Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



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Debates and Questions



Tuesday 13 May 2025

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGES FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 5 – Assent to Bill Passed in April 2025

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message Number 5 from His Honour the Administrator, notifying assent to the Bill passed in the April meeting of the Assembly. The message is dated 6 May 2025.

Message No 6 – Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have also received Message Number 6 from His Honour the Administrator recommending to the Legislative Assembly a Bill for an Act that authorises an amount to be paid from the Central Holding Authority to the purposes of the agencies or other purposes specified in the Bill for the financial year ending 30 June 2026. The message is dated 9 May 2025.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS
Filming by Media

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, as is the normal practice each year I have given permission for media outlets to record the Treasurer's delivery of the budget speech from the Chamber floor this morning and the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech tomorrow morning.

Dr Caroline Williams – Appointment as Executive Director of Parliamentary Support

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the appointment of Dr Caroline Williams as the Executive Director of Parliamentary Support. Caroline has extensive experience with the Parliament of Victoria. I welcome her to the Department of the Legislative Assembly.

Members: Hear, hear!

REORDER OF BUSINESS
Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing or sessional orders:

1. government business has precedence over Assembly business this morning

2. the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 26, be presented at the same time as the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill, Serial 25, and the Bills be considered together through all stages in the Assembly

3. the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill and the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill have precedence over other business tomorrow morning to allow the Leader of the Opposition's reply to proceed after 10 am.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION (2025–26) BILL
Serial 25
and
REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 26

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025, Serial 25, and table the budget papers. I also present the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 26, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The 2025–26 Northern Territory budget is a budget that restores confidence and rebuilds the Territory. Today's budget puts crime victims first, prioritises law and order and begins the long task of repairing Labor's mess.

The CLP was very clear with Territorians in the lead-up to last year's election that in order for the Territory to rebuild its economy, reduce crime and restore our beautiful lifestyle we need a budget that is centred around reducing waste and prioritising spending on what matters most to Territorians.

For eight years the Territory has suffered under the weight of record debt and economic and fiscal mismanagement. Territorians have suffered underfunded frontline services and infrastructure projects, project costs and timeframe blowouts, businesses closing their doors and people leaving the Territory.

Over the last eight years the Territory has consistently ranked at or near the bottom in CommSec's quarterly State of the States reports. Despite this crisis and Labor's failure, now is not the time for austerity; instead, we must grow our economy by outpacing the nation and playing to our strengths in mining, gas, agriculture, tourism and Defence to benefit all Territorians. Today's budget deals with the situation the Territory is in now, so we can reset and rebuild for tomorrow.

About our fiscal outlook—we inherited deep deficits and mounting debt from Labor. The Territory's net debt position sits at $10.55bn and is projected to rise to $13.97bn by 2028–29. The deficit in the non-financial public sector in 2025–26 will be $1.31bn, down from $1.65bn under Labor in 2024–25.

As a result of our responsible budget measures and reprioritisation, the fiscal deficit is projected to reduce to $531m in 2028–29. The net operating balance for the general government sector is projected to be $235m in deficit in 2025–26, down from $707m in 2024–25 under Labor, and is projected to finally be in surplus from 2027–28. Total revenue for the non-financial public sector is expected to increase to $10.04bn in 2025–26 and rise to $10.55bn by the end of the forward estimates.

Commonwealth revenue is projected to be $7.14bn in 2025–26, and over 70% of the Territory's revenue comes from the Commonwealth. That is not by accident. It reflects the sheer scale of the historic backlog—across infrastructure and services and across the board—left to us by the Commonwealth since self-government. While this Commonwealth funding is vital it is largely to maintain the status quo. What we need from the Commonwealth is nation-building projects, taxation reform and changes to support migration.

Eight years of underinvestment, trickery and over-promising by Labor has left the Territory even more dependent on the Commonwealth to support us just to get essential services and long-overdue projects back on track.

Certainty is the cornerstone of a strong economy, and with certainty comes confidence—confidence to invest, confidence to raise a family and confidence to grow. Since August 2024 we have wasted no time in pulling the levers of government to restore confidence as part of our year of action, certainty and security.

Under Labor the Territory endured average economic growth of just 1% over eight years—less than half of the national average of around 2%—and recorded four separate years of economic decline. The Territory's economy was stuck in neutral.

Our decisive action is already delivering results. Gross state product is forecast to surge by 7.8% in 2025–26, followed by a further 5.9% in 2026–27. Wage growth is steady and expected to average around 3.2% across the forward estimates.

Employment is expected to grow by 0.8% in 2025–26, with steady growth across the forward estimates rising to 1.6% in 2027–28 and 2028–29. Treasury estimates the unemployment rate to be 5% in 2025–26 and steadily fall to 4.5% by the end of the forward estimates. Currently, inflation is the second lowest in the country and is expected to remain around 2.5% across the forward estimates.

Recent data is promising. Residential building approvals are currently the second strongest in the nation and growing. Inflation-adjusted household spending in the Territory rose by 1.6% in the March quarter 2025 and by 4.8% over the year, reaching $2.3bn. That is the strongest result of any jurisdiction across both periods.

According to independent economic forecasts, as at the March quarter 2025, there is up to $9.3bn worth of projects under construction in the Territory, with a further $680m committed and a total project pipeline of $12.9bn.

Our population is now projected to grow with 2,600 new Territorians joining us in 2025–26 and further growth forecast in each year over the forward estimates.

Private sector confidence is back, and industry is keen to get the Territory moving across energy, mining, agriculture and tourism. We are working side by side with businesses through our industry-focused agencies and the Territory Coordinator, through tax relief, land release and streamlined approvals.

Yes, there are global risks. There are volatile energy markets, global inflation, supply chain pressures and geopolitical uncertainty, but the Territory's fundamentals are strong, and under this government we are going for growth.

Madam Speaker, 2025 is our year of action, certainty and security. In March we launched our Rebuilding the Economy: Northern Territory Economic Strategy for 2025 to 2028. We want to outpace the nation and consistently grow the Territory. A larger economy and population will increase scale, drive cost reductions, enhance services and improve labour flexibility, while reducing reliance on the Commonwealth Government.

We need to play to our strengths in order to rebuild the Territory. This means prioritising sectors where the Territory holds comparative advantage and has strong long-term growth prospects, such as energy, Defence, agriculture, mining and tourism.

Economic growth will benefit all Territorians by driving job creation, improving affordability and access to goods and services and increasing government capacity to fund public services. As part of our measures of success, our annual targets include that the Territory's economic growth exceeds national economic growth, population growth exceeds business-as-usual forecasts and the Territory is recognised as the best place to invest.

We promised we would respect Territory taxpayers by reprioritising what Labor left behind to focus and deliver on our three key commitments of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. When we came to government we inherited a string of underfunded frontline services and programs, with funding of up to $350m per year scheduled to cease across the budget and forward estimates. To fill that gap and stay under Labor's so-called debt ceiling we would have had to deliver deep, damaging cuts worth around $1.4bn over the period. We chose a better path—a path of responsibility. We have stabilised Labor's reckless budget without resorting to austerity and without putting the Territory economy at risk. We will not punish Territorians for Labor's failures.

While we have removed Labor's arbitrary debt ceiling, the public sector will not have a licence to spend money. Agencies have been directed to find $20m per year across government in operating savings, focused on reducing consultancies, travel, communications, marketing and other discretionary spending. In lieu of Labor's debt ceiling, the CLP government has introduced a budget repair strategy to address the fiscal position and challenges we inherited. It comprises five key priorities:

- We will grow our own-source revenue through economic development and population growth.
- We will contain employee cost growth by focusing resources to the front line.
- We will engage with the Commonwealth to unlock economic opportunities, ensuring sustainable debt management and supporting regional and remote Territorians.
- We will strengthen policies and processes across government to improve the effectiveness of government spending.
- We will develop a new, contemporary and simplified fiscal strategy focused on realistic and achievable debt management.

This is a budget that delivers targeted reform so we can deliver decisive action.

As part of this budget we have introduced legislative amendments to the *Gaming Control Act 1993*, establishing a 50% tax rate on profits—less GST—from lottery ticket reselling and matching activities under internet gaming agreements. This will standardise the taxation of internet gaming in the Territory and ensure a level playing field for online operators who offer ticket reselling or matched lottery products.

We are also amending the *Racing and Wagering Act 2024* to double the annual tax cap for bookmakers and betting exchanges from one million to two million revenue units starting 1 July 2025. Taxation and royalty revenues are expected to increase by $142m in 2025–26, driven by improved royalties and reforms like the new gaming tax arrangements. That is more funding to invest in safer communities, better services and real economic growth.

When we came to government we inherited an infrastructure program in complete disarray, riddled with stalled projects, unrealistic timelines and ballooning costs. Labor had shamefully announced a record number of projects but did not provide enough cash allocations to deliver many of them. Despite record announcements Labor budgeted to reduce capital works cash allocations only providing time-limited funding, with a reduction of $250m planned for 2025–26 in Labor's final 2024 budget. Labor was so desperate to make headlines that it tricked Territorians into believing projects were coming, knowing full well it had no plan to pay for them. It is like heading to the checkout with a full trolley, knowing you only have cash for a basket and hoping no-one notices as you quietly start putting items back on the shelf.

The former Labor government was good at announcing big-ticket infrastructure, but it was terrible at managing costs or providing the cash to match their splash. Territorians were sold a dream and handed the invoice. Labor did not govern with a strategy; they governed by press release.

Let us take the Darwin ship lift, which was announced in 2015 by the CLP. It was a nation-building project that should have anchored our Defence, maritime and manufacturing industries in the Top End, but Labor turned it into a fiscal disaster. What began as a government commitment of $100m to crowd-in private investment blew out to hundreds of millions of dollars under Labor's watch, yet they still did not fully fund it. They knew the true cost; they just refused to tell Territorians.

This government supports the Defence and maritime sectors, but we will not ignore cost escalations and blowouts like the former government. That is why we have referred the ship lift project to the Public Accounts Committee, so every dollar, decision and delay can be scrutinised and a credible path forward put in place.

It is devastating to think how much Territorians have missed out on by allowing these project costs and delays to run unchecked. It is jobs lost, opportunities missed and growth deferred, not to mention all the other services that could have been supported with that money.

The legacy of Labor's mismanagement is visible in project after project—promises made without proper funding. Let me be clear about what Territorians are now paying for:

- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery of Australia, originally costed at $50m, blew out to over $300m before being re-scoped by the CLP government
- the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass jumped from $61.5m to $160.9m—a $99.4m blowout
- the so-called State Square art gallery, another legacy of Labor's priorities, has surged from $47m to $143m; that is an increase of $96m, and that is a cost that all Territorians now have to bear
- the cost of the new Darwin youth justice centre has risen from $50m to $135.2m—an $85.2m increase
- the Royal Darwin Hospital third floor and mental health unit expansion, initially set at $38m has ballooned to $86.3m—an extra $40.8m
- the Mandorah marine facilities project has grown from $50m to $84.3m—an increase of $34.3m
- the Maningrida Police Station has risen from $16m to $37.4m—an increase of $21.4m
- the John Stokes Square and Nightcliff Police Station project grew from $45m to $63.3m—an $18.3m increase.

We have uncovered the full scale of the mess, and we are now working to fix it. We have scaled back Labor's bloated, undeliverable infrastructure promises and replaced them with a realistic program—one that prioritises delivery on time, on budget and with integrity—because unlike Labor we are not in the business of smoke and mirrors; we are here to get things done.

This budget puts victims first. At the August 2024 election Territorians made it clear that community safety is their top priority, and we have backed that in every day since. And now this budget delivers the investment needed to make that happen—more police on the beat, more beds in Corrections, more resources for our courts and a clear focus on putting victims and the community ahead of offenders. We are unapologetically shifting the focus from the offender's rights to the victim's right to feel safe, because that is what Territorians have asked us to do and what Labor refused to do for eight long years.

We have invested $1.5bn into public order and safety. This is what support looks like for police; this is what support looks like for our courts; this is what support looks like for our Corrections system.

We are delivering:

- $608m for police services, including continued support for the remote policing plan, police aircraft, CCTV monitoring and school-based policing

- $16m to upgrade critical infrastructure and technology at the 000 call centre and a further $2m allocated to boost emergency communications in Central Australia

- $495m for Corrections, with $126m in immediate funding and $176m ongoing to deal with rising prisoner numbers.

Since coming to government we have added over 500 new Corrections beds across the Territory. If you commit a violent act in the Territory you will face consequences, because under this government victims come first.

This budget delivers the most significant and sustained investment in tackling domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) in the Territory's history—$180m over five years and $36m a year ongoing to drive prevention and early intervention. We are funding:

- specialist DFSV courts, starting in Alice Springs and expanding to more sites, so victims are not re-traumatised by the justice system

- new culturally safe offender programs in prisons and communities to stop violence before it escalates again

- men's behaviour change programs in Darwin, Wadeye, Katherine and Alice Springs, because violence is a choice, and it can be changed

- safe houses in remote communities where support is needed most

- a specialist after-hours health response, so survivors are not left alone when they desperately need that help the most

- an expanded Family Safety Framework for those at serious risk of harm or death.

We are backing in frontline services with $26m over five years in additional funding for the incredible organisations that work with survivors. We are building a permanent, integrated workforce support and training system, so this response is strong, skilled and sustainable.

We are also expanding the Circuit Breaker Program, offering wraparound support to at-risk young people and families to prevent domestic, family and sexual violence and youth crime before it happens.

We are embedding a co-responder model in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and remote areas so the response is early, focused and fast, because safety is not negotiable and no-one—no woman, no child and no elder—should be left unprotected from violence.

For too long victims and their families have waited years for justice in a system that prioritised offenders over their rights. This budget ensures our courts are properly resourced to operate efficiently and fairly, putting victims back at the centre of the justice system where they belong.

We are investing $78m in additional funding over the four years for the justice system, strengthening victim support, Legal Aid, community courts and prosecution services. We are fast-tracking the processing of remand cases to reduce backlogs and reduce harm. That is on top of what we have already delivered since coming to government.

Since coming to government, we have wasted no time delivering significant legislative reform. We have introduced Australia's strongest bail laws, and we have passed mandatory minimum sentences for assaults on frontline workers. We have created new criminal offences targeting ram raids and post-and-boast offending. We have expanded police powers under Declan's law to crack down on bail and knife crime. We have introduced tougher public drinking offences to help restore order to our towns and streets.

We have been clear from day one: we will deal with Labor's debt and rebuild the economy. We are delivering on our Rebuilding the Economy strategy, a plan that puts the Territory on the path to long-term growth, job creation and private sector confidence. At its core this strategy is about making the Territory the best place in the nation to live, work, invest and grow a business.

We are delivering $120m for training and higher education; $2m per year for workforce attraction, skilled migration and international education; $88.4m for tourism promotion, including military heritage and interstate campaigns; $6.4m for the Office of the Territory Coordinator to fast-track major projects.

We are getting out of the way by streamlining approvals and reforming merits review to stop third-party interference in petroleum, planning and water development.

As we rebuild the Territory's economy, we are doing so with a clear focus on fairness, growth and fiscal responsibility. That is why from 1 July we are delivering the highest payroll tax-free threshold in the country. Businesses with wage bills between $2.5m and $7.5m will benefit from real and actual relief, saving up to $68,750 per year. That is a significant incentive to invest in local jobs and expand Territory operations. We have also abolished payroll tax on wages paid to more than 3,700 apprentices and trainees, because we want more businesses investing in Territory talent and backing in the next generation of workers and tradies.

We are reducing red tape for charities and not-for-profits, making it easier to claim exemptions from payroll tax and stamp duty, so those organisations can get on with their vital work in our communities.

This budget rewards effort, supports business and ensures the tax system works for all Territorians, not just a few.

We are backing gas. Beetaloo is progressing to production. Empire Energy and Tamboran are currently progressing stimulation and flow-testing for three wells that are expected to provide gas into the Territory market possibly by the end of this year.

We are stimulating the construction industry through supporting home ownership:

- HomeGrown Territory grant, providing up to $50,000 for first homebuyers
- FreshStart grant, providing $30,000 for anyone building or buying new
- $49.6m for enabling infrastructure in Holtze, creating greater Darwin's next suburb.

Since launching our nation-leading home ownership support we have seen an incredible response that is not only helping Territorians into homes, but boosting our economy. More than 600 applications have been received across our First Home Owner Grant and FreshStart programs, injecting over $12.2m into the Territory economy. That includes $7m already paid, supporting first homebuyers, whether building new or buying established, and driving construction and local jobs.

Since the enhanced grants came into effect on 1 October 2024 applications for new builds have surged, with $2.65m in new build grants paid and more than $4.3m in grants approved and pending. It is clear that Territorians are backing our plan, and our plan is backing them by helping more locals own a home, boosting confidence in the construction sector and keeping our economy growing.

We are investing in roads and economic infrastructure—$4.34bn in this year's capital works program, including $289m for the Tanami Road; $223m for Territory national network highway upgrades; $205m for Central Arnhem Road; $181m for Territory gas roads; and $615m for remote housing.

That is a hefty commitment, responsibly delivered, with a focus on regional and remote areas.

To the people of Alice Springs, we hear you. Unlike Labor, we are investing heavily in the heart of Central Australia. This budget delivers real funding, real infrastructure and real support to restore safety, services and confidence in the heart of Australia, Alice Springs. That is why this budget delivers $168.7m to bring back liveability, pride and community safety, delivering projects that support children, strengthen communities and bring back the liveability of this great town and what it is known for. This includes:

- $123.5m for the long-awaited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery—a national cultural landmark and local economic driver

- $14.8m to construct a new Alice Springs town library, expanding access to knowledge, community space and opportunity
- $14.1m for a multi-sports precinct in Gillen, giving local kids and families world-class facilities
- $8.9m for a new multicultural centre, because community pride begins with representation
- $5.7m for the Newland Park skate and play precinct, with $4m contributed from the Commonwealth
- $4.8m for a new Tourism Central Australia headquarters and Visitor Information Centre, strengthening the region's visitor economy
- $450,000 for free pool access at the Alice Springs aquatic centre over summer weekends, backing lifestyle, not just infrastructure.

We saved ANZAC Oval, restoring a local icon and recreational space for all. We are also progressing:

- $11m for subdivision works to release residential land at Kilgariff
- $9.4m for flood mitigation works
- $1.2m to remediate the Shell depot site
- new upgrades at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and youth justice facilities.

The Territory lifestyle is not a luxury; it is a reason to stay. It is why people choose the Territory and why so many choose to build their lives here. From the rolling thunderstorms that blow in only to turn into monsoons—we all cheer for until a week later when our couches mould and we are cursing the humidity—and from being completely humbugged by hundreds of flies in Central Australia to then taking a drive out to the MacDonnell Ranges and being floored by their ancient, breathtaking beauty. That is what this budget offers—protecting what makes the Territory special. We are backing the lifestyle that brings people here and keeps them here.

This budget delivers meaningful cost-of-living relief for households, seniors, families and businesses. Across Australia families are doing it tough, and Territorians are no exception. We will not punish Territorians or public servants for Labor's fiscal recklessness and economic mismanagement. We are delivering real, targeted relief to help Territorians deal with cost-of-living pressures.

Whether you are raising school-age kids, planning your first home or enjoying retirement, we want to make sure you feel supported not just in the good times but especially when it gets hard. This government stands with Territorians, and this budget proves it.

We have delivered over $290m in concessions and subsidies, including:

- $206m in utility concessions and subsidies, capping power price rises at 3% for most customers
- free drivers' licences for 12 months
- no increase to car registration
- $200 Back to School vouchers
- $100 sport vouchers, twice a year
- $100 learn-to-swim vouchers
- free swimming lessons for all primary students across the Territory
- free meningococcal B vaccinations
- early childhood education subsidies of up to $1,560 per child

- seniors can receive over $5,000 a year in combined concessions, and families up to $4,000

- businesses, up to $107,750 in support.

We are backing major events and Territory pride in a big way, with $36.5m invested in the iconic events that make this place come alive. We know Territorians do not just love their lifestyle; they live it. Whether it is the thunder of Supercars in Darwin, the electric glow of Parrtjima in Alice Springs, the roar of Red CentreNATS or the spark of Territory Day fireworks, these events bring Territorians together, celebrate our identity and showcase the very best of the Territory to the rest of the nation.

It is the CLP that will protect fireworks on Territory Day at Mindil Beach. It was the CLP that delivered the Red CentreNATS, the Supercars, launched Parrtjima and built events that instil pride and boost our economy. Under this budget Territorians can be confident that we are backing these iconic events to be bigger, better and brighter than ever. These are not just events; they restore our lifestyle, inject energy into our towns, fill our hotels, support our local businesses and give Territorians something to look forward to, because the Territory is not just a place to live; it is a place to love.

We are also delivering $2m for Aboriginal sport development, up to $75,000 grants for recreational fishing infrastructure and $5.5m for new walking trails in Watarrka National Park.

Good health is the foundation of a strong resilient Territory, and this budget backs it with a record $2.5bn investment in health services across the Territory. We are putting patients first by delivering $1.5bn for hospital services, $313m for primary healthcare, $135m for mental health and $60.3m for alcohol and other drug services. These are not just numbers; they are about Territorians getting the care they need, when and where they need it.

We are also delivering $100m in additional annual funding for the Department of Health to support safer higher-quality services right across the Territory. We are taking action on mental health, funding the new inpatient ward at Royal Darwin Hospital with an additional $16m ongoing for operations and $500,000 for equipment, ahead of its opening in early 2026. No matter where you live, from Nhulunbuy to the Daly or Tennant Creek to the Tiwi, you deserve access to modern, responsive healthcare.

If we want a stronger Territory tomorrow we must invest in our children and young people today. That is why this budget delivers $1.6bn for education and training, because every child in every corner of the Northern Territory deserves a quality education. We are backing learning at every stage, including $120m for vocational training and higher education to make sure young Territorians are equipped for the jobs of the future.

We are also making it easier for Territorians to gain a trade or qualification. This budget continues free TAFE and vocational training for eligible Territorians and up to $1,000 workwear and gear bonuses for first-year apprentices and trainees.

These are not just investments in education; they are investments in opportunity, growth and long-term social and economic success. Whether it is in a preschool in Palmerston, a high school in Katherine or a trade course in Tennant Creek, this government believes in the potential of every student, worker and classroom.

Through the Remote Aboriginal Investment partnership with the Commonwealth we are also delivering $842m in community services and Closing the Gap outcomes.

Just 262 days ago—that is nine months and eleven days—Territorians entrusted the CLP to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique lifestyle. This budget begins the long and necessary task of repairing the mess left behind by Labor.

The CLP has a proud legacy of building the Territory. Today we lay the foundations to rebuild it once again. The Finocchiaro CLP government has the passion, discipline and determination to do the hard work to fix Labor's failures, restore confidence and deliver the Territory's future.

I proudly commend the Bills to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bills read a first time.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS
Alana Kaye College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of international students from Alana Kaye College accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall move that the Assembly resolves that:

1. there be appointed an Estimates Committee of the Legislative Assembly (known as the committee) for the purpose of examining and reporting on the:

   (i) estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill (the Appropriation Bill) and related budget documents

   (ii) Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 26

   (iii) activities, performance, practices and financial management of the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation with reference to those corporations' Statements of Corporate Intent of 2025–26.

2. The membership of the committee will be three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member to be nominated in writing to the Speaker by the relevant Whip or crossbench member. Nominations to the Speaker should occur no later than Monday 19 May 2025.

3. The committee may hold hearings on the following days:

   Tuesday 10 June 2025
   Wednesday 11 June 2025
   Thursday 12 June 2025
   Monday 16 June 2025
   Tuesday 17 June 2025
   Wednesday 18 June 2025
   Thursday 19 June 2025.

4. The total time for the hearings of the committee may not exceed 60 hours.

5. The maximum time of the appearance of the Chief Minister and the Treasurer shall not exceed eight hours. For each other minister and the Speaker the maximum time of their appearance shall not exceed seven hours.

6. The committee will publish a schedule of the days and times of hearings and the times allotted for hearings from ministers, the Speaker and board Chairs by Friday 23 May 2025. The committee may only amend the published schedule with the consent of the Leader of Government Business.

7. The committee shall examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill by portfolios in accordance with an agenda published by the committee, and the proposed expenditure shall be considered on an output-by-output basis for each portfolio unit.

8. All questions should conform to Standing Order 109, and answers will be concise and directly relevant to the question asked.

9. Answers to questions taken on notice during the hearings, or additional information about an answer given by or on behalf of a minister, the Speaker or board Chair, are to be written and given to the Estimates Committee Secretariat by 14 July 2025. Answers or additional information so received are authorised for publication.

10. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is authorised to publish a transcript of the committee proceedings, whether or not it has been edited, as soon as practicable.

11. Evidence taken in public by the committee and documents presented to the committee are deemed to be authorised for publication by the committee unless the committee orders otherwise.

12. At a hearing of the committee the Chair may, after a warning, order any Member of the Assembly whose conduct, in the opinion of the Chair, continues to be disorderly or disruptive, to immediately withdraw from the committee for a period of one hour.

13. Following its second reading the Bill stands referred to the committee for report by 19 June 2025, after which consideration in detail will take place followed by the third reading.

14. The Assembly's routine of business for Thursday 19 June 2025 is:

    (i) 2.30 pm—prayers and acknowledgement of country

    (ii) report from Estimates Committee and consideration of the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025 and the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

15. When the committee's report on the Appropriation Bill is presented, the Assembly shall immediately consider the question that the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill stand as printed and the report of the Estimates Committee be noted.

16. The following time limits shall apply to the debate on this question:

    - ministers, Leader of the Opposition and shadow ministers, 20 minutes
    - any other member, 10 minutes
    - the maximum period for consideration shall be five hours.

17. When the question on the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation Bill is agreed to, the following question is proposed and put immediately: that the remainder of the Bill and the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill stand as printed.

18. When the Bills have been agreed to by the Assembly, their third reading may be taken into consideration immediately.

19. This resolution shall have effect, notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I present an amended notice for General Business notice number 2 standing in my name, that the NT Legislative Assembly:

- acknowledges that gambling and pokies cause significant harm in our community
- recognises that the financial and social costs to our economy and community from gambling and pokies far outweigh any benefits from the Community Benefit Fund
- recognises that the current taxation on gambling profits is woefully inadequate
- calls on the CLP government to:
    - minimise harm from pokies by:
        - introducing precommitment systems to all venues with pokies, including casinos
        - reducing the load-up limit for pokies to $100
    - increase transparency on the gambling industry by:
        - reintroducing mandatory publishing of venue earnings/taxation

  - publishing monthly venue-specific data in line with other jurisdictions
  - releasing the publicly funded NT Gambling Prevalence and Wellbeing Survey report within a month of receipt
- increase revenue for the NT and make online gambling companies pay their fair share of tax by:
  - increasing the tax on gambling corporations using NT bookmaker/betting exchange licences
  - removing the cap on this tax

- improve integrity and accountability to the public by banning all gifts from individuals or companies in the gambling industry to MLAs, their staff and other statutory decision-makers.

PETITION
Petition No 10 – Berrimah Road Duplication Project

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 380 petitioners opposed to the Berrimah Road duplication project. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

We the undersigned are opposed to the Berrimah Road duplication project as this could prove detrimental to the community of Berrimah Road and Haileybury Rendall School and its community.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION TIME

Budget 2025–26 – Territory Debt

Ms UIBO to TREASURER

I acknowledge the Alana Kaye College international students and their accompanying staff. Welcome to Parliament House; I hope you are enjoying your time here.

You have been scathing in your criticism of debt under the former Labor government, and you have now delivered the most expensive budget in Northern Territory history, proving you are the Bill that the Territory cannot afford. You have hooked Territorians with a debt bill that balloons to $14bn within three years, which is $1.5bn more than was forecast. You have no plan to pay down this debt.

How can you look Territorians in the eye and claim responsible fiscal management when you are hooking them in, line and sinker, with growing debt, no budget management plan and no economic vision?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will not take budget advice from the Leader of the Opposition.

I have the Budget 2024–25 papers that Labor produced, which show its fiscal balances from 2023–24 to 2027–28. These figures do not show the unfunded liabilities Labor hid in its budgets so that it did not breach the debt ceiling leading into the last election and did not have to show that in its forward estimates. Labor's fiscal balance was $1.559bn in deficit in 2023–24 and increased to $1.585bn in 2024–25. Today I delivered a budget with a fiscal deficit of only $1.3bn, which is taking into account the funding cliffs Labor left behind for us to find.

There were funding cliffs in education, health, aged care and the domestic and family violence sector. Labor funded things year on year, not showing the amount in the estimates for the outer years. This was to show that it would not breach the debt ceiling.

Our public prosecutors were only funded year on year on 12-month temporary contracts. We were up-front and honest with Territorians and looked at those funding cliffs, the unfunded liabilities that Labor left behind, and we have funded them into the future. We have been open and transparent with our budget, unlike the previous Labor government. We know that things need to be funded into the future; unfortunately that will cost, and it is shown in our budget.

Labor tried to hide things and trick Territorians for eight long years, particularly in its final year, so that it did not show a breach of its self-imposed debt ceiling. Once we were in government I looked at the figures from Treasury, which showed clearly that in the year after the forward estimates—Labor's last budget leading into the election—it would have breached the debt ceiling. We were open and up-front with Territorians and funded the services needed by Territorians leading into the future.

We have not tried to hide those figures; we put them on the books for Territorians to see that we know what our fiscal position is leading into the future. We are not hiding money; we are up-front and open about what we spend and what we need to deliver for every Territorian.

Budget 2025–26 – Action

Dr RAHMAN to TREASURER

This morning you introduced the Finocchiaro government's first budget; I congratulate you. It is the first budget the Territory has seen in almost a decade that confronts our crime crisis and works to address the financial ruin the former Labor government left the Territory in. The people in my electorate of Fong Lim elected me and many of my CLP colleagues because they knew that a change of government was necessary to address Labor's mess. How does the 2025–26 budget make good on our promise to Territorians to take action, reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Finocchiaro CLP government's first budget is above all a law and order budget. We delivered Australia's toughest bail laws and backed them with $1.5bn, which is the largest investment in policing, justice and Corrections in the Territory's history.

We are pairing that firepower with early intervention programs and multiyear support for victims. Domestic violence services, Legal Aid NT and others were left living contract to contract, as I spoke about before in answer to the Leader of the Opposition's last question. Security is a platform for prosperity, and this budget locks it in.

Labor left our economy stuck at barely 1% growth. In less than a year we have slashed red tape, introduced the nation's most competitive payroll tax and helped Territorians build 150 new homes through our FreshStart and HomeGrown Territory grants. Own-source revenue is forecast to rise this year, which is proof that the pie is growing the extra slice that will fund essential services instead of extra debt.

Our budget repair strategy puts the Territory back in surplus by 2027–28. That is real surplus, not Labor's pretend surplus by hiding costs. The now Opposition Leader was in the Labor Budget Cabinet committee making decisions not to provide ongoing funding for domestic, family and sexual violence programs, organisations such as Legal Aid NT and multitudes of other programs which were funded only to June 2025.

It is up to the CLP to fix Labor's mess and expose its hypocrisy and gaslighting of the Northern Territory. We have done that with this budget. We have cleaned up the infrastructure program so that the $1.7bn on the books for 2025–26 is deliverable, on time, on budget and not a fairytale or fallacy.

Cost-of-living relief is front and centre, with more than $290m in concessions that will put $4,060 a year back into family budgets, with extra help for seniors and concession holders.

The CLP helped build the Territory from the first days of self-government, and we are rebuilding it now. We are cracking down on crime, jump-starting growth and making the Territory the best place in the nation to live, work and invest. We want people to come and invest in the Territory; we want the Territory to be the best place to invest in the country, which is what the CLP government is committed to.

Budget 2025–26 reduces crime, rebuilds the economy, restores our lifestyle and works on our year of action, certainty and security.

Budget 2025–26 – Infrastructure

Mr YOUNG to TREASURER

You added an extra $1.5bn to the Territory's debt bill by identifying $20m in budget repair measures. You promised Territorians that you would repair the budget, get debt under control and rebuild the economy. Will you admit that you have failed on all three counts, with this cash splashing and no vision in the budget?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are dealing with Labor's mess. We are dealing with the previous budgets Labor put in place and that it failed to fund programs ongoing. Labor used to spruik in this Chamber a record spend in infrastructure—$5.2bn if I remember, at last year's budget. Out of that, what did Labor fund it with? For that spend on infrastructure—and Labor was supposed to spend $1.2bn on infrastructure—Labor budgeted $300m. That is an $800m or $900m shortfall to deliver on that infrastructure program. How was Labor doing that? It was borrowing money to do it. I make no apologies that we have delivered a budget which, unfortunately, has a significant debt burden.

This debt burden is a legacy of the previous Labor government. The only way we can reduce the debt burden is by axing $1.4bn out of the budget in the forward estimates; that means we would have to sack 4,000 public servants. That is the only way we could save $1.4bn over the next four years. What would that do to the Territory economy? It would kill it. It would devastate the Territory and send us on a spiralling road to oblivion, and this government will not do that. The Finocchiaro CLP government has delivered a budget that supports Territorians; it supports our public sector and deals with crime and the issues on our streets.

Labor previously invested in to police, but failed to invest in the justice system. Now we are having to do the heavy work and heavy lifting to support the justice system that Labor failed to do anything about.

We have more police, and we have invested in them. We have done the hard yards to invest in our correctional services and the justice system; that costs money, and I make no apologies for it.

Looking at the forward estimates we see our public sector debt reducing from $265m to a surplus in the next few years and our non-public sector debt, which is at $1.3bn, reducing in the outer years. The hard work we are doing in this budget to deal with what Labor left behind will give us the opportunity to grow the Territory and drive our economy into the future.

Budget 2025–26 – Community Safety

Mr KERLE to CHIEF MINISTER

The people of Blain want to feel safe, whether it is at home with the family or visiting the local shops. The unacceptable high level of crime in our community continues to be the number one issue raised with me by the good people of Blain. They want to see action; I want to see real action, not just words and media releases, like the previous government had. Can you explain to the House how Budget 2025–26 will place victims first and put community safety above all else?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain's community, like so many others, has a great concern in regard to law and order and community safety. That is why in August last year Territorians overwhelmingly voted for change—including in the Member for Blain's electorate. It is no surprise to anyone that community safety is the number one priority of our government. Do you know why that is? It is because it is the number one priority of Territorians. We are governing for the people on the issues that matter most to them.

I thank the Treasurer and his team for this work in delivering a budget that restores confidence and rebuilds the Territory. On top of righting Labor's wrongs, fixing Labor's mess and dealing with the issues left behind by a government that was like a child in a lolly shop, as a centrepiece of this budget we have made sure that our greatest priority, and the community's, is front and centre in every aspect of our budget.

With $1.5bn being allocated across courts, police and Corrections we are showing that we are deeply committed to driving change, taking action, putting money where our mouth is and making sure our actions speak louder than our words. At the start of this year we stood in front of Territorians and told them that this would be a year of action, certainty and security. That is what Budget 2025 does.

Our police work tirelessly, and we have given them a budget that supports their ability to keep people safe. Our courts have been historically underfunded by Labor and completely ignored, hence the hideous remand times we are seeing in the Local and Supreme Courts. We are backing that with change, including proper funding of Legal Aid to make sure we have more efficient justice in the Northern Territory.

Our Corrections system was buried at the bottom of the Attorney-General's Department for far too long. We pulled it out, stood it alone and gave it a budget that means we will have enough beds for every criminal who dares to perpetrate a crime on a Territorian. We make no apologies for that.

Labor ignored community safety, but we will not; today's budget proves that. We have seen a huge increase in the police budget, taking it to a record $608m. That is up $47m on Labor's budget last year, with a record spend for Corrections. This government is deeply committed to change. The $1.5bn is on top of the money we are spending on the root causes of crime. We are committed to change. This budget delivers certainty and our law and order promises.

Budget 2025–26 – Infrastructure

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

You have completely blown out the Territory budget, with the debt rising to $14bn within three years and no plan to pay it down, yet you managed to take a chainsaw to the Infrastructure budget, cutting a whopping $1.1bn in capital works. That is less funding for roads, schools and hospitals, and it means fewer jobs for Territorians, a stalled economy and worse social outcomes. Please outline for Territorians which critical projects you have decided are not worth investing in?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member talks about a $1.1bn cut to the infrastructure program. The infrastructure program is being funded higher than what Labor had funded it for this year. We had a look at the infrastructure program and at what we had to deliver for Territorians, and we are delivering on legacy issues left by the previous Labor government. The infrastructure spend, if memory serves me correctly, was only to be about $1.2bn.

I give the opposition a lesson. Those opposite used to try to give us lessons when they were in government. What is the difference between 'program' and 'cash'? A program is what you wish to do, and cash is what you can do. We are delivering on our cash.

We looked at the infrastructure program and, yes, we had to make tough decisions. I will tell you why. Labor was governing by press release. Labor members announced that they would deliver huge projects then those projects sat on the infrastructure program …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question clearly is: which projects are you cutting?

Mr YAN: I think I have plenty of time to get to some of those.

Madam SPEAKER: You have, indeed.

Mr YAN: Labor announced all these wonderful projects and left them sitting on the books for years and years. Labor scoped those projects 10 years ago, but things changed. We wondered why projects blew out and dragged on, costing twice and sometimes three times as much as planned. That was because Labor made the announcement, did not allocate any cash to the program, and the projects would sit on the books giving people in the bush and our towns false hope about what they would get. When the former Labor government finally got around to delivering those projects, the costs blew out.

Some of those projects had to be taken off the program, because if we were to deliver those projects they would need to be re-scoped. The scoping Labor did 10 years ago is no longer relevant. If we did not take those projects off the program we would be no better than that lot on the other side, as we would be delivering projects that are out of scope, with timelines and costs that are no longer relevant.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Treasurer failed to announce which infrastructure projects—that is clearly in the question—the government is cutting.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, I think you are answering the question.

Mr YAN: They do not like what they are hearing over there; sometimes the truth hurts. Delivering projects in today's environment, that were scoped and priced 10 years ago, would cause cost blowouts and budget overruns. The Territory's budget is in this position due to Labor's mismanagement of the infrastructure program.

Budget 2025–26 – Corrections

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

In this year of action, certainty and security the CLP government introduced a budget with a strong commitment to ensuring we have a well-supported Corrections system that keeps Territorians safe. Can you outline how this year's budget will ensure that our Corrections system is properly resourced to manage rising prisoner numbers and support broader efforts to reduce reoffending, particularly through investment in prisons, health, domestic violence programs and skill-based industry programs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder is a strong advocate in the rural area for reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

This is the first budget delivered by the Lia Finocchiaro CLP government. We are putting victims first. We are restoring the system that Labor broke. The cornerstone of this budget is law and order, with a record $1.34bn investment in police, Corrections and the court system. Our government is investing in our core services that were neglected for years under Labor.

We are making major investments in Corrections to manage rising prisoner numbers and confront head-on the crime crisis caused by Labor, delivering where Labor failed. The Corrections budget is $495m, with substantial new funding to expand capacity, enhance programs and support community safety. This is an increase of $59m in new money—additional money—to keep the community safe. We are reversing Labor's weak-on-crime legacy with decisive action and historic investment. Of that investment, $25.3m is for adult custodial operations supporting Darwin, Berrimah and Alice Springs, ensuring effective management of our prisoner population.

We are doubling the prisoner health fund to $20m because, unlike Labor, we will not ignore Corrections; we will continue to support it as we move forward. We are not backing down, taking a step backwards or just saying words; we are investing money to strengthen domestic violence offender programs in our prisons because addressing domestic, family and sexual violence takes more than Labor's empty promises.

We have increased funding for Community Corrections by $8.5m to enhance electronic monitoring—again, to keep the community safe—delivering greater supervision of offenders in the community through upgraded systems and increased capacity. In addition, we are fixing Labor's mess and restoring $34.7m of lapsed funding to ensure these essential programs can continue. The previous Labor government locked in programs and did not fund them, to the effect of $34.7m. We have set aside additional funding to manage the growth of our Corrections system because, unlike Labor, we plan ahead. We will make sure there is a bed for every prisoner …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister. Please take your seat.

Budget 2025–26 – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Before the election the now Chief Minister said that she would give unconditional support to our hardworking police. She said, 'They will get whatever they need'. Budget 2025–26 confirms that you are only willing to offer the police a 3% pay increase. How do you reconcile your government's promises to police, with this 3% along with scrapping of their housing entitlements? How will this pathetic offer stop our hardworking police from leaving the Northern Territory when their pay and conditions are not in recognition of the hard work they do?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this year we have eight enterprise agreements. The police enterprise agreement started in February.

I will correct the wrong in the Member for Gwoja's comments regarding housing. We are not removing housing from the police at all. We want to make sure that police are well looked after, as they are in these negotiations. We are still at the table; these negotiations have not finished.

As we have spoken about today, in the budget there is a record $609m for police, which is $47m more than Labor spent. We 100% back our police. They are working hard every day to make sure that Territorians are safe. We will not stop making sure that our police are well supported.

Regarding the housing agreement, police either get a house or $32,000 to go towards a house. We are putting to police that they take this money in Darwin to go toward their house, because we want to make sure that police in the regions and remote areas—where they are needed the most—are supported.

The Member for Gwoja is talking about a furphy; we back our police 100%.

Due to the fiscal outlook left by the previous Labor government—we would have more to negotiate with if we did not have an $11bn debt.

The police have a good negotiation put to them. There is an increase of 3% in their wages. We have asked Police to fund anything higher than 3% from within by finding some efficiencies in the department. We have not only done that for police; it will go ahead for all negotiations.

We have been left a significant debt; there is no money to budget with. The Treasurer highlighted many areas of inefficiencies left to us by the previous government as well as the number of projects that were left without funding.

We will continue to back our police and sit at the negotiating table with them. We will 100% back our police. The negotiations take several offers, and they are all made in good faith.

Budget 2025–26 – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement – Supplementary Question

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Can you make a commitment today that no hardworking Northern Territory police officer's housing entitlement will be worse off under any future agreement?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, no police will be worse off under this agreement. The negotiations are ongoing; this takes many seats at the table. Sometimes that can happen. Several offers have been put forward to police, and it is up to them to go to their members with the best negotiation.

I guarantee that the police in the Territory are supported; we have shown that with a record budget of $608m. On this side of the House we back our hardworking police every day.

Justice System – Update

Mrs ZIO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

People in the Fannie Bay electorate speak to me every day about how, over the last eight years, criminals have had more rights than victims and hardworking Territorians.

Can the Attorney-General update the Assembly on how the Finocchiaro CLP government is strengthening the justice system to reduce crime, ensure offenders face real consequences for their actions and restore community confidence in law and order? What steps have the government taken to reduce court delays, improve prosecution capacity and deliver faster outcomes for victims? How do these reforms compare with the state of the justice system under the former Labor government, which failed to deliver timely justice and left Territorians feeling unsafe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay speaks to her constituents every day, and she was at the NT Law Week event at Parliament House, listening to professionals who work in the justice system. We know from speaking with them, and from watching what happened under the previous Labor government, how terrible things have been in our justice system. There was a crime crisis out of control on our streets; offenders had all the rights, and victims were left to suffer and wait an eternity to get through the system so that they could see justice at the end.

Not only did Labor put the rights of offenders above the rights of victims but it underfunded courts and Corrections because fundamentally they did not believe in Corrections at all. Labor left the courts—which is in the middle of our justice system between police and Corrections—to work harder than they ever have and deal with more criminals than ever because of the crime crisis under Labor. That is all changing under the new Finocchiaro CLP government.

I thank our Treasurer for delivering a budget that places confidence at the centre for Territorians, rebuilds the Territory and puts victims first. Law and order is the most important thing to Territorians and victims. We will fix the justice system bit by bit, because it will take everything to do that.

This is our biggest law and order budget in the Northern Territory's history. It is $1.34bn for police, Corrections and justice, which is an additional $112m. That includes appointing an extra full-time judge and support staff to get through the huge remand numbers and the number of days that offenders are on remand while the victims wait around. It has not been good enough, but we will fix it. This will give the Territory the largest judicial complement in its history; it is groundbreaking for the Northern Territory and is much needed after eight years of a Labor crime crisis.

We are also backing prosecutors by hiring four more, because they too are stretched. We have 20 DPP staff who, under Labor, were on temporary contracts that were renewed every 12 months; they had no certainty. Those skills could have easily walked out, but we are backing them.

We are clearing the backlog with the Targeted Intervention Group – Early Resolution (TIG-ER) team. We have had more than 290 cases looked at, and 87 early guilty pleas were identified under that system. We will keep cleaning up the mess because Territorians deserve it. We are also investing in Victims of Crime—a record spend. I will have more to say on that soon.

Correctional Facilities

Mr GUYULA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL referred to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

ABC reported this week on numerous assaults at the Darwin correctional facilities, which are not fit for purpose. I am also hearing about a lot of physical alterations at the Berrimah correctional facility, with imprisonment rates expected to grow to over 3,000. I am worried that many people will become traumatised and hardened criminals because of jail. What community-led solutions are being funded to alleviate these pressures for the jails?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Mulka is concerned about people who may end up being traumatised by being imprisoned. I hear that frustration, but we will not put the rights of offenders above the rights of victims. If you do the crime and assault someone, we are not worried about the trauma you may have by being in a watch house for a time, or in a correctional facility. We will put the rights of the victims first, because they are also experiencing trauma; that is ongoing trauma, time and again.

To answer your question about Corrections and what is happening at Berrimah I will hand over to the Minister for Corrections, but please know that we will always put the rights of victims above the rights of offenders.

Mr MALEY: Thank you for handing this over, because I like to take the opportunity to talk about our master plan. We inherited a broken Corrections system with an overcrowding legacy caused by years of underfunding by the previous government.

Since 2023 Corrections has relied on police watch houses to manage prisoner numbers; I was determined to change that when we came to office. Prisoners were on mattresses on the floor in watch house holding cells. There was disruption to education and rehabilitation programs because the Labor government broke the Corrections system to such a point that people were getting locked up in watch houses that were not fit for long-term prisoners. A watch house is a watch house—short and sharp.

In the last nine months we have gotten rid of that. We have closed down those watch houses; now they are used for police. We have effectively opened a new prison at Berrimah. There are 510 beds in facilities throughout the Northern Territory, and now there are mattresses on bunks and beds. It is fixing the overcrowding problem.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I just want clarification, as there was an element of Corrections in the answer, but the question was about community-led solutions.

Madam SPEAKER: I think you have made your point, but the minister is attempting to answer the question.

Mr MALEY: We are fixing a broken system caused by the previous Labor government. The 510 beds includes Berrimah, and there is a 96-bed facility in Alice Springs, which was two years overdue. We put these prisoners back into Berrimah where they can get rehabilitation and training programs. The Labor government put them in watch houses—literally in a cell with the lights on—and left them there.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Mr MALEY: They had no plan to fix that, and we have done that.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, take your seat. The member wants you to go to community-led solutions; is that right, Member for Daly?

Mr YOUNG: That was the question. What community-led solutions are being funded? He is not answering the question at all.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has 19 seconds.

Mr MALEY: We have had a vast improvement. There has been an increase in program completion rates; for example, 10 people completed first aid courses. In fact, 671 people went through programs in the last eight months.

Budget 2025–26 – Education

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Budget 2025 provides immediate action to keep our community safe. Territorians can be certain this remains our top priority. On this side of the House we know education is a crucial tool to help target the root causes of crime. Every child has a right to an education, and going to school helps children stay on positive pathways and out of trouble. Can you please outline to the Assembly how the 2025 Education budget is providing significant investment to make sure Territory kids go to school?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina is passionate—as we all are on this side of the House—about education and ensuring that all kids go to school. As the Member for Casuarina rightly said, Budget 2025 is focused on reducing crime, and education plays a key role in addressing the root causes of crime.

We have secured $1.55bn to invest in Education and Training; $12.9m of that will be dedicated to our CLP government's plan to increase school attendance. Unlike Labor we are serious about getting more Territory kids to school. We know it is key to keeping them safe, off the streets and out of trouble.

School attendance will set up students for a better future that does not involve crime and, on completion of their education, a pathway into meaningful employment. Budget 2025 will ensure we have more school attendance officers on the ground across the Territory. As I have spoken about many times, it is law to send your child to school. Our new school attendance officers are working daily with parents informing them of the importance of their child's education.

Parents who repeatedly fail to send their kids to school will be fined $370. It is a long, hard road ahead but we are not shying away from the challenge. Budget 2025 will build on the work we have done in just eight months, which includes establishing 24 school attendance officer positions across the Territory. Seventeen of those positions have been filled, with further recruitment underway. We have passed the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which gives school attendance officers the power to issue compliance and infringement notices.

We have decreased the number of students on the intensive support roll by 413 students in Term 1 2025 compared with the same period in the previous year. We have increased the number of compliance notices issued from 41 to 185 and infringement notices from the measly two under the previous government to 25—when compared with quarter 1 2025. The good news is that 114 compliance notices and four infringement notices were revoked because parents sent their children back to school.

I will give an overview of the former Labor government's shameful legacy in education. We had secret lists of chronically disengaged students who were not included in the official statistics. There were fudged numbers and hidden data. Parents were not being held to account. There were poor attendance rates and literacy levels. The architect of this was the Opposition Leader, who was one of four Education ministers under the previous government. That is shameful.

Our government, with me as minister, is slowly turning this around.

Budget 2025–26 – Environment

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Nowhere in your government's budget is there a climate risk assessment or climate risk framework, as there are in all other state and territory budgets. Our essential industries, such as agriculture, aquaculture and tourism, are highly vulnerable to climate impacts, including extreme heat, flooding and sea level rise. Can you explain to Territorians why your government has not bothered to include any climate risk assessment or adaption framework, as established as best practice in government financial risk management, particularly as your budget has managed to allocate significant funding to the economically suicidal and climate-wrecking gas industry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as the Treasurer outlined today this is a budget of action, certainty and security. Our government is getting on with protecting the environment whilst ensuring that approval timeframes are reduced. We need to get things moving in the Territory. Our $11bn debt is simply eye watering. We cannot run the Territory on hopes and dreams. The way the former Labor government ran the place you would think that is exactly what it was doing. We need to stimulate economic activity across the Northern Territory whilst protecting our environment to ensure that we can all live in this wonderful place we call home.

The people in the Environment department are doing exceptional work; it has been incredible to see their important work. Yesterday I had a couple of visitors to Parliament House: Connor and Dash, two highly trained English springer spaniels from New South Wales. They are parthenium weed sniffer dogs …

Ms Uibo: I bet they dashed out when they heard there was $20m less for the Environment department.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please be quiet.

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I would like the bare minimum of respect in the answer to my question. Can you explain to Territorians why your government has not bothered to include any climate risk assessment or adaption frameworks, as established as best practice in government financial risk management?

Madam SPEAKER: We get the point. Minister, if you can make you response relevant.

Mr BURGOYNE: Our government is investing in important environmental programs across the Northern Territory. We are investing in zero and low-emission energy developments. We have seen the BESS, which is under construction to reduce the amount of gas that we are burning.

This is the legacy left by the former Labor government. Solar farms across the Northern Territory were not operating. We have been able to get those solar farms operating; they are not at operating at full capacity, but we are getting them online to ensure we are reducing our carbon emissions. When we look at our climate impact in the Northern Territory we need to look at exactly what we are trying to achieve.

We have been working with large proponents on carbon capture and storage and how we can support them to achieve these outcomes. It is real development and real money. That is how we will achieve these outcomes. It is how we will protect our environment whilst ensuring we get development happening in the Northern Territory. We make no apology for protecting our environment, yet also ensuring …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate the response about solar farms, but that is not specifically what I am talking about. It is climate risk assessment and adaption frameworks in the budget. They are included in those of other states and territories; why are they not in this budget? He does not know what it is.

Mr BURGOYNE: This Finocchiaro CLP government is ensuring that we are investing in the Northern Territory but also protecting the environment. We will continue to do so into the future. We have spoken about the offsets we are looking at and about the way in which we are seeking to protect the environment. We also know that money does not grow on trees, and we are ensuring that we can get the economy moving.

Ms Uibo: You have to plant a few more trees for your Environment department.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, silence, please.

Budget 2025–26 – Law and Order

Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER

Crime and antisocial behaviour remain serious and ongoing issues in my electorate of Drysdale. Our police do an amazing job protecting our community, but they need more support. Can you outline to the Assembly how Budget 2025–26 will deliver more resources to help police? Importantly, in that moment of greatest need when a Territorian grabs the phone to call 000, how will it provide greater certainty to Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is a tireless advocate for his community. Law and order is the number one priority for the people of Drysdale, like it is for the people of Blain and every other community across the Northern Territory.

That is why Budget 2025–26 delivers confidence and certainty. It is about rebuilding the Territory. Anchored as the cornerstone of this rebuilding budget is law and order to the tune of $1.5bn. That is made up of the record police budget of $608m, which is $47m more than Labor budgeted; additional capital works investments; a fully funded Corrections department with opportunities to build more beds; and a court system that will sustain the demand. That is what we have spent before we even talk about tackling the root causes of crime. That is where we are spending a lot of time and energy because we do not want crime to happen in the first place.

As the Member for Drysdale said, a key part of our budget—and the police budget—is supporting the 000 call centre, our Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre, which deals with 940 calls a day. That is an enormous number of people ringing who are desperate for action on crime, often at the hardest time in their life.

Our Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre at the Peter McAulay Centre is home to St John NT, police and firies. The staff do an incredible job, taking 380,000 calls a year. They need different and bigger facilities, with bigger and better IT solutions. This budget delivers $6.6m in upgrades to the 000 call centre plus a further $9.5m over three years to continue to improve the technology. We need to deliver that important investment so that we can give Territorians, in their darkest hour, the best service and support of our police on the front line.

An exciting part of this investment, Member for Drysdale—not for your community but for Alice Springs—is $2m to have a 000 centre in Alice Springs. This is a commitment we have made for a number of years. It is exciting. It will be delivered as a pilot, starting sometime this year. I look forward to announcing further details. We will have locals, including Aboriginal language speakers in Alice Springs, answering calls from Alice Springs residents—Centralians. We will have people in the Barkly with local expertise and knowledge

I thank the Member for Drysdale for his question; his heart is centred on a safer community, as is today's budget.

Budget 2025–26 – NT Housing

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

The Northern Territory has the highest rates of homelessness in the country, which is a contributing factor to crime and antisocial behaviour. Territorians are feeling the pinch from the cost-of-living pressures. How can you justify a $103m cut to the NT Housing budget, including cuts to urban, remote, government employee, homelands and town camp housing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Northern Territory faces 12 times the national average of homelessness. That is why we are investing, with the federal government, $4bn over 10 years, particularly in remote housing to address this crisis we have faced for many years.

Housing is particularly important for getting children to school, better health and better opportunities for people to get into employment. As a matter of course we are working with the federal government to deliver 270 houses per year in the Northern Territory.

The member suggested that there has been a reduction in the budget. The timing of Commonwealth funding for the Social Housing Accelerator payment program, the Commonwealth and Territory funding for the Barkly Regional Deal and the one-off funding for the Rent Choice program impact on the budget today.

The decrease in the 2025–26 output is primarily due to non-cash adjustments, under Australian accounting standards, relating to buildings and depreciation. Carryover of funding from 2023–24 into 2024–25 for the Remote Housing agreement is partially offset by additional Commonwealth funding under the Housing Australia Future Fund.

The reality is there is no decrease. I highlighted the timing of the funding and the adjustments in accounting standards for building and depreciation. We are getting on with the job. This budget provides action, certainty and security across the board when it comes to housing.

Whilst the Member for Arafura can talk about things that he believes may not be done—or budget reductions—we are getting on with the job of delivering housing. I recently travelled through the Barkly. We are delivering housing across the Barkly. Any suggestion that there will be a reduction in housing is simply misleading this House again. That is what Labor members do. All they want to do is mislead the House about a budget that provides housing and security for Territorians across the board.

Youth Justice Supported Accommodation Facility

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Our government is here for all Territorians, including important regional areas. I had the pleasure yesterday of meeting students from the Central region with the Members for Braitling and Barkly.

I understand that funding was committed five years ago for the design and construction of a youth justice supported accommodation facility in Tennant Creek. As the youth justice system has faced significant challenges and criticism, including the high rates of detention and over-representation of Indigenous young people, can you update the Assembly on the progress of this facility?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama is a strong supporter of community safety, and he is passionate about the agenda of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. I have to correct him, as he made a mistake in his question. It is not five years; it is six years of commitment of talk and no action.

I can announce that now that facility is open. For six long years people in the Barkly had to go without a facility because of the failed Labor government's project management.

I will get onto how much it cost. Heaven forbid, there was a cost blowout—six years late and only 106% over budget; it went from $3.5m up to $7.3m. If you managed that project correctly we could have two of those facilities. Imagine the betterment to the community if we had two facilities, but unfortunately with the previous Labor government's six years of talk, talk, talk, there was no action.

I want to get to the start of that; what caused it and how it came about. The Member for Barkly spoke earlier about the Barkly Regional Deal. That idea came from strong local leadership in 2018 when the former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visited Tennant Creek on the invitation of the previous Mayor of the Barkly who is now the Member for Barkly. It took the mayor and now the CLP government—not the Labor government—to get this facility off the ground. I am sure the youths in Tennant Creek would be thanking the mayor and the CLP minister. Thank you, minister.

The Barkly Regional Deal was struck in 2019 as part of a $78m investment to grow the economy and tackle the serious issues of housing and safety in Tennant Creek. If I ask the Member for Barkly to talk about the Barkly Regional Deal, he could be here all afternoon talking about the failures.

On a serious note, after the Barkly Regional Deal was announced it took three years to secure the land and access. That is the delay and mismanagement of the project by the previous Labor government—106% over budget, years late and all talk with no action.

Budget 2025–26 – Grassroots Prevention Programs

J DAVIS to TREASURER referred to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

During the recent recall of parliament to pass urgent bail laws this parliament committed to addressing the root causes of crime. At that time we heard strong calls from Aboriginal leaders, including Larrakia Nation CEO Michael Rotumah and Northern Land Council Chair Matthew Ryan, who emphasised the need for Aboriginal-led responses to crime.

Your budget includes a $3.3m allocation for grassroots prevention programs, as announced in your media release this morning. Could you detail what these programs will involve and how Aboriginal-led organisations such as Larrakia Nation and the NLC—I follow the question from the Member for Mulka as well—will be engaged in designing and delivering these community-led programs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I cannot go into the detail of what those programs are because they do not sit with my agency. As Treasurer I do the allocations for the budget across the agencies. I can tell you that we have invested in programs to deal with the root causes of crime and, through the Circuit Breaker Program in Children and Families, to work with families to start to break the cycle of domestic and family violence or crime. We are investing heavily in the Circuit Breaker Program, in families and in our kids.

Specifically, for the Member for Johnston, we are committed to working with elders and Aboriginal groups because they can help provide the answers. We do not say that we have all the answers, and we never will. There are people out there who can work with us.

This is not my agency, and I cannot drill down into the detail of what that is. My understanding is that sits with the Deputy Chief Minister and his agency. I will pass to the Deputy Chief Minister to provide you with some further detail.

Mr MALEY: Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to talk about the referrals and programs offered through the Corrections system. The Labor government broke this system, and the CLP government is fixing it.

I will run through some of the services available in the Corrections system: health in prison; in-reach alcohol and other drugs program; Alcoholics Anonymous; Narcotics Anonymous; Drug and Alcohol Services Australia; professional treatment for education …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I am interested specifically in the $3.3m allocation for grassroots prevention programs, if you could outline them.

Mr MALEY: I am talking about programs that break the cycle and the root causes of offending. The previous Labor government put people in watch houses and did not give them access to rehabilitation or educational programs; that will not break the cycle of reoffending. What will break the cycle is if we can get prisoners and young offenders into programs such as Mission Australia …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Johnston asked about the grassroots prevention programs in the budget …

Madam SPEAKER: I think we got that.

Mr PAECH: For the Corrections minister, correctional services are not a grassroots …

Madam SPEAKER: No! You are not here to give a mini speech. The Minister for Corrections has the call …

Mr Paech: It is not grassroots.

Madam SPEAKER: If you could, get onto grassroots community-led solutions, apparently.

Mr MALEY: I am talking about grassroots and breaking the cycle of crime. We are breaking the cycle of crime and giving offenders the opportunity to come out of the prison system a better person so that they do not go back into the Corrections system. That is done through education and rehabilitation.

We have had 29 people commit to the RAGE program, which is a domestic violence program in the last three months, and 35 people commit to the Safe Sober Strong Program. We have the addictive behaviour program …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Budget 2025–26 – Acacia IT System

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for HEALTH

Earlier this year the Treasurer highlighted Labor's true budget trickery, time-limited measures and sleight of hand that hid the true state of finances which, when properly reflected upon, revealed we would breach the debt ceiling.

The Acacia IT system for Health project was plagued by poor management, with costs estimated to be $187m higher than the original budget. There was no long-term funding certainty for NT Health, only time-limited finding injections, some of which expire this month. How is the Finocchiaro CLP government acting to ensure that all Territorians receive the certainty of properly funded, safe, high-quality healthcare?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri and all members on this side of the House are interested in where we are going with Health.

We will provide a record $2.33bn in the NT Health budget to deliver safe and quality health services for Territorians. This is a $273m increase from Labor's 2024–25 budget and forms part of a broader $2.5bn health-related budget for 2025–26. That includes health funding in other agencies, with funds for Corporate and Digital Development for the rollout of Acacia and funds for Corrections for prisoner health services.

Under Labor the NT Health budget deficit grew to regularly exceed $300m per annum and was left unaddressed. For example, in the 2024–25 budget there was a one-off $120m funding arrangement, which is due to expire next month, as the Member for Wanguri said. Labor did not consider how it would pay for the future healthcare needs of Territorians and did not properly fund essential health services and the doctors, nurses and allied health professionals who provide a critical service.

We have been able to address some of the shortfall, with $100m in ongoing funding to ensure that the NT Government's contribution to health services is properly funded. This ongoing funding will assist hospitals and health services across the Territory to continue to operate and not suddenly grind to a halt next month.

The CLP government advocated for and secured an additional $103m from the Australian Government for 2025, while negotiations are finalised for the five-year extension of the National Health Reform Agreement. The Australian Government shortfall equates to $200m per annum for hospital funding, compared with the funding received by other states. We will continue to advocate for our fair share in the five-year agreement. We will continue to engage with the federal Health minister, Mark Butler, to address the inequities in health funding and ensure that Territorians receive similar health funding to those in other states and territories.

Our CLP government promised that 2025 would be a year of action, certainty and security; that is what we are addressing in the NT Health budget. The days of going $300m over budget, like the last two to

three budget cycles under Labor, cannot continue. This is why we are investing an additional $100m per year in the health system. We want to ensure that the best health services are available for Territorians.

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

PAPERS TABLED
Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Inquiry into the Attorney-General Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Attorney-General Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 14 April 2025.

This Bill amends various pieces of legislation within the Attorney-General's Department portfolio. As noted in the explanatory statement, although the amendments are not extensive enough to warrant their own amendment Bills they are nevertheless required to ensure that the legislation is up to date and correct.

The committee received one submission from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), which raised concerns with proposed amendments to the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2014* and the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*. NAAJA opposed the proposed amendments in section 132 of the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act* relating to cost orders and suggested that clause 17 be amended to align provisions with other jurisdictions. However, the committee notes that the amendments envisaged by NAAJA go beyond the scope of the current Bill. NAAJA also sought clarification regarding the proposed amendments in section 7 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*, as set out in clause 23.

Following consideration of the evidence received, the committee is of the view that the Assembly should pass the Bill with no amendments. On behalf of the committee I thank NAAJA for its submission to the inquiry. I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Inquiry into the Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report, Inquiry into the Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 29 April 2025.

Amending the *Local Government Act 2019* and the Local Government (General) Regulations 2021, this Bill seeks to modernise and improve the efficiencies, transparency and overall effectiveness of the local government sector. The proposed amendments are designed to align local government systems and processes with best practice and ensure the sector is more responsive and better suited to the needs of Northern Territory communities.

The committee received six submissions. Whilst submitters were generally supportive of the proposed amendments, clarification was sought regarding the intended operations of various provisions within the Bill. Submitters also put forward a number of suggestions as to how the Bill might be improved.

Following this examination of the Bill and consideration of the evidence received, the committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the Bill with the proposed amendments as set out in recommendations 2 to 7.

Recommendations 2 and 3 propose that the Bill be amended to clarify the ramifications for noncompliance under section 19C and the process for notifying the making of, and giving effect to, determinations based on recommendations of the Local Government Representation Committee.

Recommendations 4 and 5 seek to ensure that the intent of the Bill in relation to filling casual vacancies as set out in clauses 54 and 65 is unambiguous and drafted in a sufficiently clear and precise way.

Recommendations 6 and 7 propose amendments to the explanatory statement to clarify the policy purpose of clause 7 regarding the amendment to the powers of the Local Government Representation Committee and to address a number of typographical errors.

On behalf of the committee I thank all those who provided submissions to the inquiry. I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Inquiry into the Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report, Inquiry into the Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 29 April 2025.

This Bill amends the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*, the Domestic and Family Violence Regulations 2008, the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2006*, the *Victims of Crime Rights and Services Act 2006* and the Victims of Crime Rights and Services Regulations 2010.

The Bill inserts mandatory sentencing provisions for breaches of domestic violence orders; expands the functions of the Victims Register; improves the Victims of Crime assistance scheme application and assessment process; and replaces reference to monetary amounts with reference to revenue units for calculation of the Victims Assistance Fund and levy.

The committee received 21 submissions. All submissions opposed the introduction of mandatory sentencing, with various submissions seeking clarification regarding the intended operation of several provisions within the Bill and putting forward suggestions as to how the Bill could be improved.

Following examination of the Bill and consideration of the evidence received, the committee recommends that the Assembly passes the Bill with the proposed amendments set out in recommendations 3 and 4.

Recommendation 3 proposes that section 24 be amended to provide that a person appointed a victims financial assistance scheme assessor by the Director of the Crime Victims Services Unit must have the skills, qualifications, training and experience to properly perform the functions of the role.

Recommendation 4 proposes that the Bill's explanatory statement be amended to clarify the policy intent and explain the full extent of the amendments to section 24.

In addition to the above, recommendation 2 seeks to ensure the approved victim financial assistance form lodgement process and any associated policy or guidance materials are easily accessible for those who face English and digital literacy barriers and/or digital accessibility challenges.

On behalf of the committee I thank those who provided submissions. The committee also thanks the representatives from the Attorney-General's Department for their advice. I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Inquiry into the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 29 April 2025.

Amending the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* and associated regulations, the Bill makes a number of amendments that seek to improve protections for sacred sites, reduce red tape and improve certainty and processes for economic development.

The committee received 30 submissions to its inquiry. Although submissions were generally supportive of the policy intent of the Bill, concerns were raised in relation to several proposed amendments as currently drafted. Following this examination of the Bill the committee is of the view that the Assembly should pass the Bill with the proposed amendments as set out in recommendations 2 to 4. These recommendations seek to strengthen the legislation and ensure that it is unambiguous and drafted in a sufficiently clear and precise manner.

To ensure that ministerial nominees for members of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority have the capacity to fulfil their obligations as members of the authority, recommendation 2 proposes that section 6 be amended to include criteria or matters that the minister should take into account when nominating members.

To ensure the integrity of the original authority certificate is retained, recommendation 3 proposes that consideration be given to amending the Bill to prove that the substance of the authority certificate is separate from the identity of the holders of the certificate, such that the certificate contains the substance of the given authority, including any conditions, with an addendum that identifies the holders of the certificate.

Acknowledging the importance of ensuring custodians are notified of any authority certificate transfers and the name/s of the holder of the certificate, recommendation 4 proposes that if not covered by an existing process, sections 24A and 24B be amended accordingly.

Although beyond the scope of the current Bill, the committee is of the view that if the Act is to be the subject of further reforms, consideration should be given to contemporisation of the legislation and incorporation of provisions similar to those in section 18 of the Western Australian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*, whereby if the minister becomes aware of new information about an Aboriginal site on land that is the subject of an authority certificate, they may amend, revoke or confirm the authority certificate.

On behalf of the committee I thank all those who made submissions to the inquiry. The committee also thanks Professor Aughterson and the representatives from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet for their advice. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

APPROPRIATION (2025–2026) BILL
Serial 25
and
REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 26

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bills be now read a second time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to support the 2025–26 budget, the CLP government's first budget, which restores confidence and rebuilds the Territory. This budget puts victims first, prioritises law and order and begins the long and tedious task of repairing Labor's mess.

This budget underpins our year of action, certainty and security. It is nothing flashy, but the Treasurer and the team have done an exceptional job with the unbelievable mess left to us by the previous Labor government. Unlike Labor's budgets, this budget charts a responsible and credible path to recovery; it balances financial discipline with delivering what Territorians need today. We are doing that because we need to restore people's confidence in the Territory's finances and their confidence to live, invest, visit and enjoy their lives here. If we are to rebuild the economy we must restore confidence to invest in the Territory.

When we compare this with Labor's last budget and its Treasurer offering no solution to ever-growing debt and the crippled economy it left the difference could not be more stark. Labor literally pushed the Territory off an economic cliff, and there was report after report giving bad prognoses for economic opportunities. Debt was ever-climbing, and we had nothing to show for it. People saw debt go up, yet they could not point to something tangible we had spent the money on. We had time-delayed projects with massive blowouts and little to show for a debt that went from about $2bn in 2016 to $10bn in the last Labor budget.

The Treasurer has been brave and clearly exposed in this budget the depth of deception and trickery Labor was willing to go to fudge the figures and deceive Territorians about what they could expect to enjoy. That smoke and mirrors ended today. As we worked through the budget process we revealed the scale of Labor's deception in terms of getting projects off the ground, delivering programs and having positions such as DPP prosecutors with zero dollars. It was disgusting deceptive behaviour from a Labor government that did everything it could to manage its optics and govern by press release, rather than doing what was in the best interests of Territorians.

The Treasurer is right with his analogy. Labor piled up its shopping trolley but had only enough money to pay for a basket load. Labor knew that it could afford only a basket load, yet it continued to write items on the shopping list, walk around the shop and put things in the trolley, knowing full well it would never be able to run it through the checkout and pay for it. In other words, Labor would never be able to deliver projects because its infrastructure program was nothing more than a wish list to Santa. It was not even that, because there was no money attached. These things would never come true, yet Labor members walked around, looked Territorians in the eyes and promised them infrastructure, community events and projects, continuing to announce things. Just like the shopping list, Labor added them to the bottom to worry about the details another day. Labor would never deliver; there was no money attached. Today's budget exposes that, as it should.

There was $250m in unfunded capital works. It is a bit of a favourite, but the illustration is just too good to go past—this monstrosity out the front of Parliament House; the art gallery those opposite should have built in Alice Springs. People in Alice Springs were promised ATSIAGA and, all the other things it has been called, for more than 10 years. That thing is still not off the ground; a sod has not even been turned because we need to redesign and re-scope it. It is still a picture on a piece of paper to be delivered by a CLP government.

Labor was quick to deliver an art gallery in Darwin, like we needed another one. Next to the Supreme Court a monstrosity is being built, with poles and concrete coming out of the ground right now. That project originally cost $47m and has blown out by just shy of $100m. What is $100m between friends? That had no money attached to it for next year; I do not know what the blokes onsite are thinking, but come July they would not be getting paid under Labor. Apparently, all that reo and concrete would just sit there. It is not even that simple because the contractor could have sued the Territory for breach of contract and get paid damages for failure to pay.

It is an absolute mess; that is how Labor operated. That is not the only project. The Mandorah jetty springs to mind, and there is a range of other things. It is a disgrace. Every year I sat here nauseated by the commentary from the Treasurer—of which there were many, but all were the same—as they stood here and said, 'This is our record infrastructure budget'. Everyone would roll their eyes. It was nonsense because the former Labor government could never deliver it. I do not think Labor ever delivered one of the infrastructure spends announced in its budgets. When Labor started jumping on the program bandwagon, the wheels fell off.

There is $250m worth of projects we have to wrap up because Labor conveniently did not budget for them this year knowing that it would have to pay—so it could do a charade with smoke and mirrors and magic tricks in its last budget and not hit its fake self-imposed debt ceiling. That is the level of the incompetence we saw under a Labor government, which created its artificial plucked-out-of-the-air debt ceiling, then did everything it could to deceive the community so as not to hit it. It beggars belief.

We scrapped the debt ceiling some time ago because it is nonsense. We know that there is no way any government could responsibly impose a $1.4bn cut on Territorians. Inheriting and exposing what we have, we moved forward and reset.

Today's budget is about wrapping up what Labor left behind and setting a new foundation on which we can build moving forward. That is what has happened today.

We are focused on putting the dollars into the budget so that we know what is coming, can make responsible decisions and the community and industry can move forward, seeing where money is being spent.

Building our economy is a flagship pillar for us. As a government we have three jobs we promised we would focus on, which are reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. We have structured our entire government and budget around it. These are the most important things to us because they are the most important things to Territorians.

We have already been hard at work in pulling the levers of government to deliver real change because status quo is not an option. It always makes me chuckle when those opposite say, 'Labor did it like this, so you should do it like this'. Any advice people give on how Labor did something will mean we do exactly the opposite because we cannot follow Labor in any way, shape or form; the Labor way is a one-way ticket off the edge of a cliff and a point of no return. That is not what we will deliver for the Territory. Today we drew a fence on the edge of that cliff. We have security in place warning people of the edge, and we are starting to pull back.

We have already undertaken the incredible reform of payroll tax, which exempts thousands of apprentice and trainee wages, giving tangible relief to small and medium businesses so that they can invest in their businesses, deal with the product and supply increases they are facing and employ more staff. This is real economic reform where it is needed most.

We have already passed the Office of the Territory Coordinator Bill to give us a new way of delivering significant projects in the Territory. This will give us a keen eye and the ability to move in a way we have never seen before, along with a competitive structure in which to attract and facilitate significant projects.

We have abolished third-party merits review. We defunded the EDO and put the money where it can protect our environment rather than lining the pockets of activists who would rather spend that money on lawyers delaying projects in the Northern Territory.

We have cut government red tape. I am excited about the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce delivering its final report to me in the next few weeks.

By October last year—considering the election was in August—we rolled out the country's most attractive and significant home builder scheme in the country. That is unbelievably exciting, and we have already seen such amazing results.

Today, at the Chamber of Commerce and Master Builders lunch, the Treasurer announced that the CLP government will extend those $50,000 and $30,000 grants for another 12 months through to September next year because we want that pipeline of construction stimulus. We want to get more Territorians into home ownership and putting down roots in the Territory. We want the people who are living in other states where they are looking at over $1m for an average first home. Those people are trapped in a system which does not support them. Boy, do we have an opportunity for them! We want them to come and live here; we will support them with real funding opportunities that will go towards their deposit and help them into long-term home ownership.

In March this year we launched our Rebuilding the Economy strategy, which clearly outlines our plans, visions, goals and aspirations for the Northern Territory. That work has begun and is continuing what we need to do to make sure that we are spending …

Mr O'GALLAGHER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Sorry, I am not sure whether it is against standing orders, but there is no member of the opposition or the crossbench listening to this important debate.

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is okay, Member for Karama. I am quite used to Labor not listening to me when it comes to the budget. I am not sure that a Chief Minister ever had the courtesy to listen to one of my budget reply speeches. I cannot wait to hear what the Opposition Leader has to say tomorrow. I will be sitting in my chair looking straight at her, wondering what pearls of wisdom she has for the Northern Territory. Unlike Labor we have some respect, and I will afford her the same opportunity.

The cornerstone of our budget is law and order, which is the single biggest issue in the Northern Territory and the greatest concern for Territorians; therefore, it is the greatest concern for our government. We have been able to carve out $1.5bn, which includes an additional $118m in capital investment for police, courts and Corrections. That is a record police budget of $608m plus capital works, which is $47m more than the previous Labor government's budget.

It is a record investment because we back our men and women in blue. They are out every day cleaning up the streets and being there when Territorians need them most, doing an important and tough job. We are backing them with a budget just like we are backing our hardworking Corrections officers and courts. That triangle is the justice system; you cannot fund one without funding the other.

What we saw under a Labor government was a total decay in funding towards Corrections and the courts. Unfunded Legal Aid and courts were completely broken and bogged down by remand numbers. That is shameful. People were on remand for 100 days in the Local Court and more than 350 days on remand in the Supreme Court. How is that access to justice? How is that justice for victims?

Not only have you been a victim of crime you have the agonising, traumatising experience of sitting around waiting for adjournment after adjournment, delay after delay, just to have your day in court to seek justice for you or your loved one. That is what Labor did to Territorians. On top of the high rates of crime, it retraumatised Territorians, forcing them to deal with an insufferable delay process. That is disgusting. It makes me furious to think that a victim with a case pending in the Supreme Court would sit around for at least a year waiting for it to happen, if they were lucky. That is disgraceful, and we are determined to change it. That is where this money becomes important.

The $1.5bn is on top of what we are doing to address the root causes of crime in the domestic and family violence space which we have delivered a record budget for. It is there for all to see. I do not think anyone can challenge our commitment to that funding. It is locked into the budget as we promised, and it is ready to be delivered.

We are focused on making sure that the key area of focus for Territorians is the key focus for us in this budget. We will not make the same mistakes Labor made. We will not be building things like the Nightcliff Police Station, which served as an insult to a community that really wanted action. Instead it was given a monstrosity of a building that was a total waste of money. People deserve to have taxpayer money spent where it yields a better outcome for them. That is our commitment to Territorians.

As the Minister for Police I am excited about the upgrades to the emergency call centre; we spoke about that in Question Time. I am excited to see how the pilot program goes in Alice Springs for the 000 centre. We first announced that as a commitment to Alice Springs in the 2020 election. It has taken some time to figure out how the model would work and how we can make it efficient and safe. There is a lot of accreditation involved with a 000 centre; all of that federal process must be done. I look forward to announcing when it will start. We will run it as a trial and take the learnings from that to make decisions moving forward. I hope that it will be a game changer for people in Alice Springs.

We have public housing reforms coming up this year with Minister Edgington because people are in public housing—which is a privilege—abusing the system while vulnerable women and children, family and domestic violence victims and elderly people have been on the waitlist for eight-plus years. They would love and cherish the opportunity to have a roof over their head and somewhere to cook a meal for themselves and their families where they can provide a stable environment. That work is being done.

Circuit Breaker has been a terrific success under Minister Cahill, working with police in emergency response and signing family responsibility agreements. There is more work to be done this year on family responsibility agreements so that we can make them enforceable. With over 100 signed, it is a good step in the right direction.

Just like Minister Hersey with education, we are holding parents accountable for their children. The previous Labor government could not bring itself to do that. Even when we were here for an emergency sitting of parliament a couple of weeks ago to pass Australia's toughest bail laws, those opposite did not once mention personal responsibility of criminals or parental responsibility.

According to Labor everything is someone else's problem and fault. That is built into Labor's psyche and is how its ideology is constructed. 'No-one could possibly be responsible for their own actions; everything must be someone else's fault!'—it beggars belief. No-one in the real world can operate like that, but it is the lens Labor sees things through. That is why the Territory is so far off track and is why this budget is a reset. It provides confidence to rebuild the Territory moving forward. We are proud to have delivered that for Territorians.

There are great announcements from my agencies regarding Fire—I stood with Fire & Emergency Services last week. We are fully funding Fire as a standalone agency. Labor split Police and Fire & Emergency Services, making Fire & Emergency Services a standalone agency; we continued that model. You will never believe this when I say it: Labor did not it them to be a standalone agency.

Members interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I know! I knew you would not believe me when I said it. It is hard to believe, but that is what Labor did.

Labor split them up, carved them up and sent them out on their own—'You'll be right, love; no worries.' Labor entered into an EBA with the firies, and none of that was funded. It is a mess. We put in that extra $7m to back Fire & Emergency Services and complete the component of making that an important standalone agency.

From my perspective one of the most exciting parts of what we are doing with Fire & Emergency Services is putting in two fire management officers and two new grassfire units at Tennant Creek to cover the Barkly. That is a significant step forward in our fire and emergency response and mitigation. We all saw the Barkly fires tear through the Territory. Again, Labor ripped funding from Bushfires NT; it has not had someone permanently on the ground. Now we will have two bushfire units working with landowners, communities and stakeholders. It is extremely exciting; I hope that the Member for Barkly and I will be ready for a photo there when it kicks off.

There have been huge problems in the Health budget so we put in extra funding. Education is fully funded, albeit the feds need to come to the party on a few bits and pieces for early education; we are on track to deliver. There is plenty of good news in this budget for everyone. I am proud to lead a team that is focused on our three core areas and how we make sure this budget mops up Labor's mess, allows us to set a foundation to move forward from and ensures we are focused on the areas most important to our community.

Amongst other things this budget delivers on reducing crime; rebuilds our economy; plays to our natural strengths; focuses on key areas of energy, such as gas and solar; focuses on being seen as a Defence partner of choice—the ADF or our allied partners in the United States, Japan, India and others—and delivers on agriculture and tourism. We have huge opportunities in the Territory, and we are focusing our energy where we can have the biggest impact.

Lifestyle is a key part, and a key inhibitor to lifestyle is cost-of-living pressure. The Treasurer outlined around $290m in concessions to Territorians, which range from free immunisations that are otherwise so expensive—many families cannot even contemplate giving their children that opportunity to be vaccinated.

At the Motor Vehicle Registry—the MVR that Territorians love to hate—the people are amazing, but if there is one place no-one ever wants to go it is the MVR. We are making it easier with trailer registration and free drivers' licences—one of the proudest moments for me as Chief Minister.

We have the delivery of the free swimming lessons for primary school-age children. Every child in the Territory needs those critically important swimming and lifesaving skills. No matter where you live, if you are a primary school-age child we are supporting you to have access to that service. You can use the Learn to Swim voucher or the Sports Voucher on other recreational activities rather on a key fundamental skill, such as swimming.

We have senior concessions, and we are capping the increases for power bills to give cost-of-living relief. No matter where you look in this budget there is something for everyone.

We are reinforcing our commitment to lifestyle through iconic events that Territorians enjoy, whether it is the Million Dollar Fish, which the CLP delivered from the beginning; the Masters Games; cricket; BASSINTHEGRASS; Parrtjima; V8 Supercars—and the list goes on—we will support them so that Territorians can have the lifestyle they want to enjoy. That ties into all the work we have done on hunting reserves and the work we continue to do in areas like fishing to make sure the Territory continues to be an amazing place to live, work, visit and invest in.

I wholeheartedly commend the Bill and the budget to Territorians. We look forward to the Estimates process when we will be part of 60 hours of scrutiny on how we are spending the money. I note that the opposition is already doing its best to pick holes in our budget, but this budget is mopping up the opposition's mess and tidying up its leftovers ready to move the Territory forward over the next three-and-a-half years.

It is a strong foundation upon which we can build. It exposes the deceit that is Labor and how it hid the true state of the debt to trick Territorians into believing that their lives would be better under Labor. The election result showed that despite Labor's desperation and deception, Territorians saw through it. They know that actions speak louder than words, and we have been clear that we want Territorians to judge us on our actions. Are their lives better now than they were under Labor? That is the measure of success, just like when it comes to measuring crime. Do people feel safe? Are people again enjoying living in the Territory and do they

love being Territorian again? Are they proud to be Territorian again? There was a period when things were so bad and so low that generational families were packing up and leaving. People were too ashamed to say that they were from the Territory when they went interstate.

We have to put those days behind us and rebuild the Territory's reputation. To do that we must start from a strong baseline position where the fundamentals of life are put in place in this budget. That is why law and order is the cornerstone of it. It is why we are funding health and education properly; tackling the root causes of crime; making sure our justice system, across all three arms, is strong and functional; and why we are backing the Territory and Territorians by making us the best place in the country to do business.

We believe in the innovation and aspirations of Territorians, and we will back them every day of the week to create an environment whereby they make the decisions that are best for their families, their business or their opportunities in life. That is what success looks like—when we create an environment for people to have the freedom and opportunity to achieve their aspirations and dreams for the future and see aspirations and dreams for their children's future.

I thank the Treasurer and Treasury, my Cabinet and the whole of government. Delivering a budget is a huge piece of work. It has not been easy with the way Labor left us. We are a strong and determined government, and we will continue to deliver our key priorities of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle, because that is the job Territorians gave us to do. We will do that work on their behalf as a government elected by the people to deliver their goals and aspirations for a better Territory for everyone.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support the Treasurer's Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill. I speak to my portfolio responsibilities of People, Sport and Culture and other various portfolios.

I recognise the Treasurer and the work of staff in the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of People, Sport and Culture for their tireless effort to produce the budget.

The 2025–26 budget enables the Northern Territory Government to deliver our commitment to restore our lifestyle, rebuild our economy and reduce crime.

In September 2024 I was honoured to take on the role of the Minister for People, Sport and Culture. This is an important role that supports the Northern Territory Government's focus on restoring the Territory's lifestyle. The Department of People, Sport and Culture is one of the newly created agencies and is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, vibrant and healthy community for all Territorians. It promotes active lifestyles through accessible sport and recreation programs; encourages engagement and participation in arts and cultural initiatives; and supports creative expression.

The department ensures that people of all abilities, including those with disabilities or diverse backgrounds and identities, have equitable opportunities to connect, engage and thrive in the Northern Territory's social, cultural and recreational life. It delivers programs for Territorians across various sectors, including veterans; disability; seniors; multicultural affairs; youths; gender equity and diversity; concessions; sports and recreation; libraries and archives; and arts and culture.

Our government is committed to ensuring that veterans and their families get the support and receive the services they need. The Northern Territory has the second-largest veteran community per capita in Australia, with approximately 20,000, including 5,000 Australian Defence Force personnel and 5,000 ex-ADF personnel and their families. We are therefore delivering on our annual investment of $850,000 in Operation Thrive and the Northern Territory's Defence Veterans Strategy.

Operation Thrive supports veterans and their families with transition, employment, education, health and wellbeing, respect and recognition. Under this program we have funded multiple programs and initiatives, including Veterans Community Health and Wellbeing Grants which were awarded in early 2025, with activities and events occurring across February and May 2025. Given their success we are releasing another round of funding before the end of this financial year.

We have funded Operation Resilience, a veteran and partner peer mental health program, which is a collaboration between the Northern Territory Government and GROW NT. Our government is launching a Northern Territory veteran partner and employer program, which is a collaboration between the Northern Territory Government and the Returned & Services League Queensland. We are also funding an education support program for veterans, partners and family members in collaboration with Charles Darwin University. I look forward to updating the House as these programs roll out.

The Northern Territory Government values the strengths and positive contribution of multiculturalism to the social and economic life of the Territory. The Northern Territory Government has long recognised that a significant part of our success is built on the tenacity, skills and entrepreneurship of our multicultural communities, which is why we are committed to ensuring that everyone feels valued and empowered to participate fully in community life through employment, education or simply by building the strong social bonds that make our Territory such a unique and special place. These connections build a stronger, safer and more inclusive Territory where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and succeed. That is why we are investing in multicultural facilities and events that showcase our diversity to provide even more opportunities for everyone to feel valued by embracing our differences and forging meaningful connections.

We will develop a new long-term strategy for the multicultural Territory that is aligned with the Northern Territory Government's priorities to restore the Territory's lifestyle and rebuild the economy. We are investing more than $2m in grants to support programs, events and activities that celebrate and support our multicultural communities and to improve and upgrade multicultural facilities.

Our government aims to strengthen the Territory's regions and provide local amenities for regional Territorians. It is our commitment to establish a multipurpose multicultural facility in Katherine. To honour this promise we are investing $1.5m in delivering a dedicated space where Katherine's multicultural communities can celebrate and share their cultural heritage with the broader community, enhancing the inclusive and vibrant lifestyle of the Northern Territory. This is another election commitment that we will deliver next financial year. I thank the Member for Katherine for taking this commitment to the election.

There is an expression of interest process in place for all the ministerial advisory councils. I look forward to being informed and advised by the new advisory councils for multicultural affairs. We are proud to support major community events, such as the Darwin Harmony Soiree and the Alice Springs Big Day Out in Harmony. We will continue to invest in qualification assessments for newly arrived migrants. The Territory's vibrant multicultural community is valued by our government, and our investment will support our communities and promote the Territory as the place to live.

We are investing $141m in the 2025–26 budget to support disability services in the Northern Territory. About one in eight Territorians, approximately 31,800 people, live with a disability. In addition, figures show that 6,270 Territorians have an active NDIS plan, with more than half of NDIS participants—about 51.4%—in the Northern Territory being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, compared with 7.9% nationally. The Northern Territory Government funds about one-third of the NDIS cost in the Northern Territory, a contribution of around $125m each year, and is committed to making the NDIS work well for Territorians with disabilities. That includes supporting NDIS participants to access their plans and ensuring more choice of providers.

The Finocchiaro CLP government is proud to be delivering certainty and stability for Territorians living with disability, with a total of $11.5m per year allocated as ongoing funding to maintain the Northern Territory's financial contribution to the NDIS. This funding addresses the gap left by the cessation of the Commonwealth's DisabilityCare Australia Fund and ensures that NDIS services remain stable and accessible for the thousands of Territorians who rely on them every day.

This investment is about more than just numbers; it is about providing choice, stability and dignity to individuals and families, and strengthening the disability services workforce across the Territory. This government stands firmly with Territorians with disability. As the Minister for Disability, I am passionate that we ensure they are supported, included and empowered now and into the future.

We are actively working with other Northern Territory agencies and our state, territory and Australian Government colleagues to progress a large and complex reform agenda, including responding to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Review.

On 3 April our government's response to all 222 recommendations from the disability royal commission was released. We have accepted 40 recommendations in full, with others accepted in principle, noted or subject to further consideration. Key areas of focus include strengthening protections and safeguards; improving service access, particularly in remote communities; and promoting inclusion, ensuring that people with disability have equal opportunities to participate fully in society.

A total of $120,000 in ongoing funding has been allocated to ensure face-to-face Auslan interpreting services remain available in the Northern Territory, supporting recommendations of the disability royal commission. We recognise the importance of engagement with the disability community, including those with diverse lived

experiences, to ensure all people with disability experience better outcomes in the future. We have resourced key disability organisations to assist us in this engagement.

Since the release of the final report of the NDIS review, our government has been jointly progressing work with other jurisdictions to respond to the review's recommendations to restore trust, confidence and pride in the NDIS and to ensure the stability of the scheme, placing people with disability at the centre of the NDIS.

I look forward to working with the new minister for NDIS, Hon Mark Butler, and helping to reinforce this government's earlier commitment to host the Disability Reform Ministerial Council meeting in Darwin this June.

Our government is committed to improving the lives of all Territorians living with disability, and the 10-year Northern Territory Disability Strategy Action Plan sets out how we will meet our vision for an inclusive Territory where people with disability are valued, respected and can contribute to the community no matter where they live.

The strategy guides our approach to the development and delivery of services, policies and programs for people with disability. The second action plan under the strategy—2025–29—is under development and will be released later this year, signifying our government's ongoing commitment to better support and improve the lives of Territorians with disability. I look forward to the Northern Territory Disability Ministerial Advisory Committee providing vital advice and feedback to me as the Minister for Disability on key issues impacting Territorians with disability. The committee oversees and monitors the implementation of the strategy and associated action plans. The committee membership reflects the diversity of people from across the Territory, including people with lived experience of physical, intellectual and psychosocial disability.

We are investing in programs and services which celebrate, recognise and create opportunities for people—men, women, seniors and LGBTQIA+ communities—to have a voice and actively engage in the community. Our senior Territorians are some of the most respected members of our community, recognised for their knowledge, experience and the valuable contribution they make to our community.

With our senior population expected to exceed 35,000 by 2035–36 it is important that they feel heard and that the Territory is equipped with the services and supports that allow for a more aged-friendly community. As the seniors peak body for the Northern Territory, the NT Government recognises the significant role that the Council on the Ageing Northern Territory plays in advocating for these services and supports for seniors in the community, ensuring that their rights are safeguarded and society is more inclusive and equitable for them.

In recognising this important service we will provide funding of more than $255,000 per annum to COTA NT until the 2028–29 financial year. This funding is for COTA to deliver peak body services and advice, healthy ageing activities, the Territory Seniors Calendar and NT Grandparents Day. COTA NT also manages the NT Seniors Card program on behalf of the NT Government, overseeing membership, administration and business partnerships so that our seniors can be provided with every opportunity to save on their cost-of-living expenses.

The Northern Territory Seniors Recognition Scheme is guaranteed under this government. The scheme's membership comprises people aged 65 years or over who are Australian citizens, permanent residents or hold a valid Medicare card registered to an NT residential address. Each financial year the scheme provides Territorians with their payment of a $550 prepaid card to spend on services, goods or sports. Targeted support for seniors through the scheme is unique to the Northern Territory. There is no comparable program which solely supports seniors in other jurisdictions.

Our government is also committed to ensuring people are safe and will support any initiatives that combat older person abuse, through $300,000 in grant funding. This includes funding for the Darwin Community Legal Service over the next three years for its successful older persons abuse outreach model and for two new grants to support recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and for one-off services or events to help educate and to prevent and respond to older persons' abuse.

Celebrating older people in the community and their ongoing contributions to family, friends, workplaces and community is important to the Northern Territory Government. That is why each year we look to recognise our older people by holding Seniors Month in August. In 2025–26 we will provide over $63,000 in funding under the Seniors Month Grant Program for organisations to celebrate events and activities as part of Seniors Month.

As announced earlier our EOI process will see a revamped minister's advisory council for senior Territorians. I look forward to welcoming new members who will the bring skills, knowledge and experience that will allow for robust discussions and important advice on issues relating to seniors.

Young people play a vital role in building our community and creating an inclusive society. In this year of action we are investing in the energy, creativity and leadership of young Territorians because their future is our future. Through the NT Youth Strategy we are seeking to build safer, healthier and more connected communities for young people. We will empower our NT youths through the NT Youth Round Table and Northern Territory Youth Week. These initiatives give our young people a platform to advise government on what matters to them and to offer solutions to the issues that impact them.

We are putting resources where they are needed most. This year $8.1m is being invested in the Regional Youth Services program, delivering local after-hours services, safe transport and school holiday programs across six regions.

Our Finocchiaro government is investing in the future and wellbeing of young people with the northern suburbs youth hub in Darwin. The youth hub will provide young people from 10 to 17 years old, their families and community with a safe space to gather and engage in programs and activities and to access support services. I announced last week that the government has proposed the permanent location of the youth hub at Leanyer Recreation Park following community feedback about the previously proposed site at the former Casuarina Fire Station during the 2024 election campaign.

The current drop-in youth space for young people in the northern suburbs is The SHAK, which has been operating out of Sanderson Middle School since October 2021. It is managed by Anglicare. The SHAK provides young people in the northern suburbs with a place to access a range of activities which include sport, learning to cook basic meals and visits from external service providers. The SHAK operates from alternative venues when Sanderson Middle School is unavailable. During April and May this year the program was run out of Leanyer Recreation Park on five different days. During August and November in 2024 a total of 3,904 young people attended The SHAK over 107 sessions, with an average of 36 people attending per day.

The youth hub at Leanyer Recreation Park will enhance the accessibility for young people, strengthen community connections and offer engaging spaces for young people and families. Located within a popular recreational precinct with existing public transport links, the proposed youth hub will be easily accessible for young people and families across Darwin's northern suburbs.

The Australian Government committed $6m for the project, with $5m for the design and construction of the youth hub and $1m to support the relocation of the Darwin Men's Shed to Batten Road in Marrara. By fostering positive engagement and early intervention opportunities, the youth hub will help reduce risks of offending and antisocial behaviour, supporting the Finocchiaro government's priorities to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. The department will undertake public consultation on the new location during June and July this year.

Our government has committed to improving the lives of all Territorians—women and girls, men and boys and gender-diverse people—and to creating an inclusive and safe Northern Territory. We will be developing and investing in a Northern Territory gender equality strategy in the coming year to provide an overarching long-term approach to building a fair, inclusive and safe Northern Territory for all people regardless of gender.

We have committed to support sustained and collaborative approaches across government in partnership with community organisations and individuals to improve outcomes. Through community grants and sponsorship we are investing in programs that seek to address gender inequalities and to support work that improves health and wellbeing, engagement in community, economic security and participation in leadership opportunities for everyone.

Through the Men's Places Policy and Program we are supporting initiatives that encourage Territory men to be positive role models. We are also providing ongoing funding to the NT Working Women's Centre and investing in the research to deepen the understanding of gender inequality in the Northern Territory.

Sport is synonymous with the Northern Territory lifestyle and has always been an integral part of the Territory lifestyle. With shifting social patterns giving rise to active participation, and our diverse population and unique natural environment, the Territory has a real opportunity to maximise participation. We will continue to support the sport and active recreation sector through investment, training and development of programs and

infrastructure. Partnerships created with big sporting bodies, regional councils and community organisations help to develop quality programs and services that aid in creating healthy, active and vibrant communities.

The 2025–26 budget will invest more than $45m in our sports to ensure all Territorians can be active members in their communities. One of this government's key initiatives is to make sport more accessible in regional and remote communities. To support that, the Northern Territory Government has delivered on its election commitment with $2m over four years to NT Cricket to support Aboriginal participation in sports programs across the Northern Territory. This investment will promote positive social outcomes in remote Aboriginal communities and complements broader programs aimed at improving health, wellbeing and community engagement.

I am excited to announce that Darwin will host an AFLW Dreamtime round in August 2025 between Essendon and Richmond. Dreamtime games celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who make up around a third of the Northern Territory's population. It is a popular event in the AFL fixture. An AFLW Dreamtime event of this calibre has the potential to bring together some of the best female footballers in the country to engage with fans and inspiring young girls who dream of being part of the AFLW.

I will have more to say tomorrow on the AFLW commission meeting in Darwin for the first time.

Another major win, previously announced, is to deliver international cricket back to the Northern Territory. In addition to the best of international cricket we will see the cream of international hockey, with the Oceania Cup in September 2025. These sporting events will contribute to our international and trade relations while providing valuable economic and social returns to the Territory. Through strong partnerships with the Australian Sports Commission and the Australian Olympic and Paralympic Committees this government continues to support our best athletes, coaches and officials via the valuable services of the Northern Territory Sports Academy. We were pleased with the uplift of funding received from these Commonwealth bodies to support those programs.

Having well-maintained and accessible sporting facilities plays a major role in Territorians' lifestyle to participate in sports and attend events. This government is developing a master plan for the Marrara sporting precinct, along with a commitment to upgrading community infrastructure for a number of sporting facilities, including Tracy Village sporting precinct, Woodroffe Oval and the commitment to Alice Springs for sporting infrastructure at Centralian Middle School and Jim McConville Oval.

This budget also guarantees investment in the Territory's arts and culture industry, contributing to the creative and cultural economy. Our government values the arts as it enriches the lives of Territorians and strengthens the creative and cultural economy. The CLP funded the operation of art and cultural venues such as the Araluen Arts Centre in Alice Springs, which recently hosted the Archibald Prize and Young Archie awards, attracting 151 submissions from young Territorian artists, showcasing their work.

We have provided additional funding of $2.5m per annum ongoing, to support the operation of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. This will allow MAGNT to activate its facilities and spaces across the Territory and engage Territorians in its rich culture, diverse nature and vibrant history. This highlights that despite rhetoric, Labor failed to deliver certainty and funding to MAGNT by drip-feeding critical funding each year with residual underspends from its larger department. This funding gives MAGNT certainty going forward.

As the Arts minister I am proud to provide the arts community with certainty regarding the five-year $25m funding for delivery of the arts grants program. This year will see $8m to activate arts and cultural opportunities for Territorians across all art forms and regions. In total, 30 leading arts organisations will be able to deliver diverse arts opportunities across all art forms and regions, connecting and enriching the creative and cultural lives of Territorians. This guaranteed funding will deliver the Meeting of Arts Professionals, the annual arts conference that brings together arts and cultural leaders from across the Territory to connect, build partnerships and activate creative opportunities. The CLP government will deliver the NT arts awards into the regions, showcasing and celebrating our top Territory talent to the world.

I am sure that my colleague, the Minister for Education and Training, would agree that our support, in partnership with the Department of Education and Training to deliver the Artists in Schools program across the Northern Territory, fosters student motivation, enhances classroom participation and improves overall attendance and learning. This year we will launch the first five-year action plan—2025–29—of the NT Arts Strategy 2034, informed by community and arts sector feedback. The action plan will guide the Territory in its approach for the development and delivery of services, policies and programs to enrich Territorians' lives and strengthen the creative and cultural economy.

This budget also provides guaranteed $4m funding for the Arts Trail gallery extension program, to be released as design and construction tenders.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr CHARLS: This includes construction of the new Gapuwiyak Culture and Arts centre, delivered in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program, with the formal opening planned for later this year.

A few weeks ago I was pleased to attend the formal opening of the transformation of Godinymayin Yijard Arts and Culture Centre in Katherine. The completion of the expanded stage and the open-air venue, named after the late Balang TE Lewis, for professional outdoor performances is an exciting milestone for the Katherine arts and culture centre, which now boasts more modern facilities for performers and visitors.

Libraries strengthen communities and are a vital hub which encourage learning literacy and an appreciation of culture and creativity. Importantly, they provide free access to resources that everyone can enjoy. Library & Archives NT is the premier public research library and archival organisation of the Northern Territory, dedicated to creating connections with and for communities and to being a trusted steward of Territory memory and history.

The 2025–26 budget is investing $11.3m in Library & Archives NT, which has relocated its library services to Danala, the Charles Darwin Education and Community Precinct in Darwin city. This relocation was completed in March 2025. The co-location of Library & Archives NT and CDU creates a unique lifelong learning environment spanning early childhood to tertiary study and adult learning, and it enables partnership opportunities to drive the generation of new knowledge about the Territory.

The new space is home to Library & Archives NT's long-term exhibition, Meeting Ground: Territory Encounters, which showcases historical and contemporary stories of people and places that have helped shape the Northern Territory. Library & Archives NT's new home is a more modern and useable space. With increased accessibility, new programs and purpose-built facilities, we are confident visitors will enjoy all it has to offer. I encourage everyone to visit the new library, if you have not already, and experience the new services and spaces it offers.

I commend the Treasurer for the 2025–26 budget. The work of my portfolios helps to build a stronger, safer and more inclusive Territory where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and succeed, helping to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore the lifestyle we all cherish.

I thank my staff who support me on the fifth floor; they have been working with me, the Department of People, Sport and Culture and the Treasurer's office to ensure we can deliver what is needed for Territorians.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Mr Deputy Speaker, I fully support the 2025–26 budget. I thank the Chief Minister and Treasurer for delivering a budget that restores confidence and rebuilds the Territory. This is the Finocchiaro CLP government's first budget. It puts victims and the community's safety first, invests in law and order and cements our efforts to repair the mess we inherited from the former Labor government.

When Labor came to power in 2016 the Territory's debt was less than $2bn. Fast-forward eight years, and the former government's fiscal mismanagement, unfunded projects and failure to deliver for Territorians have left us with a projected net debt of close to $14bn by 2028–29—that is more than $1bn added to the Territory's debt for every year the Labor Party held office.

I congratulate the Chief Minister and Treasurer for delivering a practical responsible budget that will right those wrongs and set up the Territory for a better path forward. This government is delivering on the 2025 year of action, certainty and security through budget measures that will rebuild our economy, restore our unique Territory lifestyle and, most importantly, reduce crime.

I was born and raised in the Territory. In my home town of Alice Springs we have seen very little of the $1bn per year that the former Labor government spent, driving up the Territory's debt. Think about that for a second—$8bn over eight years. You would think the streets would be paved with gold, especially in our

major centres, but they most certainly are not. The former government could not even lay bitumen on a road correctly. We had to fix that as well.

Alice Springs largely missed out, with many promises made by the former government that were never fulfilled. Our government is ensuring that the regions are forgotten no more. I grew up feeling safe in my community, enjoying every opportunity our amazing Territory lifestyle had to offer. We came into government in 2024 when long-term Territorians were leaving because they no longer felt safe. I heard this from members of my community, and it was extraordinarily upsetting. Under the former government there were years of neglect, particularly in Central Australia, and it has left a weak-on-crime legacy.

This is why we announced the largest-ever law and order budget in Territory history—$1.5bn for police, Corrections and courts. We have been clear from the beginning that we will do whatever it takes to keep Territorians safe.

This budget impacts each of the agencies I am responsible for. I thank the CEOs and officers within each agency for their hard work in developing the 2025–26 budget.

The Department of Corporate and Digital Development is delivering two significant ICT projects through the 2025–26 budget for NT Police and the Department of Health. These commitments will support our victim-first budget by reinvesting in core services that were neglected for too long under Labor.

Funding of $16m has been provided for the Northern Territory Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre (JESCC). This funding will provide critical improvements to the digital services used by the JESCC and the building works needed to increase operational capacity and modernise the facility.

The digital service improvements will provide functionality to reduce manual data entry, improve data quality, implement mobility tools and increase the situational awareness of the JESCC. Dispatchers will have better information on the location of units that can respond more quickly, and these upgrades will allow the delivery of the 000 SMS service. This will allow vulnerable people to request urgent assistance when they may be unable to make a voice call, which is particularly important in domestic violence situations. Community safety is our number one priority, and these digital upgrades will enable police to respond faster and be more equipped to assist the community. These are real actions to reduce crime and keep Territorians safe.

Budget 2025–26 provides a further $2m to boost emergency communications in Central Australia, with a pilot police communications centre in Alice Springs that will enhance support for police operations in the region. These digital improvements will deliver on our promises to reduce crime and restore our lifestyle by getting first responders there quicker and ensuring we can save lives.

Alice Springs will have its own 000 call centre. I thank Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro for delivering on this promise. It shows that the people of Alice Springs and the electorate of Braitling matter. I toured the centre the other day as it was being set up. Testing will occur later this year to ensure it is ready to be integrated into the call operating system.

Budget 2025–26 allocates $12m over two years to the Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program (Acacia) to ensure that the safe implementation of this digital health system is in all Territory hospitals. The Minister for Health will speak about this later.

The Acacia system was yet another mess left by Labor for us to clean up. With budget blowouts for the Acacia system it is left to us to fix. That is another perfect example of the former government's incompetence and inability to manage Territory funds responsibly. Budget 2025–26 is about fixing the fundamentals to make lasting impactful changes, not quick fixes or temporary solutions. We forget how much of a pivotal role digital services play when it comes to community safety and security. That is why this government has allocated funding to allow for the completion of the system rollout in all Territory hospitals. It is why we will ensure that no lives are put at risk while the system is reimplemented, because for this government the safety of the community comes first.

Through partnerships with the Commonwealth Government we secured funding in Budget 2025–26 to continue efforts to improve regional connectivity across the Territory. It provides $4m for the Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program to pilot new approaches to delivering mobile coverage on regional highways and major roads, as well as $1.9m for the digital connectivity program in partnership with the Department of Social Services to improve mobile connectivity in regional and remote communities.

In the scheme of things, digital connectivity may not be at the forefront of our minds as a necessity, but providing remote residents with a means to contact families and friends, call in an emergency or contact an essential service is crucial. It delivers on our promise to restore our wonderful lifestyle and reduce crime. A co-investment program with Telstra will provide delivery of a new mobile service to Canteen Creek, which is another election commitment on track for delivery this year.

I turn to the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. The dire financial state we inherited from the Labor government means that we have to focus on improving the Territory's bottom line by getting back to basics. This government is focused on rebuilding our economy and increasing private investment. This means helping projects get off the ground through faster, more robust decision-making; supporting the release of land; and managing key threats to our environment, such as weeds.

Our regulatory regime in the Northern Territory has undergone significant reform and is one of the best regimes in the country. Budget 2025–26 supports the onshore gas industry through the allocation of more than $2m in funding for the petroleum unit to deliver timely assessment and approvals processes and to ensure the onshore gas industry is well regulated to meet community expectations.

The gas industry is essential to delivering energy security and economic prosperity for Territorians now and into the future. We have been open about our vision for a stronger, more prosperous Northern Territory. The Beetaloo's enormous potential plays a big role in that vision, with $2m per year ongoing allocated to the Beetaloo regional monitoring program. This program will track and report on biophysical impacts associated with the development of the onshore gas industry in the Beetaloo region.

This is an essential element of ongoing regulation of the industry, ensuring that all risks are correctly evaluated, mitigation measures are adequate and that any corrective actions to manage unforeseen impacts are taken promptly. This monitoring will build on the baseline data collected through the Beetaloo Strategic Regional Environmental and Baseline Assessment (SREBA) completed in 2023. Rather than continuing to increase the department's output appropriation to meet the expected increase in development activity, we are applying a more effective approach by digging deeper and looking at where efficiencies can be applied. The department has already made a great number of regulatory improvements to assessment and approval processes, particularly in the mining and petroleum operations, and has identified further changes to continue to streamline where possible.

This approach delivers dual benefits to the Territory's bottom line by improving approval timeframes for proponents so they can progress their developments and, in turn, generate revenue for the Territory. In reducing the reliance on increased output appropriation by sticking to the basics and fixing the fundamentals that Labor broke we are making it easier to do business in the Territory.

This government made a commitment to tackle the spread of gamba grass in the Top End and manage buffel grass in Central Australia. Budget 2025–26 provides $2.25m for the management of both. Of this amount, $1.5m will go towards the management of weeds and fire on Crown lands, and $750,000 will go to strategic weed management.

On the topic of weeds, yesterday I was introduced to two talented employees who are visiting the Northern Territory to assist in the department's efforts to eradicate parthenium weed, which is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia due to its invasiveness potential, spread and environmental and economic impacts. It is toxic to humans and animals and will have a serious impact on the pastoral industry should it ever spread. These employees—Connor and Dash—are two highly trained and cute springer spaniels from New South Wales. They are visiting the Northern Territory to assist the Weed Management Branch in its efforts to ensure the weed has been eradicated in this area. They will literally be sniffing to find whether there are any weeds left in a certain area. I thank Steve, the handler, and Shelley and Jenny from the rangeland division for the opportunity to meet those talented springer spaniels yesterday. I wish them all the best with their work.

Budget 2025–26 continues the delivery of Commonwealth funding of $4.1m over two years under the priority places initiative towards the MacDonnell Ranges threat abatement scheme. I was fortunate to join the department's Flora and Fauna Division last week as it deployed Felixer feral cat grooming traps in the MacDonnell Ranges to target feral cats. Feral cats predate on threatened species in the area, such as the Central rock-rat and many others. It was fantastic to see the technology up close and hear from the experts in the department as they got to work. I thank Peter from the department for his continued work in this area; he is a passionate person. It is wonderful to see that through the eradication of feral animals we are able to protect our natural environment and ensure that the Central rock-rat, along with other common species throughout the MacDonnell Ranges, are protected.

During my time as Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment I have come to understand and appreciate that enabling infrastructure is a key driver of economic development. By delivering on this we are creating move housing and liveable cities for our population to grow to be sustainable. The department secured funding to subdivide the Sienna Village in my home town of Alice Springs. This project will create three new strategically located lots and, in doing so, will unlock them for potential tourist commercial development by private industry.

My department was instrumental in coordinating and assisting in the approval by the Commonwealth for the development of St Mary's in Alice Springs—$14m straight to the Territory through the Housing Support Program (Priority Works Stream) which will provide much-needed subdivision and accommodation options to the Alice Springs community. I look forward to working with the Minister for Housing Construction to ensure that this vital rollout can occur. Affordable and safe housing is vital for the community's safety and wellbeing.

We have incredibly hardworking individuals across our department. I thank Doug from the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment for getting the Northern Territory Government's proposal up and doing a lot of work to look at how things can be done differently now that we are in government.

That is why we are advocating for the Northern Territory and unlocking new opportunities for housing developments throughout the Northern Territory. This government does not forget about our regions, such as Central Australia. We will always push for better outcomes and safer communities for all Territorians in Central Australia, Tennant Creek, Katherine and the Top End.

Through this same program and advocacy by the department the Commonwealth has committed $11m to upgrade existing infrastructure and support the Farrar West development, which could see about 300 homes built over the coming years. Residential land release negotiations are constantly progressing, with more land releases meaning more opportunities for investment and development in the Northern Territory.

Land is being released in Holtze through a development agreement with the government. The part A enabling infrastructure works are due to be finalised this year, meaning that builders will soon be able to start constructing homes. Lots in stage 1 went on sale earlier this year; the demand was instant, with most lots already sold, mostly to locals; stage 2 lots are already on the market. This tells me that Territorians are putting down roots and building trust in their home town once again.

Now is the perfect time to get into your first new home with our HomeGrown Territory Grants delivering real outcomes all over the Northern Territory. There is $50,000 for first home builders, with home builds increasing from historic lows under the former Labor government. Our government's support for the building industry and getting people into their first home so that they set down roots is a key policy providing real outcomes in the NT. These are more examples of this government getting on with the job and doing what it takes to improve our lifestyle and rebuild the economy.

This budget restores confidence, rebuilds the economy and delivers action where it is needed most. This budget does not just paper over the cracks; it addresses the structural failings we inherited and fixes the fundamentals so that the Territory can grow safely and sustainably. Whether it is stronger digital infrastructure, faster development approvals, more mobile coverage for remote communities or new housing subdivisions in Alice Springs and Darwin, our government is delivering. We are doing the hard work, making responsible decisions and backing Territorians every step of the way.

This government does not make empty announcements; we get on with the job of delivering. We are rebuilding what was broken, restoring what was neglected and investing in the future that Territorians deserve. We know that Territorians have endured tough times in recent years, but this government is working hard every day to ensure that the future under a CLP Finocchiaro government is something we can all look forward to.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

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

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE (COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR) REPEAL BILL
Serial 18

Continued from 19 March 2025.

Mrs HERSEY (Public Service): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, from the outset our Territory Labor opposition condemns the CLP government for repealing this important legislation for Territory workers in our community services sector, which laid the foundations for a scheme that would have allowed some of our lowest-paid Territory workers to carry long service leave entitlements to a different employer within the same community sector.

Under the scheme, which was due to start early next year, community services sector workers would have been entitled to portable long service leave if they had continually worked in the sector for the last 10 years but had moved employers. This is a mean and heartless move by the CLP government, which has shown complete distain for Territory workers since it came to power.

The CLP government has failed to live up to its rhetoric about supporting police and offering them a 3% pay rise. That will likely see a mass exodus of police officers to other states where the pay conditions are much better than in the Northern Territory. This CLP government turns a blind eye to the concerns about the misuse of public funds when it involves its family members, but it is happy to rip away long service leave entitlements from our critical community services sector.

These are entitlements that workers can claim in other jurisdictions. When we look at parity in the Northern Territory, we see that our public service and construction sector workers can already access this entitlement. Other jurisdictions across the country are bringing portable long service leave schemes to their community service workers.

The Chief Minister and the CLP government are winding back the clock in the Territory—some would say back to the future—with the intent of denying our hardworking Territory community services sector workers the same entitlements afforded to them in other parts of the country. There is a dangerous pattern emerging.

At the expense of the community, in just eight months of government the CLP has shown it is interested in supporting only a select few it approves of. You would think its members should have learned their lesson after the Mills–Giles CLP government blunder and the recent federal election results—obviously not.

A key take-out from the Liberal Party's epic loss at the federal election two weeks ago was that it is completely out of touch with women across the country. Which workers will be most impacted in the Northern Territory with the repeal of this legislation? It will be Territory women who work in the community services sector. Up to 78% of workers will miss out on portable long service leave because of the short-sightedness of the CLP by repealing this Act. These are not just any women; in some cases they are the lowest-paid women who deserve much more than this pathetic attempt by the CLP government to save a few bucks. It is abhorrent.

This repeal Bill demonstrates the CLP's complete and utter disdain for women across the Northern Territory, but also shows its complete lack of understanding about what it takes to retain and attract essential and skilled workers in the Territory, particularly in the community services sector.

The CLP botched its response to the closure of the private maternity ward at the Darwin Private Hospital, despite knowing about it since it came to government. The impact on women who were enjoying their pregnancies—they are more stressed in the most stressful time of their life. This was unexpected stress placed on expectant mothers, and women are left in a state of uncertainty and anxiety. They have more questions than answers about their birthing arrangements, and the government has dithered and failed to prioritise this critical issue.

The CLP government is also failing in its negotiations with police officers, with a large percentage of the force actively considering taking a job in another part of the country. The CLP government strikes again, denying some 10,000 community services sector workers their entitlement to portable long service leave. It would have allowed these workers to take a decent and well-earned break from work, and it would retain them in the important community services sector.

We are talking about the 10,000 Territorians working in childcare; family day care; community legal services; crisis assistance and accommodation support services; disability services; health and wellbeing support services; group training services; home care services; recreation services; residential and community aged-care services; respite and day care services; social and community services; welfare services; and youth support and development services. They are our neighbours; the female workers, grandmothers, mothers, sisters, aunties and friends who care for our kids and our parents when they are ageing. They

support our family members with disability, at-risk young people and women fleeing domestic violence—some of the most vulnerable people. These workers will be denied the entitlement to portable long service leave so that they can stay in the sector and continue to support vulnerable Territorians and make a difference.

We are talking about the workers who are the beating heart of the Territory, the soul and backbone of our community services. Apparently it is all too much for the CLP government to bother to allow these people the basic workers' rights and entitlements that would bring them into line with many other Territory workers who already receive portable long service leave. Data shows that 50% of community services workers leave their employer within the first nine years, but remain in the community services sector; therefore, there is a significant call for a portable long service leave scheme. Community services workers deserve the freedom to move between employers without risking their long service leave. That is fair and reasonable.

I will go through the CLP's flimsy rationale for scrapping this scheme. The CLP says that it will be too expensive to set up. The estimated set-up cost for government was between $2m and $4m. The CLP is now saying that those costs are up to $12m. Clearly the CLP government is inflating the numbers to justify its argument and make itself feel a bit better about scrapping the scheme. The reality is that up to $4m is a small price to pay to ensure that 10,000 low-paid Territory workers in the community services sector are paid a basic entitlement that other workers in the Northern Territory enjoy. This entitlement would make a big difference to those workers and their families. It is hard to reconcile the CLP's too-expensive argument when it is throwing around enormous amounts of taxpayer funds to lock-up people without any plan to rehabilitate them or prevent crime in the first place.

The CLP's other argument for repealing this legislation is that it is too expensive for employers. As with any workers' entitlement scheme, employers can and should factor portable long service leave into their normal budgeting and accounting arrangements. This is not an immediate expense; it is an entitlement that accrues over time. Employers set aside long service leave for their workers anyway.

The scheme would have worked as a defined benefits scheme managed by a board, with employers paying a levy quarterly into a central fund workers would be paid out of, which is a fairly standard approach to managing entitlements of this nature. Yes, it would have required some forward planning and maybe some forward thinking—which this government lacks. It would be no different from putting away for workers' long service leave—which takes about seven years anyway—holiday pay, maternity leave or any other leave entitlement that workers in Australia should receive.

Our community services workers deserve the basic entitlement as well as workers in other sectors. Attracting and retaining quality staff is a challenge for businesses and organisations across the Territory; in fact, countrywide and globally it is a challenge. It makes sense for the Northern Territory to offer the same workers' entitlements as several other jurisdictions in the country. That would be a no-brainer for us to remain competitive with other jurisdictions and ensure we attract quality staff to the Northern Territory and keep hardworking employees in the community services sector. It is an investment in our economy, the future and the wellness of our community.

The repeal shows that the CLP's rhetoric about economic growth and boosting our population is disingenuous. Without the right incentives in place to attract and retain workers, all the government says is hot air and empty words. The Australian Services Union, which represents community and disability service workers across the Territory, said:

> *This is a disgraceful decision that undermines the working conditions of dedicated social, disability and community sector workers, the vast majority of whom are women.*
>
> *These workers already face significant challenges due to high workloads, low pay, and job security. Cutting their entitlements and making their working conditions worse will only drive more experienced staff out of the sector and make it even harder to attract new workers.*
>
> *…*
>
> *This is a retrograde step that will push the Northern Territory further behind Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, where PLSL is already in place and widely recognised as a critical tool for retaining skilled workers in these sectors.*

> *Instead of ensuring better job security and fairer conditions for workers, the CLP is stripping away rights and protections from some of the hardest-working people in our community. This decision does nothing to address the real issues facing the sector and simply makes them worse.*
>
> *…*
>
> *This is about fairness. Community, social and disability sector workers deserve the same entitlements as their counterparts in other states. They do some of the toughest jobs in our society, and instead of supporting them, the CLP has chosen to attack their conditions.*

As Unions NT President Cath Hatcher said, when the CLP first announced it would scrap the portable long service leave scheme, on average, women reaching retirement age already have 28% less super than their male counterparts. Why? Because they usually take time out of the workforce to raise their kids or care for ageing parents and do not accrue superannuation during those times. That may be okay if someone stays with the same employer throughout their career, but if they move between employers, portable long service leave is another form of financial protection allowing workers to continue to accumulate long service leave.

The Labor opposition does not support this repeal. We do not support the CLP's short-sightedness and lack of integrity when it comes to supporting workers' rights. We do not support this government's utter lack of regard for some of the hardest-working Territorians. The Territory's community services sector workers deserve this entitlement. They deserve better from the CLP government, which does not care about Territory workers in the community sector.

The Labor opposition does not support this Bill.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I support the repeal of the *Portable Long Service Leave (Community Services Sector) Act 2024*.

I will focus for a moment on the reason for granting employees the entitlement of long service leave. Generally, long service leave is intended to reward the long-term loyalty of an employee to a single employer. It is a recognition of years of continuous employment. For employers, at its core it supports retention of employees, which in turn reduces employee turnover and the associated impact of recruitment and training costs.

For employees it is a thank you for dedication and commitment, for value-adding to an employer's business and being part of an employer's journey as they build their business and deliver services to their community, offering, as it does, an extended fully paid period of leave after 10 years of continuous employment.

Before I go further, I make it clear that our CLP government values the services provided by employees within this sector. Repealing this Act will not affect employees' existing long service leave entitlements or their capacity to accrue long service leave.

Those on the other side have decided that, for the community services sector, long service leave should be an entitlement for simply working in the sector, not for dedicated and continued service to a single employer. A few short months before the 2024 election, with only minimal consultation with industry and businesses operating in the sector, those on the other side decided to rush through this legislation. They ignored the sector's requests for more detailed consultation about the proposed scheme.

They failed to do the work to scope the proposal to identify set-up costs, instead intending to rely on a Treasury loan, we were told, the quantum of which was estimated to have ranged from $4m to $12m. We cannot be sure because the work simply was not done. This is a significant range reflective of the failure to do that work in order to make an informed decision as to the financial impact of introducing the scheme.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given what we have heard from the Treasurer today in tabling the 2025–26 budget, the previous government failed to provide ongoing funding for the operation of the scheme once active, which at best could be described as fiscally irresponsible and, at worst, as a deliberate decision taken not to reveal the true cost of the scheme.

Appallingly, so preoccupied was the Labor government with the belief that by allowing employees to move freely between employers who operated in the community services sector within the Territory and between other jurisdictions, it failed to consider the financial impact this scheme would have on employers.

Anyone who has operated a business or organisation that was not a sole operator business or organisation knows that long service leave can play a factor in encouraging an employee to remain long term with a single employer. They also know that longevity of employment is fluid. It is for that reason most employers do not commence providing for long service leave for employees in their financial statements until the employee has completed five years of service, as post this timeframe the likelihood of an employee remaining with an employer and becoming entitled to long service leave increases significantly.

As at February 2024 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that over half of those in the workforce—some 57%—had been employed in their current job for less than five years. About 19% had been in their job for less than one year, with the proportion of those in their current job between one and four years rising from 35% in 2023 to 39% in 2024. This is a clear demonstration that on average people do not stick around in any sector.

The introduction of this Act meant that employers would need to commence paying the cost of long service leave, by way of a levy, from the day an employee commenced working with them. This would occur even if they never had an employee remain with them for the prerequisite 10 years to qualify for long service leave. Imagine being a small-to-medium business owner bearing the costs of recruiting and training employees as well as the cost of a long service scheme they may never have cause to access.

There is only one way employers could afford this scheme, which would be to pass on the costs to their consumers. It would not only be the cost of the levy; compliance costs would be incurred and would need to be passed on.

The Territory's existing long service leave entitlements are available to all employees in the Territory. The simple reality is that despite what those on the other side would have the community believe, many people take up roles with service providers in the community services sector and remain with their employer for the required period to qualify for long service leave.

I have had the experience of working with people in the disability, healthcare and childcare sectors who worked in their jobs not just for 10 years but for 15 and 20 years with the same employer and received their long service leave entitlements; most of them were women.

The facts are simple: if those on the others side truly believed this was a necessary scheme, they had eight years to act, but they did not. Instead, they rushed it through in the twilight of their time in government.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, we have heard in this Chamber that this government is committed to growing our economy, workforce and population. To do that, supporting our community sector workers is exactly what we need to do; having a robust and fair portable long service leave scheme in the Northern Territory would contribute to that. Equally importantly, we must commit to developing it properly so that it works for the workers, employers and the Territory as a whole.

The Northern Territory depends on the community sector. It is the second-largest employer in the Northern Territory after the public service. This is not mining or gas; it is community services. The people working in this sector are the backbone of our towns and remote communities. They are our teachers, aged-care workers, disability support staff, domestic violence workers, doctors, nurses and many others. They are the ones who keep our communities functioning and provide critical services to our most vulnerable; they keep our Territory moving forward.

We all know they are under strain. These roles are demanding, they are often under-resourced, and the burnout rate is high. While many people are initially attracted to work in the Northern Territory, retaining these skilled workers over the long term is a challenge. That is where portable long service leave can become crucial.

I have had the privilege of working with and for community service organisations for decades, and I have seen firsthand the inequitable working conditions that many of our community sector workers endure. Many of these workers are women, often in low-paid but essential roles. Their efforts go unrecognised in many ways, including in the form of long service leave.

Community service workers deserve the same rights as workers in the public service. They deserve the right to have their years of service in the community sector counted, regardless of which employer they are working for. They deserve portable long service leave to maintain their entitlements when they change employers. The reality is that changing employers in the community services sector can be by choice, but equally as often it is because of funding cuts outside their control.

When community sector workers change jobs, even if they stay in the same sector and in the same community, they lose their long service leave entitlements. This policy punishes the very workers we should be trying to hold onto: the ones who are the backbone of our community sector and community. The sector cannot afford to keep losing skilled experienced people.

A well-designed portable long service leave scheme would solve that. It recognises continuous service regardless of the employer, gives workers a reason to stay long term in the Northern Territory and shows that we value their commitment. It would encourage more skilled workers to consider the Territory as a place where they can build a sustainable career. I have heard from this government that it is a priority to attract more people to the Northern Territory. A properly implemented portable long service scheme would also increase the Territory's ability to compete with other regions in attracting and retaining talented professionals, which is critical as we work towards the goal of growing our population and economy.

Other states, soon to be five of them across Australia, have already implemented these schemes. They did not rush them; they worked with peak bodies, unions and employers over several years to design a scheme that would be affordable, practical and suited to the unique needs of the sector. These schemes have been developed with consultation and care, taking into account the kinds of issues that have been raised by members in this House, and they have been rolled out in a way that has worked properly for all involved.

In the Northern Territory we can do the same. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we can learn from those states, work collaboratively with the sector and develop a scheme that meets the needs of workers and employers. For that to happen we need a government truly committed to getting it right and not to just getting rid of a scheme or rushing it without proper consultation.

We have been told that the government's plan to support workforce growth is a website, a PALM scheme expansion, more migrant workers and some investment in training; that is not enough. None of it addresses retention or supports the people who are already here doing the work under pressure. If the government is committed to repealing this Act—I agree that the current model is flawed—I cannot support that repeal unless there is a clear public commitment to developing a scheme that will work. We need a scheme that is built with the community sector for the community sector. It needs to address the unique needs of our workers and communities, support retention and help deliver what we all want, which is a stronger Northern Territory population, a more robust economy and better outcomes for all Territorians.

Repealing this Bill without a plan for what comes next will be irresponsible. It will be abandoning the workers and undermining the work that needs to be done to ensure we have a strong supported workforce. Repealing this Act needs to come with a commitment to getting it right, through genuine consultation, careful planning and a shared purpose. We owe it to our workers and to the future of the Territory to make changes and put in place things that are effective and sustainable.

I cannot support repealing the Act without a clear commitment to developing a portable long service leave scheme that will work across the Territory. Let us ensure that we provide the support and recognition our workers deserve and that the Northern Territory grows economically and socially.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I speak against the government's proposal to repeal the portable long service leave scheme in the Northern Territory. This decision reflects not only a failure of policy and process, but a failure to consult, listen and govern in the public interest. This is a textbook case of what happens when the government acts without proper consultation, without listening to those on the front lines and without engaging the people most affected by its decisions. The result is bad policy, wasted money and a weaker Northern Territory.

I want to be clear that this repeal is not reform; it is a retreat. It is a regressive step that undermines worker protections in a sector already stretched thin, underpaid and battling a revolving door of short-term contracts and funding insecurity. Portable long service leave exists to protect workers in sectors characterised by high mobility, like community services, aged care, disability support, early childhood education and more. These essential services support our communities every day. The people who deliver them do so with commitment, professionalism and heart, despite low wages, high workloads and frequent contract insecurity.

Traditional long service leave systems assume that you stay with a single employer for seven to 10 years, but that is not the reality for workers in the Territory's social and community services sector. Contracts change, funding runs out and workers are forced to move between employers even when they remain dedicated to the same work and the same communities. Portable long service leave is a fair and practical way of ensuring these workers are not punished for the instability of the sector.

I recognise there are problems with the current scheme. The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS), representing dozens of community organisations, identified serious administrative and financial barriers to the scheme's success: compliance is difficult; the levy has created funding pressure; and the system does not reflect the unique employment patterns in the Territory, especially for First Nations organisations and those in remote areas. However, the answer to this problem is not to scrap the scheme entirely; it is to fix it. That is what a responsible government that cares about our essential community workers would do.

As NTCOSS stated publicly, 'While administrative challenges exist, the concept of portable long service leave remains fundamentally important for retaining and valuing the community services workforce. The solution is reform, not repeal.' This is the view of the peak community sector body in the Northern Territory. It is not just NTCOSS. CatholicCare NT, a major provider of services across the Territory, said, 'If the NT Government is serious about workforce retention in the social services sector, portable long service leave must be seen not as a cost burden but as an investment in people'.

These organisations understand what is at stake. They see firsthand how hard it is to recruit and retain skilled staff, particularly in regional and remote communities. They know that offering real entitlements like portable long service leave can be a meaningful incentive for staff to stay in the Territory and in their professions for longer.

This is not a fringe issue; it is core economic planning. The Territory suffers from some of the highest workforce turnover in the country. According to NT Government figures, turnover in the public sector exceeds 40% annually in some areas. Our community sector organisations report even higher rates, particularly in remote locations. The cost of turnover is not just a few exit interviews and job applications; it means lost relationships, lost experience, disrupted services and serious financial costs, conservatively estimated at over $20,000 per lost worker when recruitment, training and lost productivity are included.

If we are serious about reducing these costs and building a stable and resilient workforce in the Territory, portable long service leave is one of the tools we need to keep. It is galling to me to hear those opposite cheering on this Bill just because they are so focused on trying to score points against Labor. Yes, the scheme was poorly planned; the former government did not listen to feedback from the sector on what the sector wanted. Now the CLP is equally ignoring the sector by throwing out the scheme. That is not what the sector is saying.

Those opposite trying to frame it as a situation where the only ones who deserve long service leave are those who manage to stay with one employer is insulting to workers. I know this because they tell me. It shows how removed from workers and reality the CLP government is. There are so many reasons people are forced to move through employers that are out of their control. These tireless workers should not be punished for that.

I reject the idea that the current system should simply be thrown out. We need a government willing to do the work and sit down with community organisations, unions, First Nations leaders and workers to design a better model together.

This is why I am calling for the reform, not repeal, approach. I will outline what this means in practical terms.

First, I call for the establishment of a multistakeholder reform taskforce. This taskforce would include representatives from community sector organisations, unions, employer bodies, Aboriginal organisations and workers from urban and remote communities and the relevant government departments.

The taskforce would be tasked with reviewing the current scheme and producing a set of concrete reform recommendations within an eight-month period, including an initial two-month establishment period to secure resources, develop terms of reference and appoint members; a three-month consultation period with particular focus on remote communities and Aboriginal workers; and a final three-month reform design phase to produce a consensus-based model for legislation and implementation. This is not a radical idea; it is best-practice governance—collaborative, transparent and evidence based.

Second, we should be implementing tiered administrative requirements to ease the burden on smaller and remote organisations. That means simplified compliance processes for small or volunteer-run organisations; technology solutions that reduce paperwork and allow for offline data collection and periodic uploads, which is particularly important for service providers in communities with limited internet access; and dedicated government support for systems navigation and compliance.

Third, the funding mechanism must be redesigned. The government should explore differential levy rates based on the size and capacity of organisations. Also, funding agreements between the government and service providers should include the cost of the levy so that entitlements for workers are not pitted against service delivery.

Government contracts must be realistic about the cost of doing ethical business.

Fourth, the scheme must be tailored to reflect the real-world employment patterns in the Territory. This includes recognising and supporting part-time and casual workers who frequently move between roles; female-dominated sectors and the ongoing gender pay gap; the high rates of insecure employment in care and support work; and the mobility and complexity of employment in remote communities.

The current scheme has not delivered on its promise; rather than fixing it this government is walking away. That is a failure of leadership. Meanwhile, other jurisdictions are moving forward. In Queensland, the ACT and Victoria portable long service schemes are in place for community service workers, construction workers, cleaners and security guards. Those governments recognise that worker protection and workforce stability are not contradictory goals; they go hand in hand.

We cannot ignore the gender implications of this repeal. Community sector work is overwhelmingly carried out by women. In the Territory over 80% of workers in care-related services are women. To repeal a scheme designed to provide these women with access to long service entitlements is to deepen the existing gender inequalities in our workforce.

A reform scheme would be a step towards addressing structural disadvantage. Repealing it in its entirety is a step backwards. I am unsurprised but disappointed that the CLP is doing this.

NT Greens is committed to economic fairness, social justice and evidence-based reform. We believe that a reformed portable long service scheme must be the central part of a broader Territory workforce retention strategy, addressing the high cost of turnover and incentivising long-term commitment to the NT across sectors.

That strategy should include graduated entitlements that increase with longer service to the Territory; support for training, development and professional pathways within community and care sectors; and a legislative framework that treats workforce investment as a public good, not just a budget line item. We must look beyond the immediate bottom line and ask ourselves what kind of Territory we want. Do we want a place where care workers are valued, community organisations are supported and people see a future in staying and serving the NT? Or do we want a system that rewards short-term thinking, cuts programs when they get hard and tells workers that their commitment does not count?

This is about values. The Greens believes workers deserve fair entitlements, no matter which organisation signs their pay cheque. We believe the Territory needs a stable workforce and that reforming this scheme is smarter, cheaper and fairer than throwing it away.

This repeal is short-sighted, wasteful, and it will hurt the people we rely on the most. I call on this government to halt the repeal. Go back to the table, bring everyone in and do the work. Workers in the Northern Territory deserve better than being told that their years of service do not matter because they were forced to change employers.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support the Portable Long Service Leave (Community Services Sector) Repeal Bill 2025. Long service leave has been a cornerstone of Australian industrial relations since its inception in Victoria during the 1860s. Originally conceived to allow employees, particularly those from abroad, to return to their countries of origin once each decade, long service leave was a practical and principled innovation. It served to reward enduring loyalty to a single employer while simultaneously rejuvenating the workforce and preserving institutional knowledge.

Over time its purpose has remained clear: to provide a well-earned period of rest following extended, dedicated service. While initially confined to the public sector, long service leave was progressively extended to the private sector in the 1940s through conciliation and arbitration, embedding entitlements in industrial awards, based on continuous employment. It stands today as a testament to the enduring value of long-term commitment in the Australian workplace.

Our comprehensive review reveals fundamental flaws within the Act. Firstly, its financial underpinning was tenuous at best. Reliance was placed upon a Treasury loan merely to cover an estimated set of costs which

ranged between $4m and $12m. Crucially, no ongoing funding had been assigned for its operation once established. This lack of sustainable financial architecture rendered the scheme inherently unstable from its inception. The Act was designed to be funded through a wage-based levy, and the CLP's analysis indicates this levy was estimated to amount to about $2,000 per employee per year. This is similar in nature to payroll tax yet, critically, it lacked a minimum wages threshold, impacting businesses disproportionately.

The total financial impact upon community services sector businesses within the Territory was estimated to be about $20m per annum. This financial imposition constitutes a significant and unwelcomed additional burden. The scheme would have demonstrably increased costs for businesses across the vital community services sector, including childcare, aged care, disability services, mental health services, family and domestic violence support and community legal services. Many of these organisations are not-for-profit and operate on already tight margins. The documentation makes it plain that employers would also face onerous administrative requirements, including maintaining detailed records and submitting forms on a quarterly basis.

The most concerning consequence of this ill-conceived scheme is its detrimental impact on Territorians. It is clear that there is limited capacity within the sector to absorb these additional costs. Consequently, these expenses would be passed on to the consumer in the form of higher charges. Childcare centres have indicated the scheme would cost them an additional $50,000 per year, a cost that would invariably be passed directly on to parents in the form of increased fees.

When government policy leads to increased costs on businesses the logical and often unavoidable outcome is that businesses pass on those costs to consumers. This is particularly concerning in our current economic climate. Territorians would have ultimately borne the cost burden of this scheme, being forced to pay more for essential services like childcare at a time when many families are already struggling.

This Act would add to the cost of living when finances are already tight, directly contradicting the objective of reducing the cost-of-living burden for families.

The opposition may claim that its scheme aimed to reduce the cost of living for Territorians, but the evidence points to the opposite effect of passing on a levy as higher service costs undeniably increase the financial pressures on families utilising these services.

Repealing this Act before its commencement is not an act of undoing a flawed policy but a necessary step to remove additional financial, regulatory and administrative burden from community service providers, allowing businesses to operate without this costly and unsustainable levy. Without this burden, businesses will be able to instead invest in growth, job creation, workforce development and service delivery to Territorians.

This decision reflects the CLP government's commitment to making the Territory a place where businesses want to come and operate. Alleviating these burdens fosters an environment conducive to creating more job opportunities. We want people to move to the Territory and stay here, knowing that employment opportunities are available. We want people to stay and invest in the Territory.

Repealing the legislation before its enactment removes the financial, regulatory and administrative responsibility it would implement. This enables the CLP government to focus on its three key priorities to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

It is essential that a levy does not curtail services or risk businesses withdrawing from the Territory market, which is a real risk if service providers were to be unable to recover costs through increased charges or government funding. It is imperative to reassure our valued workforce that this repeal does not affect employees' existing long service leave entitlements. Long service leave is secured under enterprise agreements or the *Long Service Leave Act*, which remains in place. Employees who remain with their employer will continue to be eligible for long service leave under this existing framework.

Our government profoundly recognises the incredible and valuable contribution our frontline workers provide to the Northern Territory. This repeal does not reflect a lack of appreciation for their service; rather, it is a necessary corrective action to a poorly conceived and unimplemented scheme that would have placed undue pressure on the sector they serve and the families they support.

In addition, this may put pressure on existing packages for the clients with disabilities, which would put pressure on employers and could further impact the quality of the services they deliver to clients.

By repealing this Act we are demonstrating responsible governance. We are ensuring that our community services sector remains viable, affordable and capable of delivering essential services without the added unsustainable burden of this trumped up portable long service leave scheme. This is a proven measure to protect jobs, support businesses and safeguard the cost of living for all Territorians.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mrs HERSEY (Public Service)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the members for their contributions.

Territorians elected this CLP government with a clear commitment to making the Territory a place where businesses want to have the confidence to invest in, where people see job opportunities and enjoy our lifestyle. We know the employment opportunities that exist here, and we want to invite others from interstate to realise these dreams too.

In opposition we were on the record strongly opposing the portable long service leave scheme. The community services sector consistently requested more detailed consultation. Establishing and administering the scheme would have placed additional significant financial, regulatory and administrative burdens on community service providers when the sector was already facing workforce challenges.

Sarah Lloyd from the Territory Child Care Group also welcomed our position. She said that this ill-thought-out scheme would have cost childcare centres an extra $50,000, which inevitably would have been passed on to families already experiencing cost-of-living pressures.

The legislation, which was introduced by the former Labor government in its dying days, was nothing more than a desperate attempt to lure voters. In typical Labor fashion, like many other projects we have come to know about, the portable long service leave scheme was not properly budgeted for. When in government the Opposition Leader had eight long years to make these changes, but those opposite left it until three months out from the election.

Let us be clear: repealing the Act does not mean the Territory government does not value the services provided by employees within the community services sector—quite the opposite; we support them, but to bring in an ill-thought-out uncosted scheme is negligent. The Act's repeal will not affect employees' existing long service leave entitlements under some awards or the *Long Service Leave Act*. As has always been the case employees who remain with their employer will continue to be eligible for long service leave. This is one of the bonuses of being a loyal employee.

The portable long service leave scheme would have increased the cost for community services sector businesses operating in the Territory, including those delivering childcare, aged care, disability, services community mental health, family and domestic violence services, and community legal services. Many of these are not-for-profit services. The scheme, which I remind you was unfunded, would have imposed a levy on community services sector employers. Based on the estimate of approximately 10,000 impacted employees, this would increase community services sector costs by about $20m per annum. I note that the Opposition Leader spoke about those 10,000 workers, but with this unfunded, ill-thought-out scheme she clearly did not think enough of them when she was in government.

The scheme would have relied on a Treasury loan to cover the set-up costs, which were estimated to blow out to between $4m and $12m, with no ongoing funding assigned for its operation once enacted. There seems to be a pattern here. As we heard from the Treasurer there were many uncosted things in the budget that did not have ongoing and operational funding. That is Labor's modus operandi.

As this scheme had not been implemented, it is a simple and straightforward repealing of the Act. It is an essential part of the government's ongoing efforts to ensure community services sector employers can better focus on delivering essential frontline services, investing in growth, job creation, workforce development and service delivery to Territorians.

I point out that NTCOSS, even back in March when we first brought this in, went on to say, 'The model implemented was fundamentally flawed and would not have adequately served the community services sector's employees. The scheme as legislated failed to provide sustainable benefits to workers in this sector. The model introduced by the previous government simply did not meet the needs of the community service workforce.'

This is our opportunity to show our continued commitment to a brighter future for all Territorians.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 and 2, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 3:

Mr YOUNG: Minister, do you have figures on how many Territory workers will lose out on portable long service leave as a result of this repeal?

Mrs HERSEY: The estimated number of people on this scheme is 10,000, which is how the figures came about.

Mr YOUNG: Who did you consult with? Can you specify which sectors, organisations, individuals or unions?

Mrs HERSEY: We consulted with the Australian Services Union in April, which also thought the scheme needed more work and was happy to engage with us. It was meant to get back with a proposal, but we never heard from the union again. We wrote to community stakeholders; there was a whole lot we wrote to.

Mr YOUNG: Did you engage with the aged-care sector?

Mrs HERSEY: We wrote to community stakeholders; National Disability Services NT; NT Shelter; Council on the Ageing; Aboriginal Housing NT; Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance; Early Childhood Australia; early childhood and school-age education and care; Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT; United Workers Union; NT Council of Social Service; Local Government Association of the Northern Territory; and the Chamber of Commerce. We did not receive responses from any of the stakeholders.

Ms UIBO: Of the 153 early childhood education centres which are not NT Government services, how many did you engage with?

Mrs HERSEY: I read out the list of people we engaged with, but we did not hear from any of the sectors. We did hear from Sarah Lloyd.

Ms UIBO: To clarify, of the 153 ECECs how many did you, as the minister, engage with to come to the decision to repeal the Act?

Mrs HERSEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have answered that question.

Ms UIBO: The list read by the minister was not just the early childhood education centres; it was a whole list of engagement. I specifically asked about the ECECs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, is there anything further you want to add?

Mrs HERSEY: We spoke with many childcare centres, and no-one was in favour.

Ms UIBO: To clarify, there is no number that the minister can tell me. This repeal Bill affects 10,000 people, but you cannot tell me what number of ECECs you engaged with; that is only one sector.

Mrs HERSEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have answered the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has given her answer a number of times.

Ms UIBO: That is a non-answer. This is an interesting consultation process.

Mr YOUNG: When the Bill was passed last year, the estimated set-up cost was approximately $2m to $4m. You are now claiming the cost is up to $12m. How do you explain this significant discrepancy?

Mrs HERSEY: At the time we did not support the Bill, and the revised figures were based on assumptions. The approximate nature of the costings were based on data from 2023. Considering the initial actuary figures were conservatively estimated and are now a couple of years old, with the cost of inflation it is our estimate

that the figures may be potentially anywhere from $4m to $12m. We are aware that other jurisdictions, when establishing their schemes, woefully underestimated the cost of staffing and workload that would arise when the schemes were implemented within the relevant sectors.

Ms UIBO: You addressed the question about the set-up cost and the large discrepancy in estimation of approximately $8m. With the levy process, which was originally a part of the forward planning for this legislation, what was the issue of the quarterly levy paying for itself, similar to the construction levy and scheme we have for our construction workers, to access portable long service leave in the NT?

Mrs HERSEY: The portable long service leave in construction is not what we are talking about today; that is a totally different scheme.

Ms UIBO: To clarify, the question was leading on from the minister's speech on the difference with the levy. You said that there was a clear underestimation of the set-up cost. In terms of the levy cost and the scheme paying for itself, what was the decision to repeal the Act if it was to eventually pay for itself?

Mrs HERSEY: This is not relevant to the clause, but on the actuary figures, which were ill-thought-out and unfunded by the previous Labor government, more work would have been needed in that area.

Ms UIBO: That was an independent process. Was there an issue with the figures provided by the actuary?

Mrs HERSEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: You are repealing legislation based on figures, the previous government's valuation of cost and the fiscal outlook of what it will cost the Territory government, so it is relevant to a clause when talking about repealing a whole Act based on figures you have estimated.

Mrs HERSEY: The actuarial figures from 2023 estimated that employers would pay an annual levy equivalent up to $2,000 per employee in a sector that was estimated at the time to cover approximately 10,000 people. If you do the math, that is where you get the $20m.

Mr YOUNG: Was any analysis completed on how this will impact our ability to attract workers to the Territory, given nearly every other jurisdiction has or is introducing portable long service leave for community service workers?

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 155; relevance to the clause.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The clause is about repealing the Act, so can we concentrate on that?

Mr YOUNG: The minister is standing to answer it.

Mrs HERSEY: As I have explained, our government will continue to work with the community services sector and other sectors to consider options to address workforce issues in ways that will benefit Territorians and contribute to our government's priorities of rebuilding the economy.

Mr YOUNG: You say that the scheme is too expensive for employers, yet employers need to factor their staff's long service leave into their budget.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr YOUNG: I have not finished my question, so I do not know how there can be a point of order. I have 10 minutes to get to my question.

Mr EDGINGTON: Standing Order 155; the question is not relevant to the clause.

Mr YOUNG: Do you know what the question is? Because I have not asked it yet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will remind you, Member for Daly, that the question needs to be relevant to the clause, but I will let you finish your question.

Mr YOUNG: I will go back to the start, considering I was so rudely interrupted. Please allow me to give the context so we can get to the question. You say that the scheme is too expensive for employers, yet employers

need to factor in their staff's long service leave to their budget accounting arrangements as it is. How do you arrive at this conclusion?

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 155; it is not relevant to the clause.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I agree; we are starting to drift away from the clause. I am happy to allow another question; otherwise, we will move on.

Mr YOUNG: The government is talking about budgeting for the Act, so it is relevant to this clause.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have passed that question, and we are moving onto the next one.

Clause 3 agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

Mrs HERSEY (Public Service): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

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 agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MOTION
Amend Sessional Orders

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the sessional orders adopted on 15 October 2024 and amended on 26 November 2024 be amended by deleting Sessional Order 13.5 and inserting the following:

13.5 Bill's referral to the Legislation Scrutiny Committee, Urgency or Second Reading Debate after 28 days have elapsed

(1) After the first reading of a Bill, other than an annual appropriation bill, the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for the first Assembly meeting after 28 days have elapsed, unless the Assembly refers the Bill to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee or declares the Bill to be urgent in accordance with paragraph (2).

(2) The Member in charge of the Bill may move either:

(a) a motion referring the Bill to the scrutiny committee for a report by a particular date, with the question to be put without amendment or debate; or

(b) "that the Bill be declared urgent", to which the mover or any other member may speak for 5 minutes.

(3) If the Bill is declared to be urgent, the Member in charge of the Bill shall move:

(a) "that the Bill be now read a second time"; or

(b) "that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for a later hour".

(4) After the first reading of an annual appropriation bill, a Minister may move that the bill be read a second time.

The government is making this minor amendment to the sessional orders for Bill introductions to allow for a more efficient referral of Bills to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. It also makes clear that every Bill is introduced and subjected to a first reading and adjourned—the correct pathway for every Bill, no matter the handling of the Bill after its introduction, then separates the first reading from the manner in which the Bill is scrutinised.

The default mechanism remains a 28-day exposure to allow all members to read and understand the Bill, seek to consult with any interested parties or groups and then return to this place to debate the Bill, having subjected it to appropriate scrutiny in their own communities and electorates—the work we are all paid to do.

The additional options remain for the government to refer the Bill to the scrutiny committee, or for the Bill to be handled urgently in the case of a referral to the scrutiny committee without a rolling series of debates and divisions for matters that, frankly, often descend into debate on the substance of the Bill outside the standing orders and leading to even the most simple Bills becoming a matter of a half hour of Assembly time.

These matters are simple, straightforward, minor in nature and circulated to members. I commend the changes to the Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I move that the question be put without further debate.

Mr Paech: What a coward!

Madam SPEAKER: Silence please. The question is that the motion be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16	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 Hersey	Mr Young
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; I find it offensive that the Member for Gwoja called the Member for Barkly a coward, and I ask that he withdraw those words.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, all take your seats and be quiet. I did not see any altercation, and I did not hear it. It does not mean to say that it did not happen, but I ask you all to be respectful and gracious in how you behave in this Chamber.

PAPER TABLED
Correspondence from the Inspector of the ICAC

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I table a copy of the correspondence from the Inspector of the ICAC I received today.

On 20 June 2024 then Chief Minister, Eva Lawler, advised the Legislative Assembly that she had referred workplace allegations within the Office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption to the Commissioner for Public Employment for investigation. The process outlined by the then Chief Minister, Eva Lawler, was as follows:

> *Once the Commissioner for Public Employment has completed the investigation, this report will be provided to me as the relevant minister. On receipt I will refer the findings to the ICAC Inspector for him to consider and to determine whether the findings of the investigation warrant further action in line with the Inspector's jurisdiction under the ICAC Act.*

On Wednesday 7 May 2025 I received the reported titled 'Confidential Report for Nicole Hurwood, Commissioner for Public Employment, in the matter of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, Michael Riches', from Commissioner Hurwood. I immediately provided it to the Inspector of the ICAC.

Last Friday I made a public statement and indicated that upon completion the inspector's report would be tabled in the parliament. Today the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption tendered his resignation, which was accepted by the Administrator, effective this Thursday 15 May 2025.

The Inspector of the ICAC has subsequently written to me today; that is the correspondence I just tabled in the parliament. The inspector informs me in his letter that he has exercised his discretion under the Act to terminate the investigation as it is no longer in the public interest and an unnecessary expenditure for the Territory.

I have been advised that due to Commissioner Riches resigning, he will not receive any termination payments and will receive only unclaimed leave entitlements and relocation costs in accordance with his appointment.

Now that the inspector has resolved his investigation, as per the letter I tabled, I today requested that the Commissioner for Public Employment necessitates sufficient redaction of the report to allow for privacy and confidentiality concerns to be allayed so that the confidential report can be published on the OCPE's website.

As a new government we certainly share the community's frustration with the length of time this process has taken. There will need to be next steps in respect of the ICAC. We remain committed to having a strong integrity body in the Northern Territory, and we will take the time to work through what those next steps look like.

RESPONSE TO PETITION
Petition No 4 – Requesting the Immediate Withdrawal of the Proposal to Establish the Territory Coordinator

The DEPUTY CLERK: Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 123, I inform members that a response to Petition Number 4, requesting the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to establish the Territory Coordinator under the terms proposed, has been received and forwarded to the member for distribution to the petitioners from the Minister for Territory Coordinator,

> *Thank you for your correspondence regarding Petition No. 4, which calls for the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to establish the Territory Coordinator under the terms proposed.*
>
> *In response, pursuant to Standing Order 123, I advise that the Northern Territory Government is proceeding with establishing the Territory Coordinator.*

The objectives of the Territory Coordinator model are to coordinate and streamline regulatory processes for significant and complex projects and developments that have the potential to drive economic growth and accelerate private sector opportunities in the Northern Territory. The aim is to boost the Territory's competitiveness to attract large-scale investment, to fuel growth and create jobs for Territorians.

The Territory Coordinator will be critical to Government delivering on its strategic priorities and initiatives in the Rebuilding the Economy – Northern Territory Economic Strategy 2025, which was launched on 18 March 2025.

On 19 March 2025, the Legislative Assembly passed the Territory Coordinator Bill 2025. This followed an extensive public consultation process, review and inquiry by the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. The Bill passed with a number of Assembly amendments put forward by Government to address the recommendations of the Committee. In line with usual legislative processes, His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO PSM, Administrator of the Northern Territory, declared assent to the Territory Coordinator Act 2025 on 24 March 2025, and commencement procedures are now occurring.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I will talk about the seventh annual Meaningful Maths Enrichment Day, which was held on 7 May. Over 140 high-performing students from 16 primary schools participated in the event. The Meaningful Maths Enrichment Day aims to provide a unique and interactive learning experience for students in Years 3 to 6, fostering their interests in mathematics and problem-solving skills.

Meaningful Maths strives to engage students through fun and meaningful activities rather than seeing maths as a set of arbitrary rules to remember. Students work in cross-school groups to engage in hands-on collaborative activities that will enhance their mathematical literacy. There were students from one of my electorate schools, Bakewell Primary School, who took part in this event, and I mention them because they have been working hard on their maths this year, so they deserve a shout-out: Aryan P, Robyn C, Thomas T, Xavier V, Phoenix H, Saanidhya S, Nirjaasri V, Jaiden Z, Muhammad B and Noah C. I also thank the teacher, Sarah Hodgson, who attended with the students. Sarah is an inspiring leader who is co-leading maths work in Bakewell Primary School. She also recently delivered professional development for teachers across the Top End for how they can use an iPad to enhance student learning experiences in maths.

I congratulate all those students across the Top End who participated in Meaningful Maths Enrichment Day, but particularly those from Bakewell Primary School and their teacher, Sarah Hodgson.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I will talk about the Palmerston Markets, which are held in my electorate of Drysdale in the Palmerston CBD. The Palmerston Markets are a great event that we hold throughout the Dry Season and allow stallholders from all over Darwin and the rural region to come together to trade goods and wonderful food. The council does a great job of putting on family events as well, with live musicians and a personal favourite, Hyper the Clown, who my girls love.

Unfortunately, over the last two weeks we have had youth crime occur with fights breaking out at the Palmerston Markets. I address the Chamber because I will not be silent on the issue, as the previous government was about the Palmerston Markets. I stepped into this place following an event at that very place with myself and youth crime, and I was mortified by the former Labor government's response. I say to everyone in Palmerston that we will not let this continue. Our community event will not be destroyed by a handful of youths who decide to turn it into a gang-fight and fight amongst family and stallholders and disrupt the whole evening.

I spoke with the Chief Minister today, and we are in lockstep to ensure the Palmerston Markets stay safe for all family members and that it is a place for the community to come together and enjoy. We will not suffer at the hands of a few youths who think they can terrorise our community. They have come up against the wrong government and the wrong member, because I will not allow this to happen any further and I look forward to a safe and enduring Palmerston Markets. I look forward to updating my community on the steps our government will take to ensure it.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I put on the record the amazing opening of the Katherine amphitheatre that happened in early April.

Ms Uibo: Eighth of April.

Mrs HERSEY: Thanks, Opposition Leader.

It was a fantastic night; the opening of the Balang TE Lewis amphitheatre. It is part of a $7.6m transformation of our Godinymayin arts centre. The Minister for Arts was there, as were the Opposition Leader and Minister Boothby. It was a beautiful evening under the stars. We have a lot to be thankful for in our community. Having a place where outdoor functions can be had throughout the Dry Season adds to the arts and culture scene in Katherine.

The ability to experience the performance under the Territory's vast, starry sky was stunning. It was great to have Tommy's wife, Fleur, there as well as the dancers from Beswick. The Darwin Symphony Orchestra also played as part of its roadshow. Madam Speaker, I do not know if you have seen the Darwin Symphony Orchestra—I am sure you have in Alice Springs. It is a treat to see DSO play. Young Gypsy Schmidt also sang, and she had her mentors from DSO there, who were the music and education teachers at her school. It was a fantastic night.

I commend everyone who put that event together. The government funded it through the Arts Trail, which I note was under the previous government. I commend the minister for Tourism and the Minister for Arts, who came along; Clare and the team at Godinymayin who did a fantastic job on the evening; and the emcee, Kamahi, who was fantastic. It was a real treat.

Another event I attended was the Joy of Many Colours Fashion and Cultural Show at the DoubleTree by Hilton, which was hosted by the Red Cross. To the amazing Connected Women program of Australian Red Cross, thank you for hosting the event.

I attended my first event back in Katherine as part of Joy of Many Colours with Ushani Loku Arumage. It is a must-attend event in Katherine; they do a fantastic job. Bill Daw, the director of the Australian Red Cross, reached out and asked me to say a few words there; it was an honour. The Administrator, the Honourable Hugh Heggie, was there with Ms Ruth Jones. Charles Burkitt, the president of Red Cross, was there, as well as Ministers Charls and Cahill, and MLAs Oly Carlson, Khoda Patel and Laurie Zio. Thank you also to Sabeeha, the state manager of Red Cross.

I had the privilege of attending special events for the Red Cross in Katherine. These events bring people together in the community from all walks of life. Whether you are a migrant, Aboriginal or long-time local, there is something for everybody with the multicultural celebration. It is a reminder that diversity is not just something we talk about; it is something we wear, dance to and live every day.

The fashion show that they put on is not just about looking fabulous; it is about feeling fabulous. The cultural display from the many people who were there was amazing. It told a story and is a conversation starter that brings us all together.

The Joy of Many Colours is not just about style, but also about storytelling. The clothes, makeup and performances have been handcrafted, upcycled, reimagined and brought to life by some of the most talented women in our community. They are all from different backgrounds and are all amazing, with an eye for detail and such talent.

These women and this event embody the strength, resilience and creativity that make the Northern Territory not just a place to live, but a place to love. They help shape our identity as a place where cultures collide in the best possible way through collaboration, celebration and, on the day, a whole lot of pizzazz. I thank those people, the Red Cross and everyone who made that afternoon wonderful. It was fantastic to attend that event.

I will go on to the Young Achiever of the Year event. Congratulations to Kate McTaggart, a Katherine High School leader and born and bred Katherine girl. I have known her family for many years. I could not be there on the night, which was extremely disappointing for me after knowing Kate since she was a baby. She won the Australia Foundation Connecting Communities Award. Kate does a lot of amazing things in our community; she umpires at the rugby, she is a great leader at school and is on the Learning Commission and has been on that for a while. She is someone who epitomises that leadership style in the school and does a great job of it. She is inclusive of getting other people together and is a wonderful role model.

The winner of the Young Achiever of the Year Award was Jermaine Ostrofski, and he also won the Aurizon Indigenous Achievement Award. Other award winners are:

- Charles Darwin University International Student Award—Sabrina Doha.
- Glencore McArthur River Mining Regional and Rural Initiative Award—Aldress Donald Mick.
- McDonalds NT Career Achievement Award—Toni Hedditch.
- Mindil Beach Casino Resort Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Award—Talia Liddle.
- NT Government Excellence in Youth Leadership Award—Jules Gabor.
- NT Government Small Business Achievement Award—Anneliese Grazioli, Hanky Panky Lounge & Bar Kokomo.
- NT Government Young Aboriginal Educator Award—Melissa Andrews-Wurramarrba; I note she is from the Opposition Leader's electorate. I have spoken to her recently, and what an amazing young achiever and educator she is. We need more people like her in the community and in education.
- NT Government Young Carers Award—Blake Franklin-Wellard.
- Somerville Promoting Disability Rights and Inclusion Award—Uxel Mason.
- Zip Print Sport Award—DBA Referee Coordinators, Annie and Georgia.
- Hot 100 People's Choice Award—Taleisha Kirk.

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to an extraordinary Territorian, a formidable cattleman and a true leader of the north, David Warriner, who sadly passed away earlier this month.

David was not only a pillar of the Northern Territory pastoral industry, but also a fierce advocate for its people. His passing marks the loss of a man whose voice, vision and leadership shaped the cattle industry across generations. A remarkable man and a passionate leader, David was a true champion for the north Australian cattle industry.

His passing is not only a loss to his family and friends, but also to an entire industry and region. He leaves a legacy of vision.

David was born in Alice Springs and from the very beginning he was destined to be part of the landscape of the Northern Territory. He learned the ropes as a jackaroo in the Top End, eventually managing Nockatunga Station. David was also the general manager at the Tipperary Group, which managed the Tipperary, Elizabeth Downs, Douglas and Litchfield stations.

David was more than a skilled cattleman; he was also a well-respected and well-liked leader with strong morals. He served as the President of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association from 2012 to 2015 and then as Chair of the Northern Territory Livestock Exporters Association until 2021.

David was the President of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association when the industry launched a class action against the federal government's 2011 suspension of the live cattle export to Indonesia, ultimately resulting in a Federal Court finding that the government had performed illegally in imposing a huge consequential ban.

David also became a ministerial adviser to the former CLP minister Gary Higgins in 2016 to share his knowledge, experience and leadership. David fought for land tenure reform, practical infrastructure and a fair price for producers—all with a deep understanding of the Territory's unique challenges. He believed that northern Australia had the potential to feed a rising Asia and worked tirelessly to make that vision a reality.

David was also a driving force behind rebuilding the Berrimah stockyards; a project that stands today as a testament to his determination and practical leadership.

In March this year, David was awarded life membership of the NTCA. It was a fitting and timely recognition of a man who gave so much of his life to the industry. Sadly, it came just weeks before his passing, but it now stands as a lasting reminder of the respect and admiration he earned.

To Gina and David's family, we extend our deepest condolences. David was a respected and passionate leader whose lifelong dedication helped shape the northern Australian beef industry. We remember David as a straight shooter, a big thinker and a man who believed in the power of unity. He was a force for good, formidable, compassionate, principled and irreplaceable.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, with immense pride, I share some of the remarkable achievements and events that have recently taken place in the Casuarina electorate. These stories highlight the resilience, innovation and unity of our community and I believe they deserve recognition in this Chamber.

I begin with the inaugural BioBlitz held at the Casuarina Coastal Reserve on 29 March. Organised by the dedicated Friends of Casuarina Coastal Reserve, this event was a testament to community-led environmental stewardship.

Over the course of the day, 21 flora and fauna surveys were conducted, engaging participants of all ages. From checking small mammal traps, monitoring microbats, using harp traps and acoustic detectors, to active searches for reptiles and frogs, the event offered a hands-on experience in biodiversity research.

The base camp set up at the Darwin Surf Life Saving Club featured interactive lab activities, allowing volunteers to analyse their findings and share discoveries. It also provided an opportunity to engage with rangers and partner organisations, all of whom play a vital role in caring for this cherished part of our coastline.

The data collected during the BioBlitz will be instrumental in guiding the protection and management of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve for years to come. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to everyone involved in making this first event a success.

Moving from environmental conservation to local enterprise, I congratulate Rosie and Sam, the enterprising owners of Lux Nails and Beauty in Casuarina Village Shopping Centre. On 11 April they celebrated the grand opening of their second salon, Lux Beauty, within the same centre. Their new establishment offers a range of services, including relaxing Japanese head spa treatments—the first in Darwin—waxing, tinting, lash extensions and luxury facials.

Rosie and Sam's commitment to providing high-quality beauty services has not gone unnoticed; members of my office have enjoyed their visits to the salon. It is inspiring to see local businesses thrive and expand, contributing to the vibrancy and economic growth of our community. I wish Rosie and Sam continued success in their endeavours.

I acknowledge the extraordinary work of Katy Chin, General Manager of Amber NT, a not-for-profit organisation that supports Territorians through the unimaginable loss of a child, from conception through to the age of 18. Katy is a remarkable individual who dedicates an enormous amount of time and energy to Amber NT.

Under her leadership, the organisation offers meaningful support through initiatives like monthly coffee and chat groups and moving memorial events such as Light the Lagoon, the Walk to Remember and the Memorial Car Drive. These spaces provide families with the opportunity to honour their children and navigate their grief in a supportive and respectful environment. The support provided by Amber NT is so valuable that it often reduces the need for ongoing care and services from the public health system.

Amber NT is currently raising funds to continue this work. It has been an honour to assist Katy in her fundraising efforts, and I encourage our community to attend one of the upcoming events, particularly the Deckchair Cinema fundraiser on 6 July that will feature the soon-to-be-released live-action remake of *How to Train Your Dragon*.

I highlight the Australian Red Cross Connected Women's Joy of Many Colours fashion and cultural show, a community event that celebrated the rich tapestry of cultures within our society. This vibrant event was held on 27 April at the DoubleTree by Hilton Esplanade and brought together 96 models from 32 different countries, each proudly representing their heritage. It was more than a fashion show; it was a celebration of inclusion, creativity and togetherness. More than 400 people attended, creating a lively and welcoming

atmosphere. A team of 38 dedicated volunteers ensured that the evening ran smoothly, contributing to the event's warm and positive spirit.

A highlight was the nine cultural performances, which included music, dance and traditional dress. These performances served as a meaningful reminder of the richness and value of cultural expression. I thank the Members for Fannie Bay and Wanguri for taking part in this beautiful event as well. It was their first time, and it was wonderful helping them out.

I commend the Australian Red Cross Connected Women program for its ongoing work to support women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Events like this provide important opportunities for connection, leadership and community building.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I heard the Deputy Chief Minister talk about David Warriner, and I also pass on my condolences to family.

I had the experience of working with David several times. I went overseas to Indonesia with him a couple of times and was here when a number of Indonesian delegations came here particularly focused on the live cattle industry.

He was a true professional and a staunch advocate for the local cattle industry, both in his role with the NT cattle industry and the Livestock Exporters Association. I recall times when the railway and port projects were coming up that we had a number of dealings looking at how cattle could benefit from some of those projects. I remember taking some of the major investors in the railway project to the livestock cattle yards at Berrimah. I think we took them through the cow pats on a very hot day and these guys were all in suits. When we got there and met David and Patrick Underwood they must have thought, 'Who are these guys in suits?' They realised they were true investors, and as they walked back they tried to make sure they did not stand in the cow pats. They said to me, 'Do you think those guys thought we were a bunch of idiots?' I said, 'The way you dressed, yes, but they are certainly after your money.'

David was honest, a gentleman and knew his stuff. He had time with Consolidated Pastoral Company and the Packer Group of companies, and his father was also in the industry. I pay tribute to David as a hero of our local cattle industry, and I extend my condolences to his family.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge a great event that recently occurred in the Arnhem electorate: the Never Never Festival in Mataranka and the Mataranka Rodeo. It takes a phenomenal effort to bring together any type of event, let alone a regional event, particularly when there is the movement of cattle and horses such as for the Mataranka Rodeo that was held on 10 May.

I thank Tara Craigie from the Territory Rodeo Services, who did a phenomenal job. Tara and her family are now based in north-east Arnhem Land. The Central Arnhem Road was closed because of the rain over the last couple of weeks in the north-east Arnhem pocket, so Tara had to travel to Nhulunbuy and fly to Darwin. Normally she would have her whole family helping—as people do in regional areas to support each other—but unfortunately, because of the high cost of airfares, she travelled on her own. Everyone pitched in and helped with equipment, vehicles and accommodation; there was no shortage of people willing to support Tara and her great work to coordinate and organise the Mataranka Rodeo. Well done to Tara; it was a phenomenal event and a lot of fun. Unfortunately, we did not have one last year, but Tara and her family organised the rodeo two years ago as well.

The sponsors and businesses from Katherine and around the Northern Territory contributed to support the Mataranka Rodeo. As the Member for Arnhem, I am also a proud sponsor. I apologise to the riders because my sponsorship banner was on the exit gate. Everyone who went out of the arena had to look at the big Selena Uibo-sponsored face and banner, which was great coverage for me as a proud local member, but it is important to acknowledge the amount of work for the rodeo and the volunteers who put their time and effort into it. Many dug into their pockets to support it as well. It was well done.

DJ KC Bishop from Katherine, who always puts on a good show, had a stage and dance floor. I did not engage in that because I was ready to go home and have a sleep. I know everyone who kicked on may have had a few sore heads on Sunday morning, but DJ KC Bishop would have played some favourites on the deck.

I acknowledge my Arnhem electorate liaison officer, Jessie Aranui nee Hillen, for her amazing volunteering on the Mataranka Rodeo committee. Jessie has grown up riding horses and has been out bush her whole life. I do not know how she does it; she works full time in my office, has four kids to take to sports and school

during the week, then she volunteers in her own time. She also runs one of the rugby sports junior club events in Katherine and is a netball referee. I am so lucky to have Jessie in my office. A big thank you, Jessie, from the bottom of my heart for your volunteering work on the committee. I know it made a huge difference to be able to support Tara and the team to run that event smoothly.

I shout out to Wendy Tralaggan from the Mataranka BP Roadhouse and Bakery. At the end of April there were limited resources with the food trucks and stalls that could come to Mataranka and there was a clash because the Darwin River Rodeo happened to also fall on 10 May. Competitors as well as businesses split their choice between the two.

Wendy and the team did a phenomenal job making sure that all the tasty treats available at the Mataranka BP Roadhouse and Bakery were also available on Saturday night. For anyone who does not know, this roadhouse has national award-winning pies. If you ever go through Mataranka—the Member for Barkly travels up and down the highway a lot between Tennant Creek and Darwin—please stop in to support this local business. The baker at the roadhouse has won national prizes for having some of the best pies in the country. My husband attests to that; he loves eating the pies there. Please support local businesses and taste how delicious these locally made pies are. I give a big shout-out to Wendy and the team. They looked exhausted by the end of the night, but they were still serving everyone long after I left, I am sure.

I place on the record my thanks and appreciation for Moira Lanzarin who was the coordinator for the Never Never Festival, which runs over three days. On Friday night they put on a movie on at the Bitter Springs cabins; thank you to Michael and Glenys who put that on as part of the festival opportunities. The rodeo is the big one for Saturday, but the first markets of the Dry Season for Mataranka occurred on Sunday, which was Mother's Day. The collection of local talent in tasty treats, crafts and lovely things to buy was coordinated by Moira and her volunteers for the Never Never Festival, which I am a proud sponsor of as the local member.

Moira's mum, Clair O'Brien, was at the Better Half Club stall with the lovely Barb Sullivan. Some of the treats there were amazing. I made sure that I saved all of my sugar hit for their special treats. It was lovely that Clair, because it was Mother's Day, pulled out her best china from home and washed it all. It meant that anyone who bought a beautiful homemade treat from the Better Half Club stall could also have a cup of tea or coffee from this beautiful china out in the open; it was beautiful. Thank you, Clair. It is probably extra stress for you to organise that, but it was a special treat for people on Mother's Day, especially those who wanted to treat their loved ones.

I saw recently that the Better Half Club raised—a bit of my money went into it too—$601 for the Sober in the Country Ltd organisation from all the treats sold at the stall. That is about supporting people in regional and remote parts of the country to know that it is okay to say no to drinking. You do not always need to have a beer, wine, spirit or champagne or feel pressured to have a drink; you can enjoy company and the great outdoors—particularly being in remote and isolated parts of the country—without the extra pressure to drink.

Moira explained what the organisation does and that they are doing fundraising, particularly in small towns. When you talk about things like Alcoholics Anonymous, it is not anonymous when you know everyone in your town or community. That is where Sober in the Country, as an organisation, can reach out to provide support for people who may be feeling the pressure about alcohol or struggling with alcohol addiction. Well done to the Mataranka Better Half Club.

A big shout-out goes to the Mataranka School. It did a great job in fundraising. The students are off on an excursion in the second half of the year and they made a bit of coin for that. It was great to see the school students fundraising for their school at Mataranka on their weekend; on their Sunday morning, they were out fundraising. Well done to the students and staff who put in the extra effort to man the Mataranka School stall at the markets.

Thank you to the Mataranka fishing club, which put on some of the best bacon and egg sandwiches you will ever get. Every market, that is what I bank on. I set up my stall early and make sure I have a delicious bacon and egg sandwich. There is something about the way it is cooked there; it is delicious. There were probably a couple of sore heads behind the barbecue that morning, so thank you all for getting up early and fundraising for the fishing club. They recently had their kids' fishing club comp, and there were some proud fisher boys and girls—not the Treasurer, though. He was not in the fishing comp; he was at the Daly. There are great competitions organised by the Mataranka Fishing, Sporting and Recreation Club—well done. They would have made a bit of coin with their fundraising on Sunday, which they can invest back into the community events that they support.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.