

Legislative Assembly
of the Northern Territory

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Fong Lim

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Fong Lim be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today due to illness.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Photographers in Chamber

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have given permission for a photographer from the Office of the Chief Minister to be present in the Chamber during the presentation of the Chief Minister's ministerial report this morning.

VISITORS
McKillop Catholic College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 8 students from the McKillop Catholic College accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I wish you a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Two Years of Declan's Law

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I will deliver the Ministerial Report on Two Years of Declan's Law, notified on 14 October 2026.

Madam Speaker, tomorrow marks two years since our CLP government passed the Declan's law legislative package as part of our reducing crime package that we took to the 2024 election. I acknowledge Declan Laverty's mother, Samara, who joins us in the gallery again today to mark this two-year anniversary, just as she sat with us in 2024 to see these reforms come through the parliament.

Samara, you endured something that no parent should ever had to go through and you honour us again today with your presence. It is a testament to the love for your son Declan that you have fought so strongly for reform to the Northern Territory's legal system and beyond. You have undoubtedly made our community safer.

On behalf of all Territorians, thank you for your strength and courage and your relentless advocacy to drive these reforms through in memory of Declan. Declan's tragic death in March 2023 marked a turning point for the Northern Territory. It was the moment when Territorians said, 'Enough', and went to the ballot box to demand a different approach.

Declan was just 20 years old and entering the prime of his life, his happiest years, when he was murdered at work. Declan's death shocked and horrified all Territorians, particularly because the man who killed him was on bail for violent prior offending and had an extensive criminal history. This appalling crime exposed a broken bail system that continually failed our communities and families.

It exposed a weak, reckless and harmful justice system that was too often on the side of offenders rather than on the side of victims. That system was shaped under the previous Labor government, in which now the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Gwoja both served as Attorneys-General.

Declan's law has become far bigger than a piece of legislation. Declan's law has become a legacy, and Declan's legacy is a safer Territory for all of us.

Community safety is our government's highest priority. We have shown Territorians through our actions that we have consistently and deliberately taken steps since coming to government two years ago. Safe communities are the foundation of everything we value in the Territory, including strong families, thriving businesses, vibrant towns and the freedom and dignity to live and work in peace.

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Our first priority on coming to government in 2024 was to introduce debate and urgently pass our reducing crime package. Eight weeks into the first sittings, we delivered on our promises to overhaul the justice system by giving police and the courts the powers they needed to prevent crime and keep our community safe. These laws included our stronger bail laws and wanding powers under Declan's law—Declan's law does both—minimum mandatory sentences for assaults on workers; new offences for ram raids and posting and boasting online; lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10 years of age; and additional powers to tackle nuisance public drinking in public.

This reform package sent the strongest possible signal to the community that we heard their message of the 2024 election and that enough was enough. It shows that our government had no higher priority than community safety. I am proud to report that our reforms are driving crime down and making our communities safer. Nowhere are these results more clearly demonstrated than under Declan's law.

Declan's law has slowed the revolving door of bail. Refusals of police bail are up by 55%. Over the last 12 months 10,882 people have been refused bail compared with 7,000 in 2024. This means that more people accused of serious offences are being kept out of our communities in secure remand centres where they belong. Those that are out on a bail are offending less. Since Declan's law was passed offending by people on bail has also fallen by 23% and defending by young people on bail has fallen by 50%.

This means that we have less dangerous people out on bail causing harm in our communities and when people are bailed they are causing less harm in our communities. Our laws are working and the offender apologists hate it, so much so that they are challenging our bail laws in the High Court. We are defending our right to make laws that meet our community's expectations in the High Court because we are not afraid to stand our ground on behalf of the people who put us here.

Another major part of Declan's Law was the significant reforms to combating knife crime—something that I know is so important to you, Samara. Declan's Law gave police easier and widely expanded wanding powers so that they can detect knives and edged weapons before they are used, including wanding on public transport and even in our schools.

Since those powers came in police have removed 413 weapons from our streets, with more than 250 of those weapons being knives or edged weapons taken out of circulation before they could ever have been used and saving countless lives and people from being victims of crime.

Police have scanned more than 40,000 people, demonstrating the proactive measures we are taking to keep Territorians safe. As a result, knife crime is also falling Territory-wide. Since Declan's law, assaults, robberies and murders involving a knife or an edged weapon are down by 12%. There is much more work to do and we will not take a backward step as we unwind Labor's crime crisis.

Offences are going backwards under our CLP government. There is much more work to do and we are committed to staying the course. Law and order remain our number one priority. It is conclusive and inescapable that there was a crime crisis for eight years under Labor and now in just two years it is coming down under a CLP government.

Under Labor, total offences were up by 40% and in just two years they are down by 10% under the CLP. Domestic violence-related assaults were up by 80% under Labor and they are down by 12% under the CLP. Assaults were up by 60% under Labor and they are down by 6% under the CLP. House break-ins were up by 60% under Labor and they are down by 27% under the CLP.

There are close to 4,000 less victims of crime and 10,000 less offences under a CLP government. Every reduction in the crime statistics represents a Territorian who did not have to become a victim of crime nor suffer its traumatising and often life-altering consequences. There is more to do to ensure the safe and secure communities that all Territorians deserve, but we have shown Territorians that we have what it takes to get the job done. Our commitment remains firm.

I take great pride in saying that Territorians have the greatest police force in the country. To show our gratitude with actions not words, last September we secured the strongest pay deal in two decades for our police, after close work and consultation with the association. This ensures that our police family are the highest paid police in the country, with annual salary increases over the four-year period and existing entitlements locked in.

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We also backed our police with the powers they need to do their job safely and effectively. We have graduated two squads of our brand-new police public safety officer program, the biggest reform to policing in a generation. They are out there now strengthening that high-visibility community policing and targeting antisocial behaviour in our communities. Police have issued more than 440 infringement notices for public drinking and tipped out 1,300 litres of alcohol which would have otherwise fuelled antisocial behaviour in public spaces.

There are positive results from our reducing-crime package from two years ago.

The share of custodial sentences of those who assault workers has risen from 47% to 53%. For those who assault police and emergency workers, the number receiving a custodial sentence has increased from 58% to 65%. Since we created Australia's first ramraid offences, 44 offenders have been charged with 88 ramraid offences, with almost 80% of proven offences ending in detention.

Creating safer communities cannot be left to just our police and laws alone; it requires all government agencies to work together to tackle the root causes of crime so that we can deliver the safe communities that Territorians expect. We are determined as a government to address the root causes of crime to prevent people from entering a life of crime in the first place.

That is why we passed our Every Child Matters legislation in July, the most important changes to child protection laws since their introduction.

It is why we are focused on making sure that kids are getting to school, getting a good education and building their foundations for a happy and promising future. We want every child in school getting their best start in life and not being in trouble on our streets. It is why our Circuit Breaker Program is operating in every region, helping at-risk youths stay on the right path. Since December 2024 more than 700 people—young people and their families—have gone through the program with 269 family responsibility agreements in place.

That is why we have invested in rehabilitation pathways through Corrections with our work camps, boot camps, employment pathways, rehabilitation and therapeutic support. Young people exiting the justice system have strong foundations and supports to build the rest of their lives on.

Tomorrow marks two years since this Assembly passed Declan's law and our reducing-crime package. In this time we have delivered stronger laws and backed our police every step of the way. We have kept dangerous people off our streets and away from communities, taken hundreds of dangerous weapons out of the community and given the police, courts and our Corrections system the powers, resources and infrastructure they need to help support a safer Territory.

We know that there is much more work to do and our government has no higher priority than to keep all Territorians safe. Everyone deserves to live and work in dignity and security.

Declan's legacy is that Territorians will be able to enjoy what he was denied, safe communities and a brighter future. Our government continues to honour Declan's memory and we continue our work to reduce crime and create safer communities.

Thank you, Samara, for your tireless advocacy, and thank you for being here to mark this occasion.

I move that the report be noted.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for her ministerial report and acknowledge the tragic death of Declan Laverty three-and-a-half years ago.

I acknowledge Samara in the Chamber with us today and her bravery in speaking out about her son's tragic death.

Something that the Chamber all agrees on is that every person deserves to be safe in our community. This is a fundamental right for every Territorian. No-one should have their safety threatened at home, work or school or on the street. Any person who goes down the path of offending should face consequences and be held accountable for their actions.

People should also be given the opportunity to change their behaviour and become contributing members of our community. Punitive measures alone will not achieve that, and they will not make our community safer

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in the long run if that is all that the community is focused on. It will only keep the revolving door to our prison systems spinning.

This is not just our position; it is the position of very senior police, including former police commissioners from across Australia who we spent time speaking with about community safety. We did this to learn from their experiences to better understand how we make our communities stronger and safer for the benefit of all Territorians no matter where they live.

What we have heard consistently is that increasing punitive measures need to be met with corresponding rehabilitative measures that support people to get back on track to address their substance abuse issues and to ultimately change their behaviour. These approaches must work hand in hand. They must have a similar level of investment and focus if we are to make our community truly safer.

For some people, crime and antisocial behaviour remains a significant issue. We are hearing from people in places like Karama, Palmerston and Katherine, where people remain very concerned about the level of crime that they are experiencing. Ultimately, our position is that everyone who does the wrong thing should face consequences. Further to that, we believe without investing in crime preventative measures, without putting focus and effort into rehabilitation and better pathways, we will make our communities less safe.

Crime prevention starts in the classroom, in health clinics, in housing, and in supporting frontline workers to do their job well and effectively. Crime prevention means improving the way our systems, services and society respond to Territorians and their needs. If they are truly serious about long-term community safety, we strongly urge the CLP government to invest in prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation to fund frontline community organisations are dealing with the aftermath of family dysfunction and poverty every day.

There is never an excuse, but understanding the reasons is critical. We know that Aboriginal Territorians are over-represented in our justice system, and that needs to be addressed at all levels. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement was designed to do exactly that. Yet despite the CLP signing up to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement when they were in opposition—a bipartisan agreement which was signed in 2021—and acknowledging its potential to reduce offending and imprisonment rates of Aboriginal Territorians, the CLP has since walked away from this agreement when coming to government.

The CLP cut funding to law and justice groups despite promising to establish 20 of them by next year in 2027. There are now only five operating across the Northern Territory, with no guarantee of ongoing funding, despite early successes that they are having in turning people's lives around. Reduced year-on-year funding for the Aboriginal Justice Unit, is further dismantling the support for the Aboriginal justice programs.

Initiatives out of the AJA, like law and justice groups and community courts, have proven effective in achieving their aims of bringing justice and supporting community safety. Why do I raise this point? It is because nine out of 10 prisoners in our male prison system are Aboriginal and eight out of 10 women in our prison system are Aboriginal women. They have demonstrated that they can reduce recidivism with law and justice groups and get people back onto a better path and out of the justice system.

Proudly in my electorate of Arnhem, since the Groote law and justice rehabilitation plan commenced in 2019, there has been a distinct downward trend in overall crime committed on Groote Eylandt by both adults and children. The community justice group and the Anindilyakwa healing centre clearly shows that when justice is led by community it leads to better outcomes. This program clearly demonstrates the benefits of Aboriginal community-led decision-making and the importance of involving respected leaders and family members to guide sentencing in community courts and to help people to find better pathways.

The Groote Eylandt evaluation also demonstrates the work of peacemakers in reducing family conflict and keeping families safe across various communities. We strongly urge the CLP to reinstate investment and support for these critical community safety measures and to look to see how similar programs can be expanded across the Northern Territory.

Chronic overcrowding in our prison system, combined with significant correction staff vacancies with up to 50% absences for many shifts, means it is very difficult to run meaningful rehabilitation or training programs in our correction system. As we discovered during Estimates this year, just 12% of the prisoner population is engaged in education and training programs. Only 350 prisoners have access to the Ready to Work program; that is just 10% of the entire prison population in the Northern Territory.

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The Corrections Commissioner admitted that recidivism was sitting at a stubborn 60%, the highest rate in Australia. These statistics are extremely concerning because it means that prisoners will remain stuck on a cycle of reoffending with no pathway out.

We believe every prisoner should have the opportunity to turn their lives around and contribute meaningly to society. This means a structured day out of the cells to access programs, job skills and development available to all, not just a few; consistent access to health and disability support whilst imprisoned; and through-care planning so when people exit prison they are set up to succeed and are less likely to reoffend.

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of prisoners with severe mental health concerns or cognitive disabilities in the country, yet the Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia that has no forensic mental health unit in Corrections to address or treat severe disabilities whilst in prison. Just last week I received a letter from a prisoner who detailed the extensive lockdown hours that prisoners are kept in their cells without access to employment, mental health service or any rehabilitative programs. Clearly, the prison system is under enormous pressure and things will not change unless we change our approach altogether.

We need to seriously support Corrections staff to carry out their duties safely, which means the safer environment for everyone and a more rehabilitative environment. Similarly, our court system is facing enormous pressure, with a backlog of cases that stretches to 2027, leaving victims in limbo for up to six months. Currently, there are more than 56,000 cases sitting in a queue at the Local Court in the Northern Territory. Meanwhile, the Attorney-General cannot provide the number of people sitting on remand in the cases that are unresolved.

Access to justice is a critical part of community safety, but right now we have a justice system in crisis. Most children and young people in our justice system have experienced difficult home lives prevalent with violence and substance abuse. Approximately 69% of children in youth detention are known to the child protection system, almost 94% have had reported notifications about exposure to family violence, and 77% of youth in detention have mental health needs or cognitive disability, with many children living with multiple diagnosed disabilities.

Almost half of the children in youth detention have experienced significant schooling disadvantage through poor attendance or learning environments that do not match their needs. It is time to treat sick kids, not punish them. They need support and the vast majority of Territorians agree with that. What CLP government is doing with will further entrench children and young people into the justice system. Young children in justice become adults in justice, and it will further criminalise and institutionalise these children and young people. Ultimately, it will make our communities less safe.

The youth justice system in the Northern Territory is overloaded. That means children and young people are not getting access to the supports they need to get on a better track. There are not enough healthcare staff, psychologists or allied healthcare professionals to meet the needs of youth detainees in the Territory. In fact, these critical positions are often left vacant or suffer constant turnover, disrupting the provision of sustainable care that is needed to make a difference in a young person's life in prison.

Children are brought up from Alice Springs to the Top End, and they are disconnected from the support staff they have built trusting relationships with. These relationships are essential for children with developmental needs to engage successfully and beyond the prison cycle.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) prevention—the diagnosis and treatment, both in the community and while children move through the system—is one of the most pressing issues facing youth justice in the Northern Territory. Overcrowding and overstaffing means children are missing out on legal and family visits, with regular lockdowns meaning they are missing out on school and education. This is not a therapeutic or rehabilitative environment and all the evidence points to this approach causing further harm to children and young people when detained and sending them further into the justice system rather than leading them away from it.

We are not the only ones who think this; it is the view of paediatricians, legal experts and frontline workers in the field. This further exposes the CLP's punitive-only approach to Corrections with no plan for rehabilitating prisoners, no support for struggling families and no pathways for a better life.

Women and girls' safety is everyone's responsibility in the Northern Territory. Domestic, family and sexual violence remains the biggest crime crisis we face in our community, with 66% of all assaults domestic-violence related. I strongly urge the government to invest more into funding frontline services, particularly for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence services.

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Our women's safety shelters are frequently at capacity. Domestic, family and sexual violence services are experiencing high demand and are having to turn away many women and children, unfortunately, because they cannot support them. This puts women and children across the Northern Territory at a greater risk of harm. Funding out of the additional $35m a year ongoing for DFSV needs to be redirected to the frontline services rather than pipelined into unevaluated government programs.

The rebranded co-responder model to Circuit Breaker is a good start, but only 380 cases have gone through this program, despite it receiving the majority of family violence resourcing. Meanwhile, referrals of family violence behaviour change programs are 35% above expected targets, and women and children are unable to access services because they are simply not there.

Instead of meaningful action from the CLP government, we have seen the Attorney-General make arbitrary legislative reform to increase mandatory sentences for family violence perpetrators from 15 to 20 years which we heard earlier this year all the legal experts in the field have warned against and do not support that move. This is because it is not a deterrent, preventative or a long-term solution.

Where is the CLP's significant investment and support to develop and implement early intervention programs for young men and boys? Where is the CLP's significant investment and support to develop and roll out Alcohol and Other Drug rehabilitation programs across every Territory region? Funding cut from Victims of Crime needs to be reinstated so that it is able to provide the services that Territorians need to access. The CLP has shut out voices of victims by dissolving the Victims of Crime Advisory Board which provided an avenue for it to give its insights to government and advocate for measures which meet its needs and supports Territorians.

Police only received an extra $1m for family violence co-responder early intervention. The CLP only dedicated $25,000 to expand the Family Violence Health Response program. This is where the CLP's attention needs to be the most. There are programs that work, yet they are some of the most underfunded in the Territory.

There is no funding for Community Courts or specialist family violence courts in the Territory.

We acknowledge and salute the incredible work of our police officers who are out there every day and on the front line dealing with crime and antisocial behaviour. They do one of the most difficult jobs in our community. We need to see greater investment and strategic focus on supporting police health and wellbeing. Pay and conditions that reflect the critical role our police play are critical, but there is more that government can and should be doing to support our hardworking police officers.

We also need to see more investment in remote policing and supporting officers to serve in our remote communities and on our homelands. A constant, visible police presence is critical to community safety because—guess what?—remote community members also want to see police and be supported by police with community safety.

However, with more than 60% of remote positions currently vacant across the Northern Territory, police officers are limited to reactive responses and face increased risk of fatigue and burnout in remote postings. Implementing and resource allocation model recommended by the Kelly review would help to match the resources for local demand and keep all of our community safe. A comprehensive update from the CLP government on where this is at should be a priority for the Police minister, who is also the Chief Minister.

Better police housing is also critical to attract and retain our officers in our remote communities. We need to see urgent progress on new builds and upgrades to existing houses to ensure safer communities and better support for our police officers to stay in and be part of our communities.

Finally, backing police means addressing the social challenges that drive crime and antisocial behaviour across the NT. We cannot simply arrest our way out of the challenges that we face across the NT. To truly back our police we believe that there needs to be stronger investment and a strategic focus on prevention and early intervention while ensuring that those who offend are held accountable and our community is safer in the long run.

People who do the wrong thing should always face consequences. Evidence from around the world tells us that we need to similarly invest in prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation if we are truly to make a difference to community safety in the Northern Territory in the long term.

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Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, there are moments in life that change everything—moments that can fundamentally divide a family's life into a time before and a time after.

For Samara and Bridget Laverty that moment came on 19 March 2023. Twenty-year-old Declan had gone to work in Jingili, as he did most nights. He had no doubt spent the day before keeping an eye on which team would play his beloved Richmond Tigers in the premiership after their 59–59 draw just a couple of days before. Declan loved his footy, family and friends. He had dreams, ambitions and a whole life ahead of him, but that night Declan never made it home.

In a moment his life was taken in a senseless act of violence. His murderer was an offender who was out on bail. A single moment meant that a mother lost her only son and a sister lost her brother. Samara and Bridget lost the chance to create new memories with Declan, the kinds of memories that we all take for granted. The dinners, the birthdays, the Christmases, the holidays, the phone calls and probably the texts that will never come—one moment stole a lifetime of moments from the Laverty family. As a mum myself, I cannot imagine that kind of grief.

However, instead of withdrawing and trying to pick up all the pieces, Samara Laverty did something extraordinary. She stood up, she spoke up and she turned up day-in, day-out to fight for change. Last year Samara spoke before a parliamentary committee in Queensland. She began with words that I will never forget. She said, 'I am a mum. I had two children. Now I only have.' No mum should ever have to say those words and no little sister should have to grow up without her big brother.

At Declan's memorial, Bridget spoke about the brother she loved; the brother who had chosen her name and the brother she described as the best big brother a sister could ask for. For 1,306 days Samara has woken up determined to fight so that no other family needs to suffer what she suffers.

Samara made a promise at Declan's funeral that she would fight for stronger laws in his name, and she has kept that promise. When Samara's life changed in that tragic moment of violence three-and-a-half years ago, so did her ambition. That moment sparked a movement, bravely led by Samara, in Declan's name. You may not realise it, Samara, but you are one of the bravest women that the Territory has ever seen.

Thousands of Territorians gathered outside this parliament in March 2023. They brought flowers and their families. They brought their frustrations, fears and stories of victims bearing the scars of permanent injuries and the tears of personal losses, families who no longer felt safe in their own homes and business owners closing shops because of the cost of crime.

As the shadow minister for Tourism at the time, I heard all about the devastating impact that crime was having on our reputation, small businesses and economy. People who loved the Territory and wanted to raise their children here fled in droves. Wherever you looked, crime was utterly out of control, yet no-one in power back then seemed to be listening.

In the face of Declan Laverty, Territorians saw the human cost of a criminal justice system that had been recklessly dismantled, but in the words of Samara Laverty, Territorians found the courage to fight for real change. Samara's campaign gave that frustration a voice. Her petition attracted more than 27,000 supporters. They said loud and clear: enough is enough—enough of the violence, the victims forgotten, offenders getting away with it and the revolving door of offending. That dark moment became a movement that belonged to all Territorians.

That call for change did not end on the steps of Parliament House; it shook the parliament's foundations. In August 2024, the crime crisis became one of the defining issues at the Territory election. Territorians went to the ballot box demanding a different approach from a government that would take crime seriously, restore accountability and put victims first. The Country Liberal Party was overwhelmingly elected with a clear mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique Territory lifestyle. We understood that this was not simply a mandate for change in legislation; it was a responsibility to save lives.

We knew that there would be no overnight fix. We knew that we had to move fast. In our first sittings of parliament, our government introduced Declan's law. It was the centrepiece of the first of 10 law and order packages we have now brought to parliament, which Labor voted against every time. It represented a complete 180 of the way we tackle crime.

Two years on, we are seeing encouraging signs that things are turning around, with nearly 4,000 fewer victims of crime and nearly 11,000 people refused bail, which is 55% more than before Declan's law. That is more than 3,800 high-risk individuals off our streets while the justice system takes its course. That includes

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more than 1,200 youth offenders in the last 12 months, which is more than 63% more than before Declan's law was introduced.

Even when they are released at the discretion of the judges, those on bail are offending less. Adult offending on bail has gone down by 23%, and youth offending on bail has gone down by 50%. Serious crimes using edged weapons are down by 12%. We are finally beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel when it comes to Labor's backlog of crime and the victims that need their support.

Results on antisocial behaviour are clear. Police have tipped out more than 1,300 litres of alcohol and issued more than 4,400 infringement notices. Nearly 300 offences perpetrated by 10 and 11 year olds are now being prosecuted, including some serious violent offences. Before our changes, not one of those offences would have reached the courts.

We are also tackling the root causes of crime. While I speak of that, I want to mention the Leader of the Opposition, who was peddling mistruths in her speech, basically saying that we cut funding to victims of crime, which is not true; we actually extended funding. She said that we axed the Crime Victims Advisory Committee, which is not true. It is still up and running, so I do not know what she is talking about. She was talking about how prisoners or offenders have the right to be out doing what they what they want to do for a day. If those offenders did not have those rights, maybe Declan would be alive today.

We have always been up-front with Territorians. There would never be a quick fix on the crime crisis. For too long, our communities have been overwhelmed by out-of-control crime. After years of heading in the wrong direction, we are finally turning the tide.

Samara, there is no law that we can bring to this parliament that will bring Declan home. There is no statistic or graph that will ever bring Bridget back her brother. Instead, we are ensuring—just like you asked us to do when you promised Declan at his funeral—that no-one else suffers the way that we know you have and still do today.

We are prioritising community safety, putting victims first, holding offenders to account and tackling root causes of crime. Thank you, Samara, for your bravery and fierce determination. I want you to know that we will never forget why these laws were introduced in the first place. We will never forget Declan's name, the person whose name carries these laws.

I thank our police, our community and community partners for their continued work and the hardworking people across the justice system. Thank you to Territorians who placed their trust in us to deliver on our promise to reduce crime. That is something that we never take for granted.

Samara and Bridget, as we continue to deliver on our reducing-crime strategy, I hope that we can honour your courage, trust in us and faith in the Northern Territory.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the ministerial report that marks the anniversary of the passage of Declan's law by the Finocchiaro CLP government.

I acknowledge Declan's mother, Samara, who joins us today, and thank her for her determination to help protect other families.

Declan's death shocked our community. I have spoken before in this House about how his death and the events surrounding it also affected me deeply. It strengthened my determination to step forward and be part of the change.

I also remember Sifat, an international student whose tragic death, two months after Declan's death, reminds us of our responsibility to protect all who call the Territory home, including those who come here to study and build their future.

Today I will focus on what that change means for Territorians—stronger protections, greater accountability and better tools for police to keep our community safe. People should feel safe going to work, shopping at their local centre, catching a bus or spending time with their families. Parents should be able to expect that their children will return home safely after a shift. Business owners and their staff should be able to earn a living without threats or attacks. Declan's law was passed with those basic expectations at its heart.

It strengthened bail arrangements for people charged with serious violent offences and tightened the response to repeat serious offending. The reforms recognise that the risk of further harm must be taken

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seriously when deciding whether someone should be released on bail. They also strengthened accountability for breaches of bail and required electronic monitoring for repeat serious offenders who are granted bail. The practical benefit is a stronger framework for protecting the public while matters are before the courts. Bail conditions must mean something. When those conditions are breached, the justice system must be able to respond. Territorians need confidence that their safety carries real weight in these decisions.

Another important part of Declan's law is the stronger capacity for police to detect concealed weapons. The reforms simplified the approval process for wanding operations and expanded the public places where police can use these powers. This helps police identify dangerous weapons and take them out of circulation. The benefit is practical and immediate. A weapon seized by police can no longer be used by the person carrying it to threaten or harm someone. It creates an opportunity to act before an argument becomes an attack, someone suffers a serious injury and another family receives heartbreaking news. For people working in shops, using public transport or spending time in public places, that is an important protection. I thank our police for putting these powers into practice and for the difficult work they do to keep Territorians safe.

Declan's law forms an important part of our broader approach to reducing crime. Stronger bail safeguards, better enforcement and the removal of dangerous weapons work together to reduce opportunities for harm. The benefits extend beyond the immediate incident. Crime can force a business to close its doors, leave a worker frightened to return to a shift or make a family feel unsafe in their own home. Reducing that harm helps people regain confidence in their neighbourhoods. It supports local businesses, protects jobs and helps people enjoy the Territory lifestyle.

As the Member for Sanderson, I know how much these things matter to residents. People want to use their local shops, take their children to the park and feel comfortable in their own streets. Our responsibility is to keep focused on what Territorians have asked us to do—make crime reduction our number one priority.

In addressing this, we recognise that stronger laws also need to be supported by community-led early action. We need young people connected to school, sport, training and employment. We need families supported to set boundaries and children taught that their choices have consequences. My background in nursing has reinforced the importance of acting before harm occurs. That means supporting people to make better choices while maintaining clear consequences for conduct that puts others at risk.

I acknowledge that some residents continue to experience crime and antisocial behaviour. Their concerns require a response, and this means our work must continue. I acknowledge the hard work and leadership that our Chief Minister has provided in this space and thank her, as well as my colleagues along with the police and justice system staff responsible for implementing these reforms.

Declan's law has strengthened the tools available to protect our community. Our task is to keep applying those tools, listening to residents and addressing their concerns. We will remain focused on our number one priority and our promise to Territorians to reduce crime. We honour Declan's memory by continuing that work, protecting families, supporting workers and making the Territory a safer place to call home.

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 71

Continued from 14 October 2026.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will pick up where I was before the debate was adjourned for lunch yesterday. I was talking about the services that needed to be provided along with legislative changes, and I was reflecting on the fact that there is also a contradiction at the centre of the government's alcohol policy.

At the same time, it talks about getting tough on problem drinking, one of its earlier significant alcohol policy decisions was to repeal the minimum floor unit price. The practical effects were to allow very cheap alcohol back into the Territory market and we no longer need to speculate about whether that actually happens.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 29: Reflection on Previous Vote. It is not relevant to the Bill that we are debating today.

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Madam SPEAKER: The purpose of that standing order is not to limit or shut down debate. I think the Member for Nightcliff did not contravene the intent of that standing order so if you could be mindful of what the Member for Goyder is raising, but I think you can proceed.

Mr SMELT: Peer-reviewed research published in June this year examined alcohol prices before and after the repeal. It found an immediate increase in the availability of alcohol below the former minimum price and a broader downward movement in alcohol prices, with the greatest reductions concentrated among cheaper products. For large volume wine products, the researchers found that more than two-thirds of the products they examined were available below the previous $1.30 per standard drink threshold after the repeal.

This does not mean price is the only answer to alcohol harm; it plainly is not but there is an inconsistency in telling Territorians that harmful drinking requires tougher enforcement while simultaneously making some of the cheapest alcohol more affordable.

A serious alcohol policy needs to consider supply, demand and treatment altogether. It cannot simply intervene once the harm has already occurred and this has impacts far beyond just alcohol policy. Recently, the government announced that a new 1200 bed men's remand and intake prison will be designed …

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. We are talking about liquor; we are not talking about remand and Corrections. It is simply not relevant to the Bill or even close to what the Bill does …

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, this is potentially a 45-minute speech, and the Member for Nightcliff is 10 minutes in. We always allow a lot of latitude, and he has plenty of time to weave his reference to remand or whatever he wants to talk about into the themes and points he is trying to make. I get the sense that there is a bit of resistance to the Member for Nightcliff giving this speech, but I will cut you the slack and you can proceed as you choose with consideration, maybe further into the speech, that if he lapses into irrelevance or things that are not allowed within standing orders.

Mr SMELT: I completely agree.

Recently the government announced that a new 1,200-bed men's remand and intake centre will be designed, financed, built and operated by a private …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: The member will be heard in silence. Please continue, Member for Nightcliff.

Mr SMELT: … company. That makes the choices we make about prevention and diversion even more important. There is a simple economic and social reality here. Every person who can successfully be treated, before their alcohol use contributes to serious offending, is a person we may prevent from entering the justice system.

Every person successfully diverted from repeat offending represents fewer victims. It means fewer police call-outs; emergency department presentations; court appearances; less pressure on Corrections; and ultimately less money spent incarcerating people. The alternative is enormously expensive.

If we identify problem drinking, impose a ban, provide adequate treatment, wait for a breach or another offence, arrest the person, send them through the courts and ultimately incarcerate them, we have not solved the underlying problem. We have simply moved that person from one expensive government system into another.

Once the government establishes a privately operated prison, whose commercial model necessarily depends upon government payments for correctional services, there is an even …

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; the inference drawn is completely off topic.

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not. There is no point of order, please sit down. I will not be accepting frivolous points of order in an attempt to gag or shut down the Member for Nightcliff. He will be given every opportunity, as the government members will, to make his point in the allocated time.

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Mr SMELT: This depends on government payments for correctional services. There is an even greater obligation on this parliament to ensure our public policy is focused on reducing the number of people who ultimately need to be incarcerated. We should not create a pipeline from harmful drinking to repeated police contact to the courts, to the prison. The objective should be to interrupt that pathway as early as possible. Otherwise, there is a real risk that the greatest beneficiary of a failure to invest in prevention, rehabilitation and diversion will be the operator of the government's new private prison.

None of this means ignoring personal responsibility. People who commit violence must be held accountable; workers deserve protection; families deserve to be safe; police need appropriate powers; and communities have a right to expect public spaces to be safe. Accountability and treatment are not opposites. A person can be held responsible for their conduct while also receiving treatment for alcohol dependency. We can protect the communities today, while trying to prevent the same harm tomorrow.

This Bill contains measures that warrant consideration and, in some cases, support but we cannot pretend that increasing a banning notice from 14 days to 90 days constitutes an alcohol harm reduction strategy. It does not answer the fundamental question of what happens during those 90 days. If someone has a serious problem with alcohol, simply keeping them away from one place for longer will not by itself address that problem. The government should be able to tell this House what treatment will be offered, how quickly it will be offered, who will provide it, how it will be funded and what happens when that person finishes treatment.

The BDR should be a pathway to support, not simply a longer list of banned people. The Territory cannot arrest its way out of alcohol harm, ban its way out of alcohol dependency and build enough prison beds to substitute for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

If the government is serious about reducing alcohol harm, enforcement needs to be matched by treatment, restrictions need to be matched by rehabilitation, personal responsibility needs to be matched by genuine opportunities for change and community expectations need to be matched by government investment. That is the broader challenge this Bill should cause all of us to confront because the measure of a successful alcohol policy should not be how many people we ban, arrest or imprison; it should be how many people we help to break the cycle and how much harm we prevent from occurring in the first place.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I support this Bill because it strengthens community safety, preserves alcohol protections and gives the community a clearer say in its future.

I will give a bit of a history lesson because this Assembly should remember why those protections matter. We in Central Australia lived through it. The Assembly should remember the disaster that followed the expiry of Stronger Futures which resulted in the carnage that we are continuing to fix; it is what we are trying to fix today. Labor had the warnings, the expertise and a safer option. What did it do? It chose otherwise; apparently it knew better.

This Bill provides certainty where Labor created uncertainty. It transitions interim alcohol protection areas into the general restricted area framework, ensuring existing protections continue seamlessly. It establishes a structured pathway for communities seeking to change those arrangements, supported by consultation, community alcohol plans where required and public interest and community impact tests. It modernises liquor licensing, removes unnecessary regulatory burdens and strengthens compliance. It provides clearer powers to vary licence conditions and longer banning notices. It clarifies emergency suspension powers when alcohol-related violence, riotous conduct or breaches of the peace occur. These are practical measures with a clear purpose to protect communities, improve administration and ensure decisions about alcohol are properly considered.

Madam Speaker, you know only too well that the importance of that approach was demonstrated painfully in 2022. As the Commonwealth Stronger Futures legislation approached expiry, Labor chose an opt-in replacement. Affected communities had to take action to retain their alcohol protections. Aboriginal organisations proposed a safer transition; maintain the protections, consult properly and allow communities to make informed decisions to opt out—community choice with safeguards in place—but Labor rejected that approach and repeatedly ignored commonsense advice. The Member for Gwoja, who was a minister in that government, publicly defended its direction. By the time the Commonwealth protections expired in July 2022, he was the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice; Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing; and Minister for Local Government. He was part of the government responsible for examining the risks and ensuring the transition protected vulnerable people.

Let us remember the warnings, because they were important. Police had been active in voicing these concerns. AMSANT Chief Executive John Paterson warned of increased emergency presentations,

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alcohol-related injuries, domestic violence and risks to children. Donna Ah Chee and Central Australian Aboriginal Congress warned that the change threatened progress in reducing alcohol-related harm, which the Member for Nightcliff just talked about. What did the Labor government do? It increased it.

People called for proper consultation and a safer transition. Priscilla Atkins, then leading NAAJA, warned that alcohol entering newly unrestricted town camps and would also reach neighbouring dry communities. Aid organisations wrote to the Chief Minister, raising concerns about inadequate consultation, particularly with women, children, older residents and the services that support them.

Congress's June 2022 board communique recorded its work alongside AMSANT, NAAJA, Danila Dilba, Aboriginal Housing NT and others. They sought a two-year extension of protections while proper consultation occurred. That would have been prudent. Congress stated plainly that the NT Government had ignored those requests. That warning was published before the protections expired.

Madam Speaker, as the Member for Araluen, you warned against opening the floodgates. The CLP opposition challenged Labor's direction. I remember that we openly opposed what Labor was doing.

There were serious warnings from people who understood the consequences and that organisations would have to respond when families were hurt, yet Labor, in its blind ignorance, pressed ahead. Supporting self-determination did not require government to reject a protective transition. The alternative proposed by Aboriginal organisations preserved community choice. It also gave communities time to understand the changes and decide what they wanted. Labor's failure was its refusal to adopt that safeguard.

As we know, even after the expiry, the alarms continued. Labor's own Marion Scrymgour raised concerns about the transition and the need for women, including victims of domestic violence, to be heard.

AMA NT President Dr Robert Parker later said that he had warned Chief Minister Natasha Fyles in July 2022 and provided north Queensland data demonstrating alcohol's damaging effects on physical and mental health. By December, as we know, Alice Springs Hospital staff were confronting horrific injuries; we all remember that terrible time—women with head injuries, fractures and injuries requiring surgery. I repeatedly called in this Chamber for Labor to apologise to all the people hurt during that time, and what did we get from it? Nothing—crickets.

Immediately following the ending of Stronger Futures, government figures show alcohol-related emergency presentations in Central Australia rising from 856 in April–June 2022 to 1,299 in October–December, an increase of approximately 52% between those quarters. If that is not a telling failure, in July 2022 there were 1,122 domestic violence incidents recorded in Alice Springs, and in less than six months that rose to 1,477. The violence existed before July, but alcohol was not its only cause.

Perpetrators remain responsible for their actions, but governments are responsible for examining foreseeable risks and responding to credible warnings. Labor had been warned about precisely the kinds of harm that followed.

By January 2023 Alice Springs had become a national political emergency. I vividly remember Christmas 2022 moving into January 2023, and what was happening to my home. Residents and businesses demanded action. The then mayor, Matt Paterson, called for outside assistance. National scrutiny intensified. The Prime Minister visited Alice Springs on 24 January, and tighter takeaway alcohol restrictions were announced immediately. It took someone from Canberra, no less than the Prime Minister himself, to tell Labor what to do to help the people in Alice Springs because it was too blinded by its own ideology to understand what it had done.

Only then did Labor backflip and move to restore community protections with a pathway for communities to develop approved alcohol plans—the essential safeguard that Aboriginal organisations had urged before the expiry, and they were not listened to. Labor talked a big game regarding working with Aboriginal organisations but only when it suits them. After months of escalating harm, Labor adopted the basic protection it had been asked to preserve.

Territorians were entitled to ask why it took so long. Why had the warnings of frontline services not been enough? Why had the proposed protected transition been rejected? Why did it take a national crisis and so many people being harmed for it to change course?

The subsequent parliamentary inquiry found inadequate preparation and consultation that missed important groups, especially women. Let us let that sink in. The mothers, grandmothers—and the experts—were all

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pushed aside. Labor spoke about empowering communities yet its consultation failed to adequately reach the people whose safety was directly at stake.

The Commonwealth also had responsibilities. The inquiry identified failures at both levels of government. That does not excuse Territory Labor's choice of replacement policy. The federal expiry did not dictate an opt-in approach. Labor made that choice and defended it. Look where we ended up. It was nothing short of a disgrace.

The Member for Gwoja publicly argued against continuing the restrictions. When legislation restoring protections reached this House, the ABC reported that he did not speak in debate. He owes all of those affected an explanation of his government's decisions and his roles in defending them. He also owes an explanation about his Metcash shareholdings, the very company benefiting from those changes. He stood in this House and denied wrongdoing, saying that he had declared conflicts and subsequently sold the shares.

The issue was how any potential conflict had been managed. In February 2024, I saw the relevant Cabinet declaration records. Eva Lawler declined to release them. That was an opportunity to provide clarity, and Labor chose not to provide those records.

This history demands better government. It demands that consultation reach the people who are most exposed to harm, that credible warnings receive serious consideration, that existing protections are maintained while communities work through future arrangements. That is why the provisions before us matter.

This Bill preserves alcohol protections, strengthens enforcement and establishes a clearer process for communities who are seeking change. It also removes unnecessary red tape and modernises the licensing system. Community safety and effective administration belong together. Territorians deserve a government that listens before a crisis, acts on foreseeable risks and provides certainty to the communities relying upon it.

We are here yet again, cleaning up another one of Labor's messes. This is good legislation that gives opportunities to communities to make informed decisions about their futures and also clears up some of the ambiguity within the Act.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I support the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026. This Bill continues the work of our government. We have been undertaking to improve how we do business. The Bill modernises and streamlines the processes around obtaining a liquor licence as well as strengthening compliance and enforcement capabilities. It removes unnecessary regulatory burdens before aligning the Act with contemporary regulatory practice and provides certainty for persons living in interim alcohol-protected areas.

The key features of the Bill are that it strengthens compliance and public safety tools, including clearer powers for commission-initiated licence condition variations, longer banning notices and clarifies emergency suspension powers where alcohol-related violence, riotous conduct or breach of the peace is occurring.

The primary purpose is to make practical targeted amendments to the *Liquor Act* that modernise liquor licensing administration, strengthen compliance and public safety measures, preserve existing alcohol protections and provide a clear pathway for communities to shape future local alcohol arrangements.

As we heard there is history behind some of these changes to the *Liquor Act*. Stronger Futures was a defining moment in the Northern Territory. The Stronger Futures emergency alcohol provisions, initially originated in 2007 under the Territory intervention, expired on 17 July 2022. The Stronger Futures legislation was introduced by Jenny Macklin, the federal Labor member in 2012. The expiration on 17 July 2022 led to a sharp rise in alcohol-related harm and crime in Alice Springs, prompting the NT Labor government to rapidly reintroduce restrictions via interim legislation. The current legislated protections that were introduced—I will go back to how they were introduced—will expire in February 2027.

The sad reality is that when the Stronger Futures legislation lapsed on 17 July 2022, the Northern Territory Labor government had failed to do any planning to ensure that sufficient liquor restrictions were in place. We saw the rivers of grog flow and the devastating effects that had in all parts of the Northern Territory, particularly Alice Springs.

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The Prime Minister rolled into Alice Springs to discipline Territory Labor. We know that Labor in the Northern Territory is just a sub-branch of the Labor Party and that the Prime Minister runs that party. I am sure that even he might be shocked at the flip-flopping that is going on, particularly with the Member for Nightcliff. The Prime Minister forced the Territory Labor government to take action to stop the carnage and destruction in Alice Springs.

For five years in the lead-up to the expiration of Stronger Futures, Labor neglected the work that needed to be done in the communities. Labor failed to develop alcohol management plans. There was a failure across the board in dealing with crime, early intervention and prevention. The Labor government failed to manage soaring crime rates; crime was out of control under the Labor government. Labor's eight years of government from 2016 to 2024 had a major effect on many communities across the Northern Territory, including our major centres.

When Labor allowed Stronger Futures to lapse on 17 July 2022 we saw carnage, increased crime and increased violence against women and their families in the Northern Territory.

Sadly, there was a whole list of failures. It is important to get on the record that this was just one of many failures that Labor was responsible for when it comes to working with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. It is important that this is put into context, because people might think that Labor had only one failure over the years.

In 1988 at Barunga the federal Labor government promised a treaty for Aboriginal people. There still has been no treaty, 38 years on. Labor has failed to implement the treaty it promised Aboriginal Australians in 1988.

I have mentioned other failures before such as the law and justice committees. The Northern Territory Labor government scrapped the Northern Territory's law and justice strategy in the Northern Territory in 2005. There was no notice given to Aboriginal as to the reasons why. However, if you read *The Little Children are Sacred* report you will understand that Labor scrapped the funding—turned off the tap—when it came to funding law and justice committees and failed Aboriginal Territorians across the board.

In 2007 it was Jenny Macklin who introduced the Stronger Futures legislation in 2012 in the federal parliament, which had an impact on the Northern Territory.

There is more to it. The failures across the Northern Territory continued in 2008 when the Labor government scrapped community government councils across the Northern Territory. Community government councils were made up of locally elected leaders in those communities who were able to make decisions about how local government money would be spent in communities and, importantly—the is very important—not only were those community government councils dealing with local government issues, they were dealing with issues such as alcohol management in those communities. It was those local leaders who took control and provided the leadership in those communities to deal with community safety, alcohol management, education, health and a lot of municipal services that were being delivered in those communities.

When they scrapped that in 2008, it was not just scrapping councils, it took away those leadership structures in the communities where they were managing those alcohol management plans dealing with alcohol issues. Labor also scrapped that in 2008. Here we are, 18 years later and the CLP government is taking clear action to re-empower those communities.

In 2009, the CDP program, which created jobs in communities, was also scrapped. When we look at other issues, there has been this constant list of failures by Labor across the board.

When it comes to treaties, even in 2018 the Chief Minister of the Labor government at the time, Michael Gunner, announced a commitment to a treaty, even though the Prime Minister had announced that in 1988. Michael Gunner, the Labor Chief Minister in 2018, announced another commitment to a treaty or treaties with Aboriginal people and established a process. He signed an agreement to do so with the NT's four Aboriginal land councils on the 30th anniversary of the former Prime Minister Bob Hawke's failed promise for the federal treaty in 1988.

However, under the former Labor government Territory taxpayers forked out $5.3m for the Treaty Commission Office between 2018–19 and 2023–24 …

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Mr SMELT: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: relevance to the subject. You have given some latitude on this, but the minister is now reading the history of treaty. We have veered somewhat off the alcohol policy before us.

Madam SPEAKER: Well, I gave you some latitude …

Mr Smelt: You did.

Madam SPEAKER: … and I will be giving the Member for Barkly some latitude too. We all should be mindful that these can be long speeches and we can extrapolate and go on to all sorts of subjects and into all sorts of trajectories. As long as you tie it in neatly into a package by the end of it, it is usually quite acceptable. Please continue. Member for Barkly, we will be listening with intent.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Member for Nightcliff might not like hearing this because he is fairly new to this, but there is a long history of Labor failures which are particularly relevant to the failure of Stronger Futures. This all ties in as there is a pattern of failed policy issues by Labor, and that is why we are changing the liquor legislation; this is important.

In August 2021 Labor introduced the NT law and justice strategy with no bipartisan approach until 31 March, when the CLP agreed to sign the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. This was after hounding Labor, they eventually let us agree to the Aboriginal Justice Strategy. After Stronger Futures lapsed in 2022, the Prime Minister had to visit Alice Springs in January 2023, which resulted in Labor introducing some urgent legislation to try to wind back the destruction that they had caused in our Alice Springs.

The poor decision-making did not stop there. In December 2022, the NT government released its response—this is the Labor government—to the Northern Territory Treaty Commission's report from June 2022 with recommendations. They released it over Christmas, which included closing the commission and continuing the treaty process without it. They closed the Treaty Commission office over Christmas without any consultation with anyone. There was no press conference and the Treaty minister, who is now the Opposition Leader, did not respond to an interview request on that day.

That is some of the history and some reasons why this is so important. It shows a massive lapse in judgement allowing Stronger Futures to lapse in 2022 without having any legislation in place to deal with the carnage, destruction and the violence that we saw in town camps and across places like Alice Springs.

The reason we are bringing in this legislation, is that we want to ensure that women, children and families are protected moving forward. We are not taking the Labor hands-off approach and hoping that everything will be alright. We are moving forward and changing the legislation. I will go back to when that legislation lapsed—we have heard these statistics already—when ED presentations in December 2022, there were a total of 1,441 presentations, just before the alcohol restrictions were reinstated in 2023.

We can never let those rivers of grog continue, or come back in the Northern Territory, because of Labor's failed policy decisions. Importantly, this is relevant to the failed position because just two months before, Stronger Futures lapsed, the then Minister for Indigenous Essential Services, the Member for Gwoja, purchased shares in a major wholesaler that supplies grog to Central Australia.

We have to look at it this way. The Member for Arnhem, now the Opposition Leader, and the Member for Gwoja were members of that Cabinet that decided to make a deliberate decision not to introduce any legislation to overcome the problems that everybody anticipated would arise from the lapsing of the Stronger Futures legislation. Buying shares in a wholesaler, to me, is an indication that the member expected to benefit from having shares in a major wholesaler that supplies grog to Central Australia.

The then Deputy Chief Minister was the loudest voice for the ending of Stronger Futures that led to the destruction in the town of Alice Springs, while at the same time holding shares in a major wholesaler selling grog in Central Australia. That was two months before the grog bans lapsed.

The former Labor government then went a step further. It blocked ICAC from doing a corruption investigation because it refused to hand over information that was needed to do a proper investigation. That is how far Labor went when it came to hiding and trying to disguise the problems arising from Stronger Futures.

The Member for Gwoja had shares. The Cabinet, consisting of the now Opposition Leader and the Member for Gwoja made a deliberate decision not to put any laws in place at the lapse of Stronger Futures. Those who are familiar with the Riley review would know—and this was accepted back in 2017 by the Labor

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government—the executive summary called for a comprehensive, coordinated and a sustained approach to reducing alcohol-related harm. How does that fit with allowing Stronger Futures to lapse in 2022 while the Member for Gwoja held shares in a grog company?

Look at it from that way. Riley said, and it was accepted by the Labor government, that there should be a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained approach to reducing alcohol-related harm. It is a shame the former Labor government did not take that advice when it was clearly articulated back in 2017. The Labor government accepted all but one of the recommendations of the Riley review—the most comprehensive review undertaken—which made a number of recommendations.

The recommendations were sound and sensible, so what did the members opposite do? They went against the recommendations, none more spectacularly than recommendation 2.12.1, which stated no changes be made to the dry status of an area or community without local decision-making and local ownership over alcohol management. That was completely ignored by the Labor government of the time.

A clear mandate to commence consultation with communities regarding alcohol protected areas as defined under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act was delivered neatly in the Riley review. Recommendation 2.12.3 said that the NT Government convened meetings with the Australian Government and representatives of each of the Alice Springs town camps to formulate an alcohol management plan relating to supply for the particular circumstances of the individual town camps. You cannot be any clearer than that. The Riley review was very clear with its recommendations, which were completely ignored even though they were accepted by Labor at the time.

There was no consultation with town camps, no encouragement of self-determination or local ownership of alcohol management. Does that surprise anyone here? I have just outlined from 1988 the ongoing failures of the Labor government when it comes to working with Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory. It is an absolute disgrace, a history that Labor wants to hide. The inaction of the former Labor government to allow the legislation to lapse in 2022, allow the rivers of grog to flow into town camps and remote communities. It is a completely abhorrent decision that was made by Labor. They should absolutely be ashamed of themselves.

Crime stats uncovering the unimaginable spike in alcohol-related crime and domestic violence over that period have been cited in this House previously. Tragically, Labor did nothing until the Prime Minister had to arrive in Alice Springs and give directions to the Northern Territory branch of the Labor Party. He had to give directions to them.

They had almost eight years to introduce a range of legislation that would support the intent of the Riley review. It was roughly seven-and-a-half years, and after the Stronger Futures neglect, the Labor Party decided to take a peek at recommendation 2.12.10, which recommends that the Northern Territory Government develop clear action plans for managing alcohol in communities as we move towards 2022 and the cessation of the Stronger Futures Northern Territory legislation, and that the alcohol management process, including permits, is a part of that process.

That was the recommendation in 2017 that Labor chose to ignore.

VISITORS
MacKillop Catholic College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of in the presence in the gallery of Year 8 students from MacKillop Catholic College, accompanied by their teachers. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr EDGINGTON: The poor decision-making did not stop there because on the eve of the 2024 election the previous Labor government closed the Stringybark facility which accommodated three separate alcohol and other drug services. The Member for Nightcliff talked about the importance of rehabilitation, so he might want to listen carefully to this. Stringybark consisted of a 40-bed sobering-up shelter operated by Mission Australia and a 12-bed withdrawal unit delivered by NT Health. When it closed 40 beds were no longer available for parolees working to overcome substance abuse.

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In July 2018 Labor promised to build a new alcohol rehabilitation centre in Tennant Creek. It announced $5m for that in 2018, so it had six years leading up to the 2024 election to build a new alcohol rehabilitation facility in Tennant Creek. Not one shovel ever hit the ground under Labor, even though it promised to build that.

Despite all the rhetoric that we have heard from those opposite about how keen they were to deal with alcohol issues and supported rehabilitation, in Tennant Creek they had six years and not one shovel hit the ground. Leading up to the 2024 election Labor closed 40 beds at Stringybark in Darwin.

We have heard the term 'flip-flopping'. That has become all too common with the members opposite; they seem to flip-flop when it suits them and come up with ideas that they failed to deliver themselves. I do not know what to believe or listen to from them anymore.

Labor had 19 out of 25 years to invest in programs that would help deal with the problem, but it failed to build in Tennant Creek and it closed 40 beds in Darwin. Labor made a number of promises, wasted a lot of money and failed to tackle the issues that matter most to Territorians.

Labor decided to build a shade structure on Cavenagh Street. I have spoken about this before. I have a long list and I can go through them, but I probably do not have enough time to do that today. One of the things that always sticks in my mind was Labor's Boundless Possible policy and strategy to improve tourism.

Mrs Hersey: Boundless incompetence.

Mr EDGINGTON: It was an example of the boundless incompetence of the Labor government at the time. It spent $40,000 advertising that on a rocket launched out of Queensland. After that rocket launched, we never heard of Boundless Possible again. No doubt the intent behind that was to get rid of Labor's failed Boundless Possible policy. Imagine some of that money being pumped into dealing with alcohol plans, alcohol management and rehabilitation.

There is a poor history of Labor government failures since 1988. I think if I looked beyond that, there would be more failures that we could raise.

Labor members criticise and point out all these things after having 19 of the last 25 years in government. There was a poor performance by the former Labor government. The people Labor members tell me they represent, Aboriginal people in remote areas, say that there had been nothing but poor decision-making, with Labor scrapping law and justice committees, scrapping councils and promising treaties that have never been delivered. It has just been one thing after another from Labor governments.

The CLP government released its plan back in June to tackle problem drinking. It is a comprehensive and coordinated approach to reducing alcohol-related harm across the Territory. Our plan combines strong enforcement measures with prevention, treatment and recovery initiatives to address the complex drivers of harmful alcohol use. Importantly, the plan addresses the supply and demand for alcohol while also tackling the underlying causes that contribute to harmful drinking. It focuses on strengthening consequences, driving behavioural change, improving community safety and supporting early intervention for those at risk.

This Bill is a key part of this work. Converging existing interim alcohol protected areas into general restricted areas will provide long-term certainty for communities, maintain important alcohol restrictions beyond February 2027 and create a more consistent and streamlined framework for the Northern Territory.

Community alcohol management plans support local decision-making to consider alcohol availability and identify measures to reduce alcohol-related harm. Communities can develop alcohol management plans through community-led processes, direct NT Government support or externally facilitated processes funded through the Federation Funding Agreements.

I am advised that to date 98 communities have participated in community alcohol planning information sessions and are actively engaged in alcohol management planning. There are 35 alcohol management plans endorsed at the community level. Eighteen plans have progressed through liquor licensing and received the determination. Community consultation processes are undertaken through established local governance structures, including local authorities, alcohol reference groups, service delivery groups and local decision-making bodies.

Since coming to parliament, we have also introduced nuisance public drinking laws. The nuisance public drinking offence gives police powers to find, charge and arrest people in public places where alcohol is

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prohibited, as well as issuing those same people a banned drinker order. These powers allow police to intervene …

Mr PATEL: 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 EDGINGTON: These powers allow police to intervene earlier to ensure we stop this scourge on public places where alcohol is prohibited. The laws are about making our public places and parks safer and cleaner for everyone. We want to reduce the harm being caused by alcohol use in our community and enforce a higher community standard.

The NT Government is committed to increasing access to treatment and recovery services, ensuring Territorians can access support earlier and closer to home. Treatment pathways are being strengthened through assertive outreach, targeted brief intervention services and short-stay withdrawal and stabilisation programs, creating additional pathways into rehabilitation and recovery services.

Short-stay take-a-break programs are now operating in Central Australia, Big Rivers and the Top End with implementation underway in the Barkly. Access to behavioural change and treatment readiness programs has expanded through restorative day programs and remote restorative day programs delivered in regional centres and remote communities.

From 1 July 2026 Anglicare NT commenced delivery of the youth strength and healing program in East Arnhem, expanding targeted supports for young people and strengthening early intervention opportunities.

I am advised that NT Health currently commissions 96 sobering-up shelter beds and 147 residential rehabilitation treatment beds across the Territory. The Darwin Sobering Up Shelter has 40 beds and continues to experience strong demand since relocating in December 2024.

The 2026–27 Alcohol and Other Drugs Youth grants program opened its 11th round in September 2026, providing $271,000 in funding. Grants of up to $20,000 are available for individual projects and initiatives across the Northern Territory.

We are focused on those in custodial environments where mandatory programs can be delivered and those whose problematic drinking has caused harm to others. We are working to upgrade rehabilitation facilities in partnership with groups such as BRADAAG in Tennant Creek and to address the impact of floods on treatment facilities at DASA in Alice Springs.

The CLP government has been delivering on its promise, implementing strong laws and stronger enforcement with a clear focus on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our Territory lifestyle.

Late last year the CLP government increased the seven-day banned drinker order to 28 days, delivering real consequences for problem drinkers and giving police a more effective tool to stop alcohol-fuelled offending before it escalates. These reforms are having a measurable impact. I am advised the number of people on the BDR has increased from approximately 3,626 in August 2024 to 5,229 on 31 August 2026, an increase of around 44%.

This demonstrates the BDR is more effectively used as a tool to reduce harm and support people whose drinking is causing significant health and social impacts. The BDR is not just a compliance measure, it plays an important role in identifying people at risk and connecting them with health treatment and support services that help address harmful alcohol use and support long-term recovery.

To strengthen these pathways, training and awareness activities have been expanded to support practitioners and service providers, particularly in regional and remote areas. These measures enhance intervention opportunities and ensure people can be connected with treatment and support at critical points of contact with the health system.

It means that a person issued with a banning notice who is placed on the BDR cannot purchase takeaway alcohol when relevant restrictions apply. This is yet another example of the CLP government implementing practical solutions and effective preventative responses to alcohol-related harm in high-risk areas.

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Measurable impacts are not only being seen throughout BDR reforms but in our hospitals. I am advised by NT Health that the number of alcohol-related emergency department presentations between August 2025 to July 2026 has now decreased by 13.4%, compared with the same in the previous year. I am also advised that across the Northern Territory hospitals the number of domestic and family violence ED presentations decreased by 21% between August 2025 and July 2026, compared with the previous year.

Significant decreases in alcohol-related domestic and family violence ED presentations are positive signs that our alcohol reforms are working. However, like many measures, there is more we need to do. The CLP government will continue to work hard to reduce the harm being caused by alcohol in our community to ensure communities are safer.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly. It will make a difference. It will provide certainty to families living in remote areas. Interim alcohol protected areas were put in place by the former Labor government on direction of the Prime Minister when he came to Alice Springs after the lapsing of Stronger Futures and the failure of the Labor government to put in place legislation that was needed to protect women, the families and communities.

I have outlined Labor's failures since 1988: the promises of treaties, the failure to deliver on its promises, the failure of law and justice strategies and closing down law and justice strategies in 2005 without any communication with the communities that were affect, with no reasons given. This is clearly outlined in the Little Children are Sacred report. I urge the Members for Nightcliff and Arafura and their team to read it because it outlines significant failures by the Labor government of the day.

This is why we are seeing so many problems, because from 2008, as I previously outlined, it took hope and support away from Aboriginal communities by scrapping every community government council. It was not just the scrapping of the councils; it was the scrapping of every leadership structure in those communities. They were the people making decisions, dealing with alcohol management and issues in the communities, and the Labor government ripped that out from under their feet, so they had no ability to participate in decision-making in their own communities.

The legislation we are passing will provide certainty and security for the families that have been affected for many years by the failed Labor government policies.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly, and I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this Bill to parliament.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I will use this opportunity to talk about something much broader than the provisions of this legislation—that is, the devastating consequences of alcohol harm across Northern Territory, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities like those in my electorate of Arafura.

For many people in this Chamber, alcohol harm is something we debate through legislation, statistics and government policies, but for families living in remote Aboriginal communities across Arafura, the consequences are deeply personal. It is the mother worried about the safety of her children. It is the grandmother who spent decades trying to hold the family together. It is the community leader who desperately wants to make their community safer, but feels powerless to bring about meaningful change. It is the young person growing up surrounded by problems they did not create, but whose opportunities in life are being shaped by them.

There is a growing frustration in many of these communities that they are being left to deal with the consequences of alcohol harm without the support services or resources they need. A couple of communities do not have a police presence, such as Minjilang and Warruwi, so those communities in particular need police at the airport, searching people jumping on planes to go back to community to stop that alcohol flow.

Perhaps more concerningly, there is growing resentment that decisions affecting their lives and communities continue to be made without them having any meaningful ability to influence those decisions. These are communities where people have spent years calling for help, where families have asked for more support to deal with addiction, domestic violence, mental health and the devastating impact alcohol has had on their children.

One concern I have is that community members do not have a place to go when they want to make complaints or be heard, because government services have been pulled back into Darwin and it is now a fly-in fly-out service. In places like Gunbalanya and Maningrida people have nowhere to send those concerns through.

DRAFT

Where are the rehabilitation services in our communities? What are the programs that give families the tools to break the cycle? Where is the genuine commitment to working with Aboriginal leaders to develop solutions that reflect the circumstances of their communities?

We heard the Aboriginal Affairs minister talk about all of Labor's failings. I am sitting here, trying to hear him out and see whether he has a proposal going forward, especially with treaty, local decision-making and Aboriginal justice agreements. It is all good to beat your chest, but you need to come up with solutions and alternatives.

The statistics demonstrate just how serious the challenge is. Research published in 2025 examining alcohol-related injury and hospitalisation in the Territory between 2007–2022 found that Aboriginal Territorians experienced hospitalisations more than 11 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Territorians after adjusting for age. Alcohol continues to contribute significantly to violence and offending across the Territory.

In my communities on the Tiwi Islands, we have charter companies going out there every day, but we need the waterways to be to be looked at as well from the police, because it is only a two-hour boat trip. If I could put that to the government, keep an eye on the waterways between the islands from Darwin to Bathurst Island.

Behind those statistics, our families, children and communities have suffered the consequences of alcohol harm for generations. One of the most heartbreaking consequences is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). Research published in 2025 using the Territory health records from 2013 to 2017 identified prenatal alcohol use in approximately 13% of births to Aboriginal mothers. FASD can cause lifelong difficulties with learning, memory, impulse control and decision-making. For people living with undiagnosed FASD, repeated punishment will not address the underlying disability. This is why prevention, early intervention, diagnosis and ongoing support are so important.

Just so that everyone knows where I stand, people who commit crime must be held accountable. Women and children deserve to be saved, victims deserve justice and every Territorian deserves to live in a community free from violence. We must also recognise that punishment alone does not necessarily change behaviour. We can arrest someone and put them before the courts and send them to prison, but that person returns to the communities with the same untreated addiction, unresolved trauma and underlying disability.

What have we actually achieved? Have we prevented the next offence? Have we made that family safer? Have we given that person genuine opportunity to turn their life around? I have programs at my electorate. Jipungwayi works with troubled kids with the law. He takes them on camps and talks to them about lifestyle changes. We need more of that in our communities, Aboriginal leaders and cultural leaders having a chat with our young people to try to get them on the straight and narrow.

This is particularly important in remote Aboriginal communities where access to rehabilitation, specialised health services and ongoing support can be extremely limited. We cannot keep expecting communities to solve these problems alone while denying them the resources and support needed to make a difference.

Equally, we cannot keep expecting Aboriginal people to take responsibility for improving their communities while giving them so little say in how these communities are governed. We want to make decisions as well. We want to be at the table and change how kids are being trialled.

Nja-marleya is a part of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. They at the courthouse, talking to the child and the judge, making it to the trial and contributing.

These Aboriginal leaders, health workers and families across Arafura want to be part of the solution. They know the harm alcohol is causing. We see it every day. Many have are dedicated their lives to trying to make their communities safer.

What they need is not another government telling them what their problems are; they need a government prepared to listen to them about how those problems can be solved.

During the inquiry into this Bill, organisations including the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies NT raised important issues about alcohol harm and community engagement.

These organisations have decades of experience working with Aboriginal families and communities. We should be listening to them; we should be working with Aboriginal controlled organisations to develop properly

DRAFT

resourced community alcohol plans. We should be investing into culturally appropriate rehabilitation, mental health services, FASD prevention and early intervention. Most importantly, we should be giving communities a general role in determining the solutions that will work for them, because every community is different in how they deal with their youths.

This is not a challenge that began with the current government, and it is not something that any single government, Labor or Liberal, has managed to resolve. All governments must accept responsibility to doing better. We cannot continue down the path where communities are asked to endure the consequences of these problems without being given the support or authority to help address them. This only breeds further frustration, resentment and distrust, and it makes the job of achieving lasting behavioural change that much harder.

Our measure of success cannot simply be how many people we arrest, how many banning notices we issue, or how many people we send to prison; it must also be how many people we help turn their lives around, how many families are safer, how many children grew up free from alcohol-related violence and how many communities feel they finally have a genuine say in their own future.

We cannot build a stronger Northern Territory while leaving so many of our fellow Territorians behind. The people of Arafura do not need another lecture about problems their community is facing. They need to be heard. We need government agencies on the ground talking to them. They need to be supported and they need to be trusted and empowered to help shape their own future.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

QUESTION TIME

Katherine Fire Station – Unstaffed

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Can you confirm that no professional firefighters were on active duty in Katherine last weekend and that the station was left unstaffed until Monday 12 October as no career firefighters were available? Can you explain to the people of Katherine how this is supporting emergency preparedness in our region?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, no, that is not correct, Opposition Leader. We have varying staffing footprints across the Territory, as I am sure you can appreciate.

In Katherine we have one operational senior station officer role and three station officer positions. Over the weekend we had the volunteer firefighters and the auxiliaries and other members available. There has been some concern about this, but we had a professional team ready to support t he community if the need arose.

Private Maternity Services

Mr PATEL to CHIEF MINISTER

Access to maternity services is an important consideration for all Territorian women and families. For many families, having the choice between public and private maternity care provides greater certainty, flexibility and confidence during one of the most significant moments int heir lives.

The Finocchiaro CLP government has made clear its commitment to restoring private maternity services at Darwin Private Hospital and ensuring this important option is protected into the future. Can you please outline how the CLP government is delivering greater certainty and choice for Territory mothers and families now and into the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know this is an issue close to the heart of the Member for Casuarina; that we, as a government, together as a team, are making sure that Territory women are never without private maternity services ever again.

DRAFT

I thank him for his tireless advocacy on this on behalf of his constituents. The hospital is in his electorate. It is critical infrastructure for the entire Territory, being the only private hospital we have in the Northern Territory.

Today I proudly stood with the Minister for Health, announcing that we will enshrine in legislation that any provider of the Darwin Private Hospital from now going forward must delivery maternity services. That enshrines it not just in the licence but in the law.

We have taken the strongest possible action we can to make sure this never happens again.

I place on the record my thanks to Calvary, which has indicated it will restore maternity services and is working with us.

We do not want to leave anything to chance and want to make sure we deal with this issue properly.

This brings me to when this should probably have been dealt with? Let us go on a little history lesson of when this first began. We now know that Labor was told that Healthscope would link out of maternity services at Darwin Private Hospital in 2023. Who was the Health minister when they were told? Anyone have a guess? The Opposition Leader. Once again, just like with Acacia, she covered it up. She was the Health minister.

We have been working through the federal process. We met with the receivers so many times and made it emphatically clear if they were to pick someone who would not deliver maternity services at Darwin Private Hospital, they would not be welcome in the Territory. We made that clear to Calvary and we look forward to working with them.

It presents an opportunity for us to expand beds out of Darwin public hospital and utilise bed-buys in Darwin Private Hospital as well. We know we have chronic bed-block—again because there are up to 80 people on any given day across our health network who should be in dignified aged care but are sitting in hospital because federal Labor failed to do its job as well. You cannot trust Labor to deliver the health and aged care services that everyday Territorians deserve.

We will engage in bed buys with Calvary and work with them on maternity so that we receive better outcomes in the public system and in the private system.

This is terrific news, and I thank all the women and families, everyone whose tireless advocacy has put us in a position of going forward. This will never happen again, and we look forward to passing that legislation with the support of the opposition, I hope, in the November sittings.

Cost-of-living Pressures – Rent Increases

Mr SMELT to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Darwin rents have gone up by almost 14% in the past year, with renters having to find an extra $4,680 a year to keep a roof over their heads. The last time I asked what you were doing to help renters with rising rent and cost-of-living pressures, you failed to answer the question.

Will you introduce better protections for renters, including preventing landlords from increasing rent every six months?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Nightcliff has not been in the Northern Territory for very long, but I think Territorians know that we have been trying to get development in housing for a long time. Do you remember at Lee Point where there a lot of houses should have been built? It has been going on for so long, and if it could get over the line instead of being stopped at every turn—we were just about to get there but the Member for Nightcliff got up on his high horse and took a federal minister there to try to stop it again. This was shameful. When you are the ones complaining about the rents being too high and not enough houses and we need more social housing, how about you start looking at development in the Northern Territory that is ready to go and has been ready to go for a long time.

DRAFT

All you do, as a Labor opposition is flipflop around everything. We do not know whether you support gas or not; we do not know whether you support Lee Point or not—I do not think you do because you took the federal minister down to say no.

We do not know if you support gambling or not. You used to, and now it seems like you do not. Now we are doing liquor today, and I do not know what is happening with that either. You have no convictions; everything that you talk about no-one really knows where you stand with it.

What I do know is, as a government …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question specifically asked about the protections for renters, preventing landlords from increasing rents every six months.

Madam SPEAKER: Indeed, it was. Please continue, Attorney General, you have half your time left.

Ms BOOTHBY: They just do not like to hear the answer, that is all.

We have the best housing scheme in the country when it comes to being able to build a home in the Territory. You can get $50,000 as a first home buyer. You can get $30,000 if you have owned a home before when you live in it. And guess what happens when you build a house and you move into it? You are moving out of either another home or a rental property which means it frees up more properties for people to move into and that is the basic supply and demand issue.

I am not going to buy into this stuff about how we are not doing anything when it comes to rental affordability. We are the government that is literally releasing so much land, building so many houses. Housing approvals are the best in such a long time. We are leading the nation on so many factors. That is something that the Labor government could never do, and we want to support it when it comes to our economy. For so long, house prices were just tanking. People were feeling like economic prisoners in their own home, in their own Territory.

It is awful to feel like that. So as a government we are proud of the work we are doing. We have always said that there is more work to do, whether it is on crime, the economy or lifestyle. We have convictions and we are sticking by them, and we are doing exactly what we promised Territorians we would do. We are not giving up, we are staying the course.

Nhulunbuy – Long-term Future

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for MINING

With Rio Tinto's mining operations in Nhulunbuy drawing to a close, securing the township's long-term future is of critical importance to families, businesses and the broader East Arnhem region. The Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to representing all Territorians, regardless of where they live, and ensuring regional communities have the certainty they deserve.

While the new local opposition member remains silent in this Chamber on this important matter, our government continues to progress solutions for his electorate.

Can you outline the steps our government is taking to secure Nhulunbuy's future and provide certainty for all the residents, businesses and their traditional owners?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as the assistant minister for Nhulunbuy transition, the Member for Wanguri is working hard to make sure that Nhulunbuy is a strong services hub after Rio Tinto leaves; she has got their back.

The Leader of the Opposition likes to claim that our government has turned its back on East Arnhem. No matter what, she is too busy trying to knife the Member for Daly, keep the knives out of her back and trying to keep her chaotic team in some sort of order. We know that you cannot trust Labor, yet her own motion on the future of Jabiru and Gove Peninsula has sat on the Notice Paper since July last year. I know she has been busy trying to keep her spot and throwing the knives around, but we are here to represent all the Northern Territory.

DRAFT

The new Member for Mulka has told us that he is a strong person fighting for his people yet this is the last day of sittings on the first week and we have not heard one word from him about his community. Yesterday, he took his orders from the Leader of the Opposition and spoke about communities hundreds of kilometres away from his electorate. He is only new, but he has to learn that he has to represent his people and should ask questions about his people. This is the second question that government has had about Gove and yet the Member for Mulka is still to ask any questions about his own electorate.

Let me tell you what we are doing. This year, the fuel crisis hit Maningrida, with fuel prices up to almost $4.00 a litre in Ramingining. Gove has seven fuel tanks over there and $220m worth of fuel, one-fifth the (indistinct) reserves. Our government, through the Chief Minister, has written to the to the Prime Minister and also to Gumatj and Rirratjingu leaders over there asking Canberra to help us and saying we have a solution.

I suggested to the new Member for Mulka, maybe he should get on the phone, ring his mates in Canberra and say, 'Hey, I want some jobs for my community and I want real prospects.' Help us here instead of sitting over there getting told what to do by the leader of knives.

We stand here ready to partner with the federal government to make Gove a stronger place. We know Rio is leaving, and we are here to make sure that community remains strong, unlike those opposite. We represent the TOs and people from all across the Northern Territory. We committed $37m this year in the budget for works across that area, including upgrading the aerodrome on Elcho Island—the member's own home.

If the member wants to be a strong East Arnhem man, he should not wait for the Leader of the Opposition to tell him what to do. He should be out there fighting for his electorate and getting on the phone to Canberra to ask for help. We are being nice and are not giving him a hard time yet, but what we are here to do is show that we fight for all Territorians. It does not matter where you live. We are making sure the Territory is a better place to live.

Water Supply – Nauiyu

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES.

Minister, the first group of approximately 50 residents returned to Nauiyu on 29 May, with all residents to follow after the floods. More than four months later, residents are still having to rely on bottled water, and I am receiving reports of dirty water coming out of their taps. Minister, what is the CLP government doing to restore safe and reliable water supply? When will the government fully restore safe drinking water to people's homes in Nauiyu?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I want to reaffirm our government's commitment to providing every Territorian, regardless of where they live, with a reliable supply of safe drinking water. So the situation in Nauiyu has been significantly influenced by the severe weather and flooding associated with the tropical low during March this year, which impacted on water supply infrastructure and operations in that community. I think that is well known to everyone living in that area, including the Member for Daly.

As a result of these flood related impacts, a boil water alert was implemented in Nauiyu in March 2026 to protect public health while the water supply system is being restored and assessed. Throughout this boil water alert, particular attention was given to vulnerable Territorians in that community. Power and Water have been providing free drinking water to vulnerable residents through the community store. This has ensured clean drinking water has remained available while restoration work continues.

Updates have been provided through the community and local communication channels so that residents can make informed decisions about their drinking water.

Throughout this period, Power and Water took immediate action to maintain essential services, protect critical infrastructure and restore safe drinking water supplies as quickly and as safely as possible. Following consultation with NT Health and confirmation that water quality had surpassed safe levels, the boil water alert was lifted on 27 August this year.

Enhanced water quality monitoring remains in place to ensure the continued safety of the water supply. Importantly, bottled water continues to be provided to formula-fed infants in Nauiyu as a precautionary measure relating to manganese levels in the Australian drinking …

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Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I acknowledge the minister had answered part of the question, but there was a specific question. When will the government fully restore safe drinking water to people's homes in Nauiyu? I need a timeline.

Mr EDGINGTON: The boil water alert was lifted on 27 August 2026. There has been continued communication with the community of Nauiyu. Maybe the Member for Daly has not been listening, but that boil water alert—to put it on the record once more—was lifted on 27 August this year.

Ms Uibo: He was there on Monday. They told him. They showed him the dirty water.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mr EDGINGTON: As I said, bottled water continues to be provided to formula-fed infants at Nauiyu as a precautionary measure relating to manganese levels in Australian Drinking Water Guidelines requirements. This arrangement has been in place since April 2024 and remains unchanged since the lifting of the boil alert.

Severe Weather Event – Central Australia

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

It is three days since a severe weather event tore through Central Australia, leaving downed trees and powerlines, damaged property and many thousands without power. Thanks to the work of our emergency services personnel, Power and Water teams and a number of everyday Territorian volunteers, including our own Minister Burgoyne, things are on the improve. Can you provide an update on what support residents who are still without power can expect to receive?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the past few days have been a difficult time for the people of Alice Springs.

As the Member for Karama said, I give a big shout-out to all those people who have rallied and got the power back on. Thank you to the teams from Power and Water, the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure and the emergency services.

What they have been able to achieve is extraordinary. Of the 9,000 customers who lost power in the last three days, 7,750 have had power restored, which is incredible. There are still 1,250 homes without power and there is still work that needs to be done.

I am pleased to let people know that the Department of Children and Families has stood up a welfare recovery centre at 2 Railway Terrace as of yesterday afternoon. People who have been impacted by this incredible weather event can go there to get assistance. Representatives from the Department of Children and Families, Foodbank, Housing, Red Cross, Salvation Army and Centrelink are onsite and ready and able to assist. They are providing food, support, vouchers and advice for public housing tenants on what they need to do. I give a big shout out to them.

For those whose houses are still without power, as of 9 am tomorrow they will be eligible to apply for a $250 payment for the power outage. If you have been impacted by the power outage, as of 9 am tomorrow you can head to 2 Railway Terrace and put in your application. Obviously, the team has to verify that your home is in fact without power before that payment can be made, but the good news is that Jacana and Rimfire Energy are working to make sure that information is available as quickly as possible so that the money can be paid to affected residents. The eligible areas are the Alice Springs, MacDonnell and Central Desert Regional Council areas. Anyone who is impacted, I encourage them to seek that assistance; 9 am tomorrow at 2 Railway Terrace.

I give a shout out to the team from the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. The Territory business advisers have been helping and talking to businesses to see who has been adversely impacted. So far they have visited 60 businesses and are assessing what assistance they might be able to provide to get those businesses on their feet. The good news is supply of food has not been interrupted. The supply into the town is positive and still happening, which is great news for the people of Alice Springs.

Mr Maley interjecting.

DRAFT

Mr McGRATH: That was pretty rich Member for Nelson coming from the CLP which did not even put up a candidate for the Mulka region.

Nhulunbuy's Future – Funding

Mr McGRATH to CHIEF MINISTER

During the recent Mulka by-election campaign, residents, businesses and community groups raised concerns about whether your government is doing enough to secure the Nhulunbuy's future as the gold mine is closing. Chief Minister to put their concerns to reset, will you commit to dedicate funding in the next Territory budget for the post-mining transition to increase confidence, protect local livelihood and ensure Nhulunbuy a viable regional services hub?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our government has been committed to the Nhulunbuy transition …

Mr McGrath: You did not even put in a candidate.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: He is very vocal for a new fellow, here we go. Do you want play that game mate, you are taking me on alright; let us tango. Do you want to dance?

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Member for Mulka still does not understand the standing orders. He cannot continue to jump in.

Madam SPEAKER: We are going to remain silent whilst the Chief Minister answers the Member for Mulka's question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I would love to answer this question. On coming to government just over two years ago, one of the first things I did was ask for a brief on the Nhulunbuy transition. I was horrified to see, that for all the years preceding that, the Gove Futures Reference Group had been meeting from time to time and there had been a complete lack of leadership and drive from the Northern Territory Labor government on what needed to happen. It was just people coming together talking about doing something but no-one put their cards on the table or progressed this further. It was scary and shocking.

I brought it to a head immediately. I had the Member for Wanguri work with me all last year, before giving her the official title of assistant minister for Nhulunbuy Transition on this project. She and I went to Nhulunbuy several times to meet with all stakeholders and reset the Gove Futures Reference Group. That was important and everyone on the ground involved, has never seen so much activity as there is now.

It has been important, because our government went to Gumatj and Rirratjingu Corporations and put our positions on the table. We were honest, open and upfront with them straight away and said this is how we think things need to be moving forward. Since then so much work has been done.

I stood at Gama and we gave an announcement where Rirratjingu Corporation, in principle, agreed to a land tenure arrangement that will support an open town for both Yolngu and balanda; that is very important to the TO groups. Gumatj Corporation made its announcement about a new land council. There is a lot of work happening on the ground now.

I fully understand, respect and appreciate that people are very nervous in Nhulunbuy. This is a huge transition. To answer your question more succinctly with only 20 seconds to go: there is no amount of money in a government budget that is going to fix this. The bones have to be right, which is why the work we are doing with the TOs on an economic future on the fuel farm, and providing one quarter of this nation's fuel storage needs; and the work we are doing around land tenure are pivotal and key things. We want an open Nhulunbuy, and we are working closely with the TOs to deliver that.

Palmerston Special Education School

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

With growing demand and pressure being placed on existing specialist disability schools the need for additional specialist education facilities in Palmerston and the surrounding region continues to increase. The

DRAFT

new Palmerston specialist school, announced by our government, represents a significant investment in purpose-built facilities to better support Territory students with disability and meet their educational needs.

Can you provide the Assembly with an update on the delivery of the new Palmerston specialist school and outline how this investment will meet growing demand while improving educational opportunities for students with disability?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain and all members in the Palmerston area will be pleased to see this new specialist school get up and running. This is something that we brought to the parliament as a petition when we were in opposition, and I am pleased we had this as an election commitment.

The school will be purpose built for up to 200 students. DCOH was awarded the contract earlier this month. This specialist school will be adjacent to the Rosebery school and will be open by Term 1 of 2029. It will be finished at the end of 2028.

For students in the rural area and Palmerston there is at Driver Secondary School a specialist education unit. That is bursting at the seams. Students from the Palmerston area also go to Henbury. It will be amazing for those families to have a purpose-built school in their area.

An expert design group has been working towards implementing the design of the school. As at Henbury, there will be a Woolies cafe. Added to that there will be a mini farm, VET facilities, a swimming pool for hydrotherapy, music facilities, an indoor gym, specialist learning facilities and a technology and arts building.

I look forward to this project getting off the ground. It is needed in the Palmerston area. It will be great, as I said, for all those families.

I thank not only Francis De Silva, who brought that petition to me when we were in opposition, but also the expert design group that has been working towards the design of this school and now, to get it up and running, is working with the contractor.

We are making sure that we keep on time, because we will not be like the previous government whose projects were overbudget and over time. There is a finite time; it will be open in Term 1 of 2029, and I look forward to that opening.

Voluntary Assisted Dying and Palliative Care Services – Funding

J DAVIS to MINISTER for HEALTH

In the last sittings we passed the voluntary assisted dying law. During the debate we heard about the resourcing challenges, in particular for palliative care services across the Northern Territory, in addition to the known funding pressures on our hospitals. What new funding has the government allocated to the implementation of VAD services? What new funding has been allocated to palliative care services so that Territorians can have access to quality end-of-life care of their choosing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank all my CLP colleagues for passing that legislation.

This has been a longstanding issue in the Northern Territory, Member for Johnston, but I am pleased to say that our colleagues have passed the legislation and that is now in place.

We committed to an 18-month implementation plan, and NT Health is working through that plan as we speak. Palliative care issues are being considered as part of our implementation plan.

The legislation has just been passed. The Chief Health Officer and staff are working through those issues, looking at not only how it will be implemented across the Northern Territory but also what resources need to be allocated to this as we roll it out in 18 months.

When it comes to …

J Davis: You can continue, sorry, I thought you were finishing.

DRAFT

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, keep going.

Mr EDGINGTON: Oh, sorry, I thought the Member for Johnston was jumping …

Madam SPEAKER: So did I.

Mr EDGINGTON: She had me worried there.

As I was saying, when it comes to palliative care, during the 18-month implementation phase we have resources looking at palliative care. As I said, we have resources looking at what the implementation plans will be to implement the VAD legislation across the Northern Territory.

That work is under way. I have nothing further to add, other than when it comes to budget, we will be working through our budget process as we do every year. We will be considering all options …

Madam SPEAKER: Miniter, can you pause. Do you have a point of order, Member for Johnston?

J DAVIS: I felt like the question was not being answered, but I can see it will not be.

Madam SPEAKER: If you do not have a point of order, please do not stand. Minister, please continue.

Mr EDGINGTON: To reiterate what I said, all of that work is under way at the moment on palliative care, implementation of the VAD legislation. We will hear more about that through our department as we move forward on those issues.

When it comes to you asking questions about budget, at the moment we are working through what is needed. We do not have a number before us. We may or may not need further funding as we move forward. All I can tell you is we are pleased that the VAD legislation has been delivered through this parliament. It is historic legislation that many Territorians have been asking for, for many years.

We have 18 months to work through palliative care and the implementation plan and we will continue to do that in a methodical manner.

Men's Remand and Intake Centre

Mr MACKAY to TREASURER

Ensuring the Northern Territory has a Corrections system capable of meeting current and future demands is an important part of restoring law and order and delivering safer communities. The Finocchiaro CLP government continues to invest in the infrastructure needed to support our justice system, while ensuring responsible management of taxpayers' money.

Can you update the Assembly on the expression of interest for a new men's remand and intake centre at Holtze and outline how it will deliver long-term benefits for all Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is good to be able to talk about development within correctional services. The correctional services was thrown to the side of the road by the previous Labor government. I know because I was in there and part of it. It did not care about correctional services. It went to a 'rack 'em and stack 'em' model and did not invest. It was responsible for prison at Holtze. It was the one that announced it and built it. It was full the day that it was opened, because it did not have any future planning when it came to correctional services.

Reducing crime and restoring law and order is central to the Finocchiaro government's agenda. That is what we are here for. Territorians deserve to feel safe in their homes. They expect consequences for offending and a correctional system that supports our police and courts. As the Minister for Corrections said, if people commit a crime, he will be able to find a bed for them.

That means doing the product planning and investment in the infrastructure our justice system needs—something that people opposite failed to do.

DRAFT

Expressions of interest are now open for a new men's remand and intake centre at Holtze with a capacity for up to 1,200 beds, so we can future-proof our Corrections system rather than put people in watch houses and park them up there for months on end. That is what Labor did.

We are seeking experienced consortia to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the facility through a public private partnership. Expressions of interest close on 2 November and a shortlist of proponents will then be submitting detailed proposals to government.

Our ambition is to deliver a state-of-the-art facility that serves the Territory for decades—not just for a couple of years but decades to come—with a capacity and flexibility to meet our future needs so that we do not have to park prisoners in watch houses like the previous government did.

It will also provide facilities designed for education, treatment and rehabilitation, helping people leave custody better equipped and to stop offending.

Alongside we are proposing a separate purpose-built 200 bed women's facility operated by the Department of Corrections, which is great to see. We should not have women inside our men's facilities. I have said that since day dot.

The investment will also create opportunities for Territory contractors, tradies, suppliers and Aboriginal businesses. We are backing our police, supporting our correctional officers and building the capacity to enforce the law of the Territory. We are investing in a safer Territory today and for decades ahead because that is something the previous Labor government failed to do.

Groote Eylandt – Transition Plan

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for MINING and ENGERGY

Before I ask my question, I welcome one of our 2026 youth parliamentarians, who is in the gallery: Charlotte. Welcome, it is good to see you here watching parliament in real time.

Groote Eylandt is in my electorate of Arnhem and has one of the world's largest manganese mines. What steps are you taking regarding leading the NT Government's transitional plan contributing to the future-proofing of Groote Eylandt archipelago? Have you visited Groote Eylandt yourself to discuss the transition plans? If not, why not and when will you do so?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the resources in mines and energy because we know that the previous Labor government absolutely stuffed it up. They left minerals in the ground, lost jobs, lost people from the Territory because they did not support the mining industry.

On this side, in the last two years, we are out there supporting resources no matter where it is in the Northern Territory. I love talking about the Beetaloo. These lights are powered by the Beetaloo gas. The electric vehicles out there are powered by Beetaloo gas. The hair dryer the Member for Johnston uses is run by Beetaloo gas. That is what we are talking about, how good are the resources industry.

To answer part of your question, yes, I have been to Groote Eylandt. I have been there, I have looked at the issues in relation to dewatering. What we are trying to do is make the Territory a better place to invest by offering reduced crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle. If we get those three things right, people will come to the Territory.

The proof is in the pudding, our population has risen, I think it is 1.7%. It is 1.8%; it has gone up even further.

We know that under the previous Labor government it was on the downhill slide because no-one wanted to come here. It was not safe, the economy was falling and going backwards, and lifestyle was going downhill. We are making sure …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I have given the minister an easy question to answer about the transition planning and what he is leading on behalf of the Northern Territory Government when it comes to the Groote Eylandt archipelago.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

DRAFT

Mr MALEY: Yes. I will get back to what we are doing.

We are making sure the Territory is a good place to invest in and to allow people to transition from mining to other jobs. If there is an opportunity to get those jobs up and running in mining or resource sector, we want to make sure that people are able to do that. If people move—we know people move in mining resources from one site to the next site. If we can open more sites, people in the Northern Territory will come here and other people will move from one job to the next job to keep that income going,

We know how important it is to have a good job. There is no point having the best lifestyle in the world if you do not have a job to be able to afford to enjoy it. If we keep concentrating …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I specifically asked about Groote Eylandt. Other than saying that he has been there, he has not answered the question regarding the important transitional planning that Groote Eylandt archipelago is concerned about.

Mr MALEY: I do not think the Leader of the Opposition is listening. I know that she is over there fighting off the knives in her back and trying to keep her chaotic government in some sort of order. I know that she has her own problems behind the scenes.

We are making sure that the resource sector is well resourced to make the Territory a better place. We are reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle because that will make sure the transition in Groote Eylandt is better because people can get new jobs.

We know there have been announcements about staff leaving; we know that some apprentices—if we want to talk about them individually—have already found jobs. It goes back to what I was saying, that if there are more jobs in the resource sector, they would be able to find jobs somewhere else.

Pirlangimpi Road Repairs

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Earlier in the year the federal and Territory governments committed to a $75m joint investment to upgrade Pirlangimpi Road on Melville Island. As you have previously guaranteed that projects under the CLP will be on time and on budget, when will construction on this project commence and when will it be completed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I gave the answer to the member at the last sittings that the tender was going out and that work on Pirlangimpi Road will commence. We know the importance of roads on the mainland and on the islands that surround Darwin and the Northern Territory. I believe that tender is going out. Once that tender is done, it will be assessed. There is a timeframe. I do not know it off the top of my head, but once the tender is assessed and awarded, there is a period for the contractor to start work.

That tender has gone out. The works will commence on those roads at Pirlangimpi. I look forward to that work being done. I look forward to getting out there and seeing it once that work is completed.

When we look at roadworks and tenders let by the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure we see that more than 99% of that work is going to Territory businesses. The good piece out of that will be once that tender is awarded, I am pretty sure that will go to a Territory business. Hopefully a Territory business or, even better, an Aboriginal-controlled business on that island can do those all-important roadworks. There were issues over the Wet, particularly after the cyclone, about people getting around due to the state of that road. It is important to the people there that road gets done.

Once that tender is assessed and awarded, there will be a period for the contractor to start work. Hopefully they will get on with it. It will be difficult before the start of this Wet Season. They may be able to do some preparatory work if it is awarded before then, but I have the funny feeling that it may have to wait until post-Wet Season and start in the Dry Season next year.

Alice Springs Masters Games

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS

DRAFT

Alice Springs has faced severe weather, but we have also seen the incredible resilience of the local community, volunteers and emergency services. The Alice Springs Masters Games started over the weekend. Our CLP government has revived it into a huge drawcard for Central Australia. Visitors come from all over Australia, supporting local businesses and this event which showcases the Territory lifestyle.

I was pleased that representatives of the Alice Springs tourism industry at the G'day Australia event last night publicly praised the value of the Alice Springs Masters Games to the Alice Springs community. Can you update Territorians on how the games are continuing despite these challenges and what they mean for Alice Springs and the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama loves his sport.

Before I start my answer, I let everybody know that only 920 homes now have no power. That number is coming down significantly, which is great news from the crew at Power and Water and everybody who is working together to get those homes back online after the horrific events over the last few days.

The other news I have is that from 9 am tomorrow people who have been impacted from having no power can go to the centre and start the process to get $250. I hear it is a quite an easy process, after the experience we had in the Top End when going through weather events.

I thank Power and Water and the whole Alice Springs community for their resilience. That is true Territory spirit. We have heard that over the last number of days in parliament.

I was in Alice Springs on the weekend, Madam Speaker, in your neck of the woods, to open the Alice Springs Masters Games. I can tell you that Alice Springs is now in the headlines for all the right reasons, finally. Two years ago that was not the case; it made national headlines for really bad stuff happening there. You can certainly feel how things are starting to turn around in Alice Springs.

I was at the opening with my colleagues, the Members for Braitling and Namatjira. Nathan Buckley and the Administrator were there as well. The 1,800 registered participants who were competing from all over Australia and the Territory in the Masters Games were so excited to be there. When they came into that stadium they had their entourage with them, their family and friends who came with them, and it was absolutely buzzing.

It was not only about the opening. Something I noticed over the whole weekend that I spent there was everywhere I went there were crowds of people. I went to Yubu Napa, which is an amazing little art gallery in the centre of town. I have been there a number of times. When I was there on the weekend, there was a whole busload of tourists that were coming. I was like, 'Sorry, I want to do some shopping, but I might come back.' It was just so busy, which is amazing.

I went to Yaye's Cafe, just next to the Araluen Arts Centre, and it was so packed we could barely get a table. I tried the laksa for breakfast. I went to Olive Pink Botanic Gardens and literally could not get a car park. When we got there, there were so many people everywhere. I was amazing. We are talking about the middle of October in Alice Springs. It was fantastic.

I do not know if Labor supports the Alice Springs Masters Games or not yet, because when we were in opposition and they were in government it was cancelled. They could have brought it back earlier but did not; it took six years for it to come back. The Member for Gwoja was in Alice Springs on the weekend and was not at the games with me, which I find very disappointing. I do not know if he or Labor support it, but the CLP does, and we are very proud of it.

NT Health – Thriving Kids Program

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for YOUTH

On 1 October, Australia saw the introduction of Thriving Kids as part of the national reform of the disability sector. Thriving kids represents a significant change in how children with developmental delay and autism with low to moderate support needs will access their support. Can you explain the Northern Territory's approach to Thriving Kids and how families, carers and service providers are helping to shape its implementation.

DRAFT

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Member for Drysdale for the question and also for all the advocacy that he does in the disability space, especially for Autism NT, which is in his electorate. Thriving Kids is a jointly funded Northern Territory and Australian Government initiative that focuses on earlier support for children aged eight and under, and the main focus is around targeting development delay and/or autism who have low to moderate support needs.

One of the biggest challenges that we face here in the Northern Territory is in order to get to the NDIS, they need a diagnosis. That is what Thriving Kids will replace, so they do not need a diagnosis. If there are any concerns the child can be referred on and from there they will go through a pathway, and if a diagnosis is the pathway required, there will be the system there to help them as well.

Thriving Kids started on 1 October as an implementation phase over the next 15 months, which is until 1 January 2028. I was at Darrandirra Child and Family Centre with Member for Karama, as it is in his electorate in Malak, and with Kim Cleaver, the senior manager for community allied health teams from Northern Territory Health. The children's development team in with Northern Territory Health will be primarily providing targeted support. At the same time there are programs that we are currently developing, and the current Have Your Say is open until 18 October.

For the past a couple of weeks there were many places that the Department of People, Sport and Culture—along with the people supporting this project—has been consulting in the community. They had one session in Darwin, one in Katherine, one in Alice Springs. The one in Darwin had 19 attendees, Katherine seven attendees, and Alice Springs 14 attendees.

This information session was to look at how to redevelop this new initiative here in the Territory. Yesterday we had sessions in Palmerston, and there will be sessions in Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek as well. One of the things that we want to hear from the community is because of the changes happening in the NDIS space; this is nothing to do with that. NDIS is separate. Thriving Kids is not replacing NDIS, but we are providing that earlier opportunity by working together with the federal government.

Changes are happening in NDIS, and that is completely different. All focus is about how we can get that support to the child early and then help the child either to go through a pathway that they can access early without a diagnosis or, if there is a diagnosis and if they are at higher needs, there is still the pathway to NDIS as well.

SecureNT Website Advice

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Earlier in your response to my question about Daly River, you told this House that the boil-water alert had been lifted. However, according to your own government SecureNT website, the boil-water alert remains in place.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the official advice from the Secure NT website.

Leave granted.

Mr YOUNG: Who is right? You or your government's official public advice? How are Territorians supposed to trust the information coming from the CLP government when you cannot even get our facts straight?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I said before, the advice I have is that the boil-water alert was lifted on 27 August 2026.

If there is other information available on the website, we are happy to look at the website and the issues that that the community of Nauiyu is facing. I am more than happy to look at the issues. As I said, we have been providing bottled water to the formula-fed infants in that community as a precautionary measure relating to manganese levels and the Australian Drinking Water Guideline requirements.

As the Member for Daly has raised the issue, I am happy to take that away and seek further information from Power and Water in respect of that.

DRAFT

Aeromedical Retrieval Services

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for HEALTH

Supporting Territorians with a better and stronger health system is central to making the Territory the best place to work, live, visit and invest. Having good health services is an important part of the CLP government's commitment to restoring our unique Territory lifestyle.

Lots of people in the electorate of Fannie Bay have members of their family and friends who are spread across the Northern Territory. I lived, worked and invested in Central Australia, the Barkly, East Arnhem and in the Top End over the last 34 years. I know that aeromedical retrieval services are a critical part of the Northern Territory's public health system, providing rapid response aeromedical retrievals and transfers across some of Australia's most remote and geographically challenging areas.

Can you please update the Assembly on how the CLP government is delivering certainty to all Territorians when and where they need it, regardless of where they live?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay knows as well as everybody in this House that delivering aeromedical services not only in the Top End but across the Northern Territory is an extremely important part of our health system.

Our government is focused on restoring our Territory lifestyle. A strong health system is central to that. I recently announced the Royal Flying Doctor Service has been awarded a 10-year contract to provide aeromedical retrieval services in the Top End, Big Rivers and East Arnhem regions. That 10-year contract is at a cost of around $625m. It is a big contract that will include inter-hospital transfers. Under the contract, RFDS will introduce new aircraft to replace the current ageing fleet and support continued delivery of safe and effective aeromedical services for the Northern Territory.

Enhancements include six fixed-winged aircraft operating in and out of Darwin, a different type of aircraft that have shorter take-off and landing capability which will allow access to at least 18 more airstrips in the Top End to be accessed.

RFDS is partnering with Toll Aviation. That will include access to helicopters in the East Arnhem region—an important step with this contract, something that the former Member for Mulka was a strong advocate for. I hope that the new Member for Mulka will follow in his footsteps and work with our government to bring in better services.

The new contract will provide a strong, sustainable aeromedical retrieval service for Territorians. Aeromedical retrieval services are essential in the Northern Territory, particularly where distance and geography can make accessing urgent and specialist healthcare particularly challenging. RFDS, as we all know, has a long history of delivering these services, particularly in remote and regional Australia. We have seen these services in Central Australia for quite some time. We look forward to working with RFDS in providing that critical service across the Top End, Big Rivers and East Arnhem.

I praise the efforts of the previous provider, CareFlight. As we move through that transition, CareFlight will continue to remain an important partner of NT Health through its other contracts. It provides interhospital patient road transfer services between Palmerston and Royal Darwin Hospital, as well as important interstate aeromedical evacuation services from the Top End. Thank you to all the CareFlight pilots, staff, engineers and team for the work that they have been doing.

I look forward to working with RFDS in the future.

Barge Landings – Mulka Electorate

Mr McGRATH to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and LOGISTICS

During the recent by-election campaign residents of Galiwinku, Milingimbi and Ramingining raised the need to upgrade their barge landings which remain the critical access point for delivering food and other essential supplies to our remote communities. I witnessed firsthand that a barge was delayed for hours in Milingimbi due to the state of the current infrastructure. For the residents in my electorate, today will you commit to funding new upgrades to the Milingimbi barge landing and restore the funding you cut in the 2025–26

DRAFT

infrastructure program to the Galiwinku and Ramingining barge landing projects so that these communities can receive essential supplies reliably into the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, these barge landings are important for our remote coastal communities. DLI maintains 14 barge landings servicing remote and coastal island communities, all of which are on Aboriginal land and managed by land councils or the Office of Township Leasing.

Maintaining those barge landings is critical. I speak regularly with the barge operators on some of those landings. They suffer damage on odd occasions, particularly when the tides are difficult, getting in and out. That reliable access supports the regular delivery of goods and services to those communities, which is of course essential for their wellbeing.

Since 2023 consultation on maintaining those barge landings has been ongoing with NLC across the Top End. We still work closely with the land councils to deliver those services. Once we can reach agreement on some of those barge landings, because some of the repairs and access require changes to the section 19 leases, I will be in a far better position to determine the cost of repairs for those barge landings.

I will not know what the cost will be until we can lock down the changes to the section 19 leases. Once we can do that, I will be in a far better position to understand what the cost will be and allocate a budget to it.

We work closely with the land council to determine what these changes will be, along with what we do with the roads. It is a complex process, as you would understand, to try to get all the TOs in those areas together to get consensus and land on a position with the land council on those section 19 leases.

Recently, we had some issues regarding the approach to Milingimbi barge. We are investigating options to improve access to that barge landing. We have dredging issues outside some of those barge landings to get in larger barges. Again, that requires negotiation with the TOs and the land councils because we have to do the work on what that dredging operation will look like. That is just the way it is and it is sometimes difficult to speed up that process to get everybody together.

I am committed to doing those barge landings. I have been working with Catherine King, my federal counterpart, on those barge landings. She understands how important they are. Sadly, the process is not as simple as I would like it to be, but if we can speed it up and get it going, as soon as I can I will get those barge landings done.

Skills NT Plan

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Can you outline to the Assembly how the release of the Northern Territory's new skills plan will help us further build the skilled workforce that we need in the future and how initiatives such as WorldSkills will inspire young Territorians to pursue vocational careers and play a role in rebuilding our economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, recently we announced our skills plan, which underpins our commitment to rebuild the economy by delivering a strong and capable workforce, having careers counsellors and VET counsellors in schools and working with business and industry. We are focused on building real jobs in the Territory and strengthening our key industries—for example, energy, Defence, agriculture, tourism, hospitality, gas and mining.

Our VET system must be strong and respond to actual demand. Our skills plan ensures industry is involved in shaping the training it needs now and into the future. This is about positioning us well for the future and ensuring there are clear pathways to employment opportunities for young Territorians leaving school. Our skills plan has a strong focus on school-based apprenticeships and ensuring clear pathways from school to VET.

We announced the skills plan and had the awards function on the Saturday night. Then, as the Member for Casuarina stated, we went to WorldSkills in Shanghai. I told people that it is like the Olympics for tradies. It was great to meet with people in Shanghai and deliver our skills plan to them. There is a lot of similarities in the countries that are looking for a skilled workforce.

DRAFT

Thirty-eight skillaroos (tradies) from Australia who went to Shanghai. The competition was held in a place three times the size of the MCG; it was huge. I was pleased to join the federal minister, Jason Clare, and the minister from South Australia. There were 80 people supporting skilled members in industries such as bricklaying, tiling, mechanics, IT—you name it. There was hairdressing, beauty therapy, spray painting and floristry. There was so many things that our tradies from Australia were competing in on the world stage. There was a girl from the Northern Territory who pulled out at the last minute. However, a girl from Malone's Butchery will go to a competition next year. This is a great opportunity for our tradies to have aspirations for the future.

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

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Defibrillators – Remote Schools

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 115, I wish to provide a response to a question from the Opposition Leader that I took on notice yesterday.

It always pays, Opposition Leader, to check the claims being made. I highlight that in this instance the Opposition Leader referred to a 2020 Facebook post proposing a trial rollout of defibrillators that could be undertaken in schools in the Barkly region in communities that did not have a health clinic. I point out that this was not a CLP election commitment prior to the last election.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 71

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I support this amendment Bill, which is another measure that our government has to reduce antisocial behaviour and violence.

We all know that alcohol-fuelled violence throughout the community anywhere in the Northern Territory is a scourge that all our communities suffer. I am proud that we are introducing another measure to ensure we have stronger community safety provision. We said from the beginning it is our priority and we are listening to Territorians.

In my electorate of Drysdale the impacts of alcohol-fuelled harm is seen everywhere. I am proud to support the minister in maintaining the rage with the main priority the people of the Northern Territory charged us with, which was reducing crime, antisocial behaviour and improving community safety.

Thank you, minister, I am glad to be supporting this measure in that main priority of community safety.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I before I go into detail on the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026, I will talk briefly about why the subject alcohol keeps being raised in this Chamber. We have heard this from other members as well.

It is not an abstract policy problem. Alcohol harm shows up in our hospitals, our courts, our child protection system and our family violence numbers well above the national average. Alcohol harm falls hardest on the same vulnerable communities over and over.

We know that Northern Territorians drinks more per person than in any other state or territory; that 40% of Northern Territory adults drink at risky levels against a national average of 31%; that NT Police recorded close to 200 alcohol-related assaults a week last year and nearly half of those assaults involved alcohol and two-thirds of them were linked to domestic violence.

A 2024 coronial inquest looked at the deaths of 87 women killed by their partners in the Northern Territory since the year 2000. The Coroner found that every male perpetrator was intoxicated at the time. I note that alcohol does not cause domestic violence, but it exacerbates it. We continue to face a domestic violence crisis in the Territory. It is our real crime crisis that takes up most of our police time and most of our prison space. Women are killed at a rate seven times higher than in the rest of Australia.

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I also note in the Chamber that tragically, since our last sittings, three women, including two children under 18, have allegedly been killed by domestic violence. In this Chamber today I acknowledge those tragic deaths.

The cost of alcohol harm in our community is unacceptable, however you measure it; whether it is in health, justice, community safety or the broader toll on the Territory. Supply availability and enforcement settings shapes how much harm this Territory carries. We heard from across the Chamber about the harm that alcohol does; that it is severe, persistent and must be addressed. That is the backdrop for this Bill.

Territorians deserve our liquor laws to be more than incremental technical fixes debated one at a time. They need a coherent, evidence-based framework that ties supply measures to treatment, prevention and family support and that this Assembly can hold government to account against.

The minister has talked about the comprehensive plan. I heard him make reference to that in the Chamber earlier today. However, the plan that is publicly available is neither comprehensive or robust. This Bill is an example of just that. It is not enough to meet a complex and sustained social issue like alcohol harm with piecemeal reform.

With that in mind, what does this Bill actually do? According to the explanatory statement, three things. It makes targeted fixes to the *Liquor Act* to make it work better and more clearly in practice. It modernises how liquor licences are handled, described as simpler processes, stronger compliance and enforcement and less unnecessary red tape. It reforms alcohol protection areas, turning the interim protections into permanent general restricted areas and setting up a clear process for communities to change or lift that status.

I will talk about them in turn. I note that, like some other members in this Chamber, I am on the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, which this Bill was referred to. We received many submissions which were helpful in understanding this Bill. The committee made recommendations as a whole committee, which I will talk to briefly now as well. I am hoping they may be addressed by the government.

First, the shift from the interim alcohol protected areas to general restricted areas with no expiry date. This has strong support from the people who have direct experience with alcohol harm. Organisations that remember what happened—we heard about this in the Chamber today—when the Commonwealth's Stronger Future alcohol restrictions lapsed in July 2022 describe the effects of that situation as disastrous and entirely predictable and avoidable. Making the restrictions permanent with no automatic expiry as this Bill does closes off that risk of a repeat.

What is underneath this reform is important to the community alcohol plan process. If a community wants to vary or lift a general restricted area, the consultation behind that needs to be real, independent and checkable, not just a box ticking exercise.

Submissions to the scrutiny committee propose that the director notify all the stakeholders who are actively affected by alcohol in the community, including health, education, aged care and women's services, before accepting a plan. They had clear proposals that consultation on any plan letting alcohol back in should be run by an independent body and that where a community is asked to approve a plan, the Northern Territory Electoral Commission run a secret ballot to certify that it was free and fair.

The question that matters here is very simple. What independent check will exist to make sure that a community alcohol plan reflects what the whole community wants, not just the loudest or most powerful voices in it? We hear those stories all the time from people who do have the loudest voices, talking over those who are most at risk of harm.

This points to a bigger gap—one that the Bill does not address and which I have raised before in this Chamber. We are now dealing with alcohol harm Bill by Bill, each one debated more or less on its own. That makes it hard for this Assembly or the community to judge whether what we are doing is working. If we want our response to be comprehensive and effective, the government needs to put the whole picture on the table, the restriction and the investment that must go together so that measures like this one can be judged against a real strategy, not voted on piece by piece.

We do not have a comprehensive Northern Territory alcohol action plan, one that ties supply measures, like general restricted areas and banning notices to real sustained investment in treatment, prevention, family support and spells out how those pieces fit together. What we do have is the recently released plan to tackle problem drinking, which I assume is what the minister was referring to earlier. Given how much weight that document is meant to carry, it is worth having a closer look at it.

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The first thing that becomes clear is that this is actually a plan for crime; it is not a plan for health. It is not health strategy; it is a chapter of the government's crime reduction agenda. Its own stated vision is to reduce crime by tackling problem drinking and enforcing accountability. Three of its four focus areas, driving change, taking control of public places and strengthening consequences, are built around enforcement offences and penalties. Only one early intervention deals with prevention and the root causes.

Harmful drinking in the Northern Territory needs to be treated as a health problem, not a criminal one. A plan that leads with policing, punishment and treats health and treatment as an afterthought, has the emphasis backwards and compounds the harm rather than resolving it. The plan also leans hard on measures already rushed through, especially the extension of the banned drinker orders from seven days to 28. In the first month after that change, police issued 1,625 people with these longer orders. The plan calls that an additional opportunity to connect with support services but gives no detail on funded treatment capacity, on wait times, on referral pathways to match that scale of need. A longer order is not the same as a treatment pathway.

We all know that more available alcohol means more use and more harm and the 2017 Riley review gave the Territory some of the strongest availability controls in the country, yet this plan says almost nothing about supply. There is no mention of restoring a minimum unit price, which the government scrapped against the advice of two major evaluations. There is no mention of the alcohol industry at all, an industry with a direct conflict of interest between harm minimisation and profit, which South Australia's Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence called a commercial determination of violence, recommending harm minimisation be made the paramount object of liquor law for exactly that reason.

A plan that does not name the industry or say how government will guard against its influence leaves that door wide open. The same consultation problem that I talked about a moment ago applies here too. There is nothing in this document to show it was built in partnership with the communities and the services which will carry it out or wear the impact, including organisations that are doing this work well now or which need long-term funding certainty and not another set of aspirational dot points; nor does the plan to set a target for reducing harm, a timeframe to hold government to or any mechanism for independent evaluation. It lists indicators that the government already publishes. Publishing data is not the same as committing to a result.

None of this is an argument against every measure in the plan. Some of its treatment and referral initiatives are welcome and should be supported and properly funded, but a comprehensive plan to address alcohol harm in the Northern Territory is something that everyone in this Chamber believes is imperative to address. It should be led by health, not by policing; would be honest about the role of supply in the alcohol industry; would be designed with the communities it affects; and would commit to measuring outcomes we can track so that we can see whether we are, in fact, reducing harm and making the Northern Territory safer.

I return to the Bill and two of the areas which the inquiry held heard significant concerns. The first was weakening scrutiny of who gets to hold a licence. I heard the Treasurer say that we need to ensure existing protections remain. I agree with that 100%. One of my concerns about this Bill is that it talks about removing unnecessary regulatory burdens or reducing red tape, but this must never come at the potential cost of people’s safety.

This Bill drops the requirement for someone taking over a licence to show that them doing so is in the public interest and will not harm the community—a test that still applies to new licensed applicants. Alcohol licensing carries real social and health consequences. The same fit-and-proper person test and public interest test should apply whether a licence is new or just changing hands. On paper this could sound like a small administrative change, but currently if a licensee wants to transfer their licence to a business partner, a family member or a new operator, the transfer is checked as if it were a brand-new application; public interest, community impact and fitness to hold the licence are tested.

Under this Bill, that safeguard goes. The new applicant is assumed to be a fit-and-proper person unless someone comes forward with evidence otherwise. The director no longer has to go looking for that evidence. So who checks? Nobody has to. A licence with a troubled history could pass to a new name with less scrutiny than it takes to open a bank account. The neighbours who have been complaining for years will have no say in a change of control that they might not even know has happened. That is a real drop in protection.

The explanatory statement for this Bill gives no reason why it is necessary or what problem this is solving and why solving it means weakening scrutiny of who holds a liquor licence in the Territory. I note that this is one of the issues that the scrutiny committee had concerns about and made recommendations on. The recommendation specifically was that this clause be amended so that the commission may only vary the conditions of a licence or authority if the commission, in considering the community impact and public interest

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requirements, is satisfied that the variation is necessary to prevent or minimise the risk of harm to the community or is in the public interest.

If that recommendation from the committee is not taken up, I will move an amendment to make that investigation mandatory, not optional; in plain terms, before a licence can be transferred, the director must check whether the incoming holder is fit and proper, not just have the option to do so. I will move this because an investigation that never has to happen cannot do the job of presumption of fitness that the Bill assumes it does.

The 90-day banning notice was also something that the scrutiny committee made a recommendation about. The Bill extends the maximum length of a police-issued banning notice from 14 days to 90 days and widens the list of offences that can trigger one. We heard in the committee that there is no evidence that the current 14-day limit is not working. There is no evidence that 90 days will work any better or add anything to anyone's safety.

Police's own 2024–25 data shows that very few people get more than one notice under the current scheme. Stretching a scheme that already lands unevenly without evidence that improves safety is not a neutral change. Fourteen days as the default length of a banning notice, with a 90-day maximum available only when a person has been charged, and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the offending was alcohol-related, is an amendment that I will move today. In plain terms, no-one should get the longer notice just on suspicion.

Under this Bill, that order could be issued without a charge being laid and without there being any evidence that the person was affected by alcohol. That widens this Bill from managing access to public space from not just people who are alcohol affected but to anyone.

I strongly support the scrutiny committee's recommendation that the Bill be amended so that a banned person may also enter a high-risk area to access essential services or attend another place in appropriate circumstances as determined by police. The examples given in the explanatory statement are minimal, without explicitly outlining that someone banned from a high-risk area for three months could not access a supermarket, bank, education facility or much of anywhere else they need to be. In regional centres and in town, that is not an inconvenience; it is close to unworkable. It means that people will be unable to do their shopping or go to the bank. If they do, they will be committing a crime under the Act.

If the scrutiny committee's recommendation on that is not taken up, I will move an amendment to guarantee that access as well and make sure that there are clear examples set out in the Bill. It is not an adversarial ask; it is the committee's considered view reached after hearing the evidence. It will be in everyone's interests that it is reflected in the Bill that we vote on today.

The committee also recommended that the government review how the banning notice scheme is operating after three years. I support that recommendation. The shift from interim alcohol protected areas to general restricted areas is good policy supported by people who live with alcohol harm every day, but I do not support weakening scrutiny on alcohol licences or extending banning notices to 90 days without any evidence that this will reduce alcohol harm or improve community safety, and without ensuring that people can access essential services. I will move amendments in both of these areas.

Everyone agrees about the serious impact that alcohol has on the health and wellbeing of individual Territorians and the Territory as a whole. We will not achieve meaningful sustained reductions in alcohol harm through punitive reactive responses and by removing reasonable protections from the *Liquor Act* in the name of reducing red tape.

If we are really committed to reducing alcohol harm, we need a comprehensive evidence-based harm reduction strategy which includes prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, treatment and support and which addresses why people are drinking harmful amounts in the first place and invests in the things that help people and communities thrive.

The reality is that the Northern Territory could have the best alcohol strategy in the world, one that everyone benefits from. We could reduce massive health and social burdens with a comprehensive plan. Although I welcome many of the changes in this Bill and the opportunity to put forward further amendments, I also use this opportunity to call on the government to develop a comprehensive Northern Territory alcohol harm reduction strategy that is grounded in evidence, shaped by communities, focused on prevention and accountability and backed by the services and long-term investment needed to make a difference so that an

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issue that is harming so many Territorians does not have to keep being addressed with piecemeal amendments.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Liquor Amendment Bill, which will continue to strengthen laws regarding unlawful drinking in the Territory and fix the mess that the previous government left behind.

When I was campaigning and put up my hand to represent the people of Palmerston in Blain, there were people drinking in parks everywhere. Alcohol-fuelled violence was an everyday occurrence in Palmerston. In our parks there was broken glass everywhere. When I was walking along the streets of Palmerston, knocking on doors, I regularly had to report broken glass on the footpaths to council. I am proud to report that now the rate of broken glass is greatly diminished from that dark time two years ago.

It was a common occurrence for cars to be stolen and used to ramraid facilities that had alcohol. The alcohol would then be stolen and consumed, and lead to further offending.

The Member for Drysdale commented. I remember driving through his electorate, through Gray, past Dunbar Park opposite the shops, and there were people everywhere unlawfully drinking in the parks. What did the previous government do about it? Nothing. It was too busy managing the media, looking after its mates and carrying on in the media. What was it doing to look after Territorians? Nothing because alcohol-related harm got worse, month after month.

I am proud to be part of a government that is taking real action to drive down alcohol-fuelled violence and harm and make life better for Territorians. There is always more work to be done, but when I drive around Palmerston things are so much better now. Dunbar Park is nice. I used to go past and I could count between 20 and 30 people drinking unlawfully. Now I am flat out if I see one. How did that happen? This government brought back the offence of drinking in public and made it not just unlawful but also an offence so that police had powers to do something. This government brought in the police public safety officers, sworn police officers whose dedicated job is to go around and nip antisocial behaviour in the bud, such as unlawful drinking in public spaces. The drinking circle at lunchtime turns into the aggravated assaults and domestic violence at 9 pm.

Other members have covered Alice Springs pretty well. The previous government put a bandaid fix over the lapsing of Stronger Futures. We are here to fix it properly.

If the Member for Johnston goes to the NT Government alcohol policy website, she will see that there is a bunch of good stats. If you compare August 2024 with the last reported month of July, all the stats are down. For alcohol-related assault offences involving domestic violence in the NT in August 2024, there were 66 in Darwin and 53 in July this year; and in Palmerston there were 36 in August 2024 and in July this year there were 24, a decrease of 12. For alcohol-related assaults in Darwin there were 98 two years ago and in July this year there were 87. In Palmerston two years ago there were 53 and in July this year there were 30. If those kind of decreases had been recorded under the previous government, it would have trumpeted that from the rooftops. This is the result of our policies and hard work. This is real action and decreases in harm.

If you want a comprehensive alcohol policy, go and dust one off. It is called the Riley review. The respected Supreme Court Justice did the Riley review on alcohol, and alcohol harm went up subsequently. However, we are doing the hard work and reducing harm.

I support this Bill and commend it to the Assembly.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, at its heart this Bill is about balance. The Territory's liquor framework must achieve two objectives at the same time: it must support responsible businesses and allow them to operate with confidence and it must provide strong protections that reduce alcohol-related harm and keep our communities safe. Good regulation can do both. It should not create unnecessary barriers for Territorians who do the right thing; nor should it compromise community safety. This Bill seeks the balance to achieve that.

Hospitality NT described this Bill as a package of balanced reforms that will reduce unnecessary administrative burden while strengthening natural justice for hospitality businesses. Retail Drinks Australia similarly said that the Bill contains targeted regulatory and administrative amendments and described many of the reforms as sensible regulatory cleanup and modernisation. Those comments reinforce exactly what this Bill is intended to do.

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The most significant reform contained in this Bill is the transition of interim alcohol protected areas into the general restricted area framework. This government will not repeat the mistakes of the past Labor government. Territorians will always remember what happened when alcohol restrictions lapsed in 2022 under Labor. We saw rivers of grog flow into vulnerable communities and towns, with crime escalating and violence increasing. Territorians and businesses suffered. We are ensuring those important protections continue and, more importantly, also empower communities to have a choice.

If a community wishes to vary or revoke a general restricted area, there is now a clear process. When this process involves reducing restrictions, a community alcohol plan is required. The community-led Harm Reduction Unit within the Department of Health will continue to work with communities on preparing these plans, including arranging funding for appropriate programs as required. Ultimately, it requires the commission to be satisfied that any change is in the public interest and will not significantly adversely affect the Territory community. That is local decision-making supported by proper safeguards.

Increasing the timeframe for banning notices does not stop a person from going about their normal business, whether that is attending education, shopping, accessing medical care or government services, attending religious activities or taking the kids to sport or other events. It prevents a person from entering licensed venues in a high-risk area such as the CBD.

We know that when communities feel safe, locals can enjoy our unique lifestyle, businesses can invest with confidence and our visitors stay longer. We have seen this over the last two years, and perhaps they will even choose to stay. I always say that when hospitality thrives, the Territory thrives, and of course our lifestyle can be restored.

This Bill is about building on the hard work we have already done, continuing to back the community and victims and reducing red tape for businesses so that it is less burdensome.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Assembly will consider the Liquor Amendment Bill 2026, serial 71, together with amendment schedule 71OPP, circulated by the Member for Nightcliff, and amendment schedule 71IND, circulated by the Member for Johnston.

Clauses 1 to 10, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 11:

J DAVIS: Is it correct to say that the requirement for the director to send an invoice before a licensee is suspended for unpaid fees has been removed?

Ms BOOTHBY: The expansion of the automatic suspension reflects the penalty now provided for non-payment of the fee creating a clear and persistent consequence for non-payment while allowing the licence to resume once the annual licence fee, and any late payment fee, are paid. This encourages timely compliance and avoids more complex enforcement action for routine fee matters.

J DAVIS: Does that mean that a venue that misses a fee deadline by one day could be suspended with no warning?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes.

J DAVIS: How will a small business avoid being shut down by a bounced email or a late bank transfer?

Ms BOOTHBY: They have to pay their fee.

J DAVIS: If it was no fault of their own and there are unpaid fees their licence will be cancelled?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes. Once they pay it, they can then reopen.

Clause 11 agreed to.

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Clause 12:

J DAVIS: In the explanatory statement it is not clear why the fit and proper person check has become optional. Why is that that now optional?

Ms BOOTHBY: The reason is an existing licensee has already undergone assessment under the Act and the presumption reduces the duplication, but it is not absolute. It may be displaced by contrary evidence and further information may still be required.

J DAVIS: Cheques are not required for every transfer, but they may be for some. Am I understanding that correct?

Ms BOOTHBY: It is only for existing licensees. New ones still have to go through the full process.

J DAVIS: Sorry, can you say that again?

Ms BOOTHBY: It is only existing licensees. New ones still have to go through the full process.

J DAVIS: I move amendment one, clause 12 proposed section 72(7) to admit 'may' and insert 'must'. It is a one word change. A liquor licence is a privilege that carries real responsibility and every incoming owner or change should be checked. It should not depend on discretion. I move the motion.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clause 13:

J DAVIS: Clause 13 removes the public interest in community impact test for transfers. Once again, the explanatory statement gives no reason for lowering the bar. What is the basis for removing the public Interest and community impact test for transfers?

Ms BOOTHBY: It is already an existing licence. Only new licences have to go through that process.

J DAVIS: If a licence is transferred, there is no check for the new licensee, who it has been transferred to?

Ms BOOTHBY: The process has already been through with the new application and it is just a transfer from one location to the next.

J DAVIS: If someone was transferring from a quiet hotel to a nightclub, there would be no public interest in community impact tests?

Ms BOOTHBY: It still has to go to the commission. The director does the application, it still goes to the commission and then it is awarded or not based on that.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Clauses 14 and 15, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 16:

J DAVIS: The explanatory statement says that clause 16 clarifies the commission's power to vary licence conditions. The scrutiny committee heard that it narrows the list that the commission must consider from the community impact requirements down to risk of harm. What is the basis for narrowing the test from community impact requirements to risk of harm?

Ms BOOTHBY: The amendments allow the commission to respond to community harm and public interest issues while strengthening procedural fairness for licensees. Written notice, reasons and an option to respond ensure decisions are transparent, evidence informed and balanced.

J DAVIS: I just note for the Chamber, and for my fellow committee members who may also want to speak to this, that the committee recommended that clause 16 of the Bill be amended so that the commission may

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vary the conditions of a licence or authority only if the commission, considering the community impact and public interest requirements, is satisfied that the variation is necessary to prevent or minimise the risk of harm to the community or in the public interest. Has the minister considered that recommendation from the committee?

Ms BOOTHBY: I have, and I have not accepted it.

J DAVIS: Can you explain why?

Ms BOOTHBY: Throughout the debate we heard that this is about balance. We have to balance what licensees are required to do as well as community impact. Like I said, the commission can respond to community harm and public interest issues while strengthening procedural fairness for licensees.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clauses 17 to 21, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 22:

J DAVIS: This clause removes the 60% community support threshold from the Act. We heard a lot of evidence about this in the committee—the question and concerns on both sides. What will be the process to ensure that community alcohol plans are accepted by and are appropriate for the whole community? How will you ensure that the people most impacted by alcohol harm—women, older people and children—are part of this decision-making?

Ms BOOTHBY: That will be prescribed under the regulations, and it is a body of work that we are doing with the Department of Health.

J DAVIS: I note that, and I think we talked about this in the scrutiny committee, there is good work done on the ground already. It is not a criticism of that; I just want to make sure that there is a robust system in place to ensure that people who are most vulnerable are included.

Ms BOOTHBY: We agree.

Clause 22 agreed to.

Clauses 23 and 24, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 25:

Mr SMELT: Clause 25 inserts the specific locations into the Act regarding a healthcare facility and access to government services. I am keen to understand why this section of the Act was not inverted to say where people could not attend rather than having to explain where they can attend?

Ms BOOTHBY: I understand where you are coming from. Section 218 of the *Liquor Act 2019* provides that it is a defence to a prosecution for an offence against subsection (1) if the defendant has a reasonable excuse. This provision allows individual circumstances to be considered when determining whether a person had a reasonable excuse for entering a high-risk area in breach of a banning notice. It keeps those rules clear while protecting people who have a genuine need to enter a banned area. It can cover unexpected situations without the Act having to list every possible reason.

The banning notices are there for a reason. If someone needs to go to the supermarket or somewhere else, they can, but we have to protect the community so that they do not go into those high-risk areas.

Mr SMELT: Why not just say that people with banning notices cannot attend hospitality locations or licensed venues and that type of thing, rather than leaving this grey area and discretion?

Ms BOOTHBY: Because if we start listing them all, what if we miss something? That is why this is an overarching catch-all for those reasonable excuses, which is clear in the *Liquor Act*. It allows circumstances to be assessed on their individual merits, including unforeseen or changing needs, without requiring legislation to anticipate every service or communicate every circumstance that may warrant access.

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J DAVIS: A couple of specific exceptions are outlined, though. Given that you are saying there is already under section 218 a broad reasonable excuse, why have two things been specifically named?

Ms BOOTHBY: A healthcare facility or somewhere to receive medical treatment or even attending a place to access government services are critical things that people would want to access. That is why we have included them. Other things could be far ranging. Something could be essential for people to live their lives with dignity or they might have children or elderly parents—whatever it might be. There is a million things it could be. The Act having specific section about a defence to a prosecution for an offence if the defendant has a reasonable excuse allows that sort of coverage to catch all or any of those other things and it can be determined.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members that we have three amendments on this clause. The recommended order of those amendments is the Member for Johnston's amendment 2, then the Member for Nightcliff's amendment and then the Member for Johnston's amendment 3 because they relate to different parts of the clause. That is why I will go in that sequence. If you want to continue general questions, that is fine.

Mr SMELT: Evidence presented to the committee showed that 87% of banning notices issued in 2024–25 were issued to people who identified as Aboriginal, with the remaining 13% recorded as 'not stated'. The committee also heard concerns about the impact of longer notices on people experiencing homelessness, alcohol dependency, mental health issues and other forms of disadvantage.

What assessment has the government undertaken of the likely impact of increasing these notices from 14 days to 90 days on Aboriginal Territorians and other vulnerable groups?

Ms BOOTHBY: We have made it clear that we are trying to address alcohol harm on our streets. That is why we are taking these measures.

Mr SMELT: Yes, but it is a specific impact. The data that was presented to the committee showed that was overwhelmingly on a particular cohort of Territorians. How have you taken that into account in the crafting of this Bill?

Ms BOOTHBY: We have moved it from 14 days to 90 days deliberately. Police will now have those powers to be able to do that to keep our community safe.

Mr SMELT: There was no assessment of the impact on the people that will most apply to?

Ms BOOTHBY: Member for Nightcliff, I know you are new, but that recommendation for it going from 14 days to 90 days was a recommendation of the three-year review that Labor handed down before they lost government.

Mr SMELT: I do not think that was entirely relevant to my question. The question was about whether an assessment has been undertaken by the government with regard to vulnerable cohorts of people, including the 87% of banning notices that were issued to people who identified as Aboriginal.

Ms BOOTHBY: I have answered the question. I guess we could go back and look at your Labor records to see what the report looked like.

Mr SMELT: Under the existing framework, a police officer can issue a banning notice where they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a person is committing or has committed a relevant offence. A person does not necessarily have to have been charged or convicted before a notice is issued. Can you explain why the government determined that the same threshold that currently applies to a notice of up to 14 days would still be appropriate for a notice that could restrict a person's movements for up to 90 days?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is a similar question to the one asked before, but it is asked differently. I have answered that question.

Mr SMELT: No, this is about those thresholds. We are saying that people do not have to be charged or convicted before the notice is issued. This is a change from 14 days to 90 days. We want to understand why that threshold has not changed.

Ms BOOTHBY: To help out the Member for Nightcliff, I have a list here of the offences for which banning notices were issued during the year. I will run through a couple of examples.

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They were breach of bail, assault of a person, aggravated assault, assault of a worker where victim suffers harm and burglary. Think about these kinds of offences where these banning notices are used. The evidence speaks for itself.

Mr SMELT: Did the government consider requiring an additional threshold such as independent review or court involvement before the banning notice is extended beyond 14 days?

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

Mr SMELT: Why was that approach rejected?

Ms BOOTHBY: Breach of bail, assault of a person, aggravated assault, damage to property, nuisance public drinking, possessing cannabis in a public place, refusing to or failing to leave—I could go on and on. There is the evidence.

Mr SMELT: A number of submissions raised the concern that longer banning notices may restrict behaviour for a period of time without addressing the underlying factors contributing to harmful alcohol use or offending. Where a person receives a banning notice, does this legislation or the government's implementation plan provide for that person to receive an alcohol or other drug assessment, treatment or other therapeutic support during the period of the notice?

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

Mr SMELT: Can you explain why that there would not be an alternative plan or pathway for someone who is in that situation of having the banning notice?

Ms BOOTHBY: These people have been banned for a reason. They need to go and get help.

Mr SMELT: You are saying the government is not providing any pathway for someone who has received that notice to change their behaviour?

Ms BOOTHBY: There are many pathways available to people who need support through many of the agencies. These banning notices are issued by police and they will be moving to 90 days.

J DAVIS: Under this clause, I do not think this was discussed in the explanatory statement, but there are new trigger offences. Is that is that right? For example, shoplifting.

Ms BOOTHBY: The amendments expand the list of applicable offences that may trigger that banning notice or exclusion notice. They include additional liquor-related offences, violence-related offences and specified offences under the Criminal Code and the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*. The purpose is to ensure banning notices better reflect the offending that police routinely encounter and allow earlier intervention where a conduct presents a risk to community safety.

J DAVIS: For the police to issue a notice they do not need to charge someone. Is that correct?

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

J DAVIS: Sorry?

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

J DAVIS: Okay. And they do not need proof that alcohol was involved?

Ms BOOTHBY: Banning notices are used for other things as well, not just alcohol. It might be fighting in public or something like that. So having alcohol on someone or not is irrelevant. They can use those banning notices when the police feel like they need to use the banning notice.

J DAVIS: This change in this Act that extends banning notices to 90 days extends to banning notices in general, not just in relation to the *Liquor Act*.

Ms BOOTHBY: That is correct, yes.

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J DAVIS: When we vote on this today, we are voting on extending banning notices to 90 days for—I do not know what other legislation this might come under.

Ms BOOTHBY: I just let you know about the other related expansions of applicable offences. Do you want me to go through those again?

J DAVIS: No, no. Just to clarify so that I understand what I am or am not voting for, that these banning notices extend beyond liquor-related offences—or offences where someone is affected by alcohol.

Ms BOOTHBY: It also includes alcohol-related violence, riotous conduct, breach of the peace which is occurring on or near a licenced premises, and they also clarify that licensees should have reasonable opportunity to take steps unless immediate action is needed to reduce an imminent public safety risk.

J DAVIS: We are turning what is meant to be an alcohol harm tool into a general movement ban.

Ms BOOTHBY: We are giving the police the tools to do their job.

J DAVIS: Essentially we are extending a general movement ban to 90 days. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move my amendment. This amendment says that notices need to remain at 14 days, as they are, unless the person has been charged and unless the officer believes on reasonable grounds that the person was affected by alcohol when committing an offence. In those cases, the full 90 days would remain. I move number 2 after clause 25(1A), insert after one 215(1)—sorry, after section 215(1), insert (1A), 'Despite subsection (1), the specified period of a banning notice must not exceed 14 days unless: (a) the person is charged with the offence for which the notice is issued; and (b) the police officer who issues the notice believes on reasonable grounds there is evidence that the person was affected by alcohol when committing the offence.

Amendment not agreed to.

Mr SMELT: I move an amendment to clause 25. It is a straightforward and practical amendment; it is not about removing banning notices, preventing police from doing their job or diminishing the importance of community safety. It is about making sure that when this parliament gives police the power to restrict a person's movements up to 90 days, the law is sufficiently clear that those restrictions do not unnecessarily prevent that person from accessing the basic services they need for life.

The amendment provides that a person subject to a banning notice may enter a high-risk area to access an essential service or obtain essential goods or to attend another place where they have been permitted to do so by a police officer.

It then provides practical examples of what an essential service may include. We have listed supermarkets, education and childcare, transport, banking, local government, housing, housing and homelessness services, domestic and family violence, faith-based and organised youth services.

This amendment has not come out of nowhere; it draws directly from the recommendations 3 and 4 of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee's report.

Recommendation 3 was that a person subject to a banning notice should also be able to enter or remain in a high-risk area to access essential services or to attend another place in appropriate circumstances as determined by police.

Recommendation 4 called for examples to be included in the legislation to make the operation of those exceptions clearer. This was a recommendation of the committee after it considered the evidence put to it by stakeholders. It is important to emphasise this was simply not an opposition recommendation. The scrutiny committee is a government majority and bipartisan committee.

Members have already participated in the scrutiny process, considered the evidence and supported a report recommending that this issue be addressed. What we are now asking the Assembly to do is to give practical effect to that work, just as we did with the amendments to the *Traffic Act* earlier this week. The need for this amendment is clear through the submissions to the committee, a number of organisations working directly with people affected by these laws raised concerns about what happens in practice when someone receives a banning notice.

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The committee heard that high-risk areas can cover substantial parts of our CBD and town centres. For someone living in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs, being excluded from a high-risk area may mean being excluded from an area where many of the services they rely upon are located.

For people coming into regional centres from remote communities, the alternatives can be even more limited. Stakeholders specifically raised access to food and groceries, household necessities, education, banking, community and social services, transport, public facilities, libraries, safe houses, recreation programs and family responsibilities. They also raised access to domestic and family violence support and the ability of a person to move through a high-risk area in order to reach safety.

The committee accepted that concern. It found that because of the significant length of the proposed banning period, a notice could affect a person's ability to access essential services, particularly where there are limited alternatives outside the high-risk area. The committee also found that putting examples into the legislation would help clarify how these provisions should operate in practice. There can be a substantial difference between what legislation technically permits and what a person on the ground understands that legislation to permit.

If someone receives a banning notice and believes that notice means that they cannot go into this area for any reason, that person may not go to the supermarket, they may not go to their bank, they may not access housing or homelessness support. They may not attend an education or domestic violence service. They may not attend a youth service with their child. That may occur even where the legislation was never intended to prevent them doing those things. When we are extending the possible duration of these notices from 14 to 90 days that uncertainty becomes much more consequential.

No-one should realistically be expected to go three months without accessing essential services simply because the legislation was not clear enough or not prescriptive enough about what they were permitted to do. That does not mean banning notices cannot serve an important preventative measure, but it does mean we should be careful about creating unintended consequences that go beyond the preventative purpose.

This amendment also retains an important role for police. It allows a person to attend another place within the high-risk area where a police officer permits it, so this does not create an unrestricted exemption. It gives police the flexibility to deal with individual circumstances that parliament cannot possibly anticipate in advance.

I therefore hope the government will support this amendment today. It preserves the banning notice regime and preserves police discretion, but it makes it clear that a banning notice should not unnecessarily prevent a Territorian from buying food, accessing transport, going to the bank, seeking housing assistance, escaping family violence or accessing the community services they need. That is a sensible safeguard. It responds directly to the evidence provided by stakeholders, it reflects the work and recommendations of the scrutiny committee and, most importantly, it provides greater certainty to the people who actually have to understand and comply with these notices on the ground.

I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

Mr MACKAY: Mr Deputy Speaker, what the Member for Nightcliff is trying to do is to completely water down and remove the purpose of these banning notices. The government Bill states that people can enter the high-risk areas for the purposes of going to healthcare facilities or another place to receive medical treatment or to access a government service. What the Member for Nightcliff would like to do is get rid of the idea of a high-risk area where the intent is to make sure these people are removed from these areas where they are at risk. He would like them to be walking past the bottle shops, he would like them to have any excuse to be in that area, because he does not care about victims of crime; he only cares about the perpetrators.

J DAVIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak in support of this motion. I have a similar motion. As the Member for Nightcliff said, this was also a recommendation from the scrutiny committee, from the cross-parliament scrutiny committee. It is in no way designed to enable people to go to a bottle shop; it is so people can access essential services over a period of three months, which are completely concentrated in the areas that they will be now banned from. It is a sensible recommendation. It does not do anything to threaten community safety; it does something actually to keep people safe so they can access the services they need.

Mr SMELT: In light of the comments from the Member for Goyder, I would just like to check with the minister that a person can walk to a supermarket and that they could walk past the bottle shop on the way to the supermarket.

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Ms BOOTHBY: I have answered that question. It is all about that defence mechanism in that section in that section 218 of the *Liquor Act*. It is a defence to a prosecution for an offence against subsection (1) if the defendant has a reasonable excuse.

Mr SMELT: Is the Member for Goyder incorrect in his assertion?

Mr MALEY: She has answered the question.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 25 agreed to.

Clause 26, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 27:

J DAVIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, just a couple of questions. Is it correct that the warning signs currently required by section 181 for general restricted areas will now be removed?

Ms BOOTHBY: If I am understanding your question correctly, I think you are talking about the signs at different communities that were put up by the federal government.

J DAVIS: My understanding is that the warning signs that are currently required will be removed for a general restricted area.

Ms BOOTHBY: My understanding is that there are signs put up for general restricted areas.

J DAVIS: Will that remain?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is my understanding.

J DAVIS: To bring alcohol into a general restricted area is a strict liability offence. Is that correct?

Ms BOOTHBY: Correct, yes.

J DAVIS: Just to be clear, because it was a question raised with the committee. I do not know who puts up the signs, but it was raised with the committee that those signs would be removed and that people, including tourists or travellers, may not know where the boundaries are. It sounds like you are saying that is not the case.

Ms BOOTHBY: No, those signs will continue.

Clause 27 agreed to.

Clauses 28 to 31, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MOTOR VEHICLES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DIGITAL LICENCES) BILL
Serial 74

Continued from 26 August 2026.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move the Bill be now read a second time.

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Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory Labor opposition will support the Motor Vehicles Legislation Amendment (Digital Licences) Bill 2026. However, we have questions for the government regarding privacy-related concerns that we will explore through the consideration in detail process.

We support the introduction of the digital driver's licence as the next stage in convenience for Territorians who seek a digital alternative to providing their identity. This is to prove that you have the right to drive, purchase alcohol or access particular services which require identity verification. With that, we also support a digital licence system that is properly integrated with existing NT Government systems, including the Banned Drinker Register and NT Police portable devices so that it delivers practical benefits for Territorians and government agencies.

The journey towards digital licences started for the Territory in 2024, with the $20.66m allocation by the former Territory Labor government towards digital licence development and a pilot program slated for 2025. Although the legislation before us does not enable the specific technology, it establishes the framework necessary for digital drivers' licences, as we have seen, and the Northern Territory will join New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia in providing this option.

An important part of this debate that I need to reiterate, as the minister said in his explanatory speech, is that Territorians will still be able to receive and use a traditional hard copy driver's licence. The digital driver's licence is simply an additional convenient option.

Amendments throughout the legislation are intended to ensure that provisions relating to the issuing, production, return and surrender of drivers' licences can operate effectively whether a licence is issued in the physical form, the digital form or both.

The legislation clarifies a number of important matters, including that when a person is required to surrender or return a driver's licence, they must return any physical licence document and remove the digital licence from each electronic device on which it is capable of being displayed; that a holder of a digital licence is not required to surrender a mobile phone or other electronic device because it contains or displays a digital licence; and that a person does not commit an offence under this Act or another Act merely because they use a mobile phone or other electronic device to display their digital licence when lawfully required to produce it.

The legislation also addresses the seizure and removal of digital licence documents, adapting existing enforcement powers to deal with digital rather than physical documents. Although this framework-setting legislation is supported, the Territory Labor opposition will put on the record its potential concerns.

The digital licence technology system must be underpinned by robust security and privacy standards to ensure that Territorians' personal and identity information is protected and that information is disclosed only when necessary and appropriately authorised. This is where most of the concerns lie with Territorians, and I welcome the minister explaining how the CLP government is mitigating these risks.

We will continue to track the implementation of the digital licence program towards the end of the year to ensure that it delivers the security, privacy, interoperability and practical functionality that Territorians expect.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Motor Vehicles Legislation Amendment (Digital Licences) Bill 2026. I very much believe that this is practical sensible legislation that brings the Northern Territory another step closer to delivering a modern government service that Territorians expect and deserve.

At its heart, this Bill is simple, making life easier for Territorians. We live in an increasingly digital world. We do our banking on our phones, access Medicare information, make appointments, conduct business and communicate with government agencies electronically, yet our motor vehicle legislation, much of which dates back to 1949, has not provided the necessary framework for drivers' licences to operate in the same way. I think it is fair to say that we are well overdue for an update.

This Bill amends the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* and the Motor Vehicles Regulations 1977 to allow drivers' licences and vehicle registration certificates to be issues in an approved physical or digital forms. Importantly, it allows both formats to coexist. Territorians who prefer a physical licence can continue to access one. Those who want the convenience of a digital licence will have that option once the necessary systems are introduced.

That flexibility is important in the Northern Territory. We are people living in Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and remote communities across the Northern Territory, so not everyone

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has the same access to technology, reliable mobile coverage or digital services. Modernisation should never mean that we are leaving people behind. It should mean that we are giving people more options and making government services more accessible. That is exactly what this legislation is designed to achieve. Having lived and worked across urban, regional and remote parts of the Northern Territory for more than 34 years, I understand that different Territorians want different things.

With a husband who has been a member of the Northern Territory Police for more than 26 years, I very much appreciate the importance of getting the practical enforcement provisions right. A driver's licence is more than just a convenient form of identification; it is a legal document. It establishes a person's authority to operate a motor vehicle. Police and other authorised officers must be able to establish whether a person holds a valid licence and whether that licence can be relied upon.

This Bill addresses those requirements. It provides that a person may produce an approved digital licence by displaying it on a mobile phone or another electronic device. Importantly, the document must be readable and capable of being verified. The person may be required to facilitate its reading, scanning or verification, or to refresh the display. These are sensible safeguards. The last thing we want is a system where someone can simply hold up an image on a phone and expect it to be accepted without proper verification. Technology brings convenience, but it also creates opportunities for fraud and misrepresentation, and our legislation must be capable of responding to those risks.

I also welcome the provisions protecting a person's electronic device. This Bill makes it clear that displaying a digital licence does not by itself require a person to hand over their mobile phone, and that is an important distinction to make. Our phones contain an enormous amount of personal information, including private correspondence, photographs, banking information and other sensitive material. The fact that a person uses their phone to display a licence should not automatically give an authorised officer possession of that device.

This Bill also establishes mechanisms for the removal of a digital licence document when a licence must be surrendered or an officer has the grounds to direct removal. These provisions recognise the practical differences between a physical licence and a digital one. They provide greater clarity for licence holders and those responsible for enforcing the law.

Another aspect of this legislation that I find particularly interesting is the relationship between modern digital services and the infrastructure required to support them. While we are discussing the benefits of digital drivers' licences, we also have members opposite raising concerns about the development of data centres in the Northern Territory. I appreciate that a digital driver's licence does not necessarily require a hyperscale data centre to be built in the Northern Territory, but the broader point is worth making. Modern digital services depend on reliable and secure technology infrastructure. They depend on data storage, processing capability, connectivity and cybersecurity.

Data centres are an important part of the infrastructure supporting our increasingly digital economy. Therefore, I find it interesting that some members are enthusiastic about the benefits of digital government services, while also advocating for a moratorium on certain data centre developments. I am interested to hear how those opposite propose to meet the growing demand of our digital infrastructure if their preferred approach is to put new investment opportunities on hold.

Of course, data centre proposals must undergo proper scrutiny. Environmental impacts, water consumption, energy requirements and community concerns must all be carefully considered. No-one is suggesting otherwise. However, there is a significant difference between responsible assessment and a blanket pause on development. We should be looking at how the Territory can responsibly attract investment, create employment opportunities and participate in emerging industries, not simply putting up a stop sign before proposals have been properly assessed.

We cannot keep demanding the benefits of modern technology while refusing to have a serious conversation about the infrastructure that supports it. Perhaps that is something those opposite might like to consider. Even the most modern digital driver's licence needs more than just good intentions to operate.

While we are discussing the practicalities of this Bill I want to get ahead of something else. I suspect we may see, when we reach consideration in detail—because history tells me this and I would not be surprised if those opposite spend considerable time questioning why this legislation does not contain every operational detail about the introduction of digital licences.

What application will be used, how will it operate, what will the rollout look like, and why isn't every technical detail written into legislation? Perhaps I can save the members opposite a little time. This Bill establishes the

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legal framework for digital licences to be issued, produced, verified and surrendered. That is its purpose. It is not an operational manual for the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure, and nor should it be. This legislation provides a lawful foundation for digital licences. The detailed technology, administrative processes and implementation arrangements are matters for the responsible department to develop and manage within that framework.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with asking sensible questions about the implementation. In fact, genuine scrutiny is an important part of the parliamentary process. But there is a difference between scrutinising the legislation before us and criticising it for failing to contain every operational procedure that might eventually be required. If we attempted to legislate every technical detail of a digital system, we would find ourselves back in this Chamber amending legislation every time that technology changed. That would defeat the purpose of modernising government services.

To those opposite who might be preparing their extensive list of operational questions for consideration in detail, I respectfully suggest that they first consider what this Bill is actually intended to achieve. Parliament's role is to establish the law, not write the instruction manual for the app. Perhaps members opposite could remember that before turning consideration in detail into a technical support session—I am all for robust debate—it should be about understanding and examining the legislation before us, not finding fault because it does not attempt to do something that was never designed to do. Perhaps a little preparation and proper understanding of the Bill might save the house in considerable time.

Ultimately this legislation is about improving the way government delivers services to Territorians. That is something this Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to achieving. One of our government's key priorities is improving the Territory lifestyle. That does not just mean addressing the major challenges facing our communities. It means also looking at everyday interactions Territorians have with government and identifying where things can be done better, what we can do to remove unnecessary inconvenience, where we can reduce outdated administrative requirements and where technology can make services more accessible.

Every unnecessary trip to a government office, avoidable administrative process and outdated requirement takes time away from Territorians. Time they could be spending with their families, running their business or enjoying lifestyle that makes the Northern Territory such an amazing place to live.

Not every meaningful reform requires a major infrastructure project or a significant spending commitment. Sometimes progress is simply about recognising that the world has changed and ensuring our legislation changes with it.

That is what this Bill does. It provides greater flexibility for licence holders, establishes clear legal requirements, clear legal arrangements for digital licences and it supports appropriate verification and enforcement. Importantly, it allows our licensing system to evolve as technology continues to develop.

We should be embracing practical reforms that make government services easier to use while ensuring the necessary safeguards remain in place. Modern governments should work around the needs of Territorians, not expect Territorians to continually work around outdated government systems.

This Bill is another sensible step in that direction, and I congratulate the minister and the team for bringing this legislation forward. I look forward to seeing Territorians benefit from the convenience of digital licences and the necessary implementation arrangements are progressed.

I commend this bill to the House.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, at first glance this Bill might look fairly straightforward, a bill about putting your driver's licence on your phone, but it is much bigger than that. It is about making everyday life that bit easier and improving the way we do things in the Territory.

The way Territorians live today is different from how we lived 20 years ago. Think about how many times a Territorian reaches for their driver’s licence every week. You might collect a parcel; prove your identity at Births, Deaths and Marriages; hire a jet ski or even a tinny while yours is taking longer than expected to get the motor done—Member for Namatjira—check in at accommodation; buy takeaway alcohol; or enter a licensed premises along Mitchell Street.

Some locals might, on a Friday afternoon, finish work and head into the city. They might go to the Cav, the Precinct bar at the Waterfront or even to Monsoons. They might stay a bit later than they expected. They

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might go to Wharf One or Dock One—amazing food—or the Oyster Bar, Hanky Panky, Hanuman, Moorish, the new Blue Hole Steakhouse or even the brand-new Leea on Cavenagh Street. Every one of those businesses exists because locals love going out. Visitors enjoy going out as well.

One of the greatest privileges of being the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality is meeting the people behind the scenes of these businesses. In the past few months I caught up with Brad Morgan and his team from Mindil Beach Casino Resort after the completion of its major renovations. I celebrated with Garrett Prendiville and the team at the Leea as they opened the Lido, an exciting new venue for Darwin. I congratulated Nino Niceforo on bringing Blue Hole Steakhouse to Darwin after the success of his Katherine business. I joined Alex Murray at Five Spice during a networking event at the Courtyard by Marriott. I also hosted other Attorneys-General from around Australia at Dock One, showcasing the Territory spirit and hospitality at its best. I recently caught up with Justin Coleman from the Cinema Collective at Sweethearts.

I have just been to Alice Springs over the weekend and had a great meal and drink at Alice Springs Brewing Company. I went to the Locals and had breakfast. The Tropic of Capricorn—oh my gosh—a new venue that is humming in the Todd Mall. That is just to name a few. I went there for the Alice Springs Masters Games. These are not just venues; they are local people backing the Territory, employing Territorians and investing in our future.

Responsible venues like these already check identification every day. Soon many customers will simply be able to reach for the same phone they already use for digital payments, boarding passes and hotel bookings. Think about when you head out for the weekend getaway with your partner, girlfriend or mates and you check into the Hilton, the Vibe or the Adina at the Waterfront, or even the Mantra or Novotel or a number of other amazing venues we have in the Territory. Even when you book a jet ski on the harbour you are asked for ID these days. Everything becomes a little easier when we can use a digital licence on our phone.

It is the same in Central Australia, perhaps at the DoubleTree Hilton where I handed over my ID on the weekend, the Crowne Plaza or the casino, or even having a few bevvies and the famous funky fun guy mushroom pizza at Alice Springs Brewing Company. I did not have the pizza. I had a schnitzel, which was amazing.

Katherinites checking into the Contour or hiring a canoe have to show ID too.

There are many different places up and down the spine of the Territory where you have to show ID.

As the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, I recognise another practical benefit. Every day hundreds of responsible hospitality businesses across the Territory already ask customers to produce approved identification. Behind every licence that is checked is an employee and a Territorian, whether new or ones who have been here for years. They are the person serving behind the bar, checking in a guest at reception or helping visitors hire a boat, collect a hire car or book accommodation. Sometimes they check ID, but sometimes they do not have to. That is the law. They are welcoming people, no matter what, and they are offering services that contribute to our unique Territory lifestyle and rebuilding our economy.

This Bill is about making life easier for the people who use ID every day. Our government believes in moving the Territory forward with practical reforms to make life easier, not harder, and backing people like those in our hospitality industry whom I get to spend a lot of time with and love. It is an honour and a privilege.

I thank the minister for bringing forward this framework legislation to enable the work to be done by other areas of government.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I thank all the members for their contribution to this debate. Some legislation can be sexy and some are not very sexy, but this is an important piece of legislation and it will make life so much simpler for many Territorians. I thank the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and my team at DLI for putting this together.

The Motor Vehicles Legislation Amendment (Digital Licences) Bill is a practical, commonsense reform that modernises the Northern Territory's motor vehicle registration and driver's licence framework and delivers greater convenience and flexibility for Territorians.

I reiterate the Member for Fannie Bay's contribution. This piece of legislation is about the ability for us to have a digital driver's licence. The way that the legislation is currently written, you must have a physical

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driver's licence. This legislation allows us to have the digital driver's licence to make that legal. The whole operation side of it is not part of this Bill.

Our CLP government has been listening to Territorians, and we know that community expectations have changed. People increasingly expect government services to be accessible, convenient and available through secure digital channels. Territorians are embracing technology in their lives every day and government services, of course, need to keep pace with that.

I do not know many Territorians these days who do not have a smartphone, and I am pretty sure Territorians know the frustration of leaving the bag or wallet on the kitchen bench when they duck out and run an errand, particularly us in Central Australia. You dive down to the bottle shop to get there before 7 pm and—sigh. 'I left my licence at home.' Go back, start again and wait for tomorrow.

We have already seen how digital services make our lives easier. Not that long ago you needed a physical membership card to access services, and today many providers offer digital membership cards, making it easier and more convenient for people to access what they need. This Bill takes that same practical approach to drivers' licences and motor vehicle registration. It provides a legislative framework for registration certificates and driver's licence documents to be issued and used in physical or digital form, giving Territorians greater choice in how they carry and access their credentials.

Importantly, digital licensing will be optional. Territorians who prefer physical licence or registration certificate can continue to use one. There mention might of remote areas, as part of the contribution from the Member for Nightcliff, and the way that the operational side of this works is that—I will not go into specific detail, but there is an app that will be on your phone. You get the licence on your app and that still works when you are out of internet range. Even if you are in a remote area, once you have downloaded the licence through the app onto your phone, it is there. Even if you are out of range for a while, next time you come back into range it will update.

While technology has moved forward, the existing legislative framework was developed at a time when licences, rego certificates and related documents were assumed to exist primarily in physical form. This Bill updates those arrangements in a modern environment. One thing I must say is that the Territory is leading the way in some form, because our digital driver's licence has been developed to an international standard, pretty close to what you see for your passport, and that international standard is the ISO 18013-5.

Some of the other states that have introduced digital drivers' licences have not met that national standard, but I can guarantee and certainty Territorians that we meet that standard, and that provides safety and certainty, particularly for your digital information.

The Bill also provides legal certainty around the status, use and verification of digital credentials, while maintaining existing licensing, regulation, compliance and enforcement requirements. That is important. Modernising our services must go hand in hand with maintaining the integrity of our systems and ensuring the law continues to operate effectively.

The Bill also provides flexibility to accommodate future developments, reduces the need for paper-based documents and supports the delivery of government services in digital formats. This is not a new concept nationally, of course. New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia have already implemented digital driver's licence arrangements, while other jurisdictions are developing, or are considering, similar initiatives. We should not be left behind when it comes to practical improvements that are better for Territorians.

Passing this Bill is an important step, but implementation must be done properly. Find the passage of the legislation and the department will work with the relevant stakeholders on the arrangements needed to support implementation, including public education awareness activities and departmental communications. The operational rollout will proceed once the necessary checks are completed and system capabilities and readiness have been confirmed.

This is about getting the framework right before digital licence arrangements are introduced. Our Finocchiaro CLP government is focused on getting on with the job, modernising government services and delivering practical outcomes for the people of the Northern Territory. This Bill is another practical step in our government's work to rebuild the Territory economy and restore our lifestyle by making life for Territorians easier.

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It supports a broader digital transformation agenda while retaining the physical documents Territorians know and rely on. At its heart, this is a sensible reform that gives Territorians more choice, greater convenience, and a modern way to access their government credentials, while also supporting more efficient government services. Our CLP government is focused on practical improvements that make life easier for Territorians while ensuring our systems remain secure, reliable and fit for purpose.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 4, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr SMELT: You briefly touched on some of the operational aspects of the digital licence, including the app. Can you outline the steps of how a person would use this new digital licence? For example, if you are going to the post office to collect your mail, how would you use this new digital licence?

Mr YAN: I do not intend to go down a rabbit hole on the operation of this. This is the legislation that allows us to have this. The operational side of this Act sits with DCDD, and they are doing the work as far as operationalising the digital driver's licence goes. That does not sit with me; that sits with the Minister for Corporate and Digital Development. I will give you what information that I can.

There will be an app that you can download onto your phone; it will have your digital driver's licence. To scan that licence there is a requirement for a reader that an organisation could have should they wish to verify that licence. Primarily for us, in the first instance, it will be police and the BDR app. My understanding is that you do not have to hand your phone over—they would scan the document. You cannot take a screenshot of it, that does not exist; you must have the reader, so you do not hand over your physical phone. In some instances where people require proof of ID, if they do not have the reader, you will still be required to have your physical driver's licence with you.

Mr SMELT: That was exactly the detail I was looking for. If a person who is using this device, if there is a problem with their device—a cracked screen, low battery or any of those kinds of things—will they also need to carry their physical card?

Mr YAN: That is correct. It is the same as having your driver's licence which is illegible because it is scratched or damaged, it would need to be replaced; the same would go for the electronic device that would have the app on it to read the digital ID there is no difference.

Mr SMELT: For other services or businesses or government authorities, if they do not have that reader, this digital ID cannot be accepted or used?

Mr YAN: That is correct. In the initial instance police and BDR will have it, but others can then get the reader. An example would be if a bank requires your digital ID and you want to use that. If the bank has the reader they can do it; failing that, you must produce your physical driver's licence.

Mr SMELT: Can you confirm that all the interactions must happen with the app and that it cannot be screenshot or saved in your photos and you cannot share it on email or anything like that? You would have to use the app and the specific reader?

Mr YAN: Yes, that is correct. That is part of the security system and the ISO that I spoke about in my summing-up speech. You are not able to screenshot it. You can take a photo of your driver's licence and show somebody, but you cannot do it with the app; you must have the reader which provides the security and safety for the individual.

Mr SMELT: Can you update us as to when you anticipate the Motor Vehicle Registry will roll out the digital licences?

Mr YAN: It will be implemented by notice in the gazette once all the work is done by DCDD on the operational side of it, and once that is completed and they are happy with it then it will be rolled out. We do not have an exact date, but the notification will go out the gazette, as with most other legislation, but when it is approved.

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Mr SMELT: For someone to obtain this digital licence they will need to download the app—do they have to apply for the licence, or is there some application to MVR or online form?

Mr YAN: We are getting into some of the operational side of DCDD. I do not have enough information to go there, but they will have to download the app and then verify their identity through the app before they will be able to download their digital driver's licence.

Mr SMELT: Can you also reflect on the testing or safeguards or the like that your department has undertaken to prevent Territorians from fraud or theft as part of this rollout?

Mr YAN: That is not a question for me or for DLI; that is a question for DCDD. You can ask the minister during Question Time or do a written question to the minister to provide that information.

Mr SMELT: In terms of the operation of the new digital licence—you mentioned police and BDR—are there any other government authorities that will have access to this data?

Mr YAN: That work is ongoing across government as to who will require readers to access that or to be able to read the digital ID of an individual, but that individual work is happening between DCDD and other agencies.

Mr SMELT: You mentioned before some of those questions would be for DCDD but do you have any understanding about where that online digital data will be stored in Australia?

Mr YAN: That is certainly not a question for me as the minister for DLI.

Mr SMELT: We saw the major NTG outage last week, can you explain how a similar outage to that might affect the use or rollout of the digital licence?

Mr YAN: I is not a question for myself as the Minister for the Logistics and Infrastructure; again, that is a question for the operational side of DCDD.

Mr SMELT: In terms of responsibility of MVR, in terms of a person's personal driver's licence, how does that digital licence get withdrawn if their physical or for any reason if their driver's licence is suspended or cancelled or expires, how is the digital version retracted or removed from a person's device?

Mr YAN: We are becoming very operational again, but within the app through DCDD, the actual ID is withdrawn as part of the updates.

Mr SMELT: It is withdrawn as part of the updates when the app updates.

Mr YAN: Again you are getting into technical stuff. I am a mechanic Member for Nightcliff. I am certainly not an IT specialist, but the app updates on a regular basis as most of our apps do on our digital devices and once a licence has been withdrawn, i.e. suspended or revoked, it updates the app and removes the ID from the device.

Mr SMELT: If it is dependent on the user or the person's individual device for updating the app, is it possible that someone's digital driver's licence could be still available and being used if it has been expired?

Mr YAN: Yes, it is possible, but that is probably an operational question for DCDD.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 10, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill, taken as a whole, agreed to.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

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ADJOURNMENT

Mr YAN (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate St John Parap Youth Division on winning the 2026 St John NT Youth First Aid Competition for the second consecutive year in a row. The competition challenged young members to put their first aid knowledge, training, teamwork and decision making to the test through realistic emergency scenarios, including a major flood, a mental health crisis, and construction of an emergency shelter. These challenges required the participants to think clearly, communicate effectively, and work together under pressure.

I acknowledge the five Parap team members who took part in this year's competition: youth team leader, Evangelina Ronayne; team manager, Mikaela Zelly, Kai Barnes, Cameron Week and Pippa Rim. Each played a part in Parap's success and I congratulate them on their achievement. The team will now travel to Perth in January to represent the Northern Territory at the national competition, taking on youth divisions from across Australia.

St John's youth division gives young Territorians the opportunity to develop practical first aid skills, build their confidence and develop a strong sense of responsibility towards others.

I acknowledge the volunteers, including our emergency services who volunteer their time to train and support these young people. I congratulate the St John Parap Youth Division on defending their title, and wish the team success as they represent the Northern Territory proudly in Perth early next year.

I congratulate the Northern Territory's first under 21 Colts Rugby Team, the NT Mozzies, on their impressive performance at the 2026 Australia Rugby Sheild in Geelong last week between 8 and 11 October.

Competing in the tournament for the first time, the Mozzies proved they could hold their own against established interstate teams. After a narrow 29-21 loss to Victoria in their opening match, the Mozzies bounced back with a thrilling 31-29 victory over South Australia. They finished with an outstanding 74-12 win over Tassie, placing third overall with two wins from three matches.

This is a terrific result for a team competing at this level for the first time, and one that reflects the hard work of the players, coaches and everyone involved.

I recognise each of the 23 young Territorians selected to represent the Northern Territory. Led by Captain Anthony Paolucci, the squad included Aidan Buckley, Al Furguson, Cal Morris, Eligh Pomroy, Ethan Mow, Eugene Bolton, Henley Alley and Lio Latur. Alongside them were Jake Stephens, Jeffery Vaisima, Joe Gill, Josiah Mills, Justin Edwards, Kai Prosser, Lance Po-Ching and Luke Jack.

Completing the squad were Luke Xuereb, Rohan Cram, Samuel Rasaku, Samuel Williamson, Thomasi Eaton, and Zander Truong. Every one of these young men deserves recognition for their contribution to the team's success and for representing the Territory with pride.

I acknowledge Head Coach, Junior poaching coaches Luigi Andreoli and Robbie Butcher and support staff, families and volunteers who help make the teams participation possible.

The Colts programme gives young Territory players an important opportunity to continue playing rugby beyond the junior ranks and compete at a national level. The team has set a high standard for those who follow, and I look forward to seeing more young Territorians given the same opportunity. Congratulations to the NT Mozzies, you have done the Territory proud.

I recognise Aiden McGee, a young Territorian achieving outstanding success in practical shooting at both the national and international levels. Aiden has won the Australian Junior Revolver Championship for three consecutive years from 2023 to 2025, alongside 3 Northern Territory Junior Revolver Championship titles.

In 2026 he became Australian Overall Revolver Champion having progressed from fourth place in 2023, third in 2024 and second in 2025.

At the 2025 IPSC Handgun World Shoot in South Africa, Aiden represented Australia in the Junior Revolver Division, finishing 14th in the world among more than 1800 competitors from 50 countries. He also had the honour of carrying the Australian flag at the opening ceremony, which is very cool.

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His success continues in 2026, winning the ICORE Northern Territory Open Revolver Overall Championship, and the IPSC Australia Mini Rifle Championship.

Aiden was named among the top three finalists for NT Junior Sportsperson of the Year in 2026. Aiden has worked incredibly hard to achieve this success with the support of his family, coaches and the Territory shooting community.

I congratulate Aidan on his achievements and the pride in which he represents the Northern Territory and Australia. He has already established an extraordinary record, and I look forward to seeing what he achieves next.

I congratulate Glen Auricht, a long standing member of the Alice Springs community who has recently been honoured with a Paul Harris Fellowship by the Rotary Club of Alice Springs.

The Paul Harris Fellowship is one of Rotary's highest forms of recognition, acknowledging individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to their community. Glen has called Central Australia home for almost 60 years and has spent much of that time contributing to local sporting groups and community organisations.

His involvement with the Alice Springs Motorcycle Club, the Finke Desert Race and Saint John spans decades. Glen has been involved in the Finke Desert Race for more than 35 years, first as a motorcycle competitor, later as a volunteer and a committee member. He has helped prepare the challenging 223-kilometre racetrack each year, but his own racing achievements are also worth mentioning.

In 1990 Glen finished the Finke Desert Race despite having six broken ribs. In 2002 he placed third in his class. Anyone familiar with the Finke Desert Race will appreciate just how tough that competition can be even without six broken ribs. Glen’s contribution to the event was recognised in 2016 when he was named Finke Hero of the Year.

His dedication to St John NT is equally impressive. For more than 33 years Glen has contributed in excess of 7,800 volunteer hours, helping provide first aid and medical support to events across Central Australia.

His community service has been recognised on several occasions, including being named 2013 Centralian Citizen of the Year and receiving the NT Achievers Award in the same year.

Glen’s Paul Harris Fellowship is further recognition of the contribution he has made to Central Australia over many years. Through his involvement in St John and Finke, Glen has helped sustain two organisations that are important to the people of Central Australia and the broader Northern Territory. I commend the Rotary Club of Alice Springs for recognising Glen’s service. I congratulate Glen on receiving this award and thank him for his decades of service to the people of Alice Springs and Central Australia.

I congratulate nine young gymnasts who have been selected to represent the Northern Territory at the 2026 Bigham Cup in Canberra from 23 to 25 October. The team includes athletes from three Territory gymnastics clubs: ENRG Gymnastics; Darwin Gymnastic Club and the Territory Gymnastics Academy.

I recognise each of the amazing gymnasts who have been selected. They are Ariana Tsirbas; Annabelle Mammino; Sophie Proctor; Zoe Bothroyd-King, Akemi Williams-Allan; Rosie Phoo; Madelyn Johnstone; Lily Goldstraw and Matilda Blackney. These young athletes have put in many hours of training to earn their selection and have the opportunity to compete against gymnasts from across Australia.

Territory gymnasts have achieved excellent results at previous Bigham Cup competitions. In 2024 Annabelle Mammino won the level 7 all-round title. She followed this with a gold medal on vault in 2025. Emily Campbell also secured gold on bars in level 6. These results demonstrate the standard of gymnasts being achieved in the Territory and what our athletes are capable of at national competitions.

The Bigham Cup is an important event for gymnasts from smaller states and territories, providing an opportunity to compete at a very high level and gain valuable competition experience.

I acknowledge the coaches accompanying and supporting this amazing team, Kat Bolton; Rhys Barden and Saffron Jackson.

I congratulate all nine gymnasts on their selection and wish them every success at the 2026 Bigham Cup.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Casuarina, I wish you a very happy birthday.

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Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the passing of a well-known and respected member of the community, Napoleon Pantazis, known to his family and friends as Paul. He passed away on 5 September 2026 at the age of 94.

Paul came to Australia from Cyprus in 1951 with his sister, Helen. Like many migrants of his generation, he worked hard to build his life here in Darwin, taking on a range of jobs before eventually establishing Parap Fine Foods with his wife, Rene, in 1968.

Paul and Rene built a successful business through hard work and determination. When Cyclone Tracy devastated their business and livelihood, they did not give up; they started again and rebuilt what they had worked so hard to create.

Paul was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. His determination, generosity and love for his family will be remembered by all who knew him.

On behalf of the Casuarina electorate, I extend my sincere condolences to Irene and all of Paul's family and loved ones.

May he rest in peace.

I will also share some positive news from our local schools. Dripstone Secondary College's long-awaited boundary fence is now completed. I was pleased to advocate for this project. I thank the Northern Territory Government and the minister for Education for bringing this request to fruition. The fence will help improve student safety and reduce the trespassing, vandalism and antisocial behaviour that had been occurring after hours and on weekends. It is great to see this issue addressed.

The school is also undertaking an upgrade to its STEM lab, providing better facilities for students to develop their skills and pursue their education. That is fantastic news for Dripstone students.

I also recognise Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, which recently held a Silly Sock Day in September. Students and teachers enjoyed showing off their colourful and creative socks while raising funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society. It is wonderful to see schools encouraging community spirit and teaching students the importance of helping others.

The school community also supported R U OK? Day with the families generously donating donuts for students. While it was a lovely treat, more importantly it helped create opportunities to talk about mental health and remind young people that it is always okay to ask for help.

Sport continues to play an important role in bringing our community together. I congratulate several local football clubs on their achievements. First, I congratulate Azzurri United Football Club on an outstanding night at 2026 Football Northern Territory Awards, receiving 18 nominations and taking home 14 awards.

Congratulations to the following award winners:

- Dimi Galanopoulos – Coach of the Year
- Maki Ushindi – Young Player of the Year
- Imogen Baldwin – Goal of the Year
- Luis C Jaramillo – Golden Glove, Men's Premier League
- Mia Wilson – Player of the Year, Premier League Women
- Dougreu Zivagwe – Golden Boot, Men's Premier League Reserves
- Sing Fa, Jong – Volunteer of the Year.

I also congratulate Azzurri United's Team of the Year selections.

In the Premier League Women's Team, Mia Wilson was selected as a Central Attacking Midfielder.

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In the Premier League Men's Team, congratulations to:

- Cai Pritchard – Central Midfielder
- Julian Smith – Left Wing
- Maki Ushindi – Left Wing Back
- Alex Turner – Centre Back
- Luis Carlos Jaramillo – Goalkeeper
- Dimi Galanopoulos – Coach.

These are fantastic achievements and reflect the hard work, talent and dedication of the everyone involved with the club. Congratulations to all the award winners and nominees. I also acknowledge the coaches, volunteers, families and supporters who contribute so much to Azzurri United throughout the season. The club's success is something the entire Casuarina community can be proud of.

Finally, I acknowledge Tracy Village Football Club which secured its first win against Jabiru, with a score of 53–27. Congratulation to the team on getting that first win on the board.

These achievements demonstrate the strength of our local community. Whether it is a school improving facilities for students, family supporting important causes or volunteers helping local sporting clubs succeed, these contributions make Casuarina a better place to live. I am proud to represent a community where people continue to support one another, work hard and create opportunity for the next generation. I love Casuarina.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, tonight I update the House on a number of events in my electorate and activities from across the Top End.

First of all, I recognise the Northern Territory Chess Association which held its annual championship at Essington School in Rapid Creek on the weekend. I had the great opportunity to be part of the opening and the event. There were 28 players competing from across the Territory. It was a fantastic competition. Congratulations to Chris on winning the first prize in the competition.

It was great to see so many young people involved as well—young students, even my kids had a quick go at it as well. They are much better than I am at chess. It is a great credit to the committee, including President Rajiv Tahil who has been so enthusiastic and supportive of this organisation.

It was also a great opportunity to support activities that are not just outside physical sport. Cricket, footy, hockey and netball get so much of the limelight that it was great to be in my electorate supporting a different type of sport, and the many players and competitors. I appreciate the work the committee did in organising that event, as well as the parents who supported their kids in being involved in the Northern Territory Chess Association Championship.

I would also like to mention another major event in the Nightcliff electorate which was held by BirdLife Top End; the Welcome Back Shorebirds event. I would like to acknowledge BirdLife Top End which put on this event at Sunset Park. It was a terrific evening, and it brought together bird watchers, families, volunteers, members of our community, including the Member for Johnston. We were co-patrons of that event, and we were there to welcome back these extraordinary migratory birds back to Darwin. These birds have travelled thousands of kilometres from breed breeding grounds as far away as Siberia and Alaska to spend this period in the Top End.

It was inspiring to see them arrive back on Nightcliff foreshore, because this is a place that so many of us love, adore and are at every day. It was also terrific to see the range of ages with binoculars being passed around between children, parents and grandparents; everyone was enthusiastic and happy to share their knowledge and experience of bird watching. I would like to acknowledge and thank Doctor Amanda Lillyman, who has been such an important champion for Darwin Shore Birds and the work of BirdLife Top End. I would like to acknowledge Mitch Rose and the other committee members of BirdLife Top End who organised the event, as well as the volunteers who put so much time and energy into creating this festival, and the year-round work that they do to advocate for our local bird life.

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BirdLife Top End is a volunteer-run organisation with members undertaking regular shore bird monitoring around Darwin; their work goes far beyond just the community events. Their volunteers regularly count and monitor shore birds across Darwin Harbour, contributing incredibly important data to Australia's national Shorebird Monitoring Project. This is critical as many of these birds are under pressure from habitat loss, disturbance and changes in our coastal environments. That was highlighted in this year's events with the Common Green Shank Bird being the bird of the festival, which was unfortunately listed as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in 2024.

It is important that we recognise this bird and the other aspects of the festival, reminding people to keep their distance from shore birds and ensuring dogs are not disturbing them. It is events like this that are such a great reminder of Darwin's natural environment, and it really is one of our greatest assets. The work that BirdLife Top End does is important to preserve places in Darwin and it is what contributes to making Darwin such a fantastic place to live. I would like to thank Amanda, Mitch, the BirdLife Top End committee and the volunteers for a fantastic evening and everyone from the community who came to enjoy it. I look forward to more events and in welcoming the birds back again next year.

I would like to briefly touch on the Mindil Aces Football Club presentation night for the Mini Roos. This was a great celebration; they are Darwin's greatest football team. I am proud to support Middle Aces—being affiliated with Nightcliff Sports Club—as a parent and team manager as my own kids play at Mindil Aces. They thoroughly enjoyed their season, they love being part of the club, they love playing soccer and it is important that we have our community, sport and our leaders recognised. Being a team manager gives me greater appreciation of the work that goes on behind the scenes every week to ensure the fields are ready, the teams are prepared, and that the coaches, umpires, and everyone else has a great experience.

I send my congratulations to President James Cameron and all the committee for the work they have done throughout the year to make such a welcoming and positive environment for young families, the players and everyone who helps out. A special thank you goes to the coaches, team managers, volunteers and parents who organise the games, wash the jerseys and support all the kids from the sidelines.

Most of all, it was terrific to see the improvement and the enjoyment that all the kids had. There are a couple of dozen Mindil teams in the MiniRoos, and I think everyone got a lot out of this year. They are developing their skills around teamwork, discipline and confidence. It is not just about the sport; these are also incredibly important life skills.

With a club like Mindil Aces, it is terrific to see the integration of the senior teams with the juniors and the MiniRoos. We have players from the premier league women and the premier league men's teams who get involved in coaching the junior and MiniRoos teams, and to see them progress through the age groups and play senior football in Darwin is a terrific part of our culture and our lifestyle.

This year the Mindil Aces premier league team took out the premiership. It was a fantastic game. Scores were level at full time and then in extra time, Mindil Aces secured additional goals and took home the premiership. Congratulations to the players, coaches and everyone involved in supporting Mindil Aces this year. It has been an incredibly successful team.

This is really just another fantastic example of community support. It is about participation, volunteering, bringing people together, health education and fitness. I am proud to support Mindil Aces and I look forward to seeing them continue to prosper, grow and succeed in the future.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I recently attended the Doug Kelly Medal presentation night for the Big Rivers Football League. The Doug Kelly Medal is the annual best and fairest award presented in the men's competition of the Big Rivers Football League. Doug Kelly is a respected Dagoman elder and was a local athlete back in the day. He played many games for Eastside in Katherine and was a prominent figure in the AFL circles.

This year's medal presentation took place at the Katherine Hotel. The winner of the Doug Kelly Medal this year, backing up his 2025 win, was the amazing Dan Vercoe of the Katherine Camels. Dan was the highest polling men's player with 17 votes. Dan also was the league's leading goal kicker medal, booting a whopping 37 goals this season.

Eastside's Billie Byers capped another dominant season by winning her third women's best and fairest award, polling 22 votes. Billie has proven to be a machine on the field in the women's competition and is a force to be reckoned with. Katherine South was named Club of the Year with acknowledgement to their sportsmanship, setting an example on and off the field.

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Tahlia Lowe was recognised as the Volunteer of the Year with her efforts to time-keep matches beyond her own club and assisting in the canteen.

Aaron Crouch rounded out the major award winners, taking home Umpire of the Year for his consistent dedication to umpiring in the region.

Last Saturday morning, I had the pleasure to attend Eileen Doyle's book launch and signing. Her book is called *I Don't Think I Signed Up for This*. It is a true story of a girl from Chicago who married a boy from Florida and, after 14 years of marriage and four children, her husband Bill sees an advertisement: 'Come to Australia. Land is cheap and cattle are free.' They decide to pack up their four children, leave all their relatives and creature comforts, and head to the other side of the world where they would live an isolated life in the Northern Territory. Will they survive?

They bought an undeveloped block of land with no home on it and no electricity. With very little money, they started out. The one thing they had was plenty of dreams. Bill wanted to build a cattle property that would support all of them. Eileen wondered if she could be the wife Bill needed. After all, they had nothing but each other and their children. Eileen had no idea what sort of life was ahead of them. And as we experience here in these harsh climates in Australia, they would encounter fires, floods and accidents, which were all part of their new life.

They had to adapt and learn new skills to survive. For example, they had to learn to drive a bulldozer and catch wild buffalo. They had to learn to work together under challenging circumstances without packing up and throwing it all in and going back to America. Not only did they survive; they triumphed and built Dixie Station, literally from the ground up.

Just when Eileen thought no-one would turn up to the book signing, the room was full with Katherine locals and station folk who came to get a signed book, share a cuppa and a scone with friends and listen to an excerpt from Eileen's book, which she read with such passion. Her readings really draw you in.

Eileen was joined by her proud husband, Bill, who was touched by the many people that showed up and was probably reflecting on the magnitude of the trip they had made. One of her daughters joined, along with grandchildren. Can you even imagine the trip from America to the Northern Territory which would have left Eileen and the children thinking, 'Where the hell have you brought us, Bill?'

I had the privilege to listen to many of Eileen's readings as she wrote her book over the last few years and read a story at my father-in-law's Saturday morning seniors group.

Everyone was focused when Eileen read her short stories. We are all excited and extremely proud of Eileen and her book that has captured her heart and her experiences in the early years of their pioneering spirit in true Territory style. As Eileen says, 'I may not have signed up for this life, but I thank God daily for this story to tell'.

World Teachers' Day is coming up on 30 October, so I take this opportunity to thank all the educators across the Territory for the hard work they do every day. To all the nominees across the Territory, well done. Being named a finalist is a significant achievement. I wish every nominee in the Territory all the very best.

I give a huge congratulations to each of our finalists from across the Territory, but this evening I will acknowledge a couple from Katherine. The finalists from Casuarina Street Primary School are Kirsty Bartlett, Early Childhood Educator of the Year; Karly Devereux, Inclusion Educator of the Year; Nicolle Gadd, Leader in Education of the Year; Melinda Wilson, School-based Support Person of the Year; and Renez Lammon, Principal of the Year.

As the minister of Education, I have been sharing the love around the Territory for the World Teachers' Day functions, starting in Katherine for the first year we were in government. Last year I was in Darwin, and this year it will be my pleasure to join the Members for Namatjira and Braitling in Alice Springs, delivering treats to the schools in Alice Springs and sharing in the celebrations with the teachers for World Teachers' Day.

Again, I wish all nominees the very best. Even if you do not win the category you are nominated for, it is an achievement to have been nominated. All the best to every educator across the Territory for the upcoming World Teachers' Day.

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I celebrate the finalists and winners of the 2026 NT Training Awards. These awards recognise far more than individual achievement; they celebrate the dedication, perseverance and commitment of trainees, apprentices, students, trainers, registered training organisations and employers who work together to build skills, create opportunities and strengthen our workforce. I congratulate:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year—winner, Xavier Cabillo; runner-up, Areeftha Fay-Tull

- Trainee of the Year—winner, Emily Mackney; runner-up Brandon Marshall

- Vocational Student of the Year—winner, David Knox; runner-up Amelia Whelan

Millie Whelan is a Katherine student who successfully completed not one but two qualifications, a Cert III in Early Childhood and a Cert III in Rural Operations. Millie is a shy young lady and I acknowledge the courage it took for Millie to nominate. We are all proud of her and her achievements.

I also congratulate:

- School-based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year—winner, Mac McMaster; runner-up, Melanie Timber-Trudgett

- VET for Secondary Schools Student of the Year—winner, Bryony Morris; runner-up Stacey Lee

- VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year—winner, Pablo Stuardo Arisnendi; runner-up, Veeramani Ramasami

- Austin Asche Apprentice of the Year—winner, Tamika Banks; runner-up, Oliver King.

I acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Tamika Banks. Since moving to the Northern Territory and entering the trade four years ago, Tamika Banks has made impressive waves in the butchery world. The 21-year-old NT Apprentice Butcher of the Year in 2024 and 2025 and went on to become the first person from the Northern Territory to be named the Australian Meat Industry Council National Apprentice Butcher of the Year in 2026. The judges were so impressed by her skills in Sydney and ongoing efforts, that she has been selected as one of three Australians to represent the country at the Las Vegas World Butcher Wars 2027 for the under-25s category, which is quite an achievement.

In the Small Employer of the Year the winner was NC Electrical and Air-Conditioning, with the runner-up Delta NAE. A big shout-out to Neill Carberry and his crew at NC Electrical.

Large Employer of the Year winner was NEC Australia, and the runner-up was Monadelphous Group.

The Small Training Provider of the Year winner was Response Employment and Training, and runner-up Ninti Training Limited.

The winner of the Industry Collaboration Award was Creating pathways to rehabilitation, workforce readiness and successful reintegration through education and was a collaboration between the Northern Territory Department of Corrections and Charles Darwin University for their camp in Katherine which was absolutely fantastic. The runner-up was Building a stronger aged care workforce through recruitment, training, leadership and community partnerships, a collaboration between Crest NT and Response Employment and Training.

A huge congratulations goes to all of those winners and runners-up, and I wish them all the best.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, last Wednesday night I met with Jewish Territorians to mark 7 October, the third anniversary of the 2023 attacks that took 1,195 lives. We met to acknowledge the horror of the attacks, to remember those who were murdered, to recognise the suffering of hostages and their families and to hear the fears and grief that people continue to carry.

Last Sunday I stood with Palestinian Territorians to call for an end to the genocide in Palestine, to hear their grief for family and friends and to acknowledge the devastation their people are enduring. I did not have to choose between these two gatherings or between these two communities; I can stand with Jewish Territorians against antisemitism and stand with Palestinian Territorians against the genocide of their people and the destruction of their homes, villages and lives.

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I can mourn Israeli lives and Palestinian lives; I can condemn the atrocities of 7 October and demand accountability for the suffering inflicted on Palestinians. They are not competing loyalties; they are expressions of the same commitment to humanity and human rights.

I know there are members of this parliament who have said that speaking about these matters does not belong in this Chamber. I profoundly disagree. If the suffering of millions of people; the conduct of governments, including our own; the protection of human rights; and the meaning of international law do not belong in a parliament then what exactly do we believe parliament is for. We are elected to represent people, and the people we represent are not insulated from the world beyond the borders of the Northern Territory.

These events affect Territorians directly; they affect Jewish and Muslim families, Palestinian Territorians, people with family and friends in the region and people who are deeply distressed by what they are witnessing. They affect my constituents, and I know that they affect the constituents of many people in this room. They affect the conversations taking place in our homes, schools, workplaces and our community organisations. They affect whether people feel safe to speak, whether they feel heard and whether they believe their elected representatives are prepared to stand up for principles that matter.

Three years after 7 October and the events that ensued, silence is not neutral. On 7 October 2023 Hamas and other armed groups carried out horrific attacks on Israel. People were murdered, women were raped, families were shattered and people were taken hostage. The scale of the brutality, the deliberate targeting of civilians and the sexual violence reported in connection with the attacks demand unequivocal condemnation. The hostages and their families deserve to remembered; their suffering acknowledged, and we must always remember those who were never returned alive.

Nothing can justify the murder of civilians or the taking of hostages, but neither can the attacks on 7 October be used to justify everything that has followed. Over the past three years the Palestinian people have endured catastrophic loss at the hands of Israel's military. More than 74,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, including more than 21,000 children. Gaza has been devastated; homes, hospitals, schools and essential infrastructure have been destroyed. Families have been separated, and children have been killed, injured, orphaned and traumatised. People have been forced from their homes over and again with nowhere safe to go. We have heard countless stories of the suffering of Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli Government and this tragedy has been livestreamed into our lives and onto our phones.

It is so easy to become numbed to the sheer scale of suffering, but we must remember the human being behind the headlines and we must bear witness to what is being done to them, like the story of the Palestinian paediatrician who went to work only to come home to find that nine of her 10 children had been killed when her house was bombed by Israeli forces. I think of all the mothers in Gaza who are forced to make unthinkable choices every day, described in an article I read recently, as routinely compromising their own health and survival to meet their children's most basic needs.

Who can forget the story of grandfather Khaled Nabhan, whose three-year-old granddaughter, Reem, was killed in Israeli bombings. The footage of him cradling her lifeless body calling her 'soul of my soul' spread across the world.

A story that hits home for many Australians is that of the Palestinian chapter of the Australian Junior Surf Lifesaving Program. The Gaza Nippers resumed its programs last year after three years. Of the 45 children who were involved in the original program, only 15 have been found alive. The rest remain missing, uncontactable or have died as a result of the conflict.

These brutal attacks on Palestinians demand more than expressions of concern; they demand humanitarian protection, accountability from Israel and an end to the genocide. I use the word 'genocide' with an understanding of the gravity. I know its history. I know the particular significance that it carries for Jewish people, my family included, whose families and communities were targeted for destruction by the Holocaust, but that history does not make the word ours alone. It does not mean that the suffering of another people must be measured against our own before it deserves recognition, and it cannot mean that the lessons that we draw from the Holocaust apply to only one people. When we say never again about the Holocaust it must mean never again for anyone.

I will speak briefly about what it means to be Jewish and to talk about this. Antisemitism is not an abstract political concept to me; it is real and I know the fear and pain it can cause. Jewish people should never have to fear for their safety because of who they are. They should not be held collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli Government. Synagogues, Jewish schools and Jewish community institutions must be safe, and many do not feel safe, including Jewish people in Darwin, with the horrific Bondi massacre

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deepening the fear felt by Jewish Australians and added to the pain of a community already facing rising antisemitism. That fear must be taken seriously. Antisemitism like all racism must be confronted whenever it occurs and Jewish people must be safe to live openly and practise their culture and religion without fear. The same must be true for Muslim Australians and Palestinians who face racism, Islamophobia and vilification.

We must be able to hold two truths at once. We can acknowledge and address antisemitism, support Jewish Australians and condemn the Bondi attack while also speaking out against the atrocities and war crimes committed by Israel in Gaza and working to end the genocide of the Palestinian people. Protecting Jewish people from hatred does not require silence about Palestinian suffering, and standing up for Palestinians does not mean turning away from antisemitism. Our humanity depends on us doing both. I reject the false choice that some have given me that says a Jewish woman must remain silent about the genocide in Palestine to demonstrate her opposition to antisemitism, and I reject the suggestion that solidarity with Palestinians implies support for Hamas. I reject the idea that speaking about human rights in this parliament somehow does not belong in this room.

I am deeply concerned about the growing polarisation across Australia, including in Darwin. Last week I attended a One Nation rally in Darwin to observe what was being said and hear the messages being put before the community. What I heard about immigrants, Muslims and Aboriginal people was deeply concerning. Speech that vilifies people because of their background, religion or identity has no place in the Northern Territory, but division does not begin or end at a rally; it is reinforced when the actions and language of government reduce complex social problems to questions of punishment and control, when the rights and voices of Aboriginal people are pushed aside or when policies place a disproportionate burden on communities already experiencing disadvantage.

The laws the government passes, the words it uses and the people it chooses to listen to all send a message about whose lives are valued, whose voices matter and who belongs in the Northern Territory.

I conclude by expressing my profound grief for the Jewish lives lost on 7 October, for the women who were raped, the hostages and their families, including those who never returned alive. I also mourn the tens of thousands of Palestinians killed by Israel since that terrible day. I mourn these lives without qualification. I will not rank their value according to their nationality, religion or identity. I say this clearly: Israel's actions in Gaza are not in my name as a Jewish woman, as someone whose family history includes the Holocaust or as a member of this parliament who believes that human rights must apply to everyone and, above all, as human beings.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I will talk about my most recent trip to Alice Springs and reflect on the amazing people who make up a wonderful community in Central Australia. I will start by saying my thoughts are with the people in Alice Springs and Central Australia following the recent weather events. It was a shock to see some of the footages of places.

It was fantastic to catch up with a number of people across a variety of my portfolios during my trip to Alice Springs. I had the pleasure of visiting a number of sporting ovals and facilities, including the Alice Springs Basketball Stadium located at Traeger Park. I was honoured to meet Alice Springs vice president Ralph Hutchins who showed me around the facility. As soon as you enter the stadium, the most immediate site that grabs your attention are the new hardwood floorboards. It is an eye opener. It was a pleasure to hear about the history of Alice Springs basketball and some of the golden eras of the sport in the region.

As many in this Chamber know, basketball is just one of many sports located at Traeger Park. It sits right next door to hockey. I had the pleasure of catching up with Peter Mabasa, or PJ, who also sits on the Hockey NT Board. It was great to hear how junior hockey has made comeback in Alice in 2026 after a decade-long hiatus.

While on hockey, briefly I give a shout-out to the Stingers team as it prepares for another Malaysian Hockey League campaign of 2026. The appointment of national captain and local talent Jeremy Hayward to rejoin the Singers will be one towards. Alice Springs players have something to aspire to again to represent the Territory through the Singers team and I wish them well.

Speaking of our youth, I was privileged to join with my colleague the Member for Braitling to present a cheque to the Gap Youth and Community Centre. This commitment of nearly $7m over five years demonstrates the Finocchiaro CLP government support of our young Territorians in Central Australia.

The funding provides certainty and long-term support to the continued delivery of the After Hour Service and Home Runners program in Alice Springs. This investment strengthens critical youth services, supports safer

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communities and creates more opportunities for young people to succeed, helping build a stronger future for Central Australia and a better future for all Territorians.

I thank both the Member for Braitling and The Gap CEO Leon Tripp, for showing us their temporary site while the major renovation is under way. I appreciate the background to the program that has been running for 49 years, going back to the mid-1970s.

The Catholic Church had a significant part to play at the time when the then Bishop provided Rhonda and Graham Rose with the venue that kicked it all off at the Gap Youth Centre. It is a wonderful program and I thank Leon and his organisation for the work they are doing with the youth in Alice Springs.

Speaking of the Catholic Church and the original mission trails, I was extremely honoured to spend some time in the wonderful community of Santa Teresa on the Sunday. In fact, we managed to arrive in time for the Sunday holy mass at the beautiful St Therese's Church, the first to shift to 9 am mass for the summer months.

We managed to coincide our trip with the local baptism, as well as teachers returning for the new school term, which was due to start the next day.

A big thank you to Fr Alfonsus Nahak SVD and the church community for the warm welcome.

The community's Catholic mission history dates back to 1953 when the Missionaries of Sacred Heart established the mission there. The church reflects a rich connection between faith, Arrernte culture and country. The paintings inside are truly beautiful. The murals tell biblical stories through Aboriginal eyes, drawing on the people, landscapes and wildlife of Central Australia.

Photography of the paintings is not permitted, so this is something you need to experience in person. This is a special place where faith, art and culture come together. I also enjoyed catching up with Ellie Kamara, CEO of Atyenhenge Atherre Aboriginal Corporation (AAAC) and hearing about the fantastic work being done to support local people and strengthen community connections.

As minister for Sport, I had to take the opportunity to work on the famous green turf of Santa Teresa oval and check out the goal posts that once adorned the MCG. Supported for many years by the Melbourne Football Club and also the prestigious Melbourne Cricket Club, the oval is in reasonable shape and sees many community events take place there, not just football games.

I also had the opportunity to be at Santa Teresa for their annual Bush Races. It was great to visit the track and see one of the most unique race courses you will find anywhere in Australia, right in the heart of the desserts. Santa Teresa is truly special place where strong culture, community spirit and deep family connections are part of everyday life.

I will finish off this adjournment to acknowledge the Malayalee community in Alice Springs. The Member for Braitling and I enjoyed an amazing evening celebrating Onam which took place at the OLSH Hall. Pictures do not do it justice. When we arrived, the traditional Onam dance, Thiruvathira, started on the lawns outside just as the Central Australian sun was setting on a cloudy, breezy evening. It was a moving and magical start to a fantastic night. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, particularly the traditional vegetarian dinner, Sadhya, and the opportunity to learn more about the rich culture and traditions behind the celebration.

It was a beautiful evening celebrating culture, unity and togetherness. A helpful thank you to the Alice Springs Malayalee Association and Shihab Abdul Rahman and his committee for bringing everyone together for such a special occasion, and to all the dances, organisers, volunteers and everyone who contributed to making the night so memorable. Events like this do not happen without the support of many volunteers. I congratulate each and every one of them, as it was a truly an amazing night.

A particular mention to the emcees Meera and Anns for the wonderful job they did. I will also take this opportunity to mention those local businesses who supported the event:

Alice Springs Toyota; Ashar Cleaning & Property Maintenance Services; Evitria & Universal Cars; Evora Care Disability Services and Support Organisation; Motor Motion Auto Parts & Engines; Pro Cleaning; and Indian Chef for preparing and serving dinner.

Thank you once again to the president and the Indian community on a wonderful event.

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I place some names on the record of the participants and their teams for the events and performances: Mega Thiruvathira, coordinated by Anu Jojo; Nandana; Biji Tony; Bonny; Bidhuna; Neethu Nair; Mary Soorya; Stefanos Jackson; Haseena; Tharuna; Barakath; Anupriya Bineesh; Soniya; Jephy; Murukan; Thamanna; Tintu Subeesh; Ithal Aneesh; Joy; Juliet Vinod; Ayana; and Jimmy Xavier.

I congratulate them again for Alice Springs Malayalee Association for such a wonderful evening.

It was a real pressure earlier this week to attend the inaugural Northern Territory Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast, hosted by Madam Speaker and organised by the Northern Territory Council of Churches. It was a wonderful morning that brought together people from different backgrounds and perspectives in a spirit of fellowship, reflection and goodwill. One of the things I appreciated most was the opportunity to step away from the usual business of politics and connect with others over the values we share, compassion, service, respect and a commitment to our community.

I personally thank Bishop Greg Anderson, President of the Northern Territory Council of Churches, an Anglican Bishop of the Northern Territory, for chairing this event. I also extend my sincere thanks to Bishop Charles Gauci, Catholic Bishop of Darwin, Northern Territory, and Reverend Felicity Amery, Moderator of the Uniting Church, for joining us and for their support and contribution. A special thank you to Major Kaye Viney from the Salvation Army for being our breakfast speaker and sharing her message with us.

I pass on a very special mention to the Secretary of the Council of Churches, Mary Martin, for the incredible work she does not just with the council but many different organisations in the community.

I commend the Northern Territory Council of the Churches and Madam Speaker for helping establish this important initiative. I hope the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast becomes a valued tradition for many years to come. It was a privilege to be part of such a positive and meaningful occasion, and a wonderful reminder that Parliament House is at its best when it brings people together. Thank you to everyone who made the morning such a success.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call the next speaker, I acknowledge, on behalf of the Assembly, that it is the Member for Casuarina's birthday. Happy birthday.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I will talk about the extraordinary weather that was experienced in Alice Springs on Monday night. A fierce storm wreaked havoc across our town and beyond, through parts of Central Australia; all around Alice Springs. What an incredible year we have had in the Northern Territory when it comes to natural disasters. Dare I say, the year is not over yet. We almost need to brace ourselves without sounding too negative. We have had the most incredible storms, floods and fires.

Monday night in Alice Springs was a huge weather event for us. People are saying that it was the worst storm they had witnessed in a lifetime of living in Alice Springs, or in decades. I was not there and I do not think any of my Alice Springs colleagues were there to experience it either. We have been in this weird situation where we have been watching it from afar and are trying to interact with people to understand how it has impacted them.

I start by thanking Power and Water and the electrical contractors who have worked tirelessly since Monday night trying to get our power back on. Immediately on Monday night, we were advised that Power and Water staff were being dispatched from Darwin, Tennant Creek and Katherine to Alice Springs. I know the electrical contractors have been on the ground with Power and Water staff to get power back on. Earlier today, we heard that there are 900 properties still without power in Alice Springs, which is incredible since we started with 9,000.

People are just so impressed with how they have gone about it. My husband is a former sparky who was employed by Power and Water in his early days. He said that the response from these people who have dropped everything and helped out has been amazing. The police and emergency services have been incredible; what would we do without them? It is unimaginable.

I thank the Treasurer, the Member for Namatjira and the Minister for Essential Services—the Member for Barkly—for updating me personally on what has gone on over the last few days in Alice Springs; that does not always happen. Earlier in the year, there was an incredible response to the flooding in Alice Springs, but

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I was not personally informed of anything that was going on, so I appreciate that. It is nice to be remembered even though it is not necessary that people spend time worrying about me, but I appreciate that.

I appreciate the Mayor of Alice Springs, who advocated very strongly that Alice Springs would be declared a disaster zone; that happened yesterday. It is amazing how the days just blur together when things are happening so quickly and there are so much pressure and chaos happening.

The people of Alice Springs are amazing. I have heard endless stories of neighbours helping each other, which I know is universal. It happened up here during the terrible flooding in the Daly and in Katherine, but people in Alice Springs have just gone about helping each other with no recognition. They are not expecting a pat on the back. They are not expecting anything. They are just kind, generous, good people, and that makes me feel incredibly proud. It is a feeling of proudness when you hear of a whole town that is basically doing whatever they can to help their fellow neighbours and friends get through it.

What I found alarming is the number of properties that had either their roofs completely blown off or significantly damaged. I do not know what you do in that situation. Maybe in Darwin there is a fairly standard response, but we do not have that in Alice Springs.

I am heading home tomorrow; first thing in the morning I will be on the plane with the Member for Namatjira at 6.45 am to find out the answers to questions like that. What do people do when their house is exposed like that? I know there have been a few stories on Facebook about looting and people taking advantage of the situation. I think, for the most part, there is a sense of collegiality and people looking out for each other around the town.

This whole experience since Monday night has put a spotlight on something we do not talk about much in Alice Springs: storm preparedness. You guys in Darwin are cyclone prepared. You know what to do, you batten down the hatches, clear your yards and have your cyclone kit ready.

We need to think about what we do in Alice Springs. I do not think people are generally prepared for incidents like this. I have to say, over the last four or five years, they are a regular occurrence in Alice Springs—these supercell storms and very destructive winds that come through with hail. We need to think about that. We need to start planning how we can be better prepared.

I would like to say how incredibly proud I am of my community of Alice Springs. I cannot wait to get home tomorrow to talk to people, see what has happened and be part of the clean-up squad. I will not be getting a chainsaw out and photographing myself, but I will be doing something remotely helpful, even if it is just making someone a cup of tea and having a chat.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the newly released Mapping Women and Children's Safety in Wadeye and Peppimenarti report. The author was Dr Chay Brown from her story in Mparntwe.

This report was commissioned by the Thamarrurr Development Corporation in support of the Thamarrurr Aboriginal Women's Council, who have long advocated for change. I acknowledge Thamarrurr Development Corporation's commitment to improving outcomes for women, children and families, which have made this assessment possible.

I acknowledge the leadership within TDC for recognising and understanding the local experiences of safety and ensuring the voices of women and community members were essential to this process.

I thank the staff of Thamarrurr Development Corporation for the cultural guidance they provided, logistical support, community introductions and the ongoing advice throughout the consultation process that was conducted by Dr Chay Brown.

Within this report, they have come up with six priority areas they would like to see actioned by all levels of government. Those six priority areas include:

- strengthening safe accommodation for women and children through increased crisis accommodation, transitional housing and the re-establishment of safe accommodation in Peppimenarti

- investing in prevention and early intervention, including healthy relationship education, parenting support and culturally appropriate programs for young people

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- establishing dedicated social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and healing services to address trauma, grief, suicide prevention and long-term recovery

- strengthening the responses to domestic, family and sexual violence, increased specialist services, improve perpetrator interventions, stronger service integration and expand legal and advocacy supports

- improving community safety, infrastructure and service capacity, including from increased policing, improved telecommunications workforce investment and strengthened emergency response capability

- reduction of alcohol-related harm by strengthening alcohol controls and disrupting the black market which is causing a lot of harm in the Thamarrurr region, particularly Wadeye.

This report clearly states for all those six actions group the responsibility, who the lead agencies should be, in partnership with organisations and stakeholders. I encourage the government and anyone else who is interested to come on board and look at the report because the Thamarrurr Aboriginal Women's Council has done a huge body of work to ensure that it was released and that the safety of women, children and families is paramount and their voices are not forgotten. I think we all understand that safety should be the priority for everybody in the Northern Territory.

I have met many times with members of the Thamarrurr Development Corporation who commissioned this report. We were speaking throughout the process of this. This will only work if you invest in all key six areas; it cannot be isolated and alone. It must look at the long-term and short term planning to ensure the safety of women and children. They also spoke to me about it needing to go side by side with other reports that have been commissioned by the government.

There was a recent one looking into the different living arrangements in Wadeye and at what they call hubs, which are like rural hubs. They are trying to paint a picture. We know it can be difficult to fund all the homelands. They have identified three areas where you could create rural hubs that are close to homelands and people on their country and look at having services come out of Wadeye. I picture it as similar to Coolalinga. You have many of the services for the rural area in Coolalinga. Many people use that service area from Dundee to Wagait Beach to Humpty Doo. They come in to do their shopping and see the doctor and then go back home. This is what people in Wadeye would like to see.

It is set out in those six action areas. I hope that all levels of government take it on—I am talking about the federal government, I the current Territory government and local government—and work with the Thamarrurr Development Corporation on those six priority areas. It is important for the women and children from the Thamarrurr Aboriginal Women's Council.

From the Thamarrurr Aboriginal Women's Council, I quote:

'Our women have spoken and it is time to act. The women of Wadeye and Peppimenarti have spoken. Now it's time for governments to listen and act.

'The newly released Mapping Women and Children's Safety in Wadeye and Peppimenarti report, commissioned by the Thamarrurr Aboriginal Women's Council captures the voices of 85 participants and identifies six key priorities to improve the safety of women and children.

'The message is clear: local women know what needs to change and have identified practical solutions.

'The Thamarrurr Aboriginal Women's Council is calling on all levels of government to back these women with coordinated action, long-term funding and genuine commitment.

'We cannot keep asking women to be courageous enough to speak about violence if we are not prepared to be courageous enough to change the systems that allow it to continue.

The women have done their part, now it is time for action.'

I will also speak briefly on my visit to Nauiyu (Daly River). It was wonderful to get back there on Monday and visit the amazing Merrepen Arts centre, which is finally open again, after having its power connected a couple of weeks ago after months of uncertainty and the government chasing it to pay tens of thousands of dollars in electricity bills, even though the electricity has been turned off for months. I was told it has been resolved, but there was a bit of back and forth going through that.

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It was great to catch up with Kieran McTaggart and Marita Sambono—I bought one of her pottery pieces. It now sits in my office upstairs. It is a beautiful curlew, which I am using to put my fruit in the bowl. It is a beautiful piece of pottery. I do a bit of pottery myself. I am not good at it, but it is a great way to switch off. I also saw Nola Jimarin. It was great to catch up with the three of the them and talk through their next steps in opening up for business.

They have been hit hard. They have not been able to operate out of Nauiyu community. Kieran spoke to me about the many tourists that would show up to Merrepen Arts. They had a busload show up one day and, unfortunately, they had to turn people back because the power was not turned on.

They have an online service so I encourage anyone to get online and support the wonderful Merrepen Arts Centre and support our amazing artists.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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