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15th Assembly



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from St Mary's Catholic Primary School accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

ELECTRICITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MARKET REFORM) BILL
Serial 36

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Electricity Legislation Amendment (Market Reform) Bill 2025, Serial 36, and table the explanatory statement.

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

Today I present two interdependent Bills. The first Bill is titled the NT Electricity System and Market Operator Bill 2025. Its purpose is to establish a new statutory corporation, the Northern Territory Electricity System and Market Operator—known as NTESMO—that will independently operate the electricity system and market, which are functions currently undertaken by the Power and Water Corporation. The Bill will also provide NTESMO with powers to plan and procure new electricity supply infrastructure.

The second Bill is titled the Electricity Legislation Amendment (Market Reform) Bill 2025. It will amend the *Electricity Reform Act 2000* to set out the overarching structure under which NTESMO will undertake its functions. The combined effect of these two Bills is the creation of a single entity that will centrally plan, procure, operate and settle electricity supply under a transparent and robust framework.

The cost of supplying electricity in the Territory has grown by approximately 30% over the last five years and is significantly outpacing the price paid by consumers under the government's uniform tariff policy. The CSO that subsidises these tariffs was recently announced to be an estimated $192m for the 2025–26 financial year, an increase of $51m year on year, and is expected to double over the next four years. This is not financially sustainable for the Territory, and action must be taken to reduce costs now.

Reform of our electricity market arrangements is essential to bring costs under control for the long term and to ensure that electricity system gets the investment it needs to keep power supply secure and remain reliable for Territorians. The government has considered several market design options and independent expert advice and has chosen to implement the public procurement model. This model focuses on the development of a whole-of-system plan to identify the optimal electricity supply configuration for the NT and centralised competitive procurement to efficiently deliver this plan. It is a relatively simple model that minimises administrative costs, streamlines the infrastructure development process to reduce risk and will attract new investors to the NT.

The Bills are the critical first step in delivering on the government's electricity reform agenda. The new statutory corporation established by the NT Electricity System and Market Operator Bill 2025 will bring the Territory in line with industry best practice and with other jurisdictions who have had an independent entity operating their electricity system and market for decades. It will also provide NTESMO with the powers to centrally plan and procure electricity in the new electricity market.

This key legislation will provide NTESMO with a clear mandate and all the functions necessary to deliver a reliable, secure and affordable electricity supply. As a statutory corporation, NTESMO will report to the Minister for Mining and Energy for performance matters, the Treasurer for financial matters and be run by an independent board with the necessary expertise to lead such a highly technical organisation. Power and Water Corporation employees who work in the electricity system and market operation functions will transfer to NTESMO under the same employment conditions, minimising the impact on the experienced staff who keep our lights on.

The Electricity Legislation Amendment (Market Reform) Bill 2025 will provide the framework that NTESMO and other market participants must operate under in the new public procurement model. It provides the heads of power necessary to implement electricity market reforms which will be operationalised through subordinate legislation. This will include developing the Territory's first comprehensive set of Territory electricity market

rules which will detail how our electricity supply is planned for, procured, operated and paid for, and outline clear accountabilities in each part of the electricity supply chain.

These Bills are just the first step in the implementation of the reforms required to achieve this government's commitment to a reliable, secure and affordable electricity supply which is critical to rebuilding the Territory economy. Further steps will be taken over the next two years to build on this critical legislation package, develop the Territory electricity market rules and ultimately launch a new fit-for-purpose electricity market for the Northern Territory.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

ELECTRICITY SYSTEM AND MARKET OPERATOR BILL
Serial 35

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Electricity System and Market Operator Bill 2025, Serial 35, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The first reading speech I have just given for the Electricity Legislation Amendment (Market Reform) Bill 2025, Serial 36, is also the speech explaining this Bill. Rather than repeating it, I will adopt it as a speech for this Bill.

Members will note that it forms part of the same legislative framework introduced in sequence for the consideration of the Assembly.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT (EXTENSION OF SCHEME) BILL
Serial 38

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill 2025, Serial 38, and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

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

The Bill amends the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* to extend the HomeGrown Territory Grant of $50,000 in respect of new homes for 12 months. The intention of this grant extension is to continue to support the creation of new homes in the Territory. From extensive evaluation and consultation with industry and market participants, it is apparent that the HomeGrown Territory Grant program is spurring residential construction in the Territory and getting Territorians into homes sooner.

However, to maximise the economic stimulus arising from Territory residential construction activity, this Bill extends the HomeGrown Territory Grant program in respect of new homes for 12 months. Not only does this maintain the Territory’s nation-leading support for would-be purchasers and builders of new homes, but it also gives industry participants the confidence needed to continue bringing land to market, expand operational capability and invest in their Territory workforce.

I turn to the measures contained in this Bill.

This Bill extends the eligibility period for the $50,000 grant to build or buy a new home by 12 months. This means that applicants will have until 30 September 2026 to sign a contract to buy a new home or to sign a building contract to construct a new home. The extension gives purchasers more time to save for a home and to avail themselves of this considerable government support.

Developers and building companies will benefit from this enlarged demand for new homes and greenfield lots and have the requisite confidence to invest in their operations to meet this demand. The eligibility criteria for the grant is designed to ensure that support is directed to homebuyers who are purchasing or building a home to live in rather than for those acquiring property for other purposes, such as investment. To this end,

the Bill amends the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* to maintain the requirement that those who receive the HomeGrown Territory Grant must occupy their homes as their principal place of residence for a continuous period of at least 12 months. This ensures that grant recipients reside in the Territory and contribute to our economy while experiencing all that our Territory lifestyle has to offer.

From 1 October 2026 the HomeGrown Territory Grant will cease and revert to the previous First Home Owner Grant, which is a $10,000 grant to buy or build a new home. At the same time, the requirement that grant recipients reside in their purchased property will reduce from 12 months to six months.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (BEVERAGE CONTAINERS AND PLASTIC BAGS) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EXPANSION OF CDS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL
Serial 37

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Legislation Amendment (Expansion of CDS and Other Matters) Bill 2025, Serial 37, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011* and regulations to broaden and simplify the scope of containers in the Northern Territory's Container Deposit Scheme, known simply by some as the CDS. The Bill also makes several administrative changes to improve the functioning of the scheme.

This Bill continues this government's commitment to rebuild the Northern Territory economy, reduce crime and restore the Territory lifestyle. It will reduce waste, remove litter from our environment, support the recycling industry, encourage greater investment in infrastructure and provide job opportunities across the Territory.

The *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011* established the scheme with the objective to increase beverage container recycling. The scheme achieves this by providing Territorians with access to a network of collection depots where empty containers can be exchanged for 10c each.

The scheme encourages Territorians to recycle their beverage containers, helping to keep empty cans, plastic soft drink bottles and beer bottles out of landfill and litter. After almost 14 years since the scheme commenced in 2012, we have a scheme providing a well-established and highly successful pathway for Territorians to recycle. There is an extensive network of collection depots, which goes beyond Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield to Katherine and Mataranka, Tennant Creek, Elliott, Alice Springs and Yulara. The network also extends to Barunga and Borroloola in the Roper Gulf, several East Arnhem Regional Council depots, Nhulunbuy and mobile collection services in other regions. In addition to depots operated by businesses, there are collection points offered by charities, community groups, schools and sporting organisations. By way of comparison, access to kerbside recycling is limited to Darwin and Palmerston.

This Bill will increase the recovery of beverage containers, particularly in regional and remote areas of the Territory where kerbside recycling is not available.

The success of the scheme is evident by over one billion beverage containers being recycled since its commencement. That is one billion containers being recycled and not littered nor landfilled. Annually, 100 million containers are now being returned to depots and $10m in deposits redeemed. This represents over 80% of regulated containers sold across the Territory being returned by the public. Nonetheless, there is still room to improve the scheme by expanding its coverage and by making the scheme simpler for Territorians to understand and participate in.

Currently, the scheme includes water, fruit and vegetable juices; soft drinks; sports and vitamin drinks; flavoured milk; pre-mix alcoholic spirit drinks; and beer and non-glass wine containers. However, a range of beverages are excluded. This inconsistency creates unnecessary complexity and confusion.

As Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, I seek to build on the success of the scheme by making improvements that expand and simplify the scope of containers included in the scheme. In turn, this will increase the opportunity for Territorians to put money back in their pockets through recycling.

The Bill proposes to broaden the scheme to beverage containers up to three litres. This will mean that Territorians will no longer have to sort beverage containers based on the type of beverage that was in the container. Instead, the focus will simply be on the recyclability of the container—for example, aluminium, plastic and glass. As a result, wine and spirit bottles, milk containers and a range of larger beverage containers will be included in the scheme.

In terms of improving recycling rates and the volume of high-value materials for recycling, it is estimated that expanding the scheme will increase recycling by a further 12 million containers per year. Increasing the amount of valuable materials recovered will have a flow-on benefit for the recycling industry, encouraging more infrastructure investment and jobs, including in remote communities.

The changes this Bill proposes are strongly supported by Territorians who have embraced the scheme and have invested their time and efforts by collecting containers and visiting depots to redeem deposits. This strong support has been evident throughout public consultation, beginning in 2023 with the release of a discussion paper and then in mid-2024 with the release of draft legislation for feedback.

Littered wine and spirit bottles often become broken glass in public places. This detracts from our lifestyle and natural environment, and there is a cost to cleaning up this mess. The reforms in the Bill will reduce the likelihood of wine and spirit bottles ending up littering our environment and divert these containers from landfill.

For Territorians who reside in Darwin and Palmerston, where kerbside recycling is an alternative pathway for beverage containers, contamination impacts resource recovery and diminishes the value of this material. Contamination may result in otherwise valuable material being landfilled. By way of comparison the scheme offers a cleaner stream of pre-sorted glass of high value to the recycling industry and results in a higher commercial return.

Beyond Darwin and Palmerston, highly recyclable materials, like HDPE plastic milk bottles, are usually landfilled or littered. In some remote communities, empty plastic containers may be landfilled and then managed by being burned. Landfill fires are clearly undesirable. The scheme provides a pathway for residents across the Territory to recycle these valuable materials.

Beer, wine in cans and wine-based and spirit-based beverages are already part of the scheme. There is market inconsistency in the coverage of alcoholic beverages in the current scheme that the Bill addresses. Wine and spirit bottles have been in the Queensland scheme since November 2023. Most states have consulted on expanding their schemes to include wine and spirit bottles and a range of other containers. It is only a matter of time before other states follow the lead of Queensland and the Territory.

Importantly, the Bill provides producers and suppliers with a two-year transitional period to include the 10c refund marking on wine and spirit bottle labels. This will reduce the impact of the scheme's expansion on industry, noting that in Queensland the 10c refund mark will need to be included on container labels by 2027. Businesses have already commenced updating their labels to meet Queensland's requirements by applying the nationally consistent 10c refund mark. As a result, businesses complying with Queensland's labelling requirements will automatically be compliant with the Territory's requirements and will be for other jurisdictions as they expand their schemes.

The Bill also provides a transitional period of up to one year for producers and suppliers to include the 10c refund marking on labels for other types of containers being added to the scheme. A one-year transitional period recognises that the shelf life and turnover of milk and juice containers is shorter than wine and spirits. Nonetheless, these containers will be captured by the scheme on commencement of the changes.

Furthermore, it is expected that the frequency of reporting and payment obligations for smaller wine and spirit manufacturers and suppliers should be set to minimise the regulatory burden. This can be achieved through commercial arrangements between the scheme coordinators and the beverage industry, supported by conditions of registration imposed for new suppliers. There is also the potential to extend this relief to small breweries and other small beverage suppliers.

There is already scope within the Act to accommodate a reduced, proportionate regulatory compliance burden for small business; however, if commercial arrangements between scheme coordinators and the beverage industry are not in place in a timely manner, this will be prioritised in future legislative amendments.

The Bill also requires collection depots to accept containers with lids, caps or other closures attached. This change has strong community support. It will enable Territorians to return containers to collection depots without having to remove the lid or cap from the container, which is currently a source of confusion and frustration.

There are also several administrative efficiency measures in the Bill.

Firstly, the amendments transition the powers and functions of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment; the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment; and delegates of the department. This is consistent with existing delegations and will create efficiencies by more appropriately placing responsibility for administering the scheme with the department rather than the NT EPA. Strategic decisions on setting scheme targets and guidelines will sit with the minister.

These amendments allow the NT EPA to focus on their important role of making decisions about significant environmental impacts and conducting environmental impact assessments under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*. It is widely recognised that the effective use of delegations can deliver more timely decisions based on risk.

Secondly, the Bill transfers the review of statutory decisions under the Act to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, otherwise known as NTCAT. This measure enables affected people to apply to NTCAT for a review of a decision, rather than the Local Court where this function presently sits. Such reviews will be undertaken under NTCAT's existing procedures.

Thirdly, the Bill makes a range of minor amendments to clarify matters and bring the Act and regulations more into line with modern drafting principles. These minor amendments do not impact the substantive operation of the Act and regulations or the scheme itself.

The amendments to broaden the scope of the scheme will commence by gazette notice. It is intended that sufficient time be provided to allow businesses and industry to establish the necessary arrangements and adjustments to ensure Territorians continue to have a positive experience at collection depots. The other amendments will commence on the day after the Administrator's assent is declared.

In short, this Bill helps in rebuilding our economy by supporting the waste and recycling industry and removing rubbish from our natural environment.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 8 October 2025.

Motion agreed to.

LANDS, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 34

Continued from 30 July 2025.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I thank the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment for the work it has done on this Bill. Department staff carefully sifted through about 50 pieces of legislation they have carriage of to identify these small tweaks. It is always important to review legislation to ensure it is working as effectively and efficiently as possible and meeting its intended objectives.

This amendment Bill is effectively the bread-and-butter work of government, making a number of minor updates and enhancements to 11 Acts and seven regulations. Again, I acknowledge the department's efforts but am somewhat surprised that the government is attempting to dress this up as significant reform. Of course, spin is its speciality, so it should not come as a surprise that the government would make a big deal out of something as simple as this legislation. The fact that this has been brought forward as priority legislation suggests that the government has an extremely light-on legislative program. This aligns with the rest of its approach.

It is interesting that the government has made a few minor tweaks to the *Water Act* to allow water planning between existing water licensees living and operating in the same region where there is not a water allocation plan in place. One licensee trading some of their allocation to another licensee in the same region seems sensible. It does not increase the amount of water extracted from the area; it just allows existing allocations to be traded.

The real question is why this government has still made no effort to get moving on much bigger water reform work that the Territory needs. We have spoken about this before in this House. We did all the groundwork for this; we developed a comprehensive Territory Water Plan in June 2023 after extensive consultation. This government has ignored it in favour of these small amendments without any strategic planning or vision for the future.

This is incredibly necessary work for our water resources. Water is one of the Territory's most precious resources, with significant social, economic, environmental and cultural value. We need to ensure that it is protected for future generations through responsible and transparent management. We know how important this is to Territorians. We need to safeguard our water resources, coasts and waterways because they are essential to our Territory lifestyle.

We know the Territory is experiencing hotter weather due to the impacts of climate change, adding to the urgency of a robust water management allocation system. We need to ensure every Territorian, no matter where they live, has access to reliable and good-quality supply of drinking water. Territorians also want confidence in the way government is managing and allocating water, which means it has to be evidence based and transparent.

Water is crucial to our economic development, but we need to ensure the needs of industry are balanced with maintaining healthy country and ecosystems and protecting the liveability of the Territory. Again, this is about data-driven decisions made in consultation with community.

The former Labor government released the first-ever strategic water plan for the Territory after extensive community and industry consultation, setting a clear direction for how we respond to the diverse uses of water and ways in which it is valued by Territorians. It is critical that the CLP government commits to continuing the priority actions in the Territory Water Plan to ensure all Territorians have a safe and reliable water supply that is resilient to the impacts of climate change, able to support sustainable development and, with environmental cultural values, protect it into the future. We need to make sure we are using it well, so we always have enough to go around while ensuring we maintain the highest possible environmental standards so we can maintain our pristine water resources.

The amendment to the *Water Act* is the equivalent of doing an oil change on your vehicle when it needs a complete engine overhaul. It is deeply concerning that this government is proudly slapping itself on the back when every stakeholder is calling out for much more significant water policy reform. It is necessary for the future of the Territory.

This government has no vision for our community. It cannot see past the next media release. It is a government scared of genuine reform, so we see these minor, piecemeal, tinkering-around-the-edges amendments. Meanwhile the big centrepiece of its economic plan is the Territory Coordinator, which turned out to be a $21m flop with not a single project approved yet.

The other changes seem relatively sensible. Making it easier to do minor variations and develop approval without starting back at square one in the application process will be welcome. Extending the term of building practitioner registration and pushing *Heritage Act* notices online seems sensible. All is fine and sensible, but it is just not reform, and the government should not pretend it is.

The department says that it has done consultation with relevant bodies on this Bill, which is good to hear. This is important due diligence and not something the government is good at. Well done to the department

for doing this important engagement work, identifying these simple and sensible changes and doing the work to bring forward this tidy-up.

We support this Bill but also call on the CLP to get on with the real reforms that government should do.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arafura for contributing to the debate and those members who received the briefing on the Bill.

This Bill achieves straightforward and practical measures, as the Member for Arafura spoke about, to reduce red tape, promote regulatory certainty and modernise processes across 11 Acts and subordinate legislation. The Bill does not contain significant policy changes or loosen the protections established under various pieces of lands, planning and environmental legislation.

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

- expediting approvals for low-risk projects under the *Planning Act*
- modernising processes to allow the use of email and websites as a method for publishing or providing notice
- expediting processes for minor technical amendments to licences granted under the *Water Act 1992* and *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* and removing duplication of processes
- increasing the term of builder practitioner registrations from two to four years
- improving the renewal processes for builder practitioners and water licence holders
- promoting certainty in decision-making by addressing legislative inconsistencies and clarifying ambiguity.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Technical issues—we could not hear the minister, and the clock had stopped. It may have just been resolved.

Madam SPEAKER: The problem is sorted. Please continue, minister.

Mr BURGOYNE: Thank you, Member for Karama, for ensuring that I am heard.

These changes will be noticed by Territorians working towards rebuilding the Northern Territory, like the 2,545 building practitioners currently registered in the Territory who can now renew their builder's licence for up to four years. The government is saying yes to business and implementing reform such as the four-year building practitioner legislation.

Several of the reforms contained in this Bill were identified as immediate priorities of the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce. That report was released on 16 July 2025. In just under two months, in these sittings, this government is already delivering on many of the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce recommendations.

We have changed the *Planning Act*'s rigid 5% rule to allow the consent authority to approve minor variations to development permits and minor alterations to existing buildings and works. Previously, when a proponent requested changes, they were assessed on a quantitative assessment of the change. This was ineffective in assessing the real impact of the changes and did not provide any flexibility or promote good outcomes. This resulted in more regulatory touchpoints through a complex development approval process, causing delays and costs through unnecessary red tape. This Bill enables the consent authority to approve minor variations to development permits and minor alterations to existing buildings in cases where the variation is minimal and does not materially affect the amenity of adjoining or nearby land or premises.

This Bill also sets the foundations for implementing other Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce recommendations related to risk-based planning approvals.

The *Water Act 1992* has been changed to enable the trade of water anywhere in the Territory where the trade is between licence holders taking water from the same water resource and not just within the water allocation plan areas. This means that hundreds of licence holders in places such as the Darwin rural area will now have the option to trade their water entitlements during periods when they do not require it, allowing other businesses that previously could not obtain a licence or an increase to an existing licence to expand and develop their operations.

Trade does not increase the take of water from a resource; it allows for water that is allocated to be used for its most productive use. Traded water outside of plan areas provides flexibility to water licence holders and recognises the variation in water use requirements due to climate, rainfall and changes in business needs. Enabling trade for all water licence holders stimulates the productive use of our water resources and further ensures that the volume of water allocated for use from our resources is extracted for the benefit of licence holders, the community and the Territory.

While water trading will now be enabled outside of plan areas, each application to trade water will require a consideration of water availability and potential impact on water users, the environment and cultural sites before it is approved. Similarly, the changes to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976* work to strengthen environmental protections.

These reforms recognise that other laws effectively and more stringently also provide protections to Territory wildlife and are backed up by world-class environmental protection frameworks. The environmental approvals process under the *Environment Protection Act 2019* requires detailed consideration of the impacts of an action or projects on protected wildlife and threatened species and on the environment more broadly.

The comprehensive information gathered about the potential impacts on protected wildlife as part of the *Environment Protection Act* assessment processes provides the basis for any requirements to minimise or manage any significant environmental impacts or to impose conditions specific to the protected wildlife.

The powers to impose conditions on a project to protect wildlife and threatened species as part of the environmental protection regulatory framework allow for more inclusive and intentional conditions to safeguard the survival of the species and its habitat. These amendments reduce duplication and allow for, in some cases, more stringent conditions to safeguard the survival of the species and its habitat.

I have outlined several examples of how this Bill will improve efficiencies, reduce regulatory touchpoints and cut through the red tape to make government processes work for the Territory economy.

I acknowledge all the officers who contributed to this Bill from all divisions across the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Silkwood

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I give an update on the government's historic acquisition of a parcel of land known as Silkwood.

Our government has been clear that restoring our Territory lifestyle is one of our key priorities. Before the election last year we made a promise that Territorians would have more places to camp, swim, four-wheel drive, hunt and explore under a CLP government. We know these activities are more than just fun things to do; in the Territory it is our way of life. Through our historic acquisition last month of the parcel of land known as Silkwood, we are delivering on that promise.

This landmark $7.5m deal will see an expansion of the areas available for tourism and recreation in the Litchfield area. This is the largest land purchase for preservation by the NT Government in a generation. There are 30,000 hectares of natural landscape, equivalent to 15,000 TIO stadiums. We all love running up and down there; imagine running up and down 30,000 hectares of natural landscape in the Northern Territory bush. We have to go back 25 years to see anything of this size and scale acquired by the Territory.

In 2000 the NT Government acquired a significant parcel of land in Central Australia that would become Owen Springs Reserve.

The Silkwood property borders the southeast boundary of Litchfield National Park and is just 120 kilometres from Darwin. The parcel of land includes the much-loved Robin Falls which, although private property, the public can access under a special land agreement. By acquiring the Silkwood property, we can now open up a spectacular new southern section of land featuring untouched waterfalls, gorges, hot springs and four-wheel drive tracks.

Importantly, we will also be honouring our commitment to create a new hunting reserve within the purchased land. Recreational hunting has existed within Litchfield National Park under previous CLP governments and can play an integral role in the management of feral animals like buffalo and pigs.

In his *NT News* column following the Silkwood announcement, NT Field and Game's Bart Irwin wrote:

> *When I heard the announcement of the expansion of Litchfield National Park with the purchase of Silkwood Station by the Country Liberal government, to say I was pleased hunting would be included would be an understatement.*
>
> *This government is true to its word that hunting is at the forefront of their view of Territory lifestyle. For the first time in eight years, it isn't just fishing, fishing, fishing. Hunters are now constituents that this government values too.*

In 2024 the Silkwood properties comprising Adelaide River Downs, Spitfire Creek and the Grand Plateau were listed for sale. The combined asking price for the three parcels at that time was initially $18m. In December 2024, the *NT News* reported that the asking price for the full Silkwood property was reduced to $14m. The report also indicated that an additional parcel of land, lot 7358, known as Anniversary Creek, adjacent to Robin Falls, would be added to the sale portfolio.

As a new government we watched these moves closely. We received concerned correspondence from the local four-wheel drive clubs which had 'look the other way' agreements to access the land from Dr Cooper, who were rightly worried that the private sale of the property would limit future access. According to the four-wheel drive clubs, the smaller parcels of land already sold had seen a flurry of 'no trespass' signs erected in the areas, as well as locked gates restricting access.

In January 2025, at the direction of our government, the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment enlisted an independent valuer to assess the current market value of the land. Department officials then proceeded to negotiate with the landowner on the three lots at Silkwood sitting to the western side of Dorat Road. The offer was based on current market value and the fact that we wanted this land back in the hands of Territorians before it was sold off and locked up by private buyers.

Thirty thousand hectares of pristine land—as I said before, the size of 15,000 TIO Stadiums—for $7.5m represents good value for money. This is an investment in the Territory's future to help grow tourism and our economy so that future generations can enjoy our great lifestyle. As many have said, land is the one thing they are not making any more of.

The Silkwood land acquisition by our government includes three land lots. Adelaide River Downs includes Robin Falls, Spitfire Creek and Anniversary Creek. The start of these properties is located just two kilometres south of Adelaide River and stretches 30 kilometres south to Daly River Road in the Robin Falls locality.

Key highlights of the land include:

- diverse terrain, from floodplains rising to undulating sandstone and limestone plains and rises, including large plateaus
- abundant natural attractions such as the spring-fed Robin Falls, crystal clear hot springs, lost city formations, cascades, lush rainforests, gorges, waterfalls, savanna grassland and spectacular escarpment views
- accessibility via all-season bitumen road access via Dorat Road, the old Stuart Highway, that meanders through the centre of the property
- opportunities for ecotourism development
- the native timber covering most of the property is bloodwood and eucalypt woodland, varying in density throughout, depending on the type of terrain.

Four Wheel Drive NT President, Mickey Barratt, told the *NT News* following our announcement that the high escarpments in the area meant it could be enjoyed when most of the Top End's swimming and camping options shut due to wet weather. He said:

> *One of the main advantages of this area is you can go mid-monsoon, up through river crossings, all the way up and camp …*
>
> *Mid wet season in a beautiful little pristine forest, little swimming holes—it's pretty rare in Darwin.*

He also added:

> *This is a monumental day for driving and recreation in the NT—to secure this and protect it for years to come, to have it open and accessible for Territorians and interstate visitors to come and see it, is rather spectacular.*

Our acquisition will also preserve native flora and fauna in the area for decades to come, with 30,000 hectares of escarpment, woodland and wetlands returned to public hands, protecting our ecosystems and wildlife.

The Environment Centre NT—this is rare—welcomed the announcement. According to the *NT News*, the Litchfield expansion was fantastic news because it would protect the flying foxes, water monitors, bats and quolls that live in Litchfield.

'Why do we need Silkwood?', you might ask. The Department of Tourism and Hospitality advised that ongoing access issues in Kakadu National Park cause our Territory-managed parks to become overcrowded, placing increased pressure on existing visitor nodes. This is particularly the case for Litchfield National Park which, on average, receives about 250,000 visitors a year.

It is good news that people are using these parks, but we need more places close to Darwin for them to enjoy. Within Litchfield National Park there is no option for expansion of popular sites like Buley Rockhole, Florence Falls, Wangi Falls and Tolmer Falls, which all have fixed capacity due to space and environmental constraints. The newly opened Central Valley is also operating at capacity, with camping sites unable to be expanded beyond the current allocation due to the narrow nature of the creek. As a result, Territorians are missing out on these popular campgrounds at Litchfield, with the current allocation of sites booked out well ahead of the start of the Dry Season.

NT Parks and Wildlife reports that during peak season camping, occupancy exceeds 90% across Litchfield. The issue of overcrowding is noted in the NT Parks 10 Year Activation Plan, which states:

> *There are signs that some of our park offerings are at the limit of what they can sustainably support in visitor numbers. For example, Litchfield National Park is experiencing very high visitation to many of its visitor nodes, and there are starting to be problems associated with the number of people at sites and challenges managing and balancing tourism offerings and recreational usage. Products like the Jatbula Trail within Nitmiluk National Park book out, often on the same day that the trail opens for bookings each season.*

Extensive consultation with Territorians and stakeholders occurred in the development of the NT Parks Masterplan as well as the NT Parks 10 Year Activation Plan. During this extensive public consultation, strong support was indicated for new parks and reserves to be identified in the Territory. According to the reports, Territorians want new parks to improve biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage protection and recreational and tourism opportunities; spread the load of visitation on existing parks and reserves; increase hunting opportunities; and find land that is fit for purpose.

The NT Parks Masterplan states:

> *Territorians overwhelmingly wish to see parks and reserves expanded for the protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage.*

The acquisition of Silkwood will provide new tourism opportunities, with the land parcels offering access to several natural attractions in Litchfield National Park. Its close proximity to Darwin and access to the Stuart Highway makes it an ideal stop-off location for self-drive tourists. The opportunities for commercial integration throughout the area will help reinvigorate tourism in the Top End with the introduction of new products in the market such as new multi-day remote hikes and bush camping, four-wheel drive tracks and swimming holes.

The regional town of Adelaide River is expected to benefit from increased visitation, creating new opportunities for local tourism, services and economic growth. Who does not love a barra burger at Adelaide River? More tourists for Adelaide River means more support for local businesses and jobs. That is central to our government's plan to rebuild the economy.

Now that the land has been acquired by the government it can be used to expand the Northern Territory parks estate. Responsibility for its ongoing management and any infrastructure requirements will rest with the Department of Tourism and Hospitality, including all landholder responsibilities. I look forward to seeing Minister Boothby's vision for this wonderful new parcel.

Any ongoing funding requirements associated with the management of the acquired land will be the subject of future budget bids. When it comes to private investment in the area, we are already testing the waters with investors in the tourism industry. The recent investment summit surveyed the area, with positive feedback. We will now work closely with local four-wheel drive groups with intimate knowledge of the area to master plan what the next few years look like.

Early indications are that the area could be home to an additional range of swimming sites, with most having all-weather access, plus room for dozens of new campsites. Although the land is now open to the public, it is expected signage and official infrastructure for the first lot of bush camps, walks and swimming spots will be rolled out within the next two to three years. It will be status quo at Robin Falls; we will maintain this area as dog friendly, as lot of people want their friendly pooches to join them.

In summing up, our acquisition of Silkwood is much more than just a map change; this is a transformational visionary investment in our lifestyle, liveability and landscape. It is exactly what restoring our Territory lifestyle looks like, protecting our stunning natural beauty while ensuring Territorians have more places to enjoy the activities they love.

I acknowledge the efforts of the staff in my Department of Lands, Planning and Environment for acting quickly and wisely to secure the fantastic opportunities that this strategic land acquisition presents. I especially mention Kerri O'Brien, Leah Clifford and Jo Townsend who worked on this over a long period to ensure it happened.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, Labor welcomes the purchase of the Silkwood property. I welcome it as the local Member for Daly. Most of you know that Litchfield National Park sits in my electorate of Daly River, and I know that a lot of people are excited by this announcement, especially the small businesses around Adelaide River and on the road to Daly River.

It is another incentive for people to stop in at Silkwood then head to support our local businesses at Daly River, such as our fishing tour guides and parks; the businesses in Adelaide River; and Tim Carter—I am sure the Member for Barkly knows him well—who owns the Daly Waters Pub and has done the expansion to Mount Bundy Station. He upgraded the facilities so that people can stay at his business when they are passing through the expansion of Litchfield National Park.

As one of the Territory's most visited national parks, it is vital for tourism. It is a key source of income for hundreds of Top End businesses, and it attracts tourists who use local tourism operators in the Territory, with over 250,000 visiting annually.

As the member representing the Daly electorate, which encompasses Litchfield National Park, I welcome this for residents and businesses. It is an extra 30,000-hectare parcel of land for tourists and residents to explore and stay in the rural area. That means local towns, like Adelaide River, Dundee and Batchelor—we should not forget Batchelor, the gateway to Litchfield; there are many businesses in Litchfield National Park and in Batchelor that welcome this.

The only concern from this side—and it should be noted—was the purchase price. We found the sale and the purchase price interesting. At that time Silkwood was advertised for offers below $5m—that is not a good deal. I do not think anyone buying property or a house would offer more than 50% of the asking price. I find it concerning that this property was bought for more than 50% above the asking price. Imagine being the sole buyer for a house and somehow agreeing to fork out 50% more than the asking price. That is bizarre. I do not think it is a good deal.

Ms Uibo: It is not a good deal for Territorians.

Mr YOUNG: It is definitely not a good deal for Territorians. For a government that claims to be fiscally responsible and axed $20m from the Tourism budget, this seems like an extraordinary amount to pay.

The government needs to explain why it paid so much. It is a simple question of transparency. Territorians deserve and expect to know why it was sold at more than 50% of the asking price. It is a genuine question, and Territorians deserve to know. I think Minister Boothby and other members may speak later, so I hope they can answer the question on why it was bought for more than 50% of the asking price.

Tourism is a vital part of the Territory's economy and is a critical job-creating sector that delivers significant financial and lifestyle benefits to our regions and cities, yet, this government has not provided an ounce of information on its long-term strategy for moving tourism forward in the Territory. Working with the sector, the former Territory Labor government invested strongly in tangible strategies to attract more tourists and support infrastructure and initiatives that would guarantee a wonderful experience that international and domestic tourists can enjoy in areas such as Litchfield National Park.

Territory Labor put forward a Tourism Industry Strategy, Aboriginal Tourism Strategy, Cruise Tourism Strategy, Long-term Business Events Strategy, Drive Tourism Strategy and an aviation strategy. What has the minister put forward in her 11 months as part of the CLP government? Nothing new—just following the previous government's strategies. We want to see something new from this government. It is clearly showing Territorians that there is no real vision for the Territory's tourism sector.

The tourism sector does an incredible job and is getting on with it, but it desperately needs the CLP government to back it. Let us be clear that the tourism industry took a hit following the COVID pandemic, and the former Territory Labor government made significant efforts to turn that around. Year on year, the Territory tourism industry started to recover. The number of domestic visitors increased by 11.3% from 2021–24 while average visitor expenditure improved by 18.6%. Why? Because we had a vision for the Territory's tourism industry.

I have stated how the former Territory Labor government promoted growth in international visitation by supporting marketing activities and measures, such as the Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme, which caters to domestic and international flight travel. Moving forward, this remains a vital mechanism to attract visitation to the Territory because there was a vision to get the Territory back to its rightful place as Australia's go-to destination.

Thanks to those actions, the outlook for tourism remains positive over the long-term as the industry continues to grow. However, this minister is still struggling to develop an original idea or vision for the future of the tourism industry in the Territory. Talk about uninspiring.

The CLP government has cut funding to our tourism sector, committing only $88.4m in this year's budget. This represents an overall 23% cut following the 2024–25 Territory budget and is truly poor form from the Tourism minister who obviously cannot argue the case of this critical sector in the Cabinet room. At a time when we need to invest in this sector to ensure competitiveness in the domestic and international visitation markets, the government offers no vision. It does not understand the critical importance of this sector to our economy and lifestyle. Territorians want and need a government that invests in people's success and in a future where every Territorian has the chance to thrive no matter where they live.

The screen industry also plays a critical role in attracting tourists in the Territory. The former Labor government backed our local screen sector, recognising it as an industry player in its own right and investing accordingly. The Northern Territory screen sector has grown by nearly 468% and injected more than $48m into the Territory's economy over the past eight years. Between 2018 and 2024 the former Territory Labor government's strategic investment and vision propelled the industry's rapid expansion. What did the CLP do? It cut funding to the sector by 30%—another victim of the Tourism minister's lack of vision.

It does not stop there. CLP members' regressive vision for arts and culture in the Northern Territory again demonstrated their lack of understanding of what underpins and will further drive the visitor economy forward. Their derogatory, deeply unhelpful commentary on what was formerly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art gallery in Alice Springs, as well as the art gallery in Darwin, is appalling. The arts, tourism and business communities are united in their disbelief about the way the CLP has gutted those projects that would have seen many more visitors travel to both ends of the Territory. The missed opportunities are what we hear about from many in the community who just shake their heads at the government's incredibly poor judgement in relation to these job-creating, economy-boosting projects.

The Northern Territory is renowned for its vibrant arts scene, offering international and domestic visitors a unique culture that sets it apart from anywhere else in the country, but the CLP will not back it. Instead, it denigrates it and disrespects the many Territory creatives who contribute so much to our community, vibrancy and lifestyle.

Territorians are still in the dark about the fate of the State Square art gallery. They are excited about this addition to the city. The business community said that it was a priority. The CLP has destroyed not only this project but the sense of optimism and excitement Darwin people and businesses were feeling about it.

The same goes for the national Aboriginal art gallery of Australia in Alice Springs. Modelling shows that the art gallery would grow visitation in Alice Springs by 53,000 and inject an estimated $64m into the economy each year. Alice Springs needs extra visitor numbers. I met with Tourism Top End yesterday to talk about visitor numbers. It said that in Alice Springs the numbers could be improved by such things as the Aboriginal art gallery. Many people fly directly to Uluru, which is great and we want that; we want to see people from interstate flying directly to Uluru, and most people do. I think about 20% of people drive from Uluru back to Alice Springs.

What do we need to attract people to Alice Springs and to get people directly there? Member for Gwoja?

Mr Paech: A gallery.

Mr YOUNG: A gallery, yes! You would think we would have an internationally renowned Aboriginal art gallery in Alice Springs, but instead the government has downsized it and disrespected the people of Alice Springs …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections! Please continue, Member for Daly.

Mr YOUNG: The CLP government had an opportunity—it was budgeted and advocated for with the federal government. The federal minister in Canberra, Catherine King, allocated that money for the Aboriginal art gallery. What did the CLP do? It downsized it and disrespected the arts centre and the creative sector.

Mr Kerle: We are delivering. You could not deliver anything in eight years.

Mr YOUNG: I can hear the Member for Blain calling out. He has no idea how the arts sector feels about this. We have had many people come to us and raise their concerns. They were excited to see this art gallery in Alice Springs. I suggest that before the Member for Blain calls out, he meets with people in the arts and Central Australian tourism sectors. Get down there and see how they feel about it. I guarantee that he has not been there to speak to the sector and the people about how important this art gallery is.

Mr Kerle: We are delivering it.

Mr YOUNG: You are not delivering it; you are downsizing it. This would have been a national Aboriginal art gallery, but those opposite said, ‘You know what? This is not important to us. We will downgrade it and put it in the corner of a little car park and not worry about it.’ That shows so much disrespect to our creative and arts sectors, the people of Alice Springs and the traditional owners from Central Australia who would have had their art showcased in a national art gallery, with international and domestic visitors coming to Alice Springs. There would have been a site that people would have been excited to visit and see wonderful, world-renowned Aboriginal artists. Those opposite said, ‘No. We do not care about you; we will downsize it and put it in the corner.’

Coming back to the Silkwood project, as I said before, it is a good announcement. It is good to see the expansion of Litchfield National Park. I do not think anyone disagrees with that, but we have questions about the purchase price. As the transparent government those opposite say they are, I hope they can answer the question of why it cost 50% more than the asking price. I heard that the Member for Goyder will answer those questions. There was some criticism. I was on Katie Woolf’s program. Matt Cunningham from Sky News also had concerns about those questions. The property was worth under $5m, and we got it for 50% more. That is a pretty bad deal.

On behalf of the tourism, creative and business sectors, we call on this government to be transparent about the cost, because $2m or $3m can go a long way for a small business or tourism operator. That money could have gone into upgrading roads in the Daly because there will be more traffic heading down Dorat Road. I am not sure whether many of you have been down Dorat Road. I know that the Member for Namatjira has

been there plenty of times; he goes there regularly on his fishing trips. He would know how terrible that road is and how dangerous it can be …

Mrs Carlson: You guys had a chance to fix it.

Mrs Zio: Eight years.

Mr YOUNG: We upgraded those roads. You can see all the new culverts. I drive it quite regularly. Clearly, the Members for Fannie Bay and Wanguri have not been there because they have not seen the new culverts that were put in, or they are just driving blind and have not seen the new upgrades.

When there is extra traffic there is extra wear and tear on the roads. The extra money that went into purchasing the property could have gone into upgrading roads or into our tourism industry to upgrade facilities. Those questions need to be answers. I hope this government answers them, because it is a lot of money paid over the asking price.

I look forward to getting there. I have visited many of the parts that have been purchased. I have been to Robin Falls. I have hiked behind there. It is a beautiful piece of land. There are many waterholes and creeks. Even mountain bike riders go there occasionally; they ride from Adelaide River, go down the back track and come over the top to Robin Falls. I have spoken to many people doing that when I have camped there. Many people also hike around the top; it is a beautiful piece of land. I look forward to continuing to visit and speak to the many visitors who visit the park and enjoy the Territory for what it is.

VISITORS
St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from St Mary's Catholic Primary School accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I welcome you to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, like everyone else in the Territory I love Litchfield and its surrounds. I spent many wonderful times, including at what now will be part of Silkwood, in the secret spots which we will now have to share, which I am happy to do. It is always wonderful to hear talk of new national parks for the Northern Territory.

To see 30,000 hectares of this incredible country—the minister outlined some of what it includes, being waterfalls, hot springs, escarpment and beautiful bush—preserved and returned to the hands of Territorians rather than sold off or locked up in private ownership is worth celebrating.

Litchfield National Park holds a special place in the hearts of so many Territorians. As the minister pointed out, land is the one thing they are not making any more of. The possibility of expanding Litchfield to include Silkwood is exciting, and we know it means more opportunities for people to connect with country, more biodiversity protected and another piece of land that future generations can enjoy as much as we do.

I listened closely to the minister's report, and I thank him for outlining the vision for this park. I still have questions I would love him to answer. One is: how will cultural heritage in the proposed Silkwood national park be identified, protected and managed, and is this work being done hand in hand with the Kungarakany and Warray people? There are significant rock art sites in the park; what work is being done to map and safeguard other areas of cultural significance?

I am also unclear about the land tenure. Will Silkwood be part of Litchfield National Park, and if so what are the native title and land use implications if this land is declared a national park? If it will not be part of Litchfield National Park, what will it be? What tenure will it have? What is the plan to conserve and manage the cultural and natural values of the park if it is not a national park? Just as I am looking forward to my next camping trip in this beautiful place, I look forward to the answers to these questions.

I know that Silkwood could become a shining example of what is possible when we commit to conservation, culture and community at the same time. I look forward to seeing some of you at Robin Falls, at the hot springs and the secret camping spots. It is a fantastic and beautiful place. Thank you for giving it back to the

Territory. I look forward to hearing how those important issues will be managed as part of that and the exact details of the tenure of the land.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, last year we were elected on the commitment to restore our Territory lifestyle, and the acquisition of the Silkwood estate is an important piece of that commitment. In this year of action, certainty and security we are delivering our promise to establish a new hunting reserve. We are ensuring that there is camping, four-wheel driving, hunting, exploring and other great Territory hobbies just down the road. By securing this parcel of land we are locking in access to this incredible place for generations of Territorians to come.

When people ask me what our government means when we talk about Territory lifestyle, I tell them to look at Silkwood. This CLP government knows that Territorians love getting out and about and exploring the great outdoors; I know I do, and I hopefully you do too, Madam Speaker. Territorians love going camping and spending time with their friends and families. It is hugely popular and a way of life in the Territory. The planning for the next Dry Season worth of camping is already starting across many households in the Territory.

Litchfield National Park and all our national parks are a major drawcard for domestic and international tourists. There is something iconic about Litchfield. First established in 1986 under a CLP government, thanks to the generosity of the Townsend family surrendering part of their Stapleton lease, it was later expanded with the addition of Tipperary Station and parts of Camp Creek Station.

Enough with the history; let us talk about Litchfield. I remember visiting the rock holes and waterfalls of Litchfield National Park with my family growing up, later with mates in my trusty Hyundai Getz when I was a bit bigger and then taking visiting friends and family who come to the Territory as a way of showing off our great Territory landscapes that they cannot get anywhere else.

I am sure many in this Chamber have fond memories of swimming at Buley Rockhole and jumping in; Florence Falls and the 100 stairs you have to take to get up and down; Wangi, which is scary; Tolmer Falls; and my personal favourite, the Upper Cascades. The Upper Cascades is beautiful; it is like Buley Rockhole but better. The only downside is having to go for a massive hike, so I highly recommend bringing someone to carry the esky.

Locals know—we in this Chamber know—that the popularity of Litchfield can sometimes make the existing spots a bit crowded. We have all pulled up, seen that the car park is full and decided to go further down the track. The unlocking of the Central Valley camping spots in previous years by the Labor government was a welcome addition; Labor did not get everything wrong. I highly recommend if anyone has a Dry Season night to go there and camp, because it is a beautiful spot.

When people think of Silkwood, I want them to think of Litchfield on steroids. Located next to the existing southeast portion of Litchfield National Park is this incredible parcel of land that we have now acquired. It is 35,766 hectares of God's country located near Adelaide River. Cornered by Dorat Road and Daly River Road, it is just down the track.

I have been lucky to go camping at what we now call Silkwood—I did not know it was called that at the time—with family, friends and NT Scouts over the years for the infamous secret hot springs that everyone in Darwin knows about, swimming in cold creeks, exploring the caves and the four-wheel drive tracks, riding my motorbike and quadbike through the smaller tracks, camping out of phone range and enjoying the company of those I am with around a fire. I have camped at Robin Falls with the dogs and even shared a tent with them in the rain. It is truly one of my favourite spots in the Territory.

You might be wondering, like many of those who see me out and about, 'How do you get to Silkwood?' I like measuring distances in the Territory by the number of corners it takes me to get there. For example, my office in Coolalinga is only four short corners from Madam Speaker's office in Alice Springs. You simply turn right from Henning Road on to the Stuart Highway heading south. After about 15 hours turn left on to Stott Terrace in Alice Springs, take a quick left on to Bath Street and then another left at the roundabout; we are practically neighbours.

Silkwood is only four short corners from Madam Speaker's office in Alice Springs. Simply turn right on to Railway Terrace, left on to Whittaker Road, right on to the highway and 14 hours later turn left on to Dorat Road. There is an optional corner on to Daly River Road if you want to go to the hot springs, but if you want to go to Robin Falls it is four simple corners. Silkwood is just down the road, and it is well worth the trip. I am more than happy to show you on a map where the good spots are.

When I first heard that the government was securing the Silkwood parcel of land for future Territorians, I let my fiancée Mel know that if we have kids, my firstborn will be named after the Member for Braitling. I love that man. He is a great bloke. He is doing a great job, and this is another feather in his cap.

Silkwood is more than just a parcel of land; it is a canvas of opportunity—the land of opportunity, if you would. I know the Member for Barkly thinks the land of opportunity is in his backyard, but it is in mine. Technically, it is the Member for Daly's, but I reckon I live closer to it than he does.

It is a place where new generations of Territorians will create their own memories, just as many of us did growing up around Litchfield. It offers the chance to expand our camping grounds, walking tracks and four-wheel drive adventures so that families can continue to enjoy the simple joy of pitching a tent, sharing a meal around a fire and waking up to the sound of running water and native birds. This is the kind of investment that does not just pay off for today; it pays off for decades to come.

Silkwood holds the potential for ecotourism ventures and new swimming holes and trails. There are opportunities for managed hunting and potentially fishing, if there are any fish that high up. It is an asset that supports lifestyle and livelihood, creating jobs in tourism, hospitality and land management while protecting biodiversity and heritage.

There will be many camping spots, but there is also the caravan park down the road on Daly River Road and more camping to the north towards Litchfield and Adelaide River, so it will be great for the whole region.

Silkwood is the Territory lifestyle written across 35,766 hectares of country, with hot springs, waterfalls, rainforest, escarpments and wide-open bush. It is a place where Territorians and visitors alike will enjoy nature without the pressure of overcrowding, where we can spread out, swim and cool down or heat up in the Dry Season, explore and discover. It is a place where young people can learn bushcraft, Scouts can camp, families can fish, four-wheel drive clubs can chart new trails and hunters can try their luck. It is a gift not just to us but to those who come after us, ensuring that the best of the Territory remains open, accessible and alive with opportunity.

I thank the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment; the Minister for Parks and Wildlife, who I am sure we will hear from soon and who will help turn this parcel into the icon I know it will become; and the whole of government for backing the Territory lifestyle.

I remind everybody that when we are in this Chamber it is always polite to listen to what people have to say. I listened to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment explain that the parcel first went up for sale for $14m and then it was adjusted to $18m, then $14m. At no point was the parcel of land for sale for $4m. I do not understand what ChatGPT or staffer upstairs is working for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but it is nice to check your facts once in a while. If you google the words 'Silkwood real estate', you can find the original listing. You can find the *NT News* articles at the time which state those values. This idea that the government somehow paid 50% more than the asking price, when in fact we paid 50% less than the asking price, is an embarrassment on those opposite's research.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I will speak on the Member for Daly's comments regarding the economy and people needing art galleries. It is an insult to the people in my electorate. It is utter nonsense that Labor is still pushing that art galleries are the economic mover that will help people in my electorate afford their grocery, electricity or mortgage bills. It shows such disconnect and disdain for the working people in my electorate.

During my campaign I stood at Coles and spoke to people as they could not afford their grocery bills, yet Labor's grand economic reform is to build more art centres. It is so disconnected from the reality facing the common Territorian.

The people of my electorate, when they are hungry, do not want to visit a state-of-the-art gallery; they want to afford a basic shop at Coles. They want to make sure they can see a doctor when their child is sick and make sure a teacher is in the classroom when they child goes to school.

This idealism is disconnected from the basic needs of everyday Territorians. It truly astounds me that the Member for Daly pushed that narrative, and I hope his party colleagues realign on where Territorians' needs are and that it is not the economic package they move forward with in the future.

Silkwood is a great opportunity for the people of Drysdale. The people of Drysdale are active; all you have to do is drive around to see a large number of four-wheel drives, trailers, campervans and boats. We are an

active community and enjoy getting out amongst the Territory nature and environment. There is a genuine natural beauty to the Territory that we have all felt, and to have families involved in that is important. It raises that love of nature, especially in our children. My father took us out all the time, and it raised a natural curiosity for plants, animals and the natural world. It raises another generation of those who care about the conservation of the environment. There are huge benefits when government puts land aside so that nature can be enjoyed. I commend our government for doing that.

What I like about Silkwood is there is a touch of innovation to it. We are making sure it is an active park. We will have four-wheel drive tracks, which are popular among Territorians. They can put their vehicles and skills to the test whilst enjoying nature.

I am glad there is a hunting reserve. This is good news for the large number of hunters who live in my electorate. We have a lot of avid hunters and people who partake in hunting maybe once or twice a season as an event they do with friends and family, which is great.

I have not been hunting for some time, but it is pretty special. I had the great honour of learning to hunt in the Member for Arnhem's electorate with a respected family. I understand when we hear about the importance of Aboriginal law and hunting, because I got to grow up experiencing that. To me, learning to hunt on the Cobourg Peninsula was a special moment of my childhood …

Ms Uibo: That is Arafura.

Mr HOWE: Sorry, Arafura. Sorry, Opposition Leader; I meant Arafura from the beginning.

Ms Uibo: But it is on Arnhem Land.

Mr HOWE: Yes.

Jim is no longer with us, but I was lucky, especially as a white kid, to go out there and have Jim teach me how to hunt, what to hunt and when I was allowed to hunt on his land. What I consider moral when hunting is his rules. That is a pretty special memory for me. Others might not get that experience at this hunting reserve, but you are in your natural element on a hunt. I think it is important to preserve that and have it available in the Northern Territory. It is innovative. The laws may change in this place, but this park will be here for my children, grandchildren and, hopefully, great-grandchildren. They can go and enjoy it and have no idea who I was but know that the park is there for their enjoyment.

It is good that Silkwood has been acquired, and I thank everyone for their involvement. I thank Jim for giving me his rules and my memories of hunting.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the importance of Silkwood. Although I think the Northern Territory Government is incompetent, I do not think it is completely incompetent. This is a good decision; acquiring land for natural parks and reserves is incredibly important, and we will have it for future generations.

It is important to understand—I hope that the Tourism and Parks and Wildlife minister can talk us through it—the amazing opportunities before us. I hope that Silkwood can be a reserve that is jointly managed with Aboriginal Territorians to ensure the utmost respect for cultural and spiritual heritage is abided by and that tourism opportunities are afforded to Aboriginal Territorians to help shape the Territory.

National parks in the Northern Territory are amazing. On Saturday night I was in Trephina Gorge in Central Australia, camping in that beautiful park. Parks and Wildlife does an amazing job. We hope that the government will deliver its election commitment to make Territory parks free. We are looking for that in the future.

This is an important announcement which I welcome. Every Territorian has experienced the beauty and majesty of our national parks. They are managed by our amazing rangers who look after these parks and reserves to make sure that they are in tip-top condition. I thank them for their work. I also acknowledge that the government has cut Aboriginal ranger funding by $12m by not renewing the program as it said it would. It is important to acknowledge the role of our rangers in managing firebreaks, invasive weed species and places of spiritual and cultural significance to Aboriginal Territorians.

I was heartened that there was a commitment to do this. There is another location that should be a national park. Work was undertaken before the change of government. I ask this government to consider making

another national park or reserve—that is, Coniston national park. That is the last site of a sanctioned massacre in Australia in 1928 just outside Alice Springs. Work was undertaken with traditional owners on whether it is appropriate, and they think it is. Before the change of government we heritage listed the Coniston site. I would love to work with the government on making the Coniston massacre site a part of a national park or reserve to honour, respect and memorialise the events that unfolded. It is an important place to Central Australians, and we need to protect it.

There are amazing opportunities before us for the future use of these areas. The government has already signalled that it might partly be a hunting reserve. We will need to work through what insurances looks like, safety regulations and so forth, which is important. There are other opportunities to partner with wonderful environmental groups across the Northern Territory to make sure we maintain and support the unique ecosystems in each national park. Our parks are just as unique and special as every corner and person in the Territory.

It is a welcomed announcement. I look forward to finding out the finer details because we need to know and want to work through it. There are opportunities to look at diversification in some areas, as long as they are done in partnership with traditional owner groups and local communities.

Coming from the southern region of the NT, I know people are regularly at our national parks. We may be taking interstate friends or getting out there ourselves to hike sections of the Larapinta Trail. The parks are amazing and showcase the best of the Territory.

A number of members in this Chamber have been talking about tourism and the arts. I remind everyone that year on year the creative industries generate $734m for the Territory's economy, and 2,400 direct jobs are supplied and supported through our arts community. That is not a figure to shy away from or talk down; it should be celebrated. Our creative industries and our arts drive the Territory economy just as much as other industries. Please respect them and acknowledge their contributions. For many of our First Nations Territorians their art is not only a creative masterpiece in its own right; it also might be their livelihood and income supporting them and their families.

We can have a contest of ideas on whether we support a particular project or think it is worthy, but creative industries and the arts are a significant powerhouse in the Territory's economy, providing $734m. More than 2,400 jobs are supported through the arts. We also have indirect jobs such as managing art supplies, tourism components and retail elements. It is an important section of our community. We should be respecting that when we are talking about projects, whether it is the government or the former government. Let us remember that we are talking about amazing people in our creative community. Whether they are visual artists, performing artists or one of our many talented musicians, they all contribute in their own way, importantly, to the Territory's economy. Let us value them and acknowledge their work because it is important.

People come to the Northern Territory for an Indigenous experience most of the time. They want to experience our amazing culture, landscapes, songs and stories. That is something we should celebrate. It is an amazing driver of tourism in the Territory through tourism. There is work to be done in these spaces, but I acknowledge the amazing landscape we work in and the number of players in the tourism and arts sector who are doing great things.

I recently went to Yulara in my electorate and saw the amazing tourism opportunities there. It is special. I would love to see us all supporting smaller festivals across the Northern Territory. I just finished at the Gurindji Freedom Day Festival, celebrating Gurindji pride in my electorate. We can use these events to bring people to the Territory.

I am concerned, as I have heard from people in the community that the National Indigenous Music Awards had its funding halved. Please, government, understand what that means. We are at real risk of losing the NIMAs to Melbourne and Sydney. We cannot lose the NIMAs. This showcases First Nations music and creativity on a national stage. It is part of our August arts and cultural month experience. It showcases the best of our First Nations brothers' and sisters' creative talent. People come to the Territory to see it.

The NIMAs are held at the Amphitheatre under a canvas of stars shining bright in the night sky when you see our artists perform on that big stage. We do not want to lose it to the east coast; it brings people to the Territory, as does the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, the National Indigenous Fashion Awards, Country to Couture and the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards.

We need to invest more into the arts. Everyone needs to, not one particular party. The CLP has already shown that it is cutting funding to the NIMAs, halving and redirecting it. We cannot lose any of these major events. Please reconsider that.

It was great to talk about Silkwood.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to speak to this ministerial report about Silkwood.

I do not know where to start; there has been so much going on in the Chamber in the last couple of hours. Maybe the Member for Gwoja could have a chat with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about how he can speak in parliament without misleading accusations flying everywhere. He is trying to paint that he is an amazing politician. I have two questions for him: where has he been, not only over the last 12 months but four years before that when he was in this Chamber? Who has he been talking to?

He has completely lost the plot, basically trying to recreate history and saying that the previous government, which he was part of, was this amazing tourism mecca of ideas and opportunity, which is not the case. We know that because it left projects sitting on the shelf from its special program which had millions and billions of dollars on it but never went ahead for so many years. It was things like the Alice Springs Aboriginal art gallery and the tourism information centre in Alice Springs.

He only needed to walk around the Northern Territory in the last couple of months to see what has been happening regarding tourism and our economy. We had a bumper season …

Ms Uibo: Are you talking about only Darwin? Is that what you mean?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms BOOTHBY: Wherever you are in the Northern Territory, it has been a bumper season. The Member for Gwoja talked about the amazing things that happened over the last couple of months in his electorate. He is on board with that, but we cannot get those opposite talking to each other about the other things happening in the Territory.

Mrs Hersey: They must be divided.

Ms BOOTHBY: Maybe they are divided; good point.

I will also clear up the record about this price that the opposition keeps talking about. I table a copy of the *NT News* article, dated December 2024, which clearly highlights that the original asking price was over $18m and that the owner would consider offers over $14m. We offered $7.5m for that parcel of land, and it was accepted. That represents incredible value for Territorians.

The part I loved about the contributions this morning was the Member for Goyder talking about the excitement, not only for himself and his family but for other rural residents, and about what the Silkwood purchase means to them. He talked about it being rugged and how there are all these secret—or not-so-secret—places to go. I have been out and about in the community, and that is exactly the type of thing people talk about. You can see how excited he is, and he is obviously feeling that sense from his community. I thank him for that contribution, because it is important. We want to represent as many Territorians as possible, and the CLP government does that.

The Member for Drysdale talked about seeing all the four-wheel drives in people's driveways. That is the truth. I see that in my electorate, and I am sure many of you do. It is not only four-wheel drives; there are camper trailers everywhere. There are so many of them. It is amazing to see. That is what Territorians love to do, and Silkwood will create the opportunity to use their four-wheel drives and camper trailers and be out and about enjoying our unique lifestyle.

I correct the record about the myth that Labor keeps peddling about how you have to pay to go to Litchfield National Park. That is absurd. Territorians may remember that several years ago Labor brought in the tax on park passes for tourists to pay to access our parks. Territorians do not pay. We did not make that change; Labor made tourists pay. Territorians have never had to pay to go to Litchfield or any of our national parks. Please stop peddling those mistruths in this House.

Silkwood is incredible. I will take people through some things that have been said about this place. I go back to when we had our inaugural NT Investment Summit, with more than 100 investors and global business leaders coming to Darwin to see firsthand the enormous potential of our Territory. It was amazing to showcase Silkwood to those people and give them a touch of what it was all about. One of them said:

'The Silkwood acquisition provides the NT Government a unique opportunity to fast-track development of high-value tourism assets on the doorstep of Litchfield without any sort of compromise to the environment. With the current lack of accommodation in Litchfield as well as growing local, interstate and international visitation, there is an opportunity that Intrepid will need to deeply consider.'

This kind of announcement turns heads and builds confidence. It is not just about our parks; it is about the Territory as a place to invest, grow and do business. We are proud of this. It is indeed innovative, as the Member for Drysdale said. It means that after all the challenges we have seen over a number of years in our tourism economy and the economy in general—which was going backwards under Labor—this kind of investment allows us to turn the tide and do things that will secure economic benefit today and into the future for our children and grandchildren.

Litchfield already attracts over 250,000 visitors a year, and that comes with its challenges and pressures. It means we must try to find other areas to expand, and that is what this does. It opens up new spaces for walking trails, four-wheel drive tracks, waterfalls, swimming holes and bush camping. That is the kind of experience that draws people back time and again, year after year. It also means that more money will be spent in our regions in places like Adelaide River and Batchelor. All of these things will support local businesses and jobs. That is a game-changing thing that can happen for all of our regions.

Tourism operators have been calling for this over a number of years. They keep saying, 'We need new product'. Guess what? This delivers new product. It is a huge win for them as well.

My colleagues spoke about the hunting ground there, which will be amazing. We are doing the work on that now. Four-wheel drive and mountain bike enthusiasts have been talking to us. There are so many ecotourism opportunities. There is an ample number of people wanting to talk to us about how we can make this even better for Territorians and our visitors.

A man named Rick wrote to me and said that he is passionate about camping in that area and wants to make sure he can still take his dog, Rio, with him. That is important for Territorians. We all love our fur babies, as we heard this week in this Chamber.

This is tourism; it is innovative and delivering on one of our three key pillars. It is restoring our lifestyle for Territorians and rebuilding our economy, which is another key pillar we promised to deliver. It is not just about a purchase; it is about lifestyle, tourism and the economy. It pretty much covers everything we have been talking about in this Chamber for the last 12 months.

The master plan will be worked on. A range of people are involved in this process because we want Silkwood to remain as rugged as possible. We want to enhance that for Territorians and visitors. We will take the time to do that because we need to unlock every opportunity while preserving the beauty of that area for generations to come.

The CLP government is unlocking new experiences, restoring our lifestyle and backing the industry that will carry us into the future. As we always say, this is what action and delivering promises looks like. It is about restoring our unique Territory lifestyle. I am so proud of our whole team across many ministries and departments and the Territorians who have contributed to this purchase. It is there ready for everybody to enjoy now and into the future.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I support the minister's report on the acquisition of Silkwood and the expansion of Litchfield National Park. This is a significant and positive development for the Northern Territory. It represents not only major investments in our parks space but also a long-term commitment to strengthen our tourism industry, grow our economy and protect the lifestyle that makes the Territory unique.

Parks are the backbone of the Territory's tourism sector. Every year more than a quarter of a million people visit Litchfield National Park. It is one of the most iconic attractions, drawing families, self-drive tourists and international visitors alike.

As the minister highlighted, the park is now at capacity. Campsites are booked out months ahead, and visitors are often turned away. The acquisition of Silkwood provides the solution. At more than 30,000 hectares,

Silkwood opens new opportunities for campgrounds, bushwalking trails, four-wheel drive tracks, swimming holes and ecotourism ventures.

I refer to the Member for Daly who mentioned that we paid too much—50% more. I remind the Member for Daly that we have paid approximately $250 per hectare, which is a bargain. The shadeless structure on Cavenagh Street …

Ms Boothby: How much was that?

Mrs CARLSON: I think it was $4m. It is not even a hectare, so I think this is a bargain.

The economic benefits are clear. Tourism is one of our most important industries. Visitors come to the Territory for nature, adventure and authentic outdoor experiences. By expanding Litchfield, we can now offer products that keep people here longer. People were fleeing in droves before the CLP came to government, and this gives them an opportunity to have extra outdoor activities in a new place and stay longer. It will encourage them to spend more time, and this creates jobs in towns and communities in the Member for Daly's electorate, as he spoke about earlier. We are providing job opportunities.

Silkwood's location, just over an hour from Darwin, makes it ideal for the growing self-drive market. This industry directs benefits for local businesses, caravan parks, service stations—I often buy an ice cream and lunch at service stations—tourism operators and cultural experiences. Every additional day a visitor spends in the Territory adds to our economy. Every new opportunity created within Silkwood means work for local people.

This is also about our lifestyle. In the past, my family and friends have experienced this congestion. These issues were raised when I doorknocked in my electorate, as many families take their children during the school holidays and experience overcrowding. My constituents in Wanguri love camping, hunting, swimming and four-wheel driving. Every second house has a four-wheel drive or a camper trailer, and many look forward to the Dry Season camping, but some do this during the Wet Season to avoid overcrowding.

By expanding Litchfield into Silkwood, families can continue to enjoy weekends camping under the stars, swimming at safe and accessible waterholes and exploring those new landscapes. Securing Robin Falls as a part of this estate is particularly important. It is already popular but unmanaged and under increasing pressure. By bringing it into the park estate, we protect it properly for the future so it is safe, sustainable and open to all.

This acquisition is also about long-term vision. Silkwood gives us room to grow now and for decades to come. It will allow for the development of new trails, activities and opportunities as demand increases. It ensures that we are planning ahead—unlike our Labor counterparts—spreading visitation across the border area and protecting the natural environment while still supporting growth.

The Silkwood acquisition and Litchfield National Park expansion is a win for tourism, the economy and the Territory lifestyle. It secures one of the Territory's most spectacular landscapes, provides new opportunities for Territorians and visitors alike and strengthens one of our greatest economic assets, our parks.

I commend the minister for bringing forward this report and fully support this acquisition as a bold and forward-looking investment into the Territory's future.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Member for Nightcliff – Misuse of Parliamentary Privilege

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, last night in this Chamber the Member for Nightcliff made an accusation that has caused considerable concern within and outside of parliament.

I was not sitting in the Speaker's Chair at the time, but this matter was quickly drawn to my attention.

In their speech last night, the Member for Nightcliff accused a police officer of killing someone. Whilst I am a great proponent of free speech in parliament, I believe this crosses the line.

As members of parliament we must be respectful of the separation of powers that exist to ensure we are not stepping into areas beyond our privileged positions. In this Chamber we are not judge and jury. The facts are for the court to decide.

In this case I have determined that the Member for Nightcliff has misused parliamentary privilege. We should never use parliamentary privilege to supplant the role of the court. I acknowledge that matters before the courts are often, by their nature, matters of extreme importance to the people of the Northern Territory, but members must take care when discussing these matters.

I advise honourable members that I have asked the Member for Nightcliff to withdraw their comments. As yet their response is not forthcoming. I invite the Member for Nightcliff to respond now, if that is what they would like to do.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, last night in my adjournment speech I spoke about the death of Kumanjayi White. It is on record that the officer I named is alleged to be one of the officers involved in the death in custody of Kumanjayi White, but the criminal investigation is still ongoing.

It has been brought to my attention by the Speaker that the words I used are not accurate; therefore, I withdraw my comment from last night and apologise. I should have used the word 'allegedly' or phrase 'death in custody'.

However, I stand by the point I was trying to make, which was that officers involved have not been stood down and that any officer involved in such a serious incident that results in the loss of life should not continue to work while investigations are still ongoing.

NOTICES

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Police Administration Amendment (Police Public Safety Officers) Bill 2025, Serial 39.

QUESTION TIME

Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill

Mr PAECH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

You have botched your Anti-Discrimination Bill. During Estimates you said you consulted widely on it. Clearly that is not true. Last week you wrote to stakeholders saying that it would be passed this sittings. Yesterday, after significant backlash, you pulled the Bill. You claimed that it was because you had a full agenda this sittings, even though we have already run out of legislation today. Then you said that it was because you needed to consult with stakeholders.

Why did it take you until yesterday to acknowledge how unhappy Territorians are with this dodgy Bill? Why did you lie about your consultation? Why did you not send it to your own scrutiny committee in the first place, where everyone could have their say in an open and transparent forum?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will be clear about what this is all about, why we are doing it and what is happening.

We are here because in 2022 Labor stripped protections for religious schools and parents who send their children to religious schools. At the time the CLP promised that we would restore religious freedoms. A lot of work has been done in that time over many years but especially in the last 12 months when we have been consulting closely with religious groups.

The Labor opposition is not telling people that we reached a consensus with those religious groups as late as last week when we thought we found middle ground in terms of protections for the parents who want to send their children to religious schools so that they could have same-faith teachings in those schools but also protect Territorians against discrimination.

We found a middle ground, yet at the last moment I found out that religious schools are not happy with that. There was national attention and people weighing in saying that they were not happy with this agreement we reached.

We cannot go beyond what we said we would do. What they are asking for is far beyond the realms of what Territorians expect. We need religious freedoms and the right to teach children in schools with protections against discrimination.

We will not budge from that. We will take our time on that and meet with the groups again who are not happy with what we originally agreed together last week.

I make no apologies for this. I will take my time, and I will not rush this. It is too important for Territorians. It is important to the thousands of Territory families …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked you a series of direct questions. Why did you not send it to the scrutiny committee? You have said in this House that you did not bring it because your agenda was full; can you acknowledge that you lied? There are more community groups than just religious; why are you shutting important community groups out of this consultation?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you have now asked the question twice. It is up to the minister to answer.

Ms BOOTHBY: I will be clear. This legislation was squarely designed to protect Territorian families who choose to send their children to a religious school—a school of faith. They want to know that they can send their kids there to be taught the religious beliefs that they have in their families. They want that choice.

This is so important because Labor ripped those protections from the *Anti-Discrimination Act* two years ago and left them high and dry with no protections whatsoever. We sat down with those groups and consulted heavily. They told us what they wanted, and we all agreed. They then said at the last minute, 'No, actually, you have not gone far enough, and we want those further protections'. Those protections are outside of the sphere that Territorians want, so I will go back to those groups and sit down with them to work through how we can make it work and find middle ground to make sure that all Territorians and religious groups are protected from discrimination.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Defence personnel from Joint Operations Command, accompanied by their captain. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you.

Also in the gallery is Mr Ned Hargraves, senior Warlpiri elder. Welcome to Parliament House, Mr Hargraves.

Members: Hear, hear!

OC Spray Introduction

Mr MACKAY to CHIEF MINISTER

This week has seen the commencement of the much-talked-about OC spray trial. It has been a topic of great interest in the lead-up to Monday's rollout, and I know many in my electorate and in my family are grateful for this initiative. In fact, plenty of constituents across the NT have already purchased the spray, with some stores selling out, reflecting the strong community support for this trial.

Can you update the Assembly on what this trial means for the safety of Territorians and how it fits into the broader strategy to empower individuals and enhance community safety across the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder is a tireless advocate for his community. I know he has received overwhelming feedback and support from the good people of Goyder who believe they can be trusted and that individual freedom and responsibility are important parts of any society and community. I commend him for the work he has been doing because this is a big step forward. Time and again we said that we cannot deliver different, better outcomes for Territorians if we do not try different things.

The OC spray trial is an important example of that. The spray has been flying off the shelves at the firearms dealers. They are pleased with how the rollout has gone. We have been working closely with the firearms dealers to make sure this is a well-regulated process.

People would be interested to hear the feedback we received directly from them about how the last couple of days has gone. The average age of people purchasing OC spray is around 47 years, so most people purchasing OC spray are mature. I think that speaks volumes about where this policy lands and how important it is to the community. The most common size has been the small 45-gram canister. It is about a fifty-fifty split between men and women purchasing OC spray.

The feedback the firearms dealers have been getting as people purchase is that they feel much more comfortable having the OC spray and that now they will not bring a screwdriver with them, have metal poles, put deodorant in their handbag or use wasp spray.

We saw a pattern of behaviour in Territorians under 10 years of Labor, which drove crime through the roof. People felt desperately unsafe and were having to arm themselves with things like metal poles and screwdrivers. We have all spoken to people in our community who go to sleep with all sorts of things next to the bedside table because they felt desperate under a Labor government which was not listening to them. Now, those things can be replaced by legal use of a resource that will support their safety.

A lot of feedback has been that people intend to use it for dog attacks, which they had been victim of. The rollout has been smooth, and I commend the police. Feedback we have from firearms dealers is that when there was an issue with an iPad, the police quickly fixed it. We have quick responses from police to people who are doing the wrong thing. The rollout will continue. We have been clear that this is about additional layers of personal protection. We trust Territorians to do the right thing.

Police Commissioner Appointment

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for POLICE

You ordered an independent inquiry into executive appointments in the NT Police Force in March this year—seven months ago. You said that this inquiry would give certainty to police, the community and officers involved. Can you advise Territorians whether you have received this independent inquiry report and, if so, why have you not released the findings to provide the certainty you promised to police and Territorians? Why are you yet to appoint a Police Commissioner six months after sacking the last one?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for her somewhat misguided question. No, I do not have the Blow inquiry. I have been clear from the start that Justice Blow will have the resources and time he needs to do that work after the NTPA raised concerns regarding senior executive positions. We moved quickly to listen to its concerns and put in place Justice Blow's inquiry.

It has taken a lot longer than I expected, but I have been clear that is a matter for him, and it has to run its course. By its nature, it is an independent inquiry. Justice Blow has also been busy doing other things—the Matt Wright trial being one, which everyone is well aware of. I will commit, as I have in the past, that when I receive that it will be made public, and we will move forward from there. Until such time, it needs to take its course. There is nothing that can be done in the intervening period.

I have also been clear that we cannot have a new Police Commissioner when the Justice Blow inquiry is outstanding. One precedes the other, and the process will run its course.

Youth Rehabilitation – Boot Camp Program

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Please elaborate on how the CLP's youth boot camp program defers from the criticism made by the Member for Gwoja, who described it as merely a three-day excursion.

Mr Paech: It is. Do programs that work.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, Member for Gwoja.

Mr PATEL: Can you outline how this initiative integrates with broader, long-term strategies for youth rehabilitation and prevention that address stability, cultural connections and life skills development?

Madam SPEAKER: The Minister for Corrections will be heard in silence.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina likes to break the cycle of offending, which the previous Labor government failed to do. Labor's strategy was to lock them up. This is about rehabilitation, which is what the other government failed to do.

I will give you a classic example. Labor had a program called Back on Track, which ran for a number of years and cost taxpayers about $35m. Can you guess how many people finished that program? Only 35. That is $1m per person. It clearly shows that those opposite did not want to break the cycle. All they wanted to do was spend taxpayers' money, unlike on this side.

We are about rehabilitation and breaking the cycle of offending. This program is about letting young offenders go to school and then to boot camp on the weekend, unlike the failed Labor government which took these kids out of school. These children have disadvantages because they do not go to school; that is maybe one reason they end up in the youth justice system. The previous Labor government wanted to take them out of school, away from education, and put them into a boot camp. That clearly did not work because the cycle did not break.

Our program is designed to allow these young offenders to attend school during the day and then on the weekend do a boot camp program. There are various types of programs. These young offenders can do multiple programs. They can do a work readiness program one weekend, go to school during the week, do an outdoor leadership program the next weekend, go back to school, then do a fire and emergency response program the following weekend. This is about getting young offenders to break the cycle with opportunities to go to school, learn about what it takes to reintegrate into society, rehabilitate and then come back into the community as better people.

Mr Paech: Where is the work with the elders? Why are you shutting them out?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja!

Mr MALEY: This approach aims to redirect them towards a more positive pathway, helping to prevent them from getting into more serious behaviour. The previous Labor government wanted to take these young offenders out of school. That is disgraceful. Labor wanted to spend about $1m per child to do that. If you can tell me that is successful in any way, I will sit back down and not stand up again. It just shows how the previous Labor government failed these young people. It failed to look after them, rehabilitate them and spend taxpayers' money wisely, spending $35m for 35 children.

Mr Paech: You spend $2,700 a day on a kid in detention, so get your facts right.

Mr MALEY: Thirty-five million dollars is a waste of money. You are irrelevant.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja! You are on a warning.

Community Safety – Declan's Law

Mrs ZIO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

One year ago Territorians elected the CLP with a clear mandate to turn around the Territory after years of Labor's neglect and reckless spending. Since then, the government has introduced Declan's law, the strongest bail laws in the nation, and committed to putting victims first. Territorians want to know that these reforms are making a real difference. Can you update the Assembly on the results of our stronger laws and what they mean for community safety and confidence?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay's constituents have been victims. They want to be safe, as do people in the rest of the Territory.

Territorians asked for action, certainty and security, and that is what we are delivering. Since Declan's law came into effect in January, more than 3,300 people have been refused bail, which is an increase of 44% compared with when Labor was in office with its weak laws. Declan's law is the reason that more serious offenders are off our streets; that is why the streets are safer.

Justice is also moving faster. The average time on remand is down to 136 days. That is still way too long, but we are moving in the right direction. It is 7% faster than under Labor. For the first time in years, sentenced prisoners outnumber those on remand.

The results are clear. There are now 605 fewer victims of crime compared with this time last year under Labor. Territory-wide crime is trending downward, with house break-ins down by 31%; robberies down by 29%; and commercial break-ins down by 16%.

We have always said that we have more work to do. We are only just getting started.

With the crime statistics trending in the right direction, businesses will become more confident to invest and families will be more confident to live their lives. The results are starting to be seen. The Territory now leads the nation in population growth and has the fastest economic growth in Australia at 10.2%.

Territorians want to enjoy the lifestyle that makes our home unique, from fishing to festivals, laksas for breakfast—as the Chief Minister says—and owning a pet crocodile. Declan's law is delivering real results. Crime is trending downwards, and confidence is returning.

As I keep saying, there is so much more work to be done. With our whole CLP government team working together, we will keep making this the best place to visit, live and invest.

Domestic Violence Services – Funding

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for the PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In March this year you and the Commonwealth Government announced $13m in funding for frontline domestic violence services under the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses. Can you confirm that the Northern Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction not to deliver its plan to roll that funding out to frontline services? If it is, why have you not delivered on this critical plan?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am not sure where the Member for Gwoja gets his information. Maybe he just reads it on the back of a Corn Flakes box. Funding that has been delivered …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; that is offensive language. I have asked a question regarding …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, please take your seat. There is nothing offensive about what the minister just said. That is at the lower end of the range of being offensive.

Mr Paech: We are talking about DV, and you are all laughing. Fill your boots.

Mrs Finocchiaro: We are talking about DV, and you made it about you!

Mr Maley: You are irrelevant!

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

EXCLUSION OF MEMBER
Member for Gwoja

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you can leave the Chamber for an hour.

Mr Paech: Are you happy? You are all laughing; do you think it is a joke? You are the joke.

Madam SPEAKER: Leave in silence, Member for Gwoja.

Ms CAHILL: A key point about the national funding is that sadly it was a significant reduction from the previous agreement, which has made it challenging to see how we can ensure all services continue to be delivered.

We made a commitment that all services that were being funded up until the end of the 2024–25 financial year would continue into 2025–26 so that, with the additional funding we provide of $36m a year ongoing into the future for as long as we need it, we can make sure required services will be delivered.

Not a single critical frontline service funded in that space has stopped; every service is continuing. I am pleased to say that those services are working with the Department of Children and Families to develop our new framework and roadmap forward to ensure our system is responsive and can change according to demand to support victim–survivors of domestic violence and start to change the flow of this terrible situation within our community.

We have made sure that money goes where it is needed. There is safe and family-supported work being done. There is money to assist people with innovative ways in which they can assist victims of domestic violence to move into safer spaces.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; regarding conciseness, the question specifically asked: is the Northern Territory the only jurisdiction that has not delivered on the domestic violence plan and, if so, why not?

Ms CAHILL: Every day we deliver on the plans we have in place. We continue to work with the funding provided at a Commonwealth level and from the Northern Territory Government. We are delivering our commitments to ensure services receive the funds that have been committed to them. We are also making sure, most critically—which was missing significantly from previous efforts in this space—that there are clear outcomes outlined to services and a clear expectation regarding what we expect in service delivery.

We need to make sure that where the dollars are spent, we get the best value and support …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The clock had not started from about a minute-and-a-half ago.

Ms Uibo: Plus we have a break, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Can the clock be corrected? We are probably 30 seconds in.

Mr Young: That is all right. Give her the minute. I was just notifying.

Ms Uibo: She has not answered the question. I am happy for the minute to keep going.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay. What is your point of order? If it is relevance, let the minister continue.

Ms CAHILL: I could have kept talking for another minute. I would have been happy to do that.

The funding commitments that have been made and agreed to and the programs that we agreed to put in place are being rolled out and funded. The services are there. As I said, a massive funding cliff was being faced by most of those services at the end of 2024. We fixed that and committed to keep funding those services so that we can work with them to get the best possible result for victims.

Childcare Safety

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

You attended a special purpose meeting of Education ministers' last month where the NT Government was the only jurisdiction that failed to commit funding or identify initiatives to improve child safety in early childhood care settings. Following horrific revelations about instances of abuse and neglect in childcare centres in

southern jurisdictions, why is the CLP not doing more to ensure safety and quality in childcare centres are at the highest possible standards for the sake of Territory parents and children?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I went to the Education ministers meeting a couple of weeks ago, and some of the outcomes—in light of the fact we have seen horrific things happening in the early education space—are that there are things we are doing federally, like more checks on centres. There will be a trial next year for CCTV cameras across centres, and we are doing something in that space. We have committed to doing more compliance checks and adding more compliance people to the team. We know that no number of cameras takes away active watching of young people in centres. We must make sure there are compliance checks, and national compliance checks will be done across the sector. It is important to make sure …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was about funding. Why did the CLP not commit funding to any of these initiatives at the meetings?

Mrs HERSEY: There is $189m of federal funding to the early education sector, and this is rolled out by the federal government. As I said, the NT Government will put more people out there do to compliance checks across the sector. Many centres have not had compliance checks, some for seven years. A number of them …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, you have had two. This had better good, otherwise it will be disorderly.

Mr YOUNG: No, it is relevant. Sorry, Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate the minister answering about the federal funding, but the question was about the Northern Territory Government funding.

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, minister. No more points of order.

Mrs HERSEY: Obviously, the Member for Daly does not like the fact I am pointing out that under his government, some of these centres had not seen compliance checks for many years.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mrs HERSEY: They were members of the government, and the Opposition Leader was one of the Education ministers in that previous government which decided it would be okay not to do compliance checks for a long time across these centres. We have committed to grow the number of people in the sector who will do compliance checks and make sure centres are safe.

Community Safety – Update

Mr KERLE to CHIEF MINISTER

During the election campaign I, like many of my colleagues, heard from the community loud and clear that people had enough. Crime was out of control, and residents no longer felt safe in the community or even in their own homes. We wasted no time in delivering meaningful reforms to tackle crime head on. Although I acknowledge there is still much more to do, 12 months on, my constituents are telling me that they are starting to feel a real difference.

Can you update the Assembly on how our significant reforms over the past year are translating to real outcomes for the community?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Blain's community cares about community safety, as does he. That is why they elected the Member for Blain; he sat down, listened to his community members and reflected their concerns and aspirations for a safer Territory. They saw in him someone who represented their values and would take action to do something about it. I am proud to have him as part of the team. We have done more for the Northern Territory than we saw for a generation under Labor.

Members interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Whilst there is much more work to do, we know that what we have done so far is making an impact.

Those opposite are belly laughing about it. They should be hanging their heads in shame for what they did to the Northern Territory, for the high numbers of victims under their watch and for the fact that people were leaving the Territory in droves, including people from Blain, because Labor destroyed the Northern Territory. We are turning that around.

Declan's law has been an important part of our law reform. We stood shoulder to shoulder with Samara Laverty, who bravely led that charge. More than 3,300 people have been refused bail since January when Declan's law came in, which is enormous; that is up by 44%.

We have also expanded wanding powers for police. Labor made it so difficult for police in so many ways, and wanding for knives was one of them. We have seen more than 100 authorities issued for police to undertake wanding activities, which means more than 7,000 people have been scanned, removing 141 weapons from the community, which could have ended up anywhere. We do not know how many crimes did not happen because of that important proactive work of our hardworking, incredible police.

We have also seen the number of victims drop by 4.7%; we need that number to be bigger, but it is an indicative start to what has been a big year of unwinding Labor's mess. That represents 605 Territorians who were not a victim of crime in the last six months compared with under Labor. That is less impact on emergency services, victims, families and their communities. It is a profound impact, and we need to keep doing the hard work and stay the course to ensure community safety remains the number one priority and focus of this government.

This week in parliament we have given police stronger powers, with changes to the *Traffic Act*; part 2 of the *Youth Justice Act* to come; police public safety officers to come; and the 12-month OC spray trial we have just rolled out. There is plenty more work to do, but we are committed now more than ever to continue to do everything we can to reduce crime and put the rights of people to be safe above the rights of offenders.

NT PGA Championship – Support

Mr BROWN to MINISTER to PEOPLE, SPORT and CULTURE referred to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS

The NT PGA Championship recently returned to the newly renovated Palmerston Golf & Country Club for the first time since 2023. The previous Labor government was a proud supporter of this event. Can you advise the Assembly if the government has continued this support, and how much funding was given by your new government to support the NT PGA Championship?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that was supported through Major Events, so I will pass to the Minister for Major Events to respond.

Ms BOOTHBY: Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for Sport for passing the Member for Arafura's question to me because I was the proud Minister for Major Events at the PGA Championship at the Palmerston golf club on the weekend.

It was a fantastic event. It went for a number of days and had a number of visitors from across the world. You may have seen my Facebook post and other people's Facebook posts about how US golfers were at Crocosaurus Cove doing the Cage of Death and experiencing the amazing Northern Territory lifestyle. That was an amazing outcome. Sponsors from across the Territory came to the Top End to support the PGA tournament.

It is interesting that Labor supported the PGA too, but Labor members should remember that they did not support it last year. There was a big gap in the PGA, so as soon as we were elected and I became the Minister for Major Events I had people from the golf club knocking on my door saying, 'Please don't do what Labor did and forget about us. Can you support this event?', so I did. Thanks to the hard work and lobbying by the golf club, we took it one step further and gave money to invest in live exposure—a live telecast—across the world on Fox Sports, Sky and Kayo. I was on one of the live crosses on Sunday, and I had

messages from a lot of people from a lot of places. There were even ex-Territorians messaging to say, 'Wow! The place looks amazing. It is so great.'

I thank Tourism NT for putting that together with Major Events for not only a sporting spectacular, which it was, but also showcasing to the globe all the beautiful tourism destinations across the Territory and our amazing scenery, events and activities. I am pretty sure, Chief Minister, we had fireworks on as well, which is an important part of the Territory lifestyle …

Mr BROWN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Specifically, how much did the government give?

Ms BOOTHBY: Labor saved money when it cut that the year before, so it was a good investment this year to have the PGA back. It probably did not cost Territorians anything extra, to be honest, because it all comes out in the wash. It is an amazing investment of Territorian taxpayers' money into a world-class golf event in the Top End at Palmerston, my home town, and have telecast not only the golf for sports enthusiasts but also the Territory's tourism attractions. It was amazing to see all that.

Well done to the Palmerston golf club and all the people who came to support that event. It was fantastic, and I cannot wait for more years to come.

HomeGrown Territory Grants

Mr HOWE to TREASURER

This time last year Territorians were dealing with the economic consequences of an eight-year Labor government. Master Builders recorded the worst year for new home builds since records began. No-one wanted to live here under Labor's worsening crime and economic crises. Fast-forward 12 months, and thanks to the CLP's nation-leading HomeGrown Territory program and this government's work to turn around crime and our economy, people want to put down roots in the Territory once again.

Can you outline to the Assembly how the CLP's HomeGrown Territory Grants have helped Territorians achieve their dream of home ownership over the last 12 months?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is good to talk about the great things happening in the Territory. The Member for Drysdale is right; after nearly a decade of decline under Labor, the CLP has managed to turn around Labor's housing crisis in just 12 months. In the CLP's first year of government we have approved almost 1,000 applications under our HomeGrown Territory program. Most of those applicants are young couples, with 80% of the applicants being Millennials or Zoomers. I am not exactly sure what a Zoomer is; I do not think I am a Zoomer!

At a time when more than 70% of young Australians believe that the door has slammed shut on them buying a home, the CLP is stepping in to help young Territorians get out of the rental market and into their own property, becoming home owners. The CLP is the party of home ownership, and Labor is the party of renters. We unashamedly want young Australians to own their homes, and this program shows that we put our money where our mouth is. These young people are the future of the Territory, and I am proud that this CLP government is doing what Labor failed to do, which is giving young Territorians a reason to stay here and building confidence.

It is amazing the difference a year of CLP government has made, with crime on the decline, a faster growing economy and a government ready to help aspiring home owners who now want to live here. With this new-found confidence, it is no surprise that the Department of Treasury and Finance's survey shows that the majority of grant recipients were influenced to stay in the Territory thanks to our program. With such strong uptake of our HomeGrown Territory Grant, it is clear that Territorians now see a future in the Territory. Our population growth numbers reflect this, with the Territory now leading the nation.

With more than 200 new builds in the pipeline and counting, we want to make sure more Territorians have a chance to stay here and build their own homes. That is why the CLP government introduced legislation in parliament today to extend our new build grants and keep this pipeline going. This is great news for Territorians who still dream of owning their own home, for builders who want to keep on building and for Territorians in the rental market who will benefit from a growing housing supply.

With another year of the $50,000 First Home Owner Grants and $30,000 FreshStart grants, the CLP is building on the success of our first year in government and giving more Territorians, especially young Territory families, the confidence to make their home ownership dream a reality.

Police Conduct – Investigation

Mr GUYULA to CHIEF MINISTER

Almost 80 lawyers have sent you a letter stating that transparent criminal investigation requires that the police officers who restrained Kumanjayi White when he died must be suspended during the investigation. Why has this not happened? Why do these officers still have access to sensitive police information and fellow police officers? Why are they serving legal notices to the deceased's family while they are being investigated?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this matter is before the Coroner and there are processes taking place. I appreciate that there are people grieving the loss of a loved one. There are communities grieving as well. However, the process needs to run its course.

I am not familiar with the letter that you mentioned, Member for Mulka; it has not made it to my desk yet. I appreciate you said that it has been sent. I cannot comment much further other than to say that the various processes need to run their course, and we need to give them the opportunity to do that.

Mining Sector – Benefits

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

Our government made a cornerstone commitment to rebuild the Territory economy following years of gross mismanagement and ballooning debt under Labor. Our Rebuilding the Economy Strategy 2025–28 focuses on unlocking regional growth and delivering for Australia.

The mining sector plays an enormous role in achieving these objectives. Indeed, we know that mining is our largest source of own-source revenue. Can you inform the Assembly of the benefits of the mining sector as a whole to all Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I understand how all members on this side of the Chamber are laser focused on rebuilding our economy. We are dealing with the crime issue, and we have had success in that. There is a long way to go because Labor left such a shipwreck to deal with. We have made a difference and are trending in the right direction. We are rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

The mining, resources and gas sectors will allow us to rebuild our economy because it is own-source revenue. From memory, about 25% of our gross state product comes from that mining resource sector. That is money we get to spend on education, police and health systems. Those systems benefit the community and do not come cheap—they are expensive—but are super important. They need money to run, and this is what the mining sector does.

To put it simply, the Territory, especially our regions, depends on a strong resources sector because it pays the bills. Some of our biggest employers are mines like McArthur River Mine, where about 20% of the workforce is Aboriginal—local people. We cannot deliver remote services or more housing without growing our revenue, and this is what the resources sector does.

This week is NT Resources Week, and 800 delegates are in the Northern Territory from across Australia and the world, networking with each other and talking about what the next investment will be. The Chief Minister and I attended, and the Chief Minister gave a passionate speech this morning. People were cheering and saying, 'This is the sort of leadership we need in the Northern Territory'. This is the passion we need to restore our economy, unlike the previous Labor government which fell down like a lead balloon. This side of the House, under the leadership of Lia Finocchiaro, is working hard to rebuild our economy, restore our lifestyle and keep us safe. We are running our three programs to make sure we turn the Territory around, and we cannot do that without growing our own-source revenue.

We need more mines and resources projects to open, such as the Beetaloo. The Beetaloo has the cleanest gas in Australia—2% CO_2. We talk about climate change, but we need to get the gas out of the ground and into market because it is cheap, good and low-carbon gas. We need to keep working hard.

There are great opportunities in remote communities for meaningful work, and that is what the resources sector does and what we will continue to support.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, I am almost getting used to your constant chatter; that is how persistent you are. Please refrain.

Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee – Meetings

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

The Northern Territory has more than double the national rate of child deaths, and I understand that at least 13 child deaths have not been reviewed. Under the *Care and Protection of Children Act* the Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee is supposed to meet three times a year. Can the minister advise how many times that committee has met since the new government was formed and how this crucial issue is being addressed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the advice is that the committee has met twice this year.

J Davis: Could I clarify it is twice in this year? Is that correct?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, the question was answered.

Small Businesses – Support

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. As at June 2024 small and medium enterprises made up 96% of small Territory businesses. They are a vital part of our local communities as they create significant employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities for Territorians. Could you update the Assembly on how the government is supporting small businesses to grow, create jobs and thrive into the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fong Lim has a significant number of small to medium businesses in his electorate. He is keeping connected with them and supporting them in their journey. I am pleased to say that in that sector we are doing a huge amount of work because small to medium businesses are the backbone of our economy.

There are about 19,000—about 90%—small to medium businesses in the Northern Territory, and they make a critical contribution. We are committed to growing that sector so that we can create jobs and thrive.

When we came to government the Chief Minister announced the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce, and that group of passionate Territorians with real-world business experience delivered their report and gave 70 recommendations, as I recall, on how we could improve in that space. Fifty of those recommendations have been adopted, and 20 are being looked at.

The agenda looked at cutting red tape, making it easier to access finance, providing mentoring and advisory services and making sure that businesses could focus on doing business and not on filling out forms or trying to figure out which regulation they needed to adhere to or what was the right thing to do in a particular space. Businesses need to focus on growing their businesses, giving Territorians jobs and encouraging people to come to live and work here.

We also introduced payroll tax reforms that came into effect on 1 January. These measures make the Territory much more competitive. They are the most attractive payroll tax initiatives in the country. This meant that small businesses which were on the verge of growing but were concerned that it would push them into

that higher payroll tax bracket could instead look to grow their workforce and business. Most critically, we exempted apprentices and trainees, which meant businesses could create pathways for our kids to aspire to become small to medium business owners in the future.

This group of people is so innovative in what they do that everything we do is focused on supporting and helping them to grow. We want to make sure that as those businesses grow, they encourage other people to come and live and work alongside them. We are particularly keen, as the minister for Education has said on a number of occasions, to create pathways for our kids so that they do not have to leave the Territory. They can stay and have a business here. They can own a home here with the support of the Territory government.

We are proud of the work that is being done in this space. We will continue to listen to businesses and deliver what they need.

Closing the Gap Targets

K McNAMARA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Last month in your media release about the Standing Council of Attorneys-General conference you attended, you stated:

> *Our Government acknowledges the Closing the Gap targets, but this cannot come at the expense of community safety …*

I know you have said before that you do not want to hear the word 'evidence' anymore—which is an unbelievable thing for an Attorney-General to say—but given that the evidence shows that community safety is strengthened when Aboriginal people have secure housing, access to healthcare and culturally safe justice responses and when overincarceration is reduced, why on Earth is your government framing the Closing the Gap commitments and community safety as being in conflict, instead of recognising that achieving those targets is essential to safer communities; or did you mean that Aboriginal people are not part of our community?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for that strange question. I will make it clear to Territorians that we are not turning our backs on the Closing the Gap agreement. We are not walking away from all the things that need to happen in our community. When it comes to housing, reducing crime and rebuilding our economy, we are for all of those things.

I think the member should have asked that question of Labor when it was in power because I can tell you now that those Closing the Gap targets were never being reached. They were not reached under Labor, and we are doing things differently now. We will not listen to what Labor did for eight years and failed dramatically; we will do things differently.

We need to reduce incarceration rates under Closing the Gap, but we cannot do that if we are not addressing crime. The way that we address incarceration rates is to reduce crime. Fewer people on our streets committing crime means fewer people incarcerated. That is simple mathematics.

It is an interesting question—I think the member was trying to mix it all up—but we are proud of the work that we have been doing to reduce incarceration rates because we are trying to reduce crime. That is the simple fact of it.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition members, please remain silent and listen to the minister's answer.

Ms BOOTHBY: I will talk about the Standing Council of Attorneys-General meeting that I went to because it was a productive meeting. We talked about Closing the Gap. Many other jurisdictions weighed in on the conversation about community safety across Australia. There is the perception that all the states are different and have different views, but it is not the case. Every jurisdiction wants a safer community, and they are working towards that now.

I will continue to work with my colleagues around the country to ensure that we are doing things at the national level. I was clear with the people in that room that we will continue to reduce crime in the Territory by doing the things that deliver real results for Territorians.

I have spoken at length about Declan's law and having the strongest bail laws in the country because we need to put the rights of victims and the community above the rights of offenders.

That will continue for the rest of our term of government because we want to ensure Territorians can live the life that they want to live, doing the things they love to do, whether it is going to Litchfield, to the shops with the kids or the markets on a Friday night, as my Palmerston colleagues love to do. Those are the things Territorians love to do, and they cannot do it if we do not live in a safe community. I will continue the work to do that not only through representing the Territory at a national level but also for Territorians.

Northern Territory Investment Summit

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Since coming to government you have met with over 1,000 business representatives and international delegations as well as leading five delegations to Southeast Asia, culminating in the first Northern Territory Investment Summit in July. I know that members of the Fannie Bay community have reaped the benefits of that investment summit, with people going to dinner at the Trailer Boat Club, the Ski Club, Fannie Bay Super Pizza, the Cool Spot and all the cool businesses in my Fannie Bay electorate.

Can you inform the Assembly of how vital this work is in paving investment and economic growth in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay nailed it. There is the benefit. The people we meet with—the people we encourage to come to the Northern Territory—bring their counterparts and their families and go to the Trailer Boat Club, the Sailing Club, the botanic gardens, to our restaurants and parks and to Litchfield to check out what we have to offer. They then go out and tell the rest of the world what is on offer in the Northern Territory.

That is critical because it is how we will foster investment and achieve economic growth. It is the pillar of what we promised the Territory community in terms of rebuilding our economy. Those partnerships—business relationships, with entries into Asia, re-engaging with our Asian neighbours, telling them that we want to do business and skills exchanges with them and that we value their contribution to our Territory, community and economy—are the key to growing and driving the Territory forward. We are telling them about our incredible resources and the gas that will come out of the ground next year that will keep the lights on in this country until the 23rd century. I had to add that in there. It is too much maths in the afternoon, but it is for a long time.

The culmination of all that work in the first NT Investment Summit is where, instead of dragging ourselves to cold Canberra to try to convince a group of politicians that they should start looking at what we do in the Territory, we brought them to the Territory. We had 150 delegates from 13 different countries who came and saw firsthand exactly what is on offer and the opportunities in Defence, tourism, agriculture, mining and energy. Everybody is excited about gas.

We understand and have worked hard for that direct engagement locally and internationally so that people know what the Territory is about and can see what is on offer and that this is the place to come to live, work and invest. It gives them a direct entry, the closest entry, to the Asian markets that they can get anywhere in the country. We are on the doorstep of 600 to 700 million people who want to do business with us and come here to visit, invest with us and work alongside us.

We will be the hub for regional engagement, and we are excited about what the future holds in this space.

East Point Reserve – Upgrades

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

I thought maybe the Member for Fannie Bay would ask this. Prior to the election, the now Member for Fannie Bay promised improved lighting and upgrades to walkways and bike paths at East Point Reserve.

Since the election there has been zero mention in the last 12 months of this promise to the people of Fannie Bay and the surrounding suburbs.

Can you confirm whether this is one of the projects that your CLP government has reprioritised—meaning scrapped—as part of the $1bn of funding you have ripped out of the infrastructure budget?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love to talk about Fannie Bay. I wonder what those left of Lawler's Labor legacy across the Chamber did for Fannie Bay when Labor held Fannie Bay for so long.

Members interjecting.

Mr YAN: Yes, there possibly was pork-barrelling going on there.

The Member for Fannie Bay works tirelessly for her electorate. She is another member who is forever in my office, banging on my door, talking about things that matter for the people in her electorate.

As I said yesterday, we will continue with those commitments that were made during the election to help those communities. We will continue to work hard to do that, but as I said yesterday and will say again, take a look at what we inherited regarding the budget. Debt was spiralling out of control. We also had the $1.2bn black hole left by Labor. There were all the time-limited funded programs that Labor knew it had to fund but had not put in the budget in order to try to hide the true facts from Territorians. The previous government was gaslighting Territorians on the state of the budget.

We all know what that means. I say again—I said it yesterday—that I would love to deliver everything for everybody tomorrow, but I cannot. We have to make priorities. The budget is only so much; therefore, we have to look at how we spend the money that we have and how we then put it into the program so that we can deliver for our communities.

You would think that those opposite would understand that. Ministers of the previous government would have sat in budget Cabinet and would understand clearly how the budget works and how you allocate money going forward.

Labor just racked up stuff on the credit card, made announcements, went out and did press releases and put stuff on program that was not funded and programmed correctly. The former government put all this stuff on the program, but when it came to delivering it, the prices did not match up anymore. It is great to put something on the program today and then come back …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question was clearly: is this one of the projects that you have scrapped?

Mr YAN: I thought I answered that pretty clearly before.

Let us have a bit of a lesson in Logistics and Infrastructure economics. The State Square art gallery will go over budget by about $95m. Mandorah went over budget by approximately $30m to 35m.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition members! You will all be marched out.

Mr YAN: The overpass went over by $100m. When we add all that up, it is a bit over $200m in infrastructure project blowouts.

My young friend, the Member for Daly, will love this; that $200m just in blowouts would pay to seal the road to Wadeye. Let those opposite think on that.

Ms Uibo: What? To help you go out fishing there too?

Mr Young: It is not helping you.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition members, you will remain silent throughout the answer to the next question.

Borroloola Power Station

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES

A big focus of our CLP government is to rebuild the economy which will benefit all Territorians by driving job creation, improving affordability and improving access to goods and services. One of our priorities is to foster development in the regions across the Territory. I understand that the remote community of Borroloola in your great electorate of the Barkly will benefit. For example …

Ms Uibo: It gets a $20m clinic, unlike Gunbalanya.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, you are on a warning.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: I note there is a planned $4.14m upgrade to the Borroloola Power Station. Can you outline the positive impact that this important upgrade will have on the community of Borroloola and local residents?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama knows the importance of investing in critical infrastructure, particularly in regional areas.

As part of our commitment to unlock and strengthen regional growth we are investing in remote communities with a planned $4.14m upgrade to the Borroloola Power Station. The Borroloola Power Station has an existing power supply of 1.8 megawatts, supported by three one-megawatt generators.

With several electricity connection requests, including one for the Borroloola health clinic—another one of our election commitments; we are investing $20m in the health clinic in Borroloola. There is also another application from the Community Benefits Trust to establish Borroloola central, a new multiuse precinct which will demand power in the community. That demand is expected to rise by about 58% over the next couple of years.

This power upgrade is part of our CLP government's commitment to working with Aboriginal communities, which Labor failed to do. We are partnering with local business, organisations and the Australian Government to create economic resilience and foster development in the region. This important investment will increase the reliability and efficiency of the power supply and help rebuild economic development in that community.

We are ensuring that Borroloola has the services and critical enabling infrastructure it needs to grow and improve the lives of locals.

As I said, we committed $20m to the new Borroloola health clinic and recently opened the $11.7m Borroloola Sports and Cyclone Shelter. It was good to see the Member for Arafura there, coming out to help our government celebrate the opening.

The McArthur River Mine Community Benefits Trust and the Australian Government are investing $23m in that new multipurpose development at Borroloola. The project will include a number of commercial tenancies which will add pressure to the current power system.

Borroloola is a strong and growing community, and we are committed to delivering more services in that community, whether it is a health clinic or multipurpose service centre. The community will need more power, so investing in an upgrade is vital.

Power and Water will work with Territory contractors to focus on the upgrade with local health services and businesses to ensure Borroloola's future energy needs are met. These enhancements will increase the station's capacity and enable new customers to connect to the network.

The Borroloola Power Station upgrade is expected to be completed in September 2026. I thank Power and Water and all the residents there …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

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

MOTION
Improving Rental Security in the Northern Territory

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- recognises the rising cost-of-living pressures upon Territorians, particularly renters who often face housing insecurity
- acknowledges that renters in the NT face frequent and unreasonable rent increases
- urges the CLP government to improve protections for renters under the *Residential Tenancies Act* by:
    - introducing a two-year rent freeze
    - limiting rental increases to 2% every two years after the end of the rent freeze
    - establishing an independent bond board and minimum standards for rental premises, including energy efficiency and heating/cooling requirements
    - abolishing no-grounds evictions
    - protecting tenants against discrimination
    - modernising the Act to reflect the realities of renting, including specific protections for renters living in share houses
    - strengthening accountability for landlord obligations.

I bring this motion to the House on behalf of the more than 50% of Territorians and 55% of residents in my electorate who are renters. We are in the grip of a housing crisis, and renters are bearing the brunt. The evidence is overwhelming. Territorians are facing an unprecedented rental affordability crisis that demands immediate and decisive action.

I will be clear at the outset that the problems in our housing market and the rising costs of living are not caused by migrants; they are caused by billionaires and the two major parties working for corporate best interest instead of everyday people. It is deeply concerning to hear divisive rhetoric scapegoating migrants for problems created by corporate greed and decades of failed housing policy.

Today we have a chance to take a step forward in fixing this crisis by supporting this motion to better protect renters. Anglicare NT's Rental Affordability Snapshot 2025 paints the starkest picture yet. Of 370 rentals surveyed across the NT in March this year, only three were affordable for households on income support.

For households on a minimum wage, just 29 properties were affordable, meaning that 92% of rentals were out of reach for low-paid workers who are many of the workers we talk about in this Chamber. For childcare workers 92% of rentals are out of reach, and 99% are unaffordable for people on government support payments.

The NT has 12 times the national rate of homelessness, and almost half of those without a home are under 25 years of age. Instead of building their futures, young Territorians are sleeping on couches, in cars or in overcrowded unsafe accommodation, and this crisis is deepening. Nearly half of all Territorians rent, up from 40% in 2020 to about 50% in 2025.

Renting is no longer a temporary stopgap for many people; it has become permanent housing, yet our laws still treat it as insecure and secondary. The market itself is punishing renters. Domain reported in March 2025 that Darwin's vacancy rate has almost halved in the past year to just 0.6%, the lowest March figure since 2022. Territory-wide the vacancy rate is 0.71%, reflecting an extremely tight market. The number of advertised rentals has fallen from 578 in 2024 to just 370. Realestate.com confirmed that overall rental supply has dropped to 6.5% year on year and now sits 39% below the decade average. Meanwhile, rents keeps climbing. The average rent in Darwin has risen from $491 per week in 2020 to $636 in 2025. This is a 29.6% increase in just five years. Darwin now sits alongside Canberra as the second-most expensive city to rent a house.

Interstate investors are buying properties, driving competition and pushing rent prices higher while local families are locked out. I have spoken to many of those local families in my electorate. As Karen Walsh, CEO of National Shelter, put it:

> *Australia is facing its worst rental crisis yet …*
>
> *Many renters across Australia are hurting and in distress. As rents rise faster than wages, they're trapped in a relentless cycle … where hope for a brighter future feels increasingly out of reach.*

The Anglicare data makes it plain: 0% of rentals are affordable for a single person on the disability support pension; 0% are affordable for those on JobSeeker; 0% are affordable for someone on Youth Allowance; and 0% are affordable on the parenting payment. Only 1% are affordable for couples on the age pension. Even two parents—this is quite stark—working full time on the minimum wage are locked out of 94% of the rental market.

In most states and territories, landlords can increase rent only once every 12 months, but in the NT under periodic tenancies each rent period is treated as a new agreement. This means that landlords can increase rent at the start of each period, and tenants who refuse to pay can be evicted. This loophole is unique to the NT and leaves renters more exposed to unpredictable rent hikes than anywhere else in the country.

We can change this by introducing a rent freeze and subsequent caps on rent increases, with my motion proposing 2%. This would provide tenants with predictability in housing costs while still allowing landlords to adjust rents in a measured and sustainable way. Housing is a basic right, and we should be protecting this right.

The NT and WA are the last two jurisdictions that still allow no-grounds evictions. Every other state has abolished or restricted this practice. The ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland banned them, with New South Wales phasing them out. In the NT renters on periodic agreements can be evicted without any reason. As the ABC reported, tenants can be kicked out of their homes without reason, leaving many to defer important maintenance requests out of fear of negative consequences.

We should ban this, and alongside this ban we should seek to ensure that rental properties are actually liveable. The NT does not have legislated minimum standards for rental properties. This means that there is no baseline requirement for things like safe wiring, functional plumbing or climate-appropriate cooling. Without standards, tenants may be paying market rent for properties that do not meet basic health and safety expectations.

Minimum standards are now in place in Victoria, Queensland and the ACT, ensuring all rental properties meet a clear benchmark for habitability. Introducing similar standards in the NT would provide certainty to tenants and landlords about what is required, reduce disputes and improve the overall quality of rental housing stock.

Shamefully, the NT is the only jurisdiction without an independent bond board. I have been doing a lot of research and speaking to a lot of groups about this, and it is the number one thing everyone keeps bringing up. Instead, tenants hand the bond directly to landlords, which is a clear conflict of interest that too often forces renters into lengthy legal battles to recover their own money. In other states, independent bond boards safeguard bonds in a trust and release funds only according to the law, usually when both parties agree or when a tribunal orders it. These boards pay for themselves through the interest earned on the bonds, which covers their ongoing operating costs. It is important to note that these bond boards protect tenants and landlords alike whilst also saving tribunal and court time. Many cases before NTCAT are about this issue.

When I talked with Katie Woolf about this last week she seemed surprised to hear that tenants have issues with their landlords and getting their bonds back, but this is not abstract; real Territorians are living with the consequences. Many have explained to me how they end up homeless in between rental houses, because they are waiting to get their bond back because they need to use that money for their new bond for the next place. It is not good enough that we have people, particularly a lot of young people, homeless in between rental properties in such a wealthy nation.

Lachlan is one of many Territorians who has experienced the broken rental system in the NT. With his permission, I will share what he wrote and published about his experience recently. He says:

> *The Northern Territory's rental system isn't just flawed—it's failing tenants every day. My ordeal with landlord Adam Gulliford, a Parap-based Raine & Horne agent, lays bare the systemic dysfunction that*

plagues renters in the NT. More than a year after a clear NTCAT ruling in my favor, I am still chasing over $3,500 in bond money and legal costs, including an undisputed $1,390, with no resolution in sight.

In April 2024, I vacated Gulliford's property. What followed was a dispute over a broken appliance—an issue confirmed by the Northern Territory Civil and Administration Tribunal (NTCAT) as having resulted from normal cleaning. On June 27, 2024, the tribunal ordered [the landlord] to return my $3,000 bond plus costs, by specific deadlines.

He attempted to contest the ruling; it was upheld on appeal. And yet … he ignored it.

When [the landlord] failed to comply, I pursued a bailiff's warrant of seizure and sale. It failed … Next step is a court summons to garnish his wages via an attachment of earnings order—another stressful and expensive step.

This was also avoided:

The undisputed $1,390 remains unpaid. Astonishingly, there are no legal repercussions …

With an independent bond board in place, this entire ordeal would have been avoided. What a waste of legal resourcing and a shame that tenants would experience a stolen bond, like in Lachlan's case.

Another constituent of mine also shared the following experience that she wanted me to read out:

'In 2008 my rent was going up from $260 a week to $370, an increase overnight of 42%.'

This person's contract was finishing. They continue:

'I knew I could get work and a better place for cheaper rent in Melbourne, so I left the Northern Territory and moved to Victoria. I support restrictions on the amount and frequency with which rental increases can be applied. This is a clear example that rental protections, in fact, impact people's decision to stay in the Territory or not.'

This person eventually returned to Darwin, going on to have yet another bad experience. They want me to share this as well:

'After six years of tenancy, I gave two weeks' notice to vacate and requested that the final inspection be undertaken on the last day of my tenancy. This would give me the opportunity to rectify any issues raised during the vacate inspection. My property manager was unwilling or unable to schedule the inspection as requested and conducted the inspection herself.

'Her assessment, based on 152 photos and videos taken and a comparison with the original condition report, was that I had left the unit—unreasonably—unclean. She then withheld $220 from my bond to pay for cleaning. I disputed the assessment and was left with no option but to apply to the NTCAT for return of the full amount of my bond.

'The arduous process included the following: preparation of an initial application for the return of full bond, costing $67; preparation for attendance at a compulsory conference in 2018; preparation for attendance at a complex hearing before a tribunal member, whose decision was in my favour; and preparation for attendance to a directions hearing, as the property manager had submitted an application for review.'

Once again, the tribunal ruled in this tenant's favour. I continue:

'Those same photos of the property that supposedly showed it had not been cleaned were then used to advertise the property.

'If there was a bond board in place, this waste of time and resources, particularly of NTCAT, could be avoided'.

These stories are not isolated; they are examples of systemic failures. In each case an independent bond board would have prevented wasted time, stress and resources. Ordinary Territorians should not have to navigate repeated tribunal hearings and legal processes just to get their money back. This is not a new idea; in 1998 the CLP government, under Chief Minister Shane Stone, budgeted $650,000 for a bond assistance

scheme, recognising even then that the government has a responsibility in this area, yet 27 years later the NT remains the only jurisdiction without a bond board.

Even the current Chief Minister, when in opposition, supported stronger renter protections. As a member of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee 2019 to 2020, she moved to publish evidence from Darwin Community Legal Service on tenancy reforms and seconded the adoption of recommendations to strengthen protections against no-grounds evictions, particularly for people experiencing domestic and family violence. However, just five years on, we have this government, and it presides over the weakest renter protections in the nation. This is not policy backsliding; it is a generational retreat from the CLP government in the 1990s that at least acknowledged the need for bond assistance to a CLP government today that has left NT renters exposed to rent hikes, evictions and unfair bond losses.

The reforms in this motion would bring the NT in line with national best practice and provide real relief to struggling renters, being a two-year rent freeze followed by caps of 2% per year, an independent bond board, minimum standards, an end to no-grounds evictions, stronger anti-discrimination protections and reforms for share-house living.

Nearly half of Territorians are renters. They deserve security, fairness and dignity in their homes. Now they face arbitrary rent increases, eviction without reason and legal battles just to reclaim what is theirs. The evidence is clear; the solutions are tested, and the need is urgent. The NT cannot afford more delays. The cost of inaction is not just families leaving the Territory but more families pushed into crisis or young people forced into unsafe housing and more Territorians pushed into homelessness.

This motion offers a path forward towards practical reforms that will fix a broken system and finally bring renters in the NT the protections they deserve.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I strongly support this motion to improve rental security in the Northern Territory. I begin by reminding all of us that we are representing all people of the Northern Territory. I am not sure how many members in this Chamber are renters themselves, but I can hazard a guess that it is far less than 50%.

Mr Mackay interjecting.

J DAVIS: Go, Member for Goyder!

I am sure it is far less than 50%, which is the number of our constituents across the Northern Territory who are renters.

I am sure many of us grew up as renters, and we may have shared the experience of housing insecurity because of rental pressures. I remember Saturday afternoons in my childhood house where my dad counted out the 20c pieces at the kitchen table after he came home from his factory job to make sure we had enough money to make the rent and buy the food we needed until the next pay cheque. I know many people in my electorate who have this same experience every week.

Our job in this parliament is not only to legislate for ourselves or for those who own their own homes or other properties but also to make good law for all Territorians, including the more than 50% who rent, the families struggling to keep a roof over their heads and those in the broader community who depend on stable, fair housing. This motion matters because we are entrusted to represent everyone and not just ourselves.

The cost of living affects every Territorian, but for renters the pressure can be relentless. Half of Territorians rent their homes, and that is reflected in my electorate of Johnston where almost one in two households rent. These are the people who stop me in the supermarket, call my office and write to me late at night because they are often desperate. Many of these households live on modest incomes, and they tell me rent increases are consistently pushing them to the edge.

Over the last year rental demand in my electorate of Johnston has risen by 124% for houses and 64% for units, pushing the median weekly rent to approximately $730 for houses and $530 for units. These are not just numbers; they reflect parents working double shifts, students skipping meals and seniors sacrificing essentials to keep a roof over their heads.

There are also difficulties for small business owners, as noted in the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia Workforce Development's first report, which said many businesses in Northern Australia have reported that they face challenges not just filling skills shortages but, to an equal extent, locating housing for

the people offered positions to fill the skills shortages, whether from other parts of Australia or migrants. Whilst larger sectors like mining and government can offer subsidised housing, smaller businesses cannot.

One Johnston mother of three told me recently she had to move twice in two years, each time because her rent was raised beyond what her family could afford. Each move disrupted her kids' schooling and her work. Housing insecurity affected every part of her life. This does not just affect people in Johnston; it affects people across the Territory. Just down the road in the electorates of fellow MLAs who I know are incredibly committed to their constituents in Palmerston, rental returns are high—5.7% for houses and 7.4% for units—while vacancy rates are extremely low at 1.23%, far below the healthy 3% level.

Who is buying these properties that they are renting out? According to Real Estate Investor, it is mostly investors from interstate, not local residents. In fact, six out of every 10 homes sold in Palmerston go to buyers from outside the Territory, often before the property has even officially hit the market. These investors are chasing high returns, not contributing to our local community, and this drives up rents for all Territorians. These people do not send their kids to our schools, shop at our local shops or join our sporting clubs; they take profits out of our community while pushing Territorians out of secure housing.

Here is the sharp reality: the Northern Territory is the outlier in Australia when it comes to renter protections. We are the only jurisdiction in the country without an independent bond board, and we still allow no-grounds evictions, trailing behind Victoria, New South Wales, the ACT and South Australia.

In New South Wales tenants have an independent bond board holding over $5bn in bonds, which protects tenants and landlords with transparent, fast resolution of disputes. In Victoria rent increases are capped at once every 12 months, and minimum standards for heating, cooling, safety and privacy are mandatory. In Queensland new laws restrict rent increases to once per year and strengthen protections against unfair evictions. In the ACT, a territory with a population not unlike ours in numbers, landlords must justify rent increases above CPI, and there are strong rules against no-grounds evictions.

Every other jurisdiction has an independent bond board, tighter limits on rent increases and minimum standards for rental homes, and most other jurisdictions forbid no-grounds evictions. The Northern Territory is the only place in Australia where none of these basic protections exist. Territorians are being treated as second-class citizens compared with renters in every other state and territory.

This motion proposes a series of reasonable, measured reforms to bring us in line with the rest of Australia. A two-year rent freeze followed by a cap of 2% every two years is not radical; it gives families breathing room, students a space to study and seniors dignity in retirement. In Johnston a retired couple on the maximum age pension available renting a unit would have $525 a week left for bills, food and other expenses. It also stabilises our neighbourhoods, supports responsible local landlords and counters the distortion of a market tilted towards absentee investors.

In 1998 a private member's Bill was brought before this parliament seeking to establish a rental bond board, and it was defeated. In 2015 there were discussions in the Northern Territory regarding the establishment of a bond board, with a discussion paper distributed by the then government which noted back then—10 years ago—that the NT remained the last jurisdiction in Australia not to have an independent bond board. In a 2023 submission to a federal review, the Darwin Community Legal Service highlighted yet again that the NT remained an outlier regarding a bond board.

This is not a new proposal; it simply requires action. An independent bond board would help both renters and landlords. In the Northern Territory rental bonds are still held by landlords or agents. That system creates unnecessary tension. Tenants worry they will not get their money back, landlords worry about being out of pocket and disputes can drag on for months.

An independent board would easily fix this by holding all rental bonds securely in trust and managing it impartially, not by one side or the other. For tenants this means certainty that their bond is safe, separate from the landlord or agent's cashflow; fast, fair refunds when they leave a property; and clear, independent dispute resolution if disagreements arise.

For landlords it means bonds are always properly collected and stored, reducing the risk of mismanagement or error; having a central system to recover legitimate costs for damage or unpaid rent; and less time and legal cost spent in disputes because the process is streamlined, transparent and backed by law.

When we look at how other jurisdictions do it, we can see that centralised bond management reduces conflict, protects both sides and builds trust. The impact on health and wellbeing for renters and landlords would come along with the certainty that an independent bond board provides.

There is no good reason the NT should lag behind. Establishing a bond board here would immediately improve confidence in the rental sector, protect property values and support professional, responsible landlords while giving renters the security they deserve. This single reform would significantly reduce stress and unfairness, especially for tenants in complex living arrangements like share houses whose bonds currently fall through legislative gaps.

I also strongly support the other aspects of this motion which call for several other reforms which would strengthen our housing market while protecting Territorians. Minimum energy efficiency and heating and cooling standards are essential in our harsh climate. The CSIRO report, Focus on Darwin, described one of the drivers of core social needs of those living in Darwin as being thermal comfort and an affordable cost of living. It also states that 15% of seniors are seeking to leave the Territory due to the hot climate. We want to keep people here, and that includes renters. Renters should not suffer from unsafe or unliveable conditions, especially in our hot peak, the Wet Season.

There should be abolition of no-grounds evictions which thrust families out without warning, destabilise children's schooling and break neighbourhood cohesion. There should be protections against discrimination to prevent tenants being excluded based on race, family status or income. Modernising the Act for share-house tenants ensures those in non-traditional living arrangements receive fair legal recognition. There should be greater landlord accountability mandating that property owners meet basic obligations consistently and transparently.

We have talked a lot in this Chamber about how housing is not about shelter; it goes to the core of many things that this government has said is so important. It goes to the Territory lifestyle, keeping communities safer and building our economy. If we are serious about all of those things, then housing security must be at the centre. With half of our constituents renting, we owe it to them and to the future of the Territory to finally fix these gaps and give people stability.

I do not want families in my electorate to be sitting, counting out the coins in their pockets after they have come home from working their night shift to see whether they can make the rent this week. I do not think any of us want that.

Stronger renters' protection means stronger communities, safer neighbourhoods and a fairer economy. The Northern Territory is falling behind every other jurisdiction in Australia. We should not accept being the outlier or second best.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this motion forward and call on every Member of the Legislative Assembly to support it for our people, communities and future.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing forward this motion. Territorians are doing it tough. Cost-of-living pressures are being felt across households, in businesses and in the rental market. We know that people are struggling to balance their bills, groceries, power, mortgages and rent.

I want to broaden the motion by making the following amendment to omit all words after 'housing insecurity' and insert the following words:

'acknowledges the work and actions that have been undertaken by the Northern Territory Government to rebuild the economy to help ease the cost of living for Territorians'.

We acknowledge that there are cost-of-living pressures for all Territorians, especially renters.

Let us be clear that a declining population under Labor—with people leaving town in droves because it was not safe and the economy was going backwards—meant the housing market was left weaker. It was left less stable and more insecure than it should be in the Northern Territory, which should be a land of opportunity. Labor's mismanagement negatively affected our unique Territory lifestyle.

Unlike Labor over the last eight years, our government is taking action. We are delivering direct relief, supporting families, backing businesses and creating jobs, as well as building homes, because you cannot

rent a house that does not exist. That is why we are building more supply, boosting home ownership and restoring investor confidence.

A cost-of-living example is that Labor cut the battery rebate from $6,000 to $5,000 and then slashed the solar feed-in tariff despite promising not to. Labor members misled Territorians on renewable rebates, leaving households with higher power bills. The rental insecurity was worsened again by Labor's 2024 tenancy law changes. These changes penalised landlords, deterred small investors and made it harder to recover losses from lease breaks. This contributed to fewer private rentals being available. Remote housing investment stalled, and overcrowding worsened.

The Northern Territory's homelessness rate remained the highest in the country at 12 times the national average, with no long-term plan. Now we have in front of us a plan from the Member for Nightcliff for a rent freeze and a bond board. A rent freeze is a gimmick. It shrinks supply and drives investors out. The facts show that a bond board is a costly solution for a problem that is quite small in the Northern Territory.

I point out that the Member for Nightcliff does not have to take my word for it; we have recent examples of rent freezes being tried and failing. For example, in Berlin, Germany, the government froze rents for five years in 2020. The outcomes were:

- rental supply collapsing, with new rental listings dropping by 40% within months
- many landlords pulling apartments off the market, converting them to condos or selling them
- the quality declining, with landlords investing less in maintenance knowing they could not recoup the costs
- inequality, with wealthier tenants benefiting most since they occupied the nicest units at frozen prices
- surging prices when reversed—following a year of disaster, Germany reversed the law in 2021 and, as a result, rents suddenly surged, leading to a huge financial shock for tenants.

The lessons from this real-life example were that rent freezes reduced rental supply, discouraged maintenance and created inequality for renters in the market. Rent freezes hurt tenants more than they help.

A bond board sounds like a good idea; however, we must ask ourselves whether it is actually solving a problem. In 2024–25 NTCAT dealt with 578 tenancy cases. Only 21 of those related solely to bonds, which is about 3%. Most disputes were actually about arrears, terminations or compensations, not bonds. That shows that the current laws, while maybe not perfect, are working, and disputes are the exception, not the rule.

I go back to Labor's economic mismanagement and irresponsible governance, because it bled into other parts of our lives, including our health sector. NT Health was left in a $300m annual deficit, which threatens service delivery. Families had to pay between $130 and $180 per dose for a meningococcal B vaccination or they went without. They are just a couple of examples of the economy going backwards.

We have spoken about rampant crime for so long. A failing economy and lack of investor confidence under Labor saw the Territory's population decline. People leaving the Territory meant less demand for housing supply, worsening market stability. Confidence back then collapsed, and CommSec had the Territory sliding down the ranks. We all remember that then Labor Chief Minister Michael Gunner in 2021 called it a garbage report and kept it in the bin or shredded it because it was not worth the paper it was written on.

Weak economic performance meant that families paid more while earning less. Increased challenges across the board, such as the private hospital maternity ward, forced people to seriously consider their options or leave town. We are still feeling the aftermath of Labor's decisions.

While Labor left Territorians with higher costs and fewer choices, we are trying to deliver practical relief and reforms that make a difference. We have hit the ground running, with things like transport costs. Vehicle registration fees have been frozen by our government until July 2026, which keeps costs stable for 155,000 vehicles. That is a lot of Territorian families or businesses.

We have free 12-month driver's licences issued to nearly 39,000 Territorians, again helping them with the cost of living. There are free buses for people to get to where they need to go. There have been 522 two-year trailer renewals issued, and we have introduced new three-year trailer rego options, with 1,340 renewals

issued. There are no fee increases for those registrations until 2026. This is how you reduce cost-of-living pressures for Territorians.

Despite national inflation the CLP government has capped the electricity price increase to 3%, effective from 1 July 2025. That benefits approximately 85,000 households and small to medium businesses. We said that we would invest $192m to subsidise power prices for households and small businesses in 2025–26, saving households up to $1,700 a year.

The community service obligation keeps power affordable across the Territory. Without it an average household in Darwin would be paying nearly 50% more, and even more in regional and remote areas. We cannot afford for that to happen.

We boosted the Home and Business Battery Scheme rebate from $5,000 under Labor to $12,000, which is more than double. We had over 840 applications in just seven months; it is now oversubscribed. This is how you reduce cost-of-living pressures for Territorians.

Territory seniors can get a $550 prepaid card per annum. Families benefit from us continuing the $200 Back to School payments per child and the $100 Sport Vouchers which they can get twice a year, once every semester. We have heard the minister for Education talk many times about the CLP's swimming in schools program, providing $3m a year to enable Territory schools to deliver swimming and water safety lessons for all children in Years 1 to 6. That saves parents a lot of money.

I have already mentioned the free meningococcal B vaccines for infants and teens. There have been 8,000 young people already vaccinated, saving families up to $900 per child. This is how you reduce Territorians' cost-of-living pressures.

We are also keeping the Territory lifestyle affordable with free parks, family-friendly events and community programs that make every dollar go further. We have endless events year-round; a strong local market culture, such as the Rapid Creek, Malak and Palmerston markets; free entry to Territory parks and reserves if you are a local; water parks and facilities; school holiday programs; and our CLP government's major events, including the T20 cricket which had a sellout crowd because tickets were just $20 per person. It was reasonable, which meant that most people could afford to go.

The other thing that helps the economy, which benefits all Territorians, is the fact that we lifted the payroll tax-free threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m. More than 200 small businesses in the Territory benefit from that, and can employ apprentices and trainees without having to pay extra payroll tax. That is a saving for a business of more than $22,000 per year which can be reinvested into that business. If we can get all the small and medium businesses to invest back into their businesses, that will grow the economy. When the economy grows, all Territorians benefit because there are jobs, opportunities and good housing stock in play, which means renters can afford to live where they want to. That is how you reduce the cost-of-living pressures on Territorians.

Another important factor is that we need homes to rent in the first place because it will help the market determine rental prices. We have spoken many times in this Chamber about our HomeGrown Territory Grants. There have been 909 grants worth $17m issued to assist more than 2,000 Territorians. That is 200 new homes in the pipeline to be built in the Territory. People will live in them for at least 12 months which then frees up other rental properties or their previous own homes, so there is more stock in the market. First home buyer numbers are up by 23.4%, which is the strongest growth in the nation.

In remote housing we built 222 new homes in 2024–25, with another 48 under construction. That is a huge increase from the year before. That means more homes for people to live in, which then helps the rental market.

There has been a $231m investment in homelessness services, which support 75 programs Territory-wide. The Minister for Children and Families has been leading that charge and made that amazing announcement a few months ago. This will help Territorians with the cost-of-living crisis.

The Member for Barkly loves this, so I note that we have invested $3.4m in the Tennant Creek public housing project, delivering new units.

The latest CommSec State of the States data proves that we are turning the tide. We are leading the country in construction growth at 5.5% and are number one for home lending, with a 30% surge. Dwelling starts are

up by 42.4% year on year, and we are second only to Western Australia. Home construction means more homes on the market, which means people have more opportunity to rent at prices which the market dictates.

The Territory is unique, and tenancy laws must balance tenant protections with landlords who invest considerably in owning property. In 2024 Labor's changes swung the pendulum too far the other way, deterring small investors, reducing supply and exacerbating population decline.

I have been meeting with stakeholders about this and will continue to do so to ensure that our tenancy laws are balanced and fair. I will look at a range of issues, including lease arrangements, notice periods, tenant and landlord responsibilities, bond processes, rent settings and tribunal procedures.

There are protections regarding bonds. Bonds are capped at four weeks' rent and must be held in trust. Tenants can request account details. Unclaimed bonds go into a government trust account managed by the Commissioner of Tenancies in the Northern Territory. Disputes can be resolved quickly and cheaply through Consumer Affairs or NTCAT. Creating a bond board would duplicate protections at a high cost for Territorians without real added benefit. The problem is not the law; it is awareness. Reform should focus on tenant education and compliance instead of overly expensive bureaucracy.

The Northern Territory's population growth of 1.2% reflects steady upward momentum, and the NT leads the nation when viewed relative to its decade average, highlighting its growing appeal as a place to live and work. The State of the States report highlighted the Territory as having the fastest economic growth in Australia at 10.2%, nearly three times the next best. That means more jobs, investment, opportunities and housing.

These positive market moves will help tenants, prospective homebuyers and home owners alike. It is not more government intervention but real free-market enterprise allowing Territorians to prosper. Confidence is returning. We want more people to live, work and invest here. Territorians need more homes. They need fair laws, stronger supply and a government that delivers, which is what our CLP government is doing.

This is why we talk about our year of action, certainty and security, reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle because delivering a sensible and balanced housing system that works for renters, landlords and the Territory is important. Our government will be rebalancing tenancy laws to reflect the Territory's unique market, protecting tenants' rights while keeping landlords in the market so that supply and affordability are secured for the long term.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I will discuss the concept of rent caps, which I believe are blunt instruments that do nothing to solve the root cause that drives the increase in rental prices. Price controls in any market will inevitably simply lead to shortages and a decrease in quality; in this case, we are talking about housing. We will see a decrease in investment because the incentive is taken away; therefore, we will see a decrease in stock, quality and options available to renters.

The real problem is supply. What grinds me about this issue is the single-biggest thing that could put downward pressure on rental prices in the greater Darwin area would have been 800 homes at Lee Point, yet the same people who advocated to block that development, which inevitably drove up rental prices, speak about capping rents.

It would have been 800 homes, which means thousands of people who could have been housed, and it would have put real downward pressure on the market. Victory at Lee Point—congratulations. Now enjoy your higher rents. It was so easy to see; it was forecast by so many people. It truly grinds me that on one hand members opposite block development while on the other they say, 'We are the great advocates for people who are now seeing the downward spiral because we blocked that development'.

It is simple economics that to deal with this problem we must increase the supply of houses, so we need to increase the number of homes that are built and the amount of land that is released. We have had rising construction costs, slow land releases, red tape and, as I have already discussed, activists who blocked development. These things have all put pressure on the rental market.

How do we fix it? We cut red tape to start with—tick. That has been one of the CLP government's major agendas. We have developed a stream of measures, including the Territory Coordinator, to cut red tape.

We release more land—tick. Thank you to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, who is well aware of this problem and is releasing land as fast as he can so that we can get new homes built and put downward pressure on rental prices.

We also support investment in private housing for locals. The Member for Johnston touched on it, and I agree. Our grants are targeted at locals to get locals living and buying here. That is what our home-building schemes are aimed at. Again, tick.

We have expanded social housing, with 222 remote houses being built by our government, which is more than the previous Labor government. For all the horrendous things the CLP is, it still delivered more social housing—tick.

The simple fact is that the free market allocates resources more efficiently, and our job is to enable that free market as best as we can. If we allow the free market to have adequate land releases, lowered red tape and targeted home ownership for locals, we will see downward pressure on rent prices, which we want.

None of us want to see our constituents suffering with higher rents or young Territorians being blocked out of the dream of home ownership. It goes against the philosophies of our party. We genuinely want to see as many people as possible, especially young people, getting into home ownership. Rent caps sound compassionate, but like all these attempts to meddle with the free market it will ultimately lead to worse choice and availability. It is simply not a sustainable solution to high rents.

Let us cut red tape, release more land and support more locals getting into home ownership. My advice to activists who want to block development is to just think about the flow-on effects that might have on everyday Territorians in one, two or three years. I can tell you now that 800 more homes being built would see the greatest lowering of rental prices in the greater Darwin area.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I will contribute to the motion by the Member for Nightcliff, noting the amendment moved by the Member for Brennan.

I find that interesting, since it is the four hours of General Business and the government has no legislation before the Assembly tomorrow. I am sure it could have brought forward a statement or report based on the amendment by the Member for Brennan, but instead it chose to hijack the important four hours that the crossbench and the opposition get to bring forward motions and private members' Bills. This is our four hours of time.

The CLP government has a whole day to fill an agenda. So far, we have no idea what it will bring before the parliament tomorrow. It has a whole day to fill its own time, with no legislation before the Assembly so far for Thursday. It is disrespectful to bring forward an amendment and hijack a motion on an important issue that the Member for Nightcliff brought before the House.

Our Labor opposition has a different take on this motion but, all the same, we have a deep respect for that time. The Member for Brennan has missed the mark with this amendment to the motion. Maybe she should bring on a statement or a report to fill the government's so-called full agenda for this sittings week.

This motion from the Member for Nightcliff is so important across the Northern Territory because one consistent issue raised is the cost of living, particularly the worry about adequate housing. No matter where we go, housing is a topical issue. In Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine where I live, Alice Springs where the Member for Gwoja lives and the many communities off the highway—which I am sure not many of the CLP members have bothered to visit—Territorians have been telling us that the cost of renting is becoming heavy on their pockets and many families are struggling. Many individuals are struggling and saying that they do not feel they are living in a sustainable manner given the cost of living and housing.

Unfortunately, too many Territorians live with the constant anxiety of rent hikes. The Member for Johnston spoke about that in her contribution. Too many Territorians are struggling to save for the future because much of their pay packet is disappearing on rent each week to pay for other people's mortgages. Unfortunately, they feel trapped and cannot move, plan or put down roots in the Territory because they feel that housing may be insecure for them, their families and other people they may be supporting.

This is not just a housing issue; it is a cost-of-living issue. It is an economic issue and is, indeed, a social issue that directly affects whether people choose to stay in the Northern Territory, pack up and leave or have to move back home with other family members so that they can survive from day to day.

The original motion brought forward by the Member for Nightcliff acknowledged what Territorians already know: renters face housing insecurity; for many, rent increases are often unreasonable and unsustainable; and renters want stronger protections for themselves, their partners, family members and maybe those whom they are caring for.

We must be honest about the Territory's position. If we want people to come here and for our families and professionals to stay in the Territory, housing affordability is a critical piece of that. It is not enough to just provide our lifestyle opportunities if Territorians cannot afford to keep a roof over their head. Employers and employees across industries—health, education, hospitality and small business—have told us that housing availability and affordability are major barriers to attracting and retaining staff across the NT.

When rents keep going up unchecked, we lose workers, families, couples, carers and students to other states and parts of the world where stronger housing security can be offered. That is a direct blow to our economy and the fabric of communities across the Northern Territory. Ensuring equality for renters is not just a debate on morals; it is also about our economy and how we will attract the people we need to fill critical skills gaps.

I want to be clear that I understand why the notion of a two-year rent freeze was put forward by the Member for Nightcliff. The frustrations we hear in the community are real, and the need for urgent action is undeniable. However, our Labor opposition believes that a blanket rent freeze is a harsh step. We cannot ignore the fact that not all landlords are large investors with multiple properties; we recognise that some investment rental properties belong to families. Many families have invested in a single property as part of their retirement plan or assets to pass on to future generations of their family. There are people who have worked hard to buy a second home as financial security and to try to stay in the Territory.

Therefore, a blanket freeze risks the possibility of punishing both the good and the greedy. It risks penalising responsible landlords who treat their tenants fairly alongside those who may exploit the system. This is not a fair or sustainable solution in the long run. We need a mature and balanced discussion, not just in the short four hours we have on General Business day but in a longer discussion about how this can be sustained for the future of the Territory.

Other jurisdictions are already grappling with these same issues. In the Australian Capital Territory, for example, rent caps have been implemented to limit increases to a reasonable level. That model recognises that rents can move but prevents excessive, unfair hikes that push people out of their homes. The ACT, being the other territory, has a similar-size population to the NT; the difference is the geographic stretch we have. Off the top of my head, a few years ago the ACT had a public housing rental population of about 20%. I think ours is just over 40% on average. I am sure the responsible minister, the Member for Barkly, could speak to what that number is now. I am looking at the Member for Barkly. Is that roughly what it is now? No? Put it on notice. It was a few years ago, so I will go with that figure. Whether it has gone slightly up or down, we will wait and see. About 60% of Territorians may be renting or own, but roughly 40% of Territorians are renting public housing.

The idea of focusing on housing in the medium to long term in a sustainable way is not about ideology; it is about fairness, stability and sustainability. If the ACT can explore price controls that balance the needs of renters and landlords, then the Northern Territory should explore and land on critical decisions in this space.

That is why our team believes this issue is perfectly suited to a larger process of time and effort by the parliament. We propose a parliamentary committee inquiry on this issue. The committee process would allow us to hear directly from renters about their lived experiences, which has been highlighted by the Member for Nightcliff; engage with landlords and property owners about their concerns; consult with housing advocates, economists and industry groups; and develop targeted evidence-based reforms that strike the balance needed in the Territory's context.

There is general will across this Chamber to strengthen rental protections. We believe a committee process would take the heat out of the debate and focus on practical solutions that work for Territorians and provide an opportunity for all members of parliament to have input into that on behalf of their constituents and not be drowned out by a government decision.

What concerns me most is that while renters face growing insecurity, the CLP government has offered little in the way of leadership. As an example, today in Question Time we heard the Treasurer almost show a negative inference of anyone who rents. He linked his party, the CLP, and my party, the ALP, to contrast that if you are a home owner you are better, and if you are a renter you are negative.

I feel sorry for the Member for Goyder who was the only person brave enough to put up his hand to say that he rents. How is renting a negative thing or a reflection of character or resilience? I do not understand. Perhaps the Treasurer would care to enlighten all of us on why he felt those comments were appropriate, as a government minister of the Crown, and explain why there was a negative inference about people who rent. I have no idea. I hope the Treasurer can enlighten us on that.

The CLP has not put forward any serious plans to tackle rent rises; CLP members have not been engaging meaningfully with renters or landlords on this critical issue. They are failing to address the underlying causes of housing stress, such as the lack of new affordable housing supply and the high cost of living across the board.

This CLP government seems more interested in scoring political points than in working constructively to fix the problem in the medium and long term. That is not good enough for Territorians because they definitely deserve more.

What should guide us if we are to move forward? I believe there are five clear principles:

1. Housing security is essential. No Territorian should live in fear of losing their home because of sudden, unreasonable rent increases.

2. There should be fairness for renters and landlords. Tenants deserve protection, but responsible landlords should not be unfairly punished.

3. There should be transparency and accountability. The rental system must be modernised to reflect today's realities, including protections for renters in share houses, independent bond boards and clear minimum standards for housing.

4. There should be targeted reform, not blunt instruments. A two-year freeze might grab headlines, but it is not a long-term solution. We need nuanced measures to deliver fairness without unintended consequences.

5. There should be evidence-based policymaking. The CLP government seems allergic to this, but if we want action in this space it will mean that we seek the advice of everyone at the table—those who are affected directly, the experts and economists—if we are looking at evidence-based policymaking to make a difference for the Northern Territory in the long run.

Reforms must be guided by data, expert advice and community consultation and engagement, not kneejerk politics.

Nationally, work has been underway to support more housing supply being added to the Australian market. I do not dispute the need for it. In the last few months of our Labor government we did the work for the greater Holtze area, making sure the reality would be that, one day, hundreds of Territorians in new homes would be the beneficiaries.

Supply is only one part of the solution. This debate is not just about numbers or laws; it is about people—Territorians who we are all here to serve. It is about the single mother in Palmerston who is working two jobs but still struggling to cover her rent because of repeated hikes; the nurse in Tennant Creek who wants to stay and serve her community but cannot find affordable housing; and young people in Alice Springs who are forced into share houses with poor standards and limited protection. The concept of a youth foyer in Alice Springs would be a positive step forward for Central Australia when it comes to this topic. Every one of these stories reflects a bigger truth: when housing is insecure, everything else in life becomes, unfortunately, more difficult.

There is also a clear economic argument for reform. High rents discourage people from moving to the Territory at a time when we need more workers and families to drive growth. When people leave because they cannot afford to stay, businesses lose staff, customers and services, and our economy suffers.

A stronger, fairer rental system is not just about social justice; it is about creating the conditions for economic growth, workforce sustainability and community resilience.

The government should not dismiss this debate as simply the politics of opposition or the crossbench; it should treat it as the opportunity to work together in this parliament, with the community and experts, to deliver reforms that will make a difference for the Territorians we serve.

If this CLP government is serious about making a difference in the Territory—a place where people want to live, work and stay—it must tackle and address the housing crisis seriously, not just for one group of Territorians but for all. That means addressing rental insecurity head on as part of this discussion.

When Labor came to office in 2016 it was clear that the *Residential Tenancies Act* was decades out of date. Territorians were renting in a modern housing market governed by laws that were stuck in the past. In 2019 Labor initiated a comprehensive root-and-branch review of the Act. We did not just tinker around the edges; we committed to listening to tenants, landlords, advocates and legal experts in housing.

That consultation led to two major tranches of reform in 2020 and 2023. They were careful, considered, evidence-based reforms designed to bring our rental laws in line with modern expectations and community standards. Under our former Labor government, we strengthened protections for renters. We banned unfair practices like rent bidding and rent auctions; no longer could Territorians be forced into bidding wars that pushed rent above the advertised price. We also standardised termination notice periods of 60 days for fixed and periodic tenancies, giving renters more certainty and time to plan their lives.

We capped lease break penalties, ensuring that tenants escaping unsafe circumstances or financial hardships were not crippled by unfair costs. We also made it crystal clear what charges were allowed: rent; bond; and legislated utility costs—no more hidden or exploitative fees dressed up as 'extras'.

Perhaps our proudest reforms were those aimed at supporting victims of domestic and family violence. Our Labor team recognised that escaping violence should not come at the cost of safety or home security. We gave victims the right to immediately terminate a lease and walk away from unsafe circumstances, with minimal administrative burden. We also made sure they would not be held liable for damage caused by a perpetrator in the home.

We streamlined proof of violence processes to reduce trauma so that victims did not need to retell their stories again to access these basic protections. We empowered tenants to change locks or make minor safety upgrades, and we reformed tenancy blacklists so victim–survivors could challenge and remove unfair listings against their name. These reforms were about dignity, safety and justice in the community.

Our Labor team also recognises the need for privacy and fairness in the rental market. We stopped landlords from collecting unnecessary personal data from applicants and required that information to be destroyed within set timeframes. We required landlords to seek consent before using photos of rental properties that might identify tenants, protecting the privacy of families. We modernised tenancy processes by allowing documents to be served electronically under the *Electronic Transactions Act*.

A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move an extension of time to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: We made renting with a pet easier, recognising that pets are part of families and that people should not have to give them up just to find home security.

We never claimed that our work was finished; we were up front that more needed to be done. That is why we laid out a pathway for further reform, including:

- establishing an independent bond board to manage bonds fairly and transparently
- introducing minimum housing standards for safety, energy efficiency and cooling, which is essential in the Territory climate
- abolishing no-grounds evictions to give renters greater security and confidence in their homes
- expanding protections for share-house tenants and modern living arrangements.

These were the next steps that our Labor team was preparing to take, each of them grounded in consultation, guided by fairness and aimed at delivering real security for renters.

I will give an example from my own street in Katherine. We had great neighbours, a family, renting a home which was sold, and there were new owners. They were living directly across the road from us at the time. We noticed they started packing, so we asked, 'Where are you going? Are you moving?' They said, 'Yes, unfortunately, we are moving'. I asked, 'Are the new owners moving into the house?' They said, 'No, they put the rent up'. I said, 'Is it big? What is the significance of this? Because you are moving.' The rent had been put up by $200 per week. The family could not afford $400 extra a fortnight with that decision of the landlords, the new owners. Unfortunately, it meant they had to move from that house, creating stress at that time for

the family, with both parents working full time and both kids at school. They could not stay in their home because of that.

I acknowledge that big changes like that are up to the landlords, but a $400 increase per fortnight is a huge stretch for anyone, even if you are on a high salary. That is a big chunk of extra money to pay. The house went from $400 a week to $600 a week. Unfortunately, the family had to leave that house and could not secure a rental in the area; they had to move to a different part of Katherine.

That is one example of how it affects families. We are not just talking about young people, which I have heard a lot from the CLP contributions. We are talking about families and people in critical worker roles who earn too much to be eligible to rent public housing but may not earn enough to get into the private rental market. Where is the balance between these two? There is a big gap there.

The Member for Nightcliff has brought forward this motion with the intention to bring the Assembly's attention to this issue. Each of us has our own stories in our electorates and can point to anecdotes, perhaps evidence—it sounds like a dirty word in this place now, doesn't it, Member for Nightcliff?—across the Northern Territory that could feed into a bigger picture.

Whilst I acknowledge the original motion, if this is something we can put our heads together on and make a meaningful difference, it is an opportunity for a parliamentary committee. I have written to the responsible minister, the Member for Barkly, about housing—if you check your email, Member for Barkly, you will see that today—to show the earnestness of capturing the intention of the motion that our team believes in and I have articulated in my contribution to the debate to see if there is a willingness.

The government has the ability to stand up a parliamentary committee. It would be a phenomenal piece of work, with hopefully a bit more time than the VAD committee inquiry was allowed, which was three months or something—a short amount of time. Perhaps there could be a thorough process in a committee inquiry of the Northern Territory parliament with all the elements that I have outlined in my contribution to see what we can work on.

It does not sound like the CLP government has any ideas other than acknowledging that the home owner scheme is great and that people have accessed it. That is definitely a positive, but what about people who cannot access those grants?

If the mentality of the Treasurer, one of the lead executives of the CLP government, is that if you rent somehow that is negative, how do we change the mentality of the government to listen, understand and support Territorians who are renting and who may not be able to own their own home for many different reasons? How do we change that mentality to support Territorians and understand the circumstances across the Territory?

I visited Canberra last week and met with the Minister for Housing's staff. The federal Minister for Housing, Clare O'Neil, will be in the Territory soon. They know the context of the Northern Territory. We put forward ideas of how we could get elevation to the federal government about initiatives and broaden the schemes for social and affordable housing.

The HAFF was brought in by the federal Labor Albanese government a few years ago. It would be great to hear an update from the CLP on where that is, because that is supposed to capture key workers—I think there are 120 key workers on the list; I could not rattle them all off for you now.

It is the people who work and service the Northern Territory, who are in those critical jobs which provide the services that maybe people in the government take for granted. They are in that gap where—I mentioned the rental gap—they cannot quite purchase or build their own home and are maybe earning more than the threshold to apply for public housing. How do we cater for the growth in the middle and keep people in the middle in those important jobs across the Territory? If we do not have accommodation that is fit, available and accessible for people in hospitality, we will not see our hospitality industry flourish.

Our NGO sector often has experts in the field doing phenomenal work. People working on domestic, family and sexual violence prevention programs often do not earn big dollars. How do we make sure those people providing critical services in an important sector—often an out-of-sight, out-of-mind sector—are looked after? How do we attract people in the Territory for those key services to build our talent.

Providing that opportunity for young people, there are models like the youth foyer explored at the end of our former Labor government. Is that a model we can support the government to provide in a place like Alice

Springs? I have heard many representations that Alice Springs would be the place to do that work and model a youth foyer. If the government takes any of those ideas, that is fine. Brand them as your own; that is okay, as long as it is about the betterment of the Territory and focusing on out-of-the-box thinking that could help Territorians when it comes to what people are calling a housing crisis.

In conclusion let me say this: Territorians want fairness, stability and a system that works for renters and landlords. A two-year freeze may not be the right answer, but doing nothing is not an option when we are looking to support Territorians in their housing journey and create safety and the ability to feel like they are a part of the community, whether they own their home, have an investment home or are renting a home.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about this important topic. It is important to acknowledge that the Territory has a unique housing system. We have private home ownership, the private rental market and public housing, which is run by the Northern Territory department of Housing. We also have social, community and homelands housing across the Territory. It is unique. It is clear that the Territory needs to continue to increase its investment in housing across all these important sections. We need more community, social and public housing, and we will continue to see more private rentals and properties being built for home ownership.

People have spoken about various rounds of incentives and grants. I bought my first house on my 21st birthday in 2008 in Alice Springs, my home. That was because of the generous home ownership incentives offered at the time, which enabled people to get in after you had saved a small deposit. It is something that we acknowledge, and we want to see those types of investments inclusive of other areas. I acknowledge that the federal government's incentives are due to start in a month's time, with a 5% deposit to get people into home ownership.

We need to acknowledge there are many people in our community who may not ever want to buy a property, and that is okay, or who for other reasons cannot afford to get into the market. That is where we need to look at other homeownership schemes. Back in the day there was the Homenorth scheme, which allowed people to work with the Northern Territory Government of the day to buy a percentage of a property they were eligible to borrow. For instance, I think it was capped that an individual could borrow 70%, and the government would hold 30%, and when that person could refinance to buy the remaining 30% off the government, they did.

My colleague the Leader of the Opposition spoke about a range of reform work that we did, including tranches 1 and 2 of the *Residential Tenancies Act*. I had the privilege to introduce tranche 2 of these reforms to the parliament when I was the Northern Territory Attorney-General. This was an important tranche of work that provided a number of protections for renters. We must not forget that 50% of the Northern Territory's population are renters; that is an important number to remember whenever we are talking about the cost of living.

As part of that reform, we looked at the notice periods for landlords to end a tenancy. At the time 14 days was the minimum notice period. We increased the minimum notice period for landlords to end a tenancy to 60 days to give renters more security and time to plan when they are facing a move. We brought in a ban on rent bidding to stop unfair competition that pushes rental prices even higher at a time when affordability is already a challenge.

We looked at the protections for tenant privacy, limiting the personal information landlords and agents can demand during the application process to protect the privacy of tenants. We looked at clear rules to cap lease break compensation, ensuring that when tenants needed to end a lease early, costs are fair and predictable. No more than four weeks' rent can be sought if less than half the term has lapsed, or two weeks on other notice.

One of the reforms I was proud of, which we worked with community legal services and women's services on, was a life-saving protection for victims of domestic and family violence. The changes ensure that survivors are not liable for damages caused by the perpetrator of violence and that there is a clear pathway for victims to exit a tenancy immediately without penalty to secure their safety. This was an important reform because when we were consulting we heard about many people's lived experiences of victims being charged for damages that were done by the perpetrator.

We also heard from victims who had moved into a new property and wanted to install security screens, doors and cameras. That often was not possible because of lease arrangements in place. We wanted to put the safety of Territory women and families first; that is why we drove these changes to ensure that women were not being penalised when they needed to immediately leave a tenancy for their safety and to ensure that when women and children were taking on a new lease, if they needed extra infrastructure brought into that

home to give them a sense of safety and security, they would not be penalised for that. These were enhancements to properties.

These reforms were important because they modernised the Act and allowed, as the Leader of the Opposition said, for the electronic services of notices and clarified outdated definitions to make the law clearer for tenants and landlords. These changes were widely welcomed by tenants, community legal services and advocacy groups. While there is always more to do, this package of reforms represented a strong step towards fairness and security in the rental market.

It is important to acknowledge the organisations that contributed to that process and led that reform. These reforms struck a fair balance between the rights of renters and the interests of property owners while delivering strong protections.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about a bond board. We made it clear that we were committed to a bond board in tranche 3 of the reforms. We have heard from members of the Assembly and the Member for Nightcliff, who brought forward this motion, that it is important. When I was the Attorney-General and wanted to do a bond board as part of tranche 2, we had advice from Treasury that it needed to be looked at further and might not be economically viable and so forth. What the Leader of the Opposition put forward is reasonable.

The Member for Nightcliff has spoken relentlessly in this Chamber and outside about how we should have a parliamentary group look into this matter so that the parliament can understand how a bond board works, what the arrangements are, how it works financially and how it can be set up similar to other boards. I welcome anything that is put up, whether it be today or at a later stage, to establish a bond board in the Northern Territory. Importantly, an independent bond board would provide security, safety and peace of mind for Territorians, knowing that it can make those decisions and hold those funds.

We have heard stories of vulnerable families who have left a property and had their bond withheld. When they could not get a clear understanding about that, it has ended up before NTCAT. We have heard from members in this Chamber about the role of NTCAT and how it works. We have seen over a number of years that a lot of bond matters may end up in NTCAT which could probably have been dealt with by a bond board.

I thank all members for their contributions. Reforming the *Residential Tenancies Act* is important. The Member for Drysdale acknowledged that the CLP has kept Labor's remote housing program in place. The CLP picked it up when it came to government last August and has kept rolling with that plan to deliver houses. It takes a long time to plan the number of houses, where they will be built and the priorities in terms of overcrowding. The Territory's housing system is unique.

I give a shout-out to cool people from the Barkly. Jimmy Frank is doing deadly work for housing, particularly in the beautiful Barkly region, to make sure that people are involved in the design and construction and looking at a new way of delivering social and community housing. It is incredibly important.

There is an opportunity to work with the Northern Territory community as a whole on how we can better deliver public and social affordable housing for victims of domestic and family violence with caretakers onsite to provide support.

I support the establishment of a bond board, and I am happy to participate in any work to get us to that process. I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing the motion to the House and look forward to any further contributions.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move an amendment to the Attorney-General's amendment. I move to omit all words after 'and insert the following words' and insert the following words: 'that the Assembly refers the matter of the potential establishment of a bond board to the Public Accounts Committee'. That will be circulated now.

As I have said before, I will always aim high. I am here to be a fresh voice in this Chamber, which has gotten a little stale with the status quo. I will always put things on the table that I think will benefit people across the Territory, particularly my constituents. My constituents are well and truly sick of the status quo.

I have listened to everyone today, and I lowered the bar; it is incredibly low. All our housing organisations, peaks, tenant supports, every bit of information in the public domain and the people I have spoken to highlighted that a bond board is a crucial missing piece. I have asked that the issue of a potential establishment be referred to the Public Accounts Committee so that we can use the committee for what it is

intended for—to investigate it and look at the reports done by previous governments. It has also been spoken about previously by the CLP government. It is an unfinished bit of work that we need to tie up.

I am doing my job as a crossbencher and putting things on the table that our communities are calling for but, for whatever reason, the government is not prioritising. It does not take anything away from anyone to let PAC look at this.

I think we will get to the voting afterwards; I am still unsure of how to vote on an amendment to an amendment, so apologies for the confusion.

I will give my closing address. I thank everyone who contributed to my motion, particularly the Member for Johnston and the Labor members for their considered responses. I know, particularly with Labor, that we will not always see eye to eye.

Dr RAHMAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I just want clarification. I am sorry to interrupt, Member for Nightcliff. Can I determine whether the amendment to the amendment can be freshly spoken about?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, because the Member for Nightcliff is closing.

Dr RAHMAN: Even though she moved an amendment?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: She is in closing debate; that is it. Sorry. That is the advice I have from the Clerk.

K McNAMARA: I will not always see eye to eye on everything with Labor, but I appreciate the good-faith way in which those members engage with the work.

The original amendment to my motion, proposed by the Attorney-General, was an incredibly bad-faith act. It was brought to my attention that under Standing Order 92 amendments must be relevant:

Every amendment must be relevant to the question which it proposes to amend.

I point out that in the Attorney-General's amendment, nowhere does it mention renters, renting, the bond board or anything I put down. It is disappointing to get amendments like that, which I do not think are in good faith. The government gets endless time in this Chamber to talk about itself. It wastes Question Time with dorothy dixers, so why would I want to spend my extremely limited General Business time on an amendment that just talks about the government?

I will address a couple of things from the debate, including briefly the potential housing at Lee Point. I put on the record that the housing at Lee Point was listed as starting at $850,000 per house. I make it clear that Lee Point was not affordable housing. It would not have done anything for renters. No-one who protested the Lee Point development wants to block affordable housing. Lee Point was not affordable housing, and there are many other places with vacant land that could and should be used for affordable housing.

We also heard a lot of corporate bootlicking about the free market. I will not bother rehashing that. All I heard from those opposite was that they lack the courage and vision to try something new and serious. More than 50% of Territorians rent their homes. I am worried that when the government votes against this motion, it will be a failing and betrayal of Lachlan, who is still chasing his stolen bond money more than a year after a tribunal ruling. It is a betrayal of Elizabeth, who had to endure multiple tribunal hearings just to prove that her home was left clean. It will be a betrayal of thousands of Territorians sleeping in cars, on couches or in overcrowded accommodation tonight.

The evidence I have presented is overwhelming: 0% of rentals are affordable for a single person on the disability support pension; 0% are affordable for those on JobSeeker; and 0% are affordable for someone on Youth Allowance. These are not just statistics; they represent real Territorians locked out of basic shelter while landlords can increase rent and evict without reason.

The CLP's inaction sends a clear message that corporate interests matter more than Territorians struggling to keep a roof over their head. This government claims to care about keeping families in the Territory, yet it is presiding over a system that forces Territorians to leave, just like Elizabeth did when faced with a 42% rent increase overnight. It claims to support working families, yet 94% of rentals are unaffordable even for two parents working full-time on minimum wage.

The NT is the last jurisdiction standing without basic renter protections. We are the only jurisdiction without an independent bond board, one of only two that still allows no-grounds evictions and the only place where landlords can increase rent monthly. We have no minimum housing standards whilst charging market rent for properties that may lack safe wiring or functional plumbing.

On that, I give a shout-out to my landlord. It is interesting; I put this on already knowing this was an issue, well before I had it on the Notice Paper. Over the Wet Season I had to endure a skylight that bucketed water for however many months the Wet Season went. I had to buy a 20-litre bucket from Bunnings, which was constantly filling up. It was a drowning hazard for my child. Could they fix that leak? Yes. Would they fix it? No. Because I knew my rights and complained about it getting fixed, they have now given us a notice to vacate, so next week I am moving.

That is the current situation of renting. That is what I am trying to fix. It is not about demonising landlords; it is about making things fair for both parties.

This is not leadership; it is a race to the bottom. Every other state and territory has recognised that housing is a human right deserving of protection. Victoria, Queensland and the ACT have all acted. Even the CLP government of the 1990s, under Shane Stone, budgeted for bond assistance, recognising the government's responsibilities, but this CLP government has retreated even from that modest recognition. The current Chief Minister once supported stronger renter protections when in opposition. What happened to that concern for vulnerable Territorians?

If this motion fails, the message is clear: the NT will remain the wild west of rental markets where landlords hold all the cards and tenants have nowhere to turn, where young Territorians continue to leave for places that value their right to secure housing and where families will be pushed into crisis whilst we do nothing.

The solutions I have proposed are not radical. They are standard practice in lots of other places. An independent bond board, minimum housing standards and an end to no-grounds evictions are basic protections that Territorians deserve and governments everywhere else provide.

Voting against this motion is not just voting against better policy; it is voting against hope that young Territorians can build their future here instead of sleeping in cars and that families on low incomes can afford a place to call home. They will never afford the Lee Point supposed housing; they need rental protections to actually get a roof over their head. It goes against hope that tenants can challenge unfair treatment without facing homelessness.

The housing crisis demands leadership, not excuses; action, not delay; and a government that works for everyday Territorians, not just corporate donors.

The fight does not end here. The 50% of Territorians who rent will not forget which politicians stood with them and which stood with corporate landlords. Come the next election, they will remember who voted for dignity in housing and who voted to keep them trapped in an unfair system.

I urge this Assembly to stand with Territorians and with renters and to support this motion. At the least, support my amendment to the amendment to send the issue of a bond board to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: For the benefit of the Member for Fong Lim, I asked the same question of the Acting Clerk that you posed to me, which is why I could relay the answer straight back to you. That is enough on that one.

Dr RAHMAN: Mr Deputy Clerk, can I check one thing on that? I appreciate …

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you ask through me? What is the question?

Dr RAHMAN: I did not speak in that debate. Was it the case that it was not possible for me to speak in that debate, or was it the case that I could not speak in the debate because the Member for Nightcliff had begun closing?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It was the case that I asked whether there were any other speakers and you did not seek the call, so I went to the Member for Nightcliff to close. If you had stood, you would have been given the chance to speak.

Dr RAHMAN: Thanks for the clarification.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No worries.

The question is that the Member for Nightcliff's amendment to the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7	Noes 17
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Mr Paech	Mr Charls
Ms Uibo	Mr Edgington
Mr Young	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the original amendment by the Attorney-General be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 7
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Guyula
Mrs Carlson	K McNamara
Mr Charls	Mr Paech
Mr Edgington	Ms Uibo
Mrs Finocchiaro	Mr Young
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Amendment agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 7
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Guyula
Mrs Carlson	K McNamara

Mr Charls	Mr Paech
Mr Edgington	Ms Uibo
Mrs Finocchiaro	Mr Young
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION
Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation for the Northern Territory

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, this is the last time I will do two motions one after another.

I move that this Assembly:

1. acknowledges the overwhelming scientific evidence on anthropogenic global heating which is changing the climate and global weather patterns

2. recognises that in this climate crisis the Northern Territory will increasingly be impacted by more extreme weather patterns, including increased severity and length of heatwaves, prolonged droughts, sea level rises, more intense cyclones and flooding, as well as a broader distribution of tropical diseases and species habitat reduction

3. recognises that the Northern Territory Government has an obligation to its citizens to work to mitigate the impacts of the changing climate, actively create resilient communities and develop an overarching climate change adaptation strategy for the NT that focuses on:

    (a) consulting widely across sectors, our urban and rural communities, government, peak organisations and businesses

    (b) identifying key climate risks to our communities, economy, infrastructure and environment

    (c) analysing risks and impacts, costing adaptation and mitigation measures

    (d) identifying the best ways to use funding, prioritise actions and advocate for federal money

    (e) ensuring the most vulnerable to heatwaves are supported to adapt to a hotter climate, including housing upgrades to improve energy efficiency and ensuring access to reliable and free air-conditioned public spaces

    (f) ensuring consideration of climate risks is embedded in planning for all large projects that include significant public investment

    (g) creating a climate risk adaptation framework for all future government budgets.

We stand at a critical juncture. The science is unequivocal, the impacts are accelerating and the window for effective action is rapidly closing.

Today I present this motion not as a political statement but as an urgent, genuine call for the Northern Territory Government to fulfill its fundamental duty of care to current and future generations of Territorians.

The World Meteorological Organization's State of the Global Climate 2024 stated plainly:

> *The human-caused increase in the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere is the largest driver of climate change.*

The Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology State of the Climate 2024 confirmed that:

> *… the past decade has seen record-breaking extremes contributing to natural disasters that are exacerbated by anthropogenic … climate change ...*

In the Northern Territory the evidence is even more stark. Our Territory has experienced temperature increases of 1.5°C since 1910, which is significantly higher than the global average increase of 1.1°C. This is not a distant threat or arbitrary number; it is a lived reality documented in our meteorological records, visible in our landscapes and felt by every Territorian during our increasingly extreme summers.

I seek leave to table an essay.

Leave granted.

K McNAMARA: This is an essay by esteemed climate scientist Joelle Gergis. It is called Highway to Hell. As well as tabling it—do not say I do nothing for you—I have brought you all a copy because I love science, and it is important.

There is often a gap missing in effective science communication. This essay by this world-renowned scientist is a brilliant example of effective scientific communication. You could not get it from a more knowledgeable source. Joelle Gergis is a world-renowned climate scientist from Australia. She was one of the lead authors on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. I urge all members, no matter what your political leanings, to read this.

The title comes from the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, saying:

We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator.

Dr Gergis goes into a lot. One of the things she talks about is the target limits for global heating, where those limits come from, what they are and why they are set where they are. I am sure most of you have heard of the 1.5-degree limit, which is to try to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

There is a good reason. It is not because if we limit that we will not get global warming; it is the limit so we can try to avoid the worst-case scenario and the extreme of changes that will happen to our planet with more warming.

This is from her essay:

> *… there is a 90% chance that the continuation of current climate policies will result in 2.3ºC to 4.5ºC of global warming by the end of the century, with a best estimate of 3.5ºC*.

This is serious. I think that some modern media landscapes and conversations about climate are missing that, on our current trajectory, we will overshoot that limit of 1.5 ºC. She goes on to say that this represents a catastrophic overshooting of the Paris Agreement targets, highlighting just how off track we are. The lower limit of 1.5 is expected to be breached in the early 2030s, and we have already had years—I think last year was one of them—where in some places, we have reached over 1.5ºC, with 2ºC to be reached in the 2040s, within the lifetime of most people alive today.

The consequences of such high levels of warming on the Australian way of life and our national security, health and unique ecosystems are profound and immeasurable. This is the reason for my motion. The Northern Territory is in for a shock; this place will change, and we are so dangerously unprepared.

The warming of our oceans drives a cascade of climate destruction that reaches into every corner of the Territory. As ocean temperatures rise, they alter the fundamental patterns that have governed our weather for millennia. The ocean cycles we have relied on for weather prediction like El Nino, which has the strongest influence on year-to-year climate globally, are beginning to break down in this rapidly warming world, making our climate increasingly unpredictable.

Hotter oceans fuel more destructive storms and evaporate more readily, providing extra energy for tropical cyclones that are now tracking further south than ever before, bringing cyclonic conditions where our infrastructure has never been designed to cope. Meanwhile, these same warming oceans are melting icesheets in Antarctica and the Arctic at accelerating rates, driving the sea level rise that threatens coastal communities. The reality we face is a rapidly warming ocean that is destabilising every aspect of our climate

system, making the Northern Territory's weather more extreme, less predictable and increasingly dangerous for our communities.

Climate change is not coming to the Northern Territory; it is already here, and it is intensifying. We are not passive observers of a distant crisis; we are on the front line of a climate emergency that is unfolding faster and more severely here than in other parts of Australia. This is one of the things that I think most people do not understand either. Climate change, or global heating and sea level rises, happen differently and disproportionately in different parts of the globe. It is all about geography and the oceans, but we are warming in Australia faster than other places, and our sea levels in northern Australia are rising faster than other places such as the southern areas of Australia.

The Northern Territory sits at the crosshairs of climate change for fundamental geographic and climactic reasons. We are experiencing temperature increases of 1.5ºC since 1910—significantly higher than the global average of 1.1 and higher than most jurisdictions. Our tropical and arid climate zones make us particularly vulnerable to the amplified effects of global warming. When you hear those degrees of warming, it is not, 'Oh, we will have a 29-degree day instead of a 28-degree day'. Those are the averages. That means that the extremes are getting more extreme. It is not so much about the average getting hotter; it is that the hottest days are getting hotter, and they are happening more frequently.

Sea levels are rising faster in our waters than in much of the rest of Australia due to our proximity to the equator and regional ocean dynamics. Thermal expansion of warming tropical oceans hits us first and hardest. We are not just experiencing climate change but climate change on steroids.

Let me paint you a picture of what this means for real Territorians today. In Alice Springs, the number of days above 44ºC has increased from an average of four pre-1988 to 24 per year between 1989 and 2018. That is six times as many days when the heat becomes life threatening. Over 44ºC is life threatening for a lot of vulnerable Territorians, and we will continue to see an increase in the number of those days.

Studies have demonstrated that heat is already a public health concern in Darwin and Alice Springs, diminishing wellbeing and increasing mortality and morbidity. There are members who are interested in resources and peer-reviewed articles—all the statistics I read come from peer-reviewed sources, so I will not read them all out as I go, but I have them if anyone is interested.

As temperatures continue to rise, we face the prospect of extreme heat that will overwhelm people's ability to adapt, leading to anticipated population declines in the hottest regions. The impacts are not equally distributed, and that makes them even more unconscionable. Research from Quilty and Jupurrurla reveals that Indigenous communities are living in what they term 'dangerous hot boxes'—inadequate housing without proper air conditioning where residents resort to blocking windows with plywood to retrofit cooling units. These modifications trap residents in homes that become furnaces where they cannot use windows for natural ventilation or light. I have seen instances in remote areas where they have resorted to using their precious water to hose down the walls of their houses because they are too hot for anyone to sit inside.

When the power fails—as it increasingly does under extreme heat—people cannot access vital health equipment, including breathing apparatus and home dialysis machines. We are talking about the difference between life and death determined by your postcode and the adequacy of your housing.

An estimated 31.1 megalitres of water were required for home dialysis treatment across the Territory in 2018–19. That is projected to more than double to 81.5 megalitres. Water scarcity will force clients from community-based dialysis to major urban settings, severing them from their land and culture.

I heard a story from a dialysis centre that cannot operate dialysis later in the day. Dialysis water, for reasons that I am unsure of, has to be under a certain temperature; it has to be cool. The centre is having to look at getting patients in when it is dark before the sun rises to get the dialysis done before the water heats up. I am sure you can understand the implications of things like this.

Our coastline tells the story of an accelerating crisis. The sea level around the Northern Territory has risen at a much higher rate than the rest of the country due to natural climate variability and climate change. We are already seeing coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion into freshwater systems and the loss of critical coastal habitats.

In 2015 the Gulf of Carpentaria mangrove dieback was not an anomaly; it was a preview of what is to come. The combination of unusually hot and dry conditions with temporary low sea levels created compound stressors that killed vast stretches of mangroves that had stood for generations. These were not just trees

dying; they were entire ecosystems collapsing, taking with them fish nurseries, storm protection and cultural sites of profound significance to Aboriginal communities. I should not have to make the point for all the fishos that without fish nurseries, there is no fishing.

Our critical infrastructure built for yesterday's climate is increasingly inadequate for today's conditions, let alone tomorrow's. Power grids strain under unprecedented cooling demands during our increasingly frequent and severe heatwaves. Roads buckle and crack under extreme heat. Water infrastructure designed for historical rainfall patterns is faced with more intense rainfall events and longer droughts. From water treatment facilities to distribution networks, our essential services face mounting stress from a climate that they were never designed to handle.

Our primary industries are already under siege. Mango production faces disruption as flowering is inhibited by high daytime temperatures, with some commercially imported varieties no longer suitable for current growing locations. Our cattle industry confronts the reality of heat stress, reducing productivity, increasing water demand and limiting grazing range.

The tourism industry that showcases our natural wonders faces the prospect of them disappearing. A sea level rise of just 30 centimetres could cause the loss of 80% of Kakadu's freshwater wetlands. We risk becoming a Territory that markets what we have already lost.

The economic crisis extends far beyond these visible impacts. A catastrophic insurance emergency is already unfolding that threatens the foundation of our economy. This is where I cannot take anything seriously that anyone in this Chamber, from either side, says about the economy until you address the climate risks to our economy. Climate change is driving insurance premiums to massively outpace price rises for most other goods and services, with nearly one in eight households suffering home insurance affordability stress and paying more than four weeks' gross income on home insurance premiums.

The scale of this crisis is staggering. Modelling from the McKell Institute estimated that the direct cost of natural disasters in Australia could reach $35bn per year—that was in 2022 dollars—by mid-century. But averages hide the true devastation. In high-risk areas like northern Australia, insurance costs are becoming simply unaffordable. Research shows that 520,940 buildings will be deemed high risk by 2030, having annual damage costs equivalent to 1% or more of the property's replacement costs. One in 25 of all homes and commercial buildings in Australia will become effectively uninsurable by 2030, with Queensland bearing the brunt at the moment.

For the Northern Territory, this means entire communities facing economic extinction. When properties become uninsurable, they become unsellable. When they become unsellable, they become worthless. This is not a gradual transition; it is an economic cliff that communities will fall off suddenly and completely.

The banking system faces systemic risk from the insurance crisis. According to research from analytics firm Finity, roughly 3% of bank loan assets are likely to have unaffordable insurance, which equates to $60bn in loans. As one actuary warned, if these loans went under, that would cause a severe crisis for the banking system in Australia.

The productivity crisis compounds these financial risks. Climate change is projected to cost Australia between $700,000 and $2.7m more in days of work lost every year by 2061 because climate change will cause more frequent and intense heatwaves. This is not just about worker comfort; it is about economic output disappearing as our climate becomes increasingly hostile to human activity. As Richard Denniss, the Executive Director of the Australia Institute, has warned climate change will drive down productivity in all sorts of Australian industries. Extreme weather events will drive up costs and reduce output in industries ranging from agriculture and construction to tourism and the health sector.

I know I went on about climate risk a lot in Estimates. It was shocking to witness firsthand a government budget that was so woefully inadequate when it came to climate change risk. It is negligible and dangerous for us not to be taking any of the climate change risks into account in future planning in our budgets. I cannot tell whether this government is ideologically opposed or lazy.

The international economic consequences are equally as severe. Australia faces significant GDP cuts from the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, and if South Korea, China and the Group of Seven follow suit, our GDP losses will reach more than $4bn. Queensland alone could lose more than 50,000 jobs if major economies influence carbon border adjustments.

Meanwhile, we are missing massive economic opportunities. Modelling by Deloitte Access Economics suggests support for a low-carbon economy in Australia will add $680bn in economic growth and 250,000 new jobs in Australia by 2070, but Australia is being left behind as other countries seize these opportunities.

The ultimate cost of climate inaction is staggering. One estimate puts global economic costs in the trillions of dollars per year; for Australia the figure is $129bn per year. For the Northern Territory, with our particular vulnerabilities and limited economic diversification, the proportional impact will be even more severe. This is not abstract economic modelling; it is the systematic destruction of our economic foundation, property markets collapsing, insurance systems failing, banks facing systemic risks, productivity plummeting and international competitiveness eroding. The question is not whether our economy can survive business as usual; it is whether we will have an economy left to save if we continue down this path.

As Dr Gergis warns, we face a critical problem. Australia's climate is becoming more extreme and unpredictable, pushing us towards thresholds that will make adaptation extremely difficult, if not impossible. This is especially true when simultaneous disasters unfold in different regions or when rapid successions of back-to-back disasters undermine a community's ability to recover. This is not a future scenario; it is happening in the Northern Territory to our communities, industries and environment. We are already seeing the compound effects of extreme heat stressing power grids, just when vulnerable people most need cooling; coastal flooding threatening infrastructure and communities; extending droughts stressing agricultural systems; while intense rainfall events overwhelm stormwater infrastructure.

These impacts do not occur in isolation; they cascade and compound. When there is not enough time between destructive events, damage begins to compound exponentially. We see continued degradation of our natural environment and weakening of social resilience that will eventually lead to permanent displacement of people from their homes and ongoing devastating impacts to our economy.

In my children's lifetime, if we continue on the emissions path that we are currently on and that all our policies are geared for, there will be Aboriginal people in communities who will become refugees from their own lands. I put that on the record because that will happen if we continue.

It is at the point when the question facing the Assembly is not whether climate change will affect us but whether we will prepare for accelerating impacts we can no longer avoid. As this climate science makes clear, we are moving beyond the realm of gradual change into an area of systemic disruption.

At this point of my speech, you would expect this motion to say, 'What will we do to stop this disaster?' Surely any sane person listening is thinking, 'Oh my god; this is a disaster. What is the cause? Let us stop this before it continues.' The tragedy of the climate crisis is that we 100% know that the cause is burning fossil fuels—combustion. Combustion, fossil fuels and gases like methane and carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere is the entire issue; there is no mystery. Unfortunately, governments in this country and around the world have been bought hook, line and sinker by the fossil fuel industry which is desperate to see profits continue.

Whilst I would love to say, 'Guys, let us work on reeling this back. Let us work on lowering our emissions; this is an emergency', unfortunately, it breaks my heart, but I know that it will get nowhere with these people. I will not give up because I cannot see the place I love neglected with the changes that are coming. That is why the motion I put forward today is essentially saying that you guys are not doing anything to prevent climate change from happening.

At the least, can you start preparing our communities for it? This is about trying to mitigate the bigger risks that we know are coming and to try to create resilient communities so that we know the particularly vulnerable people, our elderly, will be okay.

While we debate, other jurisdictions are acting decisively. Every Australian state except WA and the NT has comprehensive climate legislation in place. Victoria legislated net zero targets as early as 2017. It has statutory frameworks with clear emissions reduction targets, a dedicated minister and comprehensive adaptation strategies. History will not be kind to this government for slashing its emissions reduction target and not even having a climate minister. It is appalling.

The contrast is stark and embarrassing. While our emissions have risen, every other state and territory except WA has seen reductions. I am not asking you to reduce emissions. You can keep your fossil fuel industry mates happy. They are in a job; they are burning it. Can you do the least and protect people from the changes that are coming?

If it is not for the moral reason, then the government should care just for the practical reasons, because the legal landscape—this is important—is shifting rapidly. The International Court of Justice confirmed in June 2025 that countries have strong obligations under international law to slash climate pollution, and it outlined legal consequences for breaching these obligations. Courts worldwide are now increasingly recognising that governments have a duty of care to protect citizens from foreseeable climate risks.

The German Federal Constitutional Court, for example, declared climate legislation insufficient in 2021, forcing legislative reform. The Netherlands Supreme Court ordered the government to achieve specific emissions reductions. In France courts have found the state liable for climate inaction. Close to home the Federal Court of Australia initially recognised a duty of care owed by ministers to children regarding climate decisions, stating that foreseeable harm would be catastrophic. While this was later overturned, disappointingly, on appeal the trend is clear; governments are increasingly being held accountable for climate inaction.

I will take a deep breath and say that this motion is not about blame; it is about solutions. Let me be clear that any government truly serious about addressing climate change would tackle the problem at its source by aggressively reducing emissions. This CLP government chose a different path when it scrapped its emissions reduction target. If this government refuses to address the cause, it has an obligation to prepare for the consequences. This motion represents the bare minimum, the lowest bar possible, for responsible governance. When you do not prevent the house fire you must at least have smoke alarms and evacuation plans.

This motion recognises that while we must continue to reduce emissions we must also prepare for the climate impacts that are now unavoidable. The Northern Territory urgently needs what the research consistently recommends: a comprehensive Territory-wide climate risk assessment and adaptation strategy.

This should include:

- consulting widely across sectors, urban and rural communities, government, peak organisations and businesses
- identifying key climate risks to our communities, economy, infrastructure and environment
- analysing risks and impacts, costing adaptation and mitigation measures
- identifying the best ways to use funding, prioritise actions and advocate for federal money
- ensuring that those most vulnerable to heatwaves are supported to adapt to a hotter climate, including housing upgrades to improve energy efficiency
- ensuring access to reliable and free air-conditioned public spaces
- ensuring consideration of climate risks is embedded in planning for all large projects that include significant public investments; we cannot continue building for yesterday's climate when we know what tomorrow will bring
- creating a climate risk adaptation framework for all future government budgets.

A climate risk adaptation framework for all future budgets is not a bureaucratic overhead; it is essential. It is good governance.

Let me be clear about what a failure to do this means. Research shows that without coordinated action, we will face escalating healthcare costs as heat-related illnesses increase; infrastructure failures increasing, requiring costly emergency repairs rather than planned upgrades; economic losses increasing as industries struggle with changing conditions; population declines as the Territory becomes less liveable; and legal liability as courts increasingly hold governments accountable for legal failures.

The research is extensive, solutions are known and examples of successful adaptation exist worldwide. Studies of Nordic cities show that adaptation and mitigation can be addressed in an integrated manner. The tools exist; we lack only the political will to use them.

We face a choice that will define the Territory's future. We can continue to lag behind other jurisdictions, watching our emissions rise while communities suffer through increasingly dangerous heat, or we can seize this moment to build a more resilient, prepared and prosperous Northern Territory.

This motion is not radical; it is reasonable, evidence based and urgent. It asks us to acknowledge scientific reality, recognise our vulnerability and commit to the strategic planning that good government demands.

Other jurisdictions have shown it can be done. Victoria's *Climate Change Act* provides a model. Tasmania's adaptation planning offers lessons. The research shows us a way forward. The only question remaining is whether we have the courage and wisdom to act. The children of the Northern Territory and their children will judge us by what we do today. We can be the generation that prepared for the climate impacts that we cannot avoid, or we can be the one that left them defenceless against foreseeable catastrophe.

I urge all members to support this motion. The science is clear: the impacts are accelerating, and the need for adaptation planning is urgent. This is not about solving climate change; this is about surviving it. This is about ensuring that when the next heatwave hits, our most vulnerable community members have somewhere cool to shelter; when the next flood comes, our infrastructure can cope; and when insurance becomes unaffordable, we have strategies to protect our economy.

The time for wishful thinking is over. The time for basic preparedness is now.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this motion to the Assembly. Climate change is one of the greatest long-term challenges facing our planet. It is a shift in global temperatures and weather patterns that is already being felt around the world.

When we talk about anthropogenic climate change, we are referring to changes caused by human activity, primarily through the release of greenhouse gases into the Earth's atmosphere. This is not a challenge that respects borders; it is a global issue that demands a global response. That is why countries around the world have come together through international treaties and national commitments to limit emissions and build resilience.

In Australia the Labor government has committed to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and the Australian Government is expected to announce its 2035 target next month.

In the Northern Territory, while we contribute just 5% of Australia's total emissions and Australia contributes less than 2% of global emissions, our emissions profile is unique, and our approach must be as well. Nearly 45% of our emissions come from the energy category, and a further 40% from what is known as land use change and forestry. This includes emissions from fires, often highly variable due to seasonal conditions, and climate-driven factors like fuel load and weather.

Much of our energy-related emissions are tied to our resource exports, which are vital to the Northern Territory economy. As we continue to grow this sector we must strike a careful balance between economic growth and our climate responsibilities.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to both; these goals do not need to be in competition. In fact, they can complement each other. That is the path we are pursuing. We will grow the economy and support national and global efforts to decarbonise. We will do this by:

- growing a low-emissions gas industry, including low-carbon gas from the Beetaloo Sub-basin for local use and export—in states like Victoria some 60% of energy production is still fuelled by coal
- supporting emissions abatement such as electrification and carbon capture and storage
- the beneficial use of appraisal gas, ensuring that those emissions can be captured
- leveraging our natural advantages to develop and export renewable energy
- using our geological formations to store carbon for Australia and international partners with limited abatement options
- accelerating the extraction and processing of critical minerals essential to the global clean energy transition; some 130 kilometres north of Alice Springs we are seeing this with the development of the Arafura Resources project for rare earths.

As the Territory grows we may see emissions rise in the short term, but by deploying emissions reduction technologies of scale we can help reduce emissions not just here but across Australia and beyond.

Our largest emitters like Santos and INPEX already have their own emissions-reduction commitments and are taking significant steps forward. INPEX, for example, recently received major project status for its carbon capture and storage joint venture in the Bonaparte Gulf just west of Darwin.

These globally significant investments highlight the Northern Territory's strategic position in the world's decarbonisation efforts. As a government, our role is to support these efforts by providing a clear, supported policy and regulatory environment and by removing duplication where possible.

That is why the Northern Territory Government has established a dedicated unit within the Department of Mining and Energy to develop a world-class regulatory framework for carbon capture and storage. At the same time, the Northern Territory Geological Survey is working to identify suitable formations for long-term CO_2 storage.

We also have legislation in place to ensure climate impacts are considered as part of our environmental approval process under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*. Greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks must be assessed for all significant development proposals. The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority independently oversees this process and has recently updated its guidance on the assessment of greenhouse gas emissions.

I emphasise that this guidance was developed by the NT EPA without government involvement. It reflects the NT EPA statutory independence and its recognition of the Commonwealth safeguard mechanism and the need to avoid regulatory duplication.

At the same time, our government is taking steps to better understand the risks climate change pose to the Territory. The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment is undertaking several initiatives, including a first-class climate risk assessment for the Northern Territory, an internal review of climate risks of the department's own operations and contribution to a national climate risk assessment and a national adaptation plan being led by the Australian Government.

In collaboration with the Bureau of Meteorology we are also exploring future water security risks, which will inform a more detailed NT-wide approach to climate adaptation. The Northern Territory's own climate risk assessment focused on how climate change could affect our economic sustainability; the security of essential resources like food, water and energy; the health and wellbeing of our communities; our natural ecosystems and built environment infrastructure; and our preparedness for natural disasters.

Once the national assessments are finalised we will compare the findings to shape the Territory's own strategic response. To support this work I have directed DLPE to provide advice on our whole-of-government climate policy, which aligns with our priorities to rebuild the economy and restore the Territory lifestyle.

The Northern Territory has a unique role to play in Australia and the world's transition to a low-emissions future. Our contribution may be small in absolute terms, but our strategic importance and natural advantages place us at the heart of the global solution. We can and will grow the Territory's economy while helping to drive down emissions here and overseas and will continue to support innovation, enable investment and take seriously our responsibilities to protect the Northern Territory's future for our communities, industries and environment.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for providing members with the Quarterly Essay by Joelle Gergis; I had a short read whilst sitting in the Chamber and will endeavour to read more of that.

I will amend this motion in the spirit of trying to reach a consensus. I will give other members a chance to speak on the amendment should they wish. I want to find common ground in regard to the Member for Nightcliff's motion.

I move that we omit all words after 'that this Assembly' and insert the following words:

- acknowledges the scientific evidence on climate change

- recognises that, with a changing climate, the Northern Territory will increasingly be impacted by more extreme weather patterns

- recognises the work that the Northern Territory Government is doing to mitigate these risks to reduce the impacts on our economic sustainability; the security of essential resources like food, water and energy; the health and wellbeing of our communities; our natural ecosystems and built environment; and our preparedness for natural disasters.

I look forward to hearing further contributions.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I support the Member for Nightcliff's motion about climate change adaptation and mitigation. I thank the member for bringing this important motion to the Chamber.

I hope that the government will look at the issues raised and go back to its departments to ensure that in 2025 we are working on real climate change solutions.

Out on country we can see and feel the effects of climate change. We know the seasons, the fires, the rain, the plants and the hunting grounds. We know the rhythm of seasons.

Across Australia and the world we have seen climate disasters. In the Northern Territory we have seen significant floods and fires. Millions of hectares of land have been burnt. I have seen the fire burning in the middle of the Arafura Swamp for weeks on end. I saw the buffalo dying from thirst because of the heat.

Our communities have an increased need for air conditioning, and many families struggle to pay for power. Some households are paying close to $2,000 per quarter for their electricity. When the power goes off, people are at risk of health issues, young children and the elderly are at risk of heat-related issues and all the food in the fridge and freezer is spoilt.

Rising sea levels are a great concern for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In Milingimbi many houses are just above sea level, so this is concerning for the future of this community. With big tides we see the water come closer, so we can see and feel the changes that have come with climate change.

In the Northern Territory this is an enormous threat to everyone because if we do not act, this place may become unliveable. The government talks about Territory lifestyle so much, but is it a lifestyle that you want to see continue, or is it something that is just for now—just for this generation and no-one else?

This may not seem like an issue; you may think, 'I will just move somewhere cooler when it gets too hot'. However, Aboriginal people who are still living on our country do not want to become climate refugees because our governments and our communities did not take action together.

This motion states many ways that this government can address the climate crisis. I want to see the government taking action and being vocal about what is being done for the future generations of the Northern Territory.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights gave a statement in 2023 stating:

> *Recent scientific reports suggest that temperatures in the Northern Territories could make the region uninhabitable for humans. Despite that, petrochemical and oil and gas industries are lining up massive projects in the region. This threatens to make Darwin and the region a climate change sacrifice zone.*

The Northern Territory should not be a sacrifice zone. First Nations people still living on our country do not want to lose our country. This government, the federal government and big-profit companies are making decisions that put everyone at risk.

Doctors from the Northern Territory travelled to Canberra in 2023 to protest fracking in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. They stated:

> *There is certainly no safe way to frack the Beetaloo Basin or process gas at Middle Arm so close to the population of Darwin.*

This followed a letter signed by 45 paediatricians connected to the NT who called for an end to fracking in the Beetaloo because of the climate change-related health concerns for people living close to fracking wells.

Larrakia elder Eric Fejo stated:

> *When we are talking about the health impacts of Middle Arm, we cannot exclude the voices of traditional owners, the first people of the lands this project effects, and the impacts it has on their health …*

It is important that the government is consulting with Aboriginal elders and leaders so that our custodianship and responsibility to care for country can be carried out.

I call on this government to consider the legacy that it leaves the Northern Territory. We must look at sustainable ways to build the NT economy that protect our environment, and partnerships with First Nations people are an essential part of this.

I support this motion and I am pleased to be a part of a discussion about the serious concerns relating to climate change.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

The science is clear: the Northern Territory is being exposed to more extreme weather. We are living with extreme heat more frequently. Bushfires are starting earlier in the season and are more intense. Flooding is more severe, and its impacts are being felt more widely. I was at Borroloola last week. We had a look at the markings on the trees, and that was a lot of water.

When the former Labor government was in power we asked Territorians what we could do as a government to protect our beautiful landscape, waterways and native flora and fauna. What we received from communities, individuals and organisations was demand for strong action; legislated climate targets, not vague goals; renewable energy investments; solar storage and EVs; transparency on emissions; and support for households and councils to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We support this motion because it reflects what Territorians wanted when we consulted them. Territorians asked for better engagement on climate change across communities, identification of risks, embedding climate planning into budgets and projects and protecting the most vulnerable through housing upgrades and cooling hubs.

Territorians are demanding leadership from their government on climate change, yet the government is doing the opposite. I will highlight the backwards steps this government has taken in its first 12 months in power. It:

- backflipped and abandoned the election promise of a 43% emissions reduction
- dropped the climate change portfolio from Cabinet
- scrapped renewable targets
- weakened environmental safeguards with its Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill
- rammed through the Territory Coordinator legislation
- ripped funding from the Environment Centre and the Arid Lands Environment Centre, thereby silencing community voices and advocacy groups to avoid accountability
- labelled any Labor initiative regarding climate change a ‘pet project’.

By the way, those pet projects included the passing of the *Environment Protection Act 2019*, a modern, science-based framework to ensure developments are properly assessed, Aboriginal voices are heard and projects are ecologically sustainable.

We support our natural resources being used effectively to help the Territory reach its greatest potential, but it must not come at the expense of our environment, lifestyle or communities. We listened to the evidence, experts and the community before we looked at investing in our natural resources, reassuring Territorians that this beautiful place we call home can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Earlier this week at the Bush Summit the former CLP Chief Minister Adam Giles shared his view on climate change, being that Australia should withdraw from the Paris Agreement because it hinders investment. The

planet is on the verge of a climate crisis, and while countries all over the world are acting before it is too late, this former Chief Minister, whom the current Chief Minister served under, said that the government should value development at all costs, including the cost of our kids' futures. That is the DNA of this CLP government—deny the evidence, expert advice and research.

To be fair, we know that the government loves the beauty that the Territory offers locals and visitors. This morning we listened to members on both sides speak about the benefits of Silkwood, with the Member for Goyder even saying that it is God's country because of its hot springs, waterfalls and bushlands.

The motion before us is not symbolic; it is essential. Embedding climate risks into budgets and project planning is how we protect communities from worsening heat, flooding and cyclones. Housing upgrades, cooling hubs and health preparedness are how we keep vulnerable Territorians safe. Legislated targets and investment in renewables are how we create jobs, secure cheaper energy and make the NT a renewable energy powerhouse.

The government's record is clear: it dropped the portfolio, weakened the safeguards and ignored the voices of Territorians who demand urgent action.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I strongly support the original motion on climate change adaptation and mitigation for the Northern Territory. I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this motion to the floor and for her rigorous research and generosity in sharing information with everyone in this Chamber. This is what we should be doing in this House—understanding the best information we have to make the best laws we can for the people and country we are responsible for.

I did not get a book because I borrowed one from the Parliamentary Library, which I highly recommend to people; if you want to get good books, they are there.

The science is clear, and the minister referenced that today. Anthropogenic global warming is caused by human activity, and it is happening now. It is not a problem for a future generation; it is impacting our people, economy and environment today.

Across the Territory we are already seeing the evidence, with rising temperatures, longer and more intense heatwaves, prolonged droughts, sea level rise, more destructive cyclones, unpredictable flooding, the spread of tropical diseases and shrinking habitats for our plants and animals.

I appreciate that the minister's amendment to this motion has retained the commitment to acknowledging the scientific evidence and recognising that the Northern Territory will be increasingly impacted by this. That is welcomed. However, the removal of any commitment to action undermines the intent of this motion. I wish to express in the strongest possible words that we are facing an urgent problem and must commit to real action. This is not a motion to congratulate the CLP for what it is doing; it is a motion about what we all need to do now, together.

We just heard from the Member for Mulka about the real effects of the climate crisis on his communities. These weather events and this climate crisis are not just a matter of discomfort and the cleanup costs we might face; people die in heatwaves, particularly with the extreme heat and humidity where we live. As climate change intensifies, fuelled by this government's love affair with the gas industry, more people will die from heat-related illness. These are preventable deaths if we act urgently to prevent future climate change.

When we look away and say, 'This does not matter' or 'Good on us; we are doing enough', we are saying that it is okay for children to struggle in unbearable heat, for communities to be flooded, for farms to fail, for our environment to collapse, for First Nations people to be turned into climate refugees on their own country and for our future to be mortgaged to multinationals' profit. Ignoring climate change in this way is like watching your house catch fire while arguing over who should hold the hose. It is like leaving a child in a room when the temperature is steadily rising and hoping that they will be okay.

This low-level denial of saying, 'Yes, it exists, but we are doing enough', is not a shield; it is a risk to every Territorian. The Australian Security Leaders Climate Group, including retired Defence leaders and experts like Ian Dunlop and Jane Holloway, warn that Darwin and northern Australia are approaching near unliveable conditions under projected warming.

Wet-bulb temperature is a term I have just learned. It is a measure of heat stress conditions, including temperature and humidity, because the body finds it more difficult to cool down with higher levels of humidity, and at some level of heat and humidity the human body can no longer cool itself down and its internal temperature rises uncontrollably. These temperatures exceed thresholds for human survival. The projections from these experts are that in the Northern Territory they will rise above what is tolerable and survivable for all of us. These are not abstract warnings; they are real, and they are here now.

It is important to acknowledge that when we talk about one or two degrees of warming, we are talking about the average change in temperature across the country. Tropical and equatorial climates like the Northern Territory will experience the extremes of that range, with temperatures in climates like ours pushing the limits of human adaptation and liveability. To be clear: we will not be able to live here.

The Australian Security Leaders Climate Group warned that Darwin and great swathes of northern Australia are in the near-unliveable condition zones for projections of 2.7°C in global warming, which we are on track to hit. Leaders are concerned about this in part because so many of our Defence and strategic assets are stationed here and climate change now presents a Defence and security risk to the whole country. That should be of concern to all of us, but I am also concerned about it because my friends, family and the community I represent live here.

To this government, which prioritises short-term profits, gas and mining above community safety, no corporate profit will protect Territorians from a hotter, drier, more volatile climate. The industries you champion will also face the consequences of rising temperatures and extreme weather.

We cannot drill or dig our way out of this crisis. Our environment is the foundation of our livelihoods, culture and future. That is why the Member for Nightcliff's motion is about responsible leadership. The Member for Nightcliff said that this is not a radical motion.

In the Northern Territory we have an obligation to mitigate the impacts of climate change, create resilient communities and plan for the future. This is a chance for the government to demonstrate that it is committed to doing that and to show that it is here for Territorians, not for international profits.

The motion calls for a comprehensive adaptation strategy that is evidence based, community led and inclusive. Consultation must extend across all sectors—urban, rural, Indigenous, non-Indigenous, government, business and community groups—because climate change affects us all.

The motion rightly emphasises the importance of identifying key risks to our people, infrastructure, economy and the environment and developing practical, costed strategies to address them. It includes ensuring that the most vulnerable children, elders, remote communities and people living in inadequate housing are supported to adapt to a hotter and more extreme climate, because that is what we are facing.

That means things like housing upgrades to improve energy efficiency, access to reliable and free cooled spaces and support to help communities cope during heatwaves and disasters. We must ensure that climate risks are embedded in planning for all major public projects and in every government budget. Roads, schools, hospitals and housing must all be designed with the changing climate in mind. Investing in resilient infrastructure now is far more cost effective than waiting for disaster to strike.

We are aware that we do not have unlimited money in the Territory, and we cannot afford to waste it. We do not want to spend big on disaster recovery we could have prevented. Every dollar we spend must be spent wisely with the long-term safety and prosperity of Territorians in mind.

Indigenous Territorians have been managing and adapting to environmental change for tens of thousands of years. Traditional knowledge of land, water, fire and seasonal patterns must be central to our climate adaptation strategies. Too often, government planning ignores this wisdom, yet it is a critical resource in managing bushfires, preserving biodiversity and protecting sacred sites.

Indigenous-led climate initiatives are successful, from sustainable land management to renewable energy projects, like Original Power, supporting remote communities like Borroloola to set up solar microgrids. They must be fully supported, funded and integrated into broader climate planning.

This motion is also about accountability. The amendment says that we recognise the work the Northern Territory Government is doing, but recognition is not enough. Territorians need to know their government is taking climate change seriously, that there is a clear plan and that funds and resources are directed to measures that will protect lives, livelihoods and the environment.

We cannot rely on short-term fixes. We need transparency, measurable outcomes and long-term commitments. In fact, our lives depend on it. Nowhere is the disconnect between climate rhetoric and reality clearer than a place the Member for Drysdale talked about in this Chamber earlier, Lee Point, known to Larrakia people as Binybara. Lee Point is a matter of huge concern to people across my electorate. It is consistently raised with me, and it would do them a disservice if I did not address what the Member for Drysdale said.

In a strange twist of logic, the Member for Drysdale said that the opposition to the destruction of Lee Point was the cause of our housing crisis. People protesting against destroying Lee Point are also people who care about housing. To set these two things up against each other is, frankly, inaccurate and unrepresentative.

Just so people know, the vast majority of housing proposed at Lee Point will be priced at more than $850,000 a year. This is in no way affordable housing, and the housing designs are in no way appropriate for the environment we are living in with extreme weather conditions. This proposed development will go nowhere towards addressing our housing crisis.

It is not only environmentally damaging; it is economically unviable. It is building housing in an area where there is no infrastructure, roads, schools, healthcare, public transport or services. This will create more barriers, not fewer. The housing crisis is also a crisis of liveable communities, not just bricks and mortar.

Environmental costs translate to economic costs. In the case of Lee Point, the natural wetlands, bushlands and coastal ecosystems provide flood protection, storm surge buffers and water filtration. Destroying them may save on initial construction costs, but future taxpayers will bear the cost of flood damage, storm repairs and ecosystem restoration.

Natural capital is expensive to replace once it is lost. The minister said this morning that one thing you can never get more of is land.

We risk losing tourists and visitors. Lee Point is part of Darwin's unique coastal lifestyle, attracting visitors from across the world for walking, birdwatching and family recreation. Development will reduce access to public spaces and diminish Darwin's appeal as a tourism destination. Fewer tourists mean less revenue for local businesses, cafes and service providers.

Instead of investing in existing urban areas for housing, which is cheaper, faster and more sustainable, developing Lee Point means extending roads, electricity, water, sewerage and underground infrastructure onto previously undeveloped land. These costs are significant, and ongoing maintenance will fall to the public.

Coastal development of flood-prone, cyclone-exposed areas increases insurance premiums, risk of disaster recovery spending and economic vulnerability. Protecting natural buffers now avoids these costs for communities and governments in the future.

Prioritising the Lee Point development diverts resources from affordable and public housing projects that could directly help those in urgent need, meaning the economy suffers from ongoing housing stress, overcrowding and associated social costs.

Member for Drysdale, I appreciate that you want to see more housing built—me, too—but let us build it in a way that meets our housing needs and does not have huge unnecessary economic, social, cultural and environmental costs.

To talk a tiny bit more about Lee Point, this stretch of coastal woodland in Darwin's north is ecologically rich, culturally sacred and increasingly rare. It is home to threatened species. It is an important habitat for migratory shorebirds, and it holds immense spiritual and historical significance to the Larrakia people.

Yet, in the midst of a climate crisis, the government has supported bulldozers ripping through native vegetation to build houses that could be built elsewhere in less sensitive, more appropriate and less significant places.

If we cannot protect a known biodiversity hotspot on sacred land in our capital city, how can we pretend we are taking climate change seriously? What does adaptation mean if not defending our ecological resilience and building housing in a way that protects that, our economy and our Territory lifestyle—everything this government says it cares about?

What is happening at Lee Point is an example of poor planning, failed consultation and a lack of long-term thinking. It shows us that without strong climate governance, precious ecosystems will be sacrificed, cultural rights will be ignored and climate resilience will be eroded for short-term development that will not solve our housing crisis and will cost all of us in the long term.

We have a chance to turn things around. We have heard that it is late in the piece. Anyone who reads any scientific or other information or the book that the Member for Nightcliff has provided knows that we are running out of time. We need to act urgently. We need to remember what is at stake.

The next five years will shape the Northern Territory forever. We are barrelling towards the end of the critical decade. It appears from the minister's amendment that there is no plan for the future except to keep going as we are. It is just not good enough.

The choice is ours in this Chamber. We can continue to say it is business as usual; we can leave future Territorians to deal with worsening heatwaves, unpredictable floods and food and water insecurity; or we can act now with courage, evidence and care to build resilient and thriving communities, protect our unique environment and ensure a safe and sustainable future for all Territorians.

When my kids were in kindergarten there was a poster on the wall that said, 'The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit'. That is what this motion is about. We are being asked to think beyond ourselves and the electoral term and to take responsibility for the future of our communities, economy and environment.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for her work. I note that the Member for Braitling has moved an amendment to the motion, but I want to speak on the general topic and the details of the motion.

As previous contributors to this debate have said, climate change is one of the greatest threats to our planet and our children's future. Each of us in the Chamber has a responsibility to ensure the risks and impacts of climate change are of the utmost priority as we go about our work. The Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050, released by our former Labor government in 2020, provided a way forward for our jurisdiction's response to climate change.

It was a comprehensive guide of how we can continue to maximise Territorians' wellbeing socially, economically and environmentally whilst ensuring a strong response to the risks and opportunities of climate change. It had four key policy objectives: net zero emissions by 2050, a target aligned with the Australian Government and every other state and territory in Australia; building a resilient Territory in the face of climate change; identifying opportunities for a low-carbon future; and ensuring all Territorians were informed and involved in the journey towards net zero.

At the time significant work was underway across government towards a future marked by a low-carbon economy and a resilient climate. Unfortunately, that effort has likely stalled under the CLP government, which has well and truly broken its promises to Territorians to address an issue that is close to their hearts—climate change. The CLP walked back its commitment to the 43% emissions reduction by 2030 target, not that it told anyone it had done that; it was only revealed under sustained questioning during Estimates. The truth was uncovered through that process. It was a gammon commitment by the CLP anyway. At the least, it was walked back on when the CLP members were speaking about it, which showed that the CLP has some awareness that climate change is a real threat to our economy, communities and way of life.

We uncovered that it was a false commitment designed to buy a few votes that were quickly walked back on once the CLP came to government. It is a dangerous pattern of behaviour that is becoming a normal routine for the CLP. Let us not forget that the CLP also scrapped greenhouse gas emissions management in the Large Emitters Policy. This policy established a baseline for new and expanding projects to manage their emissions and contribute to our net zero emissions target. It was not a handbrake to development; it was a guideline for responsible development aligning with the expectations of developers in every jurisdiction in our country and community—the people we represent in this House.

When the former Labor government consulted with the community, including industry stakeholders, on how it wanted to respond to climate change, there were two elements: 94% of Territorians said that they wanted some form of emissions target; and 70% supported a zero-emissions target by 2050. That is right; a vast majority of Territorians, as well as stakeholders across industry, peak bodies, not-for-profits, education and research institutions and Aboriginal land management groups support an emissions target, action on climate change and accountability.

The CLP government's policy direction for climate change is irresponsible and indefensible. It flies in the face of community expectations for addressing the growing climate impacts being experienced across the Territory, the country and the world. There would be few industry representatives who do not recognise that we all have a responsibility to respond to this real threat.

The Territory Labor opposition supports the original motion by the Member for Nightcliff. It is sensible and allows the government to take stock of and track its climate change mitigation efforts. It builds on the work of the former Territory Labor government, which is much more than what has been proposed through the amended motion by the Member for Braitling, who is the Environment minister.

Here is some of the work already completed under the former Labor government's climate change strategy, which could be built on by the CLP should those opposite choose. I have already mentioned the scrapping of the Large Emitters Policy, but it is critical to tell Territorians what has happened under the Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050.

Experts have mapped the Territory's emission sources and analysed projected emissions. Where is that work, and is it being used to guide development? It would be great to hear from the government on that issue. It was informed by the work mentioned, and an emissions reduction strategy was well underway. The CLP needs to explain the status of that strategy. A Greenhouse Gas Emissions Offsets Policy to guide the application and administration of carbon offsets was developed and released before the 2024 Northern Territory election. Where is the work under the CLP government? These three key things would be a show of good will by the CLP government to inform Territorians of where that work is at.

Our Territory Labor team is passionate about seeing the Northern Territory thrive. We want to ensure that Territory businesses and industries are developed in a way that is supported across the community. We want to see economic prosperity for every Territorian, not just a few, which unfortunately is becoming the rhetoric of the CLP government.

Like other Territorians, we do not support development at any cost or cutting corners purely so it can be rubberstamped and celebrated as a timely achievement. If guidelines, policies, legislation or regulations are cut for the sake of a few days, weeks or months, this will not be done in the correct way that Territorians expect. We do not believe it should be at the cost of our environment or Territory children's futures.

The original motion by the Member for Nightcliff calls for climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience to be built into the work, routine and patterns of government. This should be the responsibility of the government, particularly regarding the diversity across our Territory landscapes—from the beautiful Top End and the humidity here to the country that you, Madam Speaker, call home in the Central Desert arid region. All of it should be thought of, respected and planned for when it comes to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

We owe this to the future generations of the Territory. It is incumbent on us all to do what we can now to mitigate the impacts of further climate change for the future of the Territory so we can call ourselves responsible and make sure we leave a legacy of prosperity and the wonderful outdoor lifestyle that we all enjoy.

We owe it to Territorians who are living with the impact of rising temperatures and more severe weather events. Remote Territorians in particular, like so many disadvantaged communities around the world, continue to bear the brunt of climate change.

It is incumbent on us to ensure we are investing in more resilient communities, with more resilient and climate-adapted infrastructure. I will give an example of this: some of the materials used in the remote housing program in the Northern Territory have changed over time, which is great; we have seen more products being used for insulation.

As the former Housing minister, I walked in to some houses in Alice Springs town camps in January or February that had just been built. You could walk in, with no air con or fans, and feel the coolness of those houses because of the change in construction materials being used under the remote housing program. Some of the insulation products being used are similar to those used for fridges, so you could physically feel the cooling in the roof.

Many people know it gets hot in the summertime in Alice Springs; for us Top Enders, that is the Wet Season. The CSIRO did a project a few years ago about the impact of the rising temperatures, particularly in the desert region around Alice Springs town camps. It monitored the movement and coolness of the air at

different times of the year, and in some places in Central Australia, house reading temperatures were close to 50°C. That is huge.

It gets a bit hotter in Katherine than Darwin. We get about 44°C sometimes, and you walk outside of the beautiful air con and it is like being hit with a hair dryer in the face. It can be warm in October and November. It is one of the three or four hottest places in the Northern Territory at that time of the year. Katherine, Ngukurr, Jabiru, Rabbit Flat and sometimes Bulman have a similar temperature in that time of year. In December and January Alice Springs and the Central Desert communities take over and are hot throughout summer.

That material being used in construction, providing comfort and liveability and trying to mitigate the risks of climate change in places that are traditionally hot and getting hotter, is extremely important for sustainability in the Territory.

Ignoring this impending crisis is unacceptable. Scrapping any semblance of an emissions target is not the only backwards step taken by this government when it comes to managing climate impacts and setting up the Territory for a greener future; the CLP has also ripped up our 50% renewables by 2030 target, which was put in place to provide accountability and responsibility of government. The CLP has lied to Territorians about its reasons for doing so.

The CLP tried to claim that it was just too expensive and quoted a ludicrous figure in the billions. This is not true; it is nonsense and a further sign of a government that is not willing to take responsibility and do the hard work on such an important issue. Although the CLP government stopped short of denying climate science, it has no intention of doing anything to reduce the impacts of climate change for Territorians. That will be a disastrous legacy. It is blatant and wilful ignorance. There is no way of keeping with the views of the vast majority of Territorians if the government's members bury their heads in the sand.

Many of the points that the Member for Nightcliff's motion focused on were already in train under the former Labor government. You would think despite the change in government that the new government would still represent Territorians and that the idea of such an important issue like mitigating the impacts of climate change would be seen as a baton being handed from one team to another to continue that work. Unfortunately, that is not what the CLP government has done.

Significant work had been achieved. Much more is still to be done and should be underway, but, unfortunately, we will not see that with this CLP team at the helm. The stark contrast is that the CLP is taking us backwards when it comes to building a strong, resilient, prosperous, healthy future for the environment and our children. It is unacceptable. On behalf of Territorians, the Territory Labor opposition implores the CLP government to do the right thing, continue to work towards net zero emissions and make sure that the future of the Territory is safeguarded for many generations to come.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will make a brief contribution on this matter. I do so, picking up on the sentiment of the Leader of the Opposition's statement about keeping the baton going rather than dropping the baton. I decided to make a brief impromptu contribution because I see great value in what everyone has said and more good and commonality in it than we might think there is. I see a good-faith effort by the minister to amend this motion to express a position that we can all get behind.

There were thoughtful contributions from everyone in this House, none more so than by the Member for Nightcliff who moved the motion. I extend my gratitude to the member for putting time and work in to explain their position on the climate science, well supported by academic literature and constituency views and not in a histrionic, melodramatic fashion but in a balanced, reasonable and considered parliamentary fashion.

I, likewise, saw the immediate, considered response from the government that asserts that we are not all climate deniers; we care about the climate and are committed, as the Leader of the Opposition alluded to, not to dropping the baton.

I will be clear to all my parliamentary colleagues: I implore everyone to think seriously, carefully and sincerely about voting on this amendment to the motion together because it signals to the Territory that we care, we believe in something common and—although we might disagree on the degree and speed of action that needs to be taken, the possible ramifications and the consequences in their fine-grain detail—we fundamentally do not disagree about the fact that this issue matters. We all should get behind it.

Rather than dropping the baton—or worse still, what we tend to do a lot around here, which is picking up the baton and trying to beat each other up with it—we should try to keep the baton going by passing it along

today. There is wisdom and much in common in what the mover of this motion and the minister in charge of this area said today. I ask you all to seriously give this consideration.

There have been more assertive and critical positions put forward by other members. There is a spectrum of concern when it comes to climate change. It is pretty clear that some people think that it spells imminent catastrophe and doom; others think that it may be a slow burn; and some worry that, in the race to try to solve problems for the long term, we will compromise prospects for current generations.

The challenge is trying to moderate a position and move forward in a measured way, because the reality of it is, as the mover noted, the horse has bolted to some extent; it has definitely bolted. I can speak to that with a limited amount of authority as somebody who was situated within the Oxford University Centre for the Environment for decades-plus and was surrounded by climate scientists, geophysicists, economic modellers and the people who were at the genesis of carbon capture and storage technology.

Carbon capture and storage technology is a good place to dig into this. The fact is that it is contested science. Some people think it is not much more successful than trying to trap wind in your pants, frankly. Other people will tell you that it has been successfully utilised to mitigate the effects of climate change if the geology and conditions are right and if you put in the work to build facilities. That is what the minister is pointing to.

In our government—which is carrying the baton from the last government to a large extent and the work done by the public service for all governments—carbon capture and storage is a commitment for our Department of Mining and Energy. Carbon capture and storage and innovation to try to make sure we do the right thing by people to mitigate climate change is still part of a shared commitment. It is extraordinarily important to recognise that fact. Let us not lose sight of that and that this side has unabashedly, unambiguously expressed that it is backing the Beetaloo Sub-basin and gas development. I freely declare that I am pro-sustainable resource development, whether it is mining or gas. For me, it is important that things add up economically. That is the baseline contingent for me.

Let us remember that the former government was also behind the direction we are going with the Beetaloo development, but slightly less clear and more ambiguous at times. We are simply carrying the baton and the torch in that regard. We are likewise carrying the baton to try to give carbon capture and storage technology the best possible chance it has to work in the Northern Territory.

Good points were made by the mover and the minister. There is so much in common here. I am trying hard to build a bridge. I am saying to all of you that this is a day for us to band together and do something good for future generations in the Northern Territory and not to let the baton drop. It is easier to say, ‘You are not trying hard enough’ or ‘You are trying too hard and getting in the way of progress and development’, but this is a real chance to agree on something constructive and productive. I say to the mover of the motion that if you think about the words expressed clearly by the minister, there is much more in common than you realise.

The original motion is detailed and provides specificity, which is a good thing; however, the thing with specificity is that it necessarily also becomes prescriptive. To be clear, I speak in support of my government, the minister and the amendment because I think that we should vote on this today. We should not throw the baby out with the bathwater, move to divisions and just indicate again that we cannot agree and move forward on anything; we should at least try to mutually acknowledge that we want the best for the Northern Territory, albeit the way we want to do it might vary ever so slightly.

Members of the Assembly, look at the minister’s amendment. The first thing he says is that we acknowledge the scientific evidence on climate change. We live in a time of rampant climate denialism. We are living in a time when information is being picked and chosen on the extremes. We are starting to get to the point where we cannot agree on basic objective facts; we cannot find anything in common anymore. This is a bold, brave and genuine step by a minister to say, ‘Yes, we have heard plenty to say that we are pro-sustainable resource development, but we acknowledge the scientific evidence on climate change’. I implore the opposition and the crossbenchers to think carefully about it; do not dismiss it.

Unlike amendments moved that unfortunately frustrate the intent of the motion, that is not what happened here. Yes, the amended motion will be a simplified version of the original motion, but the spirit and intent of it truly remains the same.

The first point is that we acknowledge the scientific evidence on climate change. I acknowledge the scientific evidence on climate change, and the minister and government I belong to, in expressing this thought, is saying that it believes it as well.

Even more importantly, the second part is we recognise that, with a changing climate, the Northern Territory will be increasingly impacted by more extreme weather patterns. That is a sincere statement and a step forward. There are people in federal parliament who will not commit to that and are genuinely moving total denialism packages, running internal gymnastics that are politically insane, fractious and not bringing Australians together at all. That is a federal problem, not our problem.

We have a chance as parliamentarians of the Northern Territory to genuinely agree on something important, not with a division, and to say that a Greens member who believes in Greens things—which is what Greens do—has said that we should be seriously worried about the environment. Great; that is fine. It turns out that some of us are less worried about it, but we are still worried and do not deny it; we want to acknowledge it.

Recognising that climate change may have geographically disproportionate effects in the Northern Territory compared with down south is huge. I commend my learned colleague, the minister, for being brave enough to say that. Quite frankly, there are Environment ministers in a lot of other jurisdictions at the moment who do not have the guts, gumption, brains or balls to do exactly that; I think he deserves credit for that.

I did not intend to speak on this matter because I fully expected it not to be as collegiate as it has been so far. I implore us all, as a result, to take the time to think carefully about not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. This is an opportunity to say that we will not drop the baton—as the Leader of the Opposition intimated might happen—or take the baton and beat each other up with it, as we sometimes do. We will move it forward even if a little slower, an inch at a time, rather than getting on the good ship Greta Thunberg.

There is a way forward for us, and the more we can do cooperatively in this parliament, the better the chances are that we can move forward. I am not an Independent; I believe in the major party system and the fact that we have to, at the end of the day, agree to disagree sometimes. We also have to learn how to compromise. I want us to reach, as a parliament, the point when we can collectively compromise and agree that we are not all happy about everything, but we are happy enough with where we have landed on something that we can take it to the federal government together, put our foot down and say, ‘This is what the Northern Territory wants and needs’.

Leadership is not just the job of the person sitting second from the front; it is the job of everyone in this Chamber. Everyone in this Chamber has an opportunity to be a leader, be a statesperson and get behind our institutions and the government of the day. Just in the same way that convention dictates that public servants will execute the agenda of the day, we too carry forward a shared collective responsibility.

I draw on specific points that have been brought up. The motion is not self-congratulatory in the slightest. It is recognising the hard work of public servants and the NT Government, past and present, whose work is ongoing and deserving of our support. I had a tiny part in my stint working in the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, where I was part of the climate mitigation strategy consultation stuff. I went to maybe two or three day-long sessions, and other people had been doing it for months or years and continue to do that work. That is the work the minister pointed out today, which we should be supporting.

For the sake of our public servants, the people who are putting in the work and trying to make this happen, we should collectively be saying, ‘Okay, we are not entirely in agreement about the scale or the speed of the problem, but we are in agreement about the fact there is a problem and will work on it together’.

I will not speak to the mover’s original motion because it is not fruitful. Instead, I will speak on the minister’s words and re-emphasise important things he said, which I implore you all to consider in the back of your mind in the spirit of being collegiate, cooperative and parliamentarian-like.

I am not saying that you are not entitled to disagree; you may disagree on a matter of principle if you feel that is the best way forward. I chose to get up when I was not going to say anything about this simply because this is an opportunity for us to work together for the greater good for future generations.

Anthropogenic climate change is human-induced stuff. There is a range of actors in this country who will not even admit that part. The minister has been good enough to lead with that statement and say that we are referring to changes caused by humans. We acknowledged that they are caused by humans and, more importantly, that it is not a challenge that respects borders—that was his phrase.

We know we have a part to play, but we also have a sense of scale about how important our part is versus how important everybody else’s part is. The minister noted that Australia is committed to net zero emissions by 2050, and so is this government. He noted that, which is a bold and important statement for us to get behind. The government of the day has an agenda for the greater good. The perspective that we require is

exactly what the minister has provided. He pointed out that the reality is the Northern Territory contributes only 5% of total emissions and Australia less than 2%.

Member for Nightcliff, I do not want the perfect to be the enemy of the good. We want to work on this and will, maybe not at the speed and scale the Member for Nightcliff would like, but they had the good sense to bring this to the House. The member has done a kind thing in giving us all a copy of literature, which is in good faith. This is not the only thing that could be read in this area, but it is a great place to start, and for many people here it may be the first thing they have read about this; it may not. The point is that the member has, in good faith, brought something to the House. The minister has, in good faith, said that we do not want something quite as prescriptive and descriptive as this statement, but we, in principle, want to get behind this and band together on something.

I do not want to cherrypick things from the Member for Mulka, but the bottom line is that he frequently asks us to work together. We can work together on these issues and carefully strike a balance between economic growth and climate responsibilities. That is what has been alluded to.

I hate to break it to you, but the economy is not resolved yet; there are small fledgling signs of positive movement, but look at the figures that came out today on state final demand. The fact is we will not get out of this tomorrow. We still need to develop, grow, build, attract beneficial investment and encourage innovation. We have sectors and projects in the pipeline that will contribute to emissions but are a part of that process, so we should be supporting those projects while thinking about mitigation and supporting what we have to work with by carefully balancing our economic growth and climate responsibilities.

We need to support emissions abatement technologies and renewable energy, which is exactly what the minister committed to. He said that we will support emissions abatement technology such as electrification, carbon capture and storage and the beneficial use of appraisal gas. That is a positive step in the right direction, as well as maintaining a commitment to renewable energy. We have a crazy amount of gas and sun; for the millionth time I reiterate that we will be well placed to do the best we can to utilise both.

As acknowledged today, our largest emitters have their own emission reductions targets. That has been asserted by the minister, as well as the fact that the NT Geological Survey, which has long done great impartial work in the Northern Territory Public Sector and still has great expertise, is working to identify suitable formations for carbon capture and storage. We have the EPA, which we still allow to independently go along with its work. We are looking to protect our natural ecosystems.

Our contribution to all this may be small, but it is still significant. It is important that we work together on this to support innovation. I do not think that multi-partisanship happens often here, but this is a chance for us to do that. Let us do something together for the greater good. Please do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I ask everyone in the House to seriously consider their responsibility to future generations and the present generation by signalling to the schoolkids who come in here every day that we can work together and support an amended motion that is sensible and carries forward the baton.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you to everyone who contributed to the debate. I acknowledge the Environment minister's amendment. Yes, unlike the previous amendment from the Attorney-General to my last motion, this amendment is on topic. I thank the minister for that. I appreciate that it retains recognition that the NT is increasingly impacted by more extreme weather events.

I hear you loud and clear, Member for Fong Lim, and I truly respect your desire for this Assembly to come together on something because it is something I also want. I respect that, and I guess I am torn. On one hand it does not matter what I do; the government has the numbers. Whenever I have a motion, if the government does not want it to go ahead, the motion does not go ahead. All the Member for Fong Lim's points are entirely accurate about the first two points being a big step, but the issue with the amendment for me is that there is no action, which is what my motion was about.

Dr Rahman: There is action already happening within the public service.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, do not interject.

Dr Rahman: It is my first one ever.

K McNAMARA: He does not interrupt often.

I do not want to just recognise. 'Recognise' feels like an empty word to me. The government says that it is all about action, and that was what my motion was about. I am trying to urge the government to do something—anything. It did not have to pick everything I put in my motion, but I wanted to hear something. The minister for Environment spoke for six minutes; that was it.

I raised a litany of serious and impending risks. If the government wants us to recognise the work, I would have liked to hear about the work. The minister could have used that entire time to tell me what work is being done to adapt and mitigate the risk of climate change, but we did not hear it. That is why I do not feel inclined to accept this amendment, even though I hold the same value of wanting us to come together on something. I think that this amendment still completely …

Dr Rahman: Vote for it and hear about it next time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, please.

K McNAMARA: Why could the government not just have voted for my original one? It is not asking for too much. All this amendment says is 'recognise the work the government is doing'. What work? If the government was already doing the work, I would not have to put up this motion.

Based on the six-minute speech from the Environment minister, I am not sure that he listened to anything I said. He kept speaking about growing the economy. The point I am trying to make is that climate change is the biggest risk to our economy; what is the government doing about that? We did not hear it. Just as in budget Estimates, this government could not say a single thing it is doing to mitigate the risk to the economy.

We also heard the minister repeat the same tired lines about emissions and gas. Just like every climate scientist around the country, I am still banging my head against a wall regarding this. The label 'low-emissions gas' was created by the gas industry and has no real meaning. There can be slightly less emissions than the mass emissions from coal, but the problem is there are large fugitive emissions with methane released during extraction, processing, storage and transportation. Look what has happened this week with Santos and the tank; it is exactly this issue.

The Environment minister will never say that methane is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide measured over 20 years. As Dr Joelle Gergis says, we can rest assured that it is still a highly destructive greenhouse gas. That was brought up when regarding carbon capture and storage. There are scientific rebuttals in Dr Gergis' book to almost every point the Environment minister made.

Regarding carbon capture and storage, UNEP reports that around 80% of pilot projects have failed over the last 30 years—some failing completely, and some failing by only managing to capture minute amounts of carbon, far below expectations. So far, carbon capture and storage has sequestered only 0.1% of global emissions each year, which is one-tenth of 1% of emissions. Obviously, I am not against attempting to draw down or sequester. The idea of CCS—yes; but we already have billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that we need to remove just to meet the Paris Agreement limit of 1.5°C alone. The issue of CCS for me is that the fossil fuel industry has hijacked it and is using it as an excuse to keep polluting.

Dr Rahman: Reclaim it with us.

K McNAMARA: I want to reclaim it. This is not how CCS must work; it cannot be used as an excuse to keep polluting. CCS has a role for sure, but we have to draw down what is already in the atmosphere. When members of the government repeat these gas industry lines about CCS being the saviour that can allow companies to keep polluting or that gas is low emissions, they may as well slap on a Santos T-shirt because they are just repeating the falsehoods of the gas industry.

I again recognise that the first two points of the amendment are perhaps a big step for the government. I am glad it did not cut that out, but I must stick to my guns and say that there is no action; there is nothing tangible that will come out of this to protect communities. I am not hearing anything. I will sit back and let the amendment go through if that will make everyone happy, but I am profoundly disappointed in the government's decision not to accept my motion or any element of it. It represented nothing more than basic preparedness for well-documented climate risks.

The Country Liberal Party chose to leave Territorians defenceless against threats that are not only foreseeable but already unfolding around us. Let me be clear about what has happened by denying my motion in full, without retaining any parts of it. The CLP has rejected a motion that asks for the bare minimum to assess climate risks and prepare our communities for impacts that credible scientific institutions confirm

are inevitable. This is not about ideology or politics; this is about the fundamental duty of any government to protect its citizens from known threats.

When cyclones approach our coast, we prepare evacuation plans. When floods threaten our communities, we build levees and warning systems. When bushfires rage, we deploy firefighters and create firebreaks. When scientists warn us that climate change will bring more intense cyclones, destructive floods and dangerous fire weather, the government chooses wilful blindness.

Dr Rahman: Not true.

K McNAMARA: I have heard you loud and clear, Member for Fong Lim, and I respect what you put down today. I do not think that the amendment goes anywhere near far enough to address my concerns or anything that was in my original motion. My motion was about action, but the supposed government of action is taking no real action to protect communities from climate change.

It is not just immoral negligence; it is economic vandalism. Every day this government delays adaptation planning, the costs mount. Infrastructure that could be climate-proofed today will be more expensive to retrofit tomorrow if it can be retrofitted at all. Communities that could be gradually prepared for change will instead face sudden catastrophic destruction. The insurance crisis is already upon us, with properties becoming uninsurable and banks facing systemic risk. Tourism operators watch their natural attractions degrade while this government offers no adaptation strategy to that industry; that was nowhere in the budget. Agricultural producers confront changing growing conditions without government support for climate-resilient farming practices.

I may be a Greens member, but I have a family farm in Victoria. I have cattle and a commercial orchard, so I know what it means to implement adaptations to mitigate risks to the livelihood of my family in an agricultural setting. It is on a much smaller scale than in the Territory; however, I am not just speaking out of nowhere. I know what this means, and we are not seeing any of it from this government.

By voting against my original motion, the government has chosen the most expensive possible path, which is crisis response rather than crisis prevention. It prefers to pay disaster-relief costs rather than invest in disaster preparedness. It is the economic equivalent of refusing to maintain roads and then complaining about the cost of emergency repairs. It sends a message about the government's priorities; if it will not plan for climate risks when the science is overwhelming, the impacts are accelerating and the solutions are achievable, when will it act? When Darwin floods? When remote communities become uninhabitable? When our health system is overwhelmed by heat-related illnesses?

The decision today reveals a government that governs by denial rather than evidence and by wishful thinking rather than responsible planning. This amendment is all about wishful thinking without anything concrete. It is betting Territorians' lives and livelihoods on the hope that decades of climate scientists are somehow wrong and that perhaps it will not be as bad as it will be. Future generations will look back on this moment and ask how parliamentarians could have such clear evidence of risk and choose to do nothing. They will ask how a government could claim to serve Territorians whilst leaving them unprepared for entirely predictable threats.

While this government abdicates its responsibility, the work of preparing our communities cannot stop. Local councils, community organisations, health services and individuals must now do what this government refuses to do: plan for climate reality. Every heatwave that tests our emergency services, every flood that damages inadequately protected infrastructure and every community forced to relocate due to rising sea levels will be a reminder of this government's failure to act when action was still possible.

The science is clear that the risks are real and the need for action is urgent. With this amendment, the government has failed.

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

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

PAPER TABLED
Members' Quarterly Fuel Transaction Report – April to June 2025

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Members' Quarterly Fuel Transaction Report for April to June 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Madam SPEAKER: Before we commence adjournment speeches, I acknowledge that there are a lot of people here for the acknowledgement of Chris Nathanael. I ask members who are not speaking in this condolence adjournment to wait until after those who are doing so have finished.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to an amazing Territorian, Chris Nathanael. It is a great honour to pay homage to this incredible man, who embodied the term 'true Territorian' and gave so much to our community.

Christopher Nathanael was born in Cyprus on 17 October 1942. He told the ABC's Matt Brann on *Country Hour* that he grafted his first tree at nine years of age in Cyprus, a mulberry tree, in his effort to copy his father. Even at such a young age he was a keen green thumb, and the legacy of his grafting is famous across the Territory. I bought one of his special prized black fig trees that he grafted onto Territory stock, and I have enjoyed more than a decade of beautiful figs thanks to Chris.

Chris' family came to Australia in 1950, and although he initially wanted to go to Geelong College, he ended up at Collingwood Tech. He believed he may have started earlier in horticulture had he gone to Geelong. Chris moved to Darwin in 1962, married, had two kids—Jocelyn and Phillip—worked hard and contributed to his community in various ways, from politics to service clubs. In his words, 'I never lost sight of the fact that I love to grow things'.

After Cyclone Tracy, he did not want to live in suburbia anymore, so the family moved to Bees Creek. It was there that his love of cultivating, creating and growing was realised on a much larger scale. It was hard work but nothing that Chris was not used to. He and his family steadily built Tropiculture Australia to become a world-renowned tropical breeding nursery and orchard.

Chris became an expert tropical horticulturalist and one of the Territory's most beloved local legends. From his use of old fish and chip oil as a plant fertiliser ingredient, which stank—it was really stinky; we used to buy it, and it was the best concoction ever, but it was not great to be around—to his crossbreeding and use of heavy root stocks to adapt citrus to local conditions, Chris had determination and creativity with his passion to match it.

Chris and Tropiculture's innovations have been widely recognised, including in namesake with the Nathanael clone, a thornless Calathea lime tree which is known and grown throughout the industry here, interstate and overseas. He knew his trees. I went to visit him when he was in palliative care, and he had a huge basket of fruits and different things in front of him. I was trying to explain to him something about a leaf I noticed in our backyard, and we ended up in quite the debate about whether I was right or wrong; I knew I was wrong because if he said I was, I thought, 'Oh my goodness, I am out of my depth'. He had this encyclopaedic knowledge about tropical fruit. I was not pulling the wool over his eyes, even in those last few weeks.

Chris laughingly called himself a bit of a fruit tree hugger—there you go, Member for Nightcliff. The fruits of his passion are proof of his dedication. Tropiculture became a supplier to retailers across WA, Queensland and New South Wales and was recognised as a centre of agricultural innovation.

The farm has also hosted *Gardening Australia*; *Landline*; popular chef Adam Liaw; and actor Paul Mercurio. The ABC's *Country Hour* has also been a frequent visitor at Tropiculture. As Chris reminisced with host Matt Brann earlier this year, any new ABC horticultural reporter started off with a walk through the orchard, and that was the best local education they could have had.

Chris was also a regular contributor to ABC local radio on the Saturday morning garden segment. I think we all have spent time listening to him on that show. He was popular, respected and mischievous. As long-time host Paul Dale told Matt Brann, 'I am still laughing about when Chris turned up at the Saturday gardening

show on World Naked Gardening Day wearing only a local tropical leaf that was not quite providing adequate coverage'.

Former Speaker Kezia Purick might have been celebrating; she used to like World Naked Gardening Day as well.

Chris explained, 'It was natural that you strip down, whether it was walking into the ABC or in your own garden. It was World Naked Gardening Day, so I decided I would pick two leaves—one for the front and one for the back—but let me tell you, it is not funny to have fig leaves on your tender parts. I itched for two days later, so I do not recommend fig leaves on the naked body, particularly the vital parts.'

Chris' advice on anything to do with tropical gardening is acknowledged by all as invaluable. I went to him with many photos of different things on my leaves or fruits and seeds that I did not know. Whether it was our rambutans or anything else in the garden, he knew it all. He was always available for people. I think that was the most incredible thing about Chris; despite running an incredibly successful operation and undertaking his research and development and all of the other things he was involved in, he had time for anyone who walked through the gate or picked up the phone to talk to him. It did not matter whether you were a novice, an expert, a commercial grower or a home gardener, he would spend the time needed to bring you up to speed. I never got there, but he tried hard.

He was a generous man known for his love of sharing knowledge and produce. I do not think anyone could visit Tropiculture without having to try the beautiful array of fruit that he would have there. We enjoyed bringing the kids and getting them to sample the amazing fruit he was growing.

The Fong Lim family fondly remember Chris dropping off his latest mangoes for them to try in years gone by. It was his way of thanking them after being given a cutting from the elephant tusk mango tree. Chris continued the deliveries year after year of delicious varieties—some commercial, some not—but always delivered to Norma and her girls with a, 'Just thought you might like to try these'.

So many of the tributes to Chris speak of his patient and generous nature. His tips were gospel among gardeners, experienced and novice alike.

As Ali Hayward, dedicated staffer at Tropiculture Australia said to Matt Brann, 'Chris's legacy lives on in the backyards of so many people. We all carry that wonderful knowledge that he instilled in us. He shamelessly promoted local and native plants and deservedly won acclamations, including being named by *Good Food* magazine as one of Australia's top 30 producers and given the mantle of godfather of tropical fruit', which is cool indeed.

It was not just his horticultural prowess that is recognised; Chris' service to the Royal Darwin Show saw him named Senior Steward of the Year. He remained active in many local community organisations, including having an enormous role to play in the church at Bees Creek.

Of course, his name is synonymous with his extraordinary pioneering efforts in tropical horticulture. It is safe to say that he was one of the first to start the education of the southerners about mangoes. As he told it, Tropiculture started sending mango gift boxes interstate more than 30 years ago when the fruit was little known or even appreciated. He said that when they first started sending them they kept getting phone calls saying, 'Hey, are these pawpaws? How do you eat these?' You can just imagine.

By the time Chris Nathanael passed away in June, Tropiculture Australia was host to more than 400 varieties of plants, including 27 types of mangoes, 27 varieties of banana, countless citrus and a burgeoning variety of avocados.

Chris was heavily involved in the Country Liberal Party. I have a lot to thank Chris for. He supported me even before day one. He was part of the preselection panel that picked me to run for the seat of Drysdale in 2012. I can tell Jocelyn, Phillip and the family that he never let me forget that—not for one day or moment. Every time I saw him he said, 'You know I was on your preselection panel?' I said, 'Yes, Chris; I remember. Thank you.'

His contribution to the party was so profound that he was awarded honorary life membership as well, which speaks volumes. I was just reflecting with Jocelyn earlier that the countless hours over the last 40-plus years he must have contributed are truly profound. We thank him on behalf of the party for everything he has done.

He was proud to see us win government in August last year. He was also thrilled to vote at the last federal election, which is the last time I saw him. It was good to see him being engaged and passionate about something to the end.

He was an incredible person; I have never met someone who had a bad or ill word to say about Chris because you could not. He was generous, kind, thoughtful, inquisitive, passionate and engaged in so many facets of Northern Territory life and the community.

To Jocelyn, Phillip and your families, friends and party members who are here tonight, I express our sincerest and most heartfelt condolences to all of you. It was a beautiful service at Bees Creek. I know Chris would be thrilled that we are recognising his contribution to the Northern Territory.

On behalf of our government, thank you for giving us the honour of recognising his lifelong contribution and legacy. He will never be forgotten. To end with a classic quote from Chris—which again was from *Country Hour*—'Keep growing, please'.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge Chris' family in the gallery and thank them for coming. I caught up with them earlier upstairs to chat about all things rural, as I have also been in the rural area my whole life.

Chris and his family established Tropiculture almost 50 years ago in Bees Creek. About 25 years ago my brother came home with a ute load of citrus trees, and I said, 'Pete, what are you doing with them?' He said, 'I am growing an orchard'. It turns out he went and got them from that farm, so we dug holes and planted them. It turns out that my brother was not a green thumb, but they lasted for a number of years. This just shows the sort of person Chris was, instilling what he knew in my brother and our family, so we had an orchard at our house for many years.

He was also a friend of my father, and they were both proud members of the rural area so they spent a lot of time doing a lot of things there. They were both heavily involved in the Freds Pass Rural Show, and they worked hard on all sorts of things across the rural area. Chris was especially invested in paddock-to-plate. Between them and all the oldies who were in the rural area for a long time, they tried their hand at many different things and all worked together. Back in those days the roads were still dirt, there were no buses and the only real schools were Taminmin and Howard Springs Primary School where I went, as well as Jocelyn.

When I was writing this, it was nice to look back and think about the memories of going to the shows. I remember my dad and Chris doing things together and always running around, just being real people involved in the community. At some stage it may have been lost in the younger generations—some of the Zoomers the Member for Namatjira was speaking about earlier. It just shows that is the sort of person he was—always involved and doing something.

I have been to the Freds Pass Rural Show each year for as long as I can remember, and it will not be the same without him. Chris' family and what he did for the show will always be remembered in my heart because I have lost track of how many times I have been to that show. I have also been to the Royal Darwin Show many times and have taken my horses there; when you have horses there you spend a lot of time looking after them. You get time to wander around and see all sorts of things that you do not normally see when you rush.

Chris was passionate about horticulture, the school and community gardens; he put so much back into the community. That is what I remember about growing up in the rural area—all the things that he would do with my father and a whole group of people doing all sorts of things in those days. He worked tirelessly to develop new cultures, as the Chief Minister spoke about, and I remember in the orchard there was stuff I had never seen in my life; he was growing it. It instils in me what type of person he was, helping out all the time and trying to help my brother, who is difficult.

His focus, research and dedication to his nursery was a hub of agriculture innovation, and he was trying different things, which the Chief Minister spoke about. He was breeding the thorns out of citrus tree varieties. We all know what the thorns felt like. Innovation from people like that is important to the rural area. It shows in the church and Freds Pass; some of the community events that have happened at Freds Pass year after year are about the innovation that the old people—I say old because they are older than me, and I am pretty old myself, unlike the Zoomers—have worked hard on. I thank him for all the time and work he put in. It will never be forgotten.

I went to the funeral service, and it was great to go to a place that he designed, built and funded; he was involved in all of it. It was a special service, which I went to along with the Chief Minister, the Member for Goyder and the Member for Blain. It was touching to go, hear stories and see the old people who I have seen around as I was growing up out there; they were all there, and I had a chat to a few of them. Thank you for doing the service there; we appreciate it.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the passing of Christopher (Chris) Nathanael and pay my respects.

Chris was born on 17 October 1942 and passed away earlier this year on 1 June 2025. To ensure the details of his life are documented and preserved for future generations to look back on, I seek leave to table two documents: Chris Nathanael's funeral service booklet; and a copy of the eulogy delivered by his daughter, Jocelyn, at his funeral.

Leave granted.

Mr MACKAY: The service booklet and his service were determined and curated by Chris according to his wishes. His funeral was held at the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd in Freds Pass, which Chris was instrumental in the design, fundraising and building of.

When I attended his funeral, it was incredible to see just how many lives this man impacted. There were hundreds of Territorians there; the car park was full, as was half of Freds Pass. Joining me was the Member for Wanguri; the Deputy Chief Minister, the Member for Nelson; the Chief Minister, the Member for Spillett; and the former Member for Goyder, Kezia Purick.

I was only lucky enough to meet and talk to Chris a handful of times, but I always heard his wisdom and took his advice. A memory that will stick with me until the day I die is when I popped to Tropiculture for what I believe was Chris' last visit to his beloved farm, where he hosted friends and family for one last hurrah. Chris was in a wheelchair by this stage and, despite fighting for strength, the first thing he did when he saw me was fuss about getting me something to eat and drink. He had no regard for his own struggles. He offered me some of his fruit that I have never seen before and have never seen since, but it was delicious. Chris was an incredibly generous man, and I know that he has found his peace.

Since his passing, the more research I have done and the more people I have talked to about Chris, the more I have been impressed with the legacy he leaves behind and the impact he had on so many lives in the rural area. He was not only a pioneer of tropical fruit horticulture in the Northern Territory, which we have heard about today; he was also a proud father, grandfather and great-grandfather. I acknowledge the presence of his family and friends in the gallery.

On 14 May 2014 the former Member for Port Darwin, John Elferink, spoke in this Chamber about the life of Christine Nathanael, Chris's late wife who passed earlier that year. He said:

> *It is important in this House, from time to time, that we place on the record the Northern Territory's gratitude to citizens who have made such a substantial contribution to the community in which we live. The Northern Territory is a lesser place for the passing of Christine …*

I can confidently say that the Northern Territory is a lesser place for the passing of Chris Nathanael. Chris Nathanael was a great man who gave so much of his life to making the Northern Territory and the world a better place. We lost one of the greats.

He threw himself into community service the moment he moved to Darwin when he was 20 years old. He joined organisations such as the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, the YMCA board and the Junior Chamber of Commerce, then known as the Darwin Jaycees. At the age of 27, Chris was elected as a Darwin City Council alderman in 1969 and served until 1972.

After the destruction of their house in Parap during Cyclone Tracy in 1974, Chris and his wife, Pamela, built a never-to-be-destroyed house out of concrete and steel in the rural area on Horne Road in Bees Creek. The house was initially accessible only by driving off the two-lane Stuart Highway, over the World War II Sattler Airstrip and down a corrugated one-lane dirt track. They moved out of town and into Bees Creek in 1975 or 1976 and have been a pillar of the rural community ever since.

Later in Chris' life, he was active in community organisations such as the Darwin Sailing Club, the Beekeepers Association, the Anglican Parish, Southern Districts Football and Cricket Clubs, Bees Creek

Volunteer Fire Brigade, Taminmin Community Library, the Kormilda College Board and was the foundation chairman of the Rare Fruits Council.

I will finish by reading comments I have seen about Chris' passing which show the tremendous reach he had in his life. Michelle Neal said, 'A vast library of knowledge he has taken with him—knowledge that has paved the way for horticulture in the Northern Territory. He will be dearly missed by all. Condolences to family and friends.'

Dae Sharrock said, 'Farewell to one of nature's true gentlemen. So kind and generous with his knowledge, he lives on in people's hearts and the many happy memories he created.'

Tyneil Probert said, 'Rest in peace, Chris, and condolences to his family and staff. Our kids loved visiting on the weekends, learning about and tasting so many new beautiful fruits. Thank you for your contributions to the community.'

Ari Wheeler said, 'Another good person has passed. Thank you, Chris, for making our life better. We always enjoyed chatting with you. We will remember you and your generosity to share your knowledge and friendship. Rest in peace.'

Digby Hart said, 'A true gentleman—a lovely man who I first met at the Christ Church Cathedral about four days after I arrived from England, 61 years ago, if memory serves me right.'

Anna Beecham said, 'Such a loss to your family, friends and the entire Darwin community. He is and will be remembered so fondly by so many.'

Jayne Follett said, 'Condolences to Chris' family and friends. He was a wealth of knowledge and will be missed greatly.'

Lucy Murrell said, 'Oh dear Chris, he was good to me and my son Hugo. We had many good times at St Freds. May Chris be at peace and rise in glory.'

Doreen Dyer said, 'What a great man he was—so knowledgeable, humble and kind. We will miss seeing him at Tropiculture and everywhere associated with fruit plants. Condolences to Chris' family and work colleagues. The world is a better place for having known him.'

Prue Roubicek said, 'May Chris rest in eternal peace. Such a lovely man, a great Territorian, whose love of tropical fruit was known worldwide. Heartfelt sympathy to Chris' family and friends.'

Kylie Scott remarked, 'Such a beautiful soul. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and for feeding my garcinia addiction. Every time I eat them I will think of you. Our thoughts, love and prayers to Phil and all the family.'

Cindy Ryan said, 'The Territory has lost a true tropical horticulture legend in Chris. His knowledge will be very much missed.'

Bryon Wauchope said, 'Rest in peace Chris. Thank you for all your advice over the years; you will be missed. However, your legacy lives on in the soils of this beautiful place you helped create.'

There were more than 200 comments on these Facebook posts acknowledging Chris' passing. It was a common theme that although he may no longer be with us, he is still in our gardens, in the different fruit varieties and the love of all tropical fruit that he helped inspire in so many people.

From the people of Goyder I express my deepest sympathies to his family and all who knew him. Rest in peace, Chris. You were one of the greats.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I place on the record my condolences on the passing of Mr Christopher Nathanael, also known to many as Chris and to my family as Bapa Chris or Poppy Chris. He was a man whose life and work transformed horticulture, strengthened our communities and enriched the culture and spiritual fabric of the Northern Territory. I have known Chris and his family for over 40 years, and to us he is Bapa, which means father.

Chris was born in the village of Yermasoyia in Cyprus on 17 October 1942 and passed away peacefully in Darwin, Northern Territory, earlier this year on 1 June 2025.

Chris was best known as the founder and owner of Tropiculture Australia in Bees Creek. Through that venture he pioneered research and development into rare and exotic fruits. Where many said it could not be done, Chris proved otherwise. He found ways to adapt fruit trees from around the world to our unique soils and climate and, in doing so, changed what was possible for growers and gardeners across the Top End. His legacy is not just in the plants that now thrive here but in the knowledge he shared so freely.

He became known to many in the horticultural world as the godfather of rare and tropical fruits. It was a title given not lightly but out of deep respect for his pioneering work, his encyclopaedic knowledge and the generosity with which he shared it. For countless gardeners, farmers and researchers, Chris was the person to turn to for advice, guidance or simply inspiration to try something new.

He was a true Territory entrepreneur, establishing businesses that always tied back to his deep passion for plants, sustainability and community. His work helped lay a foundation for future generations of growers who will continue to benefit from his innovation and perseverance.

Many Territorians will also remember Chris' warm, practical voice on the ABC Radio every Saturday morning, and often I would be out and about with my husband listening to him. He was a regular on the NT *Country Hour* with Matt Brann. Week after week he fielded gardening questions with patience and humour, inspiring listeners and giving confidence to beginners and experts alike.

As cost-of-living pressures began to creep into households in the Territory and across Australia, people began to look to growing their own food sources in their backyards, and many inquired about edible tropical fruits through Tropiculture Australia. Each plant came with instructions so you could get the best harvest in our climate conditions. If you visited Tropiculture on a Saturday morning, Chris was there to give you that advice directly.

Over the years I have purchased a number of my fruit trees from Tropiculture knowing they would be disease free. Not having a green thumb like my mum, who is also in the Chamber this evening, I often needed the extra advice.

Twenty years ago this month, my husband and I bought our first house. One of our first housewarming gifts was from Chris. It was a thornless kaffir lime tree, which we planted in a large pot out the front of our house. My husband wanted to plant it in the ground, but I said to him that if we decided to move we would have to take the tree with us, hence planting it in the pot.

Our backyard is a mini orchard in which we have seven different banana varieties, four different mangoes, chico, black sapote, three different jackfruits, two different kaffir limes, dwarf fuji apple, starfruit, two different limes and a Meyer lemon tree. All of these are from Tropiculture. Most of these trees bear fruit, sometimes in excess, and it is shared amongst our family, friends and neighbours if we can get to them before the bats and possums.

Chris' contributions extended well beyond horticulture. Chris was a man of deep faith and an active member of the Anglican church and the Diocese of the Northern Territory. He gave tirelessly to his church community, most notably through his efforts to help establish Fred's Pass Anglican Church. That church is more than just a place of worship; it is a symbol of his vision of fellowship, service and community spirit. The congregation, including Chris and his late wife, Christine, worshipped there in the rector's carport. From there it was known as St Freds of the carport.

It became a popular place to worship, and a decision to build the current church was born. Chris was instrumental in the design, build and funding of the church. It was also known as the church with no walls to encapsulate the unique Territory way of worshipping. It took a lot of fundraising, and Chris convinced the banks to back them. The church would provide a space for not only the worshippers but also the community. Chris would donate a lot of his produce to raise funds.

Chris was not only a long-term member of the Freds Pass parish; he was a much-loved stallholder at the Freds Pass Rural Show and Royal Darwin Show. Chris was a familiar and much-loved presence. His stalls were not just about selling plants; they were about sharing advice, swapping stories and sparking enthusiasm in young and old alike. Many of us know people whose gardens bear fruit because of his patience, guidance and encouragement at those shows.

His absence this year was felt deeply, as the long-held corner in the horticulture shed at the Royal Darwin Show was missing his smiling face. In fact, when I went through the shed, they had a picture of Chris to remind people of him. It was a wonderful tribute.

Chris was also a proud life member of the Country Liberal Party. Some of the members who knew him are here today. I took advice from Chris to run in the last election, and, in his frail state, he sat in the sun for several hours with me on election day and handed out how-to-vote cards so that he could see the CLP take government once more.

On 15 October 2024, two days before Chris' 82nd birthday, he sat proudly behind me on this Chamber floor as part of my family to see me sworn in as the new Member for Wanguri in the 15th Assembly of the Northern Territory. He believed passionately in the future of the Northern Territory and the opportunities that exist here, particularly in horticulture and agriculture.

He often spoke of the potential of our land, our climate and our people to build sustainable industries that would not only feed the Territory but also make us leaders in tropical agriculture. His advocacy reflected his lifelong commitment to seeing the Territory prosper.

In reflecting on Chris' life, we saw a man of remarkable generosity, innovation and service. He was a horticultural pioneer, a community educator, a man of faith and, above all, a Territorian who gave more than he took.

His passing leaves a gap that will be deeply felt by his family, church, customers and, indeed, by all who had the privilege of learning from him.

On behalf of this Assembly, I extend our heartfelt condolences to his loved ones, especially his daughter, Jocelyn Nathanael-Walter, and her husband, Dylan Walter; his son, Phillip Nathanael, and his partner, Michelle Hampton; his granddaughter, Sheyla Nathanael, and her partner, Mick Sharp; his grandson, Wayde Nathanael, and his wife, Emily; and Ambree Hampton.

May they take comfort in knowing his contribution to the Northern Territory was profound and will not be forgotten. The family will know what I mean when I say this: I will miss him saying to me, 'Now listen'. Every conversation always had advice that made us better people and growers.

I also recommend that in future for consideration the Place Names Committee considers naming a street in his honour, ideally in the rural area that he called home and lined with fruit trees that reflect the essence of his life's work. Such a memorial would serve as a living reminder of his passion and inspiration for future generations.

Bapa Chris has left a permanent mark on the Territory. May this remarkable human be remembered for his contributions to the Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to contribute to honour the extraordinary life of Mr Chris Nathanael. I welcome the family and friends of Chris, who are in the gallery to hear these contributions.

I will share memories of Chris that come from a dear friend of his, Mrs Suzanne Cavanagh, who knew him through the CLP and remained close to him for over 25 years.

Her story with Chris begins in 1987. That year Chris was elected treasurer of the Country Liberal Party whilst Suzanne was working at the secretariat as the office manager. Before that, Chris had been the chairman of the Koolpinyah branch, which was the only rural branch at the time. Suzanne was also a member.

Suzanne remembers Chris as a man of ideas and energy. As treasurer, he introduced the concept of a financial life membership. He researched it thoroughly, prepared a proposal and took it to the central council meeting in November 1987. Chris was excited because, for him, it was not just about a membership type; it was about making a lifelong commitment to a party that he loved.

He even had a plan. After presenting his idea to the meeting, he would proudly place his $500 on the table and declare that he would become financial life member number one, but that moment did not quite unfold as he had imagined. Sitting in the room was Mr Paul Zlotskowsi from the Gulf Peninsula branch, and before Chris could get to his finale, Paul ...

Mr Kerle: Zlots!

Ms BOOTHBY: Zlots—that is right—jumped to his feet, slapped down the $500 and loudly announced that he would be financial life member number one. Chris did not miss a beat; he slapped down his own $500 and declared just as strongly, 'I will be number two'.

Chris would have loved to have held that number one ticket as a lifetime member. Suzanne said that she saw straightaway that something even more important than being number one was the fact that Chris' first instinct was to put the Country Liberal Party first. He never let his pride get in the way of progress. He laughed about that story for years. He was right that Paul's enthusiasm—who got the number one ticket—would encourage others to sign up too, and it did.

That same year, 1987, also brought the strong, stable independent election, as Suzanne described. Suzanne and Chris worked closely with John Hare and Colin Curnow. It was an exhausting campaign, but on the night before the election they had all been out to dinner with their partners at a Chinese restaurant in the Jape building on Cavenagh Street. Suzanne remembers how tired and anxious they all were sitting around this table until Chris, in his own way, lightened the mood. He suddenly stood up and announced that he had something important to share. Then he began singing and dancing to the Pepsodent toothpaste jingle from television. I do not know that ad but, based on the way I hear this told over and again, apparently it was pretty funny. Everyone at that table was completely stunned but also delighted. They even demanded an encore. Chris happily obliged, and soon the entire restaurant was applauding. That was exactly Chris. He knew when the tension was heavy and how to ease it. He had a knack for making people laugh, even in the most serious of times.

Beyond his humour and energy, Chris was deeply committed to getting things done. Suzanne recalls his passion for education. Time and again she heard him raise the importance of Taminmin College at the meetings they all attended. He was relentless in his advocacy and never gave up on it. Today, that school stands as a testament to his determination. We have heard from a number of members of his contribution to so many organisations and causes that he championed.

When Suzanne reflects on Chris' life, she sees his fingerprints on countless successes, especially across the rural area of Darwin. He was a man who recognised what needed to be done and also put in the work to make it happen.

Those are Suzanne's memories, and I know they resonate with many of us across the Northern Territory. They paint a picture of Chris as a man of ideas, humour and conviction—someone who lifted others up, always put the greater good ahead of himself and whose legacy lives on in the work he championed. This is the Chris we honour today.

From a personal point of view, Chris was one of those people who would just pop up everywhere, whether it was at the Palmerston Markets on a Friday night, out shopping with my boys or at the Royal Darwin Show or the Freds Pass Rural Show—he happened to be at all of these places. One thing was for sure with Chris: he was always smiling and incredibly positive. Often, he would come past the Palmerston Markets and, as others have talked about, he brought fruits. I would look at them thinking, 'I do not know what that is, but sure, thank you; I will take the fruit.' I would take it home to my boys and they would say, 'What is that?' I would say, 'Let us try it; it is from Chris.' We did and, as others have said, it was delicious. I still do not know what they were, but they were nice—a bit like what the Member for Goyder said. I will always remember that generosity and his desire to teach others about horticulture and fruit. That was amazing.

I have to mention that in the lead-up to the 2024 election he was so proud of all of the candidates. He would come by the markets not long after the other candidates were selected. I do not want to highlight anyone in particular, but he said that he was so proud that Oly Carlson had been preselected by the Country Liberal Party. I did not realise how close Chris and his family and Oly and her family were. I knew after that night when he was beaming from ear to ear about how proud he was that his dear Oly Carlson had been preselected. Of course, she went on to win and is sitting in the Chamber with us, contributing to the Northern Territory as well as Chris has.

To Chris' family, his friends and the party members who are here, thank you for joining us and allowing us the honour to share memories—not only our own but of others who shared them with us to share here.

Rest in peace, Chris Nathanael; you will be missed.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to the life of Mr Chris Nathanael and extend condolences on behalf of my Territory Labor team to his family, friends and loved ones.

As we have heard, Chris sadly passed away on 1 June this year at nearly 82 years of age—the same age as my dad. He leaves behind a remarkable legacy of service, generosity and community spirit.

Born in the village of Yermasoyia in Cyprus in 1942, Chris migrated with his family to Melbourne as a young boy. At the age of 20, he made his way to the great north, Darwin, beginning a career as a radio announcer at 8DN. Like so many who came here many years ago, Chris quickly made the Territory his home.

He was a man who believed deeply in community. His contributions stretched across decades and countless organisations, some which we have heard about this evening. He made impressive contributions to the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, the YMCA board, the Rare Fruits Council, the Darwin Sailing Club, the Beekeepers Association, the Anglican Parish, local football and cricket clubs, the Bees Creek Volunteer Fire Brigade, the Taminmin Community Library, the Kormilda College Board and the Royal Darwin Show and Freds Pass Rural Show societies. He was recognised at the Royal Darwin Show in 2019 as the Chief Minister's Senior Steward of the Year. This extraordinary life is not just a record of service; it reflects Chris' character. He never stood back. He gave his time, energy, love, knowledge and strength to support those around him and improve the Northern Territory.

Chris' life was also defined by his family. He married Pamela, and together they raised their two children, Jocelyn and Phillip. In 1972 the family bought land in Bees Creek, as the Member for Goyder mentioned, moving there full time after Cyclone Tracy. In 1988 Chris remarried to Christine, and his family grew, including his son-in-law, Dylan; his grandson, Wayde, and his wife, Emily; and his great-grandson, Noah. For all his public service, Chris was first and foremost a family man. Those who knew him speak of his warmth, humour and generosity. He was proud of his family, and he took joy in seeing them grow across generations.

As we know, Chris founded Tropiculture Australia, reflecting his lifelong love of plant growing and cultivating. In many ways, that was Chris himself—someone who nurtured, believed in growth and built lasting roots in the Territory.

Tonight, as we reflect on his life, we recognise not only what he gave but also the spirit in which he gave it. Mr Chris Nathanael was a man of service, kindness and community. His passing is a loss to the Territory, but his legacy will endure in the organisations which he strengthened, nurtured and loved; in the people he mentored; and in the friends and family who loved him dearly.

On behalf of our Labor opposition, I extend our condolences to Jocelyn, Phillip and your family and to the many family members, friends and loved ones who are mourning Mr Nathanael's passing.

On a personal note, on behalf of my father, Mick Uibo, I send sincere condolences to the family. My dad, Mick, and my mother, who passed away four years ago, knew Chris for nearly 35 years. They have high regard for him, particularly the work Chris did with my mum in the Christ Church.

Chris represented the best of the Territory spirit; he had resilience, generosity and was committed to building something better for the next generation. His memory will continue to inspire all of us who call the Territory home. May he rest in peace.

Madam SPEAKER: On behalf of all the members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, I extend my sincere condolences to the friends and family of Chris Nathanael. For those who joined us this evening, thank you for coming to Parliament House and commemorating the life of Chris Nathanael.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I will quickly say that I met Chris only once, probably 18 months ago. I purchased a little lemon tree because I have been struggling to grow them. He gave me advice and fertiliser to take home, and it is now flowering, so thank you to him.

As you know, I am a big champion of local business. Local small to medium businesses are the heart and soul of our economy because they employ locals, support local families and contribute to the economy. In my recent newsletter I went out of my way to identify local businesses owned and operated by people living in my electorate. I shout out to these businesses to give a sense of where the businesspeople of Karama and Malak are getting on with it.

One is a new cafe, Ahma Rasa, a Malaysian cafe in Winnellie, on Coonawarra Road. It opened about three or four months ago and is operated by Sharan Lim, who lives in Malak, and her family. It is a great cafe. It does coffee, sandwiches, pies, laksa, nasi lemak, char kway teow, mi goreng and many more Asian dishes. I can vouch for the claypot barra wing dish. I understand that this week the special is roti canai, which is a good Malaysian dish. It is a family-run business that does a great job.

I also acknowledge Affordable Plumbing. John lives on Kalymnos Drive in Karama. He has been going for many years and is a fantastic plumber. I have recommended him to many people, including my neighbours, and some of my neighbours only used him this week. They were struggling to get a plumber and asked for recommendations, so I said to ring John. They rang him on Friday, and he came on Monday and solved all their problems. He is reasonable, and it is personal service.

We also have Big Boys Gardening on Mullamulla Circuit in Karama. Thijs and Anthony have been growing the business. They do a range of lawns, big and small, and go across the Darwin region. It is a great business, and I know they are employing other people.

Practical Safety Australia is operated by Lance and Wendy Martin, who live on McPherson Street, Karama. It is based in Coonawarra and does all industrial and corporate workwear. They employ about eight or 10 people. They are fantastic; they have been going for many years. Lance, many years ago, was co-owner of Geminex, which was then purchased by Wesfarmers, for those who want to know. He had to stay out of business for five years, but they set up their own and it is thriving.

I have mentioned Tejinder Singh before. He does all the food vans. He has also been running a refrigeration and air-conditioning service for 32 years. He lives on Vanderlin Drive Service Road.

There is also a number of shops around Karama and Malak. I particularly point out Isabel, who runs Panda Foods at Karama shops. She is a foundation business at the shopping centre and has been operating for about 36 years, which is amazing. She employs about 12 people. You have to go there. I think the Member for Fong Lim can attest to the curry puffs, soups and laksas.

There is also Lyndall's Hair Care, which the Member for Katherine would be big on. Lyndall lives in Knuckey Lagoon and has been running that business for many years. It is fantastic to see.

I will do this every newsletter. I have put out a note saying:

> *Do you own a local business in Karama, Malak, or Knuckey Lagoon? Whether you run a cafe, tradie service, market stall, or something unique—we want to showcase and support our local legends.*

I already have businesses reaching out to me as a result of this, including builders and others, and I am proud to highlight them; it is not always the big businesses.

I also put in a recipe. These are the home cooks who run businesses out of my electorate. The one I highlighted in this edition was Katina, who has a big recipe for dolmades, and it says:

> *Hi, I'm Katina from Karama!*
>
> *I've started a small Greek food business called Katina's Kitchen Rules—born from all the lovely compliments I've received over the years.*
>
> *Cooking is my happy place, and I'm excited to share it with anyone craving homemade Greek food.*
>
> *I post meals for sale once or twice a week on Facebook, so feel free to message me on Facebook with your requests or favourites!*

I can guarantee you that I have ordered a number of meals there—maybe on a Friday night—including a big tray of moussaka or other delicious Greek food.

The small to medium businesses are the heart and soul of the economy; every electorate has them. We have to thank the people who do that, and I thank all the businesspeople in my electorate of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I will speak about recent events in the great electorate of Gwoja. One of those was the most recent Freedom Day Festival in the home of the Aboriginal land rights movement, Gurindji Daguragu country. It was so important to come together to recognise the 50th anniversary of the first parcel of land being handed back to the Gurindji people.

This festival was not only a celebration but also a commemoration of the most significant movement in Australia's history—the Wave Hill walk-off of 1966. Nearly 60 years ago the Gurindji people—led by Vincent Lingiari—walked off Wave Hill Station. What began as a strike over poor wages and conditions became a

landmark struggle for justice, dignity and, ultimately, land rights. The courage of the Gurindji people in taking that stand changed the course of this nation. At this year's Freedom Day Festival, that spirit was alive and strong.

People came from across the Territory and country to honour that history, celebrate culture and reflect on the enduring strength of the Gurindji communities. I acknowledge and thank Kalkarindji and Daguragu communities for their warm welcome and generosity in opening their community to share the important occasion. The way the community brings people together for this festival is amazing. It is through dance, music, storytelling and ceremony. It ensures that the story of the Wave Hill walk-off remains alive for future generations.

The success of the festival was also due to the tireless efforts of organisers, volunteers and local leaders. These are leaders like the Gurindji Aboriginal Corporation, local Kalkarindji police, Victoria Daly Regional Council, the Warnkurr Club, ALPA and Katherine West just to name a few. It is also important for us to ensure that these events run smoothly. I thank the groups and organisers for making this event possible, particularly the Gurindji Aboriginal Corporation crew, whom I had the honour of spending a number of days with, putting up tents for visitors.

I extend my sincere thanks to sponsors and partners who made this festival possible. Their contributions enabled us to gather on Gurindji country to remember, celebrate and recommit to the values that Freedom Day represents. Freedom Day was a reminder that, while progress has been made since 1966, the struggle for equality and justice continues. It called on all of us as leaders, community members and Australians to walk together in the spirit of courage and unity.

I left Kalkarindji and Daguragu with a deep sense of respect for the elders who continue to carry the legacy of the Gurindji people every day and gratitude for the opportunity to be part of something so powerful and unifying. The Freedom Day Festival was a proud and moving reminder of the strength of our culture, the power of our communities and the importance of standing together for what is right.

It is important to acknowledge community members who came to perform: Frank Yamma; Warren H Williams; Desert Mulga; Dodge City Boyz; Eastern Arrernte Band; Iconyx; Johno Yunupingu; Kankawa; KM Band; Warnayaka; Whitewater Band; Wampana; Laramba Band; Lazy Late Boys; MB Reggae; Roadblock; Newboys; North Tanami Band; Running Water; B2M; Seaside Drifters; Tjupi Band; and many more.

I thank my Territory Labor colleagues who came and swagged it for several days on beautiful Gurindji country to share in the festival. I also acknowledge the Member for Nightcliff who has a unique and special connection to Gurindji country and thank her for coming and supporting such an important event. I acknowledge that the Member for Barkly also participated and marched in the Freedom Day March. It is an important reminder of the significant sacrifices that the Gurindji people made for several years.

Next year is the 60th anniversary of the Wave Hill walk-off. That is 60 years since Gurindji people said enough is enough and were the strength that this nation needed to recognise that it always was and always will be Aboriginal land. I hope that next year we see more members of this parliament celebrating this amazing achievement that the Gurindji people led to deliver Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory, an incredibly powerful and important event.

During this festival we saw amazing sports day competitions. Kalkaringi School did an amazing job bringing all the kids together from Yarralin and Nitjpurru (Pigeon Hole) to play in the sports carnival. It was an amazing event. It was great to be back on Gurindji country seeing all their smiling faces, hearing powerful speeches and acknowledging the importance of that event.

A huge shout-out goes to all the Gurindji communities and the surrounding communities, including in Lajamanu, Nitjpurru, Yarralin and up to Mistake Creek, who had family members who were part of the Wave Hill walk-off. It was a timely reminder that the Wave Hill walk-off is incredibly important.

We acknowledge that there has been destruction of this important heritage site; remediation works must take place, and it be repaired because it this too important to be ignored.

Next year is the 60th anniversary. I have already written to the Commonwealth Government asking it to work to honour and celebrate the site where Gough Whitlam, the Labor Prime Minister, poured sand into Vincent Lingiari's hand, signifying this important acknowledgement in our history.

It was a great day. I saw many people who travelled far and wide. The Central Land Council had its full council meeting on Gurindji country, which was an amazing opportunity to bring everyone together. This was the first celebration we have had in Daguragu and Kalkarindji since COVID because, unfortunately, we experienced COVID and then there were floods in the local area. They have been building up to this, and it was the first big festival again. Hopefully, if people can keep their calendars free for next year, it will be bigger and better.

I send a huge congratulations to everyone who pulled together such a significant event. The art centre was open, showing amazing photographs and showcasing art. It is wonderful that members of this parliament, like the Member for Nightcliff, are supporting art centres in my electorate. She can talk about that shortly. It is a great event, and I encourage people to jump on and have a look. It was great to bring the whole community together and see everyone there celebrating such an important part of our history and showcasing the incredible celebration.

Thank you to everyone who made the trip. Gurindji, stay strong, stay deadly and keep doing what you are doing; it is amazing. Thanks to all the workers and volunteers who travelled far and wide to make this event a success.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, first I acknowledge the nice adjournment remarks about Chris Nathanael. I did not know him personally, but I acknowledge that he had a profound impact on many Territorians.

Tonight I celebrate the remarkable achievements of the Darwin Swimming Club during its 2024–25 season and reflect on the essential role that sponsors play in the Territory sporting community. This year's season for the Darwin Swimming Club, which is based at the amazing facility at Parap Pool, was packed with excitement and accomplishment thanks to the collective effort of swimmers, coaches, families and supporters.

The Buffs thrived at every level, and I am proud to acknowledge the individual and team performances that have made this a truly memorable year. We saw our swimmers shine on the national stage. At the Victorian Short Course Championships in September, club representatives included Cole, Liam, Patrick, Bayleigh, Sampson, James, Ella, Macey, Skyler, Melissa, and Chloe—a terrific moment of Territory pride.

In December Liam, Patrick, Harrison, Bayleigh, Sam, Elaine, Macey, Skyler and Chloe travelled to Sydney for the New South Wales state championships, showcasing Darwin's emerging talent.

The Swimming NT development squad for January included Skyler, Andrei, Zayne, Harry, Elaine, McKenzie, Khaden, Kalub, Ethan, Isabella, Sam, Isla, Ethan, Lilly and Luca, who were selected for development with leading Queensland clubs.

Our masters—Zayne, Oscar, Khaden, and J Park—earned two gold, five silver and two bronze individual medals and a relay gold and silver at nationals in Melbourne.

At the Australian Age and Open Championships, congratulation to Liam, Patrick, Bayleigh, Sahrah, Elaine and Macey who hit qualifying times and to James who represented DWC at the opens. A special mention goes to medal winners: Sahrah with two gold; Macey with three gold and one bronze; and Liam and James each with a bronze.

At the Australian Swimming Trials James, Bayleigh, Macey and Sahrah flew the Buffs flag. Sahrah's bronze in the 50-metre breaststroke stands as a national achievement.

The club also celebrated high-performance program selections, with James Smith invited to the next AIS NextGen freestyle camp, being only one of eight swimmers chosen nationally.

Liam and Macey took part in the Next Wave Invitational, building on their outstanding nationals form.

Locally, Darwin swimmers represented the NT in Brisbane at the School Sport Australia nationals, including Chloe, Edward, Isla, Lilly and Beth from 10 to 12 years and Ethan, Ella, Elaine, Harry, Andrei, Bayleigh and Zayne from 13 to 19 years.

The Darwin Swimming Club captured top honours at the NT Short Course Championships where Macey Sheridan was named Champion Female and Swimmer of the Meet.

Highlights of the Country Swimming Championships included 62 gold, 40 silver and 32 bronze medals and countless club and NT records.

The Buffs starred at the Katherine Birthday Carnival with 45 swimmers, eight age champion trophies and a memorable parent relay.

At the City of Darwin NT Swimming Championships, the Darwin Swimming Club had 51 competing; won 115 gold, 79 silver and 55 bronze medals; and boasted 11 age champions. Our open-water stars included James Smith as first overall in the 2.1-kilometre McArthur River Mining Darwin Ocean Swim; Chloe Reader as first female; and Elaine Smith as first female in the 1.2-kilometre swim. At Lake Argyle, James, Liam, Luca and Patrick broke the 10-kilometre quad record for first place, while Elaine, Emme, Macey and Skyler placed third amongst quad teams.

These young athletes and their teams exemplify determination, pride and the spirit of the Top End. The continued support of sponsors—I am glad to be one—is vital to enabling these opportunities and successes.

I encourage all the members in the Chamber to visit Parap Pool and see the community spirit firsthand. I congratulate the Darwin Swimming Club swimmers by name and achievement, along with coaches, volunteers and families who do amazing work to get swimmers to where they are, and especially the sponsors for another outstanding season.

I want to touch on a personal note. Many of you know that I had a granddaughter recently. Today is her 100-day birthday, so I want to celebrate 100 days of my beautiful granddaughter, Koa. I thank my daughter, Kalani, and her partner, Jaxon, for bringing her into this world. I have something to look forward to when I go home at night; they live with us, which is amazing.

I send a big thank you to my family who have been amazing through my life journey over the last year in government. I thank Kalani and Jaxon for giving me that lift when I need it with my little granddaughter, Koa. I am so glad to have had 100 days with her, and I look forward to the next million days with her.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Happy 100 days, Koa.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also express my condolences to the family of Chris Nathanael. This morning, when thinking about tonight, I walked around my garden and visited the many amazing fruit trees that we have Chris to thank for. It is not quite as many as the Member for Wanguri, but we have our pomelo, local orange, makrut lime, Tahitian lime, ruby grapefruit, pomegranate, guava, lemonade fruit, black sapote trees and many more. A big thanks to goes Chris for his generous wisdom and incredibly helpful and kind approach when anyone came to him with a question.

I speak tonight on two letters. The first letter was referenced in parliament today by way of a question, which was a letter to the Chief Minister. She said that she was not aware of this letter, which was sent by 79 legal practitioners, and therefore could not respond to it. To assist the Chief Minister, I will read this letter now. I seek leave to table it, so she can respond.

Leave granted.

J DAVIS: It states:

Dear Chief Minister and Acting Commissioner

Re: Investigation of death in custody—Kumanjayi White

We, the undersigned, write in our capacity as legal practitioners in the Northern Territory, committed to preserving the rule of law and the integrity of our public institutions across the Territory. This letter is not reflective of any organisation or association for which we work.

We write in relation to the investigation into the death of Kumanjayi White on 27 May 2025 in Alice Springs, while in police custody. We understand an internal investigation is underway. However, three months have elapsed and little information is publicly available regarding the circumstances surrounding this death, timeframes for investigation, measures being taken to ensure investigative integrity, and administrative steps being taken in relation to the officers involved.

When a death in custody occurs, transparency and accountability are essential to maintaining trust in our public institutions. Kumanjayi White marks yet another Aboriginal death in custody in Central Australia, and this investigation must be conducted in a manner consistent with community expectations. It is incumbent on government and police leadership to provide public assurance as to the process being followed.

To that end, we respectfully urge the Northern Territory Government to:

- *ensure appropriate internal and external oversight mechanisms are in place to conduct this investigation;*
- *commit to timely, regular, and accessible procedural disclosure relating to this investigation;*
- *take administrative steps to remove those officers involved from active duty while the investigation remains ongoing.*

Yours sincerely,

Legal Practitioners of the Northern Territory

Attached are the 79 legal practitioners who are signatories.

The second letter which I will read out and seek leave to table is called Civil Society Open Letter to the Finocchiaro Government.

Leave granted.

J DAVIS: It states:

No pepper spray, no guns on buses: 'tough on crime' won't produce safer communities

…

Safety in the Northern Territory is a complex and polarising issue. The situation at present is becoming untenable and 'tough on crime' reactions can do more harm than good. We, the undersigned civil society and grassroot organisations, call on the NT Government to take active steps to build thriving and safer communities.

We acknowledge that crime needs to be addressed, but the NT Government's law-and-order policies have the consequence of negatively impacting mainly Indigenous families and communities, while not doing enough to address the root causes of harm. We believe the NT Government must implement evidence-based initiatives, and we strongly believe that Indigenous led community safety models must be part of the solution.

We are alarmed about the potential consequences of NT Government policies. Arming the public with pepper spray risks escalating violent incidents. Allowing guns on public transport and in public housing exposes the poor and marginalised to an increased risk of violence, arrest and even the possibility of deaths in custody.

The NT Government is rolling out these initiatives in the name of victims of crime. However, ill-thought-out reactions can result in victims of crime not being protected at all. There is no evidence that spreading weapons through our community deters or reduces crime in the long term.

We know what works: addressing poverty, trauma and discrimination, as well as helping people regain a sense of identity. There must be consequences for wrongdoing, but increasing the incarceration rate is a simplistic response to a complicated reality. We need to help people rebuild their lives with the support of their families and communities. If we do this, crime is much less likely to occur.

NT Government policies need to reduce fear and make everyone feel safe and welcome in the community. Significant investments are needed across multiple sectors; safe and affordable housing, mental health, education, alcohol and other drug services, justice reinvestment, youth services and other structural services are required to reduce the risk of violence and keep people out of prison.

This letter is signed by 37 organisations representing a broad civil society coalition of voices opposing the Finocchiaro government's law and order agenda, which is not evidence based.

Signatories include the NT Mental Health Coalition, CatholicCare NT, Anglicare NT, AMSANT, the Public Health Association of Australia, Danila Dilba, Darwin Children's Clinic, Bishop Charles Gauci, Chay Brown from Her Story Consulting, Veritable, Waterlily, Perfectly Imperfect Consulting, Justice Reform Initiative, Central Australian Youth Justice, AEU, the Nest, the Vital Collective, Kings Narrative, Sisters Inside, the National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, BushMob, the Uniting Church Australia, Evora Care, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Oxfam Australia, Jesuit Social Services and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation.

We know firsthand that locking up people and flooding our communities with weapons does not keep us safe. It only entrenches cycles of harm and grief. Safety will come when governments listen to those most impacted and redirect resources away from cops, courts and cages, instead investing in Indigenous-led, community-based solutions that restore dignity and connection.

Jesuit Social Services is deeply concerned about the impact of the Northern Territory's tough-on-crime policies and calls on the government to shift its focus to investing in early intervention and evidence-based solutions that are known to address the root causes of crime and increase community safety.

Bishop Charles Gauci said:

> *Sometimes policies made by good people can have unintended consequences. I am aware that the rate of crime is challenging to many people. I am however concerned that a number of aspects of the Government's 'tough on crime' policies have the potential to have unintended consequences that will not in the long term reduce crime. They will also have detrimental effects on the lives of many who are amongst the most vulnerable members of our society. We need a holistic approach to these challenges based on evidence and wisdom. Hence I urge the government to keep reassessing policies for the long-term good of all.*

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a few different things to touch on in my adjournment. I will start with the wonderful things happening in my electorate and events I have been privileged to attend.

Last month my staff and I opened our Nightcliff community pantry. I have been excited about doing this for a long time. Over the past year I have heard from too many people who are not eating enough or who are struggling to put food on the table regularly for their kids. I do not believe anyone should go hungry in a country as rich as this.

I have to say that I love my electorate office. I am lucky, as I have a good one. I also have a beautiful community, and we are often being dropped off garden produce that people have grown to donate to others. As one of my constituents said to me, on one hand there are huge needs in our community, and on the other there are people with the time, resources and compassion to help, but we need someone in the middle to help those two meet. I said, 'Right, we will officially open up our community pantry'.

It goes out the front during opening hours, and it has been a huge hit. I restock it from our local friendly grocers as well as from the donations we get. I am excited about that.

We also have a photo contest. This is the second one I have run. We do a Wet Season and Dry Season Nightcliff electorate photo contest. This year I congratulate Wayne, who won; Mark for second place; and Siahn for third place. They get great vouchers to local businesses.

I also held a community lunch at the Litchfield Court area in conjunction with Mission Australia. Danila Dilba was supposed to attend but could not at the last minute. Victims of Crime had a stall. The One Percent boys came, who are fantastic youth mentors. We had a barbecue and fed everyone, and it was lovely. I am engaged particularly with Litchfield Court but with a lot of public housing in my electorate. I know many of the residents, and it was a good chance to get everyone to touch base with the organisations that they maybe did not usually have contact with and bring them all together in one place.

I took my family to and sponsored the Top Half Folk Festival at Mount Bundy Station at the start of August. This was the best music festival I have been to in the NT; I am happy to put that on the record. They were world-class acts. The entire thing was brilliantly organised down to a tee. It was a stellar example of our art and music industry and the passion and talent in the NT. I believe we punch above our weight with that.

Everyone at the festival had a smile on their face the entire time. They had thoughtful, beautiful kids' activities and music workshops as well as all the incredible performances. It was so beautiful to spend a weekend around my community and people. It was fulfilling. I extend my congratulations to the festival directors Louis Boyle-Bryant and Jayne Nankivell, along with the Top End Folk Club Committee members Glen, Sally, Crystal, Mark, Di, Anna, Karen, Louis and Hayley.

I want to see this government and subsequent governments continue to properly support the music industry, because it is one of our most important industries that benefits our community not just economically but creatively and spiritually.

I shout out to the Nightcliff Tigers, who I also sponsor, who are getting ready for their next season. I am excited about that. The club president, Mark Dodge, keeps trying to hold me to my promise that I will turn up to training, because I keep threatening to join the team, so we will see if that happens this season.

The Member for Gwoja beat me to it, because I have an adjournment speech for tomorrow on Kalkarindji, the Gurindji Freedom Day Festival and the Wave Hill walk-off. I was lucky to attend that as well; it was incredible. It is the second time I have been. I spent a bit of money at the arts centre. It was well worth it, and I loved every minute of it. I got to be involved with special experiences this time, so thank you to everyone in Kalkarindji.

I prepared a condolence for someone from my community who has passed away who I have been asked to speak about tonight. This is for Akio Hoshi.

I acknowledge the sad passing of an important member of our community, Mr Akio Hoshi. Akio unexpectedly passed away last week after suffering a stroke from which he did not regain consciousness. Akio is deeply missed by his young daughter, May; former wife, Penelope; and many others in our Northern Territory community.

Born in Japan, Akio settled in Darwin in February 2013 with long-term Territorian Penelope, and quickly became recognised for his zest for culture and contributions to his new neighbourhood. Akio was the well-known owner of Rapid Cafe, his Japanese food restaurant in Rapid Creek, for many years. It is technically in the Member for Johnston's electorate, but it is named after Rapid Creek, which is in my electorate. Several patrons have shared their fond memories of Akio sitting at their table, enthusing about his projects in art, food and music. More recently, Akio held Japanese food stalls at various markets, including Palmerston and Nightcliff.

Akio was also a gifted musician—many of you might have seen him play—who played multiple instruments and was heavily involved in the NT music scene, including composing scores for performances with Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, Garma, Nightcliff Seabreeze, the Darwin Festival, the Darwin Fringe Festival and Japanese cultural days. With the Darwin World Mix band of accomplished musicians, Akio performed many concerts and events promoting global culture and peace—themes evidenced in his community spirit and involvement.

The Deckchair Cinema screened the NT-produced 2024 film *Plotting the Northern Stars*, which chronicles part of this journey and the lead-up to Akio's acclaimed performance at the Darwin Entertainment Centre. The community tributes are many and varied from around Australia and beyond, as Akio touched so many people with his enthusiasm for life, sharing culture through food, music and connection.

Penelope and May wish to thank Royal Darwin Hospital, particularly the ICU and the amazing hospice staff for their support and care of Akio. My condolences to Penelope; May; Akio's mother, Yoshiko Kondo; his father, Masaki Hoshi; and all the people are feeling the poignant loss of Akio's indomitable community spirit. May Akio be remembered for his wonderful cultural contribution to the Northern Territory, as we are richer for it. Akio was passionate about celebrating multiculturalism; he is testament to the richness that immigration adds to communities.

In the Japanese tradition, Akio-san, may your soul rest in peace; I pray for your happiness in the afterlife.

I seek leave to table photos of Akio.

Leave granted.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been a busy few weeks in the Port Darwin electorate, so I give a big shout-out to a few constituents.

On 1 August it was Australian Primary Principals Day, which gave me a good opportunity to say a personal thank you to the amazing principals of the two primary schools in my electorate: Lisa Boyd, the Principal of St Mary's Catholic Primary School; and Fathma Mauger, the Principal of Larrakeyah Primary School. Lisa and Fathma do an incredible job, and I thank them for their continued leadership of their respective school communities.

On 8 August Larrakeyah Primary School was a finalist in five categories at the annual Australian Education Awards, including Assistant Principal of the Year, Danni Mattiazzo; Principal of the Year Government, Fathma Mauger; Primary School of the Year Government; Best Wellbeing Program; and the Best Use of Technology. I am delighted to say that it received the award for Best Use of Technology, which is not bad for a small school in the Northern Territory.

I recognise the recipients of my citizenship awards. From Larrakeyah Primary School there is Ava O'Leary for demonstrating respect and engagement during our ASPIRE grandparents' visit, as well as Georgia Day for consistently displaying school values and always trying to achieve her best in all facets of school life. From St Mary's Catholic Primary School, a big shout-out goes to Jazmine Broome for always showing care and compassion by checking in on others and supporting their wellbeing. Her kindness helps to create a positive and caring environment for everyone. Ekaagar Sandhu showed empathy and leadership by welcoming all students and ensuring everyone feels included and part of the group.

Members would be aware of the great work done in our community by the Chung Wah Society Darwin, an incredible group that was established in 1946 shortly after residents were allowed to return to Darwin following the end of World War II. Since that time they have become a part of the fabric of Darwin, working tirelessly to support the community. It was a delight to join the members of the Chung Wah Society on 16 August to attend the opening of the Chung Wah Society's Temple Moon Gate.

They received assistance from the City of Darwin and funding support from successive NT Governments over the past two decades because that is how long the project has been in the making. What made the project so special is the fact that all of the physical work was done by volunteers from the Chinese community, making it a literal labour of love.

The Temple Moon Gate signifies transition, harmony, welcome and passage from the everyday world into a sacred space. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the amazing members of the Chung Wah Society, Territorians and visitors can now experience the joy of walking through the Temple Moon Gate into a place of peace, spiritual and cultural tradition, leaving behind all worldly concerns. That is something we might all like to take advantage of from time to time.

Late last month the Darwin Patchworkers and Quilters held its 2025 Territory quilt awards. I was pleased to attend those awards with my colleagues, the Members for Wanguri and Fannie Bay, where we got a chance to look at what can only be described as artwork. I cannot imagine how difficult the judging was. There can only be one winner, so a big congratulations goes to Christine Garrett for being awarded Best in Show for her exquisite cityscape quilt.

Finally, last Friday I had the pleasure of joining the Business Enterprise Centre NT to celebrate its milestone of 25 years of helping Territory small businesses to succeed. It was a fantastic event held in the space off Austin Lane in the CBD. The occasion was also used by BECNT to launch Startup September, as well as announce the winner of the Startup September Pitch to Win promotion, for which I was one of the judges.

I say a big well done to the entrepreneurs whose pitch won, James Brennan and Adam Sheriff. James and Adam are both veterans. Their pitch was for their startup, Liberty Boats, which provides affordable, safe transport to Darwin's, as they put it, 'best pubs, bars and hangouts, safely, legally and with good vibes only'. This service is provided specifically to Marines who are stationed at Palmerston, as well as Defence personnel. They also give the opportunity for visitors to Darwin to take advantage of their service, which is affordable and a great way to see what is on offer. I wish them well in their venture, as I am sure they will be extremely successful in the future.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recently attended the launch of the Deadly Heart Trek in Katherine on 9 August, which I will talk a bit about.

There was an introduction by Dr Gavin Wheaton and Dr Bo Remenyi. The Deadly Heart Trek was born out of a conversation over Christmas dinner around the COVID period when all of us had to think about doing things differently.

I represented the Chief Minister and acknowledged the incredibly amazing work that the team at Deadly Hearts Ltd does. Cissy Johns, who is a great ambassador for heart health—a local Katherine girl who now lives in Darwin—and Annemarie Lee were the champions for change. Jacinta Hegarty was from the Heart Foundation with Henrique Thomas.

The Deadly Heart Trek is about finding the cure for rheumatic heart disease. Rheumatic heart disease is a result of one or more acute rheumatic fever episodes that cause permanent and lifelong damage to heart valves. It is a serious health issue that affects our communities deeply. It was interesting for me because I did not know much about rheumatic heart disease. The Territory has the highest recorded rates of rheumatic heart disease in Australia and globally, which I found astonishing.

More than 4,600 people are currently on the NT Rheumatic Heart Disease Register, with 750 living in my electorate in the Big Rivers region. Almost all of those diagnosed with rheumatic heart fever or rheumatic heart disease in the Territory are Aboriginal.

Since 2021 the Deadly Heart Trek has visited 37 communities in the Territory and Queensland, screening more than 3,900 children for rheumatic heart disease. Thanks to this work, 107 of those children have been diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease who may have otherwise been undetected. The Deadly Heart Trek works in partnership with the Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation, Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service and the Jawoyn Association and is supported by NT Health and the Department of Education and Training.

This year the trek targeted school-age children at nine high-risk communities in the Big Rivers region, providing vital checks, education and support. Our government is committed to detecting and preventing acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease and improving health outcomes for all those Territorians. It was great to let these people know that our government has secured a record $2.3bn for NT Health to provide safe, high-quality health services for all Territorians.

In 2020 the evidence-based Rheumatic Heart Disease Endgame Strategy was developed in collaboration with Aboriginal leaders and endorsed by 21 peak bodies. They are now working on a new NT strategy which understands that eliminating rheumatic heart disease will take community-led partnership and a collaborative approach across all sectors.

It was interesting to talk to people; Sally Grimsley-Ballard met me there and introduced me to other people. There was a panel discussion with Dr Bo Remenyi; Aunty Vicki Wade; Cissy Johns, one of the champions for change; Annemarie Lee; Jacinta Hegarty; and Henrique. It was interesting to listen to them talk about rheumatic heart disease, the journey they have had and the communities they have been to.

The Deadly Heart Trek was developed as an opportunity to listen to and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and provide education, diagnosis and treatment to those affected by rheumatic heart disease.

I was grateful to have been invited to speak there, and I learnt a lot about rheumatic heart disease that I did not know beforehand; it was enlightening. The passion of the people speaking was encouraging; with the philanthropic funding as well as the help they get from the government, they hope to stamp out rheumatic heart disease.

I popped out earlier to open the 46th BEAT Festival at the AANT Centre, previously known as the Darwin Entertainment Centre. The parents, teachers and families who got together and brought their kids as well as the effort put into this year's BEAT Festival was amazing.

The BEAT is not new to me, as my children participated many years ago. My oldest son is 28 now, and I remember coming to Darwin when he was about eight or nine years of age. His teacher was encouraging. It was a big trek from Katherine in the bus with parents. We made a couple of days out of it. This brought back a lot of memories of going there with my children when they were younger. It was fantastic.

It has come a long way, with nearly 50 years of musical performances. I recently had the pleasure of attending the BEAT at Katherine High School where many of the local schools performed. As well as the performance I saw in Katherine and this week in Darwin—tonight, tomorrow and Friday—in October the BEAT will also perform in Alice Springs.

The BEAT gives generations of Northern Territory students opportunities to develop their confidence, express their creativity, exercise persistence and finetune the art of collaboration. These skills are important in a young person's development, as I am sure members would agree.

The performances over the next three days are by more than 1,000 students from 35 schools across the Northern Territory, including singing and dance groups with the NT Music School's combined choir, Synchronicity, featured each night; a 25-piece orchestra; rock bands; musical ensembles; soloists; and stunning lighting, sound and audiovisual content.

I give a big shout-out to Bill Grose from NT Music School and the soloists who were performing tonight. They are Ariana, Hannah, Erin, Lily, Abigail, Lyla, Gracia and Darwish. A couple of girls performed just before we had to leave, along with the Rosebery dancers, and they sang *Thunder*. I cannot think of who sings that song.

Mr Kerle: Was it Rosebery Primary School?

Mrs HERSEY: I am not sure. It was a great performance. It was good to watch a couple of the shows.

There are other communities, including Belyuen, Katherine—Casuarina Street Primary School was performing tonight—Gunbalanya and Maningrida alongside students from Darwin, Palmerston and rural schools performing at the BEAT.

Thank you for the dedication from not only students but also the teachers, parents and principals, with many hours of rehearsals and preparations to get to this point. Performances like the BEAT could not be possible without the efforts and dedication of many parents and families that put in the huge effort from making costumes to assisting with rehearsals to support their children to be part of this amazing event. Unfortunately, I could not stay for the performances, but the couple that I saw looked amazing.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak on a personal note. This week my duty to Drysdale and the parliament requires me to be here; however, I deeply feel my absence from friends today who gathered at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to honour the life of Mr Shane Dowling, who was close to me and was a mentor. Today, I want to give my time to honour him.

Mr Shane Dowling was the former Mayor of South Melbourne and of Geelong. He retired as a superintendent in the Victoria Police after 35 years of service. I knew Shane Dowling well. I first met him in 2004 through my best friend, his son, Angus. Their home became my second home throughout my time at boarding school where him and his wife, Anna, would look after me every second weekend, pick me up drunk from parties and everything else that teenagers do.

I thought I would share a couple of stories of Shane. He was your classic old-school Australian copper. He was rough around the edges but deeply compassionate as well. To frame the kind of man he was, I remember in Year 12 I had dislocated my shoulder in a rugby game, and it stayed dislocated. We had a formal event that night so, getting ready, Shane put together a sling for me with ties and helped me put my jacket on. I remember Anna, his wife, proclaiming that I needed to see a doctor and Shane saying, 'Let them be boys', and giving me a beer. He then drove Angus and me to the formal and said that he would pick us up later. That sums up the kind of man Shane was.

He truly was a man of duty. Throughout his policing career, of note, he led the sexual crimes squad at Werribee for many years, a position which was incredibly difficult. He spoke about it sometimes, but his service there undoubtedly made it safer. As he said, he caught monsters and put them away so they could not harm other women. He gave a life of service.

I was honoured to ask him to be guest speaker at the Royal Military College in Duntroon during my time there. The college hosted him, and he gave us cadets a speech on small-team leadership using his long-term experience in policing.

For all his tough exterior, he genuinely was a man of compassion. It may shock some of you, but my mouth has gotten me in trouble, especially in my youth. Shane had a unique ability to take the shame out of it whilst correcting your ways. He had that special touch.

He was still Shane to the end. No doctor could tell him to stop having his beers, cigarettes or bacon and eggs on the weekend—or during the week, actually. He would live life his way until the end, and he did. It is quite telling that at the end he told my best mate, Angus, not to worry and that he lived a good life. As a man who knew him over the years that I did, I can testify to that.

He was a good man whom I looked up to. He mentored me as a schoolboy all the way to the start of my political career. He was one of the first people I called after the election. The next day, after speaking to my parents, I called Shane to let him know the result, which he said he had already seen, and he was happy.

To Anna, his dear wife, I hope to see you soon and I hope friends and family surround you this week and over the coming weeks, months and years ahead. Anna, you have always been an amazing part of my life, bringing me birthday cakes to school and all the way through. To his eldest son, Tim, you have done him proud. I know he was proud of you. To my dear friend, Angus, I will see you soon. Know that your father can rest knowing he brought up a man of great honour, loyalty, kindness and strength. You may not have the drinking strength of your old man, but you definitely have strength, and he was proud of you for that. I will see you soon, brother.

To Shane, farewell, good officer. You made the world a safer place. Thank you for being the man you were. Thank you for being a mentor throughout my whole life up until the end. I know I am doing you proud by staying here and committing myself to my community. You would have said, 'Make sure you stick it to those lefties', so I will keep doing it. I look forward to being with the family and friends soon.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Drysdale. On behalf of the Assembly, I send condolences to Shane's family and friends.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.