is in the gallery. They have been across the Territory and combing over every detail to make sure we have fit-for-purpose legislation that will deliver our intention for Territorians.

Our intention has been clear that in order to rebuild the Territory's economy we must be more competitive. To be more competitive we need a competitive edge on our regulatory environment. While other jurisdictions—such as Queensland—have had a similar model for a long time, jurisdictions such as South Australia are still developing theirs. We have had the benefit of looking at what worked for Queensland, what used to work and what others are starting to consider, to make sure that ours is cutting edge, better, stronger and more ready to be agile to deliver the certainty we need in the Territory in decision-making and program and project development.

We are at a big turning point for the Territory's future. We have an $11bn debt projected in the forward estimates to $15bn. We have been the worst-performing economy in the nation for six years in a row, our population has not been growing where it needs to be, and friends and family have packed up and left because they do not see a future for themselves in the Territory. This is a flagship piece of reform—the most significant economic reform we have seen in a decade in the Territory—that is designed to turn the Territory around. It will be important landmark reform that we are incredibly proud of.

Territorians have had the opportunity not only to attend public and online forums, meet with the Territory Coordinator and provide written and other types of feedback, they have been able to be involved—let alone the fact that we have a mandate to deliver this because we have taken it to two elections.

It is clear to us how important this reform is, and we know that transparency, scrutiny and community involvement are equally important. I will also be referring this legislation to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee as we promised. Today the consultation paper feedback summary will be released so that people can see the different types of feedback and what we looked at in developing this final version of the Bill. I am looking forward to seeing what the Legislative Scrutiny Committee looks into during the next few weeks of additional scrutiny and consultation, and I look forward to bringing this important piece of reform to the parliament in March for passage.

Thank you to every member of the team who believes wholeheartedly in the role the Territory Coordinator will play in our future. It is one of the first things we worked on by about day three or four of coming to government. Tom and I were straight into it. An absolute power of work has been done, and I am proud of the final product. I am proud of the team for delivering this landmark economic reform to the Territory, and I am proud that we have appointed Stuart Knowles as the Territory Coordinator. He has done a great job already. It was important to get him on the ground early so that everything is ready to go on passage. It is all in good hands and in good shape.

I commend the Bill to honourable members, and I am looking forward to the next phases of the Bill.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 12 March 2025.

Motion agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Mr Neil Bell

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge Mr Neil Bell in the Chamber, former Member for MacDonnell from 1981 to 1997. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 12

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Correctional Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 12, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to provide the Corrections Commissioner with additional powers to engage in a more flexible workforce to deal with the growth in our Corrections system and ultimately deliver a safer community. The Bill will allow the commissioner to appoint special Corrections officers and special probation and parole officers to ensure our Corrections system is well resourced and staffed to manage the rising number of offenders. These amendments are set to complement the government's election commitment to make the Territory a safer place.

The Bill will deliver Corrections the ability to build a more flexible workforce by amending provisions of the *Correctional Services Act 2014* and the Correctional Services Regulations 2014.

The NT's adult prisoner population has grown by 18% in the last five months, and it is anticipated there will be a further increase resulting from the government's bail reforms that commenced on 6 January 2025.

The Bill will expand the pool of available personnel by allowing the Commissioner of Corrections to:

- appoint special Corrections officers, probation officers and parole officers
- define the scope of the power and the functions of these appointees
- establish accountability and compliance standards for these appointees that coincide with Correctional Services standards.

Under the present law the Act limits the commissioner's powers to appoint correctional officers and probation officers to individuals who are public sector employees. The commissioner does not have the power to appoint officers seconded from other jurisdictions or to engage private contractors to support the important work of Corrections.

This Bill is the government's action to give Corrections more flexibility to manage increased operational demand by creating workforce options with officers who are not NT public sector employees, to have similar duties, obligations, powers and privileges conferred on a correctional officer or probation and parole officer. This will provide new opportunities to strengthen our Corrections system and keep the community safe. It will allow for a surge of personnel for prisoner custody and transfer services to complement our existing workforce.

The Bill is flexible to appoint a range of personnel with differing skill sets to perform selected tasks as determined by the commissioner in support of our hardworking Corrections officers. For example, a special correctional officer may be delegated functions to transport prisoners to and from court appearances, conduct escorts to medical appointments and hospital and transport prisoners between correctional facilities. This will free-up our correctional officers, who are highly trained, to focus on prisoners held in custody in correctional centres. It is anticipated that in providing a mechanism for managing surge capacity, the Bill will also assist with reducing the fatigue and stress often experienced by correctional staff.

In times of need, the Bill will also give the commissioner scope to seek support from other jurisdictions to send emergency or surge workforces to assist the Northern Territory. Similar arrangements have long existed for police around Australia, and this Bill provides the Corrections Commissioner with powers to seek assistance in managing rising demand on our prisons. Similarly, the Bill provides for the appointment of special probation and parole officers to assist our frontline community Corrections staff. One example of this will be providing the commissioner the scope to consider engaging service providers to expand support to the fitting and management of electronic monitoring devices on offenders, and freeing up our probation and parole officers to focus on the important work of case managing parolees and offenders on supervised orders.

This model is similar to the use of private contractors used elsewhere in Australia, such as Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. Other jurisdictions have long used specialist private corrections contractors to supplement their mainstream corrections workforce. This is not about replacing our hardworking Corrections staff or reducing jobs. In fact, we need more correctional officers and probation parole officers and the government will continue to recruit them.

These amendments are needed to supplement the capacity of Corrections to ensure the safety, security, and good order of our correctional centres and our Community Corrections system.

The amendments are substantially located in clauses 6 of the Bill, which inserts new Division 4 into the *Correctional Services Act 2014*.

New sections 25B and 25C will be inserted in the Act to provide the commissioner powers to appoint a person to be a special correctional officer or a special probation and parole officer. A person can only be appointed where the commissioner is satisfied the individual has the qualifications, skills or experience to properly perform the functions of a special correctional officer or special probation and parole officer.

New sections 25B(2) and 25C(2) clarify that the commissioner can make any appointment subject to any conditions, limitations or qualifications the commissioner decides. The commissioner is provided further flexibility to terminate the appointment of a special correctional officer or special probation and parole officer at any time under clause 7.

The Bill also provides a range of consequential amendments to the Act and Regulations to give effect to the amendments and ensure the new appointees have the same formal appointment requirements as NT public sector correctional officers. Specifically, the Bill amends the Correctional Services Regulations 2014 to ensure the new special correctional officer appointee must take an oath of office.

We acknowledge there is still more work to be done in this space to ensure our Corrections system is stronger to help make the community safe. The provision of powers to appoint special correctional services officers is a step forward to achieve that.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be declared urgent.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	K McNamara
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	Mr Young
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; I seek your guidance. I move that this be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for further deliberations. It is an important matter that is impacting on our hardworking Corrections officers and our health professionals …

Madam SPEAKER: The question has been asked and passed, so the moment to refer it to a scrutiny committee has passed.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I move that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for a later hour.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Mrs Cahill	K McNamara
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	Mr Young
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

FISCAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 15

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 15, and I table a copy of the explanatory statement.

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

The Bill enacts legislation to repeal the limit on borrowing, commonly referred to as the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling was introduced by the former Territory government as part of the 2021–22 budget and came into effect from 1 July 2021. It requires the Territory government to ensure that assessable borrowings (total borrowings excluding leases) remain under $15bn in the current year, the budget year and across the forward estimates; that is, the budget year plus three subsequent years. The Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction with a legislated debt ceiling.

The Department of Treasury and Finance maintains medium-term projections for its key fiscal indicators, including assessable borrowings to support strategic fiscal planning and risk management. Based on current projections, maintaining assessable borrowings within the $15bn limit would require a level of austerity and increases in own-source taxation and royalties that would have a significant negative impact on the Territory economy.

The impending breach of the debt ceiling is largely the result of decisions taken by the former government, including adding around $2bn to assessable borrowings between 2020–2021 and 2023–2024 through sustained fiscal balance deficits; and underestimating the cost of key projects and ICT upgrades, which will require significant additional funding injections to be delivered as scoped. Approving a record level of items on the capital works program without a corresponding increase in capital works cash funding was also responsible for these increases in debt, leading to escalating levels of revoted projects, acute funding pressures and approved time-limited funding for services that will be challenging to discontinue at cessation of funding, including in health, courts, Corrections and other public safety initiatives.

The former government's decision to significantly increase funding to police without commensurate funding increases for downstream justice services, including courts and Corrections has created further pressures on the budget that may make operating within the former government's debt ceiling untenable.

Given the inherited fiscal position and challenges, we have taken the difficult but necessary decision to repeal the debt ceiling. This will provide increased flexibility for government to progress budget repair and contain expenditure growth over the medium term without constraining government's ability to deal with immediate expenditure pressures and expiry of time-limited funding for key services. It will also enable this government to focus its efforts on growing revenue and enhancing the effectiveness of government spending.

To this end, the Bill amends the Schedule to the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act 2001* to repeal the borrowing limit amount and remove any related clauses. The Bill also repeals section 3 of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act 2001*, which is a spent provision relating to a special exception for the year 2020.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to the honourable members, and I have tabled a copy of the explanatory statement.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for the first Assembly meeting after 28 days have lapsed.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by inserting that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee.

For a Bill of this nature that is going to the heart of what the CLP says it wants to do—in terms of rebuilding the Territory economy, which is important to all of us—we need to make sure it is done in a way that is properly informed with a proper chance for input and consultation from the people and stakeholders it will affect. The purpose of setting up the scrutiny committee was to enable good governance in the Territory. That is what it was set up for; that is what we should be doing.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I would also like to see this go to a scrutiny committee. I am not sure what happened with the previous Bill, but we missed the opportunity for it to go to a scrutiny committee. The previous Bill needed to go to a scrutiny committee. Our hardworking Corrections officers came in yesterday; they are deeply upset about the lack of consultation on the Corrections Bill. They have not been consulted—the audacity of the CLP to say that it is dealing with hardworking Corrections officers, yet it has not even consulted with them.

That Bill needed to go to a scrutiny committee. I am unsure of the process of how that was missed.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I thank the members for their input. Over the last two weeks we have been open and transparent about why we are repealing the debt ceiling. We have been on the road speaking to Territorians in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs about the state of the budget and the position we have been put in by the previous government.

A number of people had the opportunity at that point to talk to us about the debt ceiling. This is a repeal—not a huge change or new legislation—of the debt ceiling that was put in place by the Labor government in 2021 after it was given ways to deal with the debt by the Langoulant report. Labor chose not to do that, and the debt kept increasing.

To effectively cover themselves, Labor members tried to make things look good, and they put in a debt ceiling which was, in effect, a fallacy. They kept spending and blowing money on that projection towards the debt ceiling. They did not consider actually indexing the debt ceiling based on that $15bn.

The previous government put in a debt ceiling that it did not care about. All it did was work towards hitting it. It did everything it possibly could to hide that fact from Territorians by not including ongoing funding for projects that were scheduled between three, four and five years or the forward projections. It did that specifically to hide the fact that it would hit and breach the debt ceiling.

It is unconscionable that the previous government did this to try to hide this fact from Territorians. It managed to push the breach of that debt cap out just beyond the forward estimates coming into this election. It would be in the same boat if it was back in government. It would have been telling Territorians why it breached the debt ceiling …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, silence!

Mr YAN: When you consider that in the last 18 months of the previous government it increased our debt by $2bn—where has that money gone, and what have we seen for it?

The Labor government poured money into projects that did not benefit all Territorians. It was not putting money into critical infrastructure to support the people of the Territory in our health sector, including aged care and mental health. Labor threw money at art galleries, playgrounds and everything else. It forgot about the majority of Territorians.

I thank the members for their contributions on an amendment. We will not be supporting the amendment. There has been plenty of transparency on the repeal of the debt ceiling. I will not support it going to the scrutiny committee.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 17
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Mrs Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	K McNamara
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	Mr Young
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

PETROLEUM, PLANNING AND WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 11

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 11, and I table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Petroleum Act 1984*, Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016, *Planning Act 1999*, Planning Regulations 2000 and the *Water Act 1992* to remove provisions for third-party merits review of decisions. These amendments support this government's commitment to rebuilding the Northern Territory economy. They will improve certainty and decision-making for developers and proponents and improve economic outcomes for the Northern Territory.

There are two forms of review that can be used to challenge government decisions. Judicial review is a common-law right that considers whether a decision was lawful and if the person making the decision was authorised to do so, regardless of whether legislated or not. Judicial review is undertaken by the Northern Territory Supreme Court.

Merits review is only available where legislated. A merits review considers whether a decision was correct and preferable in accordance with the law and that the decision made was the best that could have been made based on the relevant facts and available information to the decision-maker. Merits reviews are conducted by the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NTCAT).

This Bill deals with merits review, not judicial review. It addresses who has standing to seek merits review of certain decisions under a range of Northern Territory legislation. As a general principle, standing for applicants (or proponents) to seek a merits review is considered important for procedural fairness on the basis that the applicant is the most directly affected by a decision. This Bill does not remove standing for merits review from applicants or proponents.

This government is determined to rebuild the Territory economy. To rebuild the economy we must provide industry and businesses with regulatory processes that support certainty in development and investment.

We are experiencing an increasing number of requests for merits review by third parties opposed to development. Appeals are sought strategically to delay projects that have successfully been through assessment and approval processes and to influence community confidence in the regulation of

development. We have seen several projects unable to commence and put on hold due to reviews brought by third parties.

Right now we have two reviews before the NTCAT challenging the approval of environmental management plans for onshore petroleum activities. These reviews have been brought by organisations that are clearly opposed to the development of the onshore petroleum industry in the Northern Territory. These are environmental management plan approval decisions that have been through rigorous assessment by the regulating agency and have been informed by public submission processes.

Since 2020 there have been 18 third-party reviews pertaining to 10 decisions of the Controller of Water Resources under the *Water Act 1992*.

This Bill will reduce the current uncertainty, delays and disruption to the decision-making process and project implementation borne by regulatory agencies and project proponents.

Merits reviews impose considerable costs on government and proponents in seeking legal advice, compiling document briefs and attending hearings. Removal of the merits review process for third parties will reduce costs to both the Territory and proponents. It will also reduce efforts to undermine the integrity of regulatory decision-making where environment groups and other parties use the merits review process to influence public views about the rigour and effectiveness of assessment and approval processes.

It is acknowledged that the amendment Bill will result in the removal of third-party merits review as proposed by recommendation 14.24 of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, which required that prior to the granting of any further production approvals merits review be available in relation to decisions under the *Petroleum Act* and Petroleum and Environment Regulations including, but not limited to, decisions made in relation to the granting of all EMPs and that merits review be made available for third parties.

However, merits reviews are not concerned with the safety of industry or environmental risk, and since these recommendations were proposed in 2018 a robust regulatory regime to manage risks of the onshore gas industry has been established.

Recent requests for merits review of decisions captured by recommendation 14.24, which have been made after having undertaken a rigorous assessment by the regulator and informed by public submission processes, have been instigated to delay onshore gas development and to promote misinformation to the community about its risks.

The government must be able to adapt its regimes to regulate, as new technology, systems and information becomes available. It is this government's view that it is timely to amend the requirements for third-party merits review for onshore gas to ensure that industry is provided the certainty it needs to invest in the Territory.

A move away from recommendation 14.24 does not mean that this government does not support a robust, safe and well-regulated onshore gas industry. We recognise that this recommendation is not concerned with the ongoing safety to industry and is in fact damaging to the economic prospects of the NT.

Merits review provisions apply inconsistently across Northern Territory environment, planning and resource legislation. The Northern Territory's primary environmental legislation, the *Environment Protection Act 2019,* provides for the environmental impact assessment and approval of projects with the potential to have a significant impact on the environment. A ministerial decision to grant an environmental approval under this Act for a project with the highest risks to the environment is not open to merits review by third parties. Similarly, third-party merits review is not available to decisions to grant a licence to manage environmental impacts for mining activity in the Territory. By removing third-party merits review for petroleum, planning and water legislation, this amendment Bill will establish greater consistency across Northern Territory legislation. There is no reason why some industries of development activity should be subject to third-party merits reviews and others not.

There is a range of legislative requirements to ensure transparency and accountability in decision-making and other means for stakeholders to have their views and interests considered, irrespective of these amendments. Decision-makers are required to make their decisions public and, in most cases, provide a statement of reasons for their decisions. Stakeholders and interested parties may make submissions during consultation processes with these submissions required to be considered by decision-makers. This includes consultation on onshore petroleum environment management plans proposing drilling and hydraulic

fracturing, notification of applications for the petroleum exploration permit and public consultation on water extraction licences and development applications.

For pastoral interests, there are private legislated agreements negotiated through the land access arrangements administered by the Department of Mining and Energy under the Petroleum Regulations 2020. These private agreements establish a direct relationship between pastoralists and gas companies, allowing discussions about development and compensation to flow between the parties.

Existing legislation provides for a private agreement with native title holders or traditional owners to be in place for every grant of petroleum exploration permit in the Territory. As with the pastoral industry, these private agreements set up a direct relationship between Aboriginal people and gas companies, ensuring that Aboriginal people and their representatives—often land councils—have a direct line of communication to the gas company. In the event onshore gas development is occurring in a way that is not agreed to by either pastoralists or Aboriginal people, these private agreements operate as a forum for these stakeholders to raise concerns with gas companies directly.

Third-parties also retain the common-law right of judicial review in the Supreme Court.

I will outline the amendments proposed in the Bill in some detail.

The Bill amends the *Petroleum Act 1984* to remove the provisions for third-party merits review of a decision of the minister to release specified blocks for exploration. The amendment establishes an applicant for an exploration permit for a particular block as an interested person who may seek merits review of a decision of the minister not to release the block for exploration.

The Bill also amends the *Petroleum Act 1984* to remove the provisions for third-party merits review of a decision of the minister to grant an exploration permit.

The Bill amends the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016 to remove the provisions for third-party merits review of a decision of the minister to approve an environmental management plan or approve a revision of an environmental management plan. The Bill does not remove the ability of an interest holder to seek merits review of decisions of the minister as set out in Schedule 2 of the regulations.

The Bill amends the *Planning Act 1999* to remove the provision for third-party merits review of a decision of the consent authority to consent to development proposals and concurrent applications. Complementary to these amendments the Bill amends provisions relating to notification requirements to remove redundant processes and references.

The Bill amends the *Planning Act 1999* and the Planning Regulations 2000 to remove the provisions for third-party review of a decision of the consent authority to take no further action in response to a complaint following completion of an investigation.

The Bill amends the *Water Act 1992* to remove the provisions for third-party merits review of a broad range of decisions of the minister of the Controller of Water Resources.

This Bill does not apply retrospectively. Any merits reviews afoot prior to commencement of the amendment Bill will not be impacted by the amendments proposed in this Bill and must run their course. The amendment Bill will commence the day after the day on which the Administrator assents.

This amendment Bill helps provide industry and the broader investment community with the certainty required to invest in the Northern Territory and help rebuild our economy. This government is committed to a robust and well-regulated gas industry. It is also committed to modernising and adapting its regulatory regime for onshore gas as the industry develops, evolves and matures, as is appropriate.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members, and I table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I wish to move an amendment to the motion. I want to get in before you put the question and gag it like you have the rest of this morning.

Madam SPEAKER: You can do that, but we have to put the question that the Bill be read a first time. I will let you know when it is appropriate for you to do that.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the second reading of this Bill be made an order of the day for the first Assembly meeting after 28 days have elapsed.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you can speak now.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move that the motion be amended to include 'the Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for review and community and stakeholder consultation'.

It is incredibly important that we allow our community members and stakeholders to have input into this important legislation. It is appalling that the minister for Environment is not even affording an opportunity for Territorians to have a say on the legislation and the consequences it will deliver. This comes as the minister for Environment and Planning spoke with exact deliberation about the need for consultation with community and stakeholder and industry engagement, yet he is willing to forego the opportunity for the Legislative Scrutiny Committee to seek input and feedback from Territorians about this legislation. Shame on you, Member for Braitling, Environment and Planning minister. Not only this week has he defunded the environmental organisations who could provide …

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: And they are laughing about it; I pick up on those interjections.

Just days ago they defunded our environmental organisations which would be there to provide input on the need to protect our biodiversity and environmental protections.

Mr Maley interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please.

Mr PAECH: A day later they come in and do not allow Territorians the opportunity to have an important say. It is appalling that this is the direction we are going in.

Minister Burgoyne talks about allowing everyone to have their say, but he is not allowing everyone to have their say because he is refusing to send this to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. The government brought in a lobbyist register only days ago, to talk about the importance of industry lobby groups and being open and transparent, but this government is not being open and transparent.

The CLP members are not having an open and transparent process for this legislation and the merits review. They are willing to overlook that, steamroll ahead and not include people in the process. They are eroding their own democratic principles and policies that they came to the election with.

Only two sittings ago the Chief Minister spoke about the importance of having a Legislative Scrutiny Committee but is now picking and choosing what the government sends to it. We saw that this morning. When it gets hard, the Member for Braitling—the Environment minister who just cut funding to the Territory's environmental groups and who spoke about robust discussions—shows how scared the CLP members are about having robust discussions, because they are not willing to have them. They are not willing to hear from Territorians about robust topics, whether it is the environment—we have seen the coward-like nature of the Corrections minister, shutting down debate this morning because he does not want to talk about it.

These are important discussions for the Legislative Assembly, and we urge the CLP government to refer this to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. What are you afraid of? You are the government.. Do you not trust your own members of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee? You control the members of it. You have the numbers on that committee and can allow Territorians to have a say, but you are not willing to do that. That is terrible democratic process.

Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, you have an opportunity to right the wrongs you have delivered in cutting environment funding and being unwilling to listen to the people who care about the environment. Send this to a Legislative Scrutiny Committee and allow Territorians, stakeholders and industry groups to have a say. The least you can do as an elected member is listen to your constituency.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I also want this to go to a scrutiny committee. If someone has a good idea, I do not mind who is saying it. If I genuinely think if it is evidence based or listening to the

community, I am happy to go ahead with it. I was genuinely happy to see scrutiny committees come back and happy to hear that they were open and looking at a lobbyist register.

Scrutiny committees exist for a reason. Despite the fact the CLP has stacked them with the majority of its members, they still exist. I do not understand why they pick and choose what goes before scrutiny committees. No-one in this Chamber can genuinely talk about transparency unless we are actually providing transparency.

Yesterday's proposal for the lobbyist register filled me with despair, because it is toothless, gutless and has demonstrated to me that there is no genuine desire from that side of the Chamber to be transparent.

Let us not make this political. These committees exist for a reason. Use them, stand by your word and provide the public with transparency.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, this legislation is a repeal of legislation. Let me be clear: it is not new legislation.

For years we have heard from the previous Labor government of the strong, robust processes that it put in place as it relates to environmental protection across the Northern Territory. To send this to a scrutiny committee would essentially be debating the merits of removing merits review. Let us be clear about what we are debating.

For years Labor ignored calls for a scrutiny committee. It did not want it for any legislation …

Ms Uibo: But now you do not send anything for scrutiny, so what is the point of bringing them back?

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please! Come on.

Mr Edgington: Throw her out.

Mr Maley: You cut it.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Mr BURGOYNE: As this is a repeal of legislation, not new legislation, this is the case: we will not be supporting the amended motion.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, this is ridiculous. The Member for Braitling is saying that they are now picking and choosing what scrutiny the government wants. That does not make sense to any Territorian who knows how parliament works.

We want to see good governance and an accountable and transparent government in the Northern Territory. It does not matter to Territorians who is in government; they want to see good government, not a bad government. Has anyone in this Chamber ever walked around the Northern Territory and said, 'Hey, do you support a bad government in the Northern Territory?'

Members interjecting.

Ms UIBO: Yes, exactly. Territorians want to see good government; that is the whole point. Now it is sounding more and more—this is a huge concern for our Labor opposition—like the CLP government brought forward the motion to have a scrutiny committee for legislation without ever having the intention to send legislation to that scrutiny committee.

It is tokenistic, disingenuous and a shemozzle for the CLP government to say that it is bringing back transparency and accountability and wants to be a good government when it has removed any pathway, process or procedure to allow for the processes of parliament to scrutinise, regardless of whether someone is a CLP, Labor or crossbench committee member. The CLP government is removing the very process that for four years the CLP opposition talked about bringing back, which is the scrutiny committee. The CLP government's true 180-degree turnaround is that it does not want to send a single piece of its legislation to the scrutiny committee that it called on and made a big song and dance of bringing back to the parliamentary process.

I hope that the elected members of the CLP government go back to their electorates after the sittings week—we know it is always a big week for everybody—and look their constituents in the eye and say, 'We did not have any intention of scrutinising ourselves because we will just do what we want. We do not care now what Territorians want us to do as government; we will forge a way, make decisions and not listen to the people who voted us in.'

The biggest slight on democracy is to hear the Member for Braitling as the Environment and Planning minister say, 'We do not care about scrutiny. We are repealing this legislation.' Yes, Member for Braitling, on this side of the House we understand what repealing legislation is. We want to know what Territorians think about your decision. Who have you talked to? Apparently you do not even believe in consultation …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay, less interaction. Talk to me.

Ms UIBO: Consultation is not in the vocabulary, the thinking or the actions of the CLP government. It is not part of the CLP's toolkit. The CLP members do not respect the process of consultation and engagement. They think that hearing one story means that is everything. They do not do their homework; they are still acting as though they are in opposition and can say anything they want and it will not matter for Territorians. It does. When in government it matters to everyday Territorians, organisations, businesses and industry. This impacts them.

We have heard today what the government is intending. We know firsthand that government members are not responsible or brave enough to meet with the people who will be drastically impacted by the decisions they are making now, or are proposing to make. The Member for Gwoja talked about the Corrections minister being too chicken to talk to the Corrections officers about the legislation he is bringing forward. We got a briefing invite with less than two hours' notice—'By the way, here is the briefing. Be there, or that is it; you will miss out.' How ridiculous. Two members of parliament were not included in that, so where is the democratic process?

I hope that the Member for Braitling will not be arrogant and continue the line that his team has about not caring what Territorians think, say and want to see in legislation, whether it is new legislation or repealing legislation. I sincerely hope that the government members look at themselves in the mirror and realise they are letting down Territorians.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, it is bit rich that the opposition talks about scrutiny because under eight years of Labor there was no scrutiny whatsoever.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Calm down!

Mr EDGINGTON: The motion put forward by the Member for Braitling is for this legislation to be an Order of the Day at the next Assembly meeting after 28 days.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; I ask for your determination. The minister for Housing is talking about the amendment. We are actually talking about the motion as amended.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

Mr EDGINGTON: The motion put forward by the Member for Braitling is for the legislation to sit for 28 days. The motion to amend that particular motion is just playing politics; it is nothing more or less than that. It is coming from the side with no credibility whatsoever in regard to scrutiny.

In fact, we have heard criticising about consultation and engagement. Under the Labor government—I have spoken about this in the House before—the only time I ever saw the Members for Gwoja and Arnhem talk about consultation and engagement was standing in front of a camera at Battery Hill holding the community engagement strategy.

There is plenty of time for scrutiny, as there will be 28 days while the legislation sits there. Every member on that side, just like every member on this side—the 25 members in the Chamber—can talk about this legislation for 28 days. The role of every member is to do their job and talk to people in their electorate about legislation before this House. I remind you once more, Opposition Leader: look, listen and learn. Get out and

talk to your constituents about not only what is going on in your electorate but also what is happening in this House.

This legislation will sit for 28 days. I encourage every member opposite to do what we will be doing, which is listening to every constituent whom we represent. That is how we do our business; we engage and consult with every person we represent. I encourage you to do so yourselves, rather than coming in here and playing politics.

I move that the question be put.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 17
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
2025 Year of Action

Continued from 11 February 2025.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, less than six months ago the CLP was elected with an overwhelming majority, with a total of 17 members. The year ahead is important to us. It is a year of action, certainty and security as we continue to deliver our commitment of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our Territory lifestyle.

I will go through some of the priorities in my portfolios. First up I will talk about local government reform. Moving ahead in 2025 we are backing our bush communities with local government reform. The CLP is committed to restoring control of communities to Aboriginal people and strengthening service delivery. This control was taken away from communities in 2008 by the Labor government.

There were two key issues at that time. In 2005 the Labor government scrapped the law and justice strategy in the Northern Territory without notice, disempowering people in communities. To top that off and make things worse for people living out bush, the Labor government took away control and disempowered people in communities by removing community government councils.

We are working with Aboriginal people to empower communities that want a greater say, fostering self-determination. This will enable them to have a more active role in community development and decision-making processes. It will not be a one-size-fits-all approach, and we will not make changes without community engagement and consultation.

This is action we have already started to decisively take. Last year on 18 October in response to strong community feedback I postponed the election for the Groote Archipelago Regional Council until 15 March 2025. The residents of the Groote Archipelago region spoke to our government and we listened. Having worked with Aboriginal people to empower the community to have a greater say, we provided three wards that will reflect what the community wants. This is an opportunity overlooked by Labor to engage with people in that community …

Ms Uibo: Rubbish! That is not true. The wards came from the community; they did not come from you. Don't you claim that.

Mr EDGINGTON: We postponed that because Labor wanted to set up a council without engaging with the people in the Groote Archipelago. That is a disgrace and another highlight that the former Labor government failed to consult and engage with people in the Groote Archipelago.

Ms Uibo: What are you doing for treaty? Nothing.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Leader of the Opposition is upset because that is her electorate. Clearly, she had no influence over the Local Government minister. They could not even get that right from the start, so we are fixing it. We have spoken to people on Groote. A three-ward system has been introduced …

Ms Uibo: Actually, they were pretty annoyed that you made a decision without talking to them.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr EDGINGTON: … and there will be an election on 15 March, despite the opposition from Labor and it failing to set up the council properly on Groote. We are moving ahead, working with the people and delivering.

We consulted widely across the archipelago and the community, which overwhelmingly voiced a desire for that ward structure to ensure all communities in the Groote Archipelago region were represented in local governance, including residents in the smaller communities such as Bickerton.

We know how important the local government sector is in providing services to communities and being a mechanism for communities to engage and have their voices heard on what matters most to them. The priorities of communities are the priorities of our government.

Under the super shires model introduced in 2008 a lot of community members expressed that they lost the close connection they used to have with their council. The impact of that loss resulted in a level of disempowerment, including the ability to problem solve and address issues that directly impact individuals and their communities. The CLP government is changing that.

Legislative changes to the *Local Government Act* will commence in the first six months of 2025. Our reform is practical, deliverable and in line with community aspirations, which is something that Labor failed to adhere to.

I move on to Alcohol Policy. Our government will have an effective Banned Drinker Register. We want to ensure through review that the Banned Drinker Register can consider and effectively contribute to reducing crime. We have already introduced better police powers to tackle public drinking in non-exempt areas, including the seven-day banned drinker order.

For nearly two-and-a-half years under Labor no charges were laid against individuals supplying alcohol to those listed on the Banned Drinker Register or those subject to alcohol bans through court orders or under bail or parole conditions. As of 31 December 2024 there were 4,003 persons on the BDR. A police ban was the most common reason for being on the BDR, accounting for 58% of all banned persons. Unlike Labor, which focused only on supply, we are focused on driving down demand for alcohol with direct investments in community drug and alcohol services, including compulsory alcohol treatment and rehabilitation options for those who continue to cause alcohol-related harm to others. Our commitment to tackling demand and not just supply is what sets us apart, ensuring a brighter future for all Territorians.

On the other side, as the Member for Gwoja said yesterday, prohibition will never work. It is sad that his other Labor colleagues have not leaned towards that.

Our approach to alcohol and drug treatment will be vastly different. We will tackle alcohol-related harm that is increasingly rising in emergency wards, with stronger laws and rehabilitation. We will roll out more effective

alcohol management plans for communities across the Northern Territory. This is the work recommended in the Riley report in October 2017 that Labor failed to do. Labor failed to roll out the alcohol management plans before the cessation of Stronger Futures in July 2022. That is a clear recommendation of the Riley report that we are getting on with.

To date, 81 communities have received alcohol management plan information, 78 communities are actively engaged in community alcohol management planning, 28 community action plans been approved at the community level and 10 community action plans have been submitted to liquor licensing with a general restricted area application.

One of our key focuses this year is that we are serious about tackling antisocial behaviour in social and public housing. From 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024 there were 5,060 reports of antisocial behaviour across the NT, of which 1,181 were substantiated—an increase of 844 reports and 451 substantiations when compared to the same reporting period.

We are looking at legislative and policy changes to make tenants responsible and accountable for their behaviour in public housing. We want the community to be safe and secure so they can go about their business on a daily basis.

When it comes to health, we are reviewing patient transport services through a detailed and comprehensive review. We will work with the federal government to increase aged-care facilities to help free up hospital beds in the Territory. The availability of residential aged-care places in the Territory and the impact of aged-care-related discharge delays put significant pressure on the Northern Territory health system.

Increasing aged-care facilities will improve the wait times for Territorians on much-needed surgeries. We are partnering with the Australian Government to develop a new residential aged-care facility. A functional design brief for a 120-bed facility in the Holtze development area has been completed, with a cost estimate of approximately $120m.

One of the other areas I will be focusing on is Indigenous essential services. Over the years we have seen many opportunities to deliver services in remote Aboriginal communities. It is important that we get the Indigenous essential services system right. This is an opportunity to ensure we have water, sewerage and electricity in remote communities and improve those services in homelands across the Northern Territory.

Less than six months ago Territorians made the right decision, and we will not let them down. We will improve alcohol management and tenancy management. We are looking forward to 2025; we are full of hope and optimism. In 2025 you will see us delivering action, certainty and security for all Territorians.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I too want to look forward to a 2025 full of hope for our whole community. I have heard the CLP talk about action, certainty and security, but I must ask, for whom? The vision seems short-term focused on quick wins rather than lasting prosperity. I am not one for three-word slogans, but if I were to choose three words, how about a future built on people, purpose and prosperity for all?

The first principle: people—in yesterday's opening we heard from Bishop Charles Gauci, asking us to listen to each other, work together and work wisely for every person in the Northern Territory.

Our economy should work for all Territorians, not just big corporations. The superficial economic plan outlined by the government predominantly benefits big business. The Territory Coordinator will not make ordinary Territorians' lives better and will not ease the cost of living; it will make our lives worse by removing critical protection. Prioritising major gas companies' developments when the gas industry already does not pay any tax will not benefit Territorians. Opening Middle Arm and circumventing environmental and planning laws will not benefit Territorians.

Suggesting that the private sector will do a better job of spending public money than the government, as the Chief Minister did yesterday when speaking about payroll cuts, while our frontline workers are working overtime to meet the needs of Territorians, is insulting. The economy is not just about profits; it is a measure of the health of our society. It is a measure of our living standards. We cannot build our economy without looking after our people, money to address our homelessness crisis, or money being spent to address the domestic violence crisis and the true root causes of crime in the Northern Territory.

When we have people homeless and living in overcrowded accommodation at the same time as having empty department of Housing houses languishing in disrepair we need more money, not less, for the public

sector. This government wants to prioritise private profits over public wellbeing; this is not good economic management, and it is not good governance. If we want our economy to grow, we have to look after our people.

The second principle: purpose—because good policy is not about rushing decisions, as we have seen in the Chamber this morning; it is about getting them right for the long term. When decisions are being made on behalf of the public, the public deserves to know who is having influence on the decisions and who is being served by the outcome of those decisions. This is real transparency, not the bare minimum put forward by the CLP in its lobbyist register proposal. When transparency and accountability measures are working they motivate governments to consult widely, demonstrating to the public that they take their role as representative decision-makers seriously.

Transparent, trustworthy and accountable governments foster and listen to thorough research even when it dispenses inconvenient truths; they do not misrepresent legitimate legal cases against environmentally destructive development as lawfare or green warfare; and they do not undermine review processes and administrative accountability mechanisms critical to protecting Territorians from overzealous developers harming our environment and our people. Having 18 open third-party merits reviews under the *Water Act* alone is not a sign that the merits review needs to go; it is a sign that there is something seriously wrong with how water is being managed in the Northern Territory. Transparent, trustworthy and accountable governments do not refuse to send legislation to scrutiny committees. They do not quash those who stand up to them.

The third principle: prosperity—because real security comes from sustainable industry, strong communities and opportunities for generations to come. Knee-jerk policies and developments that offer minimal short-term gain in exchange for the long-term destruction of our environment, people, lifestyle and ability to live at all in the Northern Territory in the future are not policies that will make us prosperous. Instead we need to invest in a renewable economy. We are the sunniest place in the country; it is madness not to capitalise on that. The renewable economy has far greater capacity to create jobs and gas; gas employs less than 1% of Territorians.

The reality of prosperity in the Northern Territory runs deeper than the government is willing to discuss in this Chamber, where we often hear the economy talked about as if this is a separate entity devoid of any relationship to the health of our society. The opposite is true; the economy is a measure of the health of our society. All the decisions we make in this Chamber affect the economy. They affect which services get money, which corporations mine our land, which groups of people get support and who is left behind. All these decisions bear a cost and contribute to whether a government is or is not responsibly managing the economy.

If this government is so concerned about economic recovery, why has it not implemented the recommendations of the Langoulant review, the final report of the Fiscal Strategy Panel, when all but one of the 74 recommendations were fully or partially accepted by the government? Will the government be working to recover the $60m stolen from Territorians through the IEPS?

To manage the economy responsibly the government must first govern responsibly, and selling off the Territory to big business and bringing back croc licences is not what I mean. When the people in my electorate continue to ask how this government is addressing domestic violence, what it is doing to address the causes of crime and how it is acting for vulnerable people in our communities, they do not want to hear about being able to keep a pet croc; they want to hear about how we are keeping our women and children safe and what we are doing to address the perpetrators of violence. They want to know that the government has a well-thought-out plan to address our economy, community safety and the prison crisis—not jokes about crocs.

We need a responsible government to create a responsible economic plan for the Northern Territory which recognises that the biggest employer in the Northern Territory and the biggest contributor to gross state product is the government and community service sector. We need an economic plan which recognises that the biggest asset we have in the Northern Territory is our beautiful unique environment. We need economic planners who understand that bad policy decisions, such as overcrowding prisons, locking up 10-year-olds or destroying our environment to profit overseas multinationals and not the Territory, have knock-on economic effects as well as social effects felt by everyone in the Northern Territory.

Managing the economy is not just about opening up the Territory for business or cutting taxes; it is about governing well so that short-sighted policies do not end up costing and harming Territorians down the line.

We need a responsible government. The Northern Territory deserves leadership that puts all the people in the Northern Territory first. That is the future I am hoping for and fighting for.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I present my contribution to the ministerial report as a proud Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory—a place where I was born, where I have grown up and where I intend to continue to grow up my family.

The Chief Minister outlined the CLP's vision for 2025, which is action, certainty and security. Those three words are important because that is what the Territory needs to move forward.

For eight years with the previous Labor government there was no action, certainty or security. All we had was scandal after scandal and share scandal after share scandal. Members were making money out of misery, owning shares in the liquor industry while they let Alice Springs essentially burn to the ground. That is why certainty is a welcome change for Territorians after a long eight years.

We will deliver our election commitments to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique Territory lifestyle. We are laser focused on making the Northern Territory the most attractive and competitive place to live, work and invest.

The soft-on-crime approach is another failed Labor experiment, which did nothing to reduce the unacceptable crime, harm and violence in our community; in fact, it increased over the last eight years to unacceptable levels. Poor Labor policies created more victims of crime, crippled local businesses and drove away investment, causing devastating economic impact. That is Labor's legacy. It failed to address crime and grow our economy, and it neglected our overstretched Corrections system.

As the Minister for Corrections I can inform the Assembly that the prison population has increased in an unbroken fashion since 2020. The demand we are facing is not new. Labor left us with a Corrections crisis across the Northern Territory; for eight years it ignored the growing problem, doing nothing as our prisons became overcrowded and overflowed into watch houses.

The CLP is ending the excuses and making the tough decisions necessary to fix this mess. That is why the government developed the Corrections infrastructure master plan immediately after the election in August, to increase capacity. This government stood up the Berrimah correctional centre, expanding the Corrections capacity in the Northern Territory. We have already delivered 164 beds at Berrimah, with an additional 48 expected by the end of this month. There is a 96-bed modular section at Alice Springs Correctional Centre about to come online.

This project has blown out under the previous government. It is $10m over budget, and it is late which has caused overcrowding. This is another example how the Labor government neglected the Corrections system and resolved to do nothing, allowing prisoners to wait in overcrowded police watch houses because the Labor government failed to deliver anything for them. Labor also failed to deliver a safe workplace for Corrections officers.

I want to be clear that if people commit a crime in the Northern Territory, we will find a bed for them. Offenders will be responsible for their actions, and there will be consequences for breaking the law. We are giving victims of crime the certainty, security and respect that they deserve. The key focus on our Corrections strategy is to expand education, skills and training to combat and break the cycle of reoffending.

Many prisoners have been accused or convicted of such crimes as assault and domestic and family violence. During the last eight years there has been an 82% increase in domestic violence and family assaults under this failed Labor government. The previous government's 2024–25 budget included $1.25bn to address crime; that amount was funded for years with failed law-and-order policies.

As I said earlier, we are here to make the tough decisions. Our government policies have put 500 more prisoners behind bars since we came to office, providing certainty to Territorians that we are addressing crime. No matter where anyone lives in the Northern Territory, crime is the number one priority. We need to make the Territory a safe place to live, work and stay. We cannot expect visitors and investors to come here and bring their families and workers if they are to become a victim of crime.

We will focus on rebuilding the economy. For the last six years our economy has been the worst in the nation and can reasonably be described as stuck in neutral. This situation is unacceptable, and Territorians deserve better; they deserve to know that their tax dollars will be spent in a better and more restrained way to ensure that they get the best bang for buck.

Public service spending over the last 20 years has tripled. Reckless spending on Labor projects, such as the $56m Project Sea Dragon road to nowhere—this is in my electorate and opened up Gunn Point Road to nowhere—and 12m was spent on the Nightcliff Police Station lunch room. We have a massive debt because Labor policies failed to deal with the real roots of crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

The failed Nightcliff Police Station is not a reflection on our hardworking police; we back the police and Corrections officers 100%. It is a reflection on the wasteful spending of the previous government. Imagine how many Corrections officers, police officers, nurses and teachers we could have brought to the Territory if we had not wasted the $56m on Project Sea Dragon, let alone all the other wasteful projects. I know there is a big list, but I must say my favourite project is the $5,000 on the Christmas tree a few years ago.

The Labour government failed to rebuild the economy. There is a white elephant sitting outside this building, and there are no plans for operational costs, let alone the blowouts for it. The Holtze Youth Detention Centre is two years late and approximately $70m over budget. I will let that amount sink in. The Member for Gwoja was the previous Corrections minister. There is $70m we could have spent on police, community safety, housing in Palmerston and combatting antisocial behaviour, but this Labor government failed the Territory, and its policies resulted in unprecedented crime and a soft-on-crime approach, which has affected Territorians across the Northern Territory.

We doubled the available $6,000 funding for the battery bonus scheme. The Labor government previously announced that it would grandfather the premium feed-in tariff, which it changed. Labor promised something and did not deliver it. In fact, the Labor government clearly broke its promise in relation to the feed-in tariff. The CLP government raised the battery bonus to $12,000. Since 1 December more than 260 applications have been received, and 80% of those have been approved. That is three times more than the average monthly applications under the old scheme.

We will provide certainty for the investors who bring their money to the Territory; they need certainty. They need to make sure that ‘approvals’ means ‘approved’. The minister for Planning has removed the merits review; that will send a clear message to the gas developers: ‘Bring your money to the Territory’.

There will be competition from the USA in the next year or so. We want to make this the best place to invest money. Hopefully those investors come here because we have gas; we want to get it out of the ground and use it to lower the cost of living and for royalties to be paid on it.

Either the Member for Nightcliff or Johnston said that there is no tax on gas. That is simply not true; I want to correct the record. The Pepper inquiry said that tax could bring approximately $17bn to the economy. We need to support the gas industry and make sure that investors have certainty, because it is not only the money they will invest here, and the royalties, it is also over 6,000 jobs. We need to make sure that this place is safe and that people have jobs. There is no point in having the best lifestyle if people cannot afford to live here.

We also are dealing with mining. We want to ensure investors …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, a year of action, certainty and security—what is action? Action is having the courage to step into the great unknown, into the chaos and uncertainty, guided by the values within us, armed with the knowledge we have at our disposal to make a decision and act. That is what the Northern Territory people have put us in this Chamber for.

For too long our Territory has been riddled with inaction. We saw fear and hesitancy from the previous government, which was trying to manage the fourth estate and bend to lobby groups. We hear a lot about lobby groups, especially from The Greens and Labor coalition. The lobby groups I am concerned with are those that have turned the environment into a spearhead and driven it into the heart of the future for our children, jobs for the people in Drysdale—those are the groups I am concerned about. We are making decisive action on that.

Our government will not be riddled with fear. We will act in the interests of the people, for we are a government of the people and for the people. Action is in our DNA. From the first Aboriginal people who crossed the seas to this continent—they took action. They stepped into that unknown and crossed the seas all those years ago.

The first settlers came and farmed. They escaped Europe with the hope of an egalitarian society where they could build their wealth. They took action.

The first quarter century of the Northern Territory saw decisive action on all fronts, raising Territorians to be some of the wealthiest people in this country and, in doing so, the world. That is what action will deliver for the people of the Territory. That is the story of the Territory, not the crippling previous eight years of fear and hesitancy.

There will be action for our police. I say this to our police as your assistant minister: I want you to act hard and enforce the law with its full force; and I will back you every step of the way. That is the direction we have.

We have action on Corrections. The minister is taking action to make sure there is safety, and he is doing the plans that we have at our disposal. We have heard lies this week about costs associated with other plans. If they were that easy, this government would do it because the people know we are a government of action. They are simply falsehoods.

We will have action. Action requires an important thing; that is leadership. The CLP government will lead. We will not hide behind insecurities or the media; we will take the full brunt of the force that comes at us because we are doing it for the people.

In the Chief Minister we have a leader who has decided to create certainty and security for every Territorian. They have been pleading for that for years. The Territory has been devoid of leadership for too long, and we finally have a government and a Chief Minister who will act for the people. This is exactly what the people in Drysdale want. They want action on crime, jobs and security; they sent a clear and decisive message to me, and that is exactly what I will do in this Chamber. I will not bend the knee to any group except the people of Drysdale, for only they are my master.

We are promised certainty for all, for this government will not simply be leaves on the wind, subject to the winds of change without direction. This government will be the oak tree that weathers all storms and allows every Territorian to sprout from its branches to create wealth and opportunity for our future. We will have certainty for businesses so that when they are approved they can conduct trade and that this trade will raise revenue.

There will be certainty in our education and health systems—everything that relies on industry. We say to industry, ‘We are here; you can come and trade.’ There will be certainty for families in Drysdale who want to own a home. We will set the conditions, and we have set the conditions to make it the easiest place in the nation to own a home. That is the decisive action and certainty this government is bringing to Territorians.

On the topic of certainty, in Drysdale we are desperate for certainty on security. For too long we have been riddled with fear. There is no certainty when people catch a bus or go to the shops in Drysdale. People are not safe; they have not been safe for years. That is why they elected this government. They want certainty, and we will deliver that in the form of security for the people of Drysdale and all the Northern Territory.

We will do it with the firm hand of the police, a fair justice system and a Corrections system. That is what we will deliver, unapologetically, to all who oppose us.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Drysdale, on that note we will suspend for lunch. You can continue your remarks later.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Police Administration Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 16.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, given the huge economic social and human cost of harm caused by alcohol in the Northern Territory, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that the NT Legislative Assembly calls on the government to work with community representatives and sector experts to develop and implement a comprehensive evidence-based alcohol action plan for the Northern Territory which:

1. addresses the widespread harms caused by alcohol and the root causes of these

2. includes strategies for prevention, harm reduction, early intervention and support for those struggling with alcohol dependence

3. balances commonsense measures that benefit the health and wellbeing of Territorians based on what evidence suggests will be most likely to improve rates of harm

4. supports people to effectively break cycles of alcohol problems, complex social issues and involving the justice system in ways that can have intergenerational benefits

5. recognises that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach and ensures that local communities—particularly Aboriginal communities—are informed and engaged in the development of tailored solutions that reflect their specific needs and concerns

6. strengthens support for health services, law enforcement and emergency responders who respond to alcohol-related harms

7. takes a holistic approach that empowers communities, supports families and builds long-term sustainable solutions to reduce alcohol-related harms in the Northern Territory

8. acknowledges the role of alcohol in exacerbating domestic, family and sexual violence and prioritises the safety of women and children

9. removes the undue influence of the alcohol lobby in the development and implementation of alcohol policy, ensuring decisions are made in the public interest and based on evidence rather than commercial interests

10. ensures a long-term vision and commitment to effective alcohol policy with clear commitments and funding across electoral cycles and progress monitored through measurable outcomes.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Defamation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 13.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 14.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I present an amended notice for General Business notice number one standing in my name, that the NT Legislative Assembly:

- recognises the importance of integrity in our parliamentary system, both to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of Territorians and to ensure there is public trust in our democratic processes

- acknowledges that public trust in politics is at an all-time low, and this is due to the influence of lobbyists and vested corporate interest in our politics

- urges the government to establish an effective lobbyist register that includes the following best-practice elements:

    1. the registration of an in-house lobbyist as well as third-party lobbyists

    2. a lobbyist code of conduct, with financial penalties for breaches

    3. transparency for the public through the publishing of ministerial diaries

    4. a four-year cooling-off period between ministerial roles and lobbyist roles.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I will move that:

1. a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum (IEPS), be established to inquire into and report on the Auditor-General's November 2018 report to the Legislative Assembly at pages 31 to 66 in respect of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, including but not limited to consideration of:

(a) the full extent of overpayments to all IEPS contractors

(b) options for repayment by contractors of all unrecovered overpayments

(c) in cases of prima facie evidence of fraud the merits of legal proceedings based on advice from relevant government agencies

2. the committee be comprised of government, opposition and Independent members

3. the committee has the power to report to the Assembly from time to time

4. the committee presents its final report to the Assembly on or before 31 October 2025.

PETITION
Petition No 8 – Port Keats Road Upgrade

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 649 petitioners praying that the Legislative Assembly takes action to support the Port Keats Road upgrade. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the Northern Territory takes action to support this project, ensuring the Port Keats Road upgrade commences in 2025.

Mr YOUNG: Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION TIME

Auditor-General's Report – Territory Coordinator Advertisement

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

The Auditor-General's recent report on the Territory Coordinator radio advertisement found that your government breached the *Public Information Act* by promoting political party interests and providing misleading information about the role of the Territory Coordinator. Given the findings, how can Territorians believe that your government is using taxpayer dollars in a justified way? Can you justify using taxpayer funds for an advertisement that undermines public trust and fails to meet the standards of transparency and accountability that you promised before the Territory election?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Territory has an Auditor-General to undertake a range of functions. Some of those are audit functions on the books; others relate to public information. The Auditor-General's finding that was tabled is noted. It is a finding against the department, and it is taking that feedback on board. I believe the Auditor-General took concern with language about government delivering its election commitments. The people in the department are taking that seriously, as it is an important function—as you would know, Opposition Leader. A couple of years ago the previous Auditor-General found that a document you tabled in parliament about equality had breached the *Public Information Act*. You were found to have breached it, and you disagreed with the Auditor-General about that breach. Nonetheless, it is something that happens. I am reliably informed that the agency has taken that on board.

What I will say about the Territory Coordinator is just how wonderful it was to table that in parliament today. Now Territorians have the opportunity not only to go through the consultation summary, which we transparently published, but to see the final shape of the Bill that we pulled together in a collective effort to rebuild the Territory's economy.

It has now been referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, which is a transparency measure that the CLP government brought to this parliament along with a lobbyist register, an Independent Speaker and doubling the time for debate on petitions, because we are committed to involving Territorians in the work of our government.

We look forward to seeing what the Legislative Scrutiny Committee does. This will be its first inquiry under the new government; it will be fantastic to receive the committee's feedback. The report will be completed by 12 March so that government has time to see what is in it prior to the legislation being ready for debate and passage in the parliament the following week.

We are proud to be delivering reform on a scale the Territory has never seen before. This is about providing jobs and opportunities for everyday Territorians. It is about supporting small businesses to continue to have people come through their doors, creating new opportunities now and into the future, and it is about a sustainable pathway for the Territory so that we can continue to deliver the services Territorians expect and deserve.

Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

Mr KERLE to CHIEF MINISTER

Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour across the Territory remains a key focus of our government. In my electorate of Blain there is a spike in antisocial behaviour when welfare payments are paid. I am interested about what we can do in this space to help reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, not only my electorate but across the Northern Territory. Can you explain if our CLP government's plan to reduce crime, including looking at when Centrelink payments are made, has received any support at the federal level?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, in Palmerston people are sick and tired of high levels of crime under Labor, and they are willing to try anything that would support a safer community. I note the hard work we have done on our reducing-crime laws, and I have just given notice of more powers for police to be debated at a later stage. This is the work our government is doing in response to the concerns of communities like yours, Member for Blain, because what they have been served up under eight years of Labor is not good enough.

To that end, people in Alice Springs have had the most horrific time. Labor turned its back on them; projects have not been delivered; and crime has completely dominated the narrative, destroyed the town's reputation and gutted its tourism industry. People are leaving as a result of it; the people are demoralised. We quickly stood up Operation Ludlow, a fugitive taskforce, and surged into the town to provide a consistent and comprehensive response.

As part of being on the ground in Alice Springs, as I have been a number of times, I am out non-stop talking to people at mobile offices and on the front line with police on the streets. We go everywhere asking everyone what is going on, how we can help and what the next steps are. A collective result of that was a seven-point plan that I put to the federal government and the federal coalition. I am pleased to say that two Alice Springs visits ago federal Opposition Leader Peter Dutton was in Alice Springs. He made in-principle support to all seven of our recommendations. It was warmly received by the community because they felt like they were being heard.

The seven points include aligning Centrelink payment days with alcohol-free days in Alice Springs, following the success of that alignment over the Christmas period, for example. We want compulsory work and training programs with fortnightly reporting obligations for Centrelink recipients. We want performance audits of federally funded programs and royalty distributions. People in the town want the distributions done on community, not in the town. We need CASA exemptions. The Prime Minister was quick to move on the CASA exemptions; that has made a world of difference to police in Alice Springs.

Giving credit where credit is due, I am working with the federal government on the remainder of the seven. One of them is in the courts to work through; the rest have received a tepid or lukewarm response, Member for Blain, but we continue to work in good faith with the federal government. There is a strong message from the Coalition that they are listening to people in Alice Springs; they have signed up to all seven, which is great news for that town.

Port Keats Road

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Before I ask my question of the minister I acknowledge the hundred or so people who attended Parliament House this morning to hand me a petition. That shows the importance to roads in their community.

In November sittings last year I asked your government to confirm its commitment to fully sealing Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa. This is a critical access and safety priority for residents, as well as for providing local jobs. At the time the Chief Minister said on your behalf, 'I can get you an answer, and it can be on the public record'. I am still waiting for that answer. Members of the West Daly community have travelled here today to ask that this project, which is largely funded by the federal government, also continues to receive funding support from your government. Will you honour the commitment to fund upgrades to Port Keats Road?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thought I gave an answer to the Member for Daly about this; I think it was in the October sittings. I am here again answering the same question.

Less than a year ago previous Chief Minister Eva Lawler was patting herself on the back for securing federal funding for Port Keats Road. She bragged that her government would seal Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa and said, 'The Lawler Labor government is delivering stronger, safer and more reliable roads for all Territorians'.

That is at odds with what she said in 2020 to then Member for Daly Mr Gary Higgins, which was that the sealing of the Wadeye road was not a priority for her government. There are leaders here from the Wadeye community today because the Lawler Labor government did not deliver stronger, safer and more reliable roads. To them I say sorry that the Labor government failed you and that your local member has trudged you here today to find answers for something he already knows about.

The former government is trying to rewrite history and is not being truthful with communities such as Wadeye. The upgrade and sealing of Port Keats Road has been included in Labor's budget every year since the Member for Daly began representing his community in 2021. In 2021 the Labor government had $59.6m; in 2022 it had $59.9m; in 2023 it had $60.2m; and in 2024 it set aside $60m. For four consecutive years Labor featured the upgrading and sealing of Port Keats Road in its shiny, useless budget book.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, the minister is responding completely in a relevant way. I am curious to know your point of order?

Mr YOUNG: The question was: will you honour the commitment to fund upgrades to Port Keats Road? He is giving a big spiel; all the community members want to know is whether he will honour that funding.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, take your seat. The minister is answering your question, and he has plenty of time.

Mr YAN: Madam Speaker, I was wondering if I can get my other 15 seconds back? I have a bit to get through.

The Member for Daly is bold for asking this question and should be asking himself why he cannot front up to his community and tell them why he failed to get Port Keats Road sealed, when the money has been sitting there for years. The member has forgotten to tell the community of Wadeye that the Commonwealth only gave its permission to release the funds for this project on 20 August 2024, four days before the NT election. The Member for Daly should have known that. He failed to tell Wadeye that the DLI is still in negotiation with the Northern Land Council for access to gravel, layoffs and water along the 47-kilometre route.

My advice is that the NLC is seeking that the NTG pays for water along that route. That is a position not agreed to by the previous government, nor by this government. Again, the Member for Daly knows that. This is work that should have been done by the Labor government years ago, and it failed to do that work.

We are meeting with the people from Wadeye who came here today to hear their concerns because a Labor government, and their local member, have dragged their feet and failed to follow through on their promises.

The CLP government will honour this project. No, the funding has not been pulled, and yes, the CLP government will deliver this project because it is a federally funded program.

Payroll Tax Changes

Dr RAHMAN to TREASURER

Yesterday our government passed the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill and delivered on yet another election commitment for Territorians. That is amazing news, all the more so because the Bill passed with the bipartisan support of this House, recognising the sense in our economic policy. It was my great pleasure to accompany you this morning to my great electorate of Fong Lim—Winnellie, specifically—to visit Delta Electrics, which is a great local hardworking business. I am delighted to tell the House that Delta Electrics noted today that, as a result of our payroll tax reforms, it is looking to expand and put on more electrical and refrigeration apprentices. I give a shout-out to Anthony and his team for sharing that information. There is a skilled workforce we require. Can you tell us how we will see even more benefits to our local small and medium sized businesses when our payroll tax changes fully kick in on 1 July.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for joining me this morning at Delta Electrics; it was great to see a business that will reap the benefits of the payroll tax changes we passed yesterday in our parliament. His electorate has many small businesses, and I am glad to hear that these reforms are already being taken up by local businesses; however, I am not surprised that these reforms have started to benefit the community because this is what happens when governments back small business.

With this Bill, the CLP is further backing small businesses so that employers with wage bills below $7.5m will experience tangible savings from the next financial year and going forward. Businesses with wage liabilities under $2.5m could possibly save up to $68,000 per annum, and businesses with wage liabilities between $2.5m and $7.5m could save on average up to $19,400 per annum. That is a total of $17m that the CLP government is saving small businesses and putting back into their pockets. Businesses can invest that $17m in themselves and their people in the way that they see fit. That is $17m that the former Labor government failed to invest in the Territory economy. Instead, Labor saw our economy slump to record lows for the last six years and did nothing about it.

Labor did nothing to reverse the slump, and now the CLP has passed this legislation to rebuild our economy. Through these changes to payroll tax and the benefits they will bring to the economy, we are sending a strong clear message to Territorians and the rest of Australia that the Territory is open for business. Not only does this Bill put money back into the Territory economy, the payroll tax exemptions for trainee and apprenticeship wages are much-needed incentives for employers to upskill Territorians and create jobs where they are needed.

As Minister for Housing Construction I am acutely aware of the skill shortages in the housing industry and the difficulties that it faces. These shortages mean that builders who want to build and get supply into the market are constrained because they do not have the skilled workforce to do so. This Bill is a game changer for industries like housing construction. Builders will be able to bring on the staff they need with the skills to contribute to growing our economy.

Territorians are calling out for action on these issues after slogging under Labor's inaction for years, and we are delivering. We looked at the numbers, listened to Territory businesses and, unlike Labor, we brought in this legislation to help businesses grow, rebuild our economy and open up the Territory to being the place to do business.

Stringybark Centre

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Yesterday you said in relation to the fencing of the Stringybark facility, and I quote from the *Hansard*:

> *In relation to that fence, it is not $1m; it is over $6m to get that fence put up.*

Can you confirm that this is the cost to fence the whole of the Berrimah correctional centre and not just the Stringybark facility?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, ultimately the CLP government is about protecting Territorians. We will do what it takes to ensure that the Territory is a safe place to be. I make it clear that if someone commits a crime in the Northern Territory we will find a bed for them. There is no question about that, because that is what Territorians want. In August last year Territorians sent a loud and strong message to everyone that this is what we need to do. That is our number one priority, and we will work hard to ensure that the community is safe.

The Stringybark site was previously used as a low-security life skills unit. It was transformed into a rehab place for people to go to, with a sobering-up shelter and other services. Since then that facility had been let go; no work was done to it.

The $6m I spoke about includes getting it ready to use as a facility to hold prisoners. That will include fire upgrades; mechanical ventilation upgrades; CCTV upgrades; ICT connectivity and connectivity to government networks; strengthening doors and rooms; installation and commissioning of intercoms; bathroom upgrades and modifications; plumbing, electrical, painting and general business works; and upgrading the security fence. It is a big project to get up and running. Ultimately, the CLP plan is to make Holtze the precinct for prisons.

The previous Labor government left us with an $11bn debt. We do not have a massive amount of money to spend on Corrections officers and facilities; the previous Labor government stuffed it up so badly that we do not have a big fat cheque to spend. Member for Johnston, it is all about efficiency and moving them to one area so that we can offer better services to rehabilitate some of these prisoners.

The Labor government failed to break the cycle of offending; that is another one of our priorities. We want to make sure that prisoners can access rehabilitation, education and services to make them a better person when they come out. It is not only about putting someone in a cell and leaving them there for whatever term the judge orders; it is about rehabilitation. Through staff shortages, some of those services are cut at the moment. We want to ensure the whole prison facility is better; we need to do that by efficiency.

Using the Stringybark complex is not in our master plan; we want to move everything to Holtze. We want to make sure we do not waste taxpayers' money. The Labor government loved doing that and was good at it. There is a string of examples about that, but we are about moving the prison precincts to Holtze, which will be good for the Territory economy.

Housing – Antisocial Behaviour

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

In Gray in my electorate of Drysdale we have experienced unacceptable levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. I have met with you, the Chief Minister, police and government agencies to address this issue, which has had a significant impact on residents in Drysdale. Nuisance public drinking, alcohol abuse and high-density problem public housing are often key drivers of many of the law-and-order issues we experience in Gray.

Can you explain the actions our government will take in 2025 to address the root causes of crime and how this will help improve antisocial behaviour in Gray and other areas of the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is passionate about reducing crime and is doing everything he can to help his constituents feel safe. Getting out on the ground with the Members for Drysdale, Blain and Karama and others, I have seen the issues regarding public housing. That includes Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

The member is right; we have seen a spike in antisocial behaviour and serious incidents of crime in public housing. It is not just in Gray; it is around the Northern Territory. Sadly and unacceptably, it is across the suburbs in Palmerston. Having been there regularly to meet with MLAs, I thank them for raising these issues.

I reiterate from the outset that this level of crime is completely unacceptable and does not meet community expectations. In fact, when I go there, I hear directly from constituents how angry they are; it makes me angry as well. I see it day-in and day-out in Palmerston and around the Northern Territory.

Our government is fully aware of what is going on and is focused on dealing with the root causes of crime in public housing around the Territory. Sadly, over the last eight years, the philosophical ideology of the Labor government has been the watering down of accountability and a lack of consequences for this behaviour. The pendulum has swung too far in defending the rights of individuals, and we will take action. In 2025 we will act on public housing reform. We will look at the *Residential Tenancies Act* and how to align it with community expectations.

The visitor management, tenancy management and Red Card policy all need to be reviewed. It has been allowed to get out of control for far too long. We have been carefully looking at the Red Card policy. One matter has been brought to my attention, where a tenant had 62 Red Card demerit points under Labor and was allowed to continue living in that house. This has all been allowed to happen while there is an eight to 10-year waitlist. People have been on the waitlist looking for housing and to do the right thing.

This year we will act. We are working with MLAs and people of the Territory to strengthen the policy so we can evict people when we need to.

Ministerial Integrity

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Before the election the Chief Minister told Territorians that her ministers would divest themselves of all shares and would be ready to govern without conflicts of interest. According to the parliament Register of Interest you only divested yourself of your Telstra and Bendigo Bank shares last week after being called out by the *NT Independent*. While Territorians have been facing a cost-of-living crisis you failed to declare a free luxury jet flight from Katherine to Darwin for a champagne brunch with your friends and promoted the private charter company that gifted the trip to you on your MLA Facebook page.

How can Territorians have faith in your integrity?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, in regard to the question my shares have been divested …

Mr Young: Tipsy!

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The interjection from the Member for Daly was disorderly language. I do not think that is appropriate in this Chamber.

Madam SPEAKER: I heard that, and it was a bit low-level. Could you please withdraw it?

Mr Young: What?

Madam SPEAKER: Your inference was inappropriate.

Mrs Hersey: Sorry, I did not hear any anything.

Madam SPEAKER: Could you withdraw it, please?

Mr YOUNG: Madam Speaker, I was noting that she tripped over. Anyway, I withdraw.

Mrs HERSEY: Madam Speaker, I have divested myself of my shares, and the relevant forms to update my Register of Interest have been signed and submitted.

As a member of parliament for nearly five years now, and as a minister, I have always acted with integrity and morals and will continue to do so.

It is a bit rich coming from the Opposition Leader to raise these issues, given Labor members' history when they were in government. Former Chief Minister Natasha Fyles resigned after a series of integrity issues.

Let us not forget that the Member for Gwoja purchased shares in a major wholesaler's that supplies alcohol to Central Australian bottle shops two months before letting alcohol bans lapse in the region. They moved Heaven and Earth to block the ICAC investigation into the Member for Gwoja's shareholdings at the time and what his motives were.

I put on the record that I operate with the highest of morals and integrity. I have done what was asked of me and what is meant to be done as a minister. I will continue to operate with morals and integrity.

Ministerial Integrity – Supplementary Question

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Why did it take you six months to divest those shares?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have answered the question.

Environmental Organisations – Support

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

According to the members' declaration of interest, you have served as a committee member with the Alice Springs Community Garden, which is a great garden established with the support of the Arid Lands Environment Centre.

Given your government's decision, and the decision you made recently to cut funding to ALEC and similar organisations dismissing them as activists and economic vandals, did you declare this conflict of interest when this decision was made? How do you justify your personal support for these local initiatives while pushing policies that undermine their protection of our environment? Why do you not support the environmental organisations in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have been clear that I will not enable green lawfare to continue to delay economic progress, which is why I also terminated taxpayer-funded support for the Environment Centre NT and the Arid Lands Environment Centre. Those agreements saw the ECNT and ALEC receive $100,000 per year since 2016. That follows an announcement last year by this government to terminate $100,000 per year for the Environmental Defenders Office. This was an election commitment by our CLP government.

We will not continue to spend taxpayer dollars on activists and economic vandals and their disruptive agendas. We will redirect this funding to environmental initiatives with a focus on action not activism. Unlike the Labor Party, we will spend Territorians' money wisely to protect our environment.

There has been a lot of conversation over the last while about environment groups. I am proud to have met with Landcare and Keep Top End Coasts Healthy in Darwin.

I am one of the most green-credentialed members in this place. I get out on my pushbike and deliver every bit of mail to all my constituents in the Braitling electorate. I know that Madam Speaker likes to get out there as well. I get out there on a Sunday morning with the community garden and shovel manure to ensure that I am working with my community. I do that because I love the environment. I have chickens at home who munch on the very …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; it is not April Fools' Day, minister. Respond to the question: how do you justify …

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat; the minister for Environment has the call.

Mr BURGOYNE: I take the protection of the environment seriously in everything I do throughout my life, whether it be riding my pushbike to work whenever I can or getting out into the community and supporting these organisations to ensure that they can continue to grow. I have been in conversations with members from the community garden about how we can ensure the strength of that community organisation going forward.

I want to ensure that we are not funding environmental activist groups, but that real money is going to organisations that want to genuinely help our environment. That is what this government will continue to do, and that is why I am bloody proud to be the minister for Environment as part of this CLP government.

Energy Security

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

The east coast of our nation is in the grip of an energy crisis marked by gas shortages and soaring energy prices. In addition, the Treasurer has informed Territorians of the dire state of the budget, emphasising the importance of building enduring revenue streams for the Territory's future. Your second trip to the Beetaloo underscores your strong commitment to driving forward the Territory's gas developments, bringing significant economic investment and royalties for Territorians. These investments represent a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Territorians and will secure a prosperous future for generations to come.

Can you outline to the Assembly the work that the CLP government is doing to ensure these investments progress and bring affordable, reliable and secure energy for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know that the Member for Goyder loves his gas barbecues.

This term of government will be defined by the first commercial gas production from the Beetaloo Sub-basin, establishing a new source of revenue for the Northern Territory. That is important because under the failed Labor government we never got any new sources of revenue. In fact, mines dropped off, and we lost revenue because of the failed former Labor government's policies. Labor failed us on the economy and on crime. On 24 August last year Territorians picked up on that and delivered a new government, led by Lia Finocchiaro, which will protect the community and provide us with new sources of revenue.

Gas represents a decade of energy security in the Northern Territory. In the next 20 years some $17bn and 6,000 new jobs will come through gas royalties and associated employment in the gas industry. That means jobs, not to mention the families of workers who will come here. When people move to the Northern Territory it is not only the gas industry that will benefit; there will be hairdressers and mechanics—and the environment because there will be more people. We will be growing the population to grow the economy; we will have that circle. We will make the Territory a better place because of the gas industry.

This year our government will see the first gas production from Empire Energy and new gas from Central Petroleum, providing vital gas generation and royalties for the future. Mining, gas, agriculture, Defence and tourism all rely upon gas, and they are the five pillars that the government needs to grow our economy. We will we give them certainty.

We spoke about the action moving forward, and certainty is one of the words we used. We will ensure that industries know the Territory is a great place to do business because when they invest money there will be certainty about gas supply, public safety and population growth. We will roll out the green carpet to ensure that the Territory is the best place to do business.

In our first six months we made providing energy security our top priority. The Territory's resources, particularly in Amadeus, Beetaloo and Blacktip, are key to pulling ourselves out of the massive debt that the Labor government left us with. We need to rely on gas and energy to pull us out of that debt. We need those 6,000 jobs and that $17bn.

Local Government Reform

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

When I was at the Chief Minister's Year of Action event on Monday I was pleased to hear about our government's plan to take action in 2025 on local government reform. Our CLP team wants to empower people in the bush. Labor took away their control. I am interested to hear more about our plans in 2025 to help Aboriginal people in the bush and how this important work has already started on Groote Eylandt.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an opportunity to move forward in the bush.

The date 1 July 2008 is fairly and squarely etched in people's minds. Three weeks ago I was on Groote Eylandt; a lady there who would have been in her seventies raised a key moment with me. She said that people remember 1 July 2008 and thanked us for bringing back the Groote Archipelago Regional Council.

She said that this was an opportunity to get back the community control that was taken away by the Labor government on 1 July 2008.

The Labor government created super shires, but over the last seven or eight years its platform was all about this so-called local decision-making. That has been an exercise in spin. It is a concept that Labor adopted over the last eight years that is nothing short of tokenistic virtue signalling. The work we are doing in the bush is to get out there and talk to the people in the communities about empowering communities. Their power being taken away in 2008 has been a topical issue for many years.

In stark contrast to the LDM process, we are committed to ensuring that communities have a real voice at the local level so that communities are not only empowered; they are making decisions. Under Labor, communities lost their voice in 2008.

There were approximately 56 community government councils. Seven municipal councils were amalgamated into 16 councils—five municipal, eight regional and three shires. I have heard firsthand how those council amalgamations, alongside other policy changes, led to disempowerment in those communities. It was not just the disempowerment when the former Labor government scrapped those community councils; it took away the leadership structures in those communities. That is the big thing that went missing.

Our commitment is to restore local control. We started with the Groote Archipelago. We established a three-ward system. That election will go ahead on 15 March this year. This year we will change legislation to continue that process.

Creative Industries

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for ARTS

In Question Time yesterday the Chief Minister proclaimed that no-one will visit the State Square art gallery. The Creative Industries Strategy NT 2020–2024 was led and developed by the NT Chamber of Commerce in recognition of the sector's importance to our economy. It identified that creative industries inject more than $700m into the economy, employ thousands of Territorians and drive interstate and international visitation to the Territory.

Do you agree with the Chief Minister's assertion that no-one cares about the arts and that this is a signal to the creative industries sector that the CLP will not be investing in it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I did not hear the Chief Minister say that there is no support for the arts industry at all, but I think she made some comments about the proposed art gallery structure in Darwin. I agree with the Chief Minister about the clear lack of planning and allocation of operational funding for the proposed art gallery by the previous Labor government.

Regarding the finances, Treasurer Bill Yan clearly outlined to Territorians the current state of our economy. Labor has left us on track to record the largest debt in the Territory's history.

We have been lumbered with infrastructure we cannot afford. We have paid too much for it, with no operational budget to run it. The State Square art gallery is just one of those projects. It is not that the government does not care about the arts industry; it is about individual projects that do not have the proper allocation in the budget. That is causing problems for this government because of the lack of planning and organisation by the previous government.

I will give an example. As part of the $100m State Square redevelopment, the budget originally allocated for the art gallery was $47m, but it will cost at least $143m to complete that project. Sadly, as the Chief Minister said, there was clearly a lack of planning from the previous government. Going from $47m to $143m is not just a clerical mistake; it is clearly incompetence and a lack of understanding of how to plan and do the budget calculations. On top of that, there was no clear budget allocation for operational funding for the art gallery. There was an allocation for the Museum and Art Gallery, but for this proposed art gallery there was no funding allocated.

Our government is clear that art plays an important role in our community. It serves as a place of belonging and provides community for Territorians. More than $8m is being spent this year on the arts program, which

includes a new five-year $25m investment from 2025 to 2029 to support 30 organisations to deliver arts and cultural programs.

In addition, more than $30m has been spent over the past four years on the Arts Trail Gallery Extension Program, which provides upgrades and expansions to galleries in the Northern Territory's regional and remote locations. On top of that, the Northern Territory Government spends more than $10m per year for the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Clearly this government will support the art industry, but we will not support the projects with a clear lack of planning and forward proposals.

Aviation Connectivity

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

As Territorians we are all aware of the ongoing challenges related to connectivity, particularly in air travel. Given the geographic isolation of the Northern Territory, connectivity is crucial for Territorians, businesses and industries alike. Can you inform the Assembly about the government's efforts to improve aviation connectivity within the NT? How are these initiatives helping to enhance economic opportunities and support local businesses across Australia and international markets? That is a field I have a strong personal passion for.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as a long-term Territorian with experience in the business sector the Member for Karama is well placed to understand the challenges in this area. He advocates well on behalf of his constituents in this space.

I am pleased to update the Assembly on the work our government is doing to develop ongoing connectivity to and within the Territory to provide all Territorians with a choice of affordable airfares and destinations. Our government has committed to help rebuild the economy and restore our Territory lifestyle, and that is what we are doing. Air connectively is a critical component of this.

My team in the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations has been working incredibly hard over the past few months on the expansion, which will see connectivity not just between Darwin and our nation but between Darwin and regions beyond our nation's borders, particularly Southeast Asia.

I am thrilled to table the achievements that have been made in the past few weeks. Everybody will be aware that Jetstar announced a new route between Darwin and the Gold Coast, which will be a seasonal route from June to October, with opportunities for Territorians not just to take a holiday but to take their business to Queensland. We have had lots of feedback. People are thrilled that they do not have to catch the train from Brisbane to Coolangatta; more importantly it will bring tourists to the Territory at our peak season time.

Qantas added 95,000 seats to Darwin's routes from the Territory to capital cities. That is in addition to the 84,000 seats they added over the previous 12 months. There will be increased connectivity between Darwin and Brisbane; Darwin and Sydney; and Darwin and Canberra, which is incredibly exciting. They are also putting more seats between Darwin and Adelaide. That is important to us because Virgin unfortunately removed that flight, for which I took it to task recently. Virgin is now reconsidering how it may be able to implement a flight between Darwin and Adelaide, now understanding just what the connection between Darwin and Adelaide is. Virgin offset it with an additional 15,000 seats between Darwin and Brisbane, and Darwin and Melbourne, which everybody will be pleased about. There was the exciting news of direct flights to Bali announced by Air Asia. Everybody loves a holiday in Bali, and now we can travel there every day of the week on Air Asia or Jetstar from 22 March.

Corrections – United Workers Union

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

The United Workers Union represents Corrections officers and has a 100% membership rate, many of whom visited us yesterday to watch your government in action. You did not consult with them regarding your proposal to change legislation to contract out to private Corrections officers. They have written to you asking for a meeting and to see the legislation; they have not received a response. Your complete dismissal of the union that represents every Corrections officer demonstrates that you and your government are simply using their safety as an excuse to privatise our prisons.

Will you respond to the United Workers Union, listen to their concerns and take on board their feedback in creating your Corrections amendment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am not sure where the member is getting her information from, but I must inform her that she is incorrect. The Corrections Commissioner met with the union and, unfortunately for reasons I am not sure I understand, they walked out. The information was there for a briefing, and the commissioner was to brief the union. Within the first five to 10 minutes the union terminated that briefing and walked out. There have been some offers in relation to this. We will speak with the union because it is important, and we value the staff. The previous Labor government over the last eight years completely neglected the prison system. Infrastructure is non-existent …

Members interjecting.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Leader of the Opposition thinks that this is an opportunity to jump in and distract. I am trying to hear the answer, but all I hear is the Opposition Leader.

Madam SPEAKER: There has been a fair amount of chitter-chatter from both sides. Everybody remain silent and give the minister the opportunity to answer this important question.

Mr MALEY: It is a shame that the union was not so vocal when Labor was in power. Labor failed the prison system; it failed to build infrastructure and staff, yet when the CLP came with a clear mandate to keep the community safe the union piped up. We understand that the unions …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I am not asking about Labor or the commissioner. Thanks for your concern about where I get my information from, but unlike you I actually speak to unions. I am asking if will you respond to them and if you will meet with them.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nightcliff, can you hold it there? You do not use a point of order to give a lecture or pass on new information. If you have a point of order make it clear or sit down. What is your point of order?

K McNAMARA: My point of order was Standing Order 110; relevance. I do not care about Labor; I just want an answer to the question. Will you respond to the United Workers Union's letter and meet with its representatives?

Madam SPEAKER: He has plenty of time.

Mr MALEY: We will respond to the union. I want to make it clear that we are not privatising the prison system; we are making a more flexible workforce. The Labor government failed to make a workforce, and there have been cries from the union for many months that they are overworked and understaffed because the Labor government failed to plan for community safety.

The legislation is not complicated. We are talking about doing what the police have done for many years and what happens interstate. We are giving the commissioner powers to have special Corrections officers who are qualified, trained and experienced to do the job. These will not just be little Johnnys down the street; they will be professional people who do it interstate and for a living because they have reputations. This is about making sure the workforce is reinforced.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I note there were two parts to the question. The first was about responding to the letter, and the other was if he will meet with unions. There are still 10 seconds to answer.

Madam SPEAKER: Ten seconds, minister.

Mr MALEY: We will respond to the union. This is an operational matter. We will ensure the union knows what is going on. We offered everyone in this Chamber a briefing. We want to do the job Labor failed to do.

Cost of Living – Motor Vehicle Registry

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

People who know me know that I listen to my constituents in the Fannie Bay electorate. I have spoken to people from all sides of the political spectrum—those who voted Labor, Liberal, Greens and Independent—and listened. I have heard them say that they are concerned about the cost of living in Fannie Bay. I talk to them at the markets and in my electorate office.

I am proud to be part of a team that takes the cost of living seriously. One of these measures are the changes we made to our MVR, which are saving Territorians time and money. While we all know licences are not the most expensive thing in a person's or family's budget, every bit counts. Our free licence and three-year trailer registration has been a huge hit for constituents in the Fannie Bay electorate, providing relief to household budgets …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The time to ask the question has expired.

Madam SPEAKER: It has.

Mrs Zio: Can the minister provide an update on this?

Madam SPEAKER: It is too late; sit down.

Economic Recovery – Barossa

J DAVIS to TREASURER

We heard last week that your fiscal recovery plan hinges on projects like Barossa. Given the Barossa is offshore in Commonwealth waters and royalties are collected by the Commonwealth Government, can you please outline how much revenue the NT Government budget, not the gross state budget or any other measure, will get from Barossa and in what timeframe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the member is correct that the gas from Barossa is offshore. We do not see much in the way of royalties for that; the royalties go to the Commonwealth.

We see benefits from the people employed by Santos in the Northern Territory. I mentioned payroll tax earlier about our and how we do well out of that revenue. Through Santos, the work it does and the people it employs, payroll tax revenue comes to the Territory. We also see taxation revenue through the wages from other companies that support Santos who have bills over $2.5m.

While we do not see a lot of royalties from Santos, as they go to the federal government—the feds do not see some of that because some gas is extracted from international waters—we see revenue come through taxation and other revenue generated within our economy for the work Santos does.

J DAVIS: Madam Speaker, excuse me; he did not answer the question.

Madam SPEAKER: It is too late, Member for Johnston. The minister answered the question to his satisfaction, and he sat down.

Cost of Living – Motor Vehicle Registry

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Can you please provide the Assembly with an update on our overwhelmingly successful MVR initiatives?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay recently did some media on this with me. It is great to hear that the residents of Fannie Bay are talking to her and have been responsive to the changes we have made.

It is no secret that families across the Territory—in fact across the country—are feeling the pinch on their household budgets through the costs of living. With the rising cost of living, small expenses add up quickly, but every saving we can make and every bit of work the government can do to reduce those costs helps.

We committed to working where we can to ease the burden on the people of the Territory to take off some of the pressure and help our community get back to enjoying our Territory lifestyle.

The CLP is delivering on its election commitment to ease the cost-of-living pressures for Territorians by freezing car registration fees for 12 months, providing free drivers' licences for a year and enabling three-year trailer registrations which, in effect, reduces some administrative burdens on MVR because it only has to do it once. It saves a little work for MVR and makes it much easier for people getting trailers registered.

The former Labor government increased registration fees by more than $100 during its time. We are providing real relief to Territorians who are now left struggling with grocery bills, childcare, power costs and other cost-of-living pressures left by the previous Labor government.

The CLP is committed to not raising fees on light vehicle registrations until 1 July 2026.

The data speaks for itself when it comes to our one-year free licence commitment. In just over a month more than 13,700 licence holders across the Territory have taken up this offer. That is thousands of dollars saved across the Territory in household budgets for everyday Territorians. It is clear that these initiatives are what Territorians want from our government.

I thank the dedicated MVR staff for all the hard work they have done in making this possible. We had a little break between Christmas and new year when everything was open, and they were hammered by people coming in to get their free licences. I thank them for the all-important work they have done.

The delivery of these election commitments will save Territorians time and money, meaning less time spent at MVR and more time to enjoy our unique Territory lifestyle.

Under the program people can apply for their free licences up until 30 June 2025. If people have not done so yet, I urge them to take up this all-important offer.

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

MOTION
Improving the Integrity in Parliament

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that the NT Legislative Assembly:

- recognises the importance of integrity in our parliamentary system, both to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of Territorians and that there is public trust in our democratic processes

- acknowledges that public trust in politics is at an all-time low and that this is due to the influence of lobbyists and vested corporate interest in our politics

- urges the government to establish an effective lobbyist register that includes the following best-practice elements:

    - the registration of in-house lobbyist as well as third-party lobbyists

    - a lobbyist code of conduct with financial penalties for breaches

    - transparency for the public through the publishing of ministerial diaries

    - a four-year cooling-off period between ministerial roles and lobbyist jobs.

Thank you for allowing me to bring this motion before the House.

We had lots of conversations this week about the need to finally establish a lobbyist register in the NT, with us being the only place in Australia without one.

The public made it clear that they want increased transparency. They are losing trust in the major parties. Before the election, Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro rightly identified that the lack of this register was a major missing integrity piece in the Labor government. Without a lobbyist register we are sending the message to our constituents and businesses across the NT that behind closed doors we can be bought. Let us fix this and bring integrity into Northern Territory politics.

Before my motion came up today, the CLP hurried an announcement that it would be setting up a lobbyist register because, heaven forbid, it would have to vote on anything The Greens proposed. I was keen to hear the announcement and the details, and I am disappointed. Here the government had a real opportunity to create something of substance and genuinely demonstrate to the public that it is serious about improving integrity in this place.

For the record, I was no fan of the level of integrity and transparency in the previous Labor government either. I would be saying the same thing today no matter who was in front of me. The fact is the CLP is now in government and its members are the ones who need to do the work.

Unfortunately it appears that the CLP members went weak at the knees when it came time to stand strong and undoubtedly weak at the knees to implement a weak lobbyist register to appease their big-business donors. The ultimate weakness a government can show is capitulation to corporate vested interests. This is what is on display here in this toothless, gutless lobbyist register.

We will not be fooled. The proposed lobbyist register that the CLP announced yesterday will fail to stop the revolving door between ministers and their transition into lobbyist roles after their time in parliament. The existing legislation states that ministers must wait six months before transitioning. This register fails to extend that timeframe any further and simply adds senior staff to this list.

We need to increase the cooling-off period to at least four years. This not only acts as a real disincentive for improper relationships between ministers and industry and the lining up of jobs for themselves, it also allows the public to have more trust that politicians are not just feathering their own nests.

This revolving door of minister to lobbyist or lobbyist to staffer is one of the central issues we have continuously seen in the NT. In the past 10 years there have been too many instances of ministers, Chief Ministers and MLAs who have been working closely with lobbyists in big mining or farming corporations then have left this job and gone straight into working for the same lobbyists and companies.

In 2022 Michael Gunner, the former Labor Chief Minister, accepted a job six months and three days after resigning as Chief Minister as a lobbyist for Fortescue futures industry.

In April 2024 the Labor government signed a major gas supply agreement with US firm Tamboran Resources without a competitive tender process or disclosing the costs.

Less than three months later former Deputy Chief Minister and Mining and Industry minister, Nicole Manison, accepted a job with Tamboran as vice president of government relations and public affairs—AKA a lobbyist. She had just stepped down from the portfolio a few months before the election, so it was just after the six-month period. That is not long enough.

This revolving door also includes staffers. In 2023 it was revealed that former Labor Chief Minister Natasha Fyles' political adviser was the co-owner of consultancy firm Brooklyn Advisory Pty Ltd, which had listed gas company Tamboran Resources as one of its clients on the federal lobbyist register. At the same time he was advising Natasha Fyles on issues including the Beetaloo Sub-basin. This one I find particularly egregious. In fact, I was so appalled at the lack of integrity demonstrated that it is one of the reasons I put up my hand to run in the election. Look at me now. Thank you, Natasha, I guess. This example is egregious because it demonstrates that many of our representatives think it is acceptable for people with clear and obvious vested commercial interests, and whose interests are most often at odds with the interest and wellbeing of the community, that it is acceptable for them to be at the table behind closed doors giving advice and influencing government policy.

A lobbyist register must go beyond a mere six-month cooling-off period. Insider information is still relevant after six months and is a breach of public trust. Politicians should not be using their ministerial role to simply feather their own nests.

Parliament is supposed to be the institution of ultimate integrity, with the scrutiny and transparency vital for responsible government. The Northern Territory needs transparency more than other places, given our

unicameral structure. As it stands, and under the CLP's proposed lobbyist register, we will have no accountability for any meetings that ministers have with lobbyists or any record of participation in events that may have undue influence on our decision-making.

The Chief Minister claimed yesterday that their lobbyist register would make it 'very transparent for the government to know who is lobbying them'. It appears that the Chief Minister has fundamentally misunderstood the purpose of a lobbyist register. It is for the public, the people who put us here. Does the Chief Minister not have enough trust in her own ministers that they cannot do a background check and ascertain the intentions of the people they are meeting with?

The CLP lobbyist register is missing a crucial element: publicising ministers' diaries. This is what the transparency element is, and it is what keeps the government and lobbyists accountable. The public is paying our wages; they deserve to know who ministers are meeting with and how frequently meetings occur. This is a reasonable ask. The same practice currently applies in the ACT, Queensland and New South Wales. If these lobbyists are not impacting decision-making, there should be no issue in the public being aware of these meetings.

In what was a jaw-dropping admission of openness to be improperly influenced, in 2014 former CLP Deputy Chief Minister Mr Tollner stated, 'Your donation will open my door if you ever need to talk to me, and if you do not donate you will have to line up at the door'. 'Your donation will open my door'—if there was ever a statement that displayed the true intentions of a government, there it is.

When this government tries to act like it is the knight in shining armour, dripping with arrogance, acting like it is the only one with integrity, let us not forget the decades of shambolic CLP government riddled with corruption and ineptitude. It would do the backbenchers some good to get better acquainted with the history of their party before they start acting so virtuous.

Our constituents have every right to meet with us. It is deeply unethical to prioritise donors, yet without a lobbyist register that follows best recommended practice, we do not know if this is taking place in other offices. Without reform Territorians cannot trust that decisions made by their government are made exclusively in the public interest.

I seek leave to table a report from the Centre for Public Integrity.

Leave granted.

K McNAMARA: It is titled, 'In whose interest'. This report found that our current Northern Territory system:

> *… features none of the hallmarks for a fit-for-purpose lobbying regulation and bears the precise characteristics that the OECD warns may result in lobbying activity steering government decision-making away from the public interest: a lack of transparency, and a lack of integrity. Indeed, lax regulation of political lobbying breeds what Joo Cheong Tham …*

That is a Melbourne law school professor. I continue:

> *… has described as a 'trinity of vices: secrecy, corruption and unfairness'.*

Maybe they should be the new three words of the year for the 2025 CLP: secrecy; corruption; and unfairness. It outlines the fact that we need a broad definition of lobbying, not the limited one that we see in the CLP's new code of conduct. It also calls upon us to make sure we provide vital transparency through the online publishing of dates and details of meetings between lobbyists and representatives and the publication of diaries of ministers, shadow ministers and their chiefs of staff.

This report also includes a case study on Middle Arm, stating that all of the conduct in the lead-up to its approval:

> *… exemplifies the way in which public decision-making might be perceived as not in the public interest, thereby undermining public trust.*

This is exactly why so many in the public are furious about Middle Arm because they can see these links, and it is not good enough.

It is important to note that meeting with constituents and Territorians from all backgrounds is a vital part of our roles, and having access to their elected representatives is a sign of a healthy democracy. The enacting of a lobbyist register should in no way prevent private citizens or civil society from meeting with us; rather, it is a tool to ensure that all groups have an equal opportunity to enact their democratic right to meet with their elected representatives.

Our failure to have this mechanism for transparency is leading to mistrust in our government. I have constituents who come in every week to complain at all levels of government, ignoring them for the sake of profit. Our constituents have placed their faith in us to make the best decisions for them, not the best decisions for a few big businesses and those that donate to the major two parties.

I am not saying that we need to reinvent the wheel. We are the last jurisdiction without one, which means we have many examples of effective lobbyist registers. Queensland's lobbyist register is a strong example of an effective one. In Queensland there are comprehensive definitions that ensure all kinds of lobbying activity is covered by the register. Under their *Integrity Act 2009* a lobbying activity is defined as:

(a) communicating with the government representative in an effort to influence decision-making of the state government or local government, including for example the making of decision relating to any of the following matters—

(i) the making, amendment or repeal of legislation;

(ii) the development, amendment or abandonment of a government policy or program;

(iii) the awarding of a government contract or grant;

(iv) the allocation of funding;

(v) the making of a decision about planning or the giving of a development approval under Planning Act 2016 *…*

This is more comprehensive than the weak definition of lobbying we see in the new code of conduct recently uploaded to the NTG website. On it, lobbying activities that are excluded include communications in response to a request for tender or any communication with senior staffers or the chief of staff. This is not good enough; it is completely inadequate.

The essential concern I have is that the responsible entity for the CLP's lobbyist register will be the Chief Minister and Cabinet. My god, this is not an independent entity. No lobbyist register in Australia operates like that. In Queensland it is the Office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner; in Tasmania, an independent statutory body; in the ACT, the Office of the Legislative Assembly; in New South Wales, the Electoral Commission; and in South Australia there is a special minister.

These are all appropriate options. The Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet is not an appropriate option to oversee a lobbyist register. It is investigating itself.

Queensland continually amends its legislation as new lobbying challenges arise, making any unregistered lobbying an offence carrying a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units. Under the CLP's proposed register there are no legitimate penalties for breaches. There is only a name-and-shame list which outlines, as stated in 12.2 of the code, that the Chief Minister and Cabinet may remove persons from the lobbyist watchlist if it is satisfied they should no longer be placed on the watchlist. How would that be decided? This is totally inadequate and will not provide any disincentives for people to abide by the code of conduct.

Under Queensland's register the diaries of ministers, assistant ministers and chiefs of staff are published monthly on the Queensland Cabinet's website. The diaries of the Leader of the Opposition, chief of staff and shadow ministers are also published monthly. The information published includes the meetings with registered lobbyists, or their employees, and details of all attendees and subject matter. This ensures that the public can see which third-party or in-house lobbyist meetings of senior staff, opposition leaders and ministers are taking place.

In order to regain this trust and ensure decisions are truly for the benefit of our constituents, we must implement a lobbyist register that follows recognised good practice, such as the one effectively functioning in Queensland. Honestly, if Queensland can do it, we can.

We owe it to our constituents to do better than implementing the most basic toothless version that offers nothing on real accountability and is nothing more than a box-ticking exercise. We must ensure the lobbyist register is thorough, efficient and best practice. Let us look to our neighbours and follow their strong lead by implementing an effective one. If you have nothing to hide and are genuinely committed to transparency, you would happily vote in favour of this motion.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Miss Emmeline Michaela Howe. She has come in today see her Dad, the Member for Drysdale; she missed out yesterday, as she was at school. She has just started Transition. Welcome Emmeline and her Mum, Mrs Alice Howe, to the gallery this evening.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it is exciting to be a parent of a Transition student, I can attest to that this year.

I wish to make my contribution to this important motion that has been brought before the House by the Member for Nightcliff.

The Territory Labor opposition supports the introduction of a lobbyist register in the NT. A lobbyist register should be non-negotiable for a government that is spruiking transparency and accountability credentials, as we know the CLP government likes to do. There is not much substance to what was released yesterday by the CLP government to back up claims that the CLP will be open, honest and transparent. It will have—to quote the Member for Nightcliff—a toothless tiger in the register, which was not presented to the House yesterday, but announced by press release with no details.

The CLP refused to send legislation to the scrutiny committees, but made such a fuss about establishing these committees and bringing them back this term. One piece of legislation so far has been referred to the scrutiny committee; that was today. The Chief Minister referred the Territory Coordinator Bill to the committee; it was on the public records so she could not back out of that. This will allow Territorians to have their say, but the process is about being accountable to Territorians who elected their members of parliament.

What the Member for Nightcliff brought to the House is trying to raise the bar of what the CLP government claimed it did yesterday. In her responses in Question Time yesterday the Chief Minister said that the CLP's version of a lobbyist register would be online, but the website was not up yet, so people could apply for a paper application as of yesterday. Apparently there was an email or maybe somewhere to drop it off behind a bin at the back of Parliament House or something; who knows where it would go.

The government said, 'Tick; we have done our election commitment. Let us run on to the next thing,' without providing any detail or information about how the process would work. However, Territorians expect an accountable process to know who is lobbying the NT Government and the ministers responsible for the key decisions made in the executive arm of government.

There was such a fuss about scrutiny committees, but urgent legislation will not go to a scrutiny committee. The Member for Braitling said that while the government is repealing something it does not need to go to the scrutiny committee, as it is not new legislation; the government is removing something from the legislation, so it does not deserve to be scrutinised by the Territorians whom it impacts. I thought that was bizarre.

The CLP government is picking and choosing when something should and should not be scrutinised. We would love to see the criteria that are now guiding the CLP government because it seems to chop and change. Maybe the puppetmasters behind the scenes pulling the strings are the ones we should be asking, because it does not seem like anyone on that side of the Chamber can answer those important questions.

A big part of why the Member for Nightcliff brought this motion before the House is that the level of distrust about Territory politicians and political parties is unfortunately quite high. We want to change that. Many people who have put up their hands in this parliament want things to be better. I genuinely believe that Territorians want good government.

I believe that everyone in this Chamber, whether they are in government or otherwise, wants the Territory to thrive and do better and to work on improving all the electorates we represent. How do we do that if there are no guiding principles and no criteria about good governance?

There are organisations that do governance training; maybe we should get our Territory politicians to do governance training 101 or something like that. It seems that some of the CLP members who were in opposition and called for this—for the last eight years, the Chief Minister; and for the last four years, many of the ministers who are now in Cabinet—have forgotten their words about advocacy. It is astounding that people can come into government and flip from their principles and values because they are in government. That does not make sense to me. Your key values and principles, the people who have elected you and the people you do business with, should be the key things that guide you as a government—you shop at their stores and you see industry come and go from the Territory. Those are the key areas that should be guiding you as a politician, a member of government and a Territory parliamentarian.

Suddenly there is a real feeling of pulling back, as though it is a bad thing that you want your government to govern well. It is almost this complete change to the opposite. I have seen CLP members in this parliament for the last four or eight years now reverse their values and the principles that they have been spouting. It is concerning. People say that a leopard cannot change its spots or a zebra cannot change its stripes—all these great ways to describe it. Is it that a member of parliament cannot change their integrity? What is guiding the CLP in this sense?

The motion brought by the Member for Nightcliff is about the key values and principles. We do not have to reinvent the wheel for a lobbyist register. We are lucky in the Territory because every other jurisdiction has done it, so we just have to pick the best parts. The CLP government does not even have to think for itself because it is all there. It is like a buffet; just pick the best parts of it. However, the government has not even done that, which is frustrating.

Prior to the election, Labor committed to doing this, which is why we want to support it. When the government announced it in a press release yesterday we were quite excited, similar to the Member for Nightcliff. However, when we asked simple questions about the details of who will run it, how it will be run, how it will be accessible and who will need to be on the register, we had to weed that out of the Chief Minister in Question Time.

We like to think that we are so important in the hour of Question Time and that the whole of the Territory stops what it is doing to listen to us, but that is not the reality. A lot of Territorians would miss that information. They would be genuinely interested in finding that out. I hope the communications other than the spruiking by the CLP government become more substantial and detailed, and I hope they provide the information that the opposition, the crossbench and Territorians want to know.

We can take that information back to our electorates in the 28 days we have to run around to do the government's consultation for it, because it does not believe in consultation. Apparently you get elected for four years and that is it; you have a mandate to do whatever you want. I did not realise that we are now in a dictatorship instead of a democracy. Consultation and engagement need to be constant if we are to improve things for Territorians. The CLP government has not once said that is what it will do. That makes me concerned for my electorate of Arnhem and as the Opposition Leader taking that information and trying to make sense of it to tell Territorians.

I do not know what is driving the government because all it is doing is personal politics or repealing things that Labor had. There is no vision. Having our parliament—the 25 members, not just the government—establish something that creates a better model of the register from information across the country, and having the NT lead in that space, would be fantastic. Unfortunately, the reality is—my hopes were quashed as of yesterday—that will not be the case. We will lag behind. It is a disingenuous gesture that has no work put into it. The mechanisms of the register have not been detailed, so we should just blindly follow the half-hearted process that the government said it has completed.

Territory Labor took a strong position prior to the election about establishing a lobbyist register. We want to see this succeed and not be a disingenuous attempt by the government.

The Chief Minister spoke many times as the then Opposition Leader about accountability and integrity. However, the CLP government continues to provide the appearance of accountability and transparency rather than it being reality. The Chief Minister's lobbyist register is a classic example. It has clearly been cobbled together at the last minute—'Geez, there's a motion coming before the House on Wednesday. We

better put out a press release to say we have done it. Tick; move on.'—without doing it properly, and Territorians deserve better.

The Chief Minister ducked and weaved her way around a host of things that she enthusiastically spruiked that she would do, or that the former Labor government should do better, but she has stepped back and washed her hands of any type of commitment to the things that she called for when she was the Opposition Leader, just over six months ago.

An example of this is that Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro committed to rolling out the additional $180m in funding for the domestic, family and sexual violence sector, which originally was committed to by Labor prior to the election.

Labor did not hear much. We then said, 'This is above politics. Let us all band together in this parliament and take a bipartisan approach.' To the Chief Minister's credit, after all members in opposition and the crossbench spoke out, the CLP said that it would take a bipartisan approach. Rather than go to Canberra, the CLP would bring everyone here to listen to the sector and would roll out the money by the end of January. We are two weeks into February and have not seen a single cent. Our domestic violence prevention sector is still crying out for the much-needed funding and additional resources to reduce the high levels of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. They cannot do that without the resources and the support of the government and what it committed to. We are yet to see any of those dollars roll out, and the Territory Labor opposition will continue to ask those questions.

The Chief Minister told Territorians that every member of her shadow Cabinet at her time in opposition would divest themselves of all shareholdings. Last week the Member for Katherine, six months into being in government, probably was told by somebody on the fifth floor—maybe she got a call from Shane Stone saying, 'Sell the shares; get rid of them. Do whatever you have to do because this needs to drop. We need to move on. Why are you holding on to this six months into government when the Chief Minister told you to sell them, get rid of them, divest them or whatever?'

Being caught out by the *NT Independent* is probably not a fun thing. It was made public; maybe that was the trigger. Maybe she does not respect her leader and totally ignored the clear words from Chief Minister Finocchiaro that all her Cabinet ministers would divest their shareholdings. Maybe she missed the memo. Maybe she was too busy somewhere else, like on the jet plane or at brunch.

The direction of the CLP government has been anything but clear.

Chief Minister Finocchiaro also promised Territorians that the CLP, if elected, would double the feed-in tariffs during the peak times of 6 am to 6 pm, when the sun is out. After the election the CLP again backtracked, only doubling the tariffs between 3 pm and 9 pm …
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Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. I thought we were talking about integrity and the lobbyist register. I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's words, but are we sticking to the topic or not today?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Goyder, in General Business we tend to give members a lot of latitude. Yes, always try to bring it back to the topic thank you. Thank you, Member for Goyder, for pointing that out.

Ms UIBO: I appreciate that the Member for Goyder is listening to my contribution; I am glad to hear that. We are talking about integrity and the promises and commitments that were made by CLP prior to becoming government. Where is the accountability when it changes the story and commitment, does not deliver, completely scraps something or brings up something that was not spoken about prior to the election.

That is what integrity of government should be: it makes a promise or commitment and fulfils it. If it is to change, scrap or downgrade something like the solar feed-in tariff—why? Explain it and communicate it to Territorians. Do not let people vote for you and then change your commitment or promise to Territorians.

We are talking about a lobbyist register and integrity. That is the whole process about how you then use criteria to guide yourself as government. That is one step. To be able to do that is through a lobbyist register; hence integrity. There you go, Member for Goyder.

The Chief Minister and her deputy failed to recognise or communicate—there was no media release about the solar feed-in tariff change of times, and people were extremely angry. We heard from one voter that the single issue they voted on was the doubled solar feed-in tariff price. The CLP government, with its lack of

integrity, changed the goal post and did not tell people. When people found out, they were angry. Now they are stuck with a government that does not abide by integrity for the next three-and-a-half years.

The CLP government cut three-year-old preschool and scrapped underground power for northern suburbs, which was not told to voters before the election probably or to the CLP backbenchers who live in and represent the northern suburbs. Talking about transparency, accountability and integrity, these are some of the examples in just six months of a CLP government.

It will be a long four years, but we will continue to point out those issues. We will continue to advocate and express concerns of Territorians on the issues where they feel the CLP government has not been truthful and has backtracked, changed, scrapped or is not talking about it at all.

Territorians have every right to know who is getting through the door with the Chief Minister and her ministers, if this is to inform decision-making, particularly of Cabinet or Caucus. The lobbyist register the Chief Minister announced yesterday is pretty gammon. It falls short of the mark, when talking about not being legislated—not being protected post political cycle. It is limited to consultants only; for example, peak bodies including unions. It is a toothless tiger, as the Member for Nightcliff said.

It is not clear who will maintain the oversight. The Chief Minister spoke in Question Time yesterday about the maintenance of the CLP lobbyist register, but what are the consequences if ministers do not abide by the CLP lobbyist register? The answer was that they would be given a stern talking to, or words to that effect.

Clearly, if it takes six months to get a minister to sell or divest their shares, what kind of consequence will there be if a minister is not keeping up to date, not being transparent about the lobbyists they are meeting with, not putting it on the register or if the lobbyists are not registering themselves? The consequence is the bit that is missing; that is muddy.

The kicker is that the register will not be published anywhere, nor will any information be available. Who sees it; how do you check this; and how do you provide the openness, transparency and accountability that the CLP is talking about? We do not have any of these answers.

The Member for Nightcliff spoke in her motion about ministerial diaries. How do you then provide more information? Other jurisdictions do it, so what would be the best fit for the Northern Territory? It should not be that hard. I would say that it is like pulling teeth. But it is a toothless tiger; it has no teeth to pull. How do you give it teeth? Maybe we need to put some dentures on the CLP lobbyist register to give it some grunt and bite.

CLP members like to say that if you have done nothing wrong, you have nothing to worry about. Similarly, I say to the CLP government: if you are not holding inappropriate meetings, then you should not have to worry about opening your diary to Territorians so they can see who you are meeting with.

If the CLP government pursues its version of the lobbyist register—the Member for Nightcliff's motion is before us, and it provides clear detail on how to do it; she has done all the work. The CLP just has to adopt it. This is about the future and making things better for the Northern Territory. We want it done right.

The Chief Minister spoke in her action statement of the lunar new year, the year of the snake and shedding for new beginnings. It would be great to see the CLP eat humble pie and realise that the lobbyist register it has put before Territorians, in its current state, is not good enough. Territorians deserve better.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing such an important motion before the Assembly. The Territory Labor opposition supports the establishment of a lobbyist register in the Northern Territory, bringing us into line with jurisdictions across the country. Not only do we support it, we committed to it ahead of the election last year, which the Chief Minister failed to put on the record yesterday. We would have done it right, but the lobbyist register the CLP came up with has been hastily put together, avoids proper scrutiny and does not pass the pub test.

Territorians expect one thing above all else from their government, which is for it to be transparent and accountable. Territory Labor knows that transparency and accountability are the bedrock of good government and the community's trust and expectation in their government. The CLP says that it wants to be transparent, but its lobbyist register does not go far enough to engender that trust.

Overall, Australians value and trust our public institutions, particularly those which deliver a tangible service, such as our ambos, firies and other emergency services. Australians also value our public health institutions

and the Australian Defence Force. All these institutions are in service to the public; however, in contrast, there is a lack of trust in politicians, political parties and the political process.

This is at all levels of government and is an ongoing issue that needs to be addressed, particularly in our remote areas where a lack of political trust and engagement leads to a lower voter turnout, thereby disenfranchising a section of the public.

Accountability, scrutiny and transparency are crucial features of a healthy democratic society. Protecting our public institutions against corruption and wrongdoing ensures better decision-making and greater benefits for Territorians. That is why Territory Labor called on the CLP government to honour this commitment and establish a lobbyist register in the Northern Territory, but it seems it is doing the bare minimum.

There is a clear expectation from the public that lobbying activities should be conducted in an ethical and transparent manner. For this reason there is an onus on this government—a government that has demonstrated its willingness to disregard environmental standards, protections and reviews—to have lobbyist registers that promote trust and integrity in government processes and decision-making.

A lobbyist register sets in stone that the contact between any lobbyist and government representative is conducted in accordance with public expectations of transparency, integrity and honesty. Territorians want things done differently; they want integrity and accountability in government. The CLP's register will not be legislated and is limited in its definition of a lobbyist. Plain and simple, it is a crock.

In August 2024, the *NT Independent* published an article with the Chief Minister stating:

> *… the CLP will deliver a system of transparent accountability drawing from existing models in other jurisdictions.*

Instead, the CLP has delivered the bare minimum. In other jurisdictions, ministers' diaries are published online quarterly, meetings and registered lobbyist groups are listed along with the dates they occurred. The register, which will not be legislated, also fails to specify who will be responsible for maintaining the register.

The CLP has nine cabinet ministers and eight assistant ministers. That is 17 people being paid the big bucks, and they cannot even get this simple commitment done properly. This week the CLP launched its year-of-action slogan and has constantly talked swift and decisive action, yet it has not put any real thought or action towards this straightforward and basic commitment.

It is always 'a rule for thee and not for me' with the CLP, which will slam anyone it thinks is wrong and promise the sky to get elected. The CLP will duck and weave on commitments when it comes to being in government, be it shares, solar feed-in tariffs or the commitment to fund important infrastructure projects.

Trust in our public officials and processes requires the leadership to build the integrity framework that not only prevents corruption but also reinforces the public interest over private interest. The CLP has a history of having a complete lack of understanding of the crucial role that trust and integrity play in government. If its members wanted to show true changes from the colours of the CLP predecessors they would have, but they did not.

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker we were presented with an amendment to the motion not long before we started. I want to put it on the record that we will not be supporting the amended motion.

There is a range of things in the original motion, and there is some suggestion—reading both motions—that there is a lack of integrity and a suggestion that we do not have a lobbyist register. This is an important subject. We have just been given a lecture from the Labor Party on integrity, openness and transparency. It was interesting to hear the Member for Daly say that if Labor had been elected they would have introduced a lobbyist register. I find it incredible that he would come up with such a statement.

I have spoken about this document many times before; it is the original Labor document as it was tabled in parliament on 30 November 2016, so I will not re-table it. It has been on the public record for nearly eight and-a-half years. It is called 'Restoring Integrity to Government – Trust and Integrity Reform Discussion Paper'. In it there is some discussion about lobbyist registers. The interesting thing is it that Labor was talking about lobbyist registers eight-and-a-half years ago. Over the eight-year period of Labor being in government it failed to introduce a lobbyist register. Today the Member for Daly said that if Labor was elected it would have introduced a lobbyist register, even though it already had eight years to do it.

I do not know about the people in this Chamber, but I would not trust the Labor government with $50 to go shopping for my grandmother, let alone listen to anything its members said today. Despite some of the things that have been said, just four years ago in the 14th Assembly the Labor government scrapped the scrutiny committee. Listening to some of things that Labor members talked about today, I find it incredible that they are questioning us on our integrity.

In this term of government not only have we introduced a lobbyist register, but we are the ones who brought back the scrutiny committee in parliament. We are moving ahead; we see that integrity, transparency and openness are important for this government.

For those opposite to be questioning us today is a joke. This is a Labor opposition; only a couple of weeks ago one of its staffers from the fourth floor was caught pinning up a political protest poster inside the men's toilets on the fifth floor. It was a political protest poster against a decision made by the Health department to put up the Australian, Territory and Aboriginal flag.

The incredible thing about that was the punishment by the Leader of the Opposition. I can assure you it was nothing; it was a slap on the wrist, a warning. What kind of a person enters a workplace toilet and engages in that sort of behaviour? That is right; this is how Labor operates inside Parliament House. Its members are now trying to lecture us on integrity in this Chamber. They have to be kidding.

The previous Labor government had a litany of integrity crises over the last eight years. It had eight long years to introduce a lobbyist register, and it failed to do so. It is no good coming in here crying today and saying, 'If we were elected, we would have done it'. You had eight years to do it and you failed.

The first time Labor members talked about potentially introducing a lobbyist register was in February last year when Eva Lawler was the Chief Minister. Even then she did not commit to releasing any ministerial diaries. But now the Opposition Leader is out in public saying that Labor did commit to releasing diaries. That is absolute garbage; Labor has never committed to releasing anybody's diary.

Labor only committed to a register six months before the election. All Labor did was play 'follow the leader' after the CLP committed to introducing a lobbyist register three years ago. We committed to it three years ago, and we have delivered it.

Let us get back to Labor's integrity crisis when in government. Less than three years ago the now Leader of the Opposition—who was the Attorney-General—tabled a ministerial report which was riddled with references to the Labor Party, which the Auditor-General found was a clear breach of the *Public Information Act.* Her document, 'Achieving Equality in the Northern Territory', made multiple references to the Territory Labor government and its perceived achievements over the previous five years. It was nothing short of disgraceful for those who were in this Chamber. Someone who was the Territory's highest law officer at the time, and is now the leader of the Labor Party, tabled that document, spouting Labor achievements under the banner of the Territory Labor government.

Let us talk about the Member for Gwoja, who purchased shares in a major wholesaler that supplies alcohol to Central Australian bottle shops two months before Labor let alcohol bans lapse in the region. That is right; two months before Stronger Futures lapsed, the Member for Gwoja purchased shares knowing that the floodgates of alcohol would be opened in Central Australia. What does that say about the Member for Gwoja? What does that say about the Labor Party?

Those opposite moved Heaven and Earth to stop an ICAC investigation into the Member for Gwoja's share scandal. They refused to reveal whether he had declared his conflict of interest when he was in Cabinet. The Member for Gwoja was also caught out spending $700 of taxpayers' money on fuel for private travel while he was driving between Adelaide and the Northern Territory.

Let us not forget how Labor had a Chief Minister called Natasha Fyles, who had to resign after it was exposed that she owned shares in a gas company operated in the Territory. Prior to that she hired a political advisor who co-owned a lobbying firm that represented a gas company with a major stake in a large-scale gas exports project in the Beetaloo basin and Middle Arm.

What about the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition? The Member for Daly spent $2,500 of taxpayers' money on fuel for private travel throughout New South Wales and Queensland in 2022.

A member: That is not in his electorate; it is not even in the Territory.

Mr EDGINGTON: That was not in the Territory, and not in his electorate. He thought he was entitled to spend $2,500 of taxpayers' money on private travel for himself. When he was a staffer for the now Leader of the Opposition, he threatened the Member for Braitling outside of Parliament House. He was also given a slap on the wrist by the now Opposition Leader. There is a history of not dealing with the issues, recently with the political poster in the toilets—a slap on the wrist and a warning—there is form for that. That is what she did with the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition when he threatened the Member for Braitling outside of Parliament House.

What about the former Police minister, Brent policy-on-the-run Potter. He had to apologise for racist Facebook posts, and former Chief Minister Lawler branded him an idiot. That was their response to posting racist Facebook posts. The response was the Chief Minister saying 'Well, he is an idiot'. That was it.

Even the now Member for Arafura had to front-up while he was a Labor candidate to confess that he was responsible for a car crash that killed a woman in 2009. Neither he nor Labor were upfront with Territorians about the incident before he ran for parliament.

There you have it; all four of the Labor members sitting in this Chamber have been caught out on integrity issues, yet here they are trying to lecture us about integrity. You just would not read about it.

We have not even mentioned Labor's infamous cocaine sex scandal. Does anyone remember that?

Here they are today, the four Labor members trying to lecture us about integrity, yet all of them have been involved in their own integrity issues. The cocaine sex scandal—well that might have been a previous Labor member, but we have four here today. This is an Opposition Leader and a party with no backbone and zero integrity, yet they are trying to lecture us on integrity.

Shame, shame, shame. Shame on every Labor member sitting on the opposite side of this Chamber.

We have introduced a lobbyist register. We have brought back the scrutiny committee to parliament. We have acted with integrity; we are open and transparent. We have been upfront in changing the sessional orders to bring back the scrutiny committee which Labor took away in 2020. This Labor government clearly has no integrity and should not be trying to lecture us about this very topic.

We do not support this motion, and we remind people that, based on this motion, we already have the integrity register and a scrutiny committee.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I will not speak too long, but I will address the topic of integrity. We have this line from The Greens that they are holier than thou and are not capable of integrity breaches. To bring The Australian Greens down to Earth a little I will highlight some of the recent integrity breaches, which I would have let slide, but since we are under the microscope let us put all of us under it.

It has come to my attention that twice The Greens party has broken social media policy. The problem is this is why there is distrust. If we are to cut and edit videos and put them out to the public …

Members interjecting.

Mr HOWE: We laugh, but the rules are to have context in full. It is done that way so that we cannot cut and change it.

The other one—and I am keen to hear from the Member for Nightcliff as to why this happened—was brought to my attention that yesterday the Member for Nightcliff mocked a veteran who stands at attention for the National Anthem. Veterans come from different parties. The Member for Arafura is also a veteran. The military is not a partisan body. We represent people from all over the place and are proud to serve our country. A lot of us serve our country so there can be freedom in rooms like this …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 43; I would like you to make a ruling on the personal reference he has made about the Member for Nightcliff. You cannot come in here and make accusations. I ask for him to withdraw. There was a direct attack of the member.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: First of all, make sure you direct all questions through the Chair, Member for Drysdale.

Mr HOWE: The interjection has reminded me …

Mr Young: He needs to withdraw. He has not withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I am ruling that he is okay, thank you.

Mr HOWE: Thank you for interjecting because you just reminded me—I will carry on.

Talking about the integrity of The Australian Greens, I am curious about its two biggest donors. The party seems to be funded by two individuals, for the most part. There is a Duncan Turpie. I am sure The Greens can update us on recent events. From what I can see on the website there is $550,000 from Duncan Turpie. Correct me if I am wrong—I might be—but I believe he is a professional gambler. The Australian Greens' biggest donor is a professional gambler. I wonder how that shapes The Greens party policy on gambling in the country.

The other one is LB Conservation Pty Ltd. These two donors make up the vast majority of The Greens' donations, being over $1m. That is, I believe—correct me if I am wrong—an American businesswoman. Two people control the flow of money to The Australian Greens …

Mr Young: It is in the public eye; everyone sees it.

Mr HOWE: It is good to see that the Labor and The Greens alliance is strong. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition comes to The Greens party defence, which is interesting …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 35; this is a debate on a lobbyist register. This is not relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nightcliff, the Speaker gave latitude to the Leader of the Opposition. I remind the member to come back to the topic.

Mr HOWE: I speak to integrity. This motion raised by the Member for Nightcliff is to achieve greater transparency, in her view, to the parliament. I am highlighting some home truths for the party that believes it is holier than thou.

The NT Greens recently said that it is not connected with Labor. People should know that the Deputy Opposition Leader came to The Greens' defence. Notes are constantly going between the two parties in this Chamber. The people of the Territory should know that these two parties are joined at the hip.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; relevance. We are here to speak on the member's motion on improving integrity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member set the context as to why he was talking about integrity, and he stated that he was just giving examples.

Mr HOWE: I note how devastated the Opposition Leader is at me highlighting some of The Australian Greens' flaws. Odd, but we will carry on.

I will talk about the alcohol lobby too. I keep hearing about this alcohol lobby. I can only speak for myself, but I am yet to meet anyone from the alcohol lobby; no-one has ever approached me. Putting out these falsehoods is what further degrades this parliament, leading people to believe that lobbyists are pushing their agendas on us.

I can only speak for myself; I have never met anyone from the alcohol lobby. No-one from the alcohol lobby has tried to encourage me to push their agenda, whoever 'they' are.

Members interjecting.

Mr HOWE: I am mistaken, there is an alcohol lobby. Thank you, Member for Goyder. The Member for Gwoja was invested in it; I thank you for reminding me of that. I have never met anyone from the alcohol lobby, but it is a timely reminder that they exist. The Member for Gwoja knows them very well, by the sounds of it.

The other one is the gas industry. In Drysdale we need good paying jobs, and the gas industry can provide that. That should not be a do as we say, not as we do situation, which is what we hear from The Greens.

It is not okay that just those who currently have a job are the only ones who deserve a job. There are people in my electorate who would very much like the expansion of that industry to give them and their children a future.

If the government is to come under fire we should all be honest with ourselves, as none of us are above reproach.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this important motion before General Business today. It is a great opportunity for us to draw a line in the sand as an entire parliament. The measures that have been put forward in the motion as amended are reasonable.

We heard from the Member for Drysdale that everyone has a past and everyone learns from history. We should be learning from successive parliaments about how to do things better. Integrity, accountability and scrutiny are all important areas that we can work on and learn from.

As someone who has been an elected member in some way, shape or form now for about 15 years I acknowledge that there are things I could have done better, just as there are things that the Members for Barkly and Katherine could have done better.

This is not the time or the opportunity to act like children and bring up historical issues to try to win points on your political pointscoring blackboard; this is an opportunity to look at what the Member for Nightcliff has put forward. It is fair, reasonable and important. There are measures in it that allow us to provide a greater sense of accountability and rebuild trust with people in the greater Territory.

This is a measure that we can all say is important and will work. It is not something being brought forward by the opposition or the government; it is being brought forward by a member on General Business day. It is not a select or scrutiny committee that the government can pick and choose which matters it sends to for scrutiny, as we saw today with the Corrections legislation and the Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill not going through the scrutiny process.

Each Australian jurisdiction does things differently and is interesting in how each one processes and look at things. There was a conversation about New South Wales, which publishes its ministers' diaries; it may have been another jurisdiction. It does not go into detail, but it indicates who the minister met with and how long the meeting went for.

There should not be any reason for us to shy away from this. From my lived experience I think this is incredibly important. I acknowledge that it should have been done some time ago, but I do not want to get into the gutter tonight about who did this and that, slagging and throwing stuff. It is reasonable, and it allows for trust to be regained in the community.

I spoke about this on Katie Woolf's show last year with the Member for Port Darwin when there was commentary about former Members of the Legislative Assembly taking up outside employment. I think the Member for Port Darwin—I hope that I am not verballing her—and I spoke about the Territory being a small jurisdiction and how challenging that can be for members who, willingly or unfortunately, for various reasons were not returned to the Legislative Assembly. That applies to all sides of politics—Labor, Liberal, Independents.

Members who leave this place often do not go directly into retirement. A former Labor government in the Northern Territory ceased the pension for elected members as an economic measure at that time; since then severance packages have been brought into parliament. I will not talk about individual members who have moved on from here because all sides of politics have people who engage in outside employment afterwards. However, I think there can be a conversation with the community about the expectations and understanding of what that is and how it should look.

I was not involved in 2016 when the parliament had the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People—I was the Deputy Speaker at the time—but I understand from the members who went to Queensland that there was a great breadth of differing views and aspirations from all Australian jurisdictions about how to increase the public's participation. A core feature of that was measures through the parliament that increased the perception of transparency, accountability and integrity. They were not to be introduced by a single government that was in power; they were measures that the entire parliament could do; therefore, the parliament would own those measures.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this important motion to the House. The registration of in-house as well as third-party lobbyists is important. As has been highlighted, that process of the register is separate from the government, regardless of who is in power. Whether that process is maintained through the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly or the Northern Territory Auditor-General, it will be an important measure.

There have been Members of the Legislative Assembly who published diary entries over the years. I acknowledge that it is not a brand-new concept; members of the 12th or 13th Assembly participated in that process. It is important. I do not think we have anything to lose in doing this. It will rebuild trust in that process.

The measures introduced by former Chief Minister Eva Lawler to tidy a process involving conflicts of interest and declarations that had not been tidied for an extensive period was important work. I acknowledge and thank Kathleen Robinson, former chief executive of the department, who undertook that volume of important work. She met with all members of the Assembly to speak to them about what they thought should and should not be in there.

I am not here to talk down anyone; the process we have going forward in the 15th Assembly regarding conflicts of interest—recording those with the Legislative Assembly is a marked improvement from the existing processes. This will further complement that work. It is important.

From people I have been speaking to, particularly in Alice Springs, I know that we are happy with what has been spoken about. I acknowledge that they were not critical at the time of the Chief Minister who was talking about the register. We did not have access to the details. The Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Nightcliff have well articulated the number of opportunities before us. They are essential to ensure we can be much better in the future with transparency and accountability, not just in government but in all our dealings as local members regarding who we meet with and what we talk about.

I am thankful; I thank honourable members for hearing my contribution without interruption. This is a worthwhile motion. I am interested to hear if there are any amendments that the government wishes to put forward to discuss. This is important. People are tuned in. This is something we can either agree or disagree on in a respectful way.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I strongly support the Member for Nightcliff's motion to expand the lobbyist register to include ministerial diaries, a lobbyist code of conduct and an expanded four-year cooling-off period between ministerial roles and jobs in industry as in-house lobbyists.

I was elected on a platform of politics and bringing integrity, accountability and greater transparency into our democracy. Central to this is exactly what this motion speaks to, which is the establishment of a comprehensive lobbyist register and the introduction of open ministerial diaries. These measures are not radical; they are essential for a functioning democracy where the people we serve can have confidence in the decisions we make.

I commend the government for introducing the lobbyist register. It is an important step in the right direction. The NT is the last jurisdiction in the country to implement this minimum standard. We have the foundation to build from, and this is an important first step. But it is only a first step.

We often hear that trust in government is at an all-time low. After listening to the conversation today, there is no wonder. I think of the school kids who came in and witnessed us in the Chamber. They asked me, 'Why is everyone talking to each other like that? Why are they shouting?' When I hear the way some members speak about other members in this Chamber, it is no wonder people do not trust politics. The ongoing personal attacks have no place here. We are here to do a job, and we can do it better.

This is a motion on improving integrity in parliament, and when I listen to the language and the attacks here, it is hard to see integrity and respect in this parliament. We have an opportunity to rebuild trust in the way we work and in what we do.

I commend the government for taking the step of introducing a lobbyist register. When people in my community asked me about how this lobbyist register would work, there were lots of questions about who it would include, how open it would be and whether they could trust it.

During my election campaign I doorknocked my entire electorate twice. The overwhelming sentiment I heard from my community was that they no longer trusted politicians. They were frustrated with the secrecy and closed-door conversations. They wanted representatives they could trust, leaders they believed would act in

their best interests and would be transparent and open. This was by far the most significant issue raised with me, bigger even than community safety or cost-of-living concerns.

Democracy works best when we elect representatives who are transparent, accountable and engaged with the people we serve. It works when the broad experiences, views and needs of our communities are reflected in the decisions made within these walls, when our communities trust us because they can see we are doing right by them.

Too often I, like many others, am confronted with the secrecy that surrounds the business of government, as if the public cannot be trusted with information or have a say in decisions that impact their future. The decisions we make here in the peoples' House are made on behalf of the people. What do we have to hide? As elected representatives our duty is to consider our community's needs, values and ideas when making decisions, then to let our community know about those decisions and why we have made them.

The disillusionment with parliamentary politics is clear in our community, and it has not happened by accident. The Northern Territory is small and Darwin is even smaller. People feel it when they see corporate interests, or a select few, prioritised over the wellbeing of all. When former gas executives land powerful government roles—as we have seen with Stuart Knowles becoming Territory Coordinator, or when former Chief Ministers take high-paying jobs, like Michael Gunner's move to Fortescue future industries—the public feels betrayed, and they have a right to. When this happens, trust erodes.

If we want to rebuild that trust we have to act decisively. We have the opportunity to do that today with a comprehensive lobbyist register, as proposed by the Member for Nightcliff. We need a lobbyist register that tracks all lobbyists, not just third parties. We need open ministerial diaries disclosed in real time, including any meeting notes and related proposals.

A lobbyist register needs to be linked to ministerial diaries so the public can see who their representatives meet with, when they meet and what they discussed. Ministerial diaries need to disclose meetings in official contexts and at private, exclusive events. We need better political finance regulations to capture the interests that lobbyists are paying to have served through donations and in-kind services.

Ideally, public officials should never be allowed to work in the industries they once regulated, but at a minimum we must implement a four-year cooling off period as proposed in this motion, not the laughable six months proposed by the CLP.

The issue is not that we do not trust lobbyists; it is that we have seen too many examples of elected decision-makers failing to resist lobbying influence. We have seen too many cases where decisions benefit lobbyists or corporations over the people they are meant to serve. As elected representatives we must change our culture from within. It should be our top priority to uphold the highest standards of integrity and never allow vested interests to sway our decisions; that includes how we behave in this Chamber.

The bottom line is that when decisions are made on behalf of the public, the public has a right to know who is influencing those decisions and who stands to benefit from them. That is what we mean by 'transparency', not the bare minimum put forward by the CLP.

It seems we have a government with a scrutiny committee that has no referrals, a lobbyist register that excludes major lobbyists and a culture that continues to hold meetings behind closed doors.

I strongly support the Member for Nightcliff's motion for the lobbyist register to include ministerial diaries, a lobbyist code of conduct and an expanded four-year cooling-off period between ministerial roles and jobs in industry as in-house lobbyists. I believe this is in the interest of everyone in this Chamber and everyone in the Northern Territory.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Member for Nightcliff's motion because Territorians deserve transparency and accountability.

For too long we have been the only jurisdiction in Australia without a lobbyist register, and giving credit where credit is due, I commend the CLP for bringing it to parliament. The Territory needs a lobbyist register but the CLP's proposal is not what the public was looking for. We need real reform instead of a loophole-ridden system that protects insiders, lacks enforcement and fails transparency.

When the CLP came into government, it promised a fresh approach, transparency, accountability and that things would change.

Yesterday the Auditor-General sounded the alarm about the government's commitment to transparency. The Auditor-General highlighted misleading claims and a lack of public accountability in taxpayers' funding of political advertising that prioritises spin over substance.

A strong and transparent lobbying system is vital to regain the people's trust in our political system. Territorians have a right to know who is influencing government decisions, who ministers are meeting with and whose interests are being prioritised. This is why, before the election, Labor committed to introduce a lobbyist register. We believe that ministerial diaries should be made public so that Territorians can see for themselves who is walking in to the doors of ministers' offices and shaping the decisions for our lives. These are not radical ideas; they are standard integrity measures across the country.

The CLP claims the register will hold lobbyists accountable with a watch list. That is nothing more than a name-and-shame exercise with no clear oversight or proper enforcement. Who decides who goes on the list? What safeguards exist against the register's misuse in this system that is open to political manipulation?

Let us not forget that the CLP's proposal does not require ministerial diaries to be published. The whole point of a lobbyist register is to let the public see who their elected officials are meeting with. If the CLP was serious about integrity it would deliver a genuine, independent and enforced system.

Accountability, scrutiny and transparency are the foundations of a healthy democracy. Protecting public institutions against corruption and wrongdoing leads to better decision-making and a stronger future for all Territorians.

That is why Labor has consistently led the way in terms of integrity measures. We introduced the Territory's first-ever freedom of information whistleblower laws. We created first ever Estimates Committee to scrutinise government spending. We limited government advertising through the *Public Information Act,* and we established a ministerial code of conduct. We also created the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

These were not just headlines; they were real measures to improve accountability. We will continue to push for real reforms to close the gap, strengthen transparency and ensure that integrity in government is more than a talking point because Territorians deserve better. They deserve a government that works for them, not for the power, the insiders or the lobbyists knocking on the back door. The people of the Northern Territory deserve nothing less.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the members for their contributions to my motion. I will respond.

To begin with I am not sure how to respond to the Member for Drysdale's contributions. Regarding the donations to The Greens, we do not accept corporate donations. That is something we are very proud of. We do not believe those donations should have any influence on politics. The average amount of our donations is $43. They come from regular people. It is a grassroots movement.

We have massive amounts of volunteers every election because we are a community. At the previous elections the CLP had to fly in people and put them up in hotels because it could not get enough volunteers. We are flooded with volunteers. It is quite funny to bring up donations. The two major parties are fully funded by big industry. That is where their donations come from—gambling, alcohol, gas, fossil fuels. I am not sure why you want to bring this to the Chamber because it is a fight that you cannot win.

If we look at the latest figures, donations to the CLP: $100,000 from JP Thor Ventures; $50,000 from Randazzo Properties, a property developer; $199,000 from Ray Bail Investments. Ray Bail was also caught on camera ripping down Labor and Greens corflutes before the election; $60,000 from Tamboran; $125,000 from John Paul Thorbjornsen, who calls himself a business consultant; $2,750 from a gas exploration company. The largest Greens donation was $3,700 from a private individual.

Let us not forget that the Member for Drysdale called me a national socialist, a nazi, on the floor of this parliament last year. I am sorry if I appear to trigger him, but at that level of debate it is not worth my time responding to the rest of it.

To the government, you could have genuinely had a win here and held your heads high for raising the bar. Both the major parties love to lobby insults back and forth, but you could have held this over them. You could have, but you cannot because your lobbyist register is a complete waste of time. It is not worth the paper it is written on.

It is not too late. We are halfway there. You already have a website up and running. I looked at it. That is great. By voting support for this motion, you could hold your head high knowing that you are reaching for the highest standard possible.

This is not just my opinion. I did not really know how the inner mechanisms of a lobbyist register worked when I started on this. Remember, we are not the experts here. But I read, researched, spoke to other researchers and constituents who are concerned with integrity, and I spoke to people interstate. I used all existing publications that evaluate lobbyist registers. These additions to this motion are the best practice to ensuring a functional successful register.

There needs to be published diaries, an enforceable code of conduct and there must be longer cooling off periods. Six months is woefully inadequate. We have seen this here. We must register all lobbyists, not just third party. For example, in 2014 the former CLP Chief Minister, Dennis Burke, was registered as a lobbyist on the federal government's lobbyist register for the major Darwin developer Halikos Group. At the same time he was appointed as the head of a Territory land development approvals body. A registered lobbyist for a Darwin developer had the final say over which development projects got approval across the NT.

Under the CLP's proposed lobbyist register there is nothing preventing a repeat of this. It is not good enough, and the public deserve better.

I know that this register will include third-party lobbyists—great. The problem is that we need in-house lobbyists. It is not enough to say, 'It is obvious who the in-house lobbyists are working for; the ministers will know.' It is about the public knowing.

For example, I think Nicole Manison is now an in-house lobbyist for Tamboran. If she is in-house, we will not know how many times meetings between the government and that type of lobbyist occur. We will have no idea. It will not be included in this register. The public will not have transparency.

Thank you to Labor for supporting my motion. I recognise that Labor committed to implementing a thorough lobbyist register prior to the election.

The Chief Minister claimed yesterday that their lobbyist register would make it transparent for the government to know who is lobbying them. Once again, this is a fundamental misunderstanding of what a lobbyist register is. It is for the public. The CLP's lobbyist register will not provide an iota of transparency for the public.

Thank you to the Member for Barkly for his contribution. I know he spoke endlessly about Labor in this motion, but I am here to hold you both to account. As many of my constituents keep reminding me, I am here to 'keep the bastards honest', and that is what I am trying to do. That is what I will do, no matter how many weasel words I get from the government or how many times the major two parties try to distract from the real issues with bickering. I am sick of it, and so is the public.

In 2024 then Opposition Leader Lia Finocchiaro stated:

> *Unlike Labor, the CLP will deliver a system of transparent accountability drawing from existing models in other jurisdictions.*

What a lack of integrity and broken promises from the CLP! You said that you would draw from existing models in other jurisdictions, but I have outlined that the CLP's register is nothing like the other states' registers and not at all a system of transparent accountability.

It is all talk. The CLP members say that they want to bring back transparency to our government. They keep bragging that they has brought back scrutiny committees, yet they keep rushing motions through on urgency, which prevents proper debate and prevents it from going before a scrutiny committee.

This government wants to boast about how it is increasing transparency and how it brought in scrutiny committees, yet it votes against Bills going before these committees, as it did this morning. Failure to support this motion speaks volumes of the CLP's lack of true integrity and desire for transparency. I stand by my earlier statement; perhaps the CLP's three words of the year would more accurately be secrecy, corruption and unfairness.

Minister Edgington has rightfully called out the inappropriate behaviour of the Labor Party in previous years. This is exactly why we need a proper lobbyist register, not the spineless one that the CLP has introduced. I

do not understand the arguments of saying, 'Well, two decades ago you did this' and 'but you did that'. We are all terrible; let us do better. There should be no argument over trying to be better.

Might I add that I am not claiming to be above any of you or holier than thou; I want to be held accountable too. We should all have high standards of integrity. This lobbyist register will make us all better representatives of our constituents and help ensure that we are making decisions only in the best interest of the public.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7	Noes 17
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Mr Paech	Mr Charls
Ms Uibo	Mr Edgington
Mr Young	Mrs Finocchiaro
	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
Aboriginal Remote Housing Program

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

- commit to the full implementation of the $4bn Aboriginal remote housing program
- guarantee that the target of a minimum of 2,700 houses built over 10 years is met
- commit that no amendments will be made to this agreement without the full support of the joint steering committee for remote housing Northern Territory.

Remote housing is incredibly important for many Territorians. I thank honourable members for allowing us to have this important conversation on this issue.

Housing is central to many people's lives. We need to continue to focus on housing, whether it is urban, remote, social housing, housing in town camps or housing in homelands. Good-quality housing plays a critical role in the social and economic fabric of the Northern Territory, improving health, education, social and economic outcomes and overall improving the quality of life for many Territorians.

I recall several moments as a former Remote Housing minister when I saw the sheer excitement and happiness on the faces of young bush kids as they opened the door of their own home for the first time. Seeing them have their own bedroom for the first time was truly amazing. I recall the joy of a child when they were reunified with their family from the out-of-home care system because a safe, secure and loving home was made available. I also remember the excitement of a 78-year-old grandfather returning to country to live with his son and daughter-in-law in their new home. He was so thrilled.

Aboriginal communities, particularly in remote areas across the Northern Territory, face challenges that many of us cannot even imagine. Overcrowded and inadequate housing is the stark reality for far too many people.

These conditions not only disrupt day-to-day life but also contribute significantly to poorer health outcomes, limited education opportunities and entrenched social issues.

The Northern Territory has a unique and diverse housing system that spans the full spectrum of needs from remote community housing, homelands and outstation housing to social and affordable housing, public housing and owner-occupied housing. Our system reflects the varied needs of the population. The diversity is in not only the structure of our system but also the cultural design and climatic factors that drive different requirements across the sector. Each component of our housing system plays a vital role in shaping the future of the Northern Territory. It is crucial that our system is one in which all Territorians can see and feel real tangible benefits.

Housing is a fundamental human right. It is a right that every Territorian should have access to a safe, secure and affordable home.

It is also essential to understand that housing is not just a roof over one's head; it is a fundamental social determinant of health. Poor housing conditions are closely linked to chronic illnesses and diseases, including respiratory illness, mental health issues and preventable infectious diseases. When homes are overcrowded or dilapidated the spread of disease can be rampant, and families are forced to live in environments that are detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

For instance, overcrowding makes it harder for families to maintain personal hygiene, increases the risk of communicable diseases and exacerbates existing health conditions. These issues are particularly acute in remote communities where access to healthcare services is sometimes already limited. A home is supposed to be a sanctuary and a place of safety, rest and recovery, but when homes are inadequate or unsafe the effects on physical and mental health can be profound.

Beyond health, housing has a profound impact on other social determinants of wellbeing, such as education, employment and community cohesion. A safe, healthy home provides children with the environment they need to focus on their education, study and grow. It gives families the stability necessary to pursue meaningful work, and it allows communities to thrive. When housing is overcrowded or inadequate, children often struggle to learn in such difficult conditions, and adults are faced with additional stresses that hinder their ability to hold down a job or improve their skills. These barriers to education and employment perpetuate the cycle of poverty, making it harder for families to break free from disadvantage.

I recently came across an article that highlighted international studies suggesting that early research shows a link between higher temperatures and increased crime. This means that climate change could cause crime rates to continue to rise, or at least prevent them from going down. This theory is largely driven by international and Australian studies by universities forecasting and capturing data from regional towns around the world and Australia. These have shown that as the temperature rises so does antisocial behaviour. Extreme heat events can lead to higher aggression, which in turn can lead to more crime.

When we look at this more closely we see that the summer months in the Northern Territory can always be a busy time for our frontline workers. Additionally, the data shows that many people living in public housing experience more days without a steady supply of power, which is often due to the types of air-conditioning units and how they are being operated. Sometimes it could be a lack of understanding or information on how to use these units properly.

The Northern Territory has one of the highest rates in Australia of Aboriginal people living in remote areas. It is vital that we continue to invest in housing for our urban and remote communities.

The need for new homes and upgrading of existing infrastructure cannot be overstated. Building more homes is not just about providing shelter; it is about creating the foundation for healthier, more sustainable communities. We must prioritise the construction of new homes—housing that is functional and culturally appropriate.

Aboriginal Australians in remote and urban areas have unique cultural needs that should be respected in the design and construction of new homes. This means creating homes that reflect the lifestyle, values and traditions of people who will live in them. By doing so, we improve health and living conditions, and we show respect for Aboriginal culture and identity.

Building homes that encourage natural airflow and provide increased shade is vitally important. I know this is an issue that requires more work than it sounds like it does today. When I served as the Northern Territory Housing minister I advocated to the Commonwealth to allow us to move away from the traditional

Canberra-approved designs and to work with local communities to create designs tailored to each community and region across the Northern Territory. Understanding the difference between the Top End and the Centre is important, and those designs should be rolled out more effectively.

I was heartened to hear that progress has been made in this area under the new national agreement. I will continue to advocate to the Territory and the Commonwealth governments on this issue. I understand—again I am not here to play politics with the issue—and acknowledge Minister Edgington, the Housing minister, who shares my understanding of this complex issue and the need to involve people in the design.

Building more homes is not just one part of the solution. We need to focus on improving the broader social infrastructure in these communities, including access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities. These changes must go hand in hand with the investment in remote housing. It is an interconnected cycle that requires an holistic long-term approach. It means working with Aboriginal communities in a meaningful way to understand their needs and to ensure they are part of the decision-making process. It means providing jobs in housing construction and maintenance to local Aboriginal people so they can build their own futures while they are building their own communities.

As a former minister and a local member I am deeply passionate about remote housing, homelands and urban and social housing. During my time as minister I broadened the entitlement for government employee housing to ensure that all Aboriginal staff in the Northern Territory public service, whether they were part-time or full-time, living in remote communities had the same access with housing as other staff entitlements. To me it was crucial to ensure that all staff were treated equally and have the same opportunities. This was a difficult task; the requirements then flowed on to departments to ensure that each agency was covering those entitlements.

I was also the minister who was proud to have built more houses in one year than any other government in the history of the Northern Territory. I hope to do it again some day.

We saw the first remote community become a remote community housing provider, and we will definitely see more of this amazing stuff across the Territory because our housing sector is strong, bold and unique.

Working with AHNT, we started the important work on reform. The joint steering committee on homelands and outstations started, and it does important work to understand the costs of upgrading and delivering improved services to homelands and what is needed after years of the Liberal government under the former Chief Minister Adam Giles. I want to make it clear that I acknowledge it was the former Chief Minister; not a member of the current government.

Through working in partnership with incredible people and organisations like Chris Neade in Elliott, the Gurindji Corporation in Kalkarindji and Centrebuild in Central Australia we've seen great things happen for our people. I give a shout-out to my brother and uncle—particularly my uncle who is no longer here—the great Sammy Bush-Blanasi, who was a fierce advocate during my time in Housing to improve the living conditions for many people. I remember many trips with us travelling around the Territory seeing firsthand the living conditions of many of our people.

We must challenge the status quo and seek innovative ways to improve. I am proud to have supported the work of Jimmy Frank and his outstanding project—Minister Edgington is aware of it in Tenant Creek—with Dr Quilty, and I remain committed to supporting this initiative and project.

I urge the Northern Territory Government to consider transferring public housing complexes in our regional towns to vital services across the Northern Territory, such as women's shelters. These services can provide a safe space for women and children, or a place for them to stay as they transition out of a shelter. Remaining complexes could be repurposed to create spaces where caretakers can live within sight of these public housing complexes and support tenants who are vulnerable or who need support. Having caretakers live in public housing complexes allows us to step in and address behaviour before it escalates to situations that cause harm or danger to people.

If we could transfer public housing stock to organisations such as WoSSCA in Alice Springs, Dawn House or other organisations across the Territory, where they could have complexes for vulnerable women who are in shelters and no have accommodation to go to when trying to transition out of a shelter—having a space with a person living onsite to support and care for them would be valuable. I know several complexes in Alice Springs which could assist.

I am not an urban member, but I am acutely aware that every urban member would have a public housing complex in their electorate. Imagine if every public housing complex had a live-in caretaker, whether that is a community-based organisation or a support person on a roster from an agency who monitors behaviours and provides responses before they get out of hand.

The education minister talks about education, and the DV minister talks about how we can stop violence, particularly in these areas. If we had people and organisations contracted to provide a caretaker service in public housing complexes they would be able to de-escalate or report those issues as they see the changing behaviours. Where there are children starting to not attend school, they could jump in to support that family—when noting an escalation in verbal abuse and violence, we could get involved earlier because we have people in these complexes. Delivering health services is an important measure.

This is something I have heard about from members in the community. It is important and warrants further investigation regarding the cost of being able to do that—can we do it? Is having a safe, secure and affordable place into which they could transition vulnerable people something that our women's shelters or community organisations would be interested in?

When we talk about our housing system, we also talk about the importance of having places for our senior Territorians, the people who have worked hard for several years and have contributed greatly to the economic and social fabric of the Northern Territory. We must look after our seniors. When they transition into a smaller home, if they are in public housing, we need to support that transition. It can be complex. I know people who have been in public housing in the Territory for 30 to 40 years, particularly in Alice Springs. The Alice Springs members probably know a number of their constituents who have been in homes for a long time. Sometimes it is a conversation to support them in considering moving into a seniors village in Alice Springs—there is Flynn Drive, Albrecht Drive, Mallam Crescent, Braitling and Northside.

Young Territorians being able to buy their own home is important. I spoke yesterday about the importance of home and contents insurance coverage for flood, fire and storms. I also spoke of land availability. When we came to government in 2016 we had an important volume of work to do get land ready to build in remote communities. At that time there were 60 lots available to build remote housing. A lot of work had to occur in those communities. A number of subdivisions were created in communities to enable the home-building exercise.

The importance of remote housing cannot be overstated. The quality of housing directly impacts health, housing, education and the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. The Northern Territory is in urgent need of more houses to ensure that all families, especially those in remote areas, have access to safe, healthy and sustainable living conditions.

I was speaking to industry groups earlier today. The conversation about the housing shortage has been happening in the Northern Territory since self-government. It will be an issue well into the future, but it is one we can work on together because we all have the power to change lives, break the cycle of disadvantage and provide the foundation for future generations to thrive.

Regardless of the motions and debates that follow I urge the minister for Housing to learn from his own party's history—a history where the price was not right. It is important to move on and do that work. The Territory is a great place, and the remote housing program is incredible. Everyone can access the remote housing program. It is available online, and you can look up your community and see firsthand where the housing building is taking place, whether it is a new build, replacement or a refurbishment. We worked with the Commonwealth to secure that work before the August election. I am heartened to hear the housing numbers have been honoured by the new government, so we will continue to see that work.

Moving forward we will see work in this space. There was no better job than being the Northern Territory's Remote Housing minister and handing over keys to a home for a family; a mum and her child; a grandfather returning from Hetti Perkins Home for the Aged in Alice Springs back to country; or a young Aboriginal child who was put in the out-of-home care system being reunified with their loving family members in a new home on country with their own bedroom. It is a heartening and exciting job, but it is also met with challenges along the way.

I acknowledge that the minister for Housing inherited challenges that we inherited. There are long-term legal cases, and the Housing minister will have to work through that. These were well before his time, my time and before anyone's time in this Assembly; it is an ongoing matter.

It is a role you have to be fearless in. I was not afraid; I was bold, fierce, and I had courage. I did not just accept what people told me; I pushed, because the people of the bush deserved better. That is exactly what they have seen—record investment into remote housing in communities like Yuendumu, Docker River (Kaltukatjara), Lajamanu, Daguragu, town camps (the Aboriginal living areas, as they are referred to in the Barkly) and communities like Milingimbi and Maningrida. This has been the result of the hard work with advocacy and consultations with the Member for Mulka, Yingiya Guyula, who was with me during many of those conversations with community about new housing and the importance of subdivisions—and travelling to the Daly to hear from them

I stress to people that it is not about demonising every Aboriginal community because of a few people. We cannot demonise or withhold the progress and development of housing in communities. I am so happy to see new housing happening at Wadeye, Daly, Ngukurr and Numbulwar. I really care about this, and I will always be a strong advocate for it into the future.

Thankfully the Territory has been left in a strong position when it comes to housing investments. We have invested our own funds into housing at record levels and worked hard with the Commonwealth. The next 10 years of funding investments have been secured. It is important to see these agreements. The first one was an agreement between the Territory Labor government and the coalition under Minister Ken White. The second agreement was between the Territory Labor government and the federal Labor government under Minister Linda Burney, who is a fierce advocate for the Northern Territory.

That leaves the Territory in a good position because from that agreement, up until 2026 or 2027, and on the forecast of the numbers—the joint select committee worked with the minister on future projections. There is good work being put in place. This is an exciting topic to talk about.

Homelands are important. One of the challenges we have had in the past is with governments of all persuasions, and at all levels, talking about leasing. It has come at the cost of housing on homelands. A lease is not needed for a government to build a house on a homeland. A strong homeland resource centre is needed, with an Aboriginal land trust to look after and support that aspiration. A homeland is not just a place where we live; it is a place where we can maintain our cultural integrity and go to for healing and mediation. It is a place of deep cultural and spiritual significance. It is also a place for economic opportunity. Being able to run local businesses in a homeland is a vital incentive for many of our mob running small tourism businesses from their homelands.

The infrastructure is ageing; it needs to be acknowledged that some work needs to be done. Hopefully there are changes in the new CDEP, which is now known as RJED, to enable the creation of real jobs on country with real wages and real conditions, thanks to Senator Malarndirri McCarthy. Hopefully people will be taking up jobs in homelands resource centres and in our local regional councils where they can look after their homelands and that important infrastructure.

I give a huge shout-out to the former CEO of AHNT, Skye Thompson. I believe she is now working for the department in homelands. Skye is an absolute legend and needs to be recognised. She came into that role and did a fantastic job. While we are talking about strong, black and deadly people in the housing space, I give a shout-out to Leeanne Caton who has taken on the role of CEO of Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory.

The process with the Commonwealth to build new homes across our urban areas is a welcomed opportunity. Social, community, public and owner-occupied housing are all integral pieces of the puzzle that is housing.

A lot of people in Central Australia are encouraged, particularly looking at homes in Kilgariff. The Treasurer mentioned earlier today that there is a backlog with getting a builder to build a house in Kilgariff. I think it is more than a two-year wait to build a home.

Housing in town camps had not been redone since the Northern Territory transformation plan, and I was a strong advocate that we needed to include that. The department did a fantastic job in working with town camps. I give a shout-out to all the builders.

Mr KERLE: 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.

Mr PAECH: I acknowledge the Treasurer speaking about the importance of that program and the new people going on that list.

Building across the Northern Territory—whether it is urban, remote, in town camps or in our regional towns and centres—forms a great piece of the puzzle.

Minister Edgington, I look forward to hearing from you about subdivisions across the Territory, as it is a challenge. When I was the minister we did subdivisions in Hermannsburg and Maningrida. There is a lot of work involved in community consultation and the design of what the suburbs in remote communities should and could look like.

One thing I passed on to your department, minister—from my recent travels across the bush—is that community members are asking for a big sign in their communities with a colour-coded map indicating what will be repaired, demolished or rebuilt and where a new subdivision may be. This will enable them to have understanding and to get clarification of the planning in their community. I committed to the constituency of Gwoja that I would raise this idea for improvement.

Minister Edgington knows as well as I do that the bush telegraph—stories or radar—travels at a speed faster than light. We should help people understand the real housing story in the bush for future community meetings and consultations because it is an emotive issue, and people can get really agitated about this.

Another job the Housing minister has—which has been a difficult job with the emergency response for every Housing minister since 2007—is housing reference groups. It is a difficult task to navigate because it involves bringing people together to talk about and look at the allocation of new houses.

Ministers Edgington and Cahill, I am not sure whether it was maintained following my departure as Housing minister, but we had a priority system whereby families with good school attendance were considered for priority housing. Children who were in the out-of-home care system and had the opportunity for reunification were on the priority system. For elders in towns and urban centres in aged-care facilities who could be reunified with their families if the family got a house, there was a priority system for them to be considered for the allocation. Of course, where our mob was working in community—whether for the public service or a non-government organisation—they were also given priority consideration. That was a good way of sending a message about working and performing in those areas.

The government employee housing was always a tough thing to work through. I did not want to be seen to be moving our mob of Aboriginal people out of their houses into a different suburb, which is sometimes known as the ‘non-Indigenous government worker suburb’ of a community. I wanted them to stay in their home but get the same entitlements that other department staff received.

We worked through that process to make sure that if someone was working for the government in a remote community they received the same entitlement. It did not mean they had to move out of their house; it meant that they got the same rental subsidies as non-Indigenous staff, the same concessions for power and the same entitlements regarding the minimum level of infrastructure and upgrades to their homes. This meant that when they ceased their employment with an agency they did not become homeless; it was turned back to the public housing system whereby they would have a rental agreement and would then work through that measure. That was a sensible way of giving people in remote communities access to that.

Minister Edgington will have the difficulty of wrangling the agencies and departments to make sure that entitlement is trickling down to Aboriginal Territorians who are working as government employees in various agencies. The two main ones were Education and Health, then Territory Families where it had a footprint in regional and remote areas. Getting that entitlement for housing and the subsidies for power is a good way to incentivise people to work for the Northern Territory public service in remote communities.

Housing will be a big, ongoing story in the Northern Territory, but it is one that we should all be keeping an eye on and working on. Before you can have any housing story there is the need for good planning, making sure there is work across the Territory to build suburbs and subdivisions. The work is already in place for Kowandi and Holtze; the stages at Kilgariff were being fast-tracked.

The important point I want to touch on—strangely enough, the Member for Araluen prompted me to talk about this by looking over—is that planning and fast-tracking the industrial land areas across the Territory puts pressure on the local housing amenity in our urban areas. Whether it is the industrialisation of our rural areas or owner-operators running a small business from their home that grows over time to be quite a big business, it impacts on the local amenity. I have always been an advocate—I shared that view with the former Member

for Goyder, Kezia Purick—to 'keep rural rural'. Through good planning we can do that; we can enable the important project of home building.

I give a huge shout-out to every person who works in the housing sector, whether they work for the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory; real estate agents; Aboriginal community-controlled organisations; or great organisations like Venture Housing, YiSSA and Central Australia Affordable Housing. I acknowledge Central Australia Affordable Housing's CEO Frances, who has done a great job in her tenure in Central Australia.

I shout out to all the country men and women in this area, whether they are a tenancy manager, an officer for the department or work for an Aboriginal community-controlled health or housing service, supporting people to maintain tenancies. It is important that we support people to avoid them being evicted. Sometimes it is not easy when you must bang on your cousin's door to ask them to get ready for a home inspection or tell them that they are behind in their payments. It is important work, so I thank everyone in the housing sector. It is hard and rewarding work that directly impacts on and changes lives.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I support this motion about housing. It is important that we should be listened to, be respected and try to work together to solve housing issues.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this important issue of remote housing to the Assembly today. I support the motion because I strongly represent the homelands, communities and hub towns. They still lack housing.

A homeland is a home where we belong, where we come from, where we are ascended from—the land, exactly. When I worked my first job in 1976 or 1977 my boss said to me, 'I do not know why those people want to live in swampy areas. There are a lot of mosquitos. I would rather live on an island or in a place with fresh water. That is salt water.' I said, 'Excuse me? That is our home; that is where we belong. We need to be supported there. There are mosquitos, crocodiles in the Arafura Swamp, leeches and all sorts of things. But we belong there; that is where we live.' Every homeland is a country that we belong to. That is why I support this.

We talk about discipline and school. 'Children must go to school'—well, the government just moved children from schools in homelands to somebody else's country. They are learning leadership roles and about who they are; there is a school out there; it is country—learning on country and homelands. That is why if we stick together and sort things out together—when I walk in here I am supporting and representing the people from homelands. For housing, this is one of them—my points will be coming out and explaining more during this term so we hopefully start to understand each other and work together.

I support the motion and urge the CLP, or whoever is in the government every term, to bring strong commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to achieve good housing outcomes for all communities. Housing is an important and big job. Decades of neglect by both parties placed a burden on this government to prioritise housing and get the job done.

The Labor government has been supported by the federal government in the last few years to push to get more done, but overcrowding is still an enormous problem in remote communities. Many families are forced to move to urban towns like Darwin in overcrowded public housing or are long-grassing due to the problems that overcrowding brings to our communities. This has created geographic distance between families and their country.

In my first term I went with the then Member for Stuart; we came back from Papunya on the road to Yuendumu. We stopped on the road and saw empty houses. I said, 'Where are the people from here?' They said, 'They are all abandoned. The CDP, jobs, infrastructure and everything was taken away through the intervention.' I asked, 'Where are they now?' They said, 'You can find them all the way up in Darwin somewhere', and I was worried. People need to stay where they belong. We need to keep children and families there.

In our communities we often lose important family members who provide care and cultural knowledge who are who are needed on country. This loss of elders leads to lawlessness by young people who are no longer being taught our Yolngu way, our values and our self-discipline.

Overcrowding also contributes to ongoing health issues. Rheumatic heart disease should not exist in a First World country, but poverty in our remote communities, directly linked to overcrowding, means that we have high levels of scabies, rheumatic fever and, eventually, rheumatic heart disease. Other illnesses also spread

in this environment. In our remote communities avoidable and early deaths are increasing. Every day we are burying two to three people in our homelands on country. That is from overcrowded housing.

One significant concern is that the new housing continues to be built based on poor designs. The besser block houses are hot, the bedrooms are small and often the house layout is not appropriate. That creates big problems when multiple families are living in one space.

Dr Simon Quilty told the Kumanjayi Walker inquest that the design of houses in remote communities is 'thermally moronic'. I understand that this means that the houses are stupidly hot.

In my electorate houses are not being built with big undercover outdoor living spaces, and they often do not have good breezeway designs that can take advantage of natural cooling. Many households are spending enormous amounts of money on power for air conditioning. This can be more than $2,000 per quarter. Often the power will run out, and houses can be left with no power until the next day or until someone in that house gets paid. This means that all the food in the fridge goes off, and people are hot and uncomfortable without lighting at night and cooling, meaning the doors are left open, and there are often mosquitoes and sandflies keeping everyone awake.

We need to find many better designs for our communities that are suited to different climates across the Northern Territory.

Many of the subdivisions are building houses too close together so that there is little privacy, which makes people feel worried and suspicious. That is how people feel when they are forced to live in a hub town community with a mix of clan groups that may not be closely related.

I have explained many times the problems with continuing to grow our hub communities and ignoring the homeland towns. When people are living on another person's country it can create ongoing problems for decision-making and responsibility. It also creates problems for accessing country for hunting and ceremonies. Many hub communities have drug and alcohol use, low school attendance, gambling, high consumption of takeaway food, conflict and feelings of despair.

In homelands we see higher attendance, connection with country, responsibility for country kin, healthier food sources, and the people are healthier in their mind and spirit, in their own country on their own homelands. This country is also a space that is resource rich. We can turn to small business development to create economic independence with commercial fishing, commercial trepang harvesting, buffalo meat and crocodile farming et cetera. However, governments continue to ignore and neglect homeland towns, instead building more housing in bigger hub towns, which is increasing the problems. We need a spread of new housing stock across hub towns and homeland towns.

Many homelands have a population of between 50 and 100 or more people, with infrastructure such as schools and health centres. These homeland communities need more housing immediately. Smaller homelands also need to be able to grow so that people can move out of overcrowded houses in the hub towns and return to country.

We need to be flexible and innovative in considering the best ways to create sustainable housing. We need to see people on country consulting with homelands residents about how to achieve these goals for housing on homelands. We need to be part of the decision-making and take back the responsibility to achieve housing outcomes.

To begin to do this we must see the remote housing partnership between the federal government and the Northern Territory Government extend to include housing in homelands. There is no point spending billions of dollars creating more problems with bad housing designs, all in the hub towns where there are entrenched problems.

The Closing the Gap agreement is about shared decision-making; this is really needed. It needs to be applied to housing in the NT. Communities need to be able to make decisions about the designs of houses and where they will be placed.

The minister is aware of many of the housing problems in remote communities and in our homelands. We have discussed these problems together.

I encourage this government to commit to the housing program and take it even further to ensure that this billion-dollar agreement is implemented in partnership with Aboriginal communities, bringing better designs and extending into our homeland towns as well.

I have been calling for this for a long time—for the last nine years; this is my ninth year. Listen to us. Let us work together and make that local decision-making together. I am here; I have been sent by the people in remote communities. I represent my people. For the last nine years, you people have always turned away from me.

We must respect one another. If we look at working together, talking about housing and whatever needs to be done, we can bring this together and make safe communities and schools. There will be less crime if we work together. We are human beings out there. My people are human beings. We need to be listened to. This is one issue I have given you a bit of an earful about. I will keep going until we are understood.

We are sovereign nation people. We are the people who need to be respected, just like everybody else.

Mr EDGINGTON (Aboriginal Affairs): Madam Speaker, I speak regarding the motion on the Aboriginal remote housing program.

Before I get into this discussion I will move an amendment to the motion. Listening to the Members for Mulka and Gwoja—this is one of the issues I am pleased to say that we all agree on. Changing the motion is not about changing the overall intent; it is about clarifying what can be achieved under the 10-year agreement.

The motion that I am moving has been circulated. I move to replace dot-point one with the following:

- continue delivering the $4bn Aboriginal remote housing program as agreed under the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT Agreement

Replace dot-point two with the following:

- work towards delivering up to 2,700 houses over 10 years, consistent with the terms of the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT Agreement

Replace dot-point 3 with the following:

- continue engaging with the joint steering committee for remote housing Northern Territory to deliver Aboriginal remote housing.

Aboriginal remote housing is important to everybody in this House. That is the important part of this debate. For every child to have the very best start in life they need good, safe, secure housing. That is critical for every person living in the Northern Territory.

If we want to get our kids to school, get people to work and participating in their community and the economy, and if people want to build a business—whatever their desire is to do—we need to ensure that there is safe and secure housing for people living in the bush. There is no disagreement between this side or the other side of the House when it comes to implementing and supporting Aboriginal housing, particularly remote housing.

Like the Member for Gwoja, who expressed how thrilled he was to be the minister for Housing, I can say in my position as the minister for Housing that I am also thrilled to be in this position. I have spent a lot of time out bush travelling through remote communities and different parts of the Northern Territory and my electorate—which is the biggest in the Northern Territory at 448,000 square kilometres. The Member for Gwoja's electorate might be second; we both have large electorates. The Member for Mulka has spoken as well. The other remote members—Members for Arnhem, Namatjira, Arafura and Daly—and I share some things in common when it comes to remote Aboriginal housing.

Our government is committed to implementing the Aboriginal remote housing program. We have always been committed to action, certainty and security for all Territorians. I acknowledge that the Aboriginal remote housing NT agreement was signed in June 2024 between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments after reaching a partnership agreement for remote housing and homelands, committing $4bn over 10 years, commencing 1 July.

The investment will build up to 270 homes in the bush each year to reduce overcrowding and improve housing quality in remote areas through continued support for repairs and maintenance. From 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024, 118 of the 270 new or replacement homes have been delivered under the agreement. That target is on track because a further 160 homes are at various stages of construction. Those houses will be completed by 30 June 2025.

We are clearly on track to deliver the 270 homes, being the target for 2024–25. All parties are working well together as part of that implementation. I am sure that over the next 10 years we can work collaboratively in a coordinated way to ensure that 2,700 new homes are built over the next 10 years.

The 10-year remote housing NT schedule will support progress against closing the gap. Our government is continuing to deliver the Our Community. Our Futures. Our Homes. construction program to achieve this commitment.

Recently I visited Canteen Creek and Epenarra. It was great to be out in my electorate and speaking to people about the new housing going up in those communities. I give a quick shout-out to Priscilla Mick, Allan Dempsey and Nicholas Corbett from the Owairtilla Aboriginal Corporation at Canteen Creek. They spent time with me and showed me where the new houses are going up. About six have substantially been completed, and the community is thrilled to have new housing in Canteen Creek. There was clear enthusiasm and support for the housing going up.

As the Member for Gwoja pointed out, there are a lot of issues out bush. There is wear and tear and issues with damage to houses. At places like Canteen Creek some of the damage is being caused by donkeys. They are keen to get their mouths around taps, for example, to try to get water, but they are twisting, bending and breaking the taps. While I was out there I was pleased to sign a funding agreement with the Canteen Creek Owairtilla Aboriginal Corporation to build a donkey-proof fence around the community. That is an example of the challenges out bush.

That funding came under the Barkly Regional Deal. I acknowledge the partners in the Barkly Regional Deal: the Australian Government and the Barkly Regional Council. The challenges of living in remote communities include the weather and animals such as donkeys that can interfere with and damage housing.

I went to Epenarra, where two of the houses are substantially completed and another two are on the way. LA Build, a well-known Territory company, is building the houses at Canteen Creek and Epenarra.

A few months ago I was at Ampilatwatja; another eight homes are going up there. They are being built by Remote Build (NT).

That is some of the work going on out bush. What caught my eye in those communities is that some of the locals are participating in the workforce. When we talk about new housing going up in the bush we often forget the important part of housing builds, which is the opportunity for locals to be employed and to learn skills in construction and ongoing repairs to and maintenance of those houses.

I was interested to see locals participating in the construction at Canteen Creek, Epenarra and Ampilatwatja. I am sure that as I get around I will see more people engaged in the workforce. This is the important part of the housing program. It is not just about building houses; it is about creating opportunities for employment for people living in those communities.

Those measures had been agreed to by the previous government. There is a range of measures already in place, and the joint steering committee, which comprises the land councils and Aboriginal Housing NT, has been working well with government to ensure the housing agreement continues.

Last week I caught up with the new Chief Executive of Aboriginal Housing NT, Leeanne Caton. Nathan Evans is working there as well. We had a great meeting in my office to talk about the housing agreement and opportunities out bush to empower people and get them involved in service delivery in remote communities. It was a good meeting.

Some of the targets and the reason this motion was amended—having that conversation with the Member for Gwoja about amending the motion. The member is across what goes on out bush, as are all the remote members. Replacing some of the words like ‘guarantee’, is more about being flexible and working with the community. When houses are being built out bush we need to work directly with the community to ensure those houses are delivered in a timely manner and in accordance with community consultation and engagement.

The considerations are about culture, workforce capability, seasonal weather changes and the impacts on access to a community. We will work with the local people to ensure that targets are being met and that they are done in consultation by clearly engaging with the community to deliver the best product. There are housing reference groups in communities, which the Member for Gwoja spoke about. I will quickly mention the work that those housing reference groups take on because they play an important role in their communities, discussing housing allocations and working with the community to ensure the houses are occupied as quickly as possible once they are built.

The CLP continues to engage with the joint steering committee on remote housing. On 5 December the CLP government renewed its commitment to the partnering agreement and encouraged all parties to work together to deliver for remote Territorians. This will ensure that the overall construction target of 2,700 is met over the next 10 years and that all commitments to repairs, maintenance, tenancy management and homelands infrastructure upgrades are attended to.

There has been some discussion about KPIs, and I am sure they will continue with NIAA. The pleasing part so far is that the joint steering committee is working well together.

The Member for Gwoja touched on GEH. While we are building 2,700 remote homes in Aboriginal communities, I acknowledge that we are continuing with a scheme to ensure that Aboriginal people living in remote communities have access to subsidised rent and GEH houses where that is available. We want to ensure that workers receive those benefits by working out bush, particularly in health, education, policing, children and families—the government departments that are represented out bush.

This is a subject we could talk a lot about, having listened to the Member for Mulka. The issues about the design of houses, repairs and maintenance and ensuring that houses are put in the correct locations—I took note of what the Member for Mulka said, which is that that some houses were built too close together. It is important that during the planning stage the consultation goes on in the community. The Housing Reference Group plays a strong role in those communities. It is about getting out and talking to the whole community about location, design and what is best for the community.

It is not only just building houses; many communities require the enabling infrastructure. When it comes to roads, power, water and sewerage a lot of planning is needed.

Our government is committed to delivering on the remote housing agreement. We are working towards delivering up to 2,700 homes over the 10-year period. We acknowledge that the homeless rate is still 12 times the national average, but we are doing everything we can with the funding we receive to ensure that housing conditions are improved for everybody living in the bush

We will continue to deliver the $4bn program and engage with the joint steering committee for remote housing Northern Territory to deliver Aboriginal and remote housing. We have made some amendments to the motion; I commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I welcome the amendments and support this important motion—it sounds as though it is supported across the House—calling on the CLP government to fully commit to the $4bn Aboriginal remote housing program and to ensure the target of building 2,700 homes over the next 10 years is met.

As we heard, this program is not just about building houses; it is about providing safe, secure homes for Aboriginal families in remote communities who have been ignored for too long. Safe, stable housing is essential for the wellbeing of any community. It impacts everything: health; education; employment; and, especially, community safety. Overcrowded, inadequate and inappropriate housing in remote Aboriginal communities is a major factor contributing to our health crisis, domestic violence crisis, safety crisis and education crisis.

Without a safe, appropriate place to live we put our most vulnerable people at risk. You cannot get up and go to school if you are living in an overcrowded and inadequate shelter. Having a safe place to live is a basic human right and a foundation for people to live happy healthy lives. If we want to improve safety in these communities, we must address this housing crisis head on.

The NT population comprises around 246,000 people, making up just 1% of the national population; in contrast the NT is the third-largest jurisdiction in terms of land mass. Almost 50% of our population live outside the Darwin area across four urban towns, 73 remote communities, 394 funded homelands of the 632 registered homelands, and 43 town camps.

The target of 2,700 houses is ambitious, but it is necessary. The Territory's housing needs are at crisis level. We are experiencing the highest levels of housing disadvantage and homelessness in the country. Homelessness in the NT is 12 times the national average, and 87% of people experiencing homelessness in the Territory are Aboriginal.

According to the ABS over half of all homes across our remote communities are experiencing severe overcrowding. A staggering 98% of people who are living in overcrowded houses are Aboriginal Territorians. Overcrowding is a form of homelessness and has significant negative impacts on people. Impacts include things like a lack of privacy, increased noise levels and stress, health and wellbeing concerns and food insecurity. It makes it hard for kids who are at school, and it places extreme strain on families. Many of us in this Chamber cannot begin to imagine what it is like living in a severely overcrowded home and just how difficult it is. Access to appropriate housing is critical to addressing inequality and disadvantage. We know this significantly addresses key social determinants and helps provide life-changing opportunities for people.

While supply is our number one housing issue, it is critically important to remember that we need different types of housing; we need appropriate housing to support Aboriginal Territorians across regional and remote communities.

We also desperately need short-stay accommodation options for Aboriginal people. As part of that we need to make sure that our Aboriginal community-controlled sector manages the accommodation and provides the property and tenancy services. Aboriginal people and organisations are best placed to manage Aboriginal tenancies and help keep people safe and not fall into homelessness.

Crisis and short-stay accommodation options for women and children across all regions is urgently needed. This is not just about putting a roof over people's heads; it is about giving families the stability they need to escape cycles of violence and instability. We cannot have a thriving community if people are living in overcrowded homes or in houses that are falling apart. We need better outcomes regarding safety, mental health and community cohesion; secure quality housing will contribute to this.

A key component of the remote housing investment is the focus on growing the Aboriginal community-controlled housing sector. Community control refers to the principle that Aboriginal people and communities have the right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives, such as housing, health and wellbeing.

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) often achieve a better quality of service provision, employ more Aboriginal people and are often preferred over mainstream services, especially in communities, homelands and town camps. The NT Aboriginal community-controlled sector is characterised by smaller, not-for-profit organisations and is driven by local people who are highly knowledgeable and passionate about servicing their communities.

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the NT provide wraparound and integrated services to their housing clients and operate as multi-service operations. Their services often include housing infrastructure repairs and maintenance, primary healthcare and aged-care programs, land and sea ranger programs and construction and civil works.

The Aboriginal community-controlled sector generates local jobs and is the lifeblood of the Territory's remote communities and homelands. Building a strong Aboriginal community-controlled housing sector is the agreed Priority Reform Two commitment from the federal, state and territory governments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Growing the Aboriginal community-controlled sector builds remote economies that provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within their communities and their homelands.

While estimates vary between 6,000 and 10,000 people living on homelands across the Northern Territory, they have not seen any new housing since at least 2015. As the country tries to deal with the national housing crisis Aboriginal families across Northern Territory homelands have been living in a silent and largely invisible housing crisis for almost a decade.

Up until 2015 homelands remained the responsibility of the Commonwealth, with all funding for new housing and repairs and maintenance on homelands provided by the Australian Government. In 2015 the Northern Territory Government agreed to take on full responsibility for the delivery of repairs and maintenance and municipal and essential services to homelands in exchange for $155m cash payment of the remaining municipal and essential services component of Stronger Futures. This saw the Commonwealth relinquish all responsibility for homelands, while the Northern Territory took full responsibility for homeland repairs and maintenance and essential services only.

The NT Government has not constructed any new housing on homelands since 2015. The housing that exists on homelands is often dilapidated. The houses are energy-inefficient hot boxes in the desert—many of which are rusting—and in many cases they are beyond economic repair; that is, the houses are too expensive to repair and are cheaper to knockdown and rebuild.

As part of the recent investment into remote housing in the Northern Territory, the Australian and NT Governments have agreed to provide matched funding of $40m each per annum until 2026–27 for housing repairs and maintenance, municipal and essential services and capital infrastructure on homelands.

This is a welcome and desperately needed investment in the Territory's homelands; however, if the NT Government is serious about creating a safer community for all citizens it must commit to also investing in new housing on homelands. That is why this motion—it sounds like we are all supporting it—calls for the full support of the joint steering committee for remote housing. This committee includes representatives from the NT and Australian governments; the four land councils; and Aboriginal Housing NT, the Territory's Aboriginal housing peak body that represents the Aboriginal community-controlled sector. I was lucky enough to meet with the committee members and gain a good understanding of the work they are doing. They know their communities better than anyone else, and any changes to this agreement should happen only with their full support. We have seen what happens when we make decisions without the involvement of those who will be directly affected by them: the people who know what they need and what will work for their communities.

This motion is not just about building houses; it is about addressing the broader issues of justice, health, education and employment. We cannot continue to let this gap in housing and safety persist. By investing in the Aboriginal community-controlled sector this program is creating opportunities to begin to fix the housing inequity that exists across the Territory; it will create lasting change for these communities.

We need to ensure that these houses are built with Aboriginal say in design and construction and with genuine commitment to build for cultural realities, to prepare for a hotter climate and to support healthy living across generations. We can do that by ensuring this program is fully implemented. This is not just policy; it is about doing what is right for the people of the Northern Territory. Safe homes lead to safer communities, better opportunities and a more just society for all of us.

I am happy to hear that the CLP supports this motion to the full implementation of this $4bn 10-year program to meet the housing target of 2,700 houses across 73 remote communities, and to ensure the joint steering committee for remote housing is fully engaged in any changes to the agreement. I urge the CLP government to commit to reinvesting in new housing on homelands and to work with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector to construct and deliver these new houses.

The time to act on this is now.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I put on the record my thanks to the Member for Gwoja for bringing forward this important motion. It is heartening to hear from all sides of politics about the importance of housing for our remote communities and homelands. As the Member for Mulka highlighted in his speech it is important to ensure our people are out on their country, living a strong, happy, healthy life and practising their culture. Underpinning all that is the need for housing on our homelands.

We support the amendments that the Member for Barkly put forward, to continue to deliver the $4bn of the Aboriginal remote housing program as agreed under the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT.

We support the amendment to work towards delivering up to 2,700 houses over 10 years, consistent with the terms of the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT; and to continue engagement with the joint steering committee for remote housing Northern Territory to deliver Aboriginal housing.

This side of the House supports the amendments put forward because we know the importance of this agreement, and we should not be politicising Aboriginal housing. I commend the minister for agreeing to stick to the agreement of the $4bn for remote Aboriginal housing.

The Northern Territory is vast and diverse. It is home to many vibrant remote communities and homelands that tie into the cultural and social fabric of the people who live here. These communities embody the spirit of resilience and connection to country, but they also face significant challenges, particularly a shortage of safe, secure and appropriate housing. We all understand the challenges that Territorians face today in relation to access to equitable housing. Territory Labor believes that good housing is a right for all Territorians.

However, a lack of housing in remote communities leads to poor social and health outcomes, which affects Territorians no matter where they live. Housing is not just having a roof over one's head; it is also about creating a space where families can thrive, children can study, elders can share their stories and communities can prosper. Having a place to sleep, shelter and raise a family, as well as having personal space is critical for positive social welfare, mental wellbeing and good health in the long term.

Overcrowding continues to be a pressing issue with too many people living under one roof. This strains infrastructure, limits privacy and exacerbates health problems. It impacts education, as children struggle to find a quiet space to learn or sleep; and it affects mental health, as overcrowded living conditions add stress to daily life. Failure to address this crisis over the coming decade will only result in more social dysfunction and dislocation, and poorer health and education outcomes. A number of communities across the Territory say this every day.

Prior to coming to government in 2016 Territory Labor outlined its remote housing agenda with the staple HomeBuild NT program and the Room to Breathe program, an intense investment in expanding the living space, bedrooms and housing available to remote Territorians. In government we made good on the significant and ongoing investment in remote housing, recognising the basic human right to have safe and secure housing. We reduced overcrowding in our remote communities and supported our children and families to thrive.

We have heard this in the Chamber a number of times before. The CLP government has mentioned many times that it wants to tackle crime and address the root causes of antisocial behaviour, especially for young Territorians who are at risk. But it should not be lost on the government that providing safe and adequate housing is where you start.

We are under no illusion about the scale of challenges we face in the Territory. But having access to appropriate housing on country for Aboriginal Territorians has never been more important. We need to ensure that more housing becomes available.

Territory Labor set up the new approach where remote Territorians would be able to make decisions about the investment in increasing the living spaces, bedrooms and housing in their communities. This needs to be continued because there are many benefits of investing in housing. The relationship between poor housing conditions and the negative impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Islander householders is well established.

From a health perspective, better housing conditions ensure better health benefits and wellbeing for occupants. As the Menzies School of Health researchers outlined, overcrowding in housing is a major contributing factor in housing-related health outcomes, including by increasing the transmission of common infectious diseases and parasites.

Overcrowding can be associated with skin-related diseases, such as scabies; respiratory conditions; and other infections that can result in chronic rheumatic heart disease, stunting, blindness, hearing loss and renal failure. Not only can it impact the conditions of the occupants, but an excessive number of people in a house can put undue stress on household facilities, which further constrains health living practices.

The link between health, education and housing is clear. We know that stable housing with the proper amount of people allocated to a house provides younger Territorians the space to study and get a good night's rest. Poor health can be a driver to children missing school. A high rate of illness due to poor housing conditions may lead to lower attendance rates at school. Students who do not attend school regularly are more likely to fall behind their peers and have lower academic performances. They are in turn less likely to finish their schooling, negatively impacting their future employment opportunities.

With a good night's rest, in your own space and own bed, it is easier to get to school the next day. It allows better sleep, leading to a greater ability to focus and achieve one's potential in school. That is why Labor believes it is important that suitable and expanded housing becomes more available to the families—and future generations—who need it. On top of this there is a greater cultural element, which is homes on country, community or homeland. The bush members are aware that this creates and promotes a stronger tie to culture and country. Building safe homes on country allows families to stay on country, aiding in the preservation of languages, traditions and connections.

The former Territory Labor government committed to addressing the challenges outlined, and it aimed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. In delivering this housing investment program the former Territory Labor government understood that, on top of the long-term benefits for community residents,

ongoing construction and local management creates economic empowerment in remote communities. This means more jobs, training and economic opportunities for our remote Territorians.

Since 2016 over 4,000 new houses were built or upgraded by the former Labor government, and we make no apologies about delivering those homes. In Arnhem land—in the Member for Arnhem's electorate, crossing into the Member for Mulka's electorate and partly the Member for Arafura's electorate—almost 1,500 new and upgraded homes were delivered in the last eight years, with more scheduled. In the Big Rivers region 750 new and upgraded homes were delivered. That is the Member for Gwoja's electorate. In the Member for Barkly's region 500 new homes were built or upgraded. In Central Australia about 1,000 homes were delivered. In my electorate of Daly more than 300 homes were delivered in the communities of Belyuen, Kybrook, Nauiyu (Daly River), Emu Point, Peppimenarti and Wadeye.

One personal story reflects the importance of housing in remote communities. It was seeing one of the local decision-making agreements put in place. The Opposition Leader at the time was a signatory of the Green River Aboriginal Corporation Local Decision Making Agreement. I am sure you remember fondly when those board members came to Parliament House. It was a significant day; it was the first local decision-making agreement signed at Parliament House. Chairperson Dr Miriam Rose and some other board members, with community members, came along. The significance of that day meant a lot to the members of the GRAC board and the community members who attended Parliament House.

Usually we would go to the community to sign LDM agreements with the Chief Minister and the minister at the time. The GRAC board wanted to come to Parliament House because they knew the significance of it and wanted to make a statement.

Part of that agreement outlines aspirations from the GRAC community regarding housing. Some of the priorities outlined in the agreement included arrangements for land tenure and future land use planning. The Member for Barkly spoke earlier about the greater need for planning with communities. He was reflecting on the Member for Mulka's speech that some of the houses are too close to one another. There are agreements in place where we have land tenure and future land use planning arrangements.

There is a need for economic development opportunities, local jobs and training that go with housing. This agreement prioritises exploring options for training and job programs for the people of Daly River, including vocational education and training. There are many carpentry courses out there that can be linked to housing, ensuring that the design and housing is part of the package for training local people to get VET certificates and be trained to build their own houses. This is a key part of that.

Planning for future business development and contracting opportunities in areas such as civil road services, aerodrome services, fencing and cultural tourism is another key aspect. Underlining all that, we need good housing if we are looking to venture out creating jobs and having the people who can participate in those jobs. Underpinning all that, part of the agreement was the community health and wellbeing, which focused on service delivery that includes cultural connection to achieve positive health outcomes, especially in the education, health and justice system.

It all comes back to the housing story we have all spoken about today. We need good housing to get a good education, have good health and have good justice outcomes for our people.

This agreement outlined community housing. It looked at planning for long-term strategic housing needs and options to support the Nauiyu community, including involvement in tenders and procurement processes. This is giving the power back to GRAC, which represent all the traditional owners who live at Nauiyu to look at the tenders and procurement processes that happen in their community. Looking at short-term focus on small projects, such as the joint venture contract with the NTG, Room to Breathe—that was signed with Big River Housing.

I have come to know Ian, the contractor. I think the Member for Gwoja also knows him. He is a big advocate for the community. Ian has many local people working for him, building houses. He is also looking at training opportunities. When he leaves that community the local people can own that building company and build their own houses. He is a big advocate of that, and he is very passionate about delivering those outcomes for the community.

I will quickly tell a story of one of the homelands in our region, one that I visited many times before I was a member of parliament. Terry Sams, who lives at Emu Point, was concerned about the conditions of the homelands, as many people who live in homelands across the Northern Territory are. When we had the community Cabinet there when I became a member of parliament; I took the ministers there. Chansey, you

were there with me, as was our Opposition Leader. We were able to get an agreement in place to upgrade some of those houses which had not been upgraded since the early 1990s. Some of those houses have been upgraded and continue to be upgraded. There will be new houses that come along.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr YOUNG: I am sure some people have had enough listening to me, but I will continue on. It is great that those opposite care enough about this important matter regarding housing especially for Aboriginal housing on our communities.

Going back to Emu Point with Terry Sams being the main traditional owner—he talked about the importance of housing. Ministers looked at some of the issues in the community. It was not only housing; it also related to water security, the creche and upgrading the school. I would love to invite the minister to see the school. It has great school attendance. The last time I checked I found out that it is close to 90%.

That is all underpinned by the leadership on the homelands, ensuring that we are investing in our homelands, especially in regard to housing and kids getting a good night's sleep. They are on their own country, practising their culture and speaking their own language. These are all key parts of it, which the Member for Mulka spoke about earlier. The housing upgrades and improvements in housing all underpin that.

We have also seen the people who were not able to live at Emu Point because of the disrepair the houses had been left in by successive governments. This is not to politicise it; it has been this way in Emu Point since the early 1990s. There have now been upgrades, which have allowed many people who had to live in Darwin to come back to live on their country and send their kids to country.

There are success stories out there. There are beautiful communities fighting for better housing. We can work through some of those issues to ensure that our homelands get the housing.

I reiterate what the Member for Mulka said: we need to be more flexible to ensure we get housing upgrades for our homelands.

Last year, or possibly the year before, I had the privilege of going to Wadeye and handing over the keys for a couple of houses to the tenants who live there. One of the tenants, John Lackam, does an amazing job working for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. I was there when he received his house and saw how much he appreciated that moment. I will not guess how old John is, but he was saying that it was the first time he had ever had his own house and space where it will be quiet and he can have his kids and grandkids over. He said, 'This will make it easier for me to get up and go to work in the morning after a good night sleep'.

The other family I handed a key over to that day was Richard and Miriam Dumoo and their young daughter. I will never forget the pride on their faces when we handed over the key. Richard works with Thamarrurr Development Corporation in the civil team. Richard spoke of how proud he is that he has his own place for his kids, where there would be no overcrowding, and he could ensure that his kids would get a good education. He was so proud of that moment; I will never forget it. I still go past to see Richard, who I knew before my time in parliament, and he and his family are appreciative of the new housing in Wadeye.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this important business to the House. It is heartening to see that it does not matter what side of politics you are on, whether it is the Independents or CLP members, we are here in support of ensuring that we deliver on this $4bn agreement for housing in remote communities. We know the importance of housing in our remote communities when it comes to health, education and jobs.

I thank the minister for Infrastructure for answering my question during Question Time that he will be committing to the funding for the road, because that is also an important link. It will bring costs down for materials, and it means they will be able to do jobs in Wadeye. When we are looking at building roads, connecting homelands and building houses on homelands, a key part of that in the region of Wadeye is that part of the road. Without trying to politicise this issue, it was Gary Higgins, the CLP member at the time, who helped get the agreement in place over 10 years. It was always meant to be a staged approach. I am not here to try to beat my chest to say that I did it; it was always a staged approach. Gary Higgins completed the first section; it was around 20 kilometres. I came in, and another section of around 17 kilometres was completed at Saddle Creek crossing, close to Daly River. Now the community of Wadeye has spoken of the importance of that road; Gary Higgins also understood its importance.

I thank the minister for committing to that funding in Question Time, because people were rightly concerned. There have been many fatalities out there. The road allows people on homelands to access education in Palumpa and Wadeye, for example. It will also bring health outcomes, with people able to access the health clinic, and there will be economic development outcomes.

The minister said something about me dragging people in here. I want to make it clear that I did not drag anyone in here, they brought the petition on themselves. They knew what was going on, and they instigated the petition. They were upset when I spoke to them about if afterwards.

Mr YAN (Housing Construction): Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition for agreeing to the minor amendments we brought forward on the notice given by the Member for Gwoja. They were simple amendments, because the way it had been worded was probably not quite correct.

We are committed to delivering that housing project in the bush, and I know the importance of housing, along with all our bush members in this Chamber. Appropriate housing is the key to social and economic outcomes in the bush. There is serious overcrowding in some of our communities.

The people I represent have welcomed additional housing in Finke and Santa Teresa. Atitjere has done okay, and we are still waiting to see a few in Engawala. I know they are on program at Titjikala, and they are happy with their additional housing.

I will touch on what the Member for Johnston spoke about regarding homelands. I know it has been difficult to deliver services on homelands, but there is one positive I have seen in the last few months. It was the implementation of our HomeGrown and FreshStart programs. Some people on homelands are applying for loans for the first time ever, to build and own their own house on their homeland; that is what this grant allows them to do. They have the ability to get tenure on the land through the land councils. With that tenure they are able to apply for a home loan and, for the first time ever, own their own houses. That is great to see.

I am glad the Member for Gwoja raised the style of houses when he was the minister responsible for this, because I have been raising the same thing as the minister responsible for constructing the housing through Logistics and Infrastructure. When I talk to people in the bush, some tell me that they want the standard three-bedroom, one-bathroom house they see everybody else in, but there is a growing trend among communities to want something different. They want something that fits them and their community, rather than the cookie-cutter approach that has been put in place over many years.

I am hearing from people out the bush that there is a distinct lack of housing for single men and single mums with babies. We have to look at this in a cultural respect, because when young men go through ceremony, they cannot live in certain places. The way housing is set up at the moment is that they are forced to live in places they should not. We have a distinct lack of available housing for young single men. I have asked the department to look at how we can best deliver for the people in the bush to make sure we have appropriate housing for people and that it suits the needs of those communities.

The department is doing quite a bit of work. We have seen significant delays in delivering in the bush, particularly when it comes to developing land and releasing lots, so there are things that can be done better. We are strengthening the relationship with the land councils through the department to better work through those issues, so that when we come into a community the subdivision is ready to go, all the approvals are done, there are places for the contractors to go and set-down areas have been put in place. That minimises delays and maximises efficiency, resulting in the money we have been given by the federal government, alongside our own, being spent to its best. We are not wasting any money on delivering.

Over many years, through my old job, I have seen the social issues with poor housing outcomes, whether it is in town or the bush, which we are specifically talking about. We want people to be living back on community and to have thriving communities out in the bush. To do that we need appropriate housing and economic investment in those communities. We need to foster a future for communities where they can leverage off their country and assets to determine their own economic future. Housing is part of that, but the larger economic part of it needs to be done as well. That is another piece of work I would support and which we as a government need to work towards.

I welcome and support this agreement, which was co-signed by all the land councils and the Northern Territory Government. I will be working hard through my department to deliver on those outcomes for Aboriginal communities because it is important to get that housing delivered on time, while listening to what the people in the bush want and ensuring that we deliver it appropriately.

I have seen so many times—other bush members will have seen the same—a house that has been put on a lot but not in the correct way, so that the biggest wall is facing west with no verandah, so the poor people get cooked in the summer. Some of the earthworks and civil works have not been done properly, so that when it rains the houses become a river, with the water flowing in their front door and out their back door. More work needs to be done to make sure that appropriate civil works are done and we deliver houses in the bush in an appropriate way.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this motion. I support delivering the housing program.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I support the motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Gwoja.

As all bush members in the Chamber know, housing is the number one priority. Just ask any Indigenous person from the community and they will tell you. What is the number one issue? It is housing.

Better housing delivers outcomes for remote Territorians; it is that simple. Good, safe housing is the foundation for healthy, happy families and is fundamental to pursuing education, employment and economic opportunities. I see that for families who have moved into new homes—their family life improves, kids sleep better and go to school the next day, health outcomes improve and people are happier.

We know the challenges that the Territory and rest of the nation face regarding access to equitable housing, but these challenges are particularly bad in our remote regions. A lack of housing in remote communities leads to poor social health outcomes, which affects all Territorians no matter where they live. For example, if an Indigenous person is on dialysis and is moved into a major centre, that elder is normally followed by a whole family, so you have 20 people move into the suburb. That is another issue.

Overcrowded homes contribute to preventable illnesses, like rheumatic heart disease and respiratory infections. Having a place to sleep with shelter to raise a family and personal space is critical for positive social welfare, mental wellbeing and good health. The Labor opposition believes that good housing is fundamental to human rights for all Territorians, especially for those in our remote communities. That is what guided the last government.

As an Aboriginal MLA living in Maningrida I am immensely proud of the strides we made as a government to bolster housing construction; that is still happening today. I was the assistant minister for housing and construction; we took over the reins of a system that had only managed to erect two houses. I am glad this government is continuing with our 2,700 houses in remote regions.

From 2016 to 2024 the Labor government worked with the Commonwealth to deliver $2.1bn in remote housing investment. As of July this year that built 1,440 new homes and 1,841 homes upgraded. Not only that, with the help of the federal government we locked in a further $4bn investment over 10 years for remote housing, as the Member for Barkly mentioned earlier. The impact of these additional houses will transform the life of these communities. These projects benefit more than just the family who moves into the homes. They create jobs, support local business and build skills within the communities. They inject life into regional economies.

I see many great examples of local companies hiring apprentices and trainees who roll out of the housing program. For example, in Gunbalanya we have DICE, which is a mainstream building construction company. It has partnered with Demed Aboriginal Corporation, and they get the Indigenous participants, who are on the dole work program so they can get into a full-time job. That is what we should all be aiming for.

This money will mean more of these stories—jobs and opportunities for young Aboriginal people. The Members for Barkly and Namatjira are big supporters of building in the bush. I look to them as ministers in the new CLP government to deliver and continue with this work.

As a government we also invested in homelands. Our homelands program delivered $100m in federal funding for housing and essential infrastructure. In my region of Maningrida there are 37 outstations next door to Mulka, and there are more over the border.

Additionally, we look forward to receiving a further three years of funding for homelands—$4m per annum from the NTG and $4m per annum from the federal government—for repair and maintenance. More needs to be done. This is the largest-ever investment into homelands. As the opposition we will ensure that these agreements are honoured; remote Territorians deserve this.

The other part of the funding agreement is the joint steering committee; it is work that sets direction for a housing rollout, ensuring buy-in from Aboriginal stakeholders and a level of local decision-making. The joint steering committee is the main forum for monitoring the outcomes of the National Partnership for Remote Housing NT and JSC. The JSC ensures the funding is spent transparently and equitably prioritising the areas most in need. It also promotes local decision-making and Indigenous employment. Maintaining the partnership is crucial for the success of the remote housing initiative. The JSC consists of representatives from the Australian Government, NT Government, Northern Land Council, Central Land Council, Tiwi Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council and Aboriginal Housing NT.

The work of JSC is crucial in ensuring reduction in overcrowding; the role of land councils in the agreement's governance; transparency; the delivery of urgent upgrades to housing; a co-design approach is taken for the long-term vision for NT homelands; and ensuring, to the maximum extent possible, works are delivered by local Territorians and businesses.

By including all these parties in one body, the JSC is able to create local co-leadership and ownership of both the programs and the directions to fund. The previous government did this so that no government could decide to direct the funds and benefit itself over the next few years. The JSC ensures that the places that need the housing, and are ready to receive it, get it.

The opposition firmly believes that supporting the continuation of JSC is right. We call on the government to also commit to it. I am happy that the Member for Barkly mentioned it earlier.

Although the previous government did a great deal to improve our remote housing, much work needs to be done.

One of the main reasons for the incidence of antisocial behaviour, not improving health outcomes and people spilling onto the main centres in the Northern Territory is the result of overcrowding in communities. As an Aboriginal MLA I am trying to do good for our community. I always tell my Tiwi and Arnhem Land constituents to try to make their way home and get out of streets of Darwin, but the housing issue is the main issue.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I am mindful that we have two minutes left. I would love your indulgence to put the question. I thank honourable members for their contributions on this important issue for all Territorians, particularly those living in regional and remote areas as we continue that investment.

It is heartening to hear, and we thank the government for its bipartisan support, even with the amendment. We are happy to accept such an amendment. We take this opportunity to recognise that level of bipartisanship in this parliament.

We encourage the Housing minister to reach out to the federal Liberal Coalition and ensure that it will honour this commitment if there was to be any change. Going into an election, it is important to get these commitments for our Territorians in regional and remote areas because the previous elected member who shared the last name of the Northern Territory Senator—their price was not right, and it only built two houses in the last two years of its term in government. We never want to see that again.

I have confidence that the Northern Territory Housing minister, Minister Edgington, will not repeat that mistake. I look forward to seeing those beautiful homes. I might even try to get some selfies of the beautiful homes that you hand over.

Nevertheless, it was a great opportunity to talk about this tonight …

Mr Edgington: I hope we do not have to send you to Privileges.

Mr PAECH: I will see about that.

We support the amendment as agreed to. It is a great sign of bipartisanship on this issue. I put the motion as amended to the parliament.

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

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion, as amended agreed to.

PAPERS TABLED

Members' Quarterly Fuel Transaction Report – Quarter 3, July to September 2024

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Members' Quarterly Fuel Transaction Report, Quarter 3, July to September 2024.

Members' Quarterly Fuel Transaction Report – Quarter 4, October to December 2024

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Members' Quarterly Fuel Transaction Report, Quarter 4, October to December 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I will speak quickly about my community in Johnston. Like all members in this Chamber, a lot of my time is working to help address problems in my community, but today I will talk about the fantastic things that are happening.

Last week our office had the privilege of hosting a meeting that brought together representatives from the Mindil Aces soccer club, Darwin City Councillors and the dedicated group known as Friends of Bagot Park. Cynthia, Ed, Peter, Cliff, James and Morgan all talked about their ideas for the future of this park. A lot of people do not know where Bagot park is; if you are ever driving on Bagot Road on a Friday night you will see an area that it is full of people of all ages playing soccer. At other times you will see families and older people walking, people using the velodrome and people walking dogs. However, we know that this amazing space could offer much more for our community.

At the meeting this group of people talked about their ideas for the future of the park. This is a great example of grassroots action because these are people and organisations who play, work, plant trees and look after the park, and this was the first time that they met together. We discussed how we could better share and use the park. I am thrilled to report that this discussion was full of many exciting ideas. This meeting is an example of how we are trying to work in Johnston with the entire community to find ways to bring people together to address the problems they face.

We are looking at how we can work with people to find ways to share and make the most of our public spaces. In Bagot Park this is about creating an inclusive environment where people of all generations, cultures and backgrounds can come together to use the space in different ways. There is an incredible Bagot Park Master Plan, with ideas for an intergenerational playground and reflexology garden and a community meeting space. We came up with heaps of new ideas, like a Bagot bush dance, which you will all be welcome to come along to; a boot sale; ways to have shared meals; and a Bagot walkers group. I look forward to working alongside the community, local government and our local sporting club to turn these ideas into reality so that this place in our electorate can become a central point of connection for us all.

We are looking at ways to bring people together to address the problems they face. Last year we held our first community town hall. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring people together to talk about what matters to them in their community and what they want to happen in the future. This year we have planned quarterly town hall community meetings across the electorate, with one in each suburb. Each meeting will focus on one key community issue, which will bring people together to discuss and address topics that are important to the people we represent.

Everyone is welcome at these meetings. It is a chance for us to put our commitment to doing politics differently into action by being present, listening and engaging in meaningful dialogue with the people we are there to represent. It is not one-way talk; it is a way for people to work together on the issues they think are important. There is so much wisdom in our community, and we are excited to create spaces where people are supported to work together, build connection and strength and find solutions to the issues that they face.

Our community, like so much of the Territory, is also full of wonderful seniors. I am almost one of them! We are happy to have so many of them come into the office, sometimes seeking help and sometimes offering to help; bringing us plants for the office; bringing cake; coming to our seniors painting group or other groups that use our community room; or sometimes just to have a chat and a cup of tea. After one of those cups of

tea with a chance encounter between two people who had not met before, we realised there is an opportunity to do more for many of the people in our community who are isolated.

We launched our weekly seniors coffee mornings, which have already sparked heaps of new ideas, such as a writing group, a computer skills sharing session and much more. Someone will teach me how to swim; I am pretty excited about that. It has become a wonderful space for people to connect, share and build community. We look forward to seeing that grow.

Last year at our end-of-year seniors morning tea, one of these amazing seniors stood up and invited others in the electorate to join with her to set up a seniors advisory group for Johnston to guide our work to keep connecting with seniors—many of whom are isolated but want to connect and have so much to offer. This is very much driven from the community. This person stood up and said, 'How can we help our local member to work with us to make this a place where we all want to be?'

We are here for our whole community. Part of our vision is making sure that everyone in the community has a voice in what matters to them. In addition to the seniors advisory group we are planning to establish a young people's advisory group for our electorate so that we can give real voice and power to young people. They can tell us about the issues that are affecting them and their ideas to address them. We can work with and support them. We are working with young people to help us design that in a way that will be meaningful for them.

We have launched a speechwriting competition for young people in our electorate. They have been invited to write short speeches for me to read out as part of my adjournment speech. This is a fantastic opportunity to bring the voices of our young people into this House and give them a platform to express their thoughts on the issues that matter to them. Stay tuned. I cannot wait to read their speeches and share their perspectives with all of you. It is a small but meaningful way to ensure that young people feel seen, heard and valued in the political process.

I am active and present in the electorate. Once a week I sit outside a local shop, as inspired by a previous longstanding Independent member, Gerry Woods. He told me that was the best thing he ever did, so I have taken that on board. Each week I sit outside a different set of local shops, which is great. It helps me to stay in touch with what matters to people and local businesses. We have lots of chats. I get to check out interesting local shops in our electorate. I am finding out which ones have the best hot chips—my favourite food—and which ones have the special drinks, as my youngest son would say.

I am at Rapid Creek Markets every Sunday. It is no secret that I love those markets. I have been going every Sunday for 30 years. I have watched many of the stallholders grow up from tiny children to now running their own stalls with their own kids helping out. This is a truly thriving local economy. It is a chance for me to hear firsthand what is happening and what is important to people. These conversations remind me why I love my job.

Last week I put up a board about what was coming up in parliament this week. So many people came to me to ask questions and talk to me about it. They wanted to make sure they knew what was on the agenda. This is a way that I can bring the concerns of the community into the Chamber with me.

We have heaps of community gardens in our electorate, which are fantastic. Two are at schools—the Alawa school farm and Jingili Primary School. We are working with two other schools—Anula and Moil—to support them to set up community gardens as well. Like some of the other members we heard from today I love getting my hands dirty in the community gardens. I look forward to supporting that project over the coming months.

We are working on a way to connect people. One of the fallouts from the Corrections crisis is that the Corrections community service is no longer able to come to mow lawns. I am sure that other people are experiencing this in their electorate. They were helping seniors and those who are not able to look after their gardens. Many people are struggling throughout the Wet Season to manage fast-growing lawns and gardens that become unsafe quickly. The Corrections community support work program was fantastic, but because of the crisis in Corrections it is currently not available.

We have decided to start a community mutual aid gardening program, and we are linking people across the electorate who want to help others with the people who need help. We have started with a community lawn mowing program. We heard from the Members for Blain and Drysdale, who are mowing lawns in their electorate, and the Member for Fong Lim who shared his aspiration of never having to mow another lawn in

his life. But for us it is not just about mowing lawns; it is about fostering a sense of community and connecting people to help each other.

What we are doing in Johnston is more than just addressing immediate concerns; it is about creating a culture of support, connection and collaboration. It is about ensuring that our community members—whether young or old, new to this area or long-standing—feel they have a place here and a space where they can connect, share and thrive. It is about finding a way to do politics differently and to put people's voices first.

I express my deepest gratitude to the people of Johnston for putting their trust in me to represent them. It is an honour and a privilege, and I take the responsibility seriously. I look forward to continuing to work with them to build a stronger, more connected and more inclusive community.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, every parliamentary sitting I will share some of the great news stories that come from the mighty electorate of Gwoja; there are many good stories to tell.

I will focus on two wonderful stories and acknowledgements. I acknowledge a young woman in Gwoja who lives in Kaltukatjara community (Docker River), Joyleen Butler. Joyleen is the first person from the beautiful community of Kaltukatjara (Docker River) to graduate from high school in over a decade.

After spending two years at boarding school in Perth, Joyleen returned to Docker River to work as a youth support worker and is giving back to her community in such a meaningful way. Joyleen is an incredible role model for so many in the community, showing that dreams can come true. We are so proud of the young woman that Joyleen has become. Her journey is important. It has been supported by her family, and I give a big shout-out to my big *yaye*, her big sister, Veronica Reid. Veronica has supported Joyleen through difficult and happy times, and she helped her come back to work for her community.

Docker River is an amazing community full of great people. I look forward to seeing the incredible work that Joyleen Butler will do in her local community. As always, I will be happy to support her future endeavours.

I will go across the great electorate of Gwoja and pull up at the beautiful community of Yuendumu to acknowledge my beautiful grandmother, Ormay Gallagher, who is being recognised for her 10 years of service at the Yuendumu School, which is an amazing achievement. Nana Ormay has been a quality Warlpiri educator for over 10 years, supporting the school, students and families; developing the curriculum; and being involved in bilingual education. Next month we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of bilingual education at Yuendumu School. That is another amazing achievement.

Nana Ormay has worked so hard over those years. She has cared for and loved every *yapa* in our community of Yuendumu. She has cared for *kardiya* kids, who have come with parents who work with the school, and she has developed important Warlpiri resources not just for Yuendumu but for Nyirripi, Lajamanu and Yuelamu. That is amazing.

I celebrate the amazing contributions that those two outstanding Territorians from the bush have made and are making every day in Gwoja.

I also raise an area of concern. The ABC this week reported on Minister Hersey's education reform. Whilst I do not agree with the education reform that Minister Hersey has introduced, it was in the headlines and people were able to read the story. We all need to make a stand, because the standard you walk past or scroll past on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or whatever platform is the standard that you accept. As parliamentarians and people in the community others look to for leadership, we should not accept the horrific comments we see on social media. We must never accept racial, hateful or derogatory comments that are not constructive in any way, shape or form.

Whether or not people agree with the policy we are developing or the initiatives we are rolling out, there is no need for that level of harm to be caused in our community. Our friends and family members look to us, as do community members. We have a role to be leaders in that space.

I pulled up the ABC because a comment on the story about school truancy and issuing fines was made by Dave Quinlan, who referred to Aboriginal people as people who needed a zookeeper. In no way, shape or form is that helpful, bridging the divide or helping our community move forward together. It is purely designed to divide people.

In no way is that supportive of, or not supportive of, the minister's policies. It has nothing to do with them, but people feel they have the right to say that. No-one has the right to be a bigot or a racist. You can be

constructive and informed, absolutely, but there is no need to get in the gutter and refer to people as animals or that they need a zookeeper rather than a truancy officer. It is appalling.

I pulled up that person and the ABC. If you cannot be comfortable that, when you go to bed at night or leave work, leaving your social media unmoderated, there will not be comments of hate on there, turn off the comments for a few hours. Comments like that invite other people to be just as hateful, cruel and unconstructive; it further divides our community.

We all have a role. As members of parliament we post things all the time that encourage people to have a debate, but we must make sure that is done in a polite and respectful manner. I have decided that when people make such disgusting, racist, bigoted comments on social media, inciting people to hate, I will screenshot them, bring it into parliament and table it so that they are on the record forever and people will know who they are. The Territory is small; sometimes the people who make hateful comments are employed by the organisations they are being critical of, and they are racially targeting. That is not okay.

I am not saying, by any means, that it is in one organisation or another—organisations, companies and businesses—we all have a role to play in working together to overcome racism and discrimination because it comes in all shapes and forms. It is not just targeted at Aboriginal people; it is people living with a disability, and it is about sexual orientation, religious views and aspirations that may not align with the other person. We cannot allow that behaviour to go unmoderated because that allows hate to be perpetuated.

I hope we do not continue to see comments like that because no-one in the community deserves it. People need to be reminded that if they want to be a keyboard warrior and be hateful there are consequences.

It is a timely reminder for everyone—I am not directing that at anyone in this Chamber; please do not think I am—to have those conversations when we hear people in the community or see a comment. Do not just scroll or walk past it. Have a conversation with someone about it to say, ‘Hey, that is not okay’. It hurts a lot of people in the community, and we can all do better on this.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I will again mention, because it is an important day for the people from the Thamarrurr region who put in the effort to come here to present me with a petition brought on by the community, that the people from Thamarrurr had heard that funding was potentially being cut to their road. Rightfully, they had serious concerns about what that would mean for their regional.

The Thamarrurr Development Corporation called to ask if I had heard anything; at that time I had not. I was quite shocked to hear about this because the 2024–25 budget allocated $60m to Port Keats Road for upgrades.

To paint the picture, I put the question to the minister, I believe, in October. The minister did not answer the question but kind of fluffed about—they are looking at their budget books, ‘We will divest money here and there, so I do not really have an answer for you, Member for Daly, but I will get back to you and will put it on notice’.

Then we came to the next sittings at the end of November. Minister Yan had to fly to Canberra, so those questions were put to the Chief Minister. The question again was asked, ‘Has the funding been cut? Has it been pushed aside or been put elsewhere? What is going on with Port Keats Road? The people in this region—the fifth largest community in the Northern Territory—have concerns that the funding has been cut.’ The Chief Minister was not too sure; she was fluffing about and did not answer the question. At the end of Question Time she said, ‘I will put that question on notice’.

During that process, Thamarrurr Development Corporation had written to the minister and the Chief Minister asking for an explanation, and they still had not received a response. So we come to today. The community decided to submit a petition. I said, ‘Great idea; I am happy to support this in any way.’ The community put a petition to Parliament House which spoke of the importance of funding for Port Keats Road.

Today over 600 people were recognised as having signed that petition, but I know that close to 800 people put their name to it. With the low literacy rates we have in Wadeye, some of the people who put their name to it were not counted because they had not signed a bit of the paper. Overall, the Department of the Legislative Assembly did a great job of putting it together. I think it was roughly recognised as 600-plus people, but I know from the document I have that it was more like 800-plus. They were not just from Wadeye but the whole region.

Today people have decided, 'Dheran, you are our representative; we want to come to you. We want to present you the petition on the stairs of Parliament House.' We anticipated that 40 to 50 people would come to Parliament House today. My headcount was closer to 100 people who came because they know the significance of this road. Three dance groups from Wadeye—Djanba, Lirrga and Wangga—handed me this petition, with all the signatories, on the steps of Parliament House. They wanted to ensure that the government knew the importance of this infrastructure to Wadeye. I then tabled this in parliament today.

We know what this critical infrastructure means for the people of Wadeye. In talking about lowering the cost of living and food security, this is vital to ensuring we upgrade roads so that people are not cut off. Sometimes during the Wet Season people in homelands must get food in via helicopter. This will alleviate the pressures for those communities.

This road infrastructure will help economic and business development and growth in Wadeye. There are communities wanting to start tourism ventures; some have started fish farming and are looking at oysters. This will be a key part of that. The Member for Goyder knows Tracey from TDC and has heard it all before; he knows the importance of this. I can see him nodding his head.

Mr Mackay: Agriculture is the future!

Mr YOUNG: He is saying yes to agriculture. He agrees with me.

It is not just a road; it is more important than that. It is livelihood for people out there, connecting people to jobs, creating economic development opportunities for people and giving people access to their homelands to create the tourism ventures that I mentioned, for example, or the fish farming that just started at Fossil Head.

Mr Maley: It is a pity you did not build it.

Mr YOUNG: I heard the Deputy Chief Minister interject. I am not trying to politicise this issue. I have said on many occasions that Gary Higgins—a CLP member—came in with a staged approach over 10 years. When I was in, we did the Saddle Creek bridge road. The next section was the Palumpa to Port Keats road, and those opposite decided to cut the funding. People are not silly out there; they know. People are patient and have been waiting decades.

Mr Maley interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: Deputy Chief Minister, you should stop disrespecting the people of the Thamarrurr region. All he is doing it disrespecting those people, and they are not silly; they will see this.

Mr Maley: Tell them the truth!

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, please remain silent. Give the member some respect.

Mr YOUNG: I thank the minister; as I said, it is not about politics. The minister answered the question and said:

> *The … government will honour this project. No, the funding has not been pulled, and yes, the CLP government will deliver this project because it is a federally funded program.*

There are still a couple of questions about that. He has said that it is 80–20 split with the federal government; is the CLP government still committed to its 20%? When will the project be ready to be delivered? I know it was ready to go to procurement at the end of last year. We will wait to hear those answers.

I again thank the members from the Thamarrurr region for delivering this important petition to me on the stairs of Parliament House.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.