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15th Assembly



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 9 – Assent to Bills Passed in July 2025

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message Number 9 from His Honour the Administrator notifying assent to the Bills passed in the July meetings of the Assembly. The message is dated 15 August 2025.

VISITORS
Stuart Park Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5 students from Stuart Park Primary School, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

PAPERS TABLED
Opposition Portfolio Responsibilities

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I table the changes to the shadow ministry. The Territory Labor shadow ministry is as follows.

Leader of the Opposition, Selena Uibo MLA: shadow Treasurer; shadow minister for Police; shadow minister for Mining and Energy; shadow minister for Climate Change and Renewables; shadow minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations; shadow minister for Cost of Living; shadow minister for Air Connectivity; shadow minister for Territory Coordinator; shadow minister for International Education, Migration and Population; shadow minister for Advanced Manufacturing; shadow minister for Corporate and Digital Development; shadow minister for Workforce Development; shadow minister for Logistics and Infrastructure; shadow minister for Women and Equality; and shadow minister for Defence NT.

Deputy Opposition Leader, Dheran Young MLA: shadow minister for Health; shadow minister for Mental Health; shadow minister for Disability; shadow minister for Volunteers; shadow minister for Carers; shadow minister for Seniors and Aged Care; shadow minister for Alcohol Policy; shadow minister for Tourism and Hospitality; shadow minister for Events and Festivals; shadow minister for Young Territorians; shadow minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development; shadow minister for Housing Construction; shadow minister for Essential Services; and shadow minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

Member for Gwoja, Chansey Paech MLA: shadow Attorney-General; shadow minister for Justice and Corrections; shadow minister for Education and Training; shadow minister for Early Years Education; shadow minister for Children and Families; shadow minister for Child Protection; shadow minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence; shadow minister for Community Safety; shadow minister for the Arts and Creative Economy; shadow minister for Public Service; and shadow minister for Racing.

Member for Arafura, Manuel Brown MLA: shadow minister for Lands, Planning and Environment; shadow minister for Aboriginal Affairs; shadow minister for Parks and Wildlife; shadow minister for Agriculture and Fisheries; shadow minister for Water Resources; shadow minister for Recreational Fishing and Hunting; shadow minister for People, Sport and Culture; shadow minister for Multicultural Affairs; and shadow minister for Veterans.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report –
Inquiry into the Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Animal Protection and Related 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 27 August 2025.

Amending the *Animal Protection Act 2018*, the *Criminal Code Act 1983* and the Animal Protection Regulations 2022, this Bill builds on the existing regulatory framework and seeks to strengthen existing policies, improve the effectiveness of animal welfare governance and contribute to greater protection of animals in the Northern Territory.

The committee received 44 submissions to its inquiry, all of which supported the intent of the Bill. A number of submissions put forward suggestions as to how the Bill could be improved and others sought clarification regarding the intended operation of various provisions within the Bill.

In a number of instances submitters proposed amendments that were beyond the scope of the Bill, including removal of cultural exemptions, recognition of animal sentience and regulation of large-scale breeding supply, such as puppy farms.

Following examination of the Bill and consideration of the evidence received, the committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the Bill with the proposed minor amendment to the wording of item 1(1) in clause 27 as set out in recommendation 2. This recommendation seeks to ensure that the Bill is unambiguous and drafted in a sufficiently clear and precise manner.

On behalf of the committee I thank all those who took the time to provide submissions to the committee's inquiry. The committee thanks the representatives from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Attorney-General's Department who appeared before the committee at the public briefing on the Bill.

I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
12 Months of Reducing Crime, Rebuilding the Economy and Restoring the Territory Lifestyle

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I rise to deliver a ministerial report on our first year of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our beautiful Territory lifestyle.

On 24 August the CLP government marked 12 months in office. It has been the greatest privilege to serve Territorians in government, and we are proud to deliver on the confidence they placed in us a year ago. In just 12 months we have done more to reform regulations, streamline approvals processes, fix taxation settings and stimulate investment than the Territory has seen in a generation, and we are just getting started.

We were elected to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle, and we take that responsibility seriously. Unlike the two decades of Labor which created economic uncertainty, we have stayed disciplined and focused on tackling the issues, finding solutions and moving the Territory in the right direction on every level. We inherited escalating crime and a collapsing economy with Territorians leaving in droves. There was a loss of faith and a loss of confidence about the future. Labor had no ideas, solutions or plans to get us out of it.

Twelve months on we are proud of the progress we have made in our year of action, certainty and security. This first year was about delivering on our commitments and laying strong foundations for change.

Community safety was our number one election promise, and it remains our number one priority in government. We put our heads down and got to work for Territorians because they are the reason we are driving change. It is not change for change's sake, and it is not for headlines; it is because Territorians deserve it. We are delivering on that commitment.

Within eight weeks of coming to government we took decisive action to get straight to work on giving our police stronger powers and putting the rights of people to be safe above the rights of offenders. We worked shoulder to shoulder with Samara Laverty to deliver Declan's law, passing stronger bail laws to ensure repeat and serious offenders are kept behind bars where they belong. We reduced the age of criminal responsibility, and introduced mandatory minimum sentences for cowards who assault frontline workers.

Under Labor, business owners were waking up almost every morning to find their livelihoods torn apart—front doors rammed and shops torn open for alcohol. It had a domino effect: one Territorian's property was weaponised to destroy another Territorian's livelihood.

Labor tied the hands of our police. In place of that we have untied them with stronger laws so that they can do their job more effectively. We introduced penalties to stamp out the glorification of crime online. We have new offences for ram raids, strengthened wanding powers for our police, new nuisance public drinking laws and have done everything we can to support our police to restore law and order to the Territory. We are proud of our police and the work that they do every day to keep Territorians safe.

Since coming to government 146 new officers have graduated from the police college. Each time I stand at a graduation, as Police minister, I feel immense gratitude for those who have answered the call to serve and protect Territorians. It is fantastic to see so many of them on the beat. My team and I are on the ground and see them out there. We check in with them and our community, which knows there is much more work to do. We are on the right track.

We recognise the work our police do. It is not easy to pull on that blue uniform every day and put yourself in danger in order to protect the community. While we await the outcome of the latest consent agreement vote, which finishes on Friday, we can say with certainty that we have put forward the strongest pay deal for our police in 20 years, because they deserve nothing less.

In our first CLP budget we backed our police like never before with a record $1.5bn for police, Corrections and courts. That includes $608m directly for the Police Force. That investment included $95m for police funding, $10.2m for remote policing, $4.7m for airwing aircraft, $1.3m for CCTV and $1m for the banned drinker order support team. On top of that we are investing a further $186m over four years into major police infrastructure projects, including $143.5m for remote policing infrastructure and housing upgrades, $35.7m for a brand-new multipurpose police complex in Maningrida and $6.6m to upgrade the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre at Berrimah. This is a record investment in the safety of Territorians, and it is a clear demonstration that we are backing our police.

On 18 June I announced the introduction of police public safety officers. This is an historic move by our government and provides for our different auxiliary, public housing and transit safety officer roles to be consolidated into one highly operational unit under NT Police. The new sworn police public safety officers will wear police uniforms and operate under police command. They will be trained, supported and, importantly, given the necessary powers to tackle antisocial behaviour in public housing, bottle shops and shopping precincts and on public transport. We know more work needs to be done on public housing. In October we will make the necessary legislative changes to create the PPSO roles.

Another initiative is the availability of OC spray, giving Territorians an extra layer of personal safety. We listened to Territorians and they told us that they want more choice in how they protect themselves, and we acted. Yesterday was the first day you could purchase OC spray. We had 255 people take up that opportunity, and our police have done an excellent job in monitoring that rollout. This trial will be done properly for a 12-month period. We will collect the evidence, use our community reference group and Have Your Say to understand how the rollout went. Then we will make a decision at the end of that trial.

We have delivered reform to youth justice with the changes to the *Youth Justice Act* at the last sittings. That has been a big team effort. I am proud of the work my colleagues have done in this area. I know that it will make a big impact on people's lives and the ability of police to do their job.

It puts an end to Labor's catch-and-release system. Under Labor, youth offenders avoided accountability and consequences. They often reoffended days, if not hours, after they had been dropped home by police, who were forced into that position by weak laws.

We fixed that by expanding the list of offences that allow our police to proceed straight to charge. Police are now empowered to do that and do not have to return young people to a so-called responsible adult, as Labor would have you believe. There is broader police discretion, and the free taxi rides are over. When there is serious harm offending, hit-and-runs, stolen vehicles, assaults on frontline workers and break-ins, we are now in a position where police can move to charge.

We have done a lot of work on our commitment to reduce crime, and we are starting to see some of that data come through. There is, of course, much more work to do. In the first half of 2025 there were 605 fewer victims of crime across the Territory, which is a 4.7% drop Territory-wide. As well as our 146 police graduates, our attrition rate is down to 5.95%, which is a significant drop from the 11% we had under Labor.

There have been 20 youth offenders and seven adults charged with ramraid offences; 16 charges have been laid for posting and boasting; 7,087 people have been wanded across the Territory and 141 weapons have been seized; 451 people have been charged for assaulting frontline workers; and more than 646 criminals have been taken off the streets under our stricter bail laws.

My colleagues and I will expand on other measures as we use this contribution to outline all the work we have done over the last 12 months.

We also must look to what we are doing to break that cycle of crime in the first place and prevent crime from happening. We have the Circuit Breaker Program, our family responsibility agreements, the work the school attendance officers are doing, the police in schools program and our boot camps.

We know how important it is to get our kids to school and in the classroom, and that work has been fantastic. Our school attendance officers have re-engaged 388 children who are now going to school. That is 388 kids who will have a future. They would not have had a future under Labor as they were simply ignored and left on a long list of kids who had not engaged with the education system in a long time.

We have record domestic violence funding, released the NT Homelessness Strategy and delivered more than 200 remote houses across the Territory.

As part of our Reducing Crime strategy we have been reporting to Territorians on that data and what it looks like. It is centred on safer communities, holding parents accountable, addressing the root causes of crime and reforming the system.

We also told Territorians we would rebuild the economy; that has been reflected as part of our year of action, certainty and security. We have focused on making sure that the Territory is a more competitive place to live, work, visit and invest. In the work we have done we are cutting red tape, fast-tracking approvals and focusing on making the Territory the best place to live, work, visit and invest.

Our strategy was launched in March, and it focuses on making the Territory the best place to do business, building a bigger and better workforce, delivering for Australia, unlocking regional growth and connecting the Territory. This is a clear plan that allows the private sector and government to move forward together.

We have a narrow focus for economic growth, and we have been clear about the strategic importance of the Northern Territory when it comes to mining, energy, tourism, agriculture and Defence. These are the industries in which the Territory can deliver for not only Territorians but also our nation, our allies and the region.

When it comes to Defence, and this is squarely in my portfolio, we know we have indisputable strategic importance. We have always been Australia's front line, and there is no greater lesson than when war came to Australia in 1942, with the bombing of Darwin and Katherine. That preparedness, posture and positioning is important. We are an allied and ADF partner of choice, and we will continue that work.

We just had Exercise Talisman Sabre, with 35,000 personnel from 19 nations participating in that exercise. We also hosted a Japanese Defence contingent. I will be in Japan next week, meeting with the Japanese Government about the Japanese Self-Defense Forces rotation in the Northern Territory.

About $1bn a year is spent in the Northern Territory on Defence, and 90% of that goes to local businesses, so we know it is important.

Some of the other reforms we have achieved include appointing the Territory Coordinator, which has been significant; having the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce; removing third-party merits review; appointing a Territory Procurement Champion; raising the payroll tax-free threshold to $2.5m, which is the most competitive payroll tax regime in the country; and implementing and extending the most generous home builder scheme in the country, which has been terrific.

When we look at the crime data and the economic data we start to see that confidence bear fruit. We have CommSec saying that the Territory economy is the fastest growing in the nation, three times faster than the next fastest jurisdiction. We have the strongest population growth at 1.21%, which is up 66% on the decade average. The NAB Australian Wellbeing Survey for quarter 2 shows that the Northern Territory community was most optimistic of all states on whether it would be better or worse off over the next 12 months. People thought we would be better off. There has been a 28.4% increase in private sector construction over the year, which is significant and creating jobs and opportunities for our people.

We had a major step forward with the Beetaloo. Yesterday the deputy leader and I announced two significant approvals have taken place which will allow for a 37-kilometre pipeline to be built from Tamboran to the Amadeus pipeline, and a significant contribution in a gas condensing facility. We know that the Beetaloo is a game changer for the Territory. While the eastern states are busy building import terminals, they should be looking north for the solutions to their energy problems.

Yesterday we had the first Bush Summit in the Northern Territory. We were proud to support and deliver it to the Territory. All eyes were on this place. It was an important opportunity for us to showcase the work we have been doing on our economy.

When it comes to lifestyle, we know that living here is unique. We are proud of that, and that is exactly how we want to keep it. Therefore, we are fighting hard to protect the Territory way of life, not just with fishing, parks and our sport that people love; we have also made the largest acquisition in 25 years to increase the national park estate with the 30,000-hectare purchase of Silkwood. That is amazing, and we are proud to have secured that for people now and our kids into the future.

We reintroduced pet crocodile ownership, which Labor meanly took away. I am not sure what Labor members were afraid of. Something bit them a lot harder than the crocs—I can tell you that, Madam Speaker—and that was the election result. Labor cannot take people for granted.

We have backed world-class sport with the MXGP and the brand-new NRL deal with the Redcliffe Dolphins. I went to meet the Redcliffe Dolphins, and they are excited. We had our amazing international T20 cricket for the first time in 20 years. It was unbelievable, and people loved it.

We have also done a lot of work. Our official hunting season opens across the Territory this weekend, I believe. The deputy is across that. We expanded hunting reserves and are doing a lot of work to ensure that recreation across the Territory is supported.

We launched our Lifestyle Strategy which has five key priorities. We want to be number one for nature; celebrate community and connection; deliver better infrastructure for an active Territory; improve affordability; and help Territorians be happier and healthier. At the end of the day, we want people to have a good life. We are restoring our wonderful lifestyle and we are proud of that, just 12 months in. That work continues.

I conclude by thanking Territorians for coming on this journey with us. They put their faith and confidence in us to deliver change. Delivering change for the better is exactly what we have been focused on. There has been significant reform. I could not possibly cover it all in my contribution, but needless to say we have used every opportunity we can to do things differently for the Territory.

We have faced our fair share of criticism for that from people who want the status quo. However, the everyday Territorian who voted for us spoke loudly and clearly when they said that they wanted something different. Therefore, we do not apologise for one second for delivering and implementing our election commitments. We do not apologise for taking no advice from Labor on this issue because it failed Territorians for nearly two decades. We are here to make a difference, and that is what we spend our time doing every day.

It has been the greatest honour to lead this government through our first year. The team has been incredible to work with. I could not be prouder of the team that I serve alongside. Everyone is invested in the future of this place. I am proud of each one of them.

The last 12 months have been a big year. We have travelled to listen to Territorians from all corners of the Northern Territory, all 1.4 million square kilometres. I have been to Central Australia eight times, Big Rivers four times, East Arnhem three times and twice to the Barkly. There is plenty more to do and plenty more people to get around to.

We look forward to the remainder of the term. If the first 12 months is anything to go by, we have shown we are not afraid and will stand up for what we believe in and the principles and values we took to the election. We are very much focused on delivering for Territorians, as we said we would.

I move that the report be noted.

VISITORS
Ian Gordon

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Mr Ian Gordon, a senior Larrakia man and apparently a resident of the electorate of Drysdale. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I make my contribution about the 12-month achievement of this government. One year ago Territorians gave us, the government, a clear mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique Territory lifestyle. The year 2025 has been one of action, certainty and security. I am pleased to update the Assembly on the real and measurable progress we are delivering in Corrections, the resource sector and Agriculture and Fisheries. We are only just getting started. Our government has a laser focus on keeping Territorians safe, creating jobs and driving the economic growth that will secure our future.

When we came to office we inherited a Corrections system in crisis. There were overcrowded facilities and exhausted officers. Police watch houses were overflowing with remand prisoners. We acted quickly.

One of our first priorities was to move Corrections officers from the police watch houses. As of March this year Corrections officers were transferred out of the Palmerston and Alice Springs watch houses. That change allowed Corrections officers to return to the frontline duties where they are most effective—behind the wire maintaining order and keeping our prisons safe.

We accelerated the Corrections master plan; provided a 96-bed modular facility in Alice Springs and more than 574 additional beds at Berrimah since December; and had the largest recruit squad in the Territory's history. More than 700 officers are now serving, which is a Territory record. These are not just buildings and numbers; this is about building capacity, relieving pressure and ensuring that officers are safe and supported.

In February we amended the *Correctional Services Act* to allow the commissioner to appoint qualified personnel from interstate and private providers. That reform enabled us to partner with G4S to manage prisoner transfers, hospital escorts and watch house support. Let me be clear that this is not about privatising Corrections. Our officers remain behind the wire where their skill and professionalism are essential. Private Corrections service providers support operations outside the wire and free up our workforce to strengthen service delivery.

We invested $1.5bn in our justice system as a whole. Of that, the Corrections budget has almost $500m to support recruitment, rehabilitation programs, education, skills and training.

Despite the increase in prisoner numbers, Corrections delivered more education programs between 1 July 2024 and 17 April 2025 than were delivered in the same period in 2023–24. In 2025, 671 prisoners completed these programs compared with 553 prisoners in 2024. This is about breaking the cycle. Even with increased prisoner numbers we could still offer more programs than the previous government.

Our focus on offender rehabilitation engagement has been in-custody family violence programs, with 103 completions in quarter 3 of 2024–25 compared with 95 completions in the same period in the previous financial year. Our six-month intensive domestic and family violence program, RAGE, saw 41 completions in 2024–25 compared with only 12 in the previous financial year under the previous Labor government.

We are not wasting money on programs that do not work. The former Labor government allowed eight to 11-year-olds to participate in diversion as voluntary clients. The evidence is clear that the voluntary approach failed. There were zero voluntary diversions in 2023–24. That is right; there were no diversion programs at all.

From 2019 the Back on Track program cost taxpayers $34.5m and there were 35 participants recorded as completed. Let me rehash that: it cost $34.5m with 35 people recorded as completing the program. That is 35 success stories for almost $35m.

We have made tough but necessary reforms to the *Youth Justice Act*. We have given youth justice officers access to appropriate restraints, removed detention as a last resort and tightened diversion. These measures put safety first and give youth justice officers the tools they need to send clear messages.

A strong economy underpins a safe and happy society. As Minister for Mining and Energy and Minister for Renewables, I am proud of what we have achieved in the last 12 months. The most recent CommSec State of the States report shows that the Northern Territory is leading the nation in economic growth. That is proof that our plan is working.

In the mining sector we have seen a new goldmine operating at Nobles Nob in Tennant Creek after almost 20 years of no mining. Mineral leases have been granted for Verdant Minerals' Ammaroo Phosphate Project, bringing Central Australia closer to major production.

We gave industry certainty by progressing reforms to the *Mineral Titles Act* and streamlining environmental approvals, as recommended by the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce.

We acted on the shortage of vital construction materials, opening new areas in greater Darwin for extractive industries.

In the energy sector we shifted policy from chasing aspirational targets to focusing on affordable reliable energy for Territorians. The Home and Business Battery Scheme was fully subscribed in just seven months, giving hundreds of Territorians greater control over their power bills.

In the Beetaloo we granted the first pipeline licence for the Stuart Plateau pipeline which will soon carry Tamboran gas to the market. The first commercial gas production is just months away and with it, the first gas royalties payable to Territorians. This is action and delivery.

One of our government's five pillars is agriculture. We are diversifying the economy, creating new jobs in regional areas. Earlier this year we secured the landmark lease agreement with Duxton Farms for the Wildman agricultural hub development. This 28,000-hectare site 135 kilometres east of Darwin will host agriculture, broadacre crops, livestock and forestry. This development means jobs, investment and a stronger regional economy. It is a game changer for our agricultural future.

We are also strengthening the frontline defences against pests and diseases with the Territory's first biosecurity response trailer. The mobile unit gives us the ability to respond rapidly to threats like foot-and-mouth disease, protecting our $1.3bn agribusiness sector.

Because Territorians care deeply about animals, we have introduced the strongest animal protection reforms in history, with harsher penalties for cruelty and clearer inspectors' powers. This sends a clear message that cruelty will not be tolerated.

Our government promised to boost the Territory lifestyle. Within a month of taking office we opened new hunting areas, creating more opportunities for waterfowl and pig hunting, while supporting our conservation efforts. The Territory lifestyle is unique, and our government will always protect it.

One year ago we had overcrowded prisons, stalled projects and an economy that was struggling to find direction. Today Corrections has been reformed, the economy is leading the nation in growth, agriculture is expanding and Territorians love our lifestyle. We have done this with urgency, integrity and a clear vision for a safer, stronger and better Northern Territory.

I thank the Corrections officers, police, courts, people in resources, farmers, fishos and community partners for all their efforts and the tireless work they do behind the scenes. I send them this message: we stand with you, we are beside you, and we will support you. We ask you to invest. We will deliver on the promises we have made. We will restore the economy, reduce crime and restore our lifestyle.

This is the year of action, certainty and security, and we are only just getting started.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thought there would be more grunt and excitement for a year of celebration from the CLP, but it is flat. I do not think CLP members even believe what the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister have spoken about so far this morning. It is underwhelming and unconvincing …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Ms UIBO: Maybe they have found their voices because they know that—whoops—they were not supporting their leaders and thought, 'Let us yell out over the Chamber now'.

One year into Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro's CLP government, Territorians the length and breadth of the NT are feeling let down. It is becoming increasingly clear that Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro is not capable of meeting the promises and commitments that she made openly to Territorians 12 months ago. This CLP government's legacy is one of cheap deception, zero integrity and no substance or vision.

The CLP's biggest fail, as many people have alluded to, over the last 12 months is its key promise to fix crime. With the latest statistics we have seen that so far violent assaults, domestic violence and property damage continue to rise under the CLP government.

Instead of leadership Territorians have been handed broken promises, failed policies and hollow and shallow announcements. One year in, the CLP has failed Territorians; crime is on the rise, schools and women's safety services had funding ripped away and there is no vision for the Territory economy. The government is not holding itself to account; that has gone out the window.

The CLP promised the world to Territorians and so far has failed to deliver anything of substance, only excuses. The CLP has refused to take the responsibility that Territorians expect of their government. To make matters worse, it attacks anyone who has criticised or is focused on what the government is failing Territorians on. The CLP government attacks organisations and individuals. The petty personal politics that Territorians hate is everything that the CLP now embodies.

Territorians deserve a government that is open and accountable and will talk about the responsibility it has to Territorians. They will not see that under Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro. After 12 months it seems that the Chief Minister and her team are comfortable to hide behind press releases, refuse to engage with community organisations and leaders and break the promises they made in the election that won them government.

The Chief Minister has not stood up a press conference in seven weeks. This has been reported by the *NT News* and the NT Independent. Since 14 July this year the Chief Minister, who prides herself on being the leader of the CLP government, is too frightened to answer questions that are tough and complex and to show accountability. There are questions swirling around Territorians' minds, but they are left with no answers whatsoever.

Mr Edgington: Come on, be honest.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Ms UIBO: The Member for Barkly wants me to be honest. I will be honest. The Chief Minister was asked last week what she would rate herself for her efforts so far. She said 10 out of 10. I will be honest, Member for Barkly, it is 10 out of 10 for arrogance, 10 out of 10 for disrespect and 10 out of 10 for not engaging with the community, which wants solutions rather than punitive measures when it comes to the issues of crime and antisocial behaviour in the Northern Territory.

It is astounding that CLP members are sucked in by their own rhetoric. They are either too blind or too frightened to call out their leader for leading them down a dark hole that eventually they will be unable to get out of.

The NT Government should be a government for all Territorians. What Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro and her team have shown us so far is that they are a government for some Territorians, not all—just the few who they like and who do not criticise them.

If the government was to be genuine about fulfilling promises and commitments, it would talk about the promises and commitments it has already broken, failing Territorians. Just 12 months in, it has shown that it is a small and mean government with petty politics. In the leadership role that Lia Finocchiaro has taken on we are seeing the bad habits and bad behaviour exhibited by her failed CLP Chief Minister predecessor Adam Giles. Do not forget that the Chief Minister was part of that team. It seems as though she has developed some of the bad habits and behaviours of her predecessors. The leader who let down Territorians in the past is now coming back to the future.

Let us talk about these broken promises and commitments from the Chief Minister and her CLP team. When she was in opposition the now Chief Minister said, 'When the CLP is elected, we will solve crime in the first 100 days'. Obviously that did not happen; we all know that. I do not think anyone could say that crime has been solved in 100 days. The latest crime stats that were released by the government say that adult sexual assaults are up by 25%; child sexual assaults are up by 2%; serious assaults are up by 4%; assaults on frontline workers are up by 12%; and domestic violence is up by 5%. However, the CLP is patting itself on the back while Territorians continue to suffer from crime.

The Chief Minister spoke about how much she supports and honours the work of the police. What about the police retention bonus? Before the election the CLP promised a five-year retention bonus for our hardworking police officers. Where is it? Apparently, it dwindled away to being for only those officers who are in a 12-month

period, not a five-year period. According to the Northern Territory Police Association, this means that 90% of the NT Police Force will not be entitled to access the retention bonus. This has created a divide within our police.

Morale is already low. There is no commissioner at the helm, and we have heard nothing from the Chief Minister about the recruitment of the Northern Territory Police Commissioner. That is also causing a heavy load for our hardworking police officers. Why does the Chief Minister, as the Police minister, not talk about that? It is because she is hiding from the truth that she has broken a key promise to the people who are expected to deliver the CLP's promise to reduce crime. She has let police officers down. CLP members should be ashamed when they talk to our hardworking police officers because their team lied to police officers before the election and has not fulfilled the promise of the retention bonus. It is shameful of the Police minister not to address this matter.

Mr KERLE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; that is not correct. The Leader of the Opposition is accusing the Chief Minister …

Madam SPEAKER: No. Standing Order 31 is about offensive or disorderly words. Whether it is correct is a different matter altogether.

Mr Young: Sit down.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, you do not give instructions in this House; I do.

Mr Mackay: Kick him out.

Madam SPEAKER: I do not take instructions from you either, Member for Goyder. Member for Blain, do you want to clarify your point of order?

Mr KERLE: My point of order is that she is accusing the Chief Minister of lying …

Madam SPEAKER: No, that is not a point of order. It is not up for debate.

Ms UIBO: It is offensive to our police officers whom the CLP made a promise to, and that promise was broken. The truth hurts. The Member for Blain is feeling the pinch because he has to explain to the police officers who work, live and serve and protect in his electorate why his leader, Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro, broke a promise. CLP members will be catching their breath and making excuses for the actions of the Chief Minister. The truth hurts. It is offensive to our police officers that the Chief Minister broke a key commitment and promise made before the Territory election.

Mr Edgington: Come on, be honest.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, cease your interjections.

Ms UIBO: Funding for the Northern Territory Police anti-racism review was secretly scrapped by the Chief Minister and her team. Since then the Coroner has released Kumanjayi Walker's inquest. The recommendations and findings stated that there was structural racism within NT Police Force. This review was supposed to support police to continue the great work they do and to have an avenue for Territorians …

Mr Edgington: They are developing it.

Ms UIBO: … to have input into that review. This critical funding to move the police and community forward together …

Mr Edgington: Now you are making it up.

Ms UIBO: … importantly, in unity not division, has been scrapped by Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro and her CLP team.

Mr Edgington: Come on, be honest.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, you will have an opportunity to speak in a moment, if you choose to. In the meantime, stop your interjections or you will be on a warning.

Ms UIBO: Funding to Northern Territory Police for the anti-discrimination review has been secretly scrapped.

The Chief Minister spoke about the Territory Coordinator. Before the election the Chief Minister promised Territorians that she would lead an open and accountable government. After the election the CLP tried to sneak through the Territory Coordinator Bill without giving the community a chance to scrutinise it. It was only after much pressure from us in the opposition that public hearings and submissions were put out to the community over the Christmas and new year period, when many people have a break and are off work or travelling for a holiday.

We know from the Estimates process in June that $21m has been spent on the Office of the Territory Coordinator, with zero outcomes and no major projects progressed. Is this a good use of taxpayers' money? I will let taxpayers be the judge of that, but $21m has been spent on the economic champion of the Northern Territory, on which Lia Finocchiaro has placed all her bets and is losing so far.

There was a commitment to slash all approval timeframes across government by 50%. There is no evidence that this is being met. How is it being measured? How is it helping our business community? When asked about it the Chief Minister could not name a single approval other than the Motor Vehicle Registry wait times. That was all she could manage when talking about slashing approval times by 50%. We will wait in earnest for that answer. We hope that another CLP member can deliver an answer for Territorians, because the Chief Minister is incapable of doing so.

I turn to the fast-tracked conversion of vacant commercial CBD buildings into student accommodation. When in opposition, the now Chief Minister told the Property Council that a CLP government would slash commercial to residential building conversion approval times by 50%. It must be the favourite number, 50%. The Chief Minister promised a streamlined fast-track pathway to convert vacant commercial space to temporary student accommodation. Since then, over the last 12 months, there has been radio silence on this promise. Maybe one of the other ministers will step up and provide us with a response, because the Chief Minister is incapable of doing so.

The establishment of a lobbyist register—I know you have been a member of parliament for a long time, Madam Speaker, and you would have heard some of these commitments come and go—was a clear commitment from the CLP before the election. When it was elected to government, the CLP was pressured into delivering a dodgy and out-of-date type of register that lacks transparency and accountability. I believe the register is a little paper table that you write your name on with pencil or pen and sent it through. Where it is kept, how it is monitored and where it is publicised, we are still waiting to see. This is what I think would be a seemingly reasonable and simple task for a government to undertake, yet this CLP government cannot even get a lobbyist register together. It is ridiculous. Another promise broken by the CLP government because of its incapability and inadequate focus on completing things it promised to Territorians.

Disclosure hypocrisy—the now Chief Minister failed to properly disclose her interests in the register of members' interests in the last parliament. She demanded that members of parliament resign for much less than what has been exposed, attached to Lia Finocchiaro's name, of not declaring and publicly disclosing her interests.

Mr Young: What about the Member for Katherine?

Ms UIBO: The Member for Daly is interested in this—ministers' shares. Before the election the CLP leader told Territorians that every member of her shadow Cabinet had divested themselves of all shareholdings. After the election the Member for Katherine was forced to admit that she still had her Telstra shares and that 'it was taking a bit longer'. This was only after pressure from one of the Northern Territory's media outlets, which discovered that the Member for Katherine, who was part of the shadow ministry and is now a minister, failed to get rid of her shares. The hypocrisy is there for everybody to see.

There was a big fuss by the CLP about re-establishing the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, but only six of the 29 pieces of legislation introduced have been sent to that committee. The government moved several times, using parliamentary processes, to make it so that the opposition and the crossbench have no power, ability or process to refer legislation to this much-celebrated scrutiny committee. Only a minister of the CLP government can choose whether to scrutinise their own Bill. How hypocritical is that? The government made three attempts at changing standing and sessional orders so that no other member of parliament, not even one of the CLP backbenchers—if they have a spine—can refer legislation to the scrutiny committee. How crazy is that? Maybe the government is afraid of hard work.

I move on to the investment in infrastructure. There has been $1bn slashed in critical health, education, domestic violence support and road infrastructure.

In opposition the CLP openly had bipartisan support for a process to allow members of parliament a conscience vote on voluntary assisted dying in the Northern Territory. Now that the CLP is in government 'bipartisan' is not part of its vocabulary. The CLP has kicked the can down the road, pushed it through to the LCAC and has an inadequate consultation process to try to delay and hide from making an actual decision. You will not be able to hide much longer. You still have three years, and that is a lot of hiding to do when it comes to voluntary assisted dying. CLP members are afraid of hard work and offering bipartisanship now they are in government. That is a kicker for many people in the northern suburbs who believed that the CLP would continue its bipartisan stance to allow for this process to occur in the Northern Territory parliament.

Before the election the CLP promised Territorians that it would double solar feed-in tariffs during peak times, but after the election it broke that promise. The CLP announced that the doubled solar feed-in tariffs will apply only between 3 pm and 9 pm, rather than the peak time that everybody across the country knows is between 6 am and 6 pm. That is another broken promise to Territorians. People who voted on that very issue have been lied to by the CLP, which has broken a clear promise.

The CLP government has a disgraceful track record over the last 12 months.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, it has been an interesting 20 minutes. I will hopefully correct the record and set some things straight.

When Territorians elected us just over a year ago, they sent us to this House with a clear and urgent mandate to restore confidence in the Northern Territory. For too long confidence had been slipping away—confidence to invest in the Territory, to raise a family here and that justice would be delivered.

We faced a crisis of confidence and of common sense from the former government. Territorians were asking themselves, 'How did it get this bad?' Crime was out of control, the economy was on its knees and people were leaving the Territory because they no longer felt secure in the streets or certain about their future. That is the reality that we inherited on coming into government. That is the challenge that we have tackled head-on from day one.

I am not sure which alternative reality the Leader of the Opposition has been living in, or whether she has quickly forgotten or is trying to gaslight all Territorians about the legacy that Labor left the Northern Territory after losing government.

Our actions were decisive. We knew that without law and order nothing else really matters, at the end of the day. We introduced the strongest youth justice reforms in the Territory's history. We gave our hardworking police new powers. We strengthened bail laws and backed it with $1.5bn of investment in our courts and correctional system. We drew a line in the sand. The message was clear: if you break the law you will face the consequences. To those who work on our front line—nurses, teachers, police officers and bus drivers—we have your backs. With mandatory minimum sentences for assaults on frontline workers, we said loud and clear: Territorians who serve our community deserve protection. If a person assaults a frontline worker, they will go to prison. Law and order was just the first step.

The second step was rebuilding our economy. We inherited a basket-case economy from Labor. Jobs were drying up, investors were fleeing the Territory and confidence was lost. We had to act.

In March we launched the Rebuilding the Economy strategy, a clear plan built with input from businesses, industry and communities. Its vision is ambitious, and it is effective. We will outpace the nation in economic and population growth and make the Territory the best place in Australia to do business. We are working hard on that.

I listened to the members opposite shouting down the Territory Coordinator, but that position will be driving our economy forward.

We will build a bigger, stronger workforce. We will unlock regional growth and deliver for Australia and our allies. The previous government failed to do that for Territorians. Across our key industries of agriculture, tourism, Defence, gas and mining, we are driving jobs and investment into the Territory and not away from it.

We backed business by reforming payroll tax, lifting the threshold to the highest in Australia and exempting apprentices and trainees. That means more businesses growing, more young people in training and more jobs created in the Territory.

Look what happened—the cranes are back, the population is back and even the planes are coming back. Confidence is back. With the tide turning on crime and for the economy, more Territorians see and feel a reason to stay.

Our government's HomeGrown Territory Grants—Australia's most generous—have proven to be a game changer for people looking the seize their chance for the great Australian dream of owning their home. We have seen a huge take-up, with more than 900 applications submitted and $12.6m already paid out. With more than 200 new houses in the pipeline and new home building approvals up by 15%, more Territorians are putting down their roots here to build their future. If there is any indication we are on the right track, this is it. Territorians are backing our plan and we are backing them.

We know there are many more Territorians who want to build or buy their dream home and we want to make sure that they do not miss out. That is why tomorrow in parliament, the First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill 2025, will be introduced. Eligible first homebuyers will be able to access the $50,000 incentive for building or buying a new home until 30 September 2026. They will join the existing homebuyers who can access the FreshStart New Home Grants offering $30,000 to buy or build a new home until the same date. This extension gives more people a chance to take that step while delivering the confidence for developers, builders and contractors to invest in their operations.

It is not just us talking up the Territory. The latest NAB Australian Wellbeing Survey for quarter 2 of 2025 revealed that Territorians were the most optimistic in the country about being better off over the next 12 months. Why? It is because we are doing the work to back the Territory and Territorians. While much of the country is seeing storm clouds on the horizon, Territorians are starting to see good times ahead.

Construction activity is surging beyond housing. Our own Treasury results show that non-residential private sector work grew by 28.4% in the year to date to $71m, with cranes on the skyline for the first time this decade signalling new projects. The Treasury results also show that the value of building work yet to be done in the Territory has risen by 21.1% to more than $1.3bn over the year to the March quarter 2025, which is almost double the national average of 11.2%. That shows confidence in the Northern Territory.

When you turn the corner on crime and help the business community to get the economy moving, we get results, Territory businesses get results and Territorians get results.

We also know that Territorians are struggling with the rising cost of living. That is why we acted immediately to ease the pressure on households. We froze vehicle registration fees for 155,000 cars, motorcycles and trailers. From January we helped more than 38,000 Territorians to renew their licences for one year for free. We allowed Territorians to register light trailers for up to three years, saving them administrative issues. There are more savings on the way. We are reducing red tape, with less time wasted and more money in the pockets of Territorians.

Territorians not only deserve to save money at the wheel; they need to be safe on our roads. That is why we launched the Lives Worth Living road safety campaign, which is hard hitting, impactful and aimed at changing behaviours that cost lives. We are investing in critical road upgrades, including Tanami Road, Carpentaria Highway and Mereenie Loop. These projects are not just about asphalt and bitumen; they are about connecting people to jobs and services, improving access to health and education and opening up new opportunities for agriculture, mining, tourism and freight. For remote Aboriginal communities, these upgrades mean better living standards and better access to essential services.

Let us look at the road network and spending we inherited—an infrastructure program with delays upon delays and promises without delivery. When the previous government should have invested in roads to connect Territorians, it invested in everything but that. For businesses, roads mean improved productivity and reliability. For all Territorians, roads mean safer journeys.

We have made the Northern Territory a place of opportunity once again. This is what Territorians asked us to do, and it is what they deserve. This is exactly what the Finocchiaro CLP government is delivering for Territorians. The message to Territorians and the nation is simple: the Northern Territory is back in business. We are stronger, safer and ready for the future.

VISITORS
Stuart Park Primary School

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

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, we have had 12 months of CLP government. It has been 12 months since the CLP came to office promising Territorians safer streets, more opportunity, stronger protections for our culture and respect for the bush. I think it is fair to say that Territorians are asking this same question: where is it? Where is the safer Territory we were promised? Where is the safer and deeper respect for country and culture? Where is the delivery for the bush and the regions?

What we have seen in these 12 months is not a government rolling up its sleeves and working hard for the people of the Northern Territory. We have seen a government obsessed with looking tough, headlines and barking hard, but failing to deliver real outcomes for Territorians. The CLP said that assaults would drop and we would feel safer in our communities. Assaults have not gone down, people do not feel safer and families do not feel more secure; instead, they are continually concerned. Instead of the long, difficult work of prevention, rehabilitation and addressing the real drivers of crime, this government reaches for easy headlines and photo opportunities.

Sadly, rather than moving the Territory forward this government is trying to drag us backwards. It lowered the age of criminal responsibility so that children as young as 10 years old find themselves behind bars. Think about that—a 10-year-old locked in a cell. That is not justice or progress. It is not the Territory our children deserve.

We have seen the CLP government roll out pepper spray to the public with little to no education about how to use it—no training, no safeguards and no awareness about the risks and consequences. Given the CLP's policies and its so-called community safety agenda, all CLP members should subject themselves to the use of pepper spray in order to demonstrate their full confidence in their policies. Come on CLP members, I dare you; stand out the front of Parliament House and get sprayed. They will not because this is another attempt to look tough without a shred of responsibility or accountability or belief in their own policy settings. It does not stop there.

Where are the adult work camps and the boot camps the CLP promised to deliver for the community? There is nothing. There is not a single boot camp to be seen other than a youth excursion for three days with no therapeutic programs, no authorised programs and no involvement of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Where is the compulsory community service for young people? Nowhere; it is another broken promise.

This government has decimated the Environment portfolio. It cut funding to environmental organisations and then cynically tried to play off those organisations against one another, fighting for scraps. The government watered down environmental protections and water rights. CLP members scrapped third-party merits reviews. Why? To make it easier for their mates to make money off the Territory's land and water, while the rest of us, our children and their children will be left with the consequences.

The CLP government cut ranger funding—a blatant broken promise and a lie to Territorians—gutting programs that not only care for country but also provide meaningful jobs and pride for Aboriginal Territorians.

CLP members weakened sacred sites legislation, once again to appease their mates. Instead of strengthening protections, they have chosen to ignore and disrespect places of deep cultural significance. These are not just rocks and trees; they are places that hold our stories, our law and our very identity. This government treats them as obstacles to development, not treasures to be respected. We saw the recent departure of the CEO of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority; an outstanding person has gone, I assume, because the CLP did not like him.

What about the arts? Territorians see it plain as day; the Arts minister has been in hiding. In 12 months he has managed to visit only three remote communities. One he drove out to on a bitumen highway; the other

two he flew into in a luxury charter plane. Why? It is because he is afraid of the dirt roads. He is afraid of getting out to the Northern Territory's amazing art centres and hearing firsthand from Aboriginal Territorians in those communities about their contributions. When he turns up to events he does not connect or engage; he stands there and reads off his phone because he does not understand the arts, the people who create and the enormous cultural and economic value this sector has.

We hear that this government is reducing its funding for the National Indigenous Music Awards. Why? Because it does not care. The government jeopardises losing a significant national event to the east coast because it does not value our creative community.

Instead of showing leadership, the Attorney-General—the first law officer of the Territory—simply regurgitates the Chief Minister's lines on community safety word for word. It is clear that she does not know what she is doing. She had to be publicly shamed into attending a Standing Council of Attorneys-General meeting with her counterparts across the country. When she showed up it was reported that she sat silent on the issues that matter to Territorians and on the chance to put our unique challenges on the national stage.

She has treated the bush with disrespect, failing time and again to meet with law and justice groups on country and refusing to go to remote communities to see the reality firsthand. Instead, she ignores the evidence and recruitment recommendations and targets legal officers and organisations, trying to deflect from her own failings rather than take responsibility.

That is a pattern of this government. This government does not listen, respect, engage or deliver. It is allergic to the regions and the bush. Its members only focus on themselves. That is typical CLP.

I will be clear that this is about our future and the type of place we want to leave our children and grandchildren. The decisions made in the first 12 months have consequences. Lowering the age of criminal responsibility, weakening sacred sites protection and cutting ranger funding and water rights all have consequences. These decisions add up to the Territory being dragged backwards, not going forward. Territorians deserve a government that respects culture and country, listens to community, strengthens protections and delivers on its promises. The CLP government has shown us in its first 12 months what it is. The Territory deserves better.

This government came in promising. Its minister for Local Government promised reform. Twelve months in, where is it? Nowhere because his colleagues will not support him on the reform. They will not give him an extra cent. This is all a political attack to pick on regional councils rather than support them.

The government claimed the Groote Archipelago Regional Council that was set up under Labor. The Local Government minister has to claim it because he has nothing else to claim. If you ask the people of Groote Eylandt who set up that council, they will not muck around; they will tell you the truth. It was Labor under a local decision-making agreement, another mechanism that this government scrapped.

The CLP government got rid of treaty and local decision-making agreements. It will not deliver on local government reform. If it does, it will be done in Barkly because the minister needs to save himself for the next election. The Barkly people are not happy with him. They will make that clear; I guarantee you. Look at where the reform is done. The first one will be in Barkly, with the minister looking after himself, not the people of the Northern Territory.

Where are all the programs? This government backed away from the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and cut funding to do the racism review. That is what you get under this government.

Government members only look out for themselves; it is not a government for all Territorians. People need to see this government change and pivot. Government members talk about lifestyle. The only lifestyle they are looking after is their own, not the Territory's.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, Territorians are not interested in Labor slinging mud at the government. They want a government that delivers and backs the promises it made at the election. That is exactly what we are doing.

A year ago Territorians gave the CLP a clear mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our beautiful, unique lifestyle. After years of weak laws and reckless spending under Labor, Territorians asked for safer streets, stronger jobs, opportunities and a government that delivers. A year on we have taken that decisive action, and the results are starting to be felt across the Territory. I will highlight not only what is being done but also what that means for Territorians in their everyday lives.

Reducing crime: for nearly a decade Territorians lived through a spiralling crime crisis. It robbed families of confidence in their homes and forced businesses to spend money on repairs and increased insurance premiums instead of jobs. It drove visitors and investors away. Our first year had to focus on crime because safer streets are the foundation for everything else. When Territorians feel secure, our economy can grow, our lifestyle can thrive and confidence can return.

Declan's law came into effect in January, and we went further in April to ensure we had the strongest bail laws in the country. This resulted in 3,300 bail refusals, which is up by 44% on Labor's last year. That is 3,300 times an offender has been kept off the streets rather than being let out to commit more crimes.

The TIG-ER Taskforce, the early resolution team, has cleared more than 350 cases, meaning victims are no longer left waiting months for justice.

The crime stats are starting to turn around in some areas. Things like house break-ins are down by 29%. That means fewer smashed doors. Robberies are down by 25% since January. The number of victims is down by 4.7% compared with 2024. That is 605 fewer Territorians affected by crime.

Mandatory sentencing is in place for assaults on nurses, ambos, police and retail workers. A total of 451 offenders have been charged under the new laws, a clear consequence for assaulting our hardworking frontline Territorians.

We have more prosecutors. Court sittings are up by 13.7%, which is the most in five years. There have been 6,493 Local Court matters finalised. That is up by 31% on 2023–24. We now have more sentenced prisoners than remand prisoners in our system. Two additional permanent and two acting judges have been appointed this year. That is the largest judicial complement in the Territory's history, meeting demand from tougher laws that are now working.

In the year ahead we will rewrite the *Bail Act* to make it stronger, clearer and more enforceable, and we will expand protections for domestic violence victims and tackle alarming DV rates in our community.

You will recall that in July I tabled the changes to the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. As the Leader of Government Business said, we have a full agenda for the next three days. That allows me time to have targeted consultation with our stakeholders and Territorians, because we know how important this issue is. I look forward to hearing from more Territorians about that.

Rebuilding the economy—what does that mean for Territorians? After years of weak growth and spiralling debt of $11bn and rising, Territorians were losing confidence. The former government left frontline services held together with sticky tape and funding cliffs worth $350m a year. Businesses were holding back investment, population growth was going backwards and young people were leaving.

A strong economy underpins everything. It creates jobs, funds services and gives families the confidence to plan their future. That is why we prioritised rebuilding the economy with a clear strategy around our natural strengths—tourism, Defence, agriculture, gas and mining.

In my portfolios of Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing are industries that deliver immediate jobs and long-term growth across the Territory. By restoring funding, working together as a team, increasing air access, bringing back events and launching new campaigns that convert to visitation, we have put the economy back on a growth path.

We had a record cruise ship season, with 129 ships coming to Darwin—up from 118 last year—with 91% of passengers satisfied, 61% of passengers having shopped in Darwin and one-third having dined locally. That is money into tills in the off-peak season.

The Stories from the Heart campaign in Alice Springs sold out 4,000 bookings within days.

The caravanning sector is up this season, and operators have been back in full swing.

For travellers we have secured new air routes, the most recent being China Southern Airlines with 52,000 new seats. This is a major growth opportunity because China is one of Australia's largest inbound markets, with more than 850,000 people per year visiting Australia.

We need cheaper fares, more choice and stronger connections. That is what we will continue to strive for. Territorians need to feel connected to family interstate and we need to make it easier for tourists to get here.

We are strengthening our towns with $4.8m committed to a permanent home for Tourism Central Australia, providing certainty for Central Australian operators. That will happen this year.

We committed $3m to eight military tourism grants which have now been awarded. Locals like Stefan Wood are restoring World War II aircraft to operate unique tours. He said, 'My dream is becoming a reality. Future generations will see history in our skies.' An action plan is underway with industry partners to preserve and promote our World War II history.

I turn to the racing industry and its regional impact. Thoroughbred racing contributes $120m a year to the NT economy. The Darwin Cup injected more than $20m this year. Alice Springs Cup attendance was up by 30% and the Tennant Creek Cup also reported increased attendance. These events fill accommodation, bars and regional towns with life and energy.

In the year ahead we will deliver the visitor economy strategy with industry, preserving and promoting military tourism, including the link to Pitch Black in 2026, one of the largest exercises in the Territory. It is popular. We will implement the racing review recommendations to ensure a sustainable industry. We will streamline approvals to cut red tape and attract new investment based on the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce.

I move to restoring our lifestyle and what that means. The Restoring the Territory Lifestyle strategy brings together my portfolios—parks and hunting, tourism events, culture and community—to champion the Territory's identity as a vibrant welcoming place to live, work and visit.

For families we secured Silkwood, the largest expansion of Litchfield in a generation, adding 30,000 hectares and 20% more parkland for camping, swimming, hunting and hiking.

For hunters we have expanded access to Harrison Dam and created new hunting opportunities within Silkwood. As Mr Bart Irwin, an excited hunter, said, 'This government is true to its word. Hunting is at the forefront of the Territory's lifestyle.'

For everyday Territorians we restored the right to own pet crocodiles. There have been 123 permits issued. Territorian Tommy Hayes said, 'Owning a crocodile responsibly is a dream come true. The CLP brought this back and that is why we choose to live here.'

For traditional owners the extension of the Limmen Bight Marine Park is underway as promised, with strong traditional owner support, protecting sea country while unlocking sustainable tourism.

For our communities and our visitors this is the biggest year of motorsport events in the Territory's history. There will be more than 100,000 spectators.

The T20 cricket packed out TIO Stadium, which was an amazing achievement. International cricket was played here for the first time in 17 years, and it was the CLP that brought it back.

The PGA golf at Palmerston on the weekend was telecast across the world on Kayo, Fox Sports and Sky. Messages that came in from around the world said how fabulous the Territory looked for that experience.

We supported multicultural festivals like GleNTi, the Italian Festival, Barunga, the Nepalese Festival and Seabreeze. This is all about the Territory's diversity.

In only one year we have delivered safer streets, stronger jobs and renewed pride in our way of life. We are just getting started. Things are starting to turn around and we will keep working because the job is not done. We will keep going to deliver action, certainty and security for Territorians.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, a few weeks ago I sat in a parliamentary crossbench briefing in Darwin wearing a spit hood over my face. The device, recognised internationally as a form of torture, had been brought into the room by officials attempting to justify its use on children in detention. That moment has stayed with me because it was more than shocking symbolism; it summed up the direction that politics in the Northern Territory has taken.

One year ago I was elected to this parliament as an Independent alongside a landslide victory for the CLP. Since then I have watched from across this floor as the CLP enacted a Trump-style agenda, centralising power, weakening institutions and targeting First Nations Territorians. Scrutiny has been sidelined. Radical law and order policies have been enacted without evidence, misusing urgency powers designed for disasters to bypass parliamentary process.

The urgency is real; I feel it too. The Northern Territory is on a precipice. Every time the CLP passes a new law grounded in harm, systemic racism and disregard for the community, I feel the urgency of this situation.

I felt it when the government lowered the age of criminal responsibility to 10, removed youth diversion pathways and scrapped detention as a last resort for children, forcing young children into prison and guaranteeing them a life dictated by the trauma that causes. The CLP used urgency powers to pass each of these laws.

I felt it when the CLP introduced Australia's harshest bail laws, causing severe and dangerous overcrowding in watch houses and prisons. I felt it when, to cope with that spike in prisoner numbers, the CLP reopened the infamous condemned Don Dale prison to house the exploding prison population, now the second highest in the world per capita.

I felt it when the government refused calls from the Yuendumu community for an independent investigation into the death in custody of a young disabled man, Kumanjayi White. I felt it when the CLP exploited fear from a tragic stabbing at the Darwin Royal Show to push through unrelated youth justice laws, including reintroducing spit hoods in children's prisons, once again on urgency.

I felt it when the government prioritised fining families living in poverty for not sending their children to school, instead of supporting them.

I felt it when the CLP announced it would arm transit and public safety officers with guns and the public with pepper spray. When Territorians spoke up, calling for a smart and evidence-based community safety policy, I felt it when the Chief Minister told them they were not welcome in our Northern Territory.

I felt it when the Coroner delivered recommendations for addressing the domestic violence crisis in the Northern Territory and the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence attacked her integrity, undermining the separation of powers. She reframed domestic violence as a problem of First Nations culture.

I felt it when the CLP appointed a former gas executive as Territory Coordinator, granting him unprecedented power to override 32 safety, planning and environmental laws in a move that senior jurist Greg McIntyre SC said challenges the separation of powers and effectively creates a two-man band to run the Territory.

I felt it when sacred site protections and Aboriginal water rights were rewritten without the consent of traditional owners, land councils or custodians.

I felt it when frontline DV services looked to government for the funding promised in the election and the CLP reneged.

I felt it when the CLP abolished merits reviews, stripping Territorians of the right to appeal poor decisions made against the interests of the community.

I felt it when the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Disability in this Chamber quoted a Nazi propagandist and said that Social Darwinism shaped his thinking.

I felt it when the Member for Karama doxed the addresses of vulnerable public housing tenants in parliament and on social media called for their eviction.

I felt it yesterday when the first pepper spray cans left the shelves. OC spray, a scheduled weapon, is now available to people with no training in how to use it, no proper screening at time of purchase and no plan for what will happen when things go wrong—because things will go wrong.

I have felt it every time the CLP has misused emergency powers to bypass parliamentary process and ram through extreme laws without debate or transparency.

I feel it every day. This is not normal politics; it is systemic racism sold as community safety and power consolidated for the express purpose of avoiding accountability.

I ask my fellow members of this Chamber and people across the Northern Territory, after a year, how has this been working out for everyone? We are more divided than ever. Our crime rates are not going down, whatever the government spin might tell us. Assaults and sexual violence are increasing. Police watch houses are overflowing and the government is celebrating the second-highest incarceration rate in the world, and it is doing nothing to make us safer.

Not one person I talk to in my community says that they feel safer. Brick by brick, one decision at a time, the CLP is constructing a house of harm, division and fear, yet it asks us to believe that it is business as usual. It is not; it is an erosion of justice and is causing deep, lasting harm every day. In the process the real causes of suffering in our communities are being ignored and exacerbated—inequality, dislocation and intergenerational trauma.

When you refuse to listen to grieving families calling for independent investigations into deaths in custody, ignore Aboriginal land councils speaking with one voice about systemic injustice and keep choosing punishment over prevention, authority over empathy and secrecy over transparency, you are telling the people of the Northern Territory exactly who you serve: those with power and privilege at the expense of those without. This is not who Territorians are.

We are hard workers; we are people who have been caring for this country for thousands of years; and we are people who have been here for a month, who have come here seeking a better life. We are resilient families in remote communities across the Territory, strong women and men, young people with big dreams and elders who hold deep knowledge. We are communities which have survived generations of neglect and continue to thrive in the face of adversity.

We deserve leadership that serves all Territorians, not just a few; listens to our elders, health workers, youths and advocates; and chooses evidence over ideology, community over punishment and unity over division.

To those watching beyond this Chamber, the Northern Territory receives more than 70% of its budget from the Commonwealth. This is not just Territory business; this is a national concern.

First Nations people make up only 3% of Australia's population but nearly one in three Territorians. The way governments treat people here is a measure of how Australia treats its First Nations people. The NT is not a sideshow; it is a mirror.

For First Nations Territorians, 'intervention' is a word heavy with trauma. When the four Aboriginal land councils call for federal involvement in the justice system, it is an urgent plea that cannot be ignored.

Harm is intensifying every day. This is the lived reality, and we need meaningful help.

The next three years will shape this place for generations to come. We can keep repeating the same mistakes, building bigger prisons, passing harsher laws, fuelling deeper division and pushing legislation through this House without listening to the people we are meant to serve, or we can choose a different path.

I am not here for party politics or power. I am here because I believe in this place. I believe in the Northern Territory, our young people, our families, our communities which—despite everything—continue to show strength, resilience and hope. Belief alone is not enough; we need to act against division and further harm. We need to act for a connected, healthy and thriving society. We must act for everyone in the Northern Territory or we are acting for no-one.

I extend a sincere invitation to every member in this House: let us move beyond punitive politics and begin the real work of justice, healing and accountability. Let us go down a path that is grounded in evidence, led by communities, centred on dignity and focused on healing, not harm; a path that is strengthens justice by making it fairer, not harsher; a path that invests in the wellbeing and support of our children, not their incarceration; a path that sees safety not as control but as care for every person; a path that brings everyone with us and builds strength and safety through inclusion, not division, and listens to people who work every day on the front line—the doctors, police, community leaders. Instead of saying to them, 'You are not welcome here', say, 'Thank you, how can we do better together?' That choice is before us now.

Let us do the job that the Territory has elected all of us to do and build a Territory for everyone, because the Northern Territory and its people are worth it. The future we build will reflect who we truly are.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, when I look back on the past 12 months, I am proud of the progress we have made together as Territorians and how far we have come under the Finocchiaro CLP government.

Serving as Minister for People, Sport and Culture and working with a newly formed department has been incredibly rewarding. I have had the privilege to work with the people and communities across the Territory.

This is a portfolio that touches every aspect of our lives—from youths, seniors and equality to veterans, the arts and culture sectors, our libraries and museums, Territorians living with a disability, our sporting community, the significantly large multicultural communities and the thousands of volunteers across all those areas.

Our seniors built the Territory we love. There are about 26,000 Territorians aged over 65 years. By 2036 that number is projected to top 35,000. With our senior population projected to grow, it is important that we have the program, policies and services in place that support them and celebrate their contributions to the Territory.

We continue to fund COTA NT as the seniors peak body with $255,000 per year. This is alongside $300,000 in grants to prevent elder abuse and ensure people can access the right support if needed.

Seniors Month 2025 saw 40 events daily across the Territory, including a morning tea at Parliament House which I co-hosted with the Chief Minister. We will continue the support in 2025–26 with more than $63,000 funding under the Seniors Month Grants program.

We continue to support seniors and eligible Territorians with cost of living relief. As at 30 June 2025, the NT Concession Scheme had 16,613 members and the NT Seniors Recognition Scheme had 17,859 members.

Despite the growth in the number of seniors, we are still the youngest jurisdiction in the nation. In the past 12 months we have invested in regional youth services for after-hours programs, safe transport and school holiday activities, with more than 1,000 free and local opportunities across the regions in June and July.

We listened, acted and have consulted with the community on the proposed location of the northern suburbs youth hub at Leanyer Recreation Park. Young people are still being supported through the SHAK program in the northern suburbs, which has been operating from the nearby Sanderson Middle School since October 2021. I look forward to providing a further update on the progress of the youth hub soon.

We are committed to a fair, inclusive and safe Territory for everyone. In the coming year we will commence a gender equality strategy to guide long-term action.

I recently announced that we backed 17 local initiatives through the Men's Places Grants, totalling $152,950 invested, after strong demand to support men's health, connection and positive role modelling.

The 2021 Census showed 3,868 full-time ADF, 545 reservist ADF and 5,036 veterans living in the Northern Territory. When we consider partners and children, we estimate up to 20,000 people form part of our important veterans community.

In 2024–25 we invested $850,000 through Operation Thrive to support transition, employment, education, health, wellbeing and respect, and we will continue that support. This includes veterans' community health and wellbeing grants and an education support program in partnership with Charles Darwin University. We also hosted the Veteran Games heats in Darwin, building bonds between veterans, Defence and our wider community.

There are 31,800 Territorians living with disability, and 6,437 Territorians have an active NDIS plan with almost 52% of them identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

I was pleased to release the NT Government's response to the Disability Royal Commission on 3 April 2025, addressing all 222 recommendations. We are getting on with that work.

We secured ongoing face-to-face Auslan interpreting, making sure Territorians have the services available when needed. It is critical that Territory NDIS participants have equitable access to the scheme and that there is sufficient flexibility in any reforms that acknowledge our remote and regional centres. This year we will release the 2025–29 action plan under the NT Disability Strategy and continue to push for reforms that work for all Territorians.

For many Territorians, sport is their community. We are proud to support our sport and recreation sector through investment of $7.7m in support of our peak sporting bodies.

The Sport Voucher program continues to ease the cost of living and keeps kids active. In 2024–25 there were 26,929 Urban Sport and 4,856 Learn to Swim vouchers issued, with more than $3.1m invested in families.

Through the Active Regional and Remote Communities program and exempt schools we invested $4.22m to activate 77 remote communities.

The NT Sports Academy's Open Futures Program supported 183 athletes. Our Futures 2 and Futures 2032 Programs supported 25 talented able-bodied athletes.

Our all-abilities program backed 32 athletes, and we expanded the NT Sports Awards with new categories for para athletes and regional performance because excellence happens everywhere.

We are upgrading sporting facilities where it matters. We have delivered our election commitment for the Norbuilt Oval lights, which should be completed by the NTFL season and will allow night matches and training so that kids and others can beat the heat. We are developing a master plan for the Marrara Sporting precinct, alongside upgrades at Tracy Village sporting precinct, Woodroffe Oval and commitments in Alice Springs.

We delivered A-League, NRL and AFL, as well as the AFLW Dreamtime match in Darwin between Richmond and Essendon with close to 6,000 people through the gates celebrating women's footy.

After 17 years international cricket finally returned to the Northern Territory with the first men's T20 international ever played in the Northern Territory. The atmosphere was electric. I was there witnessing families, fans and visitors packed in the stands. When the broadcast went around the world, millions saw Darwin and the Territory lifestyle on full display. It was loud and it was fun.

I cannot speak about the return of cricket without paying tribute to the incredible one-handed crowd catch by bush pilot Harry Gill. It will be replayed for years to come and provide untold promotion for the Territory.

Territorians said that they loved the return of the game and that family and friends interstate and internationally have a better understanding of exactly where the Northern Territory is. We are putting the NT on the map.

The big moments keep coming. The Oceania Cup brings international-level hockey to Darwin this week and the inaugural MXGP Motocross Championships are around the corner.

Our creative industry provides significant economic, cultural, social and community value. We provided certainty with five-year $25m funding for 30 leading arts organisations—stability that lifts excellence, employment and community engagement. In 2024–25 Arts NT invested $7.8m in 201 activities, directly supporting 66 artists, 29 arts workers and 106 art organisations across every region. I am proud to announce the 2025–26 Arts Grants opened yesterday, with $7.9m in funding to support artists.

Next week Desert Mob 2025 returns. It is one of the nation's oldest Aboriginal art festivals, featuring artists from more than 30 Aboriginal art centres across the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia.

We boosted MAGNT operational funding by $2.5m per year to secure exhibitions, research and programs; supported the Women's Museum of Australia in Alice Springs; opened the Katherine Amphitheatre as a new culture and events hub for Big Rivers; and launched NT Music Goes Global with a music export fund pilot to take Territory talent to the world.

As part of our government's cultural initiatives, we support Libraries & Archives as our memory and our meeting place.

The Northern Territory is proudly multicultural; 28% of the population of the greater Darwin region was born overseas and 13% for the rest of the Northern Territory. In 2024–25 more than 140 multicultural grants were awarded, worth over $2m, supporting the Territory's multicultural organisations to celebrate and showcase their culture and community.

As minister, I will keep backing the things that matter to Territorians—safe streets, strong communities, world-class sport, vibrant culture and opportunities for all.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, one year into Lia Finocchiaro's CLP government Territorians have every right to feel let down. The CLP made huge promises when it came to power. The CLP told Territorians that it would restore trust, fix crime and build a brighter future, but one year on the reality could not be further from the truth.

This government's legacy so far is one of cheap deceptions and zero integrity. It has no real substance and no vision for the Northern Territory. Instead of leadership, Territorians have been handed broken promises, failed policies and hollow announcements.

Its biggest failure is the one it made the loudest: the promise to fix crime. Territorians …

Mr KERLE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! We did not promise to fix crime; that was …

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, Member for Blain. That is not a point of order. Points of order are not an opportunity to debate.

Mr YOUNG: As I was saying, the CLP's biggest failure is that it was elected in 2024 on a promise to fix crime, but it is clear that the Member for Blain, a member for one of the Palmerston seats, is not confident in his government's ability to implement those policies to reduce crime. He is rattled; he made a point of order. I hope that the Member for Blain will speak on this issue. It is crickets coming from him; it sounds like he will not speak on this issue.

The reality is that the CLP came in on a promise to fix crime, yet the facts speak for themselves. Violent assault numbers are still rising, the incidence of domestic violence continues to rise in our communities and property damage remains out of control. Every Territorian deserves to feel safe in their home, their workplace and on the streets. After one year that has not happened, and the CLP has no plan to make it happen.

It does not end there. While crime rises, schools are seeing cuts and services that keep women safe are being stripped of funding. When it comes to building an economy that provides real jobs and opportunities for Territorians, this government is silent. There is no vision, plan or direction.

Our pharmacists are dedicated professionals working around the clock, yet the government's response has been disgraceful. Instead of supporting them, it has spent money on lawyers to stop strike action and cut pharmacists' pay by 25% a day if they dare to speak up. Despite being treated with contempt, our pharmacists keep turning up every day. Territorians stand with them, even if this government does not.

It goes further than that. The CLP government promised transparency in our hospitals. Before the election, CLP members slammed code yellows, which they had every right to do because it is serious when a code yellow is called in our hospital system. Once the CLP came to office, it quietly changed the rules so that code yellows are not called, even when hospitals are bursting at the seams. It took political pressure and the media to call out the government when it was silent, when it was obvious that the hospitals were in a state of crisis and code yellows needed to be called. It puts an enormous strain on our hospital staff who are left with dangerous workloads and crushing fatigue. By hiding these code yellows this government is hiding the truth from Territorians.

The CLP has walked away from the northern suburbs youth hub. This project had a site, through community consultation, and federal funding, yet it is gone—abandoned. The government has not spoken about it. The minister spoke just before me, and he did not raise it once during his speech. This was a critical project to support young people, keep them engaged and improve community safety. Walking away from it is playing politics with the future of our kids.

This government's accountability has gone out the window. The government has refused to take any responsibility. When it is criticised, it attacks those who criticise. When challenged, it hides. We heard the Member for Barkly call out and agree that they will continue to attack anyone who criticises the government …

Mr Edgington: We will attack you.

Mr YOUNG: The CLP government will continue to attack people if they criticise any of its policies.

We are on the right side; we are working with Territorians and criticising the government. That is our role in opposition. When members of the public and community organisations criticise the government, what does it do? It hides, then it runs and attacks.

The Chief Minister, only last week or the week before, attended the Northern Territory Police Association meeting. When she was criticised there, what did she do, Member for Barkly? She ran. That is right; she ran away. She could not even front the members and talk to them or the media. She took off and ran away because she does not like being criticised.

The government also promised to invest in community drug and alcohol services. A year in, there has been nothing—no funding, no plan and no action.

Regarding private maternity services, this government left Territory women and families in limbo for nine months. While other states were working with the Commonwealth to fix the problem, the NT Health minister dropped the ball; he could not even work with his counterparts in Canberra. He did not meet with the federal minister for Health or Luke Gosling, the local member, to raise those concerns. He hid and blamed everyone else because those private maternity services were left with no funding.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease the interjections, please!

Mr YOUNG: The other big one from the Member for Barkly was local government. Before the election, the CLP made huge promises about local government reform. A year in, there are no plans, no costings and no funding in the budget. This was a promise it never intended to keep. Territorians have been misled.

In our electorates …

Mrs Hersey: You have your head in the sand.

Mr YOUNG: I do not have my head in the sand, Member for Katherine. I have met with many local government organisations in my electorate, and they ask the same thing, 'When will it be rolled out? How will it be rolled out? What is the costing for rolling out these government reforms?' Crickets!

The minister scrapped local decision-making agreements for our communities. Will he continue to do that? At the Central Land Council full council meeting, he changed his tune on that. He asked members of the Central Land Council whether they still agree with local decision-making agreements because he is now interested in it. After saying, 'We will not continue local decision-making agreements', your minister, who was left to himself—this is what happens when other ministers, who have been invited, do not show up to full council meetings. When the Chief Minister was invited to the Central Land Council meeting she let the Member for Barkly free, and he had a great time. It sounds like he wants to bring local decision-making agreements back to the table.

I agree with the Member for Barkly; we should be having local decision-making agreement talks. A lot of those agreements that were signed by those communities were the aspiration of those communities, and it took many years to get to those agreements. The communities have been patient and generous with their time to work with government and trust us, yet the CLP government scrapped the local decision-making agreements.

I hope the Member for Barkly is right, and he will bring back those local decision-making agreements.

VISITORS
Visiting Midwives

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of a visiting group of midwives on a tour of the Northern Territory. It is wonderful to have you here; we value your services so much. Welcome to parliament.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, what a year it has been, filled with promise, excitement and rectification of almost a decade of utter neglect by those on the other side. I am proud to have been a part of the team that has put the effort in over the past 12 months to see our economy going in the right direction and crime going down. People are feeling confident about coming to the Territory and investing here. People are returning, after having departed in despair in the preceding decade; they are coming back to be a part of their networks and families to recreate the relationships they had lost under the failures of the previous government.

I was delighted to be given the task of reconnecting with our Asian neighbours, which for some reason were ignored for the previous decade. I have worked hard to strengthen those relationships so that we can connect

local businesses and industries with international markets and investments. In the last 12 months we had four outbound delegations to Southeast Asia—Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. Following those outbound delegations there have been return delegations, with real connections being made and investments being progressed in the Northern Territory, as they should be.

We have entered into foreign agreements with priority international partnerships to grow engagement, trade and investment opportunities. I am excited to say that we will be taking a delegation of Territory businesses to the Osaka World Expo in a few short weeks to showcase to the world exactly what is on offer in the Northern Territory and encourage businesses from across the globe to see for themselves what they can achieve if they come to live, work and invest in the Northern Territory.

Connectivity has been a major issue for the Northern Territory over the past few years. We were committed to making an improvement in that space. We committed to continuing the Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme through to June 2028. Through that scheme we have seen the launch of three new routes in 2025, with Airnorth from Alice Springs to Cairns; Jetstar's seasonal Gold Coast to Darwin route; and, most excitingly, an AirAsia flight from Kuala Lumpur to Darwin four times a week, securing our connection to the world which is growing strongly.

Indonesia AirAsia also returned with a direct service from Darwin to Denpasar, making daily flights available to those of us who love going to Bali for a break—be it for a weekend or a couple of weeks—and encouraging people from down south to escape the winter, spend a few days in Darwin, pop across to Bali and then regrettably head back to the freezing cold of Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide.

There has been an increase in flights from Darwin to Singapore, with Qantas resuming that much-needed route. We have daily flights to Singapore which connect us to a hub that takes Territorians to the rest of the globe. This makes it much easier to do business in the Northern Territory.

In 2025 we ensured that Darwin's 140,000 residents have enjoyed access to 10 nonstop interstate routes and four international destinations with 1.17 million seats. This is a level of connectivity that surpasses many regional centres. For example, Mackay which has a population of 125,000 has only three domestic routes with 650,000 seats.

More importantly, these are affordable routes. You can fly return to Malaysia for a long weekend for about $400. If someone wants to head across to Brisbane and books two to three weeks ahead, which most people would plan to do, it costs about $500 return. This is affordable and accessible for Territorians.

Better than that, we are backing local businesses. We are delivering programs to propel businesses forward with our Business Acceleration Program, which supported 47 CEOs, forecasting 44% higher revenue and 15% more jobs. Nine Business Innovation Program grants were also awarded, collectively projecting $383m revenue growth and 336 new jobs for Territorians.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, we are just on midday. Would you like to round off or would you prefer to complete your speech later?

Ms CAHILL: I am happy to round off, Madam Speaker.

We made a commitment to restore our beautiful lifestyle, rebuild our economy and reduce crime. Our government has done exactly that and will continue to do so into the future.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled the Electricity Legislation Amendment (Market Reform) Bill 2025, Serial 36.

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled the Electricity System and Market Operator Bill 2025, Serial 35.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled the First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill 2025, Serial 38.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled the Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Legislation Amendment (Expansion of CDS and Other Matters) Bill 2025, Serial 37.

PETITION
Petition No 15 – Retain All the Current Protections in the NT Anti-Discrimination Act

Mr PAECH (Gwoja)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 432 petitioners calling for the retention of all the current protections in the NT *Anti-Discrimination Act* and to ensure that vulnerable communities are not exposed to hate speech or discrimination. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

> *The petitioners humbly call on the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to retain all the current protections in the NT* Anti-Discrimination Act *and ensure that vulnerable communities are not exposed to hate speech or discrimination.*

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): 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

Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill

Ms UIBO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

You have been forced to pull your dodgy Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill after telling the Christian school sector and other key stakeholders it would be passing in parliament this week. It is clear that you have not done the work and you have failed to consult adequately on this Bill. Your incompetence has caused concern and anger amongst many Territory key stakeholders and breached their trust. Why did you not consult properly with stakeholders? Which stakeholders have expressed concerns about your shonky work? When will the Northern Territory parliament see the amended version of your ill-conceived Bill?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech before lunch, we have a full agenda this sittings—as the Leader of Government Business has said. We are working through that agenda.

It is interesting because you can never win with this opposition. When we are pushing ahead with our agenda, which we promised Territorians at the election, those opposite say that we are ramming things through too fast, yet when we slow things down—because we are not too proud to consult with people in the community and hear what they have to say about important legislation—they attack us for that as well. It is mud slinging.

I make no apologies for allowing the Bill that I introduced in July to sit on the Notice Paper for a bit longer, however long it takes, so that I can consult widely across the Territory with all the stakeholders who continue to write to me about how they feel about this legislation.

I will not play politics with an important issue. I know the opposition likes to do that. We watched Labor do that for eight long years. I am not interested in that whatsoever.

I am putting forward important legislation and listening to Territorians about that to make sure we can get it right so that it is fair and clear and all Territorians can benefit from it.

We live in a multicultural society. We love the Territory for that reason. We want to get this right. We on this side of the Chamber do not stand for hate speech. We have lots of different things happening in that space. The Standing Council of Attorneys-General, with representatives of every jurisdiction, wants to look at what is happening with hate speech across Australia. In the Northern Territory we want to make sure that our multicultural community is alive, well and harmonious, as it always has been.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the conciseness of the answer. Part of the question was: which stakeholders have expressed their concerns about the lack of work you have done?

Madam SPEAKER: Attorney-General, you have the call.

Ms BOOTHBY: I want the Leader of the Opposition to listen to my answer because we are talking about how important it is to get this right. Unlike the Labor opposition which does not listen to Territorians—we had that for eight years—I am listening to Territorians. I want to sit down with as many people …

Ms Uibo: Who is not happy?

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Ms BOOTHBY: … as possible from all over the Territory, from all different groups, who feel that they have something important to say about this Bill. I will take that time; I make no apologies for doing that. I will continue to listen to them so that we can come up with something that is fair, balanced and clear so that all Territorians can continue to live in harmony. That is exactly what we want because we do not stand for hate speech and discrimination, but we need protections for all Territorians. I will continue that work.

CLP Government's First Year – Progress

Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER

At last year's election Territorians spoke loudly and clearly, saying that they wanted real change delivered quickly. We committed to bold action. Over the past 12 months we have worked tirelessly to deliver that promise. Can you update the Assembly on the progress we have made to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore the Territory lifestyle?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is an important part of our team.

We have just marked 12 months in government. This is a time for all of us to reflect on where we started and where we are going. It has been a significant 12 months in which we have shepherded great reform through this parliament and made change for the better across the Northern Territory, as we promised Territorians we would deliver.

As a team we have been disciplined and focused continuously and meticulously on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle because that is what Territorians asked us to do. That is the job they gave us and it is why there are 17 CLP members sitting in this Chamber. We were given a deliberate and specific job.

That work started from day one. Within eight weeks we were in this parliament passing several pieces of legislation on urgency to put the rights of people to be safe above the rights of offenders and to back our police with the laws they needed to do their job. Not only that we have delivered in the last 12 months the strongest bail laws in the country. We lowered the age of criminal responsibility so that we can intervene earlier in a young person's life. We rolled out OC spray yesterday, and we will be establishing the police public safety officer stream. We gave police stronger powers to deal with posting and boasting, ram raids, wanding, public nuisance drinking, DVO breaches, parole breaches and dangerous driving. There is a range of things. We have mandatory sentencing. There is the power of entry. We have 146 more police officers than we had 12 months ago.

That cumulatively has resulted in a reduction in the number of victims, which is most important. When you compare that with the last six months under Labor you see that 605 fewer Territorians were a victim of crime, thanks to the hard work of our police and the work we have been doing to support a safer community. That 4.7% reduction in the number of victims is just the beginning. We must do more and there is so much more work to do.

For our economy we created the Territory Coordinator and accepted 60 of 70 recommendations from the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce. We removed third-party merits reviews from the *Petroleum*, *Planning* and *Water Act*s. We have the most competitive payroll tax regime and the best home build scheme in the country. CommSec has said that the Territory has the fastest-growing population and economy in the country. What we are doing is working.

We are backing all of that with the important lifestyle piece. We had the T20 cricket. We purchased Silkwood.

There is so much more work to do, but we are on the right track.

Pharmacists – Industrial Action

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for HEALTH referred to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Territory pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are burnt out. Your government's response has been to spend money on lawyers to try to prevent pharmacists going on strike and to employ dirty tactics like cutting pharmacists' pay by 25% each day if they participate in strike action. Despite this appalling treatment, our pharmacists are turning up for work every day.

What are you doing to address this crisis across the Territory? Why will you not support our hardworking pharmacists who contribute so much to our community? How much have you spent on lawyers to block pharmacists from going on strike?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Daly has again fronted up here, misleading the Assembly, suggesting that our hardworking workers in the Department of Health are docking people's wages for participating in industrial action.

He said this morning—I wrote it down because it was important—that we are cutting their pay if pharmacists speak up. None of that is true. He knows—and I know—wages are being docked for people who do not turn up to work if there is industrial action. It has nothing to do with speaking up.

The important thing is that Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment is leading those negotiations. The Member for Daly is somewhat confused, thinking that the responsibility sits with the Minister for Health.

I put on the record that we support all pharmacists across the board.

Mr Paech: No, you do not.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections!

Mr EDGINGTON: We support all our staff. Every time I come in here I hear the opposition having a go at our hardworking pharmacists and staff across the board.

Ms Uibo: We are standing up for them. What are you doing?

Mr EDGINGTON: We are standing up for them. We are supporting all the workers across the health system. All the issues that relate to industrial action—the OCPE is considering all the feedback from the relevant union as we speak. Negotiations continue to be well and truly underway between the pharmacists, the technicians, their unions and our staff from OCPE. Let me assure you that all those issues are well and truly under negotiation as I speak.

I ask the Minister for Public Service to give an update on where those negotiations are up to.

Mrs HERSEY: Madam Speaker, as the minister outlined, those negotiations commenced on 19 February. An offer has gone to them. The commissioner will deliver an updated offer to the unions tomorrow. I look forward to seeing what that …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I appreciate the minister answering part of the question, but there was one other part, which was the last bit, about how much it is costing …

Madam SPEAKER: The cost of lawyers. The minister has the call.

Mrs HERSEY: As the Member for Barkly stated, there is no docking of the pharmacists' pay. The only docking of pay will happen if those pharmacists do not rock up to work.

The negotiations are still ongoing.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The question was about how much it is costing the government in lawyers.

Madam SPEAKER: We understand that. The minister has the call; she does not necessarily have to answer it the way you want her to.

Mrs HERSEY: There will be an offer updated to the members tomorrow by the commissioner. We continue to have these in good faith.

OC Spray Introduction

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for POLICE

Within 24 hours of your OC spray trial starting, at least four prohibited persons have illegally purchased the product. What crimes have these four people previously committed to be prohibited from buying OC spray? Will you take responsibility if an innocent Territorian is assaulted with OC spray currently in the hands of a criminal?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I was very much hoping that someone on the other side would ask me a question about OC spray, and if you channel that energy hard enough good things come your way. I am grateful for the question from the Member for Gwoja.

We have talked about this for months now. Yesterday Territorians could legally purchase OC spray to use for self-defence. Eleven firearms dealers have signed up to sell the spray. They have been working with the government and the police. We have put in place a fantastic regulatory framework to make sure there is the well-regulated sale and trial of OC spray over the next 12 months.

WA has had OC spray for a long time and has had no dramas with it. Over there you can buy it online; it is easy to get, whereas we have put safeguards in place about who can and who cannot purchase it. We have a self-declaration, whereby people must go to the firearms dealer and make a declaration, which is then checked by police in the background, virtually in real time, as it is all on iPads, so we get the data quickly. That allows us to have checks and balances. People get a fantastic flyer that goes with it to make sure that they understand self-defence and about the product. Things have been going well.

The Member for Gwoja has reinforced, in his question to me, that things are going well because police quickly ascertained that four people who should not have had it filled out the stat dec. Police responded quickly and retrieved the OC spray. One person has received a summons to appear in court. We are acting fast. Our men and women in blue are good, but they are fantastic when it comes to this.

It has been great. I take my hat off to our police; they have been doing a fantastic job. A lot of people have been working on this rollout.

This is about giving people more options for self-defence. I was in Woolies late yesterday, picking up biscuits from the shelf for the kids, and a lady walked past and said to me, ‘Thank you so much for giving us OC spray’. I turned around and said, ‘No worries. How did you go?’ She said, ‘I just got mine, and it is fantastic’. She is thrilled; it has given her peace of mind.

At the end of the day, we hope no-one ever has to use it, but it is there if they need it. I would rather someone spray a perpetrator than end up in a hand-to-fist fight on the floor, fighting for their life. I would rather they sprayed them from three or four metres away and could get out of that environment.

You choose your side, Member for Gwoja; we have chosen ours. The trial goes for 12 months, and we will see what happens after that.

Election Commitments – Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries’ Portfolios

Mr O’GALLAGHER to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

Prior to the last election we released a plan promising action to restore lifestyle, reduce crime and rebuild the economy. Many residents in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon welcomed our election 12 months ago,

expressing an immediate increase in confidence and optimism in the Territory's future. Can you update the Assembly on the progress made over the past 12 months?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama is a passionate Territorian, and his son is a frontline paramedic who is out there day to day protecting us and looking after us. Member for Karama, thank you for bringing your family to the Territory. They are the sort of people we need to bring in.

We will restore safety by having a stronger Corrections system. We have record numbers of Corrections officers, and we have made our facilities bigger and better.

We are rebuilding our economy. We have new mines which will support Territory families. We will have jobs in the Territory.

We will boost our lifestyle by improving biosecurity, strengthening animal welfare and opening new hunting opportunities.

One year on from the election, our government is getting the Territory back on track.

We inherited a mess in Corrections—I have spoken about it many times—with overcrowding, programs that did not work, police officers working hard and Corrections officers working hard in facilities that were not designed for that. We acted fast. We took Corrections officers out of watch houses, and rolled out infrastructure. In fact, there are 96 new beds in Alice Springs and 574 at Berrimah.

We have a rolling recruitment program. More than 700 Corrections officers are serving in the Northern Territory. We injected $120m into Corrections, boosted rehabilitation programs and partnered with G4S, which offers prisoner escorts and transfers. That keeps our existing Corrections officers focused on what they do best—being behind the wire, keeping the prisoners and work colleagues safe. We are making sure they go to work and come home safely.

We have also strengthened youth justice. We removed detention as a last resort to send a clear message that there will be consequences. 'Consequences' is a word that those opposite never used over the last eight years; they let that lapse. We on this side will send the clear message that if you commit a crime, there will be a consequence for your act.

We have returned to mining in Tennant Creek for the first time in 20 years. It is the land of opportunity. After 20 years there is a new mine in Tennant Creek. We have granted leases for the Amaroo phosphate project to allow mining activities to continue in that area.

Mr Paech: At least you care about the Barkly. The member does not.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja!

Mr MALEY: We have backed Territory families with an expanded battery scheme. Soon, gas in the Beetaloo will be flowing into their homes, delivering royalties to the Territory and to regional communities and traditional owners in the bush so that they can live on community and have some money to move forward.

The 28,000-hectare Wildman River agricultural hub is on its way, bigger and stronger than ever.

We have opened new hunting reserves, put in rocks and boosted our iconic lifestyle. We purchased Silkwood, because the Territory lifestyle is worth fighting for.

CLP Government's First Year – Progress

Mr KERLE to TREASURER

This time last year Territorians elected a Country Liberal government following eight long and painful years of Labor's financial mismanagement, economic decline and a worsening cost-of-living burden. The people of the Northern Territory sought stability, responsible economic management and a government committed to restoring confidence in our communities. They asked for safer streets, strong opportunities for business and employment, and a renewed focus on protecting and enhancing the lifestyle we value so highly.

Can you inform the Assembly of the measures undertaken over the last 12 months to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore the Territory way of life?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I spoke about this earlier. Over the past 12 months this government has delivered strong, decisive action to restore confidence and deliver for all Territorians after eight years of Labor's mess and mismanagement.

Who sits opposite us? The remnants of the failed Lawler government, an opposition not yet ready to accept the role it played in the disastrous social experiment of the last eight years of the Labor government. It is an opposition from a failed government with its head in the sand.

When we were elected, we faced a Territory in crisis where crime was tolerated by Labor, the economy under its control was a national joke and people were losing faith in their future in the Territory. We made it our mission to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

The first cab off the rank was restoring law and order. We delivered the toughest youth justice reforms in the Territory's history, strengthened the bail laws and gave our hardworking police greater powers. We introduced minimum mandatory sentences for assaults on frontline workers. We backed our words with a $1.5bn investment in law and order, the biggest investment into law and order that the Territory has seen.

Ms Uibo: Pity you lied about the retention bonus.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mr YAN: We then got to work on an economy that was on life support and going nowhere, all thanks to Labor's mismanagement.

We delivered the Rebuilding the Economy strategy, getting the economy back on track by cutting red tape and focusing on our strengths. This includes the most competitive payroll tax regime in the country, which exempted apprentices and trainees, making the Territory the best place to do business.

The results are clear. Thanks to the CLP the cranes are back, construction is booming and Territorians are once again confident in their future, which they were not under the previous Lawler Labor government.

We have delivered the most generous housing grants in the country, with 200 new houses in the pipeline and counting. Our government is helping 200 families get into a home of their own. Labor could not deliver on that. We are proud of our $50,000 home grants and our FreshStart $30,000 home grants.

In our year of action we are delivering action, certainty and security under a CLP government. After 12 months we are well and truly reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring the great Territory lifestyle.

Parks and Rangers

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for PARKS and WILDLIFE

Before the election the CLP promised free park fees for locals and more park rangers. Since the election there has been radio silence on both promises. Can you explain to Territorians why you have walked away from these commitments?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the CLP government loves our parks and our wildlife, which is why the first thing we did was ensure we had Parks and Wildlife and Tourism and Hospitality all under one ministry in one portfolio. Parks and wildlife are the reasons people love to spend time in the Territory. We can do all these things together. Instead of having the silos Labor created, whereby no-one talked to each other to get things done, we have managed to do a lot of work in the Parks and Wildlife space. We love preserving our parks and making sure that the generations to come—our kids and our grandkids—will be able to enjoy that.

Let us not forget one of the biggest things we announced this year—that is, the purchase of Silkwood, with 30,000 hectares, next to Litchfield National Park. It has so much space; it is pristine; it is rugged; and it has

hunting opportunities, camping, swimming and waterfalls. Territorians already enjoy going out to spend time there. They take their four-wheel drives and explore the wonders and natural beauty.

We back our parks and our tourists being able to visit those areas. We spent a lot of time in the first few months looking at all the things Labor had failed to do in our parks for a long time, like infrastructure. The crocodile fences at Wangi were broken and roads in our parks were causing problems, making it unsafe for people to swim.

We will continue to do that work because we are proud of our parks and the fact that tourism is thriving, showcasing our parks to the rest of the world. They are world class.

Mr BROWN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I want to know when the park fees will be free.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has some time.

Ms BOOTHBY: Our parks need to be a place where people can go swimming and have access to them as much as possible, but of course we have our Wet Season which has a lot of rain. At that time of year the crocodiles are on the move, and we want to make sure it is safe. The other week I was at Povey & Sons, a local business in Palmerston, which built 10 croc traps. It has used amazing technology to ensure our Parks and Wildlife rangers …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Arafura asked a direct question. Your election promise was making park fees free.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you have made your point; please sit down.

Mr Paech: When will you do it, or are you continuing to use this time because you are lying?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, please withdraw that.

Mr PAECH: I will withdraw that she has lied, but when will she be honest with Territorians that the government is not making them free?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are on a warning. There will be no more points of order for this question.

Ms BOOTHBY: I went to that business and watched it roll out the crocodile traps. Our rangers who work for Parks and Wildlife can ensure the crocodiles are captured and the swimming holes can be accessed as much as possible. We know that there is a time in the Wet Season when they cannot …

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

CLP Government's First Year – Progress

Mrs ZIO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The CLP government was elected with a clear mandate to turn around the Territory after years of Labor's neglect and reckless spending. Territorians wanted safer streets, stronger economic growth and a lifestyle worth defending. Over the past 12 months you have had some of the biggest reforms in some of the most diverse portfolios in government, from justice and crime reduction to rebuilding our tourism and events sector, expanding our parks and supporting racing. Can you update the Assembly on what has been delivered in our first year and how you are providing action, certainty and security for Territorians in the year ahead?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Fannie Bay's community of Territorians loves seeing what we are doing. We are on the right track for them.

The CLP was elected to government on a clear mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. We have delivered action, certainty and security—not words, but real results. Territorians asked for safer streets, job security and a lifestyle worth defending, and we are delivering that.

It is 12 months on, and the tide is turning. The Territory is back in business, but this is only the start. We know that we have so much more work to do. Our year of action has laid the foundations for the year ahead, which will keep the momentum going.

We had the biggest law and order budget in the Territory's history at $1.5bn, including $237m for justice. That is $112m more than Labor had.

We now have the strongest bail laws in Australia. Bail refusals are up by 44%, and remand is up by 27%. That is more than 3,300 bail refusals since January.

We have more sentenced prisoners than those on remand for the first time in a long time. Our TIG-ER taskforce has completed more than 350 remand cases, which reduces the backlog and delivers faster justice.

We have more judges and prosecutors. We are expanding capacity. We have the highest Local Court finalisation rate in five years.

We have new laws for mandatory sentencing for assaults on workers and police; DV offenders; ram raids; and posting and boasting. These laws hold accountable youth and adult offenders.

We have a victims-first approach. There has been a 40% uplift in the victims levy and there is a $15m package for support and counselling over the next five years. We increased the baseline funding for Legal Aid by 80%. We have a multi-year deal to make sure it has certainty so that victims can have justice. We have put victims first and taken back control of bail. We are delivering a justice system that backs the community and victims, not offenders.

When it comes to rebuilding our economy and our lifestyle, we increased tourism baseline funding to $8m per year, which is the first boost in years. We are integrating tourism, events, racing and parks into one streamlined visitor economy strategy. There are new aviation routes. We have a focus on military tourism and have launched $3m of investment in that space. Destination NT and Stories from the Heart are local campaigns to drive real results. We have our biggest major events year in a long time, including the T20 cricket that has returned after 17 long years.

We will keep working hard.

Election Commitments – Karama Electorate

Mr YOUNG to TREASURER

During the election campaign the now Member for Karama, Brian O'Gallagher, promised residents $200,000 for the Holy Family Parish in Karama and $500,000 for a new playground in Malak 'sooner', yet in your first budget there is no reference to either project. When will these commitments be delivered, or is this another case of the CLP saying one thing before the election and backflipping once in government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am glad that my young friend the Member for Daly is so interested in Karama. There were a lot of commitments, discussions and ideas spoken about during the election. I know I made a few for my electorate in Central Australia.

When you look at the budget and the financial position we inherited upon coming into government, you can understand why not all promises that may have been made or commitments that may have been given can be delivered straightaway.

Let us look at the $1.2bn black hole left to us by Labor and all the unfunded projects it had on the budget books to hide the fact Labor would breach its own debt ceiling. Projects and programs that were scheduled to go on for multiple years were funded only year on year. There were projects for health, domestic and family violence prevention, roads and communities, but this stuff was not funded ongoing; the former Labor government funded it only year on year. Labor would not deliver it.

Brian O'Gallagher, the Member for Karama, is out there working hard for his community. I can tell you that the previous Member for Karama was pretty absent in the community, according to the people I know there. Brian has been advocating for his community.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, can you refer to members by their title?

Mr YAN: Sorry; it was a slip of the tongue.

The Member for Karama is working hard for the members of his community. He is advocating for them. He comes to me as the Treasurer and Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure and advocates for projects and programs as every other MLA in this Chamber should do. I listen to the Member for Karama about the projects and programs he wants to deliver. I do not turn a blind eye, like those opposite used to. They did not care, I do not think, about anything that was not in their electorates.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; this is specifically a question about when the half-a-million-dollar playground commitment will be delivered for Malak.

Madam SPEAKER: It was specific. Treasurer, can you please answer?

Mr YAN: I will continue my input.

We will deliver our election commitments 100%. I will continue to work with the Member for Karama on the election commitments he gave his community. I cannot say that I can deliver them next week or next month, but I can tell you that we will deliver them.

The issue I have is dealing with the black hole those on the other side left with us so that we can actually come up with the money to deliver those commitments.

CLP Government's First Year – Progress

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Upon coming to government it has been revealed that Labor may not have been entirely honest with its published school attendance figures. We believe Labor may have under-reported thousands of kids not attending school. Can you update the Assembly on what action the CLP government has taken a year into government, particularly in your portfolio of Education and Training?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this week marks one year since the CLP was elected to government. In that time we have worked tirelessly to restore confidence, rebuild the economy, strengthen community safety and clean up Labor's education mess.

Without safe classrooms, dedicated teachers and strong learning foundations, we cannot hope to address the root causes of crime or equip our young people for the jobs of the future. This is why education has been one of the priorities of our first year in government.

Within 12 months we have delivered substantial reforms. We reinstated 46 school attendance officers to drive accountability and get children back to school. In fact, more than 4,500 compliance visits have been done, and the result is 388 students back in the classroom and off Labor's hidden list. We will not apologise for enforcing parental responsibility and accountability.

We launched the Boosting Literacy and Numeracy Plan to roll out explicit teaching across the Territory to get schools back to basics and improve literacy and numeracy levels.

We have backed our teachers with the keeping and attracting teachers strategy. We know that retaining dedicated educators is critical and we are supporting them through incentives, training pathways and practical classroom safety measures. One of those measures is the wanding in schools initiative because we cannot expect to recruit and retain teachers if they do not feel safe in their workplace.

We are also delivering reform in our secondary schools, creating clearer pathways to training, higher education and work. I was recently at Casuarina Senior College with some colleagues. We opened the CDU Trades Training Centre, equipping young Territorians with the skills that industries demand.

Education is not only about academics, it is about safety, wellbeing and life skills. That is why we introduced the swimming in schools program, with more than 5,500 students across 51 schools already completing lessons, and 73 more schools are scheduled to participate by the end of the year.

We have also invested in more school counsellors in the classrooms, not officers like the previous government, where we saw them coming out of the Mitchell Centre. This will ensure that our young people struggling with mental health challenges have support readily available at school.

We continued the back to school vouchers for 41,448 students, supporting families by easing of the cost of living.

I am proud to say that the police in schools program, which is rebuilding trust between police and young people, is fostering respect and safety in the school environment.

Methane Leak – Santos LNG Tank

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Yesterday Territorians found out that Santos has been leaking up to 184 kilograms of methane into our air every hour for almost two decades. The tank in question stands empty but is about to be refilled with Barossa gas from Australia's dirtiest gas reserve. This means that it will, once again, be releasing up to hundreds of kilograms of methane every hour into our air for the next 25 years. Does your government deem that it is acceptable for Santos to continue to pollute and damage our air for decades into the future? What is the point of any of our environmental regulations if they do not hold corporations like this to account and do not force those corporations to fix their broken infrastructure and they can continue on polluting as business as usual?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there is a leak at the LNG tank at the Santos Darwin LNG facility. That occurred when the tank was first commissioned, as mentioned, some two decades ago. A small amount of methane is lost to the atmosphere through a leak. For those who are not familiar with it, methane is non-toxic to humans and the environment—cows burp and fart it—in the concentrations that occur in the emissions from the facility.

Methane is a greenhouse gas and, as such, methane emissions are regulated by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Regulator (CER). The NT Government cooperates with the Clean Energy Regulator as required but does not duplicate regulatory effort.

The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) regulates emissions of air toxins from the Santos Darwin LNG facility in Darwin Harbour under the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*. This is important.

During initial commissioning of the Darwin liquified natural gas tank in 2006 a design fault resulted in a leak. At the time the leak was reported to the NT EPA. It is important that when those proponents found out there was an issue they reported it to the NT EPA as well as NT WorkSafe. After an independent investigation the tank was cleared to remain in service. That is our statutory authority—our independent NT EPA—working through the processes that are in place. The tank was cleared to remain in service.

During the recent life extension project, the Darwin liquified natural gas tank integrity was reassessed and the tank was found to be structurally safe for use until 2050. Again, it is important that the structural integrity of that tank is deemed to be structurally safe.

Due to the low environmental risk and high cost associated with fixing the leak, Santos made the decision not to repair the tank. The leaking gas is composed of 99.3% methane, with traces of no other non-toxic gases. I say again …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Does your government deem that it is acceptable for Santos to continue to pollute for the next 25 years and not hold it to account to fix its broken infrastructure?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nightcliff, you have asked your question. I believe that the minister is answering it.

Mr BURGOYNE: This is exactly what we are talking about. This government is supporting organisations such as the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority which are ensuring that things are happening in the way that is specified under the Act.

In regard to referring this to the Clean Energy Regulator, a federal government authority, this is what it is all about. We are ensuring that these risks are being mitigated. The NT EPA has notified the CER, as the most appropriate regulator to deal with the greenhouse gas emissions, and it is under its legislation whether it deems to do anything from hereon.

CLP Government's First Year – Progress

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Can you outline to the Assembly key initiatives and legislative achievements delivered in your first year of government as the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment; Minister for Corporate and Digital Development; and Minister for Water Resources?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, since taking office a year ago we have demonstrated decisive and committed leadership, and we are delivering for Territorians. We have undertaken significant legislative reforms to streamline processes, cut red tape and revitalise the Territory's economy.

For years key developments and projects with the potential to supercharge our growth were stagnant. Third-party merits reviews were weaponised by individuals with no genuine stake in projects, disrupting progress without evidence or accountability. Our government has fixed this issue.

The recent CommSec State of the States report confirms that the Northern Territory is leading the nation in economic and population growth. This growth is driven by strong investment, increased construction activity, record housing approvals and a growing workforce. We are firmly on track to rebuild the economy.

We are securing our water resources for the future by implementing the Mataranka and Western Davenport Water Allocation Plans, protecting Aboriginal water reserves through crucial legislative amendments and promoting responsible bore management via our Know Your Bore campaign.

The Member for Nelson likes to talk about hunting. Hunting and conservation are also supported. We have locked in waterfowl limits and season dates for five years, providing certainty for all involved.

Our government is enhancing tourism—the Tourism minister spoke about this—with the historic $7.5m acquisition of the Silkwood parcel of land near Litchfield, expanding recreational opportunities for Territorians and visitors alike.

As the Minister for Corporate and Digital Development I am committed to making government services more accessible and convenient. Territorians can now apply online for temporary traffic management cards, restricted motorbike licences and temporary vehicle licences at any time that suits them. Over the past year DCDD processed more than 29,000 online transactions, nearly tripling the previous year's total. We are piloting online bookings for motor vehicle registry appointments in Darwin, covering learner's licence applications, interstate registration transfers and overseas licence transfers, to save people time and hassle. How is that for halving approval processes, Leader of the Opposition?

We fulfilled our commitment to expand Telstra mobile coverage at Canteen Creek in the Barkly and enhanced coverage in remote homelands, including Corella Creek and Emu Point.

I could go on, but I will run out of time. After years of stalled development under the former government, our government is delivering and will continue to deliver for all Territorians.

Pharmacists – Industrial Action

J DAVIS to MINISTER for HEALTH

You said that our pharmacists are only not being paid if they do not show up to work. I have pharmacists contacting me saying that they are being docked 25% of their pay for taking protected industrial action which can include wearing a T-shirt. They are still showing up to work to protect patients, and are working for two hours every day for free. Can you confirm that our hardworking pharmacists will not continue to be docked for engaging in protected industrial action?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, when it comes to wages, conditions and efficiency measures, Parliament House is not the bargaining table. All these negotiations are being conducted by OCPE as we speak and it will continue to have those negotiations with the relevant unions.

Ms Uibo: Can you confirm it is true?

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, silence!

Mr EDGINGTON: NT Health assures me that there are plans in place to deal with the industrial action, maintaining access to medicines and essential services to ensure continuity of patient care.

While other sectors have struggled, Health has been hit especially hard. The Northern Territory, like the rest of Australia, is feeling those pressures. I will give a bit of a history lesson on this issue because it is important to put what is happening into context.

In 2020 public servants were assured by Labor, to get an election win, that it would be their best friend. Almost the first action of the Labor government on winning the election was to announce a wage freeze. That was for the very people it claimed to be friends with.

CPI has been running high. The issues that the Member for Johnston raises are all important because it was the former Chief Minister Michael Gunner who told public servants at the time that either they had to accept the deal or face massive job cuts. That was said at the time when it came to the wages freeze. The issues that we are talking about today …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The minister said that the pharmacists are only not being paid when they are not at work. Can he confirm that they will be paid when they show up to work?

Madam SPEAKER: He has the question. It is up to you how you answer it, minister.

Mr EDGINGTON: Like every public servant, they are paid when they turn up to work. This is nothing new. I am not sure where the Member for Johnston is coming from.

Ms Uibo: The pharmacists are writing to us.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Mr EDGINGTON: The situation we are in is that the wage freeze by the Labor government pushed many public servants back when it comes to real wages growth in the Northern Territory. The members have come in here today and placed the blame on the CLP, but the blame squarely sits with Labor which had a wage freeze in place for two years, preventing real wages growth for our public servants. Do not bash our public servants because it was Labor that failed the public servants for two years with a wage freeze and failed to put in place real wages growth. The situation we find ourselves in is all the doing of Labor, and we are trying to fix it.

NT Resources Week

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

One of our government's cornerstone commitments is to rebuild the Territory economy following eight years of gross mismanagement by Labor. Our Rebuilding the Economy strategy 2025–28 focuses on unlocking regional growth and connecting the Territory. Our government knows that these objectives cannot be achieved without our mining sector, which is the largest contributor to Territory own-source revenue, and one of the largest employers of regional and remote Territorians.

This week is NT Resources Week, the premier mining event in the Territory calendar. I understand that you are speaking at the Mining the Territory event. Can you inform the Assembly about the benefits to Territorians of events such as Resources Week and the mining sector as a whole?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Casuarina for his commitment to the Territory. In fact, the Member for Casuarina came out to South32 on Groote Eylandt last week to see for himself …

Ms Uibo: Did that cost $2,000 as well, and you do not know where it is?

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, stop interjecting.

Mr MALEY: … the mining that happens there, what South32 does and how committed it is to looking after land, its people and the community. I applaud his efforts to …

Ms Uibo: That is my crew. Hear, hear!

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

Mr MALEY: … understand how important mining is to the Northern Territory.

As outlined in our government's maiden budget, handed down in May, mining is the largest contributor to NT's gross state product at about 25%. Mining royalties contributed more than $200m to the Territory Treasury in 2024–25 and play a vital role in our economy.

Having events like NT Resources Week is crucial to the Northern Territory. Resources Week is our flagship mining and energy event, an opportunity to showcase our immense area, tools and minerals to the rest of the world and show the explorers and investors that we are here. This year Resources Week has attracted more than 805 delegates from across Australia and the world. That is a 15% increase from the year before. That shows there is a real interest in the Northern Territory and this government is rebuilding our economy because these people will invest, employ people and pay royalties to the government and landowners.

Confidence in the NT mining sector is growing, and this investment shows that. I am delighted to speak at the Mining the Territory conference to promote the great work of our sector. Australia is one of the world's untapped mineral markets, with about 80% yet to be explored. Let me tell you, the Territory holds enormous potential.

In 2024 there was $176m invested in exploration, but we must do more. Exploration creates mines, and we need new mines. We need to bring in that revenue to the Territory and native title holders. I echo the Chief Minister's comments when she told the protesters and activists who challenge the value of mining to go away. They are not welcome here. We want people who support, not people who deny Territorians the economic opportunity that mining brings through jobs and royalties. Those people are not welcome here; we want jobs, royalties and a commitment to the Northern Territory, as the Member for Casuarina has shown.

The resource and mining sectors have been and will continue to be the backbone of our economy. I welcome Resources Week and all those who participate and invest. I thank them for investing in jobs and the Northern Territory's future.

Election Commitments – Blain Electorate

Ms UIBO to TREASURER

At the recent election the now Member for Blain told residents that he would fix the ground issues at Moulden Oval and invest $150,000 for lights there, and put $300,000 towards women's change rooms for the Palmerston Raiders. None of these commitments received funding in your budget. When will the people of Blain receive these commitments? When will you deliver them?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is great to see the opposition starting to take an interest in other electorates.

The Member for Blain is a huge advocate for his community. He is always on my case, sending me letters. We are dealing with issues for the people of Blain and getting things done, which the previous government failed to do, I can tell you. The Member for Blain advocates hard for his community. My office, whether through Treasury or Logistics and Infrastructure, works hard to support the Member for Blain.

The Member for Blain made commitments during the election campaign, and of course we will work through and honour those commitments. The opposition is asking when we will do it. I will say it again: there was the big black hole that the previous Labor government left us—this huge debt, which is a huge hole—in our economy which meant we could not walk in and delivery everything we wanted tomorrow.

As I said for the Member for Karama, even though I would love to deliver everything for the Member for Blain next week or next month, the reality is that due to the state of the budget left to us by Labor it cannot be done. We have to stage these projects and this spending over the years to make sure we can deliver everything for our communities, but we will deliver it.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Mr YAN: I take the interjections and laughing from those opposite. It is like they do not care about what they did to our economy. They are laughing at the fact that they increased debt by $8bn in eight years. That is $1bn-plus per annum, yet they have the gall to ask why we have not delivered this and that.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that for 20 of the last 24 years Labor has been in government. What did you deliver for Territorians? You delivered debt and uncertainty …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr YAN: You delivered failed pet projects for the Territory …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Everyone will be quiet for three seconds, then the Treasurer will continue in silence.

Mr YAN: Those opposite are getting a bit fired up. I wonder why. Maybe it is because I was talking about the truth and the legacy left to us by the previous government.

I would love to deliver everything for everybody, but I cannot. It will take a bit of time. We will get there on our election commitments and promises to electorates across the Northern Territory, but we will do it responsibly and we will spend responsibly. We will deliver on those commitments.

Meningococcal B Vaccination Program

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for HEALTH

Our CLP government committed 12 months ago to introducing a free meningococcal B immunisation program from 1 January 2025, ensuring that every eligible family can access this vital protection. I am grateful that constituents in my electorate of Wanguri Sally and Ash Lawrence have been tireless advocates for wider men B vaccination after losing their beautiful daughter Skylar to this deadly infection. Our election commitment established the universal program for infants and Year 9 students, ongoing annual funding and a two-year catch-up program for older students. Can you tell me how this program is progressing and benefiting young Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ash and Sally, Skylar's parents, who have been strong advocates for this matter.

The short answer is that we are delivering our election commitment. I am delighted to share the news that more than 8,000 eligible young Territorians have received the free meningococcal B vaccine since we launched the program on 1 January this year. Of the 8,178 Territorians vaccinated 5,513 were infants aged between six weeks and two years and 2,665 were adolescents aged between 14 and 19 years. In addition, 1,248 doses were administered to Aboriginal children aged under 12 months via the National Immunisation Program. There has been strong demand for the free vaccine since the program started on 1 January this year. I encourage even more eligible families to take part.

This initiative delivers our election promise to give Territory families access to vital protection against meningococcal B whilst also easing cost-of-living pressures. Children are the greatest beneficiaries of vaccinations. They give families certainty and security. I have been encouraging more families to access this protection for free.

It was fantastic to see such a strong uptake of this important immunisation program. Recently, I visited Darwin High School where I met with two Year 10 students, Olivia and Madison, who were having their first shot as part of a catch-up program offered to students in Years 10, 11 and 12. Year 9 students have already received the vaccine as part of their school immunisation schedule in Terms 1 and 2.

Previously the meningococcal B vaccine was free for only Aboriginal infants via the NIP or those with specific medical conditions. Families were paying $130 to $180 per vaccine, with infants under two requiring three doses and adolescents needing two doses.

Expanding this free program to all young Territorians has been life saving. In the past decade the NT has recorded 16 cases of meningococcal B, including four tragic deaths. Survivors often face devastating long disabilities, with one in four impacted. Our free vaccination program is a game changer. It helps Territory families avoid the unimaginable loss of a child or the long-term effects of this preventable disease.

We are protecting and improving healthcare for all Territorians.

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

MINISTERIAL REPORT
12 Months of Reducing Crime, Rebuilding the Economy and Restoring the Territory Lifestyle

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, it is one year since the CLP came to government. I will speak about my electorate, what has been cut and some of the broken promises.

First of all, the lack of engagement in the last year for our Indigenous group was the main sore point for me, especially regarding sacred sites. The sacred sites legislation did not get up to the scrutiny level; that was unfortunate because it goes to the core of my values. One reason was that apparently there was a lot of backlash from the Territory Coordinator scrutiny. If you are in government you have to be ready to take scrutiny. You must take it on and get the community to come and talk to you to put their reasons across. Shutting them down is unacceptable.

I turn to the broken promises on gamba grass. The CLP promised more funding to community groups, Aboriginal rangers and local councils for gamba grass. Some of our remote and regional members were hoping that you would add more funding to that. Gamba grass becomes dangerous to our environment when it is dormant for a long time.

Another sore point was the funding cuts to the Aboriginal ranger groups. This goes to not only the programs but also the families who work on country and encouraging youths to work on country. In the family context that is important if you want leadership, especially regarding stories and the cultural values on land.

We have not heard anything on the commitment to ban gillnet fishing; we have not had any clear answers or a timeline on that.

I go back to the importance of engagement and consultation. A lot of legislation and policies have been passed that affect Aboriginal people. It is disappointing that consultation is lacking in this space with Aboriginal people, who are the people affected by these laws. It is unhelpful to make laws for people without them all being at the table, especially about sacred sites. Me and the old fella, Yingiya, and all my members here voiced our concerns about that. Sacred site laws make us healthy. It affects our decisions on land and our culture and our law. The least you can do is get us to the table and have a chat to us about it.

Another issue was ignoring the water reform that Labor worked on. We did extensive consultation across the Territory to develop a comprehensive water plan for the Northern Territory. Water is a precious resource. This government has failed to show any leadership, vision or understanding of how critical it is to manage our water resources.

The other issue is removing the third-party merits review. The government is asking people to trust you without oversight from an expert or a professional in this space. It is concerning for us. We will be watching that carefully.

I thank the Member for Barkly for putting the Gunbalanya Health Clinic in my electorate back on the agenda. I shared that video of the security patrols.

If you are talking about the judicial system, we need to beef up the AJA in the community so Aboriginal people are at the table. We want engagement from government. We want government members and ministers to go to our communities and talk to our people. They are interested; they want to make change.

Local solutions like local decision-making was put on ice as well. This is where we want to elevate all our Aboriginal groups to contribute actively and participate in this society. We have plenty of ideas and push to try to make change for our mob. Bring us to the table. As I say over and again, come out to my region and my electorate. I will take you on a tour and introduce you to the main people. Just come out there, get off the Stuart Highway and come out to Kakadu.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

ANIMAL PROTECTION AND RELATED LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 32

Continued from 30 July 2025.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I support the Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

At the outset I place on the record our thanks to the scrutiny committee for its thorough inquiry conducted into this Bill. Its work has ensured that it comes before the House having been carefully considered. This has balanced and strengthened the voices of stakeholders and the concerns raised across the community to then be put into good law and practice for the Northern Territory.

I can only hope that more legislation will have this same robust, careful and methodical process of scrutiny by the committee and have the opportunity to be properly scrutinised through the parliamentary process. As we spoke about earlier, only six pieces of legislation out of the 29 in the last 12 months have been through the scrutiny process. It is a valuable process. I thank the Chair for presenting the committee report to the Assembly today.

Our Labor team has a member on the committee, so the process has been robust. It is important to improve practices and look at the regulations as much as we look at legislation to make sure the laws have been modernised, improved, developed and made for the better. The opposition—our Labor team—is happy to support this important legislation, but we also highlight the value of scrutiny through the committee process. I urge the CLP government to continue to have that good practice and not pick and choose what should be scrutinised.

I acknowledge the Member for Goyder, who tabled Evie's Bark petition, which provided our parliament the opportunity to confront head-on the deficiencies in our animal welfare laws. That petition and the tireless work of its organisers and the signatories gave voice to widespread community demand for stronger animal welfare protections. It demonstrated that when Territorians see injustice—whether it be against people or animals across the Territory—they want to step up, improve laws and call for change for the better.

The legacy of the advocacy of those signatories is one of the most significant aspects of this Bill when it talks about broadening the definition of 'animal'. This is not a minor technicality; it is recognition that our laws in the Territory must evolve alongside scientific understanding and, indeed, community expectations. In the past narrow definitions have left gaps that exposed animal cruelty without adequate recourse. By broadening the definition this Bill ensures that a wide range of creatures, those capable of experiencing suffering, are properly protected under Northern Territory law. This reform aligns the Northern Territory with contemporary standards across Australia and, importantly, reflects the compassion and decency that our community expects.

This Bill introduces a critical reform by doubling the maximum penalty for failing to provide an animal with the minimum standard of care. This is also an important step. Too often we have seen horrific cases when

animals were left without food, water or medical treatment. We welcome this increase in penalties, but we also place on the record that, given the seriousness of some of the vile incidents that have been witnessed across the Territory in recent years, there is a case perhaps for considering whether even harsher penalties may be justified through this amendment. Two years' imprisonment or 200 penalty units may not reflect the gravity of some of the offences of sustained neglect or cruelty to animals. We are prepared to work with the government in future to ensure the punishment truly fits the crime and the community sees justice because people rightly expect that those who abuse and neglect animals will face real consequences.

Our team supports the introduction of specific obligations that clarify what caring for an animal means in practice. These are not burdensome requirements; they are the basic responsibility of ownership. The Bill makes it clear that any person in control of an animal must provide access to clean water and shelter at all times; provide a hygienic living environment appropriate to maintain the animal; seek treatment if the animal is diseased, injured or suffering; not confine or restrain an animal in a way that denies it the ability to move appropriately for its age, condition or size; and not abandon an animal. Each of these obligations addresses a gap that, unfortunately, has been too easily exploited in the past.

Abandonment in particular has been a blight and something that the Territory community has been calling out. Provisions to deal with this will be integrated in this legislation. Too many Territorians have seen tragic images of dogs left on chains in backyards and cats left behind, abandoned in houses, slowly suffering without the proper care that they need and deserve. This Bill rightly makes abandonment an offence.

These reforms set the clear standard that if you take on the responsibility of caring for an animal, you must provide it with the basics of life. Anything less is cruelty.

We thank the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for its work in examining the use of prong collars. The evidence it received was clear that these devices caused unnecessary pain and suffering for a creature. The Bill strikes the balance between creating an offence for their use and ensuring that legitimate training methods that promote welfare and positive behaviour remain available. This, in our view, is sensible reform. Training should be about building trust and respect between animals and humans, not about inflicting pain, and neglect and cruelty. We support this provision wholeheartedly, and it is modern and in line with community expectations.

There are provisions in this Bill that are direct responses to the horrific crimes committed by Mr Adam Britton. It is difficult to speak of those crimes. Unfortunately, many people have read about horrific and unspeakable acts, such was the depravity of this particular individual. It is important that the Northern Territory parliament acknowledges that our laws failed to anticipate such cruelty. This Bill ensures that those failures in Territory law will never be repeated.

I reflect on and acknowledge the animal welfare teams who investigated this particular individual, the horrific things they uncovered and the evidence that they had to go through. Many of those hardworking public servants were unfortunately traumatised in doing their role. I hope that they are getting the support that they need. The horrific work that they had to do has culminated in further protections through Northern Territory law. Our team offers them our thanks for doing that work. It would not have been easy. We hope that they are being given the opportunity to heal.

These changes reflect the hard lessons that have been learned from that case I mentioned. They strengthen protections, close loopholes and send a clear message to the community that cruelty of that horrific nature will not be tolerated in the Northern Territory and there are severe consequences for anyone who thinks that is okay.

Overall, this Bill achieves the modernisation of the *Animal Protection Act*. It updates the terminology to reflect contemporary standards; increases penalties where necessary; clarifies obligations in plain enforceable terms; and responds directly to community advocacy and expert recommendations. Most importantly, it reflects what Territorians expect in the year of 2025—that animals should be treated with care, respect and compassion.

I note that Dean is in the gallery. Thank you, Dean, for the advocacy work that you and your family have done. I thank the other signatories. Thank you, Dean, for being here today and for the amazing work you have done to support the changes in the Northern Territory law.

These laws alone, unfortunately, will not eliminate cruelty, but our stronger laws are the foundation of enforcement, education and cultural change across the Territory. By modernising this Act, we give our enforcement agencies the tools that they need and the community the confidence that its compassion is reflected in modern-day Territory law.

Although we support this Bill we also acknowledge that this must be the beginning, not the end, of the journey to improve laws and animal welfare. Animal protection is an evolving field. Community expectations will continue to grow, and cases will continue to test the adequacy of penalties and definitions. New issues will arise as science advances, and our understanding deepens with regard to the needs of different animals that are cared for across the Territory.

We commit to working with the government, the sector and the community to ensure that the laws of this parliament keep pace with community expectations and Australian standards. This includes revisiting penalties if they prove to be too lenient, perhaps considering further reforms in regard to breeding and sales and exploring more comprehensive frameworks for animal welfare in remote and regional settings, where enforcement can be challenging.

It is important that this parliament recognises the tireless work of the organisations that continue to dedicate their energy, efforts, funding and love and compassion to animal welfare every day. I place on the record our appreciation and thanks to groups such as the RSPCA NT, PAWS Darwin, Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC), the Darwin Animal Rescue Group and the many smaller rescue and foster networks across our towns, regions and communities that do extraordinary work, often with limited resources and relying heavily on volunteers and donations, such as the groups of wildlife carers et cetera.

These organisations are on the front line. They are called upon when an animal is abandoned, abused or found lost. They provide shelter, rehabilitation and, ultimately, a chance for a second life. They travel to regional and remote communities, working hand in hand with residents to manage animal health, population, education programs and welfare in culturally respectful ways. Their work not only saves animal lives but also builds awareness and educates our community on responsible ownership and the humane treatment of animals.

It is one thing for this parliament to strengthen the law, but it is these groups that see the reality on the ground every day and provide care and give effect to the compassion that this Bill enshrines. On behalf of my team, I thank them sincerely for their service to animal care, protection and welfare. We owe them a great debt of gratitude and a strong commitment to and ongoing support for their work in the community.

This Bill is a significant step forward. It strengthens protections, modernises our laws and reflects the values of compassion and decency that Territorians hold dear.

I again thank for their work the scrutiny committee, the Member for Goyder, the petitioners behind Evie's Bark and all the community advocates who made this debate possible and are focused on improving animal welfare.

It is often said that the true measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable. Animals cannot speak for themselves. They cannot petition this parliament or advocate in committee rooms. They rely on people, lawmakers, enforcers and carers to act in their best interests. With this Bill I believe that the Northern Territory takes a meaningful step towards ensuring our animals are treated with the care and dignity they deserve.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister and his team for the work they have put into this Bill. I also thank the committee: the Chair, the Member for Wanguri; and my peers, the Members for Goyder, Johnston and Gwoja. I had the privilege of being on the committee.

Who would have known puppies could bring the parliament together, but they certainly did. For all the confrontation we have in this Chamber, which I embrace as an important part of what we do, it was great to see a uniform approach from everyone with an issue like this. I thank my committee colleagues for their individual work to get us where we have got to today.

I make special mention of Sarah and her cat Kiara from my electorate of Drysdale. I hope in some small way that the passage of this Bill will put her at peace, as her cat is now deceased. Sarah, I know this is important legislation for you.

I also thank the Member for Goyder for his work in advocating from the beginning for the passage of this Bill.

At its crux, our pets deserve dignity. That is echoed across the community, and it is important that our pets have that dignity and are not seen as property. My electorate has a large number of pets whom we all love.

I have a pet—Blue, my golden retriever. The fact is we deeply love our pets. When my daughters draw a family picture, Blue is always in that picture. It shows how deeply we bond with our animals.

A lot of people in my electorate use kennels when they go on holiday. For me, it was important throughout the committee process and the writing of this legislation that people know there will be a minimum standard they can expect for the welfare of their animal. I am confident that this Bill has real teeth in punishing individuals or businesses that neglect the welfare of an animal. I can say to my electorate that there are serious consequences, and this Bill has serious teeth for those who neglect their animals, including those in the community. We have a huge number of pets, and it is unfortunate that when you walk around Drysdale, you can see neglected animals. I have seen it. This Bill also aims to address that and give dignity to our common pets throughout the community.

We are also banning cruel practices like prong collars, improper vehicle restraints and the misuse of electrical devices. That is in step with the modern training of dogs. We have learned a lot. I am an avid believer in responsible pet ownership and making sure you have a trained and well-behaved dog. It is safer for you and makes a happier pet. This Bill ensures some antiquated practices are removed.

Ultimately, we are recognising the loyalty our animals have to us, and in this Bill we are showing that loyalty back to them. I commend everyone in the Chamber who supports this Bill for that.

It goes to the heart of what our Country Liberal Party is about. We are stepping up on personal responsibility for pet ownership. It is a duty, not a hobby. There are genuine responsibilities a human being in this society takes on with pet ownership. This extends to businesses; they have a duty of welfare, and the state will enforce that duty. It also ensures respect for law and order and gives real teeth and consequences to those who cut corners on animal welfare. We simply will not allow individuals to cut corners when it comes to the welfare that our pets deserve.

It safeguards against—the Opposition Leader spoke about this—the horrendous actions in the case that came before the Northern Territory. A good friend of mine had to endure listening to that trial. I know it was deeply distressing for him to hear the crimes that were committed. We are directly addressing that moral decline and saying that is not acceptable in our society. We will up the laws and up the consequences for anyone who engages in such outright depravity. We all agree it is a shocking incident in our history, but at least we have responded as a government. No-one would accept that behaviour, and we are taking action to ensure there is a line in the sand against such depravity occurring.

It strengthens our institutions. We are empowering our authorised officers to act when an animal is at risk. We are giving our authorised officers greater powers to step in and look after the welfare of the animals in our community. That is a good thing, and for that reason I gladly support this Bill.

I thank the minister, the committee and all in this Chamber for supporting this Bill.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I support the Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. These amendments provide stronger, clearer and more enforceable legislation to protect animals from harm.

Right now, in far too many places, the laws meant to safeguard animals are weak, inconsistent or riddled with loopholes—but not in the Territory after today. In the Territory we recognise that animals feel pain, joy, fear and love. We know that animals are sentient; science confirms it and experience confirms it. Anyone who has ever seen a dog cower in fear or a rescued horse learn to trust again knows that they are not things; they are lives, they feel and because they feel, they deserve protection. That is why this amendment Bill is so important. These amendments recognise that animals are sentient beings under the law, not mere property.

Significantly, these amendments importantly recognise the role animals play in our lives. They give voice to the devastation experienced by Anitra and Dean Jackson when they lost their beloved fur baby Evie. Dealing with a family emergency, Anitra and Dean left Evie along with their second fur baby, Waffie, at a pet boarding house, believing they would be safe and well cared for and not realising—I believe all pet owners in the Territory would have been equally unaware; as someone who has used kennel facilities in the Northern Territory in the past, I was not aware—that such commercial enterprises were unregulated in the Territory, so much so that 14 months after losing Evie, they remain in the dark as to what went wrong, and they are denied answers and justice for Evie.

The amended legislation provides new inspection powers in connection with premises used for commercial purposes such as boarding kennels, as well as puppy breeding operations, cattle holding yards and premises used for training and racing of animals. This ability will increase compliance with the NT animal protection laws which will include minimum level of care obligations and the creation of offences where a person has failed in their duty of care. These obligations are to provide animals with appropriate and sufficient food and water, appropriate accommodation and living conditions and appropriate treatment for a disease or injury or when suffering, not to confine or restrain an animal in ways that are inappropriate and not to abandon an animal.

Had these inspection powers and minimum levels of care been in place previously the Jacksons, at the very least, would have had an avenue through which they may have obtained answers as to what went so wrong with Evie's stay in that boarding kennel.

By ensuring stricter penalties for cruelty and neglect, the amendments also treat serious abuse as the crime it truly is. Both the Leader of the Opposition and my colleague the Member for Drysdale referred to the heinous case the Northern Territory experienced in recent times. These amendments will include new criminal offences to cover that and increase the penalties in that sphere. They will also extend the cover to production, dissemination and possession of animal crush and bestiality material.

To assist with better compliance and enforcement of the NT animal welfare laws it is further proposed to have a number of additional welfare codes and standards which will make it much easier for those of us who have pets to know where to go when we need answers and how to get help when we need it, whether our animals are used in racing or in connection with a commercial purpose.

The changes proposed are not radical; they are reasonable. They are not anti-business, but they are pro-compassion and, most importantly, they are just. Anybody who has experienced the love of a fur baby knows how important it is for us to keep those babies safe, as they are a part of our families and a critical part of our lives.

Protecting animals is not about choosing them over people; it is about acknowledging that kindness, decency and justice are not limited resources. In fact, they grow stronger the more we practise them.

How we treat animals reflects who we are as a society. These amendments ensure that we are a society that protects the vulnerable, that acts not just out of convenience but also conscience and that chooses to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. It is beholden on all members of our community to ensure that animals have a voice and that we do not tolerate cruelty in any form in our community, but rather progress a culture of care for all creatures great and small, because when we protect the voiceless, we raise our own voice in defence of a more just, humane and compassionate world.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I speak in strong support of the Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

This Bill is about more than updating legislation; it is about the values we hold as Territorians—fairness, responsibility and compassion. It is about the way we treat those who cannot speak for themselves. It is about ensuring that the Northern Territory has some of the strongest and most modern animal protection laws in the nation.

Territorians care deeply about their animals. Whether it is the dog that greets you at the gate, the horse that carries you through a muster, polocrosse field or just mows the lawn, the cat that curls up at the end of the bed or the birds and fish that brighten our homes, animals are family. They enrich our lives, support our livelihoods and remind us every day of loyalty, joy and unconditional love. Our responsibility then is clear: to make sure they are safe, protected and treated humanely.

This Bill is a greatest hits of the commonsense approach towards animal welfare. I thank the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and his team for bringing this important Bill to the Assembly.

The journey leading us here was a marathon, not a sprint. This Bill comes after an extensive review of the previous legislation, with more than four months of initial consultation and an additional month with the LSC. Hundreds of submissions have been received from families, local government councils, universities, legal experts, former MLAs, racing organisations, the RSPCA and everyday Territorians.

The message from that consultation could not have been clearer: Territorians want strong protections for our furry friends. They want tougher penalties for those who do the wrong thing and better oversight. They expect their government to close the gap, to give our hardworking animal welfare officers the tools they need and to ensure that cruelty, neglect and abuse are met with real consequences and tougher penalties. Beyond the formal submissions, we on this side of the Chamber also heard advocacy from everyday Territorians directly when we were out and about in the community.

I first met Dean and Anitra Jackson at the Freds Pass markets. I acknowledge the presence of Dean and supporters in the gallery. We organised at the time to have a formal meeting in my office. They told me the story of Evie the cocker spaniel and their horrific experience with a boarding kennel which led to Petition Number 12—which we debated in this Assembly last month—and the inclusion of a code of practice for boarding facilities and kennels in this Bill.

All of us in the Chamber know the joy and comfort animals bring, but we also know the heartbreak of losing them. The story of Evie the cocker spaniel, whose short life has inspired reform across our Territory, was touching. When Dean and Anitra Jackson trusted a boarding facility to care for Evie and her mate, Waffie, they expected—as any of us would—that their beloved dog would be safe, fed and cared for. What followed was every owner's nightmare. To this day, her family has not had the clarity they deserve about how she was fatally injured.

More than 2,000 people signed the petition called Evie's Bark, calling for reform. Each of those signatures is a voice calling for change, accountability and laws that truly protect our pets. Dean and Anitra's advocacy in Evie's name helped shape this Bill.

This Bill features the introduction of a code of practice for boarding facilities and doggy day cares, the first in Territory history. These codes set enforceable standards so that families who leave pets in care can have confidence their animals will be safe. They also support industries and communities by making clear what the best practice looks like.

Dean and Anitra's courage has ensured that future Territorians will not suffer the same preventable heartbreak that Evie's premature death caused.

I will run through the greatest hits of common sense contained in this Bill. This Bill creates new minimum care offences. This means that if someone fails to provide the basic minimum care to an animal—be it food, water, shelter or treatment—our animal welfare officers can issue infringement notices. This is about giving frontline officers the tools they need to act early to educate where possible and, if that does not work, prosecute where necessary.

This Bill also increases the maximum penalties for cruelty offences and fixes a legal technicality in regard to beating animals. This Bill adds the words 'or suffering' after the word 'harm' to better clarify the offence when an animal is beaten and it constituents cruelty. This change was necessary to fix a legal loophole that did not pass the pub test. We are fixing it.

This Bill also modernises the requirement to restrain dogs when travelling in the back of utes and trailers. Every Territorian has seen a dog riding in the back of a ute, sometime safe and sometime not. It is often cute when you pull up at the traffic lights and a dog stares back at you. The changes in this Bill improve the readability and clarity to make clear the requirement to restrain a dog or dogs when riding in the back of utes or trailers down a public road. Constituents have come into my office after witnessing the horror of a dog bouncing behind a ute while they desperately tried to flag down the driver; it is awful. These laws make it clear, and it will be simple. When transporting dogs in the back of utes and trailers, they need to be safely secured—no ifs, ands or buts.

These changes make the law clearer and penalties enforceable, while acknowledging that working dogs used in stock work have an exemption in line with Territorians' expectations. This is not about cracking down on the farmer on his property; it is about making sure that when Territorians are transporting their animals at 100 kilometres an hour down the road, they are keeping them safe and preventing anyone else from having to witness that trauma and torturing a dog to death.

Next on the list, this Bill gives authorised officers the ability to enter locked vehicles to rescue animals in distress such as from heat. This will allow our hardworking animal welfare officers to respond promptly to save animals from suffering or dying a horrible death. If you are heading to the pub for a few hours and plan on leaving your dog locked in the car or on the back of a tray in the sun, you are a moron. It is not good

enough, and now the animal welfare officers will have the power to break your window, break the lock and get the dogs out to rectify the situation promptly.

This Bill also bans prong collars in the Northern Territory. These devices cause pain, distress and harm to dogs and have no place in the Territory. For those who do not know, it is basically a chain link collar with prongs that dig into the neck of the animal and when tightened it pinches and constrains the neck. I know there are some listening who disagree with the move of including this ban in this legislation—including in my own electorate, and I acknowledge their contributions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee inquiry and their advocacy—but this Bill is about protecting those without a voice and these devices are being misused and causing harm in the Territory.

This Bill also clarifies that using electrical devices on sensitive parts of animals, such as their face, udders and genitals, constitutes cruelty. It is a shame that is needed to be included. That behaviour is not training or about controlling an animal; it is abuse and this Bill makes sure the law says so. It is another commonsense change.

This Bill increases the maximum penalty for bestiality from seven to 10 years' imprisonment. This change is in line with community expectations and introduces a new criminal offence for the production, possession or dissemination of animal crush material. I will not be defining 'animal crush' as it is in the Bill; it represents some of the darkest cruelty humans are capable of. These are some of the most serious and abhorrent acts imaginable. By strengthening these laws and increasing the penalties, we are drawing a clear line that such offences are intolerable and will be met with the harshest penalties.

Other commonsense changes contained in this Bill include allowing for the collection of blood and other samples when investigating racing offences and allowing for the inspection of commercial facilities, like boarding kennels, breeding operations, doggy day cares and racing facilities to make sure everything is aboveboard and our animals are safe and not being mistreated. It also includes codes of practices and standards for campdrafting, rodeos, greyhound racing and the aforementioned boarding facilities and doggy day care centres.

This Bill is balanced. It recognises the importance of iconic Territory traditions like campdrafting and rodeos, while ensuring welfare standards are in place. It supports responsible practices and ensures the continuation and social licence of these activities while cracking down on cruelty and neglect.

These changes are not just about law. It is about family and knowing that when you leave your dog at a kennel it will be cared for; when you send your horse to be trained, it will be safe; and when you see a dog riding in the back of a ute, it is restrained and safe.

These increased penalties matter. They send a strong message that cruelty and neglect will not be tolerated. They provide a real deterrent and give the Territory the strongest animal welfare laws it has ever had.

The additional powers for our authorised animal welfare officers are reasonable, practical and targeted. They give officers the authority to intervene before tragedy occurs rather than after.

It is about confidence that the laws reflect our values and the government is doing its job to safeguard what we love. It is about compassion, because how we treat animals says much about how we are as a society.

This Bill ensures that the Northern Territory is not left behind in animal welfare. It makes us a national leader. It delivers stronger protections, tougher penalties and better safeguards for animals in our communities.

More than that, it honours Evie's Bark; it honours Dean and Anitra's courage, the more than 2,000 voices who signed the petition, the more than 400 people who put in submissions across the entire process to get here today, and all those calling for change. To them I say, your voices have been heard, this government is taking action and the action you put in has delivered real reform.

This Bill sends a simple message that in the Northern Territory cruelty will not be tolerated, neglect will not be excused and the welfare of animals will always matter.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the members who made contributions to this critical Bill. I also thank the Member for Goyder. I know he is passionate about animals because I have been to his house; it is like going to a local zoo.

I thank the scrutiny committee for its careful consideration of the Bill and for its report. I thank the Chair and the committee members for that work, as well as the members of the public who took the time to make contributions. Thank you for the work you did in not only looking at the Bill but also preparing the report and outlining the matters raised about the legislation's amendments.

The aim of this Bill is to ensure the Northern Territory has some of the strongest animal protection laws in Australia. The government is committed to ensuring that the NT's animal protection laws meet the evolving expectations of the community. Animals deserve to be safe; they are our furry friends.

These new laws will strengthen animal welfare safeguards and enforce the toughest-ever penalties for animal cruelty offences and sexual involvement with an animal offences. The amendments to the cruelty offences in the Criminal Code represent the doubling—and, in some cases, tripling—of the penalty maximums or imprisonment if Mr Britton was to commit these shocking crimes today.

The Legislative Scrutiny Committee made only one recommendation for the Bill. I understand that as part of its consideration the committee invited submissions from dedicated animal welfare groups and members of the public. I again thank those people who took time to provide feedback.

It is not proposed to adopt the committee's recommendation, as the exempted use of electric shock prods on livestock animals, including crocodiles, is adequate in providing that protection. It is in another section, so we think it is already covered.

Amendments to the *Animal Protection Act 2018*, the Animal Protection Regulations 2022 and the Criminal Code aim to provide greater protections and enforcement for all animals in the Northern Territory, including supporting our industries that are important to the Northern Territory economy.

As honourable members are aware, the legislative reforms in this Bill have been informed through direct engagement and consultation across a broad range of stakeholders and the community, including a public Have Your Say campaign.

I turn to the main amendments in this Bill.

In relation to the existing duty of care offence under section 23 of the Act, the maximum penalties will increase from 100 penalty units or one year of imprisonment to 200 penalty units or two years' imprisonment.

This Bill inserts new strict liability specific minimum level of care offences categories. These new lower-level offences are aimed at providing greater compliance and enforcement flexibility for our frontline officers, including the ability to issue infringement notices.

In relation to the serious animal cruelty offences in section 24 of the Act, the maximum penalties will increase from 200 penalty units or two years' imprisonment to 300 penalty units or three years' imprisonment.

A new offence is being inserted in relation to the possession and use of prong collars on dogs.

Section 34 of the Act is being repealed and replaced to provide clarity as to the need to restrain a dog when travelling in the back of a ute or trailer.

The main amendments contained in this Bill clarify and provide new authorised officer entry and inspection powers, including:

- the ability to seek additional information to better identify a person as part of an investigation or for issuing enforcement notices

- the ability for an authorised officer to enter a locked vehicle or premises in an emergency to rescue an animal in distress

- new authorised officer entry and inspection powers where a place is being used for a commercial purpose, such as boarding kennels and doggy day care centres, and where premises are being used to train and race animals

- the ability for an authorised officer to collect samples, such as blood, from an animal connected to an offence.

The regulations are being amended to provide more clarification about the use of electrical devices on animals. This will provide more guidance and certainty to industry and the community while ensuring that animals are better protected. Additionally, the regulations will insert new animal welfare codes of practice and guidelines for regulating campdrafts, rodeos, boarding kennels and the racing of greyhounds and horses.

The Bill also amends the Criminal Code to introduce a new serious offence to cover production, dissemination and possession of animal crush material and material related to sexual involvement with an animal with a maximum penalty of five years or 5,000 penalty units if it is a corporation. It also amends the Criminal Code to increase the maximum of penalty for the offence of sexual involvement with an animal from seven years to 10 years.

These amendments respond to the reprehensible cruelty offences committed by Mr Britton and aim to provide better protections and enforcement for all animal in the Northern Territory. The amendments in the Bill also align with other states and territories to ensure that the Territory has some of the toughest animal protection laws in Australia.

These laws will strengthen animal protection safeguards, enforce the toughest-ever penalties for animal cruelty offences and sexual involvement with an animal offences. Territorians have seen shocking cases of animal cruelty in recent years and are telling us that they are sick of offenders appearing to walk away with a slap on the wrist. Once these new laws are passed, those who commit the same kind of shocking animal cruelty and animal sex offending, like those done by Mr Britton, may be looking at a very long time in jail.

I thank everyone for their involvement in the development of this Bill. I thank the Biosecurity and Animal Welfare Branch within the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries; the officers attached to the Attorney-General's Department; of course, my own staff; and all the people involved in making submissions. Critical legislation does not happen without the expertise and hard work of departmental experts and professionals.

I thank all the stakeholders, community members and organisations who made contributions and submissions in relation to this, and my Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. I give particular thanks to Anitra and Dean Jackson who are here from Evie's Bark, who engaged in meaningful negotiations for the past 16 months or so. I hope these new animal protections laws serve you and your community well.

Finally, I thank the Parliamentary Counsel for its dedication in making sure that this Bill is legally sound and represents our intentions.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr BROWN: Is it your expectation that if inspectors come across a case where several dogs are found with serious health problems, such as an animal with parasites on it, untreated infestation and open wounds, will those responsible receive a written warning or will they receive meaningful punishment?

Mr MALEY: The first step in this process will be education in relation to helping the owner of the animals deal with that and give the animals medication. The next step after that will be an infringement notice.

Mr BROWN: Is that a warning?

Mr MALEY: The first step will be education which will be trying to help the owner of that animal to prevent it from happening, which would include a warning. If it happens again, it is up to the discretion of the animal welfare officer and the circumstances of the case. This legislation allows for an infringement notice to be issued at some stage.

Mr BROWN: Will this new provision give the public confidence that severe cases of animal neglect will no longer be met with warnings?

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case scenario. Our officers are experts and have been in the industry for a long time, so they will use their discretion. This is about education and stopping the suffering of animals. That is the main goal. They will do whatever they need to do to stop animals suffering. The first part will be

education. There will be medication given, then they can move down the line if there is repeated offending. Again, it is a case-by-case scenario based on the discretion of the authorised officers.

Ms UIBO: Is there a proforma framework for what that education looks like, or is that at the discretion of the animal welfare officer?

Mr MALEY: It is face to face and it is discretionary.

Mr BROWN: Will there be clear guidelines to ensure consistency so that cases involving obvious visible suffering are not dismissed lightly?

Mr MALEY: No, every case will be assessed on its own merits.

Mr BROWN: If inspectors find animals left with untreated infections to the point of significant injury, what new enforcement tools in this Bill will apply? Will owners in such cases face fines, bans or disqualification from owning animals rather than discretionary warnings?

Mr MALEY: We are talking about clause 6. There are different levels of care. I do not think your question goes to that. It will be case by case. I am trying to answer your questions—I am not sure how many you have—but the maximum penalty will be either 200 penalty units or imprisonment and it will be assessed case by case using the authorised officer's experience. As I said, the goal is to stop the animal suffering. Education will be used as the first tool, after that officers will move forward with penalties and infringement notices.

Ms UIBO: You said it is a case-by-case basis for education before it goes to a written infringement and penalties. Is there a case, within the intent of the clause, that an education opportunity would present itself but it could go straight to penalties, or would you go to the infringement and then penalties?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case. If the authorised officer went to the same property on three different occasions and education had not worked on the first occasion, again it would be up to the authorised officer's discretion. You could throw a bit of common sense in there. If they go there and a new dog is on the premises and that dog is suffering, education obviously has not worked. It would be up to the officer's discretion. If it was me, I would say that there comes a time when you can only educate so much, so it would be time for penalties to kick it. It would be case by case. The police do it every day. If you get pulled up for speeding, you may get a ticket or you may not; it depends on the circumstances. Police use their discretion and so will these authorised officers.

Mr BROWN: Do you agree that cases of obvious animal neglect should always attract penalties rather than warnings and, if so, will this Bill deliver on that expectation?

Mr MALEY: I am giving you leeway, as we are on clause 6. My expectation is that animals should not be harmed. This Bill is about stopping animals being harmed. Authorised officers use their discretion and the powers of the Act to deal with that. I want to limit this discussion, because we are getting off clause 6.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 39, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 33

Continued from 30 July 2025.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police): Madam Speaker, I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill and I commend it to the Assembly.

There is a number of components to this Bill and I will not speak to all of them, but a couple relate directly to supporting our police on the front line and, in fact, came from our police, so I will highlight those.

This legislation comes in two tranches. We have done a big piece of work here, and we are working on even more measures to support frontline policing, particularly in regard to people who drive off from random breath tests and other things. We continue to do that work. It is not the end of the story when it comes to giving police better powers to support them to keep the community safe, but it has important components along with other things. I will speak to that.

The additional powers for our transit safety officers are key. People might ask why are we bothering to increase powers for transit safety officers when we will be transitioning to the police public safety officers, but there is no reason to wait. Hardworking public servants and transit security officers are doing a fantastic job. We want them to have all the powers they need to do their job, which is why we are doing that significant piece of police public safety officer reform. While that takes its course—it will take a few months before the rubber hits the road—we need our transit safety officers to have the powers to maintain a safe public transport network.

This Bill supports our transit safety officers to issue directions so that if someone is committing or is about to commit an offence, they can issue a direction for that person to leave, which is a lawful direction they can give. That is an important power to back them up. They have to be listened to and respected, so this direction is an important way for them to try to prevent crime from happening. If behaviours are escalating, they can issue a direction for the person to get off the bus, leave the bus depot or get away from the bus stop—whatever it might be—and hopefully de-escalate what could end up being a volatile situation in a public place like a part of the public transport network. That is one important component of this, so we are proud to be delivering that for them.

The second part is about authorising transit safety officers to use OC spray gel and mist variants. We are saying, 'Go your hardest. Pick whichever one you like the best,' because, at the end of the day, our transit safety officers do an important job. If you are threatening the safety of other people, you might cop it, and that will be entirely as a result of your poor choices and bad behaviour. There is this uncertainty and restriction on our transit safety officers, so we will now provide that clarity.

The gel is thicker and more targeted, so it can withstand wind and other things a lot better, meaning you have a targeted impact on the individual who is producing the threat. That creates less risk for people nearby as they are less likely to face the impact of it because it is not being carried on the wind, for example. The cone-shaped mist is the one which people would be familiar with.

That is an important clarification and an important tool for transit safety officers to protect not only the community but also themselves. They go into highly volatile situations time and again, which reinforces why police public safety officers is such an important reform. It will give the ultimate powers, security and processes to our hardworking transit officers to do what they need to deal with crime and antisocial behaviour and, hopefully, stop crime from happening. In the intervening period we will not just sit around and say, 'That reform is coming'; we are giving transit officers the powers and support they need now. That is being done.

There are a lot of other components to the Bill in regard to bus network safety, including removing the Casuarina bus interchange, which I think everyone is looking forward to. When you speak to people at Casuarina Square they say that there has been an unbelievable drop in the incidence of crime and antisocial behaviour in the shopping centre since we came to government with the work we have already done. It is like night and day, the change in that place.

We know that having a different approach to bus depots will deliver even better results for our community. There has been hysteria. A lot of hysteria seems to follow me from people who do not like what we are doing, and they want to make everything about the sky falling down. Their parents must not have read them stories like *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* or *Henny Penny*. Perhaps some bedtime reading is in order for the people who come at me for the most bizarre things. I am gobsmacked by the accusations levelled at me on a daily basis. In any event, the sky will not fall down when the Casuarina bus depot goes.

If you cast your mind to whenever you go interstate or when you are lucky enough to travel overseas, count how many times you went to a bus depot and let me know. There will not be any times. It is a different way forward for the Territory, but we are not reinventing the wheel and it will lead to better outcomes.

I will not rehash all the other components of transit safety, which are obviously features in this Bill.

There are other changes, particularly to support our frontline police. As I said, those changes are coming in two tranches, with this Bill and a second one coming through. This Bill features in part a response to last year's significant road toll, with 60 lives lost on Territory roads. They are huge numbers. I think our road toll was the worst in the country. The impact on communities and families is devastating; it is far too high.

When we break down that road trauma data, we see that alcohol and drugs play a big role in those lives lost. Three-quarters of those fatalities had drugs and alcohol as a contributing factor. That is huge. That is not a statistic; it is people's lives and loved ones, a person not sitting around the dinner table, an anniversary missed and a significant contributor to our community that we have lost.

This year 28 lives have been lost on our roads, which represents trauma for not only families and workplaces but also our first responders. When we have a high road toll, it is our first responders—police, firies, ambos, CareFlight, you name it—who are on the scene dealing with that trauma and carnage. By increasing road safety and reducing the number of lives lost on our roads, everyone's life is better.

Part of that is about having cumulative offences for drug and drink-driving offences. Under Labor the law was structured such that if you had multiple offences at one time, the judge could say you can serve them all concurrently, but now they will be cumulative. If it was three months for this, six months for that and 10 months for the other thing—that you did at the one time—they can be stacked up. That reflects the seriousness of the offending and the severity of the actions, and it creates greater deterrence for people making stupid decisions. We need people to understand that as a road user you have a responsibility to yourself and every other road user and their family. That is a significant component of this legislation, reflecting the seriousness of the consequences of making those incredibly bad decisions.

We are creating two new traffic infringement offences targeted at unlicensed driving. If you never held a licence and were caught driving, the police used to charge you and send you to court. There would be the entire court process.

It is not news to anyone that our courts are clogged, thanks to the Labor government that underinvested in the justice system. In Question Time the Attorney-General clearly articulated the work we have been doing in our court system to create greater efficiency and the fantastic results. This includes the TIG-ER taskforce, which resolved about 350 remand cases early; the fact that we now have more sentenced prisoners than we do people on remand for the first time probably in a generation; a 7% reduction in the number of people on remand; and an 80% increase in Legal Aid's base funding. There has been a huge amount of work and reform in the court space.

These new traffic infringement offences will add to that greater efficiency in not only the court system but also policing. When police send someone to court that creates a process and a workflow for them. Do not get me wrong, police love catching bad guys and sending them to court; it does not get better than that. However, there are times when it can be better dealt with in another way. For example, when an unlicensed driver is caught for the first time, police will be able to issue an on-the-spot fine, which deals with it then and there. The good thing about fines is that people feel the pinch straightaway. We talk a lot about delivering meaningful and immediate consequences, and copping a fine is exactly one of those situations.

We have also created an on-the-spot fine for learner drivers who think that it is okay to sneak out without mum, dad or another grown-up supervising them and pop down to the shops, the servo or whatever else the young ones might be wanting to get up to. That is not okay, so this is a way to send a clear stern message to them that they have to be responsible and take the conditions of their licence seriously. Again, it delivers immediate tangible consequences and supports our police to do their important work in regard to deterrence. It supports a more efficient system.

That is a couple of the ways in which this Bill deals with those issues. As I said, we have a lot more coming through.

This Bill deals with a lot of other things. The last one I will touch on deals with abandoned vehicles. I do not think you can go to any community where it does not drive the everyday Territorian crazy. People cannot stand seeing crushed cars and abandoned vehicles strewn all over the roads like it is the lolly litter that you see on the side of the road. It is awful. When you drive past an abandoned car on the first day all the tyres are on. When you drive past on the second day the windows have been smashed. When you drive past on the third day one tyre is gone and the next day a second tyre is gone. Soon enough it is burnt to smithereens, and it is still sitting there with a pink sticker. It is ridiculous.

The Infrastructure minister has dealt with that much more efficiently by truncating the timeframe to just a couple of days, which means Territorians will have the issue of the eyesore of abandoned, busted, stolen, crashed vehicles being dealt with much faster. Territorians will not have that constant reminder of the poor choices of people who choose to break the law. We support that reform of changing the timeframe from seven days to three days. There might even be tyres left on by the time the car is moved on—who knows?

It is a great step forward and is part of our plan to reduce approval timeframes. This counts as part of that. This is about how we as a government can do things better. Why do we wait a certain amount of time to do some things? Our team has been clear with the public service that we are not here to deliver the status quo and we are open to how we can do things better.

Seven days was an arbitrary number that someone came up with a long time ago. We know we can turn around the same result in three days, which is more than a 50% reduction in that timeframe. We are proud to be delivering that as well.

Of course, my comments do not do the entire Bill justice because there is plenty to it, but I wanted to highlight a few relatively small changes that will make a significant difference. That is what we are focused on. There is no change too big or small that we will not explore and make if it makes sense. I look forward to that next phase of reform in this space.

The changes to give transit safety officers better powers and police better opportunities to deliver immediate consequences, to make sure there are penalties when we see drunk and drug-driving that are immediate and reflective of the severity of their actions and to deal with abandoned vehicles are important. We will continue that work.

What I love most about this type of reform is that it comes from everyday Territorians. Sometimes it is the small things you do that mean the most to people. These are by no stretch small things, but they are a collection of things which, together, send a clear signal that we want to do things more efficiently and deliver better outcomes for Territorians. This is one of a number of ways in which we continue to listen to people, our police, our transit officers and our community to deliver a legal framework in the Territory that aligns much more closely with their values and expectations than what they saw in a generation under Labor.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory Labor opposition welcomes legislation that contributes to a safe, efficient and sustainable transport network that meets the needs of the Territory so that wherever someone lives they are supported to have transport.

The commercial passenger vehicle (CPV) industry has undergone significant changes over the past two decades. The CPV industry provides an essential service in the community, ensuring Territorians can get to health appointments or access community shops. It helps visitors to get around to experience the wonders of the Territory. It is important that the regulatory framework for these services is up to date to ensure the safety of people accessing these services.

The amendments before the Assembly include repealing the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Board, as recommended following a broad review; increasing fines for multiple offences, including taxi fare overcharging and refusal of service for persons who use a wheelchair; clarifying the procedure for granting and approving communications at dispatch networks; updating language and aligning infringement provisions with accreditation and licence-related infringements; and transferring the forum of appeal against accreditation, licensing and related decisions from the Local Court to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The Territory Labor opposition is prepared to support these amendments.

I turn to the proposed amendments to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949*. Members of this Assembly will agree that those who work in MVR offices across the Northern Territory do a great job, but the fact is that service delivery methods and preferences are changing as technology moves forward. That includes how Territorians choose to engage with Motor Vehicle Registry licence, registration and renewal processes, especially in our regional and remote areas. No Territorian wants to be standing in MVR offices longer than they need to. By implementing the department's recommendations for an updated and robust digital framework, we can ensure that Territorians receive timely service delivery through improved digital processes and online MVR services.

The Territory Labor opposition also welcomes the department's recommendations on the amendments to update terminology and remove provisions no longer necessary, including revising the classification of a motorised wheelchair as a motor vehicle and addressing the issue of the licensing of a person underage to use a motorised wheelchair in public places.

Territory Labor will not stand in the way of a measure that alleviates cost-of-living pressures on Territorians, including expanding light trailer registration options from one to three years.

Turning to the amendments to the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008*, we are pleased that the CLP government is continuing the work of the former Territory Labor government to address antisocial behaviour on our bus network and empower our hardworking transit officers.

Regarding the amendments surrounding OC spray and clarification for the types used, it is worth noting that the former Territory Labor government took the steps to ensure that our transit officers had the necessary powers and tools, including OC spray, to assist with the safety of Territorians using our public transport system. Given the CLP's rushed half-thought-out rollout of OC spray to the community, it is ironic that the argument of the now Deputy Chief Minister at that time was that OC spray for transit officers was:

> *… a thinly veiled attempt to take the pressure off the Labor government rather than address the lethal level of crime …*

I find that somewhat ironic, considering the CLP is putting OC spray in the hands of not only our trained police and transit officers but also members of the public who are not trained. Further to that, the now Deputy Chief Minister stated:

> *The government did not want to deal with the complex issues that persist in the police force; instead, it decided to sidestep police and arm transit officers with capsicum spray.*

Does that not sound ironic from the now Deputy Chief Minister? He went on to say:

> *Although this may seem like a straightforward and simple idea, it is far more complicated than the government acknowledged. The potential for unintended consequences is extremely high.*

What consequences of the use of capsicum spray did he describe? He stated:

> *Not only bad guys are at risk from the use of OC spray; transit officers and bystanders who are unlucky enough to be in the area where OC spray is deployed are at risk.*

Further, the now Deputy Chief Minister considered the amendments to empower transit officers to use OC spray to be a thought bubble and policy on the run. It is a bit different now the CLP is in government. By their own measure, CLP members are clearly making policy on the run because they are failing to address the rise in crime on their watch. Although on one hand I highlight the thought bubble and policy on the run irony, on the other hand I understand that OC spray and its use in the trial could make a difference for our community. It is critical to ensure that Territorians have their say so that their feelings about safety are heard.

Territorians remain concerned about the lack of specific guidelines or regulations that will be necessary with OC spray in the wider community and what will happen if it falls in the wrong hands. The legislation in regard to trained officers is one thing, but there is no commitment from the CLP government to explain what happens when there is misuse by the general public and the health impacts for innocent bystanders who may be accidentally affected. All these questions remain unanswered. Now that the CLP is in government it is often quiet in regard to providing responses to Territorians about those concerns.

I refer to clause 44, which amends section 26, and the power to require a person to get off a bus and in cases of noncompliance to be removed forcibly. We understand that this amendment intends to close a gap that has left transit officers unable to act until after harm is done. Let me be clear that everyone in the Territory has the right to access safe public transport.

The amendment adds a third circumstance of 'the person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit a relevant offence' on a bus or at a bus stop or bus station as a trigger to the issuance of a direction to go away. What training modules are in place to ensure that officers will apply the 'about to commit' test fairly and consistently? Hopefully, the minister can answer that in his reply. It would be great to hear more of that detail. I asked about it in the briefing, but I want to hear that from the minister. We all want our bus network to be safe for drivers and passengers, but we must ensure that safety goes hand in hand with transparency, accountability and community trust, with some of these questions being answered by the government.

I turn to the amendments to the *Traffic Act 1987*, which provides for the regulation of matters such as the operation of traffic control devices, alcohol and other drug offences, hooning offences and impounding and the forfeiture of vehicles.

One thing this Assembly agrees on consistently is that too many Territorians are, devastatingly, killed on our roads each year. When things go wrong on our roads, the impact on families, friends, colleagues and our wider community is significant. Nearly every Territorian who uses our roads is doing the right thing and wants to get from point A to point B safely, to get home at the end of the day or ensure their travel is safe. Unfortunately, there are times when individuals engage in high-risk behaviour on our roads, putting at risk the lives of other Territorians and visitors, and this is unacceptable.

I acknowledge the members of the Northern Territory Police Force who continue to do hard work under difficult circumstances day-in and day-out to enforce our road rules and regulations and our other first responders.

The former Territory Labor government passed legislation that ensured Territory police have the necessary powers to address dangerous driving on our Territory roads. That is why the Territory Labor opposition will support the amendments requested by the Northern Territory Police Force. These amendments, first, provide the court with discretion when imposing licence disqualification penalties for drink or drug-driving offences to order the licence disqualifications for drink or drug-driving offences to be served cumulatively rather than at the same time—we received this information during our briefing—when the offender is already subject to disqualification or is being sentenced for multiple offences. Second, they allow NT police to issue infringement notices to learner licence holders operating a motor vehicle without the required supervising driver and persons driving a car for which they have never held a licence.

The opposition welcomes these recommendations from the relevant agencies to ensure that our legislation is current and ensures that our transport system and road network are efficient, sustainable and safe for every Territorian and those visiting.

We look forward to putting further questions to the minister during the consideration in detail process, following his wrap-up speech. Overall, we commend the Bill to the Assembly, but we have further questions we want answered by the minister.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank everyone for their input to the debate on this important Bill.

This Bill is about making our transport system safer, fairer and more efficient for Territorians. It is about modernising outdated laws, fixing gaps that have left the community exposed and reducing unnecessary red tape that costs people time and money.

The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 amends key road and transport legislation, including the *Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act 1991*, the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949*, the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008* and the *Traffic Act 1987*.

The purpose of the Bill is to make targeted amendments to enable timely reforms in the areas of trailer registration; abandoned vehicles; infringement offences for driving without a licence; automated decision-making, which is clear in an ever-changing world; commercial passenger vehicle regulation; bus safety and transit officers; licence disqualifications; and sentencing options for drink and drug-driving offences who are already subject to a disqualification or who have committed multiple disqualifiable offences. This Bill also facilitates various technical and miscellaneous amendments to transport legislation to modernise language, correct inconsistencies, clarify interpretation and repeal redundant provisions.

When we came into government Territorians gave us clear direction, part of which was to reduce red tape. As has been noted, people who use the MVR sometimes have to stand in a long line. A lot of this Bill is about reducing that red tape and providing efficiencies for the public so that people can do more business with government in an easier manner and have less face-to-face interaction, saving them time and effort.

This Bill delivers practical reforms. Some are specifically about saving Territorians' money and others are about giving police and courts stronger tools to tackle risky road behaviour. Others still are about ensuring our buses are safe and our public spaces are free from antisocial behaviour. Across the board this Bill is about modernising our laws so that they reflect the Territory that we live in.

The cost of living is an issue for all Territorians. People are tired of paying more for the basics like groceries, power and even their rego. We promised before the election that we would ease some pressures, and that is exactly what we have done. We froze light vehicle registration fees; gave Territorians a free year of their driver's licence; and introduced the three-year trailer registration option so that people are not forced to line up at the MVR every year to hand over more in administration fees.

This Bill locks in that three-year trailer registration option permanently. It means that anyone with a light trailer up to 750 kilograms can register for three years in one go. This saves time, cuts paperwork and avoids annual fee increases. It is a practical commonsense reform that helps families, tradies and small businesses. It is about giving people back their time and putting money into their pockets.

The Chief Minister spoke about abandoned vehicles. Unfortunately, we see them across our communities. Abandoned cars are left on verges, across footpaths or dumped on the edges of our towns. We are all proud of our communities. We want our neighbourhoods to be safe, clean and welcoming.

Under the current provisions, authorities have to wait for up to seven days before a registered vehicle can be deemed abandoned. We have cut that waiting period to three days. Police, local councils and the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure do their best, but outdated rules have at times slowed them down. This does not imply that authorities must remove the imposing vehicle within this timeframe, but it provides them with the ability to do that if they deem it appropriate and have the resources available.

We expanded the definition of 'abandoned vehicle' so that authorities can deal with cars on verges and in public places, not only roads. We have expanded powers so that vehicles blocking pedestrians can be moved as well.

We have scrapped the outdated newspaper ad requirement that adds significant cost for authorities to proceed with removing these vehicles. Again, that is about modernising what we do. A lot of people do not use newspapers anymore. They get their information online and that is where we will move to.

We have raised the disposal threshold from $1,000 to $2,000, reflecting today's values. We made sure that before a car is disposed of the Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) is checked and owners are given notice and a fair chance to retrieve it.

The year 2024 was probably one of the darkest years on our roads. Sixty Territorians lost their lives. That is not just a number. I have said this over and again. That is 60 families devastated and 60 lives cut short.

Our police work tirelessly to enforce the law and keep our roads safe. The traffic infringement notice scheme has been one of their most effective tools, with quick penalties that deter bad behaviour without tying up the courts, but there was a glaring gap. Until now there has been no infringement for two high-risk behaviours—a learner driver driving without supervision and a person driving a car when they have never held a licence. These are both incredibly dangerous. They put lives at risk and force police into slow, resource-intensive court proceedings when a fast clear penalty and fast clear action are needed. This Bill fixes that outstanding gap.

It introduces new infringement offences for unsupervised learners and never-licensed drivers that empower police with the swift tools that they need and frees up courts to focus on more serious cases. This is not about paperwork. It is about giving police the authority they need to act quickly to stop dangerous behaviour and save lives.

The killers on our roads are the fatal five—speeding, drink and drug-driving, not wearing seatbelts, distraction and fatigue. The numbers tell a grim story. Between 2020 and 2024 there were 6,690 drink and drug-driving offences proven in our courts. That is more than 1,600 per year.

Over the past decade alcohol was a factor in more than half of all road deaths in the Territory and drugs were a factor in nearly one-third of those, yet under our current laws when someone is convicted of multiple disqualifying offences, their licence bans are usually served concurrently. That means a repeat drunk driver can keep stacking up offences but face no extra real punishment. It dilutes the seriousness of those crimes and sends the wrong message.

This Bill provides an ability to further address these issues. Courts will be able to impose cumulative disqualification periods. If you are already banned and offend again, your penalties can stack. If you are convicted of multiple offences at the same time, those disqualification periods can then add up. This is at the discretion of the judges and it is something that they previously never had the ability to do. If you keep endangering others, your time off the road will grow.

This is about setting a clear hard message that enough is enough. Territorians have had it with repeat offenders who put at risk everybody else on our roads. Judges will have the ability to consider cumulative penalties if they deem it appropriate for the offence. This reform ensures that the law has teeth, the courts can deal proportionately with serious behaviour and community safety comes first.

Our buses are essential in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs; thousands rely upon them every day, but too often they have become sites of antisocial behaviour and violence. Bus drivers have been abused, assaulted and threatened, and passengers have been made to feel unsafe. We have acted with safety screens for every driver, CCTV across the network, free buses as an interim measure to reduce cash-handling risks, new duress alarms and direct police links and a comprehensive bus safety reform strategy.

This Bill strengthens those protections further. It gives our transit officers to power to immediately remove offenders from bus stops and interchanges rather than having to wait for a technical breach. Transit officers told us that when someone is breaking the rules, the quickest way to protect drivers and passengers is often to direct the person off the bus or out of the area straightaway. This Bill makes the necessary changes so that transit officers can take that action immediately, instead of first issuing a warning and waiting for the person to ignore it. To put that into context—the Leader of the Opposition raised this—previously the transit safety officers had to wait for somebody to commit an offence. They would threaten to assault somebody, but officers were powerless to remove them. It was only after a person had been assaulted that officers had the powers to deal with it, and that was not right; we need to protect people on our networks.

This Bill clarifies that transit officers can carry and use OC gel spray, which is safer and more precise. As we know, the spray spreads out in a mist and in an enclosed area or if it is windy others may be affected. The ability for transit safety officers to carry the gel—which is more directed and less prone to wind—is common sense.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about clause 44 and how transit officers will deal with a person who is about to commit an offence. I gave an example before. Our transit safety officers are well trained in the use of de-escalation techniques, in assessing situations to manage them and, particularly, in what they are doing. I have seen them in action, because I have been on the bus network with them. It is about the training and the use of—for want of a better term—their mouth and their brain to engage with people on the network and deal with individuals before things escalate. I have seen it, and they are great in what they do. Their training is comprehensive.

Everyone seems to want to talk about OC spray at the moment. Transit safety officers are trained in the use of OC spray. They go through a course so they know how to use it, and it is fairly comprehensive. I have been through probably the same course that they have. They know its effects and how to use it. They will use de-escalation techniques before they have to step up to that level. They will use their mouths and their brains before they have to step up and use OC spray.

As part of these changes our message is simple: antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated. This government backs frontline workers, will protect the drivers and passengers and will ensure that public transport is safe for all Territorians.

The commercial passenger vehicle industry is vital. With taxis, rideshares, minibuses, coaches and specialised medical transport, our commercial passenger system is there to assist some of our most vulnerable people in our community to get around and access the services they need. It keeps tourism running, gets people to appointments and provides that necessary mobility.

This Bill strengthens confidence in that industry. Some of the changes are to penalties. If you abuse your licence or do the wrong thing, specifically overcharging—we know at times that happens with our most vulnerable people—and you are caught you will pay the penalty, which will be stiff. We will not tolerate that.

We also removed the requirements to establish a Commercial Passenger Vehicle Board which has been defunct since 2012 and has been replaced by other fit-for-purpose industry forums. Last night I met with a large number of people from the taxi industry who work under the Australian Taxi Drivers Association. They have a committee in the Territory which represents them and advocates on their behalf to my office and the department.

These reforms ensure consistency of penalties for the various types of passenger services. They ensure that minibus drivers face the same rules as taxis in regard to wheelchair passengers. All too often we see wheelchair passengers left behind. That should not happen. It introduces penalties for rideshare drivers who do not carry ID cards. These reforms support both passengers and operators to provide fair, safe and professional services for Territorians and visitors alike.

This Bill is about action, modernising our laws and increasing safety for every Territorian. It locks in cost-of-living savings through trailer registration reform; cleans up our streets by fixing the abandoned vehicle rules; empowers police with new infringement options; gives courts stronger sentencing tools to deal with

repeat dangerous drivers; strengthens transit safety officers' powers to keep buses and the public safe; modernises our MVR services for the digital age; and tidies our legislation to reflect the Territory we live in.

For the vast majority of Territorians who do the right thing, nothing will change. For those who break the rules, drive drunk or drugged, harass people on our buses or dump cars in our neighbourhoods, this Bill ensures the law has the strength to respond. It is fair, modern and necessary.

Territorians asked this government to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle, and this Bill is another step in delivering exactly that.

I thank the people in the department for putting this Bill together and all the people upstairs who work on our legislation.

This large piece of work has been evolving over some time. There will be more to come. There is more work to do in the transport area. This will be the first tranche of reforms and work to make sure that we deliver legislation and frameworks that support Territorians.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 44, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 45:

Ms UIBO: You outlined some of this in your wrap-up speech. Is the change to expand to OC gel being made because of concerns about OC spray in practice to date? Has anything triggered this expansion to the gel?

Mr YAN: There have been no issues to date requiring this change. It is because the gel is now available and it works better in a confined environment. The changes to the Act are to clarify that transit security officers can use either the spray or the gel. That is the only effective change to the legislation.

Ms UIBO: We received information from the briefing that there have been two reports of discharge by transit officers to date. Can you confirm whether either of the two reported discharges of OC spray on public transport were reviewed as part of the rationale for the expansion to OC gel?

Mr YAN: No.

Ms UIBO: Based on your previous response, is it just because it is available now that the tools for transit safety officers are being expanded to include it?

Mr YAN: The spray was already in use under the previous legislation, as we know. The gel is now available in the Territory, so the legislation is being changed because it is prescriptive and says 'spray'. This change will allow transit safety officers to also use the gel variant. That is the only change.

Ms UIBO: Were any issues about the way the spray was deployed identified in the two discharge incidents? Have any issues that may have been identified been directly used to inform the change to the legislation?

Mr YAN: No, not that I am aware of. The two times that the spray has been deployed there were no issues raised through the reporting process.

Ms UIBO: Has disciplinary action been taken against any transit officer about the misuse of OC spray in the line of duty?

Mr YAN: I have given a lot of leeway in relation to this questioning. This is not relevant to this clause. You are going into operational issues for DLI and transit safety officers. I do not know what you are trying to achieve by this, but it does not relate to the section being amended or the clause.

Ms UIBO: Can you inform the Assembly of processes when members of the public were inadvertently exposed to OC spray during the two incidents?

Mr YAN: I highlighted that this is straying far from the terminology of the clause. This is to allow the use of the gel variant in conjunction with the spray. The question you have asked is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: Hopefully this one takes your fancy about what is relevant. What assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the use of OC gel by trained officers will genuinely reduce the risk in a confined space?

Mr YAN: That would be self-explanatory. Currently there is OC spray, which is an aerosol spray that can be affected by the wind. Police and Corrections have use of and have used it. The gel variant is better for confined spaces so there is less chance of other people being affected.

Ms UIBO: Will the OC gel that will be used on our bus network be stronger, weaker or the same concentration as the OC spray that is currently authorised for use?

Mr YAN: I believe that the gel is of the same percentage as the spray.

Ms UIBO: How does the potency of the OC spray and the gel used by transit officers—which you confirmed will be the same concentration—compare with the strength of products legally available to the general public in the Northern Territory as of yesterday?

Mr YAN: That is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: Regarding public safety, is it something that can be used if someone will misuse their own personalised OC spray?

Mr YAN: Can you repeat that question?

Ms UIBO: If the idea of expanding the use of OC spray and OC gel on the public transit network is to provide a safety mechanism for those trained transit officers, will the potency or the concentration of the OC spray and gel available to them counteract any of the public OC spray that could be misused on our bus network? That is the relevance of that question.

Mr YAN: Although it is not specifically relevant to the clause, my understanding is that the OC spray available to police, Corrections and transit safety officers is of a percentage that is higher than that of the OC spray available to the general public.

Ms UIBO: Will additional training be required for our transit safety officers to use gel or is it the same training process as for the OC spray?

Mr YAN: There should be no difference in the training required for the use of the gel or the spray.

Ms UIBO: Will your government be monitoring and evaluating whether transit officers should use OC gel versus OC spray? Will that be through a review process and feedback from the trained officers on what is effective to ensure safety for public transport users?

Mr YAN: Every use of OC is reported and assessed through a reporting mechanism to the director or CEO of the department. My understanding and my thoughts would be that gel would be the preferred option for transit safety officers using it in a confined area. I would hazard a guess that gel will be the predominant OC being used by transit safety officers on our bus network.

Clause 45 agreed to.

Clauses 46 to 67, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

GAMING CONTROL AMENDMENT (COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND) BILL
Serial 30

Continued from 30 July 2025.

Ms BOOTHBY (Racing): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, the opposition will support the Gaming Control Amendment (Community Benefit Fund) Bill.

This Bill comes before us because a change in Accounting Standards has fundamentally altered how the Community Benefit Fund grants can be awarded. For many years not-for-profit organisations in the Territory could apply for CBF grants to improve or upgrade the facilities they operated out of, even when those facilities were government owned. That changed in 2021 when the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report audit made it clear that under Australian Accounting Standards, capital grants can be provided only to the owner of an asset. As a result, organisations leasing or occupying government buildings suddenly found themselves ineligible for grants to improve the facilities they deliver services from. That was not the fault of those community organisations; it was a consequence of the accounting rules. The Treasurer's Direction that followed has made it clear that only asset owners can receive capital work grants.

That brings us to the central principle at stake. These are government-owned assets; they are not not-for-profit organisation assets. It is the responsibility of the NT Government, through its departments, maintenance schedules and infrastructure budgets, to maintain its buildings and facilities. Community organisations do an amazing job, but the government should be taking basic responsibility for this.

This Bill partially shifts that back on to community groups, but in doing so it shines a light on this government's record. It exposes that under the CLP, the Northern Territory Government will be the worst landlord in the Territory. This government has already shown its attitude towards public money. It likes to shuffle funds around and blur the lines between what is a departmental responsibility and what should be left to the community groups. We know how quick its members are to pat themselves on the back while Territorians see services decline.

That is why we are putting the government on notice that the Community Benefit Fund exists to support community organisations to deliver better services for Territorians. It is not, and must never become, a slush fund for departments to plug holes in their maintenance and infrastructure budgets or to avoid spending what should probably come from their own asset maintenance schedules.

We support this Bill because it reflects the reality of Accounting Standards and allows community groups to broaden the scope of what they can access the CBF for, but Territorians can be assured we will be watching closely. We will ensure that Community Benefit Fund grants remain what they were also meant to be—a genuine source of support for the Territory's not-for-profits to get a get-out-of-jail-free card when they have a government that refuses to take responsibility for its buildings.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Ms BOOTHBY (Racing)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for contributing to this debate. I clarify that a committee has been assigned to look after the Community Benefit Fund and put forward its recommendations to the minister, especially in relation to the major grants. The Chair of that committee does a wonderful job. He has been the Chair for a long time under the CLP and Labor. It is wonderful to hear that Labor supports this change in the legislation.

A number of grants have benefited people across all the electorates in the Territory. It is not something that anyone picks and chooses.

This Bill is not just about amending legislation; it is about standing up for the community groups, sporting clubs and not-for-profit organisations that make the Northern Territory such a special place to live. Every day across our suburbs, towns and remote communities, volunteers are working tirelessly, coaching children, caring for seniors, running cultural events, delivering food and offering safe spaces for those who need it. They are the backbone of our lifestyle, and they do it on a shoestring budget, powered mostly by goodwill. But passion alone is not enough. These groups also need comfortable, safe and modern facilities. For some, that might mean a new change room for players; for others, it might mean an upgraded kitchen to host community meals. For others still it could be a refurbished hall to keep cultural traditions alive.

This legislation restores an avenue of support that was lost. Until 2021 not-for-profits operating from government-owned buildings could access the Community Benefit Fund for capital works. That ended after a Treasurer's audit found it breached Australian Accounting Standards, which allowed for grants to be made only to the asset's legal owner.

Rather than find a solution, the former government issued a directive that prohibited these organisations from accessing the Community Benefit Fund. The effect was harsh. This disadvantaged organisations that were left without a resourcing avenue while asset-owning agencies, already stretched with competing priorities and burdened by debt, had to absorb the cost and responsibility to carry them out. At the end of the day, it was Territorians relying on these services who felt the impact most.

Since coming to government I have been approached time and again by not-for-profits from every corner of the Territory, asking for this decision to be looked at and reversed. They have been clear that they want to take the lead in improving their facilities so that they can keep delivering for the community.

This Bill makes a subtle but important change to the *Gaming Control Act 1993*. It restores the ability of not-for-profits operating out of government-owned assets to apply to the Community Benefit Fund for capital works or improvements. It does so in full compliance with the Australian Accounting Standards and without breaching the Treasurer's Direction.

Importantly, this reform is not intended to substitute government investment in its own assets. Agencies will remain responsible for their buildings and facilities. This amendment provides an optional pathway for community organisations that want to act on their priorities and deliver upgrades that matter most to them.

The benefits are clear: it frees up government agencies to focus on their core responsibilities while empowering local organisations to improve their facilities faster and more efficiently. It means services can be delivered sooner and Territorians can benefit without unnecessary delays. The impact will be felt in real ways, including safer spaces for kids to play sport, halls that can host year-round community gatherings and accessibility upgrades so that seniors and people with disability can take part fully. These types of improvements change lives and restore our Territory lifestyle.

This is a small amendment with a big impact. It enables not-for-profits, strengthens our communities and ensures government support is delivered in a way that is effective and financially responsible.

I thank the people from Licensing, the Racing team and the community benefit committees that we have for both major and minor grants who do an extraordinary job at working through all the applications we receive and speak with community groups to find out what is needed.

I am proud to commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Ms BOOTHBY (Racing)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

PAPER TABLED
Auditor-General's Report No 3 – 2025–26 Effectiveness of Internal Audit and Audit Committees

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General's Report No 3 – 2025–26 Effectiveness of Internal Audit and Audit Committees.

MOTION
Note Petition No 14 – Immediate Resurfacing of the Entire Length of Boulter Road, Berrimah

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be noted.

Thank you for the opportunity to debate this petition calling for the upgrade of Boulter Road.

My electorate is one of the most diverse urban areas of the Northern Territory, from the Casuarina shopping centre at one boundary to Darwin Airport and the Berrimah North business park at the other; from the Marrara sporting precinct to the suburbs of Wagaman, Anula, Wulagi and out to the blocks of Berrimah North.

Sanderson is a community of families, workers, seniors, young people and small businesses. Each part of our electorate contributes something unique and, together, forms a community.

Within this electorate lies Boulter Road. Originally built as a semirural road in 1981, it has long struggled to keep pace with the growth around it. Today it is home to more than 230 houses and units, with about 750 residents relying on it daily. It is not just a residential road; Boulter Road provides access to important community services and facilities. Milkwood Steiner School, with 125 students, depends on safe access along this road. The RSPCA, CatholicCare, a childcare centre and Anglicare NT all operate from this area. These organisations deliver services that touch lives across our city. From supporting families and children to caring for animals and helping some of our most vulnerable Territorians, they all rely on a road that is safe and reliable.

Over many years government and council have approved residential developments in this area. Developers were required to construct urban-standard roads within their estates, yet the connecting road, Boulter Road, remained at semirural standard. That decision left the community with infrastructure that does not match today's reality.

The impacts are obvious. There is no footpath, which means children walking to and from school must step onto the road itself. That is especially risky in the Wet Season, when water and bushland make the roadside impassable. Every year after heavy rain, potholes appear. Families pay the price in repairs, while drivers face hazards as they dodge holes and water.

Quite simply, Boulter Road was never designed for the urban traffic volume it now carries, and the risks grow greater each year. This is not about blame. The point is that the road needs to be lifted to the standard of the community it serves, and the starting point is proper design. We cannot simply patch this road year after year and expect different results. What is required is a well-planned, properly designed upgrade that reflects the needs of the families, schools and services that use it.

I acknowledge the constructive approach being taken now. The Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure recently joined me onsite at Boulter Road. Together we spoke with many residents and saw the issues firsthand. I thank the minister for his time and for listening directly to the community.

I also acknowledge the positive engagement I have had with Darwin City councillors. Council has a vital role to play here. With the election results due by the end of this week, I look forward to working closely with the new council team to make Boulter Road a shared priority.

Residents have a clear message: they want their children to walk to school safely, their cars to be protected from constant damage and a road that is fit for purpose. They have shown patience, signed this petition and engaged in good faith.

Now it is up to the Darwin City Council and the government to take the next steps. This is not a political matter, it is a matter of community safety, fairness and respect. The families who moved into these developments did so in good faith, expecting the supporting infrastructure that should come with growth. We owe it to them to deliver.

I call for the Boulter Road upgrade to be made a priority for the Northern Territory Government and the City of Darwin. With proper design, collaboration and commitment, we can deliver a road that meets the needs of the community today and into the future. This is about more than fixing a stretch of bitumen; it is about keeping children safe on their way to school, enabling access for essential services, supporting families who live and work in this area and ensuring the people of Berrimah North and the broader Sanderson community are given the infrastructure they deserve.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, the Territory Labor opposition supports this petition because we once again have the opportunity to discuss the need for timely upgrades and repairs to our Territory roads, no matter where they are. Regardless of whether it is under the care of the local council, such as Boulter Road, or a Territory government-managed road, it is important to accommodate increased traffic flows and support investment in our urban, rural and remote areas to ensure the safety of drivers and pedestrians wherever they are in the Territory.

The former Labor government worked hard over eight years to ensure we had the proper infrastructure in the right place at the right time. It is an ongoing process as our communities grow and change. Areas such as Berrimah have experienced growth in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue in the years to come. Greater infrastructure and planning will be needed to sustain that development.

I remind those outside this Chamber that the CLP government took a sledgehammer to the infrastructure budget in May. The Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure and Logistics, Bill Yan, cut a whopping $1bn from the program to upgrade or build new infrastructure throughout the Territory. That funding was allocated to roads and bridges—clear investments in the future of the Territory and future generations. We are aware that this is impacting the confidence of the civil construction industry and its ability to attract and retain workers in the Territory. This CLP government continues to lack a tangible economic vision, as well as a pipeline of work that will drive the Territory forward for all Territorians.

I understand that residents want to maximise safety with footpaths along Boulter Road. When upgrading and repairing our road infrastructure all levels of government must consider the needs of pedestrians and motor vehicle users.

As a bush member I have spoken numerous times about the critical need to address the flooding issues on Territory roads. That is why upgrades to drainage systems and certain sections of roads is important. Roads affected by flooding in the annual Wet Season not only pose serious safety issues for those concerned but also cause significant damage to motor vehicles. As time goes on, the roads budget will be affected because the government has not taken the time to address these issues adequately.

I emphasise the importance of investing in roads that are affected by flooding, corrosion and potholes. I am aware that several roads in my electorate and my team's electorates would benefit from the same attention of the Treasurer and Infrastructure minister as his Cabinet and Caucus teams have.

Earlier this year members of the Wadeye community expressed concern that upgrades to Port Keats Road had been cut. Numerous times they reached out to the minister's office, but had no response. The community put together a petition and handed it to me at Parliament House to be tabled. More than 600 people signed that petition. They know the importance of roads in the bush and across the Territory. The road connects the community of Wadeye to their homelands and connects people to services. This means that people living in homelands have access to education, health and other services.

The Treasurer will get up next and say, 'You had four years to get that money in the bucket', but there was always a staged approach to upgrading Port Keats Road. If the Treasurer will go with that line, I suggest that he speak to the former Member for Daly, Gary Higgins, who always stated that it was a staged approach.

The year before, the Saddle Rail Creek section of the road was upgraded—I believe it was about 26 kilometres—just outside Daly River. There is a 50 to 60-kilometre section that would connect the communities from Wadeye to Palumpa. Last week the Deputy Chief Minister was asked by the media about the barge services to Wadeye which had been cut. He could not commit to whether that money would be spent on the road between Wadeye and Palumpa. It is concerning when the second-in-charge, the Deputy Chief Minister, contradicts the Treasurer, who I hope in goodwill is still committed to the road between Palumpa and Wadeye. He can clarify that when he gets up to speak.

This is about the people who live in Wadeye having food security and access to education and services, ensuring that they can visit their homelands and have connection to their country and giving families and students a choice in which schools they will attend. Wadeye has the Catholic education system and Palumpa has the public education system. People sometimes want that choice in education. Many families who are traditional owners from Palumpa live in Wadeye because their parents have access to services and they work in Wadeye because there are more jobs for their families, but they are unable to send their kids to school on their own country.

Allowing the road between Palumpa and Wadeye to be upgraded is bigger than the road itself; it is about connectivity …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; this petition debate is in regard to Boulter Road, and it has nothing to do with Port Keats.

Mr YOUNG: I was talking generally about roads of importance and the $1bn cuts to infrastructure the Treasurer made.

Madam SPEAKER: There is always a certain amount of latitude given to these discussions, but draw it in and make it relevant to the actual petition, Member for Daly. You have a few minutes left, so make it relevant, please.

Mr YOUNG: It is relevant, because plenty of people from Wadeye come to Darwin and use Boulter Road. Plenty of people from across the Northern Territory come to Darwin and use Boulter Road. Therefore, the upgrades to Boulter Road are important to all Territorians, not just those in Darwin.

We know that the CLP members stick to their little bubble. They sit in their little bubble and do not see outside it. They would not even know what is going on outside of Darwin, below the Berrimah Line. Maybe the Member for Barkly does—I will give that to him—but that is about it because he is the only one who travels. He would understand that people across the Territory use Boulter Road when they come here.

All roads in the Northern Territory are important. That is the point we are getting at, but the CLP government does not want to listen—or does not care. I hope all roads that were previously budgeted for are committed to by the Treasurer and that he does not walk away or drive down Daly River Road to go fishing.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, this is a debate on a petition for Boulter Road. It just goes to show how much those opposite consider the people of the northern suburbs. My young friend, the Member for Daly, did everything but speak about Boulter Road. He took an opportunity to grandstand on everything that is happening everywhere else.

I wonder whether he knows where Boulter Road is. I know where it is. You head down the old Stuart Highway, you take that road then you go to Boulter Road. I was there with the Member for Sanderson, whom I thank for his strong advocacy on behalf of his community, particularly when it comes to infrastructure needs in Berrimah North. We know that Boulter Road plays a key part in the Berrimah North Area Plan—I bet the Member for Daly did not even know about that—which was established by the Northern Territory Planning Commission. It is an important link road that helps connect that growing part of Darwin.

The Member for Sanderson personally showed me the upgrades he is pushing for in his electorate. Seeing the area in person gave me a helpful perspective and showed how committed he is to getting better outcomes for his community. Maybe the Member for Daly should have thought about that in his contribution.

It is great to see growth happening in Darwin, but with that growth comes more traffic and a clear need for better road infrastructure. Locals are right to want improvements that keep pace with development and make the area safer and easier to move around in.

Boulter Road is managed by the City of Darwin. It was originally constructed as a rural profile road; that is how far back it goes. Upgrading it to meet urban needs will take proper planning, detailed design work and a commitment of capital funding. DLI advised me that the City of Darwin could consider resealing the road as an interim fix while that planning is done. Although that would not be a full upgrade, it would help with the surface condition in the meantime. Any of that work will require funding from the City of Darwin's budget. The City of Darwin is of course eligible to apply for a range of federal funding programs that support local road upgrades, and I encourage it to do so.

The good news is that the CLP is already investing in infrastructure upgrades in this area. One key project is the upgrade to Amy Johnson Avenue and Boulter Road, which is being delivered through the black spot minor works program. This critical upgrade includes a new left-hand turn lane into Boulter Road to ease congestion and provide safety for people in the area. These improvements are necessary to make the intersection safer and better equipped to handle the increased traffic that comes with development in the Berrimah North area.

I provided notification of this petition and my response to the City of Darwin and will continue to support the Member for Sanderson in his advocacy for this project. We will work in conjunction with the City of Darwin ongoing for the upgrades to Boulter Road because, trust me, it needs it.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, unlike the Member for Daly I can speak authoritatively about Boulter Road. When I stood for election for the seat of Karama in 2020, Boulter Road was part of the Karama electorate. When I was successful in becoming a Waters Ward councillor, Boulter Road was part of it.

The biggest issues in 2020, raised with the previous Labor Member for Karama, were about getting street lighting and making access safer by getting footpaths and all the transitions in, be it from Amy Johnson Drive or Vanderlin Drive. Nothing happened. When I stood for council, I knocked on every door in Boulter Road about 10 times. I know every bloody house there. The biggest issues people had were they wanted street lighting, safety and to be listened to. I was successful, along with my other Waters Ward councillors, Sylvia Klonaris and later Kim Farrar, in getting council to put in street lighting.

We got council to start focusing on its job, but there was still this question about whether the NT Government or council was supposed to do the work. This government is now working in collaboration with council and they are both working out the responsibilities of who should do it. This is a great thing.

Boulter Road was moved into the Sanderson electorate. I have to give full credit to the Member for Sanderson who has picked up on the same advocacy that I was doing. We all know the people. We have walked to see people like Linda Lay and all those who head up that residents' activist group. We are there all the time talking to them. It is only this government, along with the council, that is delivering anything because the previous Labor government neglected and ignored the residents. It does not matter what you say here, I was there. I have walked it. I have been with the people.

Let me say here and now—I hope the people from Boulter Road are listening to this—if you heard the speech by the Member for Daly, you have been ignored again. He wants to talk about everything else apart from Boulter Road. We listened to you about your petition. You went to the effort of coming to us and asking for something to happen. It is only this government, through the Member for Sanderson with support from me and the minister, who has got behind this and we are making improvements. A lot more has to be done.

We do not want to make the same mistakes that were done in the past. We need to get the strategies right. When subdivisions are done there is also a responsibility on the developers to make sure that they provide the necessary footpaths, street lighting and so on which have been missing.

I commend the petition.

Motion agreed to; petition noted.

PAPER TABLED
Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee – Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory Second Interim Report

Dr RAHMAN (Chair of Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I table the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee report, Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory Second Interim Report, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) is a difficult, sensitive and challenging subject to discuss for many people, including Indigenous Australians. It was with some trepidation, therefore, that the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee embarked on a consultation tour across the Northern Territory in August 2025 to gather views, particularly in remote areas, on the possible introduction of VAD legislation in this jurisdiction.

I am pleased to report that over the last month our efforts to learn from and share information with Territorians have been undoubtedly fruitful and successful. Hundreds of witnesses took the time to express their views and provide detailed testimony. Oral evidence in tandem with the hundreds more written submissions we have received will help to inform our forthcoming final report which will substantively deal with the evaluation of VAD models with safeguards, challenges and potential delivery in the Northern Territory.

In the intervening period I am proud to present this second interim report on VAD in the Northern Territory to the Legislative Assembly and the public at large as testament to the excellent data collection undertaken by LCAC pursuant to the VAD inquiry terms of reference. In doing so, I express my sincere gratitude to my fellow committee members and the committee secretariat for their collegiality, cooperation and commitment to conducting this inquiry with rigour. Moreover, I thank the many hundreds of Territorians across dozens of locations who have contributed to this process to date. It has been a privilege to hear from all of them.

We trust that the report we have tabled will be of continued assistance to interested parties and we look forward to tendering subsequent work in due course.

I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Funding for Better and Fairer Schools Agreement

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence from the Member for Arnhem as follows:

I propose for discussion this day the following definite matter of public importance:

That the Northern Territory Government is open and accountable with Territorians about how it is rolling out the additional $1.1bn of funding under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement which is designed to ensure every NT school is fully and fairly funded.

The letter is signed by the Member for Arnhem. Is discussion supported? Discussion is supported.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, every Territory child, no matter where they live or what their circumstances are, deserves access to a quality education from early childhood through to their schooling years and work leaving time. Our Territory kids deserve the opportunity to thrive and to have options available to them for a bright and rewarding future. This should be the highest priority of any government, regardless of its political nature.

We have spoken about the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement in the House before. It is an historic funding deal made between the former Labor government and the Albanese Labor government and the strongest deal secured by any jurisdiction in the country. I acknowledge the hard work the Australian Education Union NT Branch did towards this important deal.

The Territory Labor opposition clearly signalled that the rollout of this funding is one of our greatest priorities. From the beginning we said that we would closely monitor the CLP's rollout of this important agreement for our Territory kids and ensure that it honours the agreement in full over its term of government. We expect to see every dollar of that agreement going into classrooms and resources for every urban, regional and remote public school across the Territory, in line with the agreement's guidelines.

It is incredibly fortunate for Territory schools that we still have a federal Labor government in Canberra because there was no guarantee that the agreement would have been honoured by a Liberal–National government should the Coalition have won the May federal election.

Under the $1.1bn agreement struck by the former Territory Labor government, every public school student should be $33,746 better off and every non-government school student should be $7,596 better off over the life of the bilateral agreement. It was an historic agreement and it remains critical that it is rolled out exactly as intended because it will mean more support and better resources for every student across the Northern Territory.

As a reminder to the CLP government, the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement funding is tied to a number of important markers:

- a Year 1 phonics check and early years of school numeracy check to identify students who need additional help
- evidence-based teaching and targeted intensive support, such as small school or catch-up tutoring to help students who fall behind
- greater wellbeing support for learning and engagement, including through student wellbeing officers and multidisciplinary teams providing services within schools
- initiatives that help attract and retain teachers and school leaders, including rewarding and recognising experienced teachers to work in schools which need additional support
- providing access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning for teachers and school leaders
- providing quality-assured curriculum resources that have been developed in partnership with the teaching profession
- implementing the recommendations of the Northern Territory Government's review of effective enrolment to make the funding methodology for NT schools fairer
- implementing the recommendations of the review of secondary education in the Northern Territory to improve access to secondary education in remote and very remote communities.

It also identifies a number of targets that will be critical for success, including increasing the overall student attendance rate to 79.7%; increasing the proportion of students in the strong and exceeding NAPLAN proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 10%; increasing employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander staff in our schools; and increasing the proportion of students with Year 12 or equivalent certification by 7.5 percentage points.

The CLP does not believe in evidence. In fact, the CLP has made it clear that it is opposed to evidence-based policy; the CLP will not have a bar of it. That is one of the reasons for our genuine concerns about the capacity or willingness of the CLP government to fully and effectively roll out the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement which ties funding to evidence-based approaches. Some $737m of federal government funding is tied to these outcomes, so our team expects that the CLP government will honour the actions and targets that have been set out in the agreement.

It is incredibly concerning that we have not heard from the Education minister on how any of these elements of the agreement are progressing so far in the 12 months under her watch. We have no visibility on where the Education minister and the CLP government are at with any of the elements or targets under this bilateral agreement. We have heard nothing about additional social and emotional wellbeing supports in our classrooms; engagement with communities to ensure there is a strong relationship between families and carers and their schools which is critical to better outcomes, particularly for our remote schools; initiatives to attract and retain more teachers in the Territory; additional professional development for our Territory teachers; and the review of secondary education that is meant to improve access to secondary education in remote and very remote communities.

Our Territory Labor team said that we would hold the government to account on education. We are definitely following through on that, which is why we are calling on the CLP to provide much more detail on how the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is being rolled out across the Territory. This is a $1.1bn investment, yet there is no accountability from the CLP government in regard to that funding. We need greater visibility over how this funding is being rolled out.

It is not like those opposite do not have form when it comes to making sure that classrooms and students are the first to suffer from budget cuts. The last time the CLP was in power it ripped $135m out of Education, which was the equivalent of sacking 500 teachers and school staff. Like much of what the CLP is doing in the community, there are long-term consequences for its poor decision-making in governing the Territory. Our Territory schools, teachers, parents and carers should not suffer and, in particular, our students cannot afford to suffer from any approach the CLP takes regarding a similar erosion of the Education budget. The Territory Labor opposition will ensure that this does not happen to Territory schools again.

We have these concerns for a number of reasons. One of our biggest concerns is how the CLP government is investing in programs to support the social and emotional wellbeing of our Territory students. The CLP government talks about literacy, numeracy and attendance and seems to think that spending $21m on a program that enforces punitive measures for students without adequately assessing their needs is a winning strategy. It is not. It is not working. We have seen it. It will not work in the long term. All the evidence points to that. Even the former Senator for the Northern Territory, Nigel Scullion—the father and creator of this punitive measure of getting kids to school—said in hindsight that it did not work.

We heard a great quote from the Member for Karama who said, ‘We do not want to make the same mistakes that were done in the past’. This should be applied to the decision-making mistakes by the former CLP government in the context of education. Please do not make the same mistakes of the past.

Attendance officers working across our education system are doing a great job with the complex circumstances in which they are operating. I support their work in getting disengaged students back to the classroom, but more work has to be done in this space and not from the punitive approach. Unfortunately, the CLP government’s simplistic idea that you drag a kid to school, or you punish the parents or carers, and they will learn effectively, is deeply flawed. It has not learned from the past mistakes in education. The reality is that our Territory kids need to feel safe, supported, connected and confident to engage in school life and with their learning journey. It is critical to their success and the success of our entire education system.

We hear the Education minister talk about a secret list. This is rubbish. Anyone who has worked in education over the past few years or decades knows about the passive roll. I find it highly concerning that the Minister for Education and Training, who was the shadow minister for Education in opposition for four years, had never heard of the passive roll. She continues to peddle the rubbish, relabelling what was always known as the passive roll as a so-called secret list. It is an embarrassment to her, for her ignorance about education, and to all teachers, educators and school staff that the Education minister had never heard or known of or discussed the passive roll in the Northern Territory. She has deemed it a deceitful term in calling it a secret list. There has never been a secret list; there has always been the passive roll.

There are genuine concerns about our education system. This is not being adequately prioritised by the CLP government. We call on the Education minister to ensure that she and her team are honouring the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement when investing in and addressing social and emotional wellbeing for our students. We have heard nothing from the Education minister about the significant number of vacancies across the Territory, such as school counsellors, psychologists and other allied health professionals who are critical in supporting schools and students to succeed in learning.

The next phase of this agreement is critical because it goes to the needs-based funding model. The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of students with additional needs, whether it is a disability or mental health or behaviour difficulties. Almost one in three students require educational adjustments to manage and succeed in the classroom and through their learning journey. The issues they face are complex and diverse, which means schools need the resources and skills to help manage the learning journey for that student while they are engaged in formal learning.

We have not heard the Education minister talk about this element at all. Instead, the CLP government seems to think that every student starts on a level playing field, so if they fall off the radar for some reason, it is apparently the student's fault. The government thinks that every child comes into the classroom, or attempts to, with the same abilities and without any social, emotional, cognitive, language or other barriers to learning. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for our Territory kids. To think this is dangerously simplistic.

Parents, carers, schools and students need to know that the CLP government is taking needs-based funding seriously to support thriving students. They need to know that the CLP is not afraid of doing the work to apply a needs-based funding formula to the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement rollout so that every child in the Territory is funded according to their needs and that schools have the resources they need in and out of the classrooms to respond to the complex and diverse needs of each student. This is not an easy task. I implore the government to take on the challenge to ensure that it does not drop the ball for our Territory kids.

I congratulate the government for continuing with the former Labor government's plans for middle school reform. We fully support this ongoing. We place on the record that although the success of the phase-out of middle schools will be watched carefully and closely by our team, we support the work being continued under the CLP government which was originally started by our Territory Labor team.

We draw the minister's attention to genuine concerns and anxiety in the community about how these changes are rolling out. I have been contacted by several high school and middle school educators and teachers about what happens next with these changes and the phase-out of middle school. It is highly concerning that they are reaching out to me in opposition and are not hearing that information directly from the Education department. I implore the government to ensure that the department provides that information to middle school staff and the families of students at those schools.

Teachers are unclear about what this means for their workload. There is no clarity on the professional development that will be available for teachers who may have to teach different subjects or teach subjects at higher grades than they have previously. What support networks and mechanisms are we putting in place for our hardworking educators and the school staff for the transition from middle school to the high school model?

When it comes to our children's education, a lot is stake; it is our future. With the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement there is more opportunity than we have ever had to fully resource our kids for the better. We need to ensure that we get this right. We need to ensure that every child in every school across the Northern Territory receives the benefits of the fully funded resourcing and the support they need to succeed in their learning.

We saw the CLP drop massive price hikes on schools when the exemption from the community service obligation on their power bills was removed quietly by the CLP via gazettal notice. There was no announcement or opportunity for public questioning or response through a media release; it was just quietly gazetted that the exemption was removed. We have seen this without any warning or investment to cover the significant sums of money for power that our schools pay. Schools are already concerned about the massive jump in power prices that they will now have to pay with money that was originally intended for resources for individual students, not the overhead costs of running the school. It was for the resources that those students deserve in order to thrive in their learning journey. There were no warnings.

There has been no investment in the significant sums that correlate with the truancy officers and no comparable improvement in attendance rates in any region other than Darwin. We want attendance rates to

improve for all of the Territory, but, unfortunately, the rest of the Territory is being left out. The CLP is showing its arrogance by focusing only on Darwin.

We want more transparency and to hear assurances that the government will support the productive and beneficial use of historic levels of funding that are going directly to classrooms and not into its budget repair measures and flawed programs of the past that proved they did not work, like the punitive attendance measure. Nothing will deliver better for our kids than the resources provided directly to meet their learning needs.

Our Territory Labor team continues to support education. We will continue to support our principals, teachers, school staff, assistant teachers and, of course, our students because if the ball is dropped in education we will see generations to come being disadvantaged. The further we go from Darwin, unfortunately, the further it shows the inattention and lack of care and respect the CLP has for those who live outside of Darwin. This will not just be a costly mistake; it will have a negative impact on education across the Territory.

Territory kids, no matter where they live, should have access to a quality education and be able to thrive to the best of their ability when learning. Our principals, teachers, assistant teachers, support staff and school administrative officers should all be resourced properly so that they can deliver quality education.

This is of significant importance. It is a high interest area for all Territorians to make sure that our kids thrive in their learning journey, whether they are in the zero to five area, are at primary school or high school or are school leavers.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am not sure where the Opposition Leader has been whilst I have been here for the last year talking about education. What is embarrassing is not the work that we are delivering to improve the lives of children in education; what you call embarrassing is that the Opposition Leader was one of four Education ministers in the previous government who failed education in many areas, which I will outline shortly. I have not had one email from the Opposition Leader to ask what has been going on. She says that she is hearing from people across the Territory. Is that a small select group of people you are consulting with when you go out and talk to maybe a couple of the people you worked with all those years ago?

I pick up on the power prices. I have spoken about this before on radio. It is a bit rich for the Opposition Leader to come in and talk about power prices and say that schools will be left to pay those bills because that is not true. We consulted with COGSO and the schools have been consulted on this. They have been assured that they will not be out of pocket. I put that on the record. That is more Labor lies. Labor members have not learnt anything in a year of being in opposition and they continue to peddle the same rubbish they did while they were in government. They will find that they may be in the wilderness for some time.

I am not sure why the Opposition Leader thinks we will not honour the agreement that Labor signed up to in the dying days of its government. On that note, it was signed up at the eleventh hour, and non-government schools were not negotiated with on that. That left them feeling left out in the cold without the finances to compete with the government school increases in wages and the other things to run in their schools. It was remiss of the previous government to not negotiate. We are here to look after all schoolchildren in the non-government and government sectors, and it was remiss of the previous government—in which the Opposition Leader was an Education minister—not to consult with the non-government sector.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on the $1.1bn investment under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, which is an opportunity to turn around the Northern Territory's education system after eight long years of failure under Labor.

I put on record the failings of the previous Labor government, which had four different Education ministers in eight years, of which the Opposition Leader was one. I think she forgets that. She could have done more while she was Education minister. The revolving door of leadership bred chaos, confusion, dysfunction and a shocking decline in education outcomes. Opposition members talk about openness and accountability now, but where were they when their ministers failed to deliver?

Let me put the facts on the record. Under Labor, the Territory recorded the poorest literacy and numeracy results in the nation. One in three Territory students needed additional support in literacy and numeracy compared with just one in 10 nationally. Fifty-eight per cent of NT students failed to meet basic literacy and numeracy standards, with Aboriginal students climbing to a staggering 85%.

What does this mean? It means far too many Territory kids were left behind, unable to read, write or do basic maths at a level that allows them to thrive. Perhaps the most appalling failure is in school attendance. The law is clear that every child over the age of six must attend school. Labor failed to enforce this basic responsibility. Between 2016 and 2024 school attendance across the Territory declined from 80.8% to 71.7%, the lowest attendance rate in the nation. In some regions the decline is even worse. In the Barkly attendance dropped from 62% to 46%; in Big Rivers from 71% to 58%; and in East Arnhem attendance stands at a mere 54%.

I remind the Opposition Leader of the attendance rates in Labor-held electorates, including her own electorate. I am not discounting the fact that these schools do an amazing job. They have great teachers and facilities, but they cannot do the work if parents do not get their children to school. In the electorate of Arnhem, Angurugu has 30% attendance, which is a decrease from 36%. That is a third of kids going to school. Garrangali school has 53% attendance; Barunga School, 46.9%; Bulman School, 49.8%; Manyallaluk School, 32%; and Milyakburra School, 45.9%. All of them have had a reduction in attendance rates while the Member for Arnhem has been their member.

I had a conversation with the Members for Mulka and Arafura in the last sittings of parliament. Each one of us has an obligation when we are in the community to talk and engage with parents and let them know the importance of getting their kids to school. Like I have said, how can kids be the next Member for Mulka or the next Member for Arafura if they do not go to school? That is an important role that we have as members. We talk to people every day we are out and about in our electorates. This is one of the important roles the school attendance officers have.

The figures I read out are shameful. With a third of kids attending school in some of those areas, it tells a story of neglect and broken promises. It is incumbent on all of us as members to talk to constituents in our electorates and remind them of the importance of getting their kids to school.

In regard to being open and accountable, I have spoken many times about the hidden list. The Opposition Leader says that it is disingenuous to say it is a hidden list, but it was not published. It is the intensive support roll, previously known as the passive list. It is, in fact, a secret list of student who had not attended school for 20 days or more—that is one month. These students were excluded from official attendance statistics to paint a better picture. These figures were never publicly released under the previous Labor government. It clearly preferred to keep it this way.

Some students on the list have not attended a day of school in the past three years. Let us think about that for a minute. How can a person without going to school get an education to become a productive member of the community? It is disgraceful.

The former Labor government deliberately hid these statistics from Territorians and used this list to try to make school attendance figures look better. When Labor took government in 2016 the number of students on the intensive support roll was 1,274. This had risen to 1,628 when Labor left in 2024.

In the 12 months the CLP has been in government I am pleased to report that since the introduction of school attendance officers we have reduced this number by 388. That means 388 more students are attending school and have better opportunities for improved education outcomes and a more meaningful life. Unlike Labor we will not hide these figures and keep Territorians in the dark about the true state of the education system. We will not shy away from being open and transparent when it comes to the uncomfortable truth of the Territory's education system.

I have been on patrols with student attendance officers. I have spoken about that in the parliament before. I have seen the great work they do, working closely with families and communities to improve school attendance outcomes. Most of those attendance officers have close links with the community; they are locals and the ties that they have are second to none. The rapport, communication and engagement they have with these families is amazing. Keeping those parents, families and students engaged with those attendance officers is the way we will get kids attending school and hold parents to account and help them combat some of the complex reasons why they cannot get their kids to school.

We make no apologies for holding parents responsible and accountable for their children's education. Every child deserves an education. Our government has repeatedly stated that we will not accept the status quo and keep doing more of the same, hoping things will get better.

At Timber Creek School where attendance officers have been on the ground supporting parents and engaging with students, attendance has jumped from only 36.2% in Term 2 last year to nearly 68% this year.

I applaud Timber Creek School and the hard work people are doing there, along with the attendance officers who go out from the Big Rivers region to work with those families.

Similarly, Alpurrurulam School in the Barkly region has seen enrolments surge from 33 student in Term 2 last year to 77 this term, another sign our approach is working. This community has also been supported by the department, which has worked closely with the school through consultation with the community to see that the school is a welcoming place for students and staff.

It is no wonder kids were not going to school under the previous Labor government. Under Labor there were no qualified school counsellors based in schools; they were based in the Mitchell Centre, far from where the children needed them most. Students and teachers felt unsafe in schools with no increase in police presence, despite growing concerns. Teachers were leaving disheartened and unsupported, and new teachers were reluctant to come to the Territory. The middle years system was failing, creating an extra transition point where students were dropping out. This was not an accident; it was a systemic failure.

For kids to thrive and have a meaningful pathway to a job we need strong support systems in place like dedicated careers counsellors working closely with students and businesses to offer VET alternatives that lead to achieving their NTCET. This includes school-based apprenticeships, VET pathways and career expos held in our schools.

With that in mind, I was surprised to hear recently that the previous Labor government discouraged the Minerals Council from attending schools and their career expos. Shame on Labor. It took away the opportunity for young kids in the regions and the bush to work in the resources sector. Put simply, Labor was scared of the resources sector; it saw ‘resources’ as a dirty word. I am proud to say that the resources sector—which offers jobs and training programs for our kids—is back in Territory schools. It is great to be supporting this industry.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement—signed by the previous Labor government just before the caretaker period last year—represents a massive injection of funding, with $1.1bn over five years to help fix this crisis that the Opposition Leader and the government she was a part of have created. The Commonwealth is contributing $737m while the Territory government will add another $350m. This funding will bring all Territory public schools to 100% of their SRS funding by 2029.

The federal Education minister at the time said that Territory schools were funded to only 80% of what was recommended. In other words, one in five kids are not receiving funding. That is unacceptable, and it is a problem our government is determined to fix. Let me be clear that all additional funding under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is going directly to schools. I will repeat that for the Opposition Leader, who seems to be tone deaf and has not heard what I have been talking about over the last year: all additional funding under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is going directly to schools. The fact that the Opposition Leader says that she cannot find it, see it or hear it, concerns me—tone deaf.

In 2025 alone, an extra $110m will be provided by the NT and Australian Governments. School budgets are now based on enrolment numbers, moving away from funding based on attendance, which has been used for the past 10 years. This new needs-based funding system means schools with the greatest disadvantage receive additional support first.

Budgets are now released in the year before the school year begins, giving schools certainty and stability to plan and employ permanent teachers. Under the new funding system more resources are provided to support children and young people, particularly disadvantaged students, on their education journey with greater clarity, consistency and funding.

Schools have more flexibility to allocate resources according to their specific needs, such as staffing, program improvements and infrastructure upgrades. Schools will be able to continue to expand on programs that are responsive to the needs of their students. All schools will be better off under the new system. I assure members that no schools will be disadvantaged by the changes to funding this year and that schools have the resources to continue to operate and deliver quality education programs.

Education is the foundation of a safe and strong Territory. The CLP government will continue to work closely with schools, families and communities, unlike the previous Labor government which excluded the non-government sector from key negotiations. We are dedicated to engaging with all education providers so that funding is fair, full and equitable, regardless of the sector. We will build on the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and ensure this investment translates into real measurable improvements for our children.

We brought back school attendance officers with the power to get kids back to school. We are delivering our commitment for all primary students to have free swimming lessons; restoring the safety of students and staff by expanding school-based policing; ensuring qualified school counsellors are based in schools and are properly resourced; giving teachers financial certainty by moving them off short-term contracts and into permanent placements so that they can have the confidence to put down roots in the Territory; getting back to basics, through our Boosting Literacy and Numeracy plan, mandating explicit instruction for all schools starting from next year; and reforming our secondary system by replacing the outdated middle school model in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs with a modern comprehensive secondary system that supports real pathways to real jobs and futures.

The previous Labor government's failure was devastating for Territory children. Our children deserve more than broken promises and hidden statistics; they deserve a fully funded and fully supported education system that sets them up for success. We will deliver on the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement because our kids deserve nothing less.

I will quickly talk about Term 2 of 2025. The hard work of our attendance officers has seen improvements in attendance in Alcoota School from 31% to 41%; Alpurrurulam from 20% to 31%; Alekarenge, 24% to 30%; Lajamanu, 25% to 32%; Mataranka, 60% to 75%; Peppimenarti, 40% to 52%; Timber Creek, 36% to 67%; and Warruwi, 40% to 51%. That is by no means a set and forget.

Whilst officers have done incredible work to increase those attendance rates, children who are going to school for only one-third or half of the time will not be educated enough to get into a great job, be provided with a good education with the great teachers, school counsellors, school-based police and the infrastructure that we have in the communities. We need parents to be more responsible, get their children to school and make sure that they get a meaningful education which leads to a job.

At the end of the day, that is what our government is working very hard to do. We do not want kids to finish school and not go into a job. There are so many jobs out there. For every child who is finishing school this year, there is a job available for them. We need to make sure that our careers counsellors and everyone in the school system, along with parents, works hard at making sure that each student who finishes school moves into a meaningful pathway into a job and is a productive person in our society.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on the topic of education. I fundamentally believe that education is the great vehicle of empowerment and is a necessity for both the state and individual. Reason and knowledge are the vehicles of freedom for the individual and state. Knowledge liberates the individual from ignorance, dependence and tyranny. I have no doubt that state dependence is a great tyranny. Through education one can liberate themselves from that trap.

Education allows us to look back on history. We can see the great tyrannies of the 20th century and certain ideologies that claimed mass victims—more victims than the Spanish flu, the Great War and World War II.

Education forms the character of the mind, instilling discipline, values and morality, and ultimately the great liberation of self-government, both of the state and of one's own mind. This education allows citizens to partake in civic life and voluntarily take up their duty of meaningful engagement in society and civics. By denying education, you deny the individual the ability to have meaningful engagement in their community, to provide for themselves and their families and to ultimately have meaning.

Education is a great intersection of past, present and future. Without this intersection, we risk the descent into moral relativism, which radical elements continue to push as they dictate what is right and wrong.

Education enables innovation, which is essential for our competitiveness in the global free market. At a time when Australians suffer our greatest per capita recession in modern times under a federal Labor government, innovation remains essential. It will be innovation in the modern marketplace that raises our production and will get us out of our per capita recession.

Education is not merely for innovation; it is for transmitting the enduring values of discipline, responsibility, respect, teamwork, work ethic and reverence for our local, Territory and national culture. A strong education system instils a voluntary love of and loyalty to the community, society and nation, ensuring the preservation of civilisation.

Education safeguards the inheritance of the next generation. It is the greatest gift we can give to the future generation. As I stated, it is the intersection of our past, us and future generations.

Education provides equality of opportunity. Education is itself the great leveller. A child, no matter where they are born, has the chance to rise; they are not chained to their parents' station. An individual can learn and rise to any level in the meritocracy that is this country. It enables social mobility, which in itself is an essential measure of a society's health.

Good education cultivates creativity to solve the problems society will face tomorrow. That is why it is essential for us to pass on this gift, because we will not know the problems that are faced tomorrow. We hand it over to our youths, and by giving them the gift of education we enable them to face those challenges.

We know why we need education, so let us examine the position that our CLP government inherited. We inherited the lowest numeracy and lowest literacy in the nation.

An historic shame was wiping off the roll the children who did not attend school for more than 20 days. That is the so-called passive roll. I say to the Chamber that it is a great sin, shame and stain on the history of our Territory. It is a stain on the past, present and future. I call it 'Labor's forgotten children', and I say that there will be no more of Labor's forgotten children in the Northern Territory. To the families who suffered under this period, who were failed by Ministers Fyles, Lawler and Monaghan and the now Opposition Leader, I am sorry that in the 21st century a government denied you the power of education. That is the Labor way—'Trust us, we will look after you. No need for school.' Also, its stats would look better. If that is not a shame, I do not know what is. Not this government—we have ended the era of Labor's forgotten children.

It might be tough love for some, but we will not deny any child an education in the Northern Territory. Truancy officers are getting children back to school. Can you imagine fighting that, which people in this Chamber did? They were fighting against the right of a child to learn for all the reasons I listed, denying them freedom to govern themselves and participate in meaningful engagement with work and civics. It is a shame.

I thank the minister for her work in reforming secondary schools. I attended the local information session hosted by Principal Maisie Floyd. She is an incredible educator and a credit to Drysdale and the Palmerston education community. She leads Palmerston College, what will be the Driver campus. The Driver campus will host Years 7 to 12, and those students will have a strong academic pathway and an incredible pathway for trades.

Coming from the construction industry, I am a great advocate for the potential of trades. I assure you that in the coming century, as the world changes in ways unimaginable to us now, those who can work with their hands will be in high demand. I strongly welcome investment in that area.

The Palmerston Youth Skills Centre is an incredible facility. I had the pleasure of visiting it with Minister Hersey and the Member for Blain. It is impressive to see the kids as they start chipping away at credits on their apprenticeship and trying different trades to see what they like. It is a fantastic opportunity.

I met a young woman from the rural area who is doing her Certificate II in mechanics. She has already completed a barista course through the trade centre. Her ultimate goal is to go to university and be a midwife, a most noble profession. This young woman will have mechanical skills which she can employ on her own property. She has a barista qualification which she can use to get a job at a cafe or other hospitality venue as she supports herself going through university to become a midwife. That is the power of education.

I thank Leanne Thackeray, the assistant director, for the visit. I thank her team, including chef Lorraine Kerrigan for the amazing lunch spread put on for our visit.

There has been some discussion on electricity prices. I have a note given to me by the Treasurer, from the Department of Education and Training chief executive, to put to bed some of the fears and misinformation Labor is spreading. The chief executive has approved the following changes to school funding to support schools to manage the costs of electricity. For Semester 2 of 2025, schools will receive a cash grant to cover the estimated increase in cost for the July to December 2025 period. This estimate will be based on the consumption used in the same period in 2024, multiplied by the new tariffs. Schools can seek additional funding support if the funding provided is insufficient. For 2026 and future year budgets, a change will be made to the school funding model to allocate additional budget based on the same methodology. I hope that puts to bed any misinformation and lies being peddled by those opposite.

I thank Minister Hersey for her work and ongoing dedication to education, particularly in the Palmerston area. I thank all my educators. I genuinely have the most incredible educators at my primary schools, Driver and Gray Primary, and Palmerston College at the Driver campus. They are the most incredible dedicated team

who genuinely are trying to make the best future for our children, something I will assist them with throughout the time that I am in this Assembly. Thank you, minister and all the educators.

Thank you for ending the Labor Party's policy of forgotten children. There will be no more forgotten children, and education for all.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the incredible work done by former Chief Minister Eva Lawler, who was a quality experienced educator well before she entered parliament. She was instrumental in getting the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, providing an additional $1.1bn for Northern Territory schools. That is an achievement and a legacy for the Northern Territory to be proud of.

When we talk about education we need to understand what it delivers. Education delivers our children a bright future and the hope to live the life that they deserve, to take on the roles they deserve and to live their best lives. That is all delivered through a quality education. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement delivers the foundation for our kids to have access to a quality education regardless of where they live, who they are or where they have come from.

Work has been done in the Northern Territory over many years by successive governments when it comes to education. Making solid investments in education is crucial. We have seen policies aimed at increasing participation in school and record infrastructure investments over many years in schools to deliver better and fairer school conditions and environments that are more conducive to our kids having the best recipe for success. We need to have quality infrastructure in classrooms to attract families and engage children with school in the first place.

I am worried that we have heard from many schools about the CLP's changes and hiking of electricity costs for schools. Many schools are worried that this additional investment that has been secured will be spent on things like electricity rather than hitting the classroom floor, helping kids get into those classrooms and at their desks to help them learn. I would hate to see that investment paying for power when it should be paying for kids to have access to crucial educational resources.

Supporting our teachers across the bush is important. Infrastructure has to be upgraded so that our teachers have quality housing in remote communities. We want to attract the best to the Territory. When we were in government went through a range of EBA negotiations to land a very good deal so that quality educators across the Northern Territory could be renumerated and rewarded for their hard work.

We need to understand that every school is different and has its own challenges and celebrate the successes. The Territory education system is unique. We have private, public, independent and homeland schools. It is important to acknowledge that different schools require a different level of investment.

In my beautiful home of Central Australia there are many schools that cater to children with complex learning needs. They provide a quality service, but we need to recognise that they need a higher level of funding than other schools, even though they might be in the same footprint.

This is an incredibly important topic to speak about because our kids are our future. Politics is the contest of ideas. I do not agree with the CLP government's truancy officers, the $21m for a program that has not really changed attendance rates in Territory schools, but I acknowledge those amazing truancy officers. Jono Schwalger has been the face of a lot of policy decisions in news articles. He is an outstanding man who has done hard work with young people over many years across Central Australia. I recently ran into him in Mutitjulu where he was working with families to support them.

The best way to get kids to school is through amazing programs like the school nutrition programs that make sure that kids know to come to school to get a good bellyful of tucker and then start the day learning in the classroom. FaFT (Families as First Teachers) is a program that encourages the whole family to come to school to help learn and to recognise that when they do that, they are bringing together the family unit. They are thriving and supporting one another, and they are learning together.

We introduced the RATE program across the Northern Territory, allowing and creating the platform and the opportunity for remote Aboriginal teachers to engage and be skilled and be in the classrooms. Whether they are teachers in their own right, or assistant teachers, it is incredibly important to acknowledge their work and thank all our educators for that.

This is an opportunity to hear from the government about its intentions for this funding, to make sure that this funding will not be spent on paying for power but will be spent on educational resources and addressing the needs of our kids.

Organisations like the Australian Education Union have spoken about many of the challenges that their members face each day when they are coming to school to teach. We need more allied health professionals working in our school environments—speech pathologists and social and emotional support services to work with Territory families to support our young people if there are problems or signs of children needing help or that things may start to escalate. If we can work together to address those behaviours, we are on the right track.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is a significant investment in the Territory's education system. Fully funding schools is crucial. Schools are doing a range of things with that funding and we are seeing the achievements. We are hearing from people in those schools the aspiration that is shining through. I have been to a number of schools in my electorate where I have seen firsthand that by now being fully funded they can bring on additional staff to support the classroom. Some of these amazing schools are supporting program development through learning on country, courses teaching young kids through ranger programs and programs teaching maths, science and English in an innovative way because they now have the resources to do that.

This agreement also allows us to have a serious conversation about the future of education and what is being taught, how it is being taught, how it is being measured and how we can look to do things in the future. That means enhanced support for students. It is about expanding remote secondary school provision and the whole-of-school approaches to wellbeing and inclusion. It is increasing the resourcing for these schools so that they have all the resources that they need.

Early years phonics and numeracy checks are about making sure that our kids are not slipping through the cracks when building their foundation and learning skills before they enter mainstream education. Making sure that our kids have had appropriate screening to look for any developmental matters or delays and bringing in the appropriate supports to help them in the classroom is incredibly important. This is a wonderful initiative that can be delivered through this investment.

Genuine partnerships with community are crucial to make sure that education can work by bringing in the family, community members and organisations in a local area. Everyone has a role to play in delivering education in our community. It is important that through this agreement we can see and hear how schools are using that funding.

There are roughly 30 schools in my electorate of Gwoja, so I am busy visiting those schools all the time. I have seen firsthand how this additional Better and Fairer Schools Agreement funding is delivering positive results in schools across the electorate. These are important building blocks for the future, our children and our staff. When we are investing like we are, that is when we will see attendance rates increase because people are feeling engaged and empowered. I welcome that investment.

In speaking about education it would be remiss of me not to talk about Closing the Gap. A vital role for Closing the Gap is delivering quality education for kids. This $1.1bn is an incredible tool for closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, because if we can work with our families to get our kids into school and support our children to have the biggest, best and brightest future, that is an achievement.

When we talk about education it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge the amazing principals, teachers, teacher aides and administrative support staff in schools and the Department of Education and Training staff who all do an incredible job. The Australian Education Union does an amazing job representing the interests of its members.

Our school truancy officers do hard work every day. It is hard for our school truancy officers, who do not necessarily want to be the ones on the beat waving a big stick, implementing the government's punitive, draconian school attendance policies; they want to be supporting, loving and engaging our kids to get them to school.

This matter of public importance is an important opportunity to acknowledge everyone who has a role to play in education and to thank our school support staff. Gwoja has about 30 schools and Aboriginal educators and community liaison officers do amazing work to support our schools.

I hope that this government can continue the rolling investment in government employee housing for our teachers in recognition that living in those locations can be difficult and infrastructure upgrades are needed. I hope that the CLP government keeps in place Labor's policy for people who work for the Department of Education and Training in a community to be eligible for government employee housing subsidies. That is how we engage our mob, Aboriginal people, to work in the schools. If they have access to that housing subsidy it makes life a bit easier and encourages them to work at and support the school.

We need to recognise that investment of $1.1bn should go to educational services, resources and support and is not pushed aside to pay for things like power. This is the type of investment that is a game changer for the Northern Territory.

I acknowledge the outstanding efforts and contributions of kids in the bush. As the Member for Gwoja I am proud when I hear or see stories on Facebook of my mob graduating from Year 10 or Year 12, and many of them going onto university. People in my electorate from wonderful communities like Yuendumu, Kalkarindji and all the way to Docker River are going to university; There are Aboriginal Territorians who are talking about doing their masters and PhDs. This is all because of a quality education system in the Territory, and it should be celebrated.

We are willing and ready to support education matters that are evidence based that deliver positive outcomes for the Territory and that will see growth in the jobs of the future.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I am happy to discuss the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and to support the call that the Northern Territory Government be open and accountable in sharing information with Territorians about how it is rolling out the additional $1.1bn under the agreement.

Everyone in this House is familiar with it, but for anyone listening who is not, this agreement is truly transformative. It represents an historic long-overdue commitment by the Commonwealth and the Territory to close the gap in school funding and ensure that all NT public schools reach full funding by 2029. This is about more than dollars; it is about supporting teachers in classrooms, providing targeted literacy and numeracy programs, ensuring there are resources for students with disabilities and addressing the unique challenges faced by remote and very remote schools in our Territory. In this Chamber we all are familiar with these challenges, which include high staff turnover, limited housing for teachers, restricted access to specialist services and the complexity of the environment that we are working in, including delivering education in communities where English is often a second, third or fourth language.

Everyone in this Chamber has spoken about their commitment to education for all our children, and I think everyone here is committed to making sure that all children have access to appropriate education. This funding gives all Territory kids a chance at this and a real future. It is essential that we make sure we use this money as wisely as possible and that it is going exactly where it needs to—directly to our children's learning.

School councils and peak bodies such as NTCOGSO have raised concerns about the rollout of this funding. They are seeking assurances that the funding will reach schools as intended, rather than being absorbed by other costs. Concerns they have outlined include that centrally provided services and supports, such as staffing programs, curriculum delivery and working with children cards—those kinds of costs—continue to be properly resourced by the department rather than cost shifting to schools and that any transition of costs to schools will not undermine student outcomes.

The removal of the community service obligation (CSO) subsidy for schools to help cover electricity costs has been talked about this week. COGSO said that schools will now face the full cost of electricity …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: I can hear you guys talking; can you take it out the back?

J DAVIS: Schools will face the full cost of these electricity and network charges, alongside a 3% increase in tariffs. This effectively takes money away from students, classrooms, critical support services and undermines the intent of the Better and Fairer Schools funding. There are clear things that COGSO is calling for, including targeted funding to cover these unfunded electricity costs, the reinstatement of schools as recipients of the CSO subsidy and clearer guidance from the department on contracts and financial obligations with electricity suppliers.

Everyone in this Chamber agrees on the importance of education. Some people in this Chamber have worked in education for decades and are committed to making sure that it works as well as it can for everyone in the

Territory. The Better and Fairer Schools funding gives us a unique and wonderful chance to catch up and make a real difference for students, not to cover unexpected rises in power bills. We need to make sure that we spend this money properly and do not dilute the benefits of this landmark investment, leaving schools to absorb costs that are not theirs to bear.

What this MPI called for and what I support is clear and transparent reporting so that Territorians can see how the funding is improving student outcomes and supporting equity across the Territory. I call on the government to provide clear accessible reporting on how that $1.1bn is being allocated so that we can all know that the funding is reaching schools and supporting students. This is about putting students first, supporting teachers and ensuring that every child, whether they are in Darwin, Alice Springs, the Barkly, Wadeye, Yuendumu or elsewhere across the Territory, has the real opportunity to succeed.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter of public importance before the Assembly. The motion calls on the Northern Territory Government to be open and accountable with Territorians about how it is rolling out the additional $1.1bn funding under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement which is designed to ensure every NT school is fully and fairly funded.

Education for Territory children is without a doubt one of the top priorities for those in this Chamber. No matter where they live or their circumstances, every Territory child should have the ability and the opportunity to thrive in their schooling, from early education through to the end of school. Territory kids are our future. Regardless of what they choose to do as a profession—teacher, scientist, nurse, doctor or even our much-needed tradies—it is our responsibility as leaders and parliamentary representatives to work alongside families and those in our hardworking education sector to ensure that Territory kids have all the options available. That is why I again place on the record that no public school student or any public school in urban, rural and remote areas should be worse off now or in the future. That should be a priority for any government.

I have 13 schools dotting the Daly electorate. I extend a big shout-out to the following schools: Adelaide River School; Berry Springs school; Batchelor Area School; Belyuen School; Douglas Daly School; Dundee Beach School; Palumpa school; Peppimenarti School; Pine Creek School; Tipperary Station School; Woolianna School; and Woolaning School.

The schooling system in the Northern Territory has long faced a challenging socioeconomic and geographic landscape, making it essential to allocate substantial resources to provide quality education for children across the region. Service delivery costs in the Territory are higher than in any other jurisdiction, with 71% of NT Government schools being in remote and very remote areas.

From the outset of this parliamentary term, the Territory Labor opposition put on the record our intention to hold the CLP government to account on its part to implement the bilateral Better and Fairer Schools Agreement which was signed by the previous Chief Minister and Education minister, Eva Lawler.

This landmark agreement was signed by the former Territory Labor government and the Albanese government last year to fully and fairly fund all NT schools. Under the agreement the Australian Government will invest an additional $737.7m from 2025 to 2029, with the Northern Territory committing to invest an additional $350m over the same period. This means that Northern Territory schools will reach their full and fair funding levels two decades earlier than they would have if funding continued under the original settings.

The agreement can enhance support for the students of Adelaide River School; increase resources for schools such as Batchelor Area and Pine Creek Schools; provide more funding certainty for schools such as Berry Springs; provide more educators and support staff for Belyuen, Peppimenarti, Wadeye and Palumpa; and ensure genuine partnerships with communities, which they deserve. It can also expand remote secondary provision, provide whole-school approaches to wellbeing and inclusion and help with early years phonics and numeracy checks. This means more resources for schools as well as support for the students and teachers who need it most, reshaping the schooling landscape in the Northern Territory across its 151 schools.

In October last year those on this side of the House were concerned when the former CLP candidate for Solomon let slip on ABC radio that those opposite had initially been reluctant to honour the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. It raised alarm bells for the Territory Labor opposition team because it truly gave us a sliver of insight into what a potential federal Liberal–National Coalition government could have done if it had come to power in May. Thankfully, we have a strong re-elected Albanese Labor government that will continue to hold the Education minister and the CLP government to account in delivering the Territory's end of the agreement.

Through the agreement the NT is committed to the improvement measures of increasing the proportion of students with Year 12 or equivalent certification by 7.5 percentage points, increasing Aboriginal employment numbers, increasing the NT's overall student attendance rate to 79.7% and improving proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 10%. That is the bare minimum.

Since the Education minister confirmed in October last year that the government would honour the agreement, we have had no clear update on where the Education minister and CLP government are at with the implementation of the elements of this agreement. That is where our concerns arise. This agreement will ensure every child, through an adequately funded education, gains a better start in life regardless of their location, yet we know nothing of what the CLP government is doing in regard to the funding.

The Education minister's focus has been almost entirely on punitive measures rather than effective investments, particularly in addressing the social and emotional wellbeing of students across the Territory. Where is the government providing enhanced support for students, expanded secondary provision or increased resourcing for schools? How is this being done?

These questions need to be answered, especially given the Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations' recent media release stated that public schools were removed from the electricity subsidy and are now being forced to divert funds intended for students to pay the electricity bills instead. COGSO even highlighted in the media release:

> *The Commonwealth government increased funding for the NT from 2025 through to 2029 to improve student outcomes. However, instead of being used for new programs, staffing and resources for students, this money is being redirected to cover pay rises and higher utility costs. Funding intended to lift student learning is being lost to government cost shifting.*

This is not what the funding, as outlined in the bilateral agreement, is intended for. I am concerned about how this could impact needs-based funding for children with additional needs and in-school support for those with extra needs, which could be diverted. We need to recognise that not all Territory kids start on a level playing field. We must ensure that they receive what they need and deserve, especially under this significant funding agreement.

Furthermore, as far as genuine partnerships with the community go, I for one know this is where the CLP government falls short. Our educators and hardworking staff do fantastic work on the ground every day in the communities, but still the CLP government and minister consistently engage in rhetoric about punitive measures as the way to address disenchantment with school. We know that it is not all about using punitive measures; it is about engaging with families and Territory kids in an appropriate way that makes them feel safe, supported, connected and confident in their ability to engage with school and learning. It is crucial for the CLP government to take a thorough approach, and the Education minister has an important role to play in this process.

We are calling for greater transparency and a clear commitment to ensuring that these historic levels of funding are effectively channelled into the classroom. By focusing on direct investment in our education system we can avoid the pitfalls of budget repair or ineffective programs and truly provide our children with the support they need to thrive. This funding will be the difference. We all want Territory kids to succeed. We want opportunities for kids to be leaders in the industries that will shape the future of the Territory.

We need to go further. Although this funding is great and it ensures that each of the 151 schools across the Northern Territory are fairly and fully funded, there are other reasons that student do not attend school. We have spoken about these many times in the Chamber, including housing and the living conditions of people. That is why I am proud the Labor government signed the $4bn housing agreement with the federal government. Was it enough? We would always want more from the federal government.

We need funding for our homelands. People on homelands, living on their traditional lands out bush, have the right to safe adequate housing. We need to ensure that schools in our homelands are fully funded so that kids on our homelands get a fair and good opportunity to attend school. The curriculum that we are building on homelands needs to embed the cultural knowledge from our old people. Many of our old people are also teachers and knowledge holders. When bilingual education is and our culture are embedded into the curriculum, we will get better outcomes. The data shows that.

Please, do not walk away from our homelands. Work with people in homelands to ensure that people can access their homelands and the kids there can get a better education.

I have spoken numerous times in this House about Port Keats Road, and I will keep going on about it until the road is built. It is an important piece of infrastructure to ensure that people living in the homelands near Wadeye, like the homelands of Nama and Wudapuli, have year-round access to their closest school in Palumpa or, in the opposite direction, Wadeye. We need to invest in infrastructure to ensure that our mob get the opportunity to go to school.

It was a shame to hear that the Education minister cut $3m for much-needed infrastructure upgrades to homelands schools.

Mr Edgington: That was you.

Mr YOUNG: That was the Education minister, Jo Hersey. She cut $3m for infrastructure for our schools on homelands. This is exactly what I am talking about. Those students will be going to schools that are depleted, falling apart and not adequate for their learning needs because the Education minister cut $3m out of the infrastructure program.

Mr Edgington: You did.

Mr YOUNG: I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Barkly. I know he is upset because a school in his own electorate had funding cut by the Education minister. That was $8m from Alekarenge School. The Member for Barkly banged on about it for the last four years, saying that he will upgrade Alekarenge School, but what did he get? He got a cut of $8m from Jo Hersey, the Education minister. Where is the Member for Barkly advocating for the students of Alekarenge School?

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Barkly, stop interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: Where is the Member for Barkly speaking up for the community of Ali Curung when the Education minister has cut $8m from its school? That is shameful. That will be your legacy.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition brings before this House a matter of utmost importance: the openness and accountability of this government in rolling out the $1.1bn funding package under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. Let us be clear that all of us in this Chamber respect the work of the people in the Department of Education and Training and schools to make sure our kids are thriving, but this funding that has been provided is not a victory for Labor; it is a bailout for all its failures.

Through the Leader of the Opposition's matter of public importance, our government again has been gifted an opportunity to expose the brutal truth that Labor failed Territorians. Labor failed our children. For the last eight years Labor was in charge of education, and what did Territorians get? A national disgrace on school attendance, literacy and numeracy, safety and funding. Labor's report card is an F—a big fat fail.

While other states were lifting outcomes, the Territory sank to rock bottom under Labor's watch. One-third of our students needed extra help with literacy and numeracy in 2024, which is three times worse than the national average. One-third of our kids are struggling to read and count because Labor could not be bothered to do the hard work.

What did Labor do? Did it take responsibility? No. Did Labor fix it? No. Once again, Labor denied that there was even a problem. Labor members blamed everyone else and when the whole system was collapsing around them, they ran to Canberra, cap in hand, and begged for a bailout. Let us not forget that Labor scurried off and signed this agreement in caretaker mode, on its way out the door and after dragging our schools, students, teachers and school staff into the dirt. Labor left Territorians with a mess and expected Canberra to clean it up. That is shameful and unforgiveable.

For eight long years under Labor, Territorians and, more importantly, our children were failed. Labor failed on attendance, literacy and numeracy, school safety and funding. You do not have to take my word for it. In January 2024 the *Australian* published an investigative series titled 'NT Schools in Crisis'. The headline said it all: it laid bare the mismanagement and failure of the Labor government. Over those eight years the Territory's education system became nothing short of a national embarrassment. Every parent in this Territory knows it, and every teacher lived it.

The facts speak for themselves. Under Labor the NT recorded the worst educational outcomes in the nation. In 2024 a staggering one-third of NT students required additional literacy and numeracy support compared

with just one in 10 nationally. Attendance rates plummeted. Truancy officers were scrapped. The law that every child over the age of six must attend school was ignored. How do I know? I was there. Labor looked the other way. How do I know? I was there. When schools hit the point of collapse, Labor blamed everyone else and went running to Canberra.

Labor left Territorians with a broken system that the Commonwealth had no choice but to prop up. Yes, $1.1bn is now being poured into NT schools. Yes, by 2029 our schools will finally be funded at 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard, as recommended by David Gonski back in 2011. However, let us not forget that this is money we need today because of Labor's failures yesterday.

Ms Uibo: You have no clue.

Mrs ZIO: I note that interjection.

Our side of politics is committed to turning the page. Unlike Labor we will not hide the truth, fudge the numbers and run to Canberra with excuses. The difference is accountability and action. The CLP is not making excuses. We are fixing Labor's failures.

In 2025 alone $603m has already gone directly into schools, with every cent accounted for. Schools now have their budgets a year before, so they can plan properly. Under Labor that never happened. We are delivering election commitments, like free swimming lessons …

Ms Uibo: That is not true.

Mrs ZIO: It is absolutely true.

Ms Uibo: No, it is not.

Mrs ZIO: This is so that families do not have to dip into sport …

Ms Uibo: Yearly budgets have been going for years and years.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! Stop interjecting, please.

Ms Uibo: When did you stop working in education?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, no more interjections, please.

Mrs ZIO: We are delivering election commitments, like free swimming lessons, so that families do not have to dip into their sport vouchers just to keep their kids safe. Already, more than 7,300 Territory kids have completed the Swim and Survive program this year.

This is transparency in action, with funding going directly into classrooms, directly to school communities and directly to our children.

Our government is not trying to sugarcoat the problem. Attendance remains unacceptably low. Nothing sums up Labor's failure better than school attendance. Labor never delivered. Labor never cared. It simply told people to look the other way—'Nothing to see here'.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! I am warning you. This is an important MPI that you have introduced. Do the courtesy of listening to everyone, please.

Mrs ZIO: In 2016 school attendance was over 80%, but by 2024, under Labor, it had collapsed. That is thousands of children left behind because Labor abolished truancy officers, scrapped enforcement of school laws and waved a white flag. In regions like Central Australia, attendance fell even further. Why? It is because for eight years Labor neglected the most basic responsibility—getting kids to school. It weakened the law and failed to support parents.

That is why our government brought back school attendance officers. These officers have the powers Labor scrapped, and they are already making a difference. There are 388 more kids attending school because of direct intervention. When this number of 388 more kids attending school was quoted during Question Time,

all in the Chamber would have clearly heard—I am hoping it will be documented in *Hansard* for all to read—the Member for Gwoja let out a big sarcastic 'wow'. That is exactly why the Labor team sits on that side of the parliament with only four members.

If schools under our government re-engage only one Territory student with school, I can tell you that we will celebrate. In this case we have gotten nearly a whole school's worth of students back in school, and I can tell you that we will celebrate that number. It is clear that those opposite celebrate only when numbers decline. I guess you would think that if they celebrate declining numbers that they would celebrate some of our crime statistics.

Make no mistake: we will hold parents accountable with case conferences, fines and, when necessary, legal action. We will hold parents accountable because a child missing out on school is not only a tragedy for that child; it is a tragedy for our entire community.

When we get those students back to school, our focus is clearly on going back to basics and lifting standards. We are investing $14.2m in a Territory-wide evidence-based approach to literacy and numeracy. For every school and every classroom there is one consistent and proven standard.

We are supporting teachers, not short-changing them with constant rolling contracts. Already, 67.8% of our classroom teachers are permanently employed. That is up by more than four percentage points in one year. By 2027, 75% of our teachers will have permanent jobs, providing stability and giving families the chance to settle in the Territory. Our teachers are now the highest paid in the nation. That is a record the CLP is proud of, and we will continue to defend it.

When it comes to our kids' education, Territorians deserve honesty, accountability and action. Labor talked endlessly about education while delivering the worst outcomes in the nation. Labor begged for federal cash while refusing to take responsibility for its own failures. Labor ran schools into the ground and then tried to pat itself on the back for signing a bailout deal as it left office. It is a disgrace and a betrayal of Territory families.

Yes this $1.1bn is critical, but the important question is: who do you trust to spend it wisely? Is it the party that let our schools collapse for eight years or the party that is working to fix those failures? Labor gave us excuses, decline and a crisis. The CLP is delivering investment, reform and a system that we can once again be proud of. This government is committed to ensuring that every Territory child, no matter where they live, has the best start in life because education in the Northern Territory should not be a political embarrassment; it must be our greatest success.

Territorians do not trust Labor with schools. Why would they? Labor left a national embarrassment, threw up its hands and hoped that the Commonwealth would clean up its mess. Our government is rebuilding trust, delivering outcomes and making sure every cent of this $1.1bn goes where it belongs—into classrooms, kids' futures and fixing Labor's failures. Labor wrote the failure, and our government will write the recovery.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, like most of us on our side, I call for transparency, accountability and above all a commitment from the Northern Territory Government in rolling out the additional $1.1bn in funding under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.

This agreement is more than a piece of paper; it is an historic agreement, signed by the last Labor government and the Commonwealth Government. For the first time in our history, every Northern Territory school will be fully and fairly funded at 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard by 2029. Let us be clear that this is a nation-building reform, and Labor negotiated it. Labor delivered that certainty for Territory schools.

However, its success depends on more than announcements. It depends on how it is implemented. If the CLP government fails to show leadership, stay focused and be open with Territorians, this once-in-a-generation investment will fail to deliver for our kids.

When the last Labor government signed this agreement with the Commonwealth it marked a turning point. For years Territorians knew that our schools were underfunded. Teachers, parents and students saw it every day in overcrowded classrooms, ageing infrastructure, the lack of specialised teachers and under-resourced programs for children with additional needs. This agreement corrects that injustice. It guarantees that all Northern Territory public schools will finally be funded to the standard they deserve. That is equity, fairness and what every Territory child deserves.

We must acknowledge the unique context in which the Northern Territory school system operates. No other jurisdiction in Australia faces the same combination of socioeconomic disadvantage and geographic remoteness. We have schools in the heart of Darwin serving multicultural urban communities. We have remote and very remote schools where attendance is patchy; we all acknowledge that. Recruitment is difficult, and the cost of delivery is higher than in other parts of Australia. Providing a quality education in these contexts requires more than goodwill; it requires significant expertise, resources and innovation. This is why the $1.1bn investment is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

At its heart, this agreement is about ensuring every child in the Northern Territory has the best start in life and, through education, gains a brighter future regardless of where they live. Education is a great equaliser. It is the key to breaking cycles of disadvantage, creating opportunity and ensuring that children in Wadeye or Gunbalanya have the same life chances as children in Nightcliff or Palmerston. In an increasingly complex and globalised world, a high-quality education is critical for not only individual success but also Australia's future stability and prosperity. If we fail our students, we weaken our workforce. If we fail our schools, we compromise our national economy. If we fail this agreement, we fail this generation.

I turn to the objectives of this agreement. The first objective is equity and excellence, ensuring that schools are equipped with evidence-based teaching and every student has access to equitable learning opportunities. This goes to the heart of the funding deal because fairness is not about treating every child the same; it is about recognising that children in Maningrida may need different supports from children in Darwin and are therefore funded accordingly. Equity means putting resources where they are most needed so that excellence can follow. Without equity, excellence is reserved for the few. With equity, excellence can be shared by all.

The second objective is wellbeing. We know that children cannot learn if they do not feel safe, engaged and connected. Schools need the resources to take a structured approach to student wellbeing to build resilience, create safe spaces and ensure children feel a sense of belonging. In the Territory context that means addressing trauma, tackling bullying, supporting mental health, recognising cultural identity and creating inclusive school communities. Wellbeing is not a side issue; it is essential for learning outcomes. If children feel valued, they will value their education.

The third objective is to build a strong and sustainable workforce. Our teachers and school staff are the backbone of the system, yet in the Northern Territory we face chronic challenges in attracting and retaining staff, particularly in remote areas. This agreement recognises that teachers need support to innovate, develop and remain in the profession. It recognises that teachers deserve respect, fair pay and safe working conditions. A sustainable workforce means teachers are not burnt out after two years in remote areas, but see teaching in the NT as valuable and with pride. It also means recognising the roles of Aboriginal educators, assistant teachers and non-teaching staff who are essential to the fabric of remote education.

We must be frank. We cannot have a government playing silly buggers with this funding. We cannot afford to see it wasted on higher bills for schools because the government refuses to invest in energy efficiency. We cannot afford to see it diverted into programs that do not work while classrooms go without teachers. We cannot afford to see it swallowed up by bureaucracy. This funding is for schools, classrooms and children. If the government cannot keep that focus, the promise of this agreement will be broken.

For the first time many remote schools have funding security. They can plan for the future knowing that they will receive a predictable and fair share of resources. This is transformational. Remote principals can hire staff with confidence, invest in programs with certainty and partner with communities without fearing the rug will be pulled out from under them. This agreement was designed to disrupt the status quo which was failing bush schools. If the government undermines the agreement, it will condemn an entire generation of remote children with the same failures of the past.

That is why this matter of public importance matters. It calls on the government to be open and accountable about the $1.1bn being rolled out. Territorians deserve to know how much is going to each school, how programs will be evaluated and what outcomes are being achieved. Without transparency, confidence will collapse. With transparency, we can hold the government to account and ensure the investment delivers real change.

It was the Labor government that signed this deal and secured the money to give Territory children the promise of fair and full funding. It is this CLP government that needs to take it forward. Labor believes in equity, excellence, wellbeing and a strong workforce. Labor believes in accountability and transparency. Labor believes that every child in every corner of the Territory deserves a fair go. This government has no such record. It scrapped renewable targets, abandoned climate leadership and cut programs when it was tough. The government now risks failing our children by failing to deliver on this agreement.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is historic and a chance to finally give Northern Territory children the same opportunities as every other child in Australia has. It is a chance to close the funding gap, lift outcomes and prepare our young people for the future, but it is only a chance. It will succeed only if the government shows commitment, focus and transparency. This investment must not be wasted, diverted or undermined. For the sake of every child in every school, we call on the government to be open, accountable and committed, no matter the school.

I acknowledge all the educators in my electorate: from the Tiwi Islands, Milikapiti, Pirlangimpi and Wurrumiyanga; in Kakadu, Jabiru; Gunbalanya; and in West Arnhem, Warruwi, Minjilang and Maningrida. Keep up the good work, everyone, and get our kids in there.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about my fantastic constituents in the electorate of Nelson. We have amazing football clubs, pony clubs, garden clubs, cricket clubs and many more in our rural area. First I will touch on the Litchfield Bears who shone at the Frank Johnson and Gaynor Maggs Medal Awards and the 2025 Darwin Junior League Presentation Night.

The Frank Johnson and Gaynor Maggs Medal Awards was held on Monday 1 September at the Turf Club. It was a night to acknowledge those who continue to demonstrate the value of community sport, both on and off the field. Congratulations to Litchfield Bears players, Matthew Woolmington, Frank Johnson medallist; Erin Luchetti, Gaynor Maggs medallist; Murray Fogg, Male Rising Star; and Trent Wedding, NT News Player of the Year.

The 2025 Darwin Junior League Presentation Night was held on 25 August. Congratulations to Litchfield Bears players Jarvis Pearce, the 2025 Under-14 Boys Player of the Year and 2025 Under-14 Boys Highest Point Scorer, and Lachlan Keirnan, the Highest Point Scorer Under-13; and the 2025 Coach of the Year, Beau Pearce. Congratulations to the Litchfield Bears for winning the 2025 Junior Club Champions of the Year and to the 2025 Junior Team of the Year, the Litchfield Bears Under-14 Boys.

Congratulations to all the winners and nominees for their hard work, talent and dedication to make the entire Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club and the community incredibly proud.

I have a connection with the Litchfield Bears. I played rugby league for the Bears back in the day. In fact, the pavilion is named after my dad; it is the John Maley Pavilion. There is a big sign on it. He played back in his day and I played there as well.

Congratulations to the Litchfield Bears Under-15 Girls for winning the 2025 Chemist Warehouse Junior League Premiership in an incredible grand final clash that went to extra time. The Bears defeated Brothers 16–12. A special shout-out goes to Alana Finn, who was named Player of the Final for her outstanding performance.

A huge shout-out also goes to the Litchfield Bears Under-13 Boys who were crowned the 2025 Chemist Warehouse Junior League Premiers after a thrilling 26–18 victory over the Nightcliff Dragons. A special shout-out goes to Josh Roberts who earned Player of the Final for his outstanding performance.

It is also worth noting that the Litchfield Bears women have secured their spot in the 2025 grand final. I look forward to an exciting final. Go, you mighty Bears!

Not only are our rugby league players are doing well; our pony club members are too. This year's Pony Club Association of the Northern Territory Championships were held last month. This premier event showcases young equestrian talent across the Northern Territory. This year it was expanded to all adult riders as well. I am a bit biased; I am the patron of the pony club. I also support the pony club through my riding when I play polocrosse and participate in equestrian sport throughout the rural area.

I will quickly go through the winners. Overall Highest Point Champion was Delilah Small, Darwin Horse and Pony Club; Under-16 Dressage Champion, Caitlin Dennis, Litchfield Horse and Pony Club; Senior Dressage Champion, Allison Ross, Litchfield Horse and Pony Club; Reserve, Lisa O'Donoghue, Darwin Horse and Pony Club; Champion Show Jumping Club, Litchfield Horse and Pony Club; Under-16 Show Jumping Champions, Tobi Campbell, Darwin Horse and Pony Club, and Emily Andrews, Darwin Horse and Pony Club; Senior Show Jumper, Sarah Brohan, Darwin Horse and Pony Club; Reserve, Allison Ross, Litchfield Horse

and Pony Club; Champion Mounted Games Club, Darwin Horse and Pony Club; and Under-16 Mounted Games Champion, Delilah Small, Darwin Horse and Pony Club.

The Southern Districts Cricket Club hosted a 2025 Top End T20 Series match. The Member for Goyder and I went along. I think the rural area is the only place you can watch cricket and hold a couple of goats. That is what it is like in the rural area. As I said earlier, the Member for Goyder basically has a zoo; he has animals everywhere. Those goats certainly liked him. We watched NT Strike versus Hobart Hurricanes and it was a great game with skill and sportsmanship. The crowd sitting under the big trees were a typical rural crowd. NT Strike took out the game with 127 runs to 125. I congratulate the Southern Districts Cricket Club and the committee for outstanding dedication and hard work to make an event like that such a great success.

I shout out to the Rural Garden Club. On 20 June the Rural Garden Club hosted the Biggest Morning Tea at Di Spencer's house in Herbert. It raised $3,300 for the Cancer Council, which is a wonderful effort. The Member for Goyder and I attended. I give a big shout-out to the committee members who do a great job.

I went to the Top End Gem & Mineral Club Open Day at Knuckey Lagoon. Mr Deputy Speaker, you also went, as did the Attorney-General. I panned for gold and checked out all the things that the club does. It was amazing. The club members had so much knowledge about what is around, and they talked about how they got into fossicking. I must admit that I have a metal detector and go out to do a bit of that. I have not found much gold, because I am still here, but I understand you get the gold bug and gold fever, and away you go. It was a great day with good activities. I watched people shape and polish gems and the gold panning. It was great to have that in the rural area.

A special thank you goes to Hugh Auckram, president and junior coordinator, for doing such a great job and welcoming everyone there. I also thank the club and committee members for the work that they do.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recently attended a forum held for our early childhood educators, those who give so much of themselves every day to nurture, guide and educate our youngest Territorians and work tirelessly to do so.

Whether children are in preschools, long day care, family day care, early learning centres, before and after-school care or vacation care, these educators are at the heart of our communities. Their work is often unseen but never unimportant. They provide not only care and education but also love, safety and stability during the most formative years of a child's life.

In recent months the early childhood sector has been cast into the national spotlight for all the wrong reasons, not for the dedication of the many, but due to the distressing actions of a few deeply troubling and disturbed individuals. These people whose conduct stands in stark contrast to the values of this profession have brought pain and dismay to an otherwise professional, compassionate and principled workforce. We must not allow the actions of a few to overshadow the integrity of the many. The overwhelming majority of early childhood educators are doing exceptional work in challenging circumstances, and they deserve our trust, respect and unwavering support.

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of hosting the Early Childhood – Conversation with the Minister forum, which was held in Darwin at the CDU campus in the city and online. More than 100 educators, trainers and teachers joined us to share their stories, challenges, frustrations and hopes for the future of the sector.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the many providers who participated in those conversations, including Top End Early Learning Centre; St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Darwin; Mother Teresa Outside School Hours Care and Early Learning Centre; Kentish Community Services; Teacher Registration Board; Charles Darwin University; Early Childhood Australia NT; Essington School; Leanyer School Playgroup; ISACNT; Territory Child Care Group; Haileybury Rendall School; Kalkaringi School; Big Rivers Kentish Early Learning Centre; Hospital School, Royal Darwin Hospital; Gove Child Care; Child Australia; NAPCAN; and Yulara Child Care Centre, just to name a few.

A special mention goes to Zuccoli Early Learners, a not-for-profit service whose educators courageously spoke to me about the stigma they face. They expressed their hurt at being seen as motivated by profit rather than passion. Let me be clear: the value of early childhood education is not defined by a funding model but by the commitment of the people within it. I saw firsthand their deep care and professionalism.

I also acknowledge Will Qian from Lajamanu Preschool, who joined online to speak of the unique pressures faced by men in early childhood education. In the wake of recent national allegations, many men in the sector feel under suspicion or scrutiny. The answer is not to push men out of this profession. Children need diverse,

nurturing role models—men and women—who reflect the world they are growing up in. Sometimes those men are the only men they have as a role model in their life.

I have since spoken to male educators at Kentish Early Learning Centre in Katherine who are not only supported by their workplace but also backed up by the parents who drop off their children.

There were two standouts from the forum, for me. Firstly, there was the growing burden of paperwork and regulation. Educators spoke of the exhausting process of preparing for Assessment and Rating cycles, where appearances often seem to take precedence over authentic learning experiences. Many feel the system is no longer serving educators or children.

Secondly—this really surprised me—this was the first time an NT Education minister had hosted such a forum with the early childhood sector. This is what people at the forum told me. It staggered me. For too long, these voices have gone unheard, and it is no longer acceptable. People like Alice, from Casuarina Childcare Centre, approached me after the event to say thank you, not for solving every problem, but simply for listening. I assure Alice and all other educators that we are listening, and they will be heard. Every child matters. Every educator matters.

Not long after that forum, I attended the national early childhood education ministers' meeting in Sydney where three key national reforms were agreed upon: a national educator register to increase transparency and accountability; mandatory child safety training for all educators and those working in the sector, including board directors; and a ban on personal devices while working directly with children. These reforms are vital, and we know there is more to do.

The early childhood workforce is the backbone of our society. It enables parents to work and study, fuels our economy and, more importantly, lays the foundation for every child's future.

To every early childhood educator across the Territory, I see you, I thank you and I stand with you. Your work shapes lives, strengthens families and builds communities. Let us continue working together to ensure that every child and every educator has the support they deserve. I wish all the educators in the early childhood sector a happy Early Childhood Educators' Day, which is tomorrow.

Last week was the Tournament of Minds. Katherine South Primary School students came to Darwin, and it was pleasing to see Ashton from Katherine South Primary School go up to receive the highly commended prize that they won for the Language Literature challenge. Well done to Katherine South Primary School. It was a fantastic experience and adventure for the students who attended. The team was called The Pajahmez and they gave their interpretation of Shaun Tan's short story *The Water Buffalo* in the form of a short play.

This is a great experience for the students to travel and take part. A huge thanks to Miss Stella who took time out of her weekend to attend and support the students. Well done, Katherine South Primary School. The students are going onwards and upwards. They are all champions. The students stepped out of their comfort zones to achieve. Well done and congratulations to them all.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the disgraceful behaviour that we saw over the weekend from the so-called March for Australia rallies across the country.

What happened last Sunday, particularly in Melbourne, was not just disturbing; it was shameful. A group of Neo-Nazis stormed Camp Sovereignty—a sacred place for our people—during what it called the March for Australia. This was not about patriotism; it was about hate, racism and intimidation. Across the weekend, the so-called March for Australia rallies were held in our cities. These gatherings claimed to be about housing and immigration, but from the beginning, the warnings were clear; they were organised and led by Neo-Nazis and white supremacists. No-one can pretend that they did not know. Those rallies should never have been given space on our streets. They gave cover for hate groups to spread their poison.

When the march ended the consequences were terrible. Violent thugs went in and attacked people who were peacefully protesting at Camp Sovereignty. They tore down Aboriginal flags and assaulted women who ended up in hospital. That is not free speech; it is hate crime.

What makes this even worse is the silence from those in power. Earlier this year the Multicultural Affairs minister, Jinson Charls, made comments in this Chamber that alarmed many across the Territory. In a debate on racism he referenced Charles Darwin's survival of the fittest and disturbingly suggested that it still rings true in many ways. He even quoted a Nazi propagandist. Those words echo the very tactics and ideology that fuelled the darkest chapters of our history. They were condemned by the Anti-Discrimination

Commissioner as deeply concerning and offensive, but since last weekend's marches when Neo-Nazis openly took to our streets, we have not seen or heard the Multicultural Affairs minister condemn them—not a word of leadership, not a word of rejection and not a word of solidarity with our multicultural communities he was meant to represent.

We must be clear. We stand with our multicultural communities; we stand with our people of colour. Those on this side of the Chamber stand with our First Nations brothers and sisters, our family, in this time of hate. The strength of Australia lies in our diversity and our ability to come together from all backgrounds, cultures and walks of life. These hate-filled groups do not speak for Australia; they speak only for division and fear.

To anyone who marched last weekend the truth is this: you were warned. The organisers were known Neo-Nazis. The information was out there. There are no excuses. For the future there will be no excuses. If you march with hate, you march against this country.

Now we must do more than condemn; governments and police must hold the attackers to account. I note that one of the Neo-Nazis, who I will not name, was arrested earlier today, and so he should be. He will face the consequences of the courts and the justice system, but stronger action is needed to make sure that groups like this cannot use our streets again to incite terror or division.

I shout out to multicultural groups, our brothers and sisters at Camp Sovereignty and our First Nations brothers and sisters. You are loved and are a part of this community. You make our community all the better for being here.

On the weekend we saw the worst of Australia come out. It was disgraceful, and I hope those opposite call it out for what it is—division and hate.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is with pride and gratitude that I mark one year since the Country Liberal Party returned to government. As the new Member for Wanguri I stand humbled by the trust placed in me and inspired by the energy of our community.

Over the past 12 months we have listened, worked hard and are now delivering results that matter to families, businesses and local organisations across Wanguri, Leanyer and Muirhead. I have been privileged to celebrate with our community at cultural events, school events and sporting achievements. Our office has been busy supporting families, small businesses and individuals. Each story reminds me that politics is about improving lives in the Territory.

The Australia China Friendship Society of the Northern Territory recently received grant funding from the Minister for Multicultural Affairs to complete the next stage of its building in my electorate. Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that you, the Multicultural Affairs minister and the Member for Casuarina attend many of the society's events on a regular basis and know that extension is well and truly needed. The society is building the extension for the community shed, which will provide a welcoming and inclusive space where members from diverse cultural backgrounds can gather, collaborate and participate in meaningful activities. This is not just bricks and mortar; it celebrates the cultural contribution of the Darwin Chinese community and strengthens the multicultural fabric that makes our city unique.

Another achievement is the rollout of the meningococcal B vaccine. This program owes much to Sally and Ash Lawrence, who turned the tragic loss of their daughter Skylar into determined advocacy.

Not only has Sally been advocating for meningococcal B vaccinations but also she is a true super mum. Sally is coaching the Tracy Village Falcons under-11 division 1 netball team. Mila O'Connell Bristen, Pippa Gamble, Poppy Hewitt, Violet Mayfield, Stevie Joyce, Rhainer Lawrence, Zahra Sefton, Lucy Wilson and Emma Kelly tomorrow night will be playing in the finals. I wish Sally and the team all the best for tomorrow night. I am sorry I cannot be there to cheer them on, but I am confident they will play their very best. These girls, under Sally's leadership, show the best of our community.

I pay tribute to Sharon Freeman, the outgoing president of the Tracy Village Falcons. For more than a decade she has given her heart and time to grow the club into a family. Thank you, Sharon, for your contribution to the community, and all the very best on your next journey.

I was proud to host Dementia Alliance's first Wanguri community event at our electorate office in July, where there were activities and support information for individuals who have dementia and their families. It was clear from this session that regular support needs to be provided and since then, from the Wanguri electorate community room it has run fortnightly sessions offering activities, connection and support for people living

with dementia and their carers. I encourage other members of this Chamber, community members or carers to reach out to Dementia Alliance or simply drop in on the fortnightly Saturday morning. This Saturday is one of those days to participate.

In addition, I acknowledge Liza Metcalfe, a tireless local advocate, along with Emil Almazan from Dementia Australia and Jennifer Marquez, for initiating the regular group support sessions with me. Together we are working towards dementia-friendly certification for our own office so that it is truly welcoming and inclusive.

I had the honour of judging the science fair at the Good Shepherd Lutheran College Leanyer campus on Friday 15 August. I was blown away by the creativity and curiosity of our students. I congratulate all the entrants and the winners.

The early learning to Year 2 winners were Olive and Ivy Apps for 'Can you germinate a supermarket bean?'; Oliver Versteegh for 'The Power of Magnets'; and Rani Renilson for 'Invisible Ink'. The Year 3 to Year 5 winners were Anastasia Manison for 'Candle Carousel'; the amazing Brooklyn Fairfield for 'Rocket', and the whole school was outside watching as the rocket flew up into the sky; and Hamish Renilson for 'Balloon Powered Boat'. The new School Values category winners were Xandor for 'Exposure of Bi-metals and Bi-material Components to Heat'; Robert Symonds for 'Build a Model Aircraft to Explore How Planes Fly'; and Matteo Barriball for 'Crystals'.

Dripstone Middle School also held its science fair on Thursday 14 August. The Member for Casuarina and I went to look at the stalls. Each year it gets bigger and bigger. I was told last year that it was only on the ground floor. This year it extended to the top floor as well. It doubled in size. Projects that were equally impressive were 'Hydrogen Fuel' by Jack Francis, Hudson Stoddart, Benjamin Leeming and Lachlan Collins; 'Vertical Farming' by Vhanna Fernandez, Satine Peterson, Cai-Zhen Hoon and Mia O'Brien; and 'The Mystery of Black Holes' by Jake Gordon, George Parimeros and Matthew Boubaris.

The Dripstone science faculty, led by Ms Roopa Bandi, has been supporting the students closely to ensure that all students have great learning outcomes in science. Over many years the school and staff have made science exciting again.

Last Friday the Member for Casuarina and I had the joy of judging the Book Week Parade at Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School. The costumes and enthusiasm from the students were fantastic. It is events like these that remind us how powerful imagination and literacy are in shaping young minds.

I congratulate some of the winners who were Community of Learners, Basti Warland; Room 2, Ryhlee Westwood; Room 4, Hemi Maclean; Room 6, Zaharias Vrondos; Room 8, Ollie Delaney; Room 9, George Vrondos; Room 10, Aayansh Mysuria; Room 12, Xavier Grant; Room 13, Chicken Divas with Ehva Ergos and Ellie Murphy; Room 14, Lily Newton; Room 15, Stradic Maguffie; and Room 17, Marisa Bayetto. It was a hard decision for me and the Member for Casuarina.

I say a huge thank you to Ms Natasha Robinson who is the Defence school mentor at Wanguri Primary School as we say goodbye to her and her family as they are transferring to Townsville. Ms Robinson pitched to the school to transform a run-down space and create the Defence garden for the Defence children.

During Term 2 Ms Robinson showed me the area and we had an in-depth discussion on what she wanted to achieve with this space. The aim was to create a sensory and edible garden, where students grow herbs, vegetables, flowers and more. The garden offers therapeutic and educational benefits while fostering a sense of belonging and wellbeing for the Defence children. I went back to the office and wrote to a number of businesses. The wonderful Trish at Bunnings Palmerston came on board immediately and has worked with the school to transform the garden into a wonderful, colourful thriving space. I dropped in last week and I hope that soon the school will be able to harvest a lot of its produce and have an array of florals.

Thank you, Ms Robinson. You have left a wonderful legacy. I am sure you are welcome to return to the Territory any time, but we wish you all the very best on your journey.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the significant contribution to the Northern Territory of one of my constituents, Dr Benedict Scambary, a deeply respected public servant and leader who has recently concluded his 17-year tenure as the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Dr Scambary is one of the Northern Territory's most steadfast champions of cultural protection and responsible development. His leadership leaves a profound and lasting legacy for not only the authority but also the broader Northern Territory and the custodians of our sacred sites.

As noted by the authority's chair, Mr Bobby Nunggumajbarr:

> *Dr Scambary is the Territory's longest serving chief executive officer. For 17 years he has worked tirelessly to ensure the sacred sites of the Northern Territory are protected, whilst supporting development …*
>
> *He is highly trusted by custodians, respected by industry and has provided steady, principled leadership through times of challenge and change.*

The combination of trust from traditional owners, respect from industry and consistency through complex times are rare in any leader and cannot be overvalued in the complex Northern Territory. Under Dr Scambary's leadership the authority has achieved a remarkable balance, protecting the sacred while enabling the possible.

From infrastructure and tourism to Defence, primary industries and the resources sector, Dr Scambary played a central role in ensuring that development projects such as the SunCable Australia–Asia Power Link, the Territory Energy Link and the Adelaide River Off-stream Water Storage project could proceed without compromising sacred sites or the cultural integrity of this land.

Dr Scambary also leaves behind a legacy of effective regulatory practice overseeing more than 3,000 authority certificates, supporting custodians in landmark legal victories and leading the first successful prosecution for sacred site desecration in Australian history—the OM (Manganese) Ltd case at Bootu Creek.

His voice has been one of quiet conviction, never seeking the spotlight, yet always standing firm when the moment demanded it. When it came to the protection of sacred sites he stood not behind, but beside, custodians, honouring the trust placed in him and guiding that trust into the framework of Western law. In Dr Scambary's words:

> *Protecting Aboriginal sacred sites is not a tick box exercise, it is part of what makes the Territory a remarkable place to live and work.*
>
> *… I recognise the enormous leap of faith custodians take in placing their culture knowledge into the framework of western law. I will always be deeply grateful to the past and present custodians who have trusted me, sharing their law for the benefit of future generations.*

On behalf of so many people across the Northern Territory, I extend my sincere thanks to Dr Benedict Scambary. I acknowledge his dedication and integrity and the legacy he leaves not only within the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority but in the heart and the future of the Northern Territory. May his next chapter be as impactful and principled as the one we honour today.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, my adjournment speech is about the rally that happened at the front steps of parliament a couple of hours ago. Hundreds of Territorians gathered out the front of parliament for the Justice not Jails rally, calling for an end to the CLP government's racist agenda. Hundreds more had gathered in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and Sydney.

They represent many community members from a vast array of backgrounds, professions and experiences. Despite what the Chief Minister claims, they belong here in the Territory; they make our communities better. These community members can clearly see what this government is doing—attacking First Nations people through criminal justice reforms and by dismantling environmental processes and protections. The Chief Minister can tell them to pack up their placards and head back to the east coast, but I can tell you they are not going anywhere. These people live and work here. They are from here and they want a better Territory. These community members who gathered today, and many others at home, were not celebrating a year of CLP government; they are commiserating about it.

This morning we had to sit through nauseating self-congratulatory speeches from this government on its first year. It can be summarised as paving the way for the gas industry to exploit the natural environment, increase the police force and criminalisation of vulnerable community members and protect the so-called Territory way of life, which is yet to be defined.

Unsurprisingly, the Chief Minister reaffirmed that the number one priority continues to be the tough-on-crime agenda. This agenda, over the past year, has pushed the Northern Territory backwards, away from evidence, safety, compassion and real justice. What this government calls tough is in reality reckless, short-sighted and harmful to the children, young people and adults that it is supposed to protect and legislate to benefit.

I have said before that this framing of tough versus soft on crime is a false dichotomy. It is cynical. It is simply a cheap political slogan to whip up division. It has no substance. This tough-on-crime slogan is indicative of a government which cares only about winning votes, no matter how deceptively it wins them.

The CLP continually passes legislation without consultation and against the recommendations of all experts and people with lived experience. CLP members claim it is their mandate from winning the election, but might I remind them that just because you are elected it does not mean you are allowed to make only uninformed policy decisions based on empty populist slogans.

This government has a mandate to lead the Territory for all Territorians, make decisions in the best interests of all Territorians and invest in our community so that all people can thrive. Instead, it is making short-sighted, punitive, environmentally destructive and racist decisions that benefit big industry and few else.

I understand that everyone wants and deserves to feel safe. I also recognise that our role, as elected representatives, is tough and there is immense pressure from constituents who want immediate action to help increase their sense of safety. I too feel that pressure, and sometimes I feel the urge to give community members a sense of safety despite knowing that what is being offered by the CLP will not provide real security or prevent crime.

In case I was not clear enough in the past, I reaffirm my strong opposition to the rushed bail reforms that have been passed in previous months. I will continue to oppose ill-considered, harmful and rushed bail reforms that are not backed by evidence. Detention should always be a last resort for children. The reality is that reducing crime is complex, and it takes time, resources and investment. The CLP government thinks that jail is the solution, but this is only kicking the can down the road. We know that incarceration is a vicious cycle and that we are institutionalising people. We will only make the Territory less safe in the future and alongside this we are only adding to the trauma of colonisation and perpetuating its violence.

This week I received answers to questions I had sent to the Office of the Children's Commissioner. The commissioner shared that across the 20 monitoring visits to youth prisons completed in the past year, the following issues were identified.

At Don Dale youth detention centre poor infrastructure conditions were observed, with dilapidated, dirty and damaged infrastructure. There was increased time confined to accommodation blocks and cells; inadequate access to quality programs and resultant boredom; and complaints about the centre regime.

At Holtze Youth Detention Centre there was incomplete infrastructure, including poor acoustics, drainage and fixtures; lockdowns of children in blocks or individual cells; staff shortages; inability of young people to leave the blocks and access time outdoors; lack of programs, both in quality and quantity; inconsistent application of and confusion about the rules of the centre.

At Alice Springs youth detention centre there was damaged and incomplete infrastructure; resultant ongoing lockdowns and incidents; staff shortages; and staff and young people feeling unsafe.

Alongside this, the commissioner raised concerns about the extended lockdowns that are continually occurring, leaving young people being subjected to extended periods within their cells outside the usual structured day activities within youth detention; limited contact with family; and the poor quality and quantity of food. These are children we are talking about; they are still growing and developing. This government is literally depriving them of enough food, let alone everything else necessary for healthy development.

In further responses the commissioner maintained ongoing concerns about the reduction of the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10 years old, stating:

'Children in contact with the youth justice system are among some of the most vulnerable members of the Northern Territory community. The overwhelming evidence shows us that these children have often survived significant trauma, are known to child protection services and are of compulsory school age, yet disengaged from education. These children are likely to have a diagnosed disability and have been exposed to multiple adverse life experiences, including family violence.

'Contact with the youth justice system is often the result of a failed service system that is not meeting the needs of our most vulnerable children and families. The focus must be on supporting children and young people to remain connected to positive supports, including education, health, community and culture, through community-led alternatives with a trauma-informed focus.'

This emphasis on locking up children with a disability is probably one of the more diabolical aspects of this. We have to stop locking up disabled children and we need to give them support.

The commissioner also raised that there was no consultation before the government reduced the age, despite the NT Government legislation handbook requirement that stipulates agencies are to consult with independent statutory officers as relevant during the development of legislative proposals. The Children's Commissioner was not consulted on this amendment and had to write to the Chief Minister instead. These recommendations, as we know, were ignored. Not only are we failing these children by jailing them, we are also neglecting them in prison.

The CLP government likes to call anyone who is concerned about human rights a crime apologist or tell them that they should move interstate because, apparently, accountability is not welcome here. I might remind this government that human rights are inalienable. Just because someone has committed a crime does not mean that they are suddenly less human or no longer have rights. I implore the CLP government to take seriously the concerns raised by the Children's Commissioner and urgently address the crisis.

I also put on the record the serious community distress that, Steven Haig, the police officer responsible for the death of Kumanjayi White, is still working and being paid. Unbelievably, he was recently the prosecutor in a case against Kumanjayi White's father. On what planet is it acceptable for an off-duty police officer to kill a young disabled Aboriginal person and then continue working in the community and, not only that, be allowed to prosecute members of the victim's family? This is unacceptable …

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

K McNAMARA: I am almost finished; just sit down.

Mr KERLE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not know what standing order it is, but this is an active case before the courts. The Member for Nightcliff is using highly inflammatory language. I ask you to make a ruling.

Members interjecting.

K McNAMARA: I am almost finished …

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me! Order! I do not need everyone else telling me how to …

Mrs Zio: Shame on you for not knowing the rules.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Fannie Bay! Desist.

I know you may not like what has been said, but everyone else could say their piece. I will let the Member for Nightcliff continue, but, please, respect any active court cases.

Mr PAECH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I bring to your attention that the Member for Nightcliff had a minute 47 seconds remaining; the clock is still ticking.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can we take the clock back?

Members interjecting.

K McNAMARA: They just love to try—they are so sensitive when it comes to things that I say. I have parliamentary privilege like everything else that has been said in this place …

Mr Maley: Do not be a coward; go outside and say it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister! Stop interjecting.

K McNAMARA: I am not the coward who killed an Aboriginal person in a supermarket.

I stand with the family of Kumanjayi White and the community members who stood on the steps of Parliament House this evening …

Mr Maley: You are a coward.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister! There will be no further interjections.

K McNAMARA: I pick up on that. The Deputy Chief Minister is continually calling me a coward.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, and I ask him to withdraw that comment, please. Withdraw that comment!

Mr MALEY: I withdraw that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Continue in silence.

K McNAMARA: I stand with the family of Kumanjayi White, the community members who stood on the steps of Parliament House this evening and all others who are voicing their concern and distress in their calls for no more locking up of children; no pepper spray in our community; no arming public safety transit officers and public housing officers; no spit hoods on children; yes to justice for Kumanjayi White and Kumanjayi Walker; power back to Aboriginal communities; and time for the federal government to hold the CLP to account.

I want real investment in our communities to create a Territory where all people can thrive. The CLP has made it clear that this will never happen on its watch. One year of the CLP government is one year too many.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I share good news from my community.

The community of Willowra in the Tanami region has recently undergone peacekeeping and mediation. After many years of tension and division between families, Willowra has seen an historic mediation take place. With care, respect and a shared commitment to harmony, families have come together in the spirit of reconciliation and healing.

This would not have been possible without the extraordinary leadership of the Southern Tanami Kurdiji Indigenous Corporation, known as STKIC by many. Its mediation team travelled hundreds of kilometres to support the Willowra community. Team members worked closely with the Northern Territory Police Aboriginal liaison officers. I particularly thank Derek Williams, Paul Briscoe, Jadewyn Nelson and Mick Turner. These outstanding men stood with community leaders and have worked tirelessly with the community and the Southern Tanami Kurdiji group to help guide this process. They have been strong, committed and deeply respected.

I acknowledge many local stakeholders who supported the peacekeeping efforts, including Toni and Con at the store, David at the Willowra learning centre and the Central Land Council representative Ronald Brown, whose prayer and blessing gave cultural and spiritual strength to the families and the whole community during the peacekeeping. I also acknowledge the people at the school, health centre and local council who have all been through a difficult time but have remained working with and for the community.

We have witnessed a powerful reminder of the strength of our communities. When families, leaders and organisations come together with patience, respect and cultural strength, real healing can take place. This mediation has helped restore unity, safety and wellbeing for Willowra. There is still much work to be done, but it is an important step forward. I pay tribute to the courage of the Willowra families who came together and showed us what is possible when peace is put first. As the local member I remain committed to working alongside Willowra and all those hardworking organisations and community members to build a stronger, safer future in the Tanami.

To say sorry in Warlpiri means more than just a word; it is an acknowledgement of the past, to forgive and to move forward. It is not something that is given lightly, but it was said and exchanged in Willowra last week. The road ahead will not be easy, but what is clear is that everyone wants to move forward together. To do that, we stand together as a community with the full support of our community.

It was noted during the peacekeeping, and I have been asked to call on the Northern Territory Government to send housing representatives out as soon as possible to help repair existing homes and deliver new homes so that families in desperate need of housing can return home and the local council can help clean up the community to restore pride and make Willowra beautiful again.

Willowra has shown us what reconciliation looks like in practice. With courage, patience and respect, peace has been made possible. It is our responsibility to support that peace with services, housing and investment that the community deserves.

Again, I acknowledge and thank the Southern Tanami Kurdiji group; all my family who have done amazing work; and the four ALOs, Derek Williams, Paul Briscoe, Jadewyn Nelson and Mick Turner, who are champions and legends and did great work in the community to bring everyone together. Thank you to the Kitson and Long families for working together, making sure we could all be strong together. It has been important.

I am thankful to have been out there for a couple of nights, sitting in the sand, listening, talking and working with people. We can work together for a bright future.

I now shift across the amazing Western Desert. The Kintore community is coming together this week in the spirit of remembrance, healing and celebration, supported by the Pintupi Homelands Health Service, Purple House and Red Dust. They have been working hard over 12 months. The community has felt the deep loss of many loved ones, and these celebrations are a way to honour the memory and acknowledge the grief carried by our families. At the same time, they celebrate community pride and resilience.

This year also marks important milestones in beautiful Kintore, including 40 years of the Pintupi Homelands Health Service, which is an amazing health service in that community delivering strong leadership and healthcare. Twenty-one years of Purple House is an amazing achievement. Purple House, born out of Kintore community, has changed the way of renal dialysis across this country. There has been 20 years of Red Dust working in Kintore community. These are amazing things to celebrate—the service, resilience and partnership with the community.

All the activities have been guided by community consultation, ensuring they reflect matters that are most important to our Kintore mob. This week they will have bush trips, cultural ceremonies, football and softball games under the beautiful new lights we got for Kintore community, men and women's groups, hair styling—I bet the Member for Katherine is jealous they will be doing deadly hairstyles there—a colour run, local bush bands every night, a gospel singalong, a bed-making workshop and much more. These celebrations bring together and strengthen our community spirit and provide opportunities for joy, happiness, healing and connection.

I had the honour and privilege to be in Kintore yesterday, sharing those stories, memories and celebrations. It is so amazing to have Pintupi mob coming together. I am proud and happy that I could be there because all this week we celebrate Pintupi pride—proud to be Pintupi, proud to have created Purple House, proud to have returned to country from Papunya. It is a great week to celebrate.

I acknowledge Leander Menezes, Chief Executive Officer of Pintupi Homelands Health Service. He is an amazing man doing great work in the local community.

Our amazing champion for renal dialysis is Purple House CEO Sarah Brown. She is an absolute legend of the Territory and of delivering renal services across the country. Thank you for your amazing work.

Thank you, Scott Stirling from Red Dust Role Models. Your commitment to being in that community for 20 years is an amazing achievement.

I acknowledge my brother Jeffrey Zimran for his amazing commitment to our communities over many years. His father was the first man from Pintupi and Kintore who made sure he could go back to country to have renal dialysis. If it were not for him and his wish to be on country, we would not be where we are today, seeing renal services like Purple House delivering quality care.

I thank Michael Gallagher for being the amazing champion on the day, making sure everyone was ready and lined up to speak. Marlene Spencer, the Chair of Purple House, gave an amazing speech and spoke strong about country and community. The Chair of the Pintupi Homelands Health Service, Giselle Barku, is an amazing leader in our local community. The one and only Joe Young, our elder there, gave a great speech and kept everyone together.

It was amazing. Please, check it out on the socials. We had all our kids come together, dressed up, painted up, doing song and ceremony, singing, dancing and performing. I thank Papunya Tula; the amazing artwork that comes out of the Western Desert movement is truly to be celebrated. It was an amazing celebration all round.

Happy celebration, Kintore mob. I am so proud of you—Pintupi pride. Let us all get behind and support this amazing initiative. Happy 40th to Pintupi homelands, happy 21st to Purple House and happy 20th to Red Dust Role Models. This is an amazing achievement for our local community. Kintore is amazing. A big thank you to all the sponsors who made such an important event happen.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the incredible event that was the National Road Transport Museum Truckies Reunion 2025. This event and the opportunity to showcase Alice Springs to many in the trucking industry has been a long time coming. Ten years have passed since the previous major reunion of this size. The last major reunion, which occurs every five years, was cancelled due to COVID.

I will acknowledge some of the people who were integral to the development and successful running of this event.

Frank Bilato, Chair of the committee, is one who must be mentioned. Frank oversees the road transport museum and has supported the organisation for many years. Frank spoke to me on Sunday about the success of the event and how many people were having positive experiences in our town of Alice Springs. This is what events like this are all about—bringing people to our town, spending their money in our local businesses and taking their memories back down south to spread positive stories about their time in Central Australia.

I thank Mr Bill Sankey, who worked with the organisation to ensure the event could go ahead, along with Minister Boothby, whose support has been much appreciated.

To Jac Linder, Ainsleigh Bilato, Wally and Leanne Mathews and all the volunteers who helped out over the weekend, thank you. These sort of events simply do not occur without the support of community members such as those I have mentioned.

The event culminated in a much-loved truck parade on Sunday. Families and friends lined the Stuart Highway to see trucks of all shapes and sizes pass by—a sight that has not been seen in Alice Springs for many years. This event and the parade highlight the wonderful community spirit and uniqueness that is Alice Springs.

The wonderful Ronald McDonald House Charities Gala Ball was held on the weekend. It is an incredible organisation that supports families when their children fall ill and require accommodation when visiting hospitals in Adelaide, mainly for those travelling from Alice Springs. On the night, local residents from Alice Springs spoke of their experiences utilising the Ronald McDonald House in Adelaide and the need for such a house in Alice Springs. Melissa Monkhouse, CEO of Ronald McDonald Charities South and Central Australia, spoke of her desire to deliver that house for Alice Springs.

I thank my department and Melissa for working on this. I also thank Minister Edgington, who has been working on a site to ensure that this can happen and that we will see the development of this facility.

Also on the night, national CEO, Barbara Ryan, and national board Chair, Mr Garry Thompson, spoke of their amazement at the support from the community of Alice Springs.

I thank Danny Brennan and his incredible partner, Leeann, who operate the Old Quarry in Alice Springs. They put on an incredible event, bringing together the beauty of the desert, incredible talent of didgeridoo player Tommy Crow and the best light show in the country—our million-star sky that never disappoints.

Thank you to the community of Alice Springs for doing what we do best—coming together to support one another and a good cause.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, tomorrow is Early Childhood Educators' Day, Wednesday 3 September. Our early educators are an integral part of children's early development, hardworking and loving. I have had my experience with early childhood educators, given that my kids went through childcare and preschool, and I can tell you that they are as much a part of our lives now—my kids are nearly teenagers—as they were when they were little.

Tomorrow my office will deliver on my behalf—as I will be in parliament—treat boxes to the early learning centres in my electorate, as a small token of my appreciation to them. For many years I have been visiting the early childhood education centres and preschools across my electorate, and they do a fabulous job. Often, I donate different things to them, and they are always so appreciative. When I am there the kids come running out to greet me, and I love it.

Happy Early Childhood Educators' Day to Goodstart Early Learning in Bakewell; Milestones Early Learning Palmerston; Rosebery Early Learning Centre; Zuccoli Village Early Learners and Zuccoli Early Learners Early Education Centre—the two of them are not far from each other—Bakewell Preschool; Rosebery

Preschool; Zuccoli Preschool; and Mother Teresa Catholic Early Learning Centre. A big thank you to all of you who do an amazing job.

On Saturday 23 August I attended the Top End Gem & Mineral Club Open Day. Mr Deputy Speaker, you were also there in your capacity as the Member for Karama. I believe that the club's Knuckey Lagoon location is in your electorate. We were also joined earlier that day by the Deputy Chief Minister.

I am the proud patron of the Top End Gem & Mineral Club—I have been for a couple of years—and the club members do a sensational job in getting the community together. These are people who love fossicking and making beautiful gemstones into jewellery out of raw rock, which is fascinating.

On the weekend we watched—I did not get to do it, but I got to watch—the gold panning. Kids there were finding gold, which was amazing. The club had display after display of beautiful jewellery of all sorts—different types of diamonds, opals and broken bits of china which were made into jewellery. The members are fantastic at what they do. There is something for everyone. The open day was well attended. I am so proud of the club for being able to pull it off.

The club is looking to grow from strength to strength. If anyone is interested in the Top End Gem & Mineral Club, please go there at Knuckey Lagoon; the people are fabulous.

It was Seniors Month recently. We had Seniors Fortnight in Palmerston. I was at a number of events, mainly the opening and closing ceremonies of Seniors Fortnight in Palmerston and Humpty Doo because the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association—it is a combined club of Palmerston and the rural area—does a lot of work over Seniors Fortnight.

It was wonderful to be there with many of my colleagues. I will not name them because I am pretty sure out of the 17, most of them came along at some point. We are huge supporters of our seniors in our community because they do so much. They are our volunteers and babysitters. They do whatever you need them to do. When I have events, they always ask whether they can come and help. I love that.

I give a big shout-out because it was a huge fortnight in Palmerston and the rural area. I had a lot of feedback saying how wonderful it was. Well done and thank you to President Marg Lee, Vice President and Public Officer Neville Driver, Secretary Glenda Bradbury, Treasurer Sheryl Sephton, Publicity and Tech Officer Sally Howarth and Assets Manager Trevor Miller. He is on his way to recovery, but he was supporting it in spirit. I also thank the general committee members: Janette Ashby; Gerry Crowhurst; Glenda Bradbury, who I mentioned is the secretary; Helen Lemcke; Diane Spicer; Jenny Segav; Gillian Marnell; Chris Murray; Glenda Reid; and Maryke Lawton. All those seniors do a fantastic job. We appreciate all the work they have done over many years; thank you.

Recently, along with my colleagues the Members for Drysdale, Wanguri, and Blain, I attended the Pakistani Independence Day event held at the Cyprus hall in Marrara. It was fantastic to join the Pakistanis for that celebration. Uzair Mir, the president, greeted us and was so welcoming and wonderful. We spent time with Dr Tamoor Mirza and Dr Usman Khalid, who attends events regularly, so we see him around the place. Qasim Mujahid, President of the Islamic Society of Palmerston, and his wife were also there. I have spoken about them in this Chamber before. It was great to catch up with him. Also attending were our famous police officer, Mr Abbas Malik, and his wife, who spend some time at Palmerston Markets. We had a great time.

The other fantastic thing about that particular night was the Pakistan cricket team came along. We had photos with them and got to chat about their playing in the T20 cricket finals and the championships. Teams from all around the world came to the Territory on the back of the T20 international cricket. It was amazing to spend time with them.

Our Pakistani community has young cricketers. The Member for Wanguri was having a good chat to them about their upcoming finals. It was great to see those young fellows. I hope they had a win, Oly. I do not know; maybe we will get to find out in your next adjournment.

We also shared amazing food. We had a great time experiencing the different types of Pakistani food. There were amazing treats which, to be honest, I have never tried before. We had all a good crack. It was wonderful.

There were groups of children who were singing and dancing, saying prayers and all sorts of things. One of my highlights was a group of young performers who each had a letter sequinned on their shirts. When they stood together and sang, it spelled out 'welcome' which we loved.

Thank you to the members of the Pakistani community for allowing us to come and celebrate their Independence Day. They do not do many events, so we were thrilled and honoured to be able to go along.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will start by providing a brief response to the Member for Daly's comment earlier.

I think the Member for Daly was most likely checking my Facebook about my activities. I provided an ABC interview and talked on ABC television on Sunday about the march that was on Sunday and my perspective as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. It would be good for the Member for Daly to go back and check.

Mr Young: You have still quoted Nazis and not apologised.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Daly, cease interjecting.

Mr CHARLS: Another thing is that on the same day this was happening in Darwin, I was out with multicultural community groups and at the Rapid Creek Markets, wearing my MLA T-shirt, along with the Members for Wanguri, Casuarina and Karama. We were engaging with the community.

In response to your comment about my support for multicultural community groups, I will read out a text that I received today:

'Thank you so much. Your support means a lot for me and my family. Thanks for being an amazing leader and supporting the community and members like me and my family.'

This individual had some issues which I raised with Minister Edgington's office, and his office could help. Our government is supporting the multicultural community. It does not matter where you are from or who you are; we will support you.

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the numerous events to which I have been invited in my electorate and across the broader Northern Territory community. It was the month for sports, the month for arts and definitely the month for our seniors.

I attended many events in August. The T20 matches, Seniors Month activities, the Darwin Festival and Indigenous fashion, art and music awards were all brilliant, but if I had to choose one event that was my favourite—I must admit I have a strong bias for one performing arts event—it would be Divine Steps: A Classical Indian Dance Journey. This was due to the fact my beautiful daughter Aimie performed on stage. This was her second year performing with Divine Steps at the Darwin Fringe Festival, and it was wonderful to watch her bring the grace of Bharatanatyam to life alongside her talented peers. A special thank you to Anu Jo Prince for her incredible guidance, mentorship and dedication in nurturing these young dancers. Well done, Aimie—your mother, sister and I are so proud of you.

We have just seen the end of four weeks of celebration of our seniors through Seniors Month. I was proud to co-host a closing morning tea at Parliament House on Friday with the Chief Minister in recognition of this. Seniors Month 2025 saw 40 events delivered across the Northern Territory. We will continue this support in 2025–26 with more than $63,000 in funding under the Seniors Month grant program. Our government is proud to support these events, and we will continue working to ensure the Territory is a place where seniors can thrive.

I will highlight a few key events from this celebration of our seniors. I enjoyed attending two seniors events with many of my colleagues from this side of the House, hosted by the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association, which brought together community groups, local businesses and government to celebrate the contributions of older Territorians. I also hosted a special morning tea at my Sanderson electorate office. It was wonderful to come together with our seniors, sharing time, stories and laughter with those who continue to enrich our community. A big thank you to Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro for joining us and making the morning even more special.

There could not have been a more fitting finale to Seniors Month than the Seniors of Excellence NT Awards, held at around 2 pm at the Italian Club on Sunday just gone. These awards were founded by Michael Foley in 2014 to recognise, acknowledge and celebrate senior Territorians. I was honoured to attend the Seniors of Excellence NT Awards on behalf of the Chief Minister. It was a heartfelt celebration recognising the invaluable contributions of senior Territorians. I warmly congratulate all the recipients and organisers on a truly special occasion. I was also joined by the Members for Brennan, Casuarina, Wanguri and Drysdale.

August was also the month for a lot of sport. I start by paying tribute to the newly crowned national champions, the Darwin Salties wheelchair basketball team. Not only did the Darwin Salties finish their NWBL season top of the ladder but also they won the competition. They are three-peat champions—three titles in a row. What an amazing achievement. You have done the Territory proud.

The good news does not stop there. It was great to see the AFLW Dreamtime game return to Darwin last Friday, with nearly 6,000 Territorians attending to cheer on Richmond and Essendon. This fixture has quickly become a highlight of the national competition, celebrating elite women's football and Indigenous culture under our Territory skies. Congratulations to Essendon for their 15-point win in their hard-fought game. Well done to AFL Northern Territory for delivering a great event and activations in the lead-up to the match. Thanks to assistant minister and Member for Fannie Bay, Laurie Zio, for joining me at the event.

I cannot talk about sport in August without talking about international cricket. I will use two words—sold out. After a 17-year wait, we had a sold-out crowd for the first-ever T20 international cricket match played in the Territory. This proves what we have always known—Territorians have been crying out for the return of international cricket. After 17 years, the atmosphere was electric, the grandstands were full and our Finocchiaro CLP government is proud to have delivered this world-class event from inception for our community.

I was honoured to join the Non-Resident Nepali Association of Northern Territory thanksgiving program celebrating the Nepal cricket team which was here to participate in the Top End T20 Series. It was a fantastic evening, appreciating their achievements while enjoying authentic Nepali cuisine and community spirit. It was great to see the Members for Casuarina and Wanguri there also.

I cannot forget our senior athletes who competed at the 2025 World Aquatics Masters Championships in Singapore. Four Darwin Stingers won gold, which is an extraordinary achievement. They are Maggie Roberts, Val Hristova, Anne Walker and Bob Patterson.

We saw the launch tonight of the Oceania Cup. It is the first time in eight years that we have seen international-level hockey in Darwin. I thank the Member for Fannie Bay for attending the launch. We look forward to seeing amazing competition over the coming days.

I have spoken about seniors and sports, so I will now delve into the arts. I was privileged to go on an arts pilgrimage across Darwin visiting several art galleries. First I went to the Darwin Festival exhibition Art Broken. Thank you to David for the insightful tour of Art Broken at Darwin Visual Arts and for sharing the stories behind the artworks, including your own inspiring pieces.

I visited the 2025 Salon des Refuses at Outstation Gallery Waterfront. It is a beautiful location; I encourage everyone to check it out.

The next visit I made was to 'Rangipuy: The Beach is Breathing' and 'Milkum Ga Walna: Pattern, Camera, Life' by Paul Gurrumuruwuy. These were outstanding exhibitions, showcasing powerful stories and remarkable creativity. Both exhibitions are open until 11 October 2025 at the Danala Charles Darwin University building.

Thank you to Petrit and Zoe at the Northern Centre for Contemporary Arts for showing me around the first major solo exhibition by Jenna Mayilema Lee, a Larrakia, Wardaman, and Karrajarri Saltwater woman. The exhibition 'Of Smoke and Rain' is on until 27 September 2025.

I recently viewed 'Wangka Walytja, the Life and Times of the Papunya Literature Production Centre' at Library & Archives NT at the Danala CDU building in the city. The exhibition explores the history of the Papunya Literature Production Centre is open until 20 September 2025.

I had the opportunity to visit 'The Rictors' exhibition in its final days at the Darwin Botanic Gardens event centre. 'The Rictors' explores the story and art behind the extraordinary lives of three brothers, Mick, Ian and Noli Rictor. The three brothers belonged to the last uncontacted family who were reunited with family by an Anangu-led expedition in 1986.

Speaking of fantastic artwork, I congratulate Katalin Horompo on her People's Choice Award win in the 2025 Portrait of a Senior Territorian Art Award. Ms Horompo's moving portrait *Never Let it Rest* captured respected Territorian and Vietnam veteran Robert (Bob) Shewring OAM, GAICD. The People's Choice Award of $1,000 was decided by public vote in August during the exhibition held at Araluen Arts Centre.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I place on the record a phenomenal event that occurred in the Arnhem electorate; that is, the official opening of the Gapuwiyak Culture and Arts Centre. This occurred on Saturday 16 August in the community of Gapuwiyak and was 10 years in the making. It has been a huge journey for the art centre, staff, artists, community organisations and service providers that supported this project and the children (*djamakuli*) in Gapuwiyak who now have an amazing facility to grow into, learn from and support for future artists in the community and the beautiful surrounding homelands.

It was my honour to attend the opening on 16 August with the community and see the many years of dedication to get that amazing building. It will not just be a building to house art; it will be a place of history. It will continue to provide a celebration of culture, language and music. It will be a learning place with all of that in the centre.

I have been the local member for nine years and have seen and been a part of that huge journey, supporting the process. I dragged my Labor Cabinet colleagues there many years ago, and the Territory Labor government committed $2m towards the project. There were lots of stops and starts, unfortunately, for different reasons such as land tenure and extra resources for building. The Army community service program AACAP was involved. Mostly, the resilience of the community created that ongoing momentum for what is now a stunning facility in the centre of Gapuwiyak community.

I acknowledge the Minister for Arts attended that opening on behalf of his team. It was a special day. I got to stay overnight, because it is my electorate, and be part of the bands and the music. It was a moving event.

Senator for the Northern Territory, Malarndirri McCarthy, was the Member for Arnhem many years ago. She was at the original building opening for the art centre when she was a young woman, and it was amazing to see her as Senator for the Northern Territory and Minister for Indigenous Australians at the opening, many years later, for a fully purpose-built art and culture centre. Big thanks to Malarndirri and her team for being there; I know her time is in demand now, as a minister. It was an amazing milestone for her to support the first art centre iteration and now the official art centre, which will remain for many years to come.

As I mentioned, the Member for Sanderson was there. The Member for Mulka was there; his family is very connected in and out of that area, with the Gapuwiyak community and its surrounding homelands.

It was beautiful and moving. The amazing music was by the band Drifting Clouds. People may have followed their success, particularly over the last couple of years. Sadly, the Member for Mulka's brother passed away; he was one of the singers of Drifting Clouds. He passed away only in the last month; that is sad and tragic. The Member for Mulka got up on stage with Drifting Clouds and sang. We captured that with the videographer. It was a bittersweet moment for not only the Guyula family and the community but also everyone who has seen amazing and special leaders, some who have unfortunately passed away before their time, including the Member for Mulka's brother.

To be honoured in that way was I think a fitting tribute to a sad, tragic and sudden loss for the Bunhanura homeland, the Gapuwiyak community and the connections of the family in that region. Although we have these balanda (Western) borders or electorates, we know that is not reflective of the families and people we represent in that region. Often there is a lot of movement of families in homelands and communities, as well as Nhulunbuy township, in that pocket of the Territory.

The Member for Mulka has an impressive voice. It is special to sit next to him in parliament, and it was special to see him perform in honour of his brother at that very special event.

I shout out to all the people who volunteered, particularly the Gapuwiyak School staff, rangers, organisations and police—every person in that community got together to support that opening. It was such a wonder to be there. It was fulfilling and one of my best days as a local member in the last nine years. It was so special.

I place on the record my appreciation and thanks to Mr Trevor Van Weeren who has been the art centre manager for the whole time that I have been the local member. His journey has been for 10 years at the art centre and the new facility; mine has been a nine-year journey as the local member.

When I first saw the centre I said, 'Wow, it is beautiful'. I had not even gone inside. I was wandering around looking at the stage that faces Lake Evella. It is in a stunning part of the community, almost like a natural amphitheatre. People were cooking damper, weaving and getting ready for the *bunggul* (traditional dance). It was a hive of activity; it was fantastic. Then I went into the art centre and saw Trevor. I called out, 'Hey, Trevor, great job'. I gave him a hug, and I emotionally broke down. It was such a beautiful and stunning facility to have. To know the journey and some of the artists who have passed away, with their strong vision.

They wanted not just an art centre but a cultural hub for the community and homelands to have many generations of enjoyment to come. It was beautiful. I was crying and sobbing. Poor Trevor was trying to get everything ready, but I had a moment with him to honour the work he has done.

The whole time Trevor managed to stay calm, even through the stops and starts and the extra challenges that have been thrown in this year, to get that facility fully functional and operational. I think the centre had $20,000 of sales that night. Thank you to all, particularly the people from Nhulunbuy, who came to spend their money at the art centre. The way that everyone supported it was phenomenal.

There was a fashion show. There are talented models in Gapuwiyak who were at Country to Couture at the Darwin Aboriginal Art Festival a few weeks ago. To be modelling in their own community, cheered on by family, was special. Cassie from Tiwi Islands is a renowned Aboriginal model who was there to support them. I thank Cassie for her work in building up confidence and supporting those young people coming through.

There were a few outfits that I thought, 'I would love to wear that if I was a little skinnier like I used to be in my youth'. They looked phenomenal on the catwalk. Roman, who is an Aboriginal police liaison officer, transformed from being on shift to being on the catwalk. It was cool. We captured that with some great photos.

It was great for the young people, our seniors and everyone in between from that community to see the celebration of music, arts, culture, language and food. A big hangi was cooked up. Some South Sea Islander mob work in that community. They did a big ground oven for many hours to feed the community at that celebration. That was a nice touch.

It was a huge journey for the art centre, the artists, Trevor the manager and Joy who worked tirelessly to support the vision of the community, artists and board.

We talk about showcasing Northern Territory artists and this is a state-of-the-art facility. In my speech on the day I said that if you want to see some of the best artwork in Arnhem Land, please go to Gapuwiyak. If you do not get a chance to visit the community, you can buy online. Have a look at the centre's website and Facebook page. Please support the Gapuwiyak community, artists and homeland by purchasing the amazing art. The money goes directly back into the community.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Casuarina electorate is full of sporting achievements. I am proud to recognise the incredible efforts of our young athletes.

I congratulate Fern Hancock, a talented Dripstone Middle School student, on her success at the NRL NT 2025 Chemist Warehouse Darwin Junior League Awards, where she was recognised in the under-15 girls category. This is a fantastic achievement, and Fern should be proud of her dedication and hard work.

I acknowledge an amazing group of young basketball players who have been selected for the Darwin region 12 years and under boys and girls basketball squads. Congratulations to Mason Higgins and Athanasia Rigas from Dripstone Middle School, as well as Aria Palu, Ava Ramic, Emma Van Bodegraven, Stephen Gordon, Noah Mansell, Kowen Hodges and Sebastian Williams from Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School. Representing Darwin at this level is a remarkable accomplishment, and I know these young athletes will make their schools, families, and our community proud.

A special mention goes to Shannon Talbot, a rising star from Dripstone Middle School, who was named the 2025 NRL NT Under-13 Boys Player of the Year while playing with the Nightcliff Dragons. Shannon's commitment and passion for the game have paid off, and this award is a reflection of his outstanding talent.

Casuarina's sporting excellence extends beyond the courts and fields into the pool. Casuarina Storm Swimming Club continues to shine on the Territory stage. At the 2025 NT Open Water championships, Rosanna stormed home and claimed the title of 5km Champion Female. This is an incredible result and a testament to her hard work and perseverance.

At the 2025 NT Short Course Championships, Timothy was crowned Junior Champion Male, awarded to the top Northern Territory swimmer in the 9 to 12 years category, based on points from his seven best individual events. This is an extraordinary honour for such a young athlete, and his performance was remarkable. Timothy went on to shatter the 9 Years Boys 50m Backstroke record with a blazing time of 40.05 seconds, beating the previous record of 40.77 seconds which had stood since 2021. What an outstanding achievement. Congratulations, Timothy.

These successes highlight the incredible sporting spirit that thrives within Casuarina. Behind every award and selection are hours of training, dedication and the support of families, teachers, coaches and volunteers. I thank everyone who contributes to nurturing young talent and creating opportunities for our kids to succeed not just in sport, but in life. Casuarina is a community that celebrates its young people, and I look forward to seeing what these athletes achieve next. Congratulations to all of them.

I congratulate Casuarina Car Wash, which officially reopened under new ownership and management on 11 August 2025. The new operators are Gibba and Katrina Turnbull, along with their son Mathew and his partner, Danika. Gibba and his family are no strangers to hard work and determination. They have been successfully running family-owned businesses since 2001, starting from humble beginnings. Their first business was a labour hire company, and over the years they expanded into accommodation services in the mining industry, a tree-lopping business and several other car washes.

Casuarina Car Wash has long been an important local service. Under the Turnbull family's leadership I know it will continue to thrive, and I wish Gibba, Katrina, Mathew and Danika every success as they embark on this exciting new chapter.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the Darwin Festival 2025. Sixty-four sellout shows, a record 50 venues, an extraordinary list of international guests and some of Australia's and the Territory's most dazzling performers and artists lit up the city between 7 and 24 August.

I was fortunate to represent Minister Boothby to recognise that last year's Darwin Festival won the gold award at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards on 3 April at the Last Supper. I very much enjoyed having the opportunity to go to the program launch at the Deckchair Cinema on 3 June.

My involvement with this festival goes back a long way to when it was the Bougainvillea Festival in the 1980s. Growing up in this place, I have extremely fond memories of what it was. I remember what the Darwin Festival was when it started, and I know that it has now become world class. I say that with some authority because I have had the privilege of attending other great festivals around the world. I can say with great confidence that the Darwin Festival is truly magnificent.

I am surprised nobody is saying terribly much about the Darwin Festival tonight, given that it raised $33m for our economy last year. For once, I am not here to talk about economics and the economic value of the festival. We should reflect on the pure artistry, the value of social cohesion and the goodness that it brings to our city, because it is important to remember the things that make Darwin and the Northern Territory a liveable, loveable and wonderful place.

One of my fondest memories as a Darwin Festival performer in years past was playing baritone saxophone in a Motown show between midnight and 3 am in the Spiegeltent, which used to be in the Darwin Botanic Gardens. I have seldom done more fun things in my life. I digress, so I will return to talking about this year's festival which had packed crowds.

The festival's closing weekend at the Darwin Ski Club featured the sold-out Anthony Callea and Tim Campbell 'The Songs of Elton & George' concert, the mesmerising Sarah Blasko and the final performance on the final night by the ultra-high energy Melbourne Ska Orchestra.

The festival is in its 46th year. The Darwin Festival saw this year, as it does every year, the introduction of something new—the Fort Hill Parklands venue opened, which was fantastic. On the opening weekend Guy Sebastian performed, which you could hear from Parliament House, as well as the New Zealand band L.A.B.

There were eight world premieres over the entire Darwin Festival period. The biggest-ever Taste of Darwin program had all its events sell out. Other sellout shows included Indian mentalist Suhani Shah; Emma Donovan; Merrick Watts, who does the hilarious An Idiot's Guide to Wine; comedians Melanie Bracewell, who a lot of us see on TV, and Dave Hughes; John Safran; Burnout Paradise and many more.

It was wonderful to see so many others out night after night enjoying themselves in our CBD, dancing, laughing or even just being in awe of people on the stage. If you have not been to Festival Park before, put it in your calendar to do next year because it is an amazing atmosphere. Everyone has a great time, listening to live music and eating amazing things. Whether you were at Festival Park, dancing at Club Awi or at a show, there was an amazing vibe.

All of Darwin is indebted to the people who organise the festival, believe in the festival and work their bums off for the festival. I am personally indebted to Artistic Director Kate Fell and CEO James Gough, who I met

when I was fortunate to represent the minister, and likewise Darwin Entertainment Centre CEO Georgia Hendy—it is now the AANT Centre—for inviting me to attend so many of the shows across August.

I would like to talk about many of the shows and there are many things I would like to point to, but I am limited for time so I will only speak about some of the shows I attended. To give you a sense of how broad, diverse and wonderful the festival was, flick through the program. You will see that an insane amount of stuff goes on in a short space of time, and there is something for everyone.

As many of you know, I am a musical person, so I tend to gravitate towards watching musical things, but the festival is a great opportunity to branch out and see stuff that is truly different, engaging and exciting in a different way. This year I decided to concentrate on the circus, theatre, ballet, opera and all the things that you do not get to see every day in Darwin. I will pick out a couple of my favourites.

La Ronde circus was at the Spiegeltent, which used to be in the Botanic Gardens but is now across from Parliament House. Inside that giant tent the things that people did and the feats of strength were astonishing. The show sold out night after night. I was going to take my dad with me, but I am pleased I did not take him. It would have been difficult to explain it to my father. There were a lot of pretty racy costumes—I will not lie—but it was absolutely delightful and so entertaining.

I took my dad along to Bangarra Dance Theatre's Illume program. I do not really understand anything about modern dance, but it is wonderful to see something I do not understand. The artistry and strength was beautiful. The Entertainment Centre was packed, and the performers received a standing ovation. Everyone loved it.

It is a privilege to see these things in person, and it is important that we had the opportunity to expose young people to all this. For the young, old, seasoned veteran, uninitiated—everybody—it is a beautiful opportunity. We talk about restoring the Territory lifestyle. I am a bad fisherman, but I love to fish and camp. It turns out I am a reasonable shot. However, the lifestyle is not just about hunting, fishing and camping; it is also about having the Darwin Festival and the arts.

The arts not only pay off amazingly economically, as I keep pointing out, but it is good for the soul. It is good for us to bond, sit in the park and eat Hanuman and ask, 'What is that quirky music?', and have a circus guy walk past juggling and god knows whatever else. It is a wonderful atmosphere and a magical place to be at this time of the year. I digress; I should talk about other shows.

I saw Suhani Shah, the mentalist, whom many of you have seen. Honestly, it was terrifying the things that she could do. Some of my colleagues are nodding. I was in fear that she would pick me out and pick my brains for all my deepest, darkest secrets. It is truly astonishing the kind of things that can be deduced. It is impressive. I do not know anything magic and I think it is not fair to even call it magic; it is more mentalism, as she puts it. She is a rock star across the Indian subcontinent. To see this woman do what she was doing on the stage was impressive.

I am a patron of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, as many of you know. The Heaven and Earth program was wonderful, especially the world premiere of *Wuyal's Journey*, which was something that you do not get to see every day. It was a long time in the making. Netanela Mizrahi and Banula Marika's work in cooperation was a special thing that they shared. It is worth everyone looking into it rather than have me explaining it poorly, but the bottom line is that it is a truly amazing cross-cultural celebration of Indigenous song with our Darwin Symphony Orchestra. It was something to celebrate. Everyone was extremely moved by the whole thing. It was a privilege to be there.

I saved the best for last. I saw a show called *Duck Pond*, which is basically the ballet *Swan Lake* done by circus performers. I cannot tell you how spellbinding it was. The feats of strength and the things people could do are such that you feel embarrassed just sitting in your chair and think, 'I can barely get up and down and this person is suspending their body weight on one finger off a rope'. It was mind blowing. If you ever get the opportunity to see Circa, please do so because they are amazing.

My time is drawing to a close, so I cannot say terribly much more today. I wish I could speak about the Darwin Fringe Festival, which I had the pleasure to launch, representing Minister Boothby, on 11 July. Hopefully I can talk about that on another occasion. The 10th Darwin Fringe Festival, which was launched this year on World Fringe Day, is a special opportunity for local performers.

I am already looking forward to the 47th Darwin Festival, which will again be curated by Kate Fell. It will be held between 6 and 23 August 2026 and will be preceded by the 11th Darwin Fringe Festival. I urge all of you

to get involved next year if you did not get to them this year and enjoy the wonderful festivals of August that we have in Darwin.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak on a number of matters. First of all, Gerry (Geraldine) Crowhurst from the Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club recently had her 80th birthday. Gerry is a foundational part of the 50+ Tuesday Club. She is a rock who is always at everything unless she is literally in the hospital. I always appreciate getting my smiles and hugs from Gerry when I come to visit. Happy birthday, Gerry. I hope you had a great one. I am sorry I missed the party today, but I was here in parliament. Congratulations on your 80th, aka 21 with a few years' experience.

An amazing thing that happened recently in my electorate was the Book Week assembly at Rosebery Primary School. Congratulations to Principal Danielle Banicek and Assistant Principal Natasha Nichols. A lot of hard work was done by parents and teachers to get kids in their costumes and to have all the costumes made, ready and delivered to the school. The teachers especially put in a lot of time to make costumes for the performance and put makeup on the kids. Having three boys, I can appreciate how much work that is. They did it first thing on a Friday morning before assembly, which is even more impressive.

We started the assembly with a dance from the Year 3/4 and 5/6 students. Having boys and knowing how hard it is to get them to do anything you want them to do, it was incredibly impressive. It was a fantastic dance. After that, all the students marched up and down showing off their costumes. At assembly all the classes sit in rows with a gap down the centre, so class by class they all hopped up and marched so that their parents could see them. It was great.

I asked the principal afterwards why there was no judging and awards for best costume. She said that it was much better this way. Honestly, I would hate to judge best costume at that assembly because there were so many fantastic costumes from all the kids. We had about three Spidermen, we had a Minecraft costume and many costumes that I tried to work out what they were; I think I am starting to show my age. Unfortunately, the teachers were invisible. I could not see any of them because they had all dressed up as Where's Wally, so no-one could find them. Well done, Rosebery Primary School, on a fantastic Book Week assembly.

On Monday 1 September I had the honour of attending the NRL NT Frank Johnson and Gaynor Maggs Medal Awards with my colleague the Member for Fannie Bay. This is a fantastic night when NRL NT honours its standout players, coaches, officials and teams from the season.

As a proud supporter of the Palmerston Raiders and the Northern Sharks, I must admit that the Litchfield Bears are working hard and building their club, and the results are there for all to see in their rankings on the ladder and their results on the night. Well done to President Em Burkitt and Vice President Luke 'Hoody' Mahood of the Bears. I think the Members for Nelson and Goyder would agree with me on that.

Congratulations to the Northern Sharks for a strong showing on the night and being well represented in the awards. This is a credit to club President Gordon Hounslow, the committee and all the coaches, players and volunteers.

Some of the award winners on the night were:

- Frank Johnson Medal—Matt Woolmington, Litchfield Bears
- Gaynor Maggs Medal—which I had the privilege to present—Erin Luchetti, Litchfield Bears
- Rising Star—Murray Fogg, Litchfield Bears
- Gatley Shield Player of the Year—Trey Crowley, Nightcliff Dragons
- Under 18s Player of the Year—Murray Fogg, Litchfield Bears; and George Rosas, South Darwin Rabbitohs
- Coach of the Year—Thomas Gunn, Northern Sharks
- NT News Player of the Year—Trent Wedding, Litchfield Bears
- 'No More' Representative Player of the Year—Jacinda Summers, Darwin Brothers, one of our fantastic real estate agents, I believe
- John 'Shadow' Mount Club Champion—Litchfield Bears.

Club President Em Burkitt and Vice President Hoody accepted the award on behalf of the club. That award is a real credit to the team, the committee and all the volunteers.

The Match Official of the Year was Paul Devir; the Carmen Award Volunteer of the Year was Fiavaai Fou, Alice Springs Brothers; and the Teacher of the Year was Rodney Cremona, Nightcliff Middle School.

Life membership was awarded to Craig Singleton, Darwin Brothers; Chuck Norris, Palmerston Raiders; and Gordon Hounslow, President of the Northern Sharks. Congratulations to those three people who received life memberships from NRL NT.

The women's team of the year was Natalia Grant, Brothers; Jacinda Summers, Brothers; Ellie Niki, Brothers; Jaymee Park, Sharks; Mere Rasaku, Dragons; Kel Nona, Brothers; Grace Bailey, Sharks; Skye Cash, Sharks; Rekeisha Humes, Sharks; Mayo Watson-Compton, Sharks; Donica Sarikon, Rabbitohs; Erin Luchetti, Bears; Victoria Alley, Palmerston Raiders; and coach, Thomas Gunn.

The men's team of the year was Aaron Kurnoth, Brothers; Dallas Caulton, Brothers; Adam Hall, Sharks; Kanae Gimini, Souths; Jarrad Lane, Raiders; David Jacobson, Bears; Blake Blomley, Raiders; Nathan Dixon, Bears; Elijah Coombes, Brothers; Caleb Niki, Brothers; Kyro Ahmat, Brothers; Matthew Woolmington, Bears; Trent Wedding, Bears; and coach, Reg Rose.

Well done to the Litchfield Bears and the Northern Sharks on a great year and building on the strength of their committees and volunteers. Well done to all the other NRL NT clubs for your hard work all year.

Thank you, NRL NT, for a great night.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about a sport that is deeply woven into the fabric of rural life in the Northern Territory—polocrosse.

Last weekend marked the last carnival of the NT polocrosse season, with the championship weekend held at Freds Pass Reserve, the best sporting reserve in the Territory. It was more than a competition; it was a celebration of horses. While I am talking about horses, a special shout-out goes to Carrot, who should have won best horse, but alas. It was a show of horsemanship, teamwork and community. The minister for Sport, Jinson Charls, cheered on with me as we watched the Member for Nelson play his last games of the season.

The event was made possible thanks to the support of Saddleworld, a business that knows rural families, supports the rural lifestyle and is embedded in our way of life. The owners are incredibly generous in supporting our local sports, so I pause here to thank them. They are not only sponsors; they are a partner to our rural community. Saddleworld is where I buy my stockfeed for my growing petting zoo—the chickens, the horse and even my baby bull. Every time my dog Thunder gets a taste for my boots, and it happens more often than I would like, Saddleworld is where I go to replace them. Businesses like Saddleworld do not just provide supplies; they provide a place of connection, advice and support for everyone from hobby riders to championship players, from the small chicken farmer to the large poultry expert and everyone in between. It is a Territory company worth supporting, and I encourage all Territorians to pay it a visit.

On the field at Freds Pass, we saw a display of Territory talent at its best. The Litchfield polocrosse A-grade team emerged as champions with an impressive lineup of players. They are Sharia Piening-Valle; Pat Coleman; Harry Simmonds; Blake Radford; Kenny Grimmon; and, of course, the Member for Nelson, Gerard Maley, who showed he is as handy with a racquet in his hand as he is with a microphone in this Chamber. Sharia and her horse, Fifi, deserve a special mention for their consistency and skill across the weekend, as does the Member for Nelson and his horse, Max, who held strong in that number three position.

Their victory came against a strong Palmerston side, who have had a great season making many finals throughout and besting the Litchfield side on more than one occasion. They not only put up a great fight on the field but also extended their hospitality by hosting the championship dinner the night before. It is gestures like this that remind us why polocrosse is more than just a sport. It is a community built on respect, rivalry and camaraderie.

The B-grade championship went to the Noonamah Polocrosse Club team, who played with grit and determination. Litchfield added another trophy to the cabinet by securing the C-grade championship. A special shout-out must go to the former Member for Goyder Peter Maley. Peter is usually a mainstay of the A-grade side for Litchfield, but due to a recent injury he had to take up goal-waving duties instead. Peter would have been itching the entire time to be out there with his teammates. I am certain we will see him back in the saddle next season, stronger than ever.

Polocrosse is more than about who wins the finals. It is a sport that represents everything good about the rural life. I have seen teams made up of grandfathers and grandsons, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, fathers, uncles, nieces and everyone in between, all sharing the same field and the same passion. One example is the Penn-Dennis family, consisting of Brett, his daughter, Jess, and grandson, Roy, who all play for Litchfield. It is incredible to see three generations on the field at one time.

Polocrosse is one of the few sports where age and the size of the player do not matter. It is all about skill and working as a team.

Just as importantly, I have seen the sidelines full of family members cheering them on, sometimes louder than the horses themselves. It is this intergenerational connection that makes polocrosse so unique. It is a sport where young people learn resilience, responsibility and teamwork, often starting on a horse before they can barely walk. They grow up surrounded by role models not only in their families but also across their wider clubs. They learn to care for their horses, work as a team and enjoy the simple but powerful pleasure of spending time together outdoors.

The Northern Territory is home to an incredible amount of talent in this sport. We have a number of great teams in the rural area from the Humpty Doo Polocrosse Club to Noonamah, Howard Springs and the Litchfield Polocrosse Clubs and even the northern Palmerston team. Our clubs are stacked with players who are the envy of other states. Many of them start young and go on to represent the Territory at the national level. Importantly, they stay connected to their communities, coming back to mentor, coach and cheer on the next generation.

At the annual general meeting of the NT Polocrosse Association held over the weekend, I was truly honoured to be appointed as patron. It is a privilege to represent such a dedicated organisation that works tirelessly to keep this sport alive and thriving in the Territory. The NT Polocrosse Association is not only about running competitions; it is about building community, developing young leaders and talent and providing opportunities for families to connect with each other and with the land. I look forward to advocating for them to ensure that this sport continues to grow and to support the volunteers, the players and the families who make it possible.

I give a special shout-out to President Frank Blokland and the rest of the committee for all the work they do behind the scenes. Many of them do not even play polocrosse; they just give up their free time to make sure that others can.

I am more than happy to stick to spectating this sport. Watching the speed, precision and partnership between rider and horse is enough for me. I am constantly impressed by the athleticism and horsemanship of the players and, of course, the Member for Nelson, who make it look effortless but who I know put in countless hours of practice to get there. Polocrosse requires not only skill but also an extraordinary bond between horse and rider. It is that bond that underpins every pass, turn, goal and win.

If you are unfamiliar with the sport, think six horses on the field, three on each side, and the riders have a big racquet with a net on it and they are throwing a ball around like it is nothing. Riding the horse is hard enough when you have five other horses running into you, but then to catch a ball and throw it around is incredible. I could not do it without the horses or the racquets and just the ball.

This sport is not just about trophies and titles; it is about lifestyle, family and community. It reflects the values of the rural area—hard work, teamwork, responsibility and a deep love of animals. Long after the championship ribbons have been packed away, the memories of weekends like this one at Freds Pass will live on in the stories told around the dinner table, with photos shared and the friendships built.

Polocrosse in the Northern Territory is thriving, and it deserves recognition. Next year in my electorate Freds Pass Reserve—which is one of the greatest sporting facilities we have in the Territory—will host the national competition. I am told that more than 600 horses will travel to the Territory to compete in June 2026. It will be a truly massive event.

Finally, I am proud to support the NT Polocrosse Association and all its players, to serve as its patron and to celebrate the people and horses who make it all possible.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.