# Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



# Parliamentary Record
# Debates and Questions



Thursday 19 June 2025

# CONTENTS

LEAVE OF ABSENCE ..... 2147
Member for Daly ..... 2147
Member for Barkly ..... 2147
MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR ..... 2147
Message No 7 – Assent to Bills Passed in May 2025 ..... 2147
VISITOR ..... 2147
Bill Horton ..... 2147
APPROPRIATION (2025–2026) BILL ..... 2147
Serial 25 ..... 2147
REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL ..... 2147
Serial 26 ..... 2147
ADJOURNMENT ..... 2173

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 2.30 pm.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE
## Member for Daly

**Mr BROWN (Arafura):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Daly be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today because of personal reasons.

Leave granted.

## Member for Barkly

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Barkly be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today as he is unwell.

Leave granted.

## MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
## Message No 7 – Assent to Bills Passed in May 2025

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have received Message Number 7 from His Honour the Administrator notifying assent to the Bills passed in the May meetings of the Assembly. The message is dated 10 June 2025.

## VISITOR
## Bill Horton

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the gallery. My nephew Bill Horton is with us this afternoon. Bill is a Territorian born in Katherine, and he has come to visit me this weekend. Welcome to Parliament House, Bill.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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

Continued from 22 May 2025.

**Consideration in detail**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly on 14 May 2025, following the tabling of the Estimates Committee report, the Assembly will have before it the question that the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025, Serial 25, stand as printed and that the report of the Estimates Committee be noted.

The following time limits apply to the debate on the committee's report:

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

There are no extensions of time. If the debate is not concluded after five hours, the question will be put without further debate.

**Mr HOWE (Chair of Estimates Committee):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Estimates Committee report and associated minutes of proceedings on its consideration of estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Schedule to the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025; the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025; and the activities, performance, practices and financial management of the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation.

This is the Legislative Assembly's 24th year of Estimates hearings. The Estimates process provides a valuable opportunity for members to ask ministers questions relating to agencies and programs being funded under the budget.

The hearings worked effectively and provided members an opportunity to ask questions about any area of government. I thank members for the way they conducted themselves during the hearings and for allowing each other time to ask their questions of most interest.

The committee's report outlines the key lines of questioning that arose throughout the course of the hearings. During the hearings there were 134 questions taken on notice by ministers. Of these, 28 were answered during the course of the hearings. The questions and answers have been uploaded to the committee's webpage.

I note that outstanding answers to the questions taken on notice must be received by the committee secretariat by 14 July 2025. Answers will be uploaded to the committee's webpage as they are received. Answers that are not received by the due date cannot be accepted or published by the committee.

I thank all ministers and the board Chairs for assisting the committee with their answers. I also thank the many agency staff who spent much time preparing information for the hearings, including the agencies the committee did not get to within the allocated time. There are many long days and nights spent preparing, and this comes at the expense of one's personal time and time with family. This time sacrifice is noted and appreciated. I also thank the many staff who supported the committee's hearings in various ways.

On a personal note, I thank this Assembly for the immense honour to Chair these Estimates. The Chair is granted large powers through the Estimates process, and like all things, with that comes a great responsibility. I hope that people on all sides of this Chamber feel that I gave them a fair and just treatment. I wanted to ensure that accountability was held to ministers, whilst ensuring ministers had fair proceedings for them to answer their questions. I was happy with the conduct across all sides; this goes a long way in ensuring the integrity of this Assembly.

I commend the Estimates Committee report to the Assembly, and I thank all those involved throughout the process.

**Mr BROWN (Arafura):** Mr Deputy Speaker, as the budget Bill passes through the House I speak with deep concern and disappointment, especially for my electorate of Arafura. This budget has not planned for the future for fellow Territorians. It is a road map for neglect, and nothing over the last two weeks of Estimates has changed this. It abandons remote communities, breaks promises to fellow Territorians and slashes investment in the services our people rely on every day.

The CLP has taken a chainsaw to projects in my electorate of Arafura. In Gunbalanya the $20m health centre and morgue is gone. This was not just bricks and mortar; it was about culturally appropriate healthcare, a dental and X-ray service, renal support and a morgue so that families who are cut off in the Wet Season can honour their loved ones. All of it has been scrapped, without even a phone call or a visit to the local leaders. I asked the Treasurer how he will justify denying basic health services to this remote community.

Is the new policy of the CLP that remote Aboriginal communities should not expect the same quality of care as you get in town? The funding for Gunbalanya oval lights was cut; something basic and symbolic of community pride was deleted from the books. Sorry, kids—no under-lights footy.

The $24m funding for the cyclone shelter in Maningrida—one of the most cyclone-prone parts of the Territory—has been cut. Families in the largest community in the country have been left exposed. When the next cyclone hits and families have nowhere safe to go, will the CLP take responsibility? You are taking a calculated risk with people's lives, which is something you would never do in the urban centres.

I acknowledge the funding for the remote police infrastructure at Maningrida Police Station, a Labor project you are progressing, but on the other hand you have cut off the Maningrida security patrol. I have spoken about this before. The pulling of funding for local security services is devastating for Maningrida, and it seems like this government does not care.

The Chief Minister has told residents that there was not enough money to go around. She fails to mention that this is only if you are from a remote community. For two years the Maningrida Progress Association and the NT Government co-funded private security patrols. These patrols prevented break-ins and kept families

safe. Just weeks ago a car was set alight outside a home. Crime is rising, but the rug is getting pulled out from under the community.

Eight police officers cannot be everywhere at once, especially with a community of 4,000, and security patrols have filled the gap. What good is future funding when crime in these communities is hurting today? The CLP has ripped $50m from the Jabiru transition plan. This was not about roads or buildings; it was a partnership and a promise to transform the post-mining future of the entire region. Did anybody consult with the Mirarr people, the traditional owners or the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, or was this another decision that was made behind closed doors without warning to the people who fought for this vision?

At the last sittings the Treasurer said that he would travel to Jabiru with me. Well, let's do it. I will be sending a letter to lock in some dates, and I will let people know. In housing the CLP slashed Aboriginal employment targets from 40% to 30%. This has ripped work out of local hands, which helped to build skills, create jobs and empower people in communities like the ones I represent.

What about the remote housing builds? When Labor left government we had 260 houses in the last reporting period. Under this government it is just 160, which is nowhere near the target set with the Commonwealth. Meanwhile, overcrowding gets worse and families are left waiting. There has also been no funding for transport in Arafura. Millions have been cut from transport, planning and delivery output while communities are left isolated and struggling for basic connectivity.

The government also slashed over $4m from Aboriginal justice. Those opposite tell us that they are committed to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement but are cutting funding to law and justice groups, which are key to keeping people out of jail and giving young people a chance. Evidence shows that alternatives to custody work, but funding has been reduced for it. I know that the Attorney-General has not visited a single remote community, but I invite her now to come to Maningrida and meet with the Nja-marleya law and justice group, which is changing lives and diverting young people from crime. They would love to see a minister from this government to explain what their priorities are and why the cuts are happening.

There is also $3m cut from the Kahlin Aboriginal Compound commemorative site. As a Tiwi man, I know the pain of the Stolen Generation. This project was about dignity, truth, respect and healing the past. Cutting this funding is more than a budget decision; it is a removal of history and a slap in the face to every family tied to that place and site. How can you reassure Friends of Kahlin or anyone focused on reconciliation that your government takes these stories seriously? The CLP has broken its promises by cutting grants and undermining the vital work of the Arafura electorate ranger groups. This includes the Bawinanga, Garngi, Mardbalk, Njanjma, Tiwi, Warddeken, Warnbi and Kenbi ranger groups. They will all be worse off. This is devastating for environmental management, local jobs and cultural heritage.

The budget for early childhood education has dropped by almost $5m. Early education is one of the most powerful ways to prevent crime and build a stronger future, yet the government is ripping money out of it. There is also a cut for upgrades in homeland learning centres where kids are already learning in demountables, with cracked floors and no cooling. What message are we sending? Does their education matter less because of where they live?

Wherever the CLP sees a remote Aboriginal or bush community, it sees a place to cut and not a place to invest in. This budget is not just bad policy; it weakens our communities, abandons our children and elders, erases our history and puts lives at risk. It is not responsible governance, and it is regional neglect.

This budget may pass through this House today, but its consequences will be felt for years beyond these walls. In Gunbalanya, Jabiru, Maningrida, Tiwi and across West Arnhem, people will feel these cuts in their homes, health, safety and future. The people of Arafura and the bush deserve better. The Territory deserves better, and the opposition will keep fighting.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Mr Deputy Speaker and members in the Chamber, what a week! I was there for every hour of the 60 hours of Estimates.

I express my gratitude to everyone who worked so hard. Most of us on the Estimates Committee were new not only to Estimates but also parliament. As always, the incredible support of the DLA staff got us through. The amount of work you do is often invisible, but we all see it and know how imperative it is. I give a special mention to our hardworking Chair. I speak on behalf of all of us when I say that we appreciated your clear and fair chairing of the sessions. Thank you to my fellow committee members, MLAs and, of course, to the amazing public servants who worked incredibly hard to prepare for Estimates. I am sorry that so many of you did not get the opportunity to answer questions you had prepared about the work you do.

Estimates is the only formal opportunity we have every year to ask detailed questions about how every dollar is spent and to hopefully get some real answers. At its core, Estimates is about accountability to the people of the Northern Territory. For anyone who thinks Estimates is boring, I am here to tell you that it is not. If you listen hard there is so much to learn in what is said and not said. Behind each line item is a decision that affects real people and communities; outcomes in health, education and infrastructure; and every part of our lives in the Northern Territory. That is one of the things that makes this process so important.

We have only 60 hours every year to do this. Last year I watched all of Estimates for the first time and asked, 'How can that possibly be enough time?' Now, having been in it, I can tell you that even though it feels like a long time when you are in the room, it is not enough—not even close. We are trying to examine the entire budget of the Northern Territory in that limited window. There is no other forum in this parliament that allows for line-by-line interrogation of spending decisions. The public deserves better than rushed questioning and constrained time limits.

We have only 60 hours, so it means every minute matters. When ministers give opening statements, sometimes for longer than 30 minutes; when members of government ask questions about their electorate that could have easily been asked in a briefing directly to their minister; when ministers choose to answer questions through long, drawn-out and sometimes repetitive responses; and when members of both parties use it for political pointscoring, it means that we all lose out. Estimates is not a time for campaigning; it is a public accountability mechanism.

The structure of the hearings also places unnecessary strain on everyone involved, including the committee members, DLA staff and the agencies. The long hours and the packed schedule are difficult to manage and, in some cases, counterproductive. I note that last year the Member for Araluen gave a dissenting report noting this, and I hope that our reflections on the process this year can help us work towards managing that better.

I came to Estimates this year with questions about every portfolio. The Member for Drysdale, who was our amazing recordkeeper, may have the stats of how many I got to ask; I have no idea. I can tell the Assembly, as well as all the people in my community who had questions they wanted answered, that every question I did not get to ask was put in as written questions. The current tally is more than 50 pages of questions, and I am still compiling. The public servants will already have the answers to these, as they would have had them in their preparation for Estimates.

We learned a lot of things as part of this process, and here is a small snapshot of some of the things that I heard for those people who did not have the joy of listening to the whole 60 hours.

The Chief Minister acknowledged that ICAC has serious concerns and that there will be a process to look at this but could give no detail or timeframe of what that might be.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed the CLP's support for spit hoods despite the previous Ombudsman's statement on the risks of serious harm, limited effectiveness and the benefits of alternative measures. The Ombudsman said that they are expecting 600 police complaints this year and that they are anticipating their Corrections complaints will be down from previous years, saying:

> *… we consider this decrease may be due to a number of factors, including inability of prisoners to access our office, potentially due to lockdowns and being accommodated in watch houses.*

When asked, I was told that there is no process in place to address challenges for prisoners to make complaints due to overcrowded prisons. The Minister for Corrections later said that they were going down perhaps because prison conditions were improving. He also said that people could complain to an official visitor. When asked about the official visitors, we were told that there has been only one official visitor covering all adult prisons across the Northern Territory who managed just seven visits in the last year. Official visitors are vital for keeping prisons accountable and protecting prisoner wellbeing. One person simply cannot oversee a prison population in the Territory with the world's second-highest incarceration rate. There is one official visitor despite the law stating the minister must appoint at least three official visitors for each custodial correctional facility.

We heard that the Territory Coordinator employs at least 16 staff and has a budget of $6.4m but is yet to fast-track any projects or create designated areas of economic significance. We heard the Chief Minister tell us that she stands by the appointment of the Territory Coordinator and the process for it, including the removal of eligibility requirements from the Act because she said that it is not an integrity position.

We heard that Treasury issued home owner grants under a law that was not yet passed because it knew that would pass. Is there not meant to be a separation of powers? If the department can do what it wants before a law is passed, it raises the question for me about the point of us being in this room in parliament.

We heard that because of the high levels of disadvantage, the Northern Territory Government gets five times more GST money per person than most states—over $3bn a year—but Treasury told us that there is no way to track how this money is spent or whether it is helping those in need.

The Chair stopped me from asking the Minister for Multicultural Affairs about his views on Charles Darwin's theory on the survival of the fittest, as he expressed in this Chamber:

> *I will talk about something that has shaped my thinking. This is from science. Charles Darwin's survival of the fittest theory is a well-known theory from long ago. It still rings true in many ways. People are born with different strengths and talents; not all parts are equal. Not all people can do the same things.*

The minister said clearly that this informs his decision-making. This is the minister responsible for Disability, Multicultural Affairs and equity. I was told this question was hypothetical, which is difficult to understand, given the minister is in a role making significant financial and policy decisions about the delivery of services to people experiencing discrimination in our society on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, age and disability. This is tangible, not hypothetical. The community wants to know how the minister's stated views affect that decision-making. I was told that this question was not part of the purpose of Estimates. Estimates exists to test how money is spent, and preventing scrutiny of a minister's public views in making decisions about how that money is spent fundamentally undermines our purpose.

We heard from Minister Maley that there is no specific climate change strategy; it is just embedded in our thinking and the government is looking into how we can grow the cows faster to reduce emissions.

We heard the minister also confirm that total revenue from mining and petroleum royalties is just $298m out of the Territory's $10.4bn in total revenue—less than 3%.

In March we heard that Corrections will no longer be staffing or using police watch houses. Despite this, the minister confirmed that Corrections prisoners are still being held in watch houses—some for as long as 11 days, subjected to 24-hour artificial light and with no access to outdoor space.

I have more things I could list. That is just a snapshot.

I reaffirm my strong support for the Estimates process. It is one of the few formal mechanisms we have for real accountability and transparency. I welcome every opportunity we get to shine a light on how decisions are made and how public money is spent. Even within the constraints of limited time, and sometimes the misuse of that time, we saw just how much can be uncovered when questions are asked with purpose.

Territorians deserve nothing less than openness, honesty and access to information because ultimately that is our job. Democracy works best when governments are ready and prepared to answer to the people they serve.

**Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries):** Mr Deputy Speaker, before I start my contribution to the Bill I want to myth-bust some of the things that we just heard from those opposite.

The Member for Arafura told the Assembly that the CLP will slash these projects and there will be no money to go around. I want to correct history here. Remember, in its budget the previous government had a program of approximately $5.2bn. Last financial year it spent $1.2bn on that program, so there is a big difference there. For this financial year, those on the other side put only $315m towards that overall budget program. They had a program of $5bn and were going to spend only $315m on it, yet they said that they would complete it in the next year or so.

I am a mere mechanic, but that maths does not add up. There was no way those programs would be delivered. Members of the opposition knew that these programs—they spoke about the health clinic and the lights—would never be delivered, yet they went out there, hand on heart, and said they would be. Their own figures …

**Ms Uibo:** They had money against them; you took it away.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, everyone else has been heard in silence. Let the Deputy Chief Minister be heard in silence.

**Mr MALEY:** That $315m will go to three projects. It is already fully committed. Those on the other side knew that the programs they are talking about would not be delivered. They planned to deliver Mandorah and the art gallery, which had no funding and will cost another $8m per year. That was committed to out of the $315m, as well as money on housing.

These programs that those opposite suggest have been slashed were never funded by the previous government. Members went out to their communities and said, 'Yes, we will deliver that', yet the figures show they would never deliver those.

The Chief Minister rightly said, 'Yes. There was not enough money to go around.' It is a true statement. There is not enough money to go around because the previous Labor government put us in approximately $11bn worth of debt.

The Labor government seemed to run these programs out on press release after press release that promised the world. It knew in its own budget book that there was $315m, but it would never deliver.

The member spoke about the ranger programs. They are funded by the Commonwealth and do a good job. Ranger groups can apply for grants like everyone else in the community does. The funding is federal. If they need more funding, I suggest those opposite talk to their counterparts, the Albanese Labor government in Canberra, to get more funding. When they talk about how rangers are not funded correctly, it is the Australian Labor Party which controls their funding. Those on the other side have a direct link to it, so I suggest they talk to Albanese about funding for the ranger programs because the Australian Labor Party has the chequebook. If it says there is not enough funding …

**Ms Uibo:** Do not make election commitments if you will not fund them.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, please.

**Mr MALEY:** Those opposite need to go to their federal counterparts. They should pick up the phone and say, 'Hey, this program needs some more funding'.

**Ms Uibo** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, I have asked you to stop speaking.

**Mr MALEY:** For eight years they failed to do that.

This is another classic example of how the previous Labor government talked the talk but did not have any action behind it, like the $315m for a $5bn program.

Labor members can do all the talking, but the facts speak for themselves. Clearly, they would never deliver these programs. These ranger programs can be funded by the Australian Labor Party.

The Member for Johnston spoke about Corrections. She failed to mention that those complaints have been on a downward trend since 2019. I give a shout-out to all the Corrections officers and executive for doing a great job. We came into power nine months ago and have made some major changes, but they have been operating behind the scenes, year-in, year-out, doing their job. We know those complaints have been on a downward trend, and I congratulate the Corrections executive for that.

Another thing we have not heard from the other side is about all the questions that were not asked. The Member for Johnston talked about the questions that were and were not asked. There were no questions asked about Aboriginal Affairs. Remember, Estimates timing is run by the Labor Party and the crossbench. They get to pick and choose what questions are asked, and they control the clock. Those members forgot to ask, or ran out of time to ask, any questions about Aboriginal Affairs; the Northern Territory Fire and Emergency Service; Housing Construction; Tourism and Hospitality …

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 1; the Deputy Chief Minister is misleading. Housing Construction was discussed at Estimates by the Treasurer and Housing minister. I ask him to withdraw that false statement.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Deputy Chief Minister, continue but check your facts.

**Mr MALEY:** Parks and Wildlife and DCDD were not asked any questions. These hardworking public servants did all the work. The government had it ready to go and made itself available, yet the Labor Party and crossbench members failed to ask questions about important subjects.

There was a range of questions asked by the opposition members. They asked them twice in three months. We did some research, and it was estimated to cost the Territory taxpayers over $417,000 to answer the questions they asked twice. It seems to be that, even in opposition, Labor finds ways to waste taxpayers' money.

This budget is disciplined and responsible, and it puts Territorians first. I congratulate the Treasurer and his team on doing the work to deliver a balanced and transparent budget that focuses on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. This is what Territorians voted for and deserve; it is what Territorians will get with a government from this side. We are focused on reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle.

This is the exact opposite to what we inherited when we came into office. There were blowouts, Labor messes and governing by media. Labor members, hand on heart, said that they would deliver programs, when clearly the facts show they did not. Again, I refer to the $315m Labor programmed in its own budget to spend on these programs.

For eight years there was neglect and skyrocketing debt. Remember, when they came into office about eight years ago, the debt was about $1.8bn. Labor ballooned that out to over $11bn. That is almost $1bn a year spent that the previous government did not have. Imagine if it was your home budget and you were spending more than you earn by $1bn a year.

We have solid plans to target growth for mining, energy, tourism, agriculture and Defence. They will be our key pillars to rebuild the economy. We are backing regional jobs, regional development and business and economic growth.

The NT, under the CLP, is open to do business. Let us look at last year's Estimates. That is a clear example of how Labor neglected the portfolios I manage, which are Agriculture and Fisheries, Mining and Energy and Corrections.

There are outstanding questions on notice from last year's Estimates. We asked a whole lot of questions in opposition last year, and they still have not been answered by the previous government. That is right; they could not be bothered answering important questions. Some of the questions were as follows:

- How many mango trees in the Territory are currently affected by the twig tip dieback?
- How many grants and resources into Territory programs have moved from exploration to production?
- What is the longest delay with licensed exploration?

These questions are relatively straightforward, but the previous government was either unwilling or unable to answer them. This year the opposition asked two rounds of questions, costing taxpayers $417,000. Labor members are wasting taxpayer money from opposition.

We recognise and appreciate sectors in agriculture and fisheries. Those opposite neglected agriculture, fisheries was overlooked, and biosecurity was under-resourced—three important parts.

Last year the Member for Barkly asked the then Attorney-General, the Member for Gwoja, critical questions about Corrections. He asked what work was being done on planning and building new female prisoner accommodation. After nearly one decade in office Labor failed to act on the urgent need for purpose-built women's prisons. It was not until last year that funding was even discussed. Despite repeated warnings, no action was taken.

The Member for Johnston spoke about people in watch houses. Remember, the Labor government put those prisoners into watch houses; it did not plan, and it neglected the Corrections system so badly that we ended up having to put prisoners and Corrections officers into watch houses.

In the last 10 months we have taken those officers out and created the Berrimah Correctional Centre, which has more than 400 beds. We put 100 extra beds in Alice Springs, and the youth detention centre in Holtze is up and running. These facilities are under immense strain and pressure because the Labor government lost control of crime.

We are reforming existing infrastructure, ensuring female prisoners have their own facilities separate to male prisoners. I am proud of the CLP government's ongoing commitment to deliver for Territorians, and we will do things differently. The status quo is not an option under this government.

I was asked about the Beetaloo, how we went out there and about my travel expenses. The Member for Gwoja said, 'Beers for the boys'. That $2,000 is less than the money the Members for Gwoja and Daly spent—of taxpayers' money—on their interstate holidays. They went interstate on personal holidays and spent more money. That money was for ministerial staff and the assistant minister for Mining to travel with us.

The assistant minister for Mining travelled there, yet the Members for Gwoja and Daly spent money on …

**Ms Uibo** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, you are continually interjecting. I ask you not to do it again, otherwise I will look at a warning.

**Mr MALEY:** Clearly, the Members for Gwoja and Daly are happy to spend taxpayers' money interstate on their fuel bills, yet they question it when the assistant minister for Mining travels to the Beetaloo.

We support the Beetaloo because we want to make sure gas gets out of the ground. That money is the legitimate cost of the assistant minister and ministerial staff travelling to the Beetaloo, not beers for the boys, free fuel for a personal holiday or iced coffee from interstate shops. It was the legitimate cost for the assistant minister, who went to the Beetaloo. He is nodding because I was on the plane with him. We saw what was happening.

Clearly, the previous government spending money on interstate holidays is more of a concern than progressing and promoting gas in the Beetaloo. Shame on them.

I make no apology for supporting investment in the Beetaloo. The gas produced in the Beetaloo will drive us moving forward. That is why we need to do what we can to recover and rebuild our economy. The previous government left us in $11bn worth of debt, up from about $1.8bn, in their eight years. They wrecked the economy.

The Member for Johnston spoke about the $300m that mining and petroleum royalties will deliver into the Northern Territory and said that this was only a small percentage of our overall income. They forgot to recognise that this contribution overlooks the larger economic impact. The resources sector will rebuild the economy. It is not just a royalty cheque; it is thousands of jobs, hundreds of local contracts and billions of dollars in economic activity across the Northern Territory.

Had those opposite bothered to ask relevant questions, they would have discovered that the mining and petroleum sector spent half a billion dollars in exploration in the Northern Territory in 2024; that is $500m in exploration. That money goes to the Territory. It benefits the suppliers and goes to the roadhouses, local contractors, drilling, hiring, fuel, consumables and regional accommodation.

Royalties of $300m is a large amount. On top of that, these are the relevant questions that the members of the crossbench failed to ask because it did not suit their narrative. They do not want to rebuild the economy; they want us to go away, spend more money and end up with a massive debt which will affect Territorians as we move forward.

The mining and petroleum sector directly supports Territory businesses. Four thousand people have jobs in the mining sector. It accounts for 25% of the NT's gross state product; that is double the national average.

The planned INPEX maintenance shutdown in August this year is estimated to inject $200m into the local economy and offer dozens of local contracts. Do not just focus on royalties of $300m. What about the exploration of $0.5bn, the 4,000 jobs and the $200m investment that will happen this year?

Newmont spent $1.8bn on a new mine shaft that will extend the mine well beyond 2024; that will flow through to local suppliers and contractors. I have been to that mine and seen the local contractors, the people flying in from Darwin and across Australia and the people delivering fuel, toilet paper and soap. They are the local jobs that this $1.8bn investment covers to extend the mine's life.

They are the relevant and important questions that the crossbench members should have been asking, but it does not suit their narrative because they think that royalties from mining is a demon. It is not a demon; it is a saviour and will save our economy. I make no apology for supporting it wholeheartedly.

Whilst I am in this role I will do whatever I can to support those industries because they will rebuild our economy. It will get us back to where we can build lights in Maningrida, build health clinics and support ranger groups, unlike the previous government which destroyed the economy. I hope those opposite are taking notes because they need a lesson. Our economy is where it is at because of them.

There are well-documented shortfalls in east coast gas. The Beetaloo has enough gas to fuel our economy for 200 years. The Member for Nightcliff said that Germany has 80% renewables. She forgot to tell the Estimates Committee that when Germany runs out of power, it connects across the border to get power from a nuclear reactor. When it runs out of solar, it flicks a switch, and the power comes from somewhere else.

Unfortunately, in the Territory we cannot flick a switch and have power from somewhere else. We must have the spinning reserve here ready to go because we cannot rely on anyone else. Australia is an island and does not have a powerline from a neighbouring country from which we can get power. We saw the same in South Australia. It has a renewable target and is borrowing power from Victoria, which is coal. If you want a narrative on how good renewables are you must look at the big picture. We do not have a Norway or another country next door where we can flick a switch and get extra power from nuclear reactors, coal power or gas. We have the Territory; this is where we are.

We need to look at things in the Territory that are relevant. The Member for Nightcliff may get her information from the Australia Institute, which is based in Canberra. That says it all—getting information from something based in Canberra rather than in the Northern Territory. I and a lot of people have been here a long time because we think the Northern Territory is worth fighting for.

We will cut red tape and show the world that the Territory is open for business. It has already worked. We know the Beetaloo had approximately $120m injected into it. Recently there have been some promising results with gas flows of 7.2 terajoules a day. That will be great. We need to get that gas into a pipeline and our generators so that we can have power and turn on the lights. Unfortunately, renewables need that spinning reserve and that gas will firm up our system. We delivered the Mining and Energy operating budget of $40m. We are keen to support the Beetaloo through the Beetaloo Project Management Office.

We will deal with fishing because it is dear to me; we will look at reef fish. We will deal with biosecurity and browsing ants. We need to make sure that these things are not neglected, as they were by the previous Labor government. It did not care, and the Labor members still do not care. Meanwhile our government is investing in biosecurity, aquaculture, agriculture, mining and the petroleum industry because we know what is best for the Territory. We want to fight for it because the Territory is worth fighting for.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I begin by thanking all the Legislative Assembly staff for their tireless efforts in supporting the Estimates Committee.

A big shout-out goes to all the amazing Hansard staff who stayed on every day, late into the evening and night, preparing the *Hansard* to be made available for Territorians.

I acknowledge the secretariat staff of the Estimates Committee who have been working tirelessly not just in the two weeks the committee has met but also in the weeks leading up to the hearings.

I also acknowledge the committee members. A number of members of this Assembly participated as committee members, and I thank them. In particular, I recognise the hard work of the committee Chair, the Member for Drysdale, and thank him for it. I acknowledge the Deputy Chairs; there were a few who jumped in to help that process along. I acknowledge the Member for Johnston who has been at every session of the Estimates Committee, working hard for the people of the Northern Territory.

Estimates is an important process. It enables us, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, to ask questions of the government to determine what expenditure is planned, what has been spent and what policy settings and strategies are being used or will be introduced over the reporting period.

A huge thank you goes to all the Territorians who provided their valuable input and insights on the areas they thought were important for the government to be questioned on, whether it was about expenditure, policy or finding out operational decisions, who had made them and where they had been made. I thank every Territorian who reached out to their local member of parliament with an idea or suggestion.

I thank the people in the organisations, stakeholder groups and industry groups who we met with over the months and who raised concerns about things. I thank them for all the work they did and for being strong advocates in their relevant areas.

We heard a lot during Estimates. Those 60 hours were used in their entirety. I acknowledge that for most of the time the committee members were respectful of one another. There were a few jabs here and there from members of this Assembly; I am not sure who they are. It was a bit of work, but I stress the importance of the Estimates Committee. It was a productive committee. It was positive working and moving forward together; I acknowledge that.

There were a number of questions asked, and we got back a number of answers. Some provided clarity. Unfortunately, some did not give us, the organisations or the individuals …

[Editor's note: Fire alarm – Parliament House evacuated.]

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, we will continue with the debate. Member for Gwoja, please continue.

**Mr PAECH:** Madam Speaker, I have delivered some fiery speeches in here before, but never one this hot. The Territory is burning, and we have just had two weeks of Estimates where we heard how hot it is.

As I was saying before the alarm went off, this Estimates process enabled us to ask questions of the ministers and acknowledge the amazing work of Northern Territory public servants. I acknowledge how hard it is for a number of our public servants who front Estimates, and it might be uncomfortable as it might be their first time. I give them a big shout-out and say thank you. I remind people that public servants are not political; they are there to carry forward and implement the legislation of the government of the day. I say to the hardworking public servants, we see you, hear you and thank you.

In Estimates we heard a number of alarming things. I will talk about commitments because the CLP is allergic to them. We heard that the government will not commit to introducing a standalone DV peak body, a standalone children and families peak body or a safe drinking water Act, despite the Department of Health already doing the work to implement it.

We heard that Dawn House and the Katherine women's crisis service found out through Estimates that the infrastructure funding and plans for their services were being cut.

We heard the minister for Environment talk about this CLP government walking away from its commitments to reduce carbon emissions by 2030. That target is gone, and the minister had a big smile on his face as he was talking about it. The work the department of Environment had been doing will all go away.

The Deputy Chief Minister spoke about rangers. Aboriginal rangers matter, and they matter to the Northern Territory. The CLP government talks about Commonwealth funding. The Commonwealth Labor government continues to fund ranger groups and will continue to invest in Aboriginal ranger groups across the Northern Territory. The CLP government broke its election commitment of approximately $12m in funding over four years from 2024 for Aboriginal ranger group grants. It is another broken commitment. The CLP government will talk about time-limited funding, and that is fine; it can do that. However, let us be clear that the CLP made the commitment to fund Aboriginal ranger groups and to invest $12m after it was elected. That is what an election commitment is, and the CLP ripped it out of the hands of Aboriginal Territorians. That is the type of stuff we heard this week during Estimates.

A number of ministers could not answer basic questions; however, a number of ministers answered questions, and I acknowledge two of them.

The Education minister was calm—big smiles over there—as we worked through, hearing about the wonderful investment in education that Territory Labor left. That is what we heard.

Minister Cahill has a difficult portfolio in Child Protection. We worked through and asked important questions. I acknowledge that.

We also heard that the Northern Territory CLP government has not met with any law and justice groups across the Northern Territory—not one. This government talks big about addressing crime and antisocial behaviour, wants to work to change the way things are done in the Territory and claims that we need to do things differently, yet its members will not get out and talk to people in the communities with lived experience who have the solutions. They have been ignored and not had the opportunity to meet with the government.

The Attorney-General spoke about how the Northern Territory Government had removed $300,000 for a systemic racism review into the Northern Territory Police. This important investment needed to be done by the Northern Territory's Anti-Discrimination Commission.

We heard that this government could not answer simple questions on how many people had been released on bail during its time in office. The Deputy Chief Minister could not answer a single question about $6,000, or thereabouts, of expenditure on ministerial travel listed as 'other', but comes in today and says, 'Hang on, I remember; I took the assistant minister.' It is pretty sad that you cannot remember your own colleague who travelled with you when you are sitting before the Estimates Committee.

We had a number of members of the Estimates Committee. I shout out to all of them; they did a great job. However, it is alarming when you have to ask questions in Estimates of your own government regarding issues in your electorate. They are the type of questions that should be asked by your colleagues at any time.

I acknowledge that significant work is happening across the Territory, not because of the Territory government but because of the federal government. We heard through Estimates that Imanpa Road will still go ahead because of the federal Labor investment.

We heard that Yuendumu School stage 1 investments would proceed, but unfortunately stage 2 investments would not happen under the CLP government. We heard that the $8.7m investment for Alekarenge School in the Barkly will not happen under the CLP government. You can guess who I am—'What about the Barkly?' It appears that he forgot about the Barkly, his electorate, because it is not getting this investment anymore.

We spoke about homelands, housing and subdivisions. That is important work that needs to continue to be done. We heard firsthand how the agencies and departments will continue to do significant investment across the Territory, but we also heard that Northern Territory Government is unclear whether it will reach its own target of 270 houses built in the reporting period.

We heard that the Northern Territory Government could not confirm whether public servants or executive contracted CEOs were still employed, whether they had resigned or whether their contracts were renewed. These were basic questions that we could not get straight answers for. This is not good. Territorians deserve to know who is being paid and who is not, who is employed and who is not.

The opposition, Independent and crossbench members will continue to ask these important questions, because it is important to understand where the investment is going.

We heard about what is happening in the domestic and family violence space. The minister spoke about a number of initiatives. We made it clear that we are not discounting the need to do things differently; we just want to understand where the money is going to.

I thank the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence who confirmed answers to simple questions that the Corrections minister could not—that is, domestic and family violence programs in prisons will be evaluated in line with the evaluation frameworks. I thank Hansard for accurately capturing that, because these were simple things the Corrections minister failed to answer. It was an abysmal appearance by the Corrections minister; he could not answer simple questions. Luckily, he has a very competent Corrections Commissioner, because we got those questions answered. This is incredibly important in the Northern Territory.

I also draw attention to Education and Health. We heard about significant investment being made in those areas. I acknowledge all the hardworking teachers. We asked about what investment is going in there and what is being done.

It is clear that this government, 10 months in, is fumbling. It might not have had the big gotcha moments in this Estimates, but this is this CLP government's first Estimates. The corruption, lack of leadership and vision is all starting to grow, and that will be exposed in future Estimates processes. We are seeing early on the lack of willingness to answer simple questions, deferrals to other ministers to answer questions and kicking the can down the road because they do not feel comfortable answering them.

The Attorney-General could not answer a simple question about law reform that she single-handedly played an important role in bringing to the parliament and passing.

The Territory Coordinator has huge expenditure, but the government could not tell us in any meaningful way what projects were in the pipeline to be streamlined or fast-tracked.

We heard that agencies and statutory bodies that deliver critical services in the Northern Territory had reductions in their budgets. This is alarming. Many Territorians watched the Estimates process over the last two weeks.

When I reflect on Estimates and the questions we asked, I am astonished at the incompetence of the Minister for Arts. His session was a disgrace. He totally disrespected the integrity, credibility and creativity of our Northern Territory artists and creatives. The fact he has not even been to a remote Aboriginal community off the bitumen is alarming. We produce this nation's greatest remote Aboriginal artists, yet this is someone who has not even been bothered to go to a remote community off the bitumen, like the remote Aboriginal community of Hermannsburg that is 130 kilometres out of Alice Springs.

The Attorney-General of the Northern Territory has not been to any remote Aboriginal community in 10 months. That is disgraceful.

Aboriginal people matter as well. This should be a budget for all Territorians, but this is a budget for a select few. There are few ministers on the other side of this Chamber who have gone off the beaten track into remote communities to hear and listen to these Territorians. You should be disgusted and ashamed of yourselves, because if your budget was for every Territorian, you would be out in the bush talking about it. You would be out in bush telling everyone how this budget is for them, but it is not. This budget is for a select few. This budget is not for remote Territorians, pastoralists, remote Aboriginal Territorians or businesses outside of Darwin.

There is no new money to tackle antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs, yet you all say that you are serious about addressing crime there. Where is the new money? Where is the investment? Zero, nothing—you have no credibility in Alice Springs anymore. There is nothing new in this budget for the good people of Alice Springs, and you should be ashamed of yourselves.

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for asking many of my questions while I was unwell in the first week of Estimates. I thank the Committees staff who have worked hard to support Estimates and all those who took part in the process.

There were some serious issues raised during Estimates, and I already raised many of the big concerns about lack of funding for rangers, homelands and remote communities in my budget speech in May.

I will talk about an issue that happened last week when the Member for Johnston asked a question on my behalf. The Deputy Chair stated that it was not okay to ask a question about systemic racism within a government scheme. The Member for Johnston was asked to rephrase the question so that it did not contain the words 'systemic racism'.

The phrase 'systemic racism' is not rude or offensive. They are not disorderly words. What the Member for Fannie Bay, the Deputy Chair, needs to understand is that for those of us who are Aboriginal, systemic racism is something we face. I know it, I have felt it, and I see it. We know systemic racism exists because it is part of our daily experience, and it needs to be talked about if we are to fix the problem. Every person in the Estimates room who allowed the Deputy Chair to make a ruling that she would not allow a question with the words 'systemic racism' in it are helping to embed systemic racism in our systems. This should have been challenged by everyone. We are not targeting anyone with the words, but we can feel there is systemic racism. If we cannot talk about it, we cannot address the problems it creates.

The question the Member for Johnston asked on my behalf was about a clear case of systemic racism. The NT Concession Scheme is designed to help people who have very little money. The information I have from the government outlines that 95 people in my electorate are on the NT Concession Scheme. There are approximately 5,500 adults in my electorate, many of whom live in poor conditions and are on Centrelink. If the scheme helps everyone equally, the number of people on it should be a lot more.

There are barriers for remote Aboriginal communities to access the NT Concession Scheme. These barriers are access to services that promote the scheme and sign people up to the scheme, language, literacy and internet access. These barriers impact many Aboriginal remote communities and create systemic racism

where Aboriginal people have less access to pathways for support. This is the very definition of systemic racism.

Systemic racism is when laws, policies or practices within an area and across agencies produce a discriminatory outcome for racial or cultural groups. Although the laws applied and practices may appear neutral, they result in uneven or unfair outcomes. These words are not rude words that cannot be said, because these are real issues that affect many people and need to be addressed.

To have one of the most important parliamentary committees not allow questions that discuss systemic racism is improper and dangerous. They are silencing the problems and the experience of many people in the NT. The question was not about individual racism, which is a problem that we should be discussing as well, but about systemic racism. The Estimates hearings are a time when the systems of government are scrutinised so that we can identify problems that exist.

There needs to be training for the members of parliament and the committees so they can understand and identify issues of systemic racism without fear and concern.

I am running out of time; I will leave it there.

**K McNAMARA (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, I will start by responding to some of the things we heard today about agencies that were not questioned. It was completely misleading for the Deputy Chief Minister to say that the opposition crossbench had no questions for Aboriginal Affairs or emergency response. Those agencies were at the end of each section, and the Estimates sessions ran out of time.

There is simply not enough time allocated for the Estimates process, which is crucial. I had many questions for Emergency Services, Bushfires NT and Parks and Wildlife—areas that I am passionate about and my constituents care about—that I missed out on asking, but I will be sending through written questions. Thank you again, as other members have said, to all the people who worked so hard to prepare for that and who did not get a chance to appear.

During the Estimates hearings it became abundantly clear that the Territory is being governed not by evidence or public interest but by an aggressive pursuit of deregulation and limited transparency, all for the sake of short-term profit. The CLP government continues to insist it is making risky environmental decisions for the sake of the economy, but when pressed it could not provide clear evidence that these investments would provide return for Territorians. We heard ministers continue to spout propaganda from the gas industry and ignore facts and science.

Regarding the Estimates processes, I am grateful for the Member for Drysdale's genuine efforts as Chair. It is an incredibly difficult role, as it became clear to me during the process, and he did it fairly. However, there were many ministers attempting to shut down questions that were related to their portfolios and in the public interest. I also must note, as has been raised here, there were many times when acting Chairs shut down different lines of legitimate questioning in what appeared to be attempts to protect their colleagues in the hot seat and were completely inappropriate uses of the Chair's powers. I hope that does not continue with any other committee hearings. In particular, the question regarding systemic racism that the Member for Fannie Bay shut down was a wholly inappropriate use of the Chair's power.

I now raise one of the more upsetting things we heard in Estimates. Dawn House and Katherine Women's Crisis Centre found out through Estimates that their funding had been slashed. This government—in a crisis of men's violence against women, when women are being killed every month, if not every week—not only slashed their funding but did not bother to tell them before Estimates. It is disgraceful.

In the case of Dawn House, we heard that $6.5m that staff had been promised for critical infrastructure was being rescinded. They have spent years working on the plans for this. The buildings are falling down, and they have hundreds of women and children who are turned away every month. The funding, like that, is just gone.

The CLP tried to blame Labor, but let me be clear. This government managed to find millions of dollars for the gas industry and $6m for the Territory Coordinator. It is a disgrace. I hope the fate of every woman and child turned away from Dawn House as a result of this cut will weigh heavily on CLP members' consciences.

What emerged across multiple hearings is a pattern. The government is systematically removing public oversight of environmental decisions, accelerating approvals for extractive industries and blocking

Territorians from accessing any information on these decisions, with the Territory Coordinator being a clear example of this.

We heard from the Chief Minister last Tuesday that there was no formal hiring process for the role of the Territory Coordinator and that he was simply hand-picked as he was 'the best person for the job', which is hard to be sure of if the government does not advertise the role and take applications.

There was no assurance that the Territory Coordinator would not be unduly influenced by his buddies in the gas industry, with no mechanism for public oversight of lobbyist meetings with the Territory Coordinator in place.

I continued this line of questioning, and when asked why the government had chosen to implement a weak lobbyist register which does not publish who the lobbyists are meeting with—once again, an integral part of a lobbyist register—or how frequently, all the Chief Minister could say was that it was a policy decision.

This truly begs the question of what the CLP government is trying to hide, and in whose best interests is it operating. It is not for everyday Territorians. Let me be clear: these are not isolated policy choices. This is a coordinated effort to strip back regulation, weaken independent oversight and hand more power to developers, mining corporations and gas companies, all at the expense of Territorians, especially traditional custodians on whose lands these contracts apply to.

Throughout the two weeks, ministers continued to proudly show off the ways in which they had reduced mechanisms for public scrutiny upon development, with the removal of third-party merits reviews being a core aspect of this. When asked to explain the reasoning, the government claimed that this was to reduce delays and uncertainty. Let us be honest, they simply want fewer challenges and less accountability.

If the government truly wanted improved outcomes for the Territory, we would be seeing an investment in climate mitigation and adaptation throughout our planning, environmental investments and protections, disaster preparedness and more. I spoke a lot about climate change during these Estimates, particularly adaptation and mitigation. I hope that I repeat it so often that everyone in this Chamber gets sick of hearing it because I cannot stand here and let the Territory that I know and love be left to fall apart under the climate risks that are coming.

Government after government have completely failed to prepare us for what climate change will do to the Territory. Do not forget, in northern Australia we are on the front line. We experience the most extreme of all the changes that are coming, and we have a government that is doing nothing to prepare people for this.

When I asked that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries whether it had a climate change strategy, the minister said it was simply embedded in their thinking with nothing in writing. He insisted they are thinking about the environment by seeing how we can 'grow the cows quicker and grow the grass more efficiently'. What a disaster for these sectors. I want our agriculture and fisheries to thrive and be able to respond and adapt to the changing climate that they rely on—that we rely on. We have a minister for these industries who abdicates all responsibility for this. I am deeply concerned for the future of the industries if that is who is leading the charge.

I was at least encouraged to hear there is an Office of Climate Change within the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, but it only has funding of $2.6m, which is pennies. I was disappointed that the minister who oversees this department could not give me a definition of climate change, could not tell me what causes climate change and refused to explain what the department's definition of climate change mitigation and adaptation is. This is indicative of members of a government who have their heads in the sand about climate risk. This is indicative of a government that is so driven ideologically to oppose international scientific consensus on climate change that it would rather let the Territory be destroyed by climate change than do anything about it.

On top of that, in December last year the government quietly removed the requirement for the NTEPA to provide independent advice on every onshore gas environment management plan. That is right; independent environmental advice is no longer a mandatory part of this process. This sends a message that the regulator's job is not to protect the environment but to clear the path for industry. The government keeps saying we have a robust regulatory framework when really all this government is doing is facilitating the destruction of the environment.

This government continues to boast about its plans to frack the Beetaloo Sub-basin while it remains one of the most high-risk developments in the Territory's history with little economic return. The gas industry's water

use, emissions and waste pose unacceptable threats to our groundwater and climate, yet this government claims it can now selectively implement the Pepper inquiry recommendations. Let me remind everyone: those 135 recommendations were the bare minimum conditions for fracking to go ahead—not a menu to choose from, but the baseline for safety, trust and social licence.

We are now seeing the dismantling of those safeguards, with the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment yesterday acknowledging this willingness to ignore vital restrictions, stating:

> *That does not mean that we will adhere to the letter of every single inquiry recommendation, some of which were overlay prescriptive or are now outdated, especially where these pose impediments to industry …*

This is a minister and a department that is putting the needs of the industry above the environment. That does not sound like an Environment minister to me. Despite this fast-tracking and red tape, we have not seen any new resourcing for compliance. This is dangerous.

Earlier this year the Minister for Renewables scrapped the 2030 target for 50% renewable energy, justifying this due to the supposed excessive cost to taxpayers, giving it a figure of $5bn. When I asked the Minister for Renewables how he came up with this figure, despite government estimates of $280m, he could not provide any metric for these calculations. He simply said, 'We talked to the industry, and that was an estimate'. This again showed a willingness to blatantly lie to the public and blindly trust the mining and gas sector to make decisions for the Territory.

The Deputy Under Treasurer admitted that the department began the operation of the First Home Owner Grant before the legislation had passed through parliament. This seems to be a serious legal issue and clear violation of proper democratic process. I am concerned about the ramifications of this.

The Treasurer admitted the government does not consider the cost of social harms to the community from the predatory gambling industry. These harms cost our economy millions more than what we receive in taxes, but this is not even taken into consideration.

I thank all the public servants who are working hard and running these departments to ensure this place still runs, despite the government's attempt to turn this place into a train wreck.

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I will talk about the Estimates process we have just undertaken, as well as the budget the Treasurer handed down in early May.

I remind Territorians and those in the Chamber that this budget was responsible, transparent, realistic and for Territorians. We inherited a debt of $11bn, so coming into government, we had to make some tough decisions because that is what a government does. It makes tough decisions so it can govern for the whole Northern Territory.

From listening to the commentary today from various members, I need to put on record that some of the things being said are outrageous.

The Member for Gwoja basically accused the government of being anything but transparent. He was talking about gotcha moments those opposite were trying to get and basically saying that we were lacking in answers to all the questions, which I find astounding. He is actually talking about what the government he was a part of did when he was the Attorney-General. That is what we experienced in opposition for four long years, listening to then government members filibuster for hours on end, not to mention the ministers. At one stage one of them brought in a football and was throwing that around the room, which was disgraceful. That was the kind of government we had under Labor for the last four years when we were in opposition. Member for Gwoja, I do not agree with the fact that you thought we had gotcha moments.

A couple of members on the other side talked about government backbenchers' time wasting. That is not true at all. I remember the Chair stating that out of the whole day, which was 12 hours, the government members asked 20 minutes' worth of questions. MLAs in the government have their democratic right to represent Territorians and ask those questions, and 20 minutes out of 12 hours is not a great deal of time. I do not think we were filibustering in the way the Members for Gwoja and Johnston talked about.

Members on the other side also thought ministers were time wasting in answering those questions. Estimates is a time when the opposition asks questions, and the minister goes through the answers. We also have officials with us from the departments who contribute. That is how it has always worked. I do not think any of

the ministers were overly explaining their answers. At one stage, I was asked the same question three or four times, because members did not like the answer I gave. I heard that time and again throughout the Estimates process. Just because you do not like the answer does not mean it is not the answer. It is misleading in terms of how that has been represented about the government.

There were accusations of all these cuts and not delivering on promises. We have been in government for 10 months, and those opposite obviously have not been listening. Shortly, I will go through all the things we have delivered.

We had to reprioritise a huge budget deficit. When we came to government we saw an infrastructure program that had $5bn worth of wish list projects. Every time Labor made an announcement in a particular part of the Northern Territory, it just threw that project on the program and said, 'We will worry about that later'. Money was never allocated to those projects. In fact, I heard the Deputy Chief Minister say that $319m of the $5bn had been allocated, which is three projects across the Northern Territory in the next 12 months. Of course we must make tough decisions, and every dollar we have must count. We make no apologies for that.

Regarding the accusations about Dawn House, none of us want to see women rocking up to shelters and being turned away—that is horrific—but this is not a new problem. We have been experiencing this, and it has been escalating, for years. The previous government did little to address this. It watered down the laws when it comes to domestic violence perpetrators, yet members of the opposition are accusing us of not supporting the shelters.

The minister was clear in her answers about Dawn House that she had met with staff straight after the budget and notified them of the changes on 13 June. She said during Estimates that she was working with the people at Dawn House to ensure that they could provide the services they need to and can expand, because that is what is needed. Let us not forget that not only was the previous government watering down domestic violence laws but also this Dawn House funding sat as revoted works in the infrastructure program for years.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Stop the interjections.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Do not tell us that we do not care about domestic violence. It is shameful. We are the ones who brought in changes to domestic violence laws so that there is mandatory sentencing. We expanded the Victims Register and increased the victims levy by 40%. Our government has done that. We care more about preventing domestic violence than any other government has so far.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Stop the interjections on both sides.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Member for Nightcliff said some things about gas and the Territory Coordinator. I do not think she realises that we need to rebuild the economy after eight years of Labor trashing it and sending it backwards year after year. The way we rebuild our economy is through things like gas and development, which the Territory Coordinator needs to do. How will we fund police, health, housing, education and domestic violence prevention if we do not have a strong economy? The way we do that is through gas, mining, agriculture and tourism, so of course we need the Territory Coordinator. Member for Nightcliff, you can ask until you are blue in the face about why we are spending this much on this and that. We will make no apologies for spending money and making decisions about the Territory Coordinator and gas because we need to rebuild the economy.

**K McNamara:** Will you apologise to the women being turned away because you would rather give money to a gas company?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Nightcliff, stop interjecting.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** We will not accept the status quo. We came into government—elected overwhelmingly with a huge majority—to make changes. We are here to change the Territory for the better by rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle which has been devastated by crime, so we must reduce crime too. That is what we have done in the last 10 months.

We heard opposition members say a few times that they did not get time to ask questions. The outputs are all there, so they can manage their time and questions. Like I said, on one of the days only 20 minutes of

12 hours were taken up by government MLAs, which were important questions they wanted to ask. The opposition was squandering the time and disrespecting the public servants who worked so hard to put all of that work together to be ready for their ministers to answer all those questions.

In my portfolios we did not even get to half of the independent commissioners; Tourism and Hospitality; Major Events; Parks and Wildlife; and Racing, which includes hospitality, liquor, gaming and all those things. We did not get to have one question asked of us.

**Mr Kerle:** Why do you not want to talk up the Territory?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Blain, stop interjecting.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The other part I want to point out is—which is unbelievable—Labor can still work out, from opposition, a way to waste Territorians' money. They came to the ministers in March with pages of written questions regarding whole-of-government agency-related questions. The departments spent all their time going through and getting those answered. They went back to the opposition, and then three months later—I do not know how much changes in three months; these guys had eight years and did not change much and, in fact, made it worse—they asked the same lot of questions to every agency, except Education. Go figure. Maybe they do not care as much about education as they say.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Asking those questions twice cost Territorians $417,000 each time—that figure times two. They are still wasting Territory taxpayers' money. That is something we will not do.

**Mr Paech:** Stop wasting time now; hurry up.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gwoja, you were heard in silence. Let the minister be heard in silence too.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** They do not like to hear the truth. The previous Labor government loved a review for the sake of a review. It used to review reviews. It was constant. Nothing ever got done. All Labor did was talk about it.

Everyone on the other side seems to be up in arms about the racism review. The previous Chief Minister promised that would be done by the Anti-Discrimination Commission for $300,000. That was after the Northern Territory Police had already employed somebody to deal with racism within the force, and she had already started all that work.

We are just getting on with the job. We want to make sure there is no racism in our police force and other areas across the Territory. There is some work to be done there. We all acknowledge that. We all sat here about one month ago and explained that is what we saw and that we needed to work on it, but it does not mean we need to do a million reviews on it.

We had to use that $300,000. We talked about coming to government and having to make tough decisions. That is exactly what we did. Legal Aid faced a crisis because of NAAJA's legal crisis. NAAJA and Legal Aid were having crises. Victims were waiting even longer for justice. Defendants could not be represented in courts. Guess what? We had to use that $300,000 to fund Legal Aid. We did that and made that decision. I make no apologies for that whatsoever.

We have to get on with the job and keep going. If that means that we change things, that is exactly what we are here to do. We were elected to change things. We make no apologies for that.

The other part I wanted to talk about was the fact that we had, in my Attorney-General portfolio specifically, years of Labor watering down laws. I talked about domestic violence before. We had years of neglect in our courts. We have come to government and started strengthening all the laws. We have Declan's law, bail laws—the strongest in the nation now—more powers for police regarding public drinking, post-and-boast laws, mandatory sentencing for assaults against workers, ramraid legislation and the list goes on.

The numbers support the fact that what we are doing is starting to work. Under the post-and-boast laws, for example, seven people have been charged. Guess what? That is seven people who would not have been

charged under Labor. They now have consequences for their actions. We do not want people committing crimes and then posting about it on social media. That is disgusting. The victims in those cases just go through more trauma. That is not okay under our watch.

Goodness! What about there being no money in the budget for Alice Springs, which we were accused of just a few moments ago by the Member for Gwoja? Honestly, we have done more for Alice Springs in the last 10 months than Labor did in the last eight years. Labor had extra police, including police from South Australia, go there. All the laws we are changing that I have already spoken about—guess who that helps? Alice Springs. That was needed.

**Ms Uibo:** That is not what Alice Springs residents are saying. You better talk to the Member for Braitling about that. He knows. He has his head down.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, stop interjecting.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** There is a lot of work to be done across the Territory. You cannot change eight years of no consequences, no accountability and criminals walking around the streets because Labor did not care about that. Remember, it thought that jailing was failing. Guess what? Bailing is failing as well, so we fixed that, unlike Labor which did not fix it. Labor let it get out of control.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Attorney-General is misleading parliament. It was the Deputy Chief Minister who said, 'Jailing is failing'.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr PAECH:** What? Are you offended by another glass of water?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Gwoja, take your seat. Continue, minister.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I thought the Member for Gwoja had a shirt that said, 'Jailing is failing'. I think I have seen him in it out the front of this House.

We are strengthening the laws, investing in our neglected courts and looking at reducing remand days because victims need justice earlier; we do not want it to be in the hundreds of days as it was under Labor for a long time.

We will keep answering questions and making changes to be a transparent government to be able to answer those questions. Our government brought back scrutiny committees and extended the debate time for petitions so that Territorians could be heard in parliament. We brought in the lobbyist register. I do not know how much more transparent we need to be, but we will continue. We make no apologies for the changes we are making across the Territory.

We were elected to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle, and we do not apologise for the changes we are making. We will keep delivering that. We have already delivered so much, and we are not stopping. This is not a 'set and forget'. We have another three-and-a-half years to start to see real results for Territorians. All Territorians have wanted for so long is a government that listened and could deliver on its promises; the CLP is doing that.

We are happy to be questioned about it; we were questioned about it for 60 hours, and we answered all those questions. There were not many questions taken on notice either, which is a good result considering there is a lot of information available to be asked for, and it is up to the opposition members to manage their time to be able to ask those questions.

The CLP has delivered a responsible, transparent and realistic budget for Territorians, and we will continue to answer questions, make changes and not apologise for those changes. Territorians deserve a government that can listen, act and will keep on delivering for a better and safer Territory.

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will start with a positive contribution about the Estimates Committee. I thank all the committee members and the Chair, the Member for Drysdale. I agree with the comments in the House and echo how professional he was in his first Estimates and how fair, particularly to the opposition and the crossbench, he was. He handled the position in the way the Estimates spirit should be. There were a couple of good zinger sayings as well, which I am sure we will take through—and hopefully he gets a chance to Chair next year's Estimates.

Thank you also to the Deputy Chair, the Member for Fannie Bay, for your work while you were unwell during the time and still struggled through, particularly for today. Thank you, Member for Karama, for your role. The Member for Johnston, as we heard, did not miss a minute of the 60 hours of Estimates; thank you for your dedication. I thank my own teammate, the Member for Arafura, for his contribution on the Estimates Committee.

I never thought I would say it, but I missed the Member for Araluen in this Estimates process. The voice of not just Araluen, but Central Australia, is fierce with the Member for Araluen, and it was a big change not to have her come in and ask her regular important questions for her constituents in Central Australia. I hope the Member for Araluen still puts in her important written questions, which I am sure she will on behalf of her constituents.

That is most of the positive things I can say about the Estimates process for this year.

When I think about the first budget the CLP government has delivered, my first questions are these: what kind of Territory will this budget help shape? What legacy does it build for Territorians? Unfortunately, the answer is bleak.

The Territory needed a budget that would invest in people, deliver jobs and make our community safer. What we got from the CLP government was a plan for deeper debt, less opportunity and broken election commitments. The last two weeks of Estimates exposed the lack of fiscal strategy and economic vision by the government, and the CLP can only be described as economic vandals. The CLP members are economic vandals who have started robbing the future of the very Territorians we are supposed to represent. They are supposed to build the Territory's future for all, not just some, and under the leadership of Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro and Treasurer Bill Yan they are robbing the Territory's future.

Somehow, the CLP managed to deliver a budget that burdens Territorians with an additional $1.5bn of debt, despite cutting $1bn out of the Infrastructure budget and raking in an extra $1bn in Commonwealth funding and other revenue. When you think about those three key facts—more money in the coffers, less investment in communities, yet more debt—it beggars belief. It demonstrates a key lack of economic vision to support growing the Territory's economy by not providing real and lasting opportunities to ensure all Territorians thrive no matter where they live.

This budget saddles Territorians with an additional $1.5bn debt over the forward estimates. That is $1.5bn in just a few years. In reading the CLP government's papers, it quickly becomes clear that while the government talks a big game, it delivers little, if anything. The CLP has made a show of removing the debt ceiling, effectively dismantling a key measure of accountability for government spending and funding.

It becomes clear as soon as you look at page 6 of Budget Paper No 2 that the government has no plan for reducing debt. It has not even attempted to reduce the debt; there is just an ever-growing $1.8m every day in interest payments for Territorians to pay. When CLP members are asked what the answer is and what the economic vision is for the future, they always say, 'The Territory Coordinator'.

We found out in Estimates it cost $21m to set up the Territory Coordinator's office, and not one project, report or area of significance was declared by the Territory Coordinator. Where has that $21m gone? The government cannot answer that.

Moody's reviewed the Territory's credit rating in March 2025, and at that time it remained unchanged from the 2024–25 Mid-Year Report. However, the government's budget papers acknowledge that it does not know how its unchecked debt might impact the Territory's credit rating into the future. In fact, the budget papers foreshadow a potential rating downgrade as a result of the government's incredibly poor budget effort.

I quote from Budget Paper No 2:

> *Since this assessment, the government has repealed the legislated debt ceiling and has approved significant new operating and capital commitments, increasing fiscal balance deficits and debt levels in the 2025–26 Budget.*

This shows a clear lack of responsibility when it comes to the debt and deficit bill of Territory taxpayers. Less clear is what the government has to show for this reckless accumulation of debt or what Territorians will get out of it. I will get to that later.

The Treasurer made motherhood statements about reducing debt, but there is little substance to his plan. For example, he says he will grow own-source revenue by growing the population, yet his own budget papers, in black and white, predict population growth—which includes births—to remain steady, growing at 1.2% by 2028–29. This is hypocritical of the CLP, which uses slogans like, 'We will not accept the status quo', which we have heard in the Chamber time and again. This is accepting the status quo. This flies in the face of public comments the Treasurer made in April this year about growing the population by 4,000 per year.

We sought answers from the Treasurer and the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations about how they intend to meet this target. We did not get real answers beyond the new Designated Area Migration Agreement. The NT DAMA III is an exciting piece of work, and the former Labor government was proud to have DAMA I and DAMA II. It is fantastic as it will allow for 1,500 skilled migrants each year to come to the Territory. The third iteration is a win, largely by the federal Albanese Labor government and our own Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling, rather than the CLP government which swung in at the last minute to claim victory for something that the former Labor government did over many years.

Minister Cahill is the Workforce Development minister and the minister for Population. She said in Estimates that it is not her responsibility to grow the population; instead, it was everybody else's job. Meanwhile, Territorians remain none the wiser about how the government will deliver on this aspect of its supposed debt reduction strategy. The rest of the proposed plans are motherhood statements lacking any clear action or key performance indicators. There is no accountability, yet the CLP claimed that it would be accountable.

The only other tangible plan provided for in the budget papers is a cut of $20m from each government agency, and that is only if their budget is above $20m. It is still unclear how the government will achieve these cuts—whether it is through sacking staff or cutting programs—because each minister could not answer the specific question we asked every agency that came before the Estimates Committee. We will monitor this closely.

The CLP government is trying to cover up something when it comes to protecting public sector jobs. We know this because government members spent the last two weeks contradicting each other and themselves about whether there are caps on public sector jobs. Earlier this year the Chief Minister said that there was a cap on non-frontline public sector jobs, yet when we asked the Minister for Public Service about it on Monday, she said there was none. At one point in that same Estimates session, the minister said that the government was keeping redundancy protections and then at another point she said that it was not. Which is it? We still do not know.

This is a minister who is not across her brief when it comes to enterprise bargaining agreements. It is ridiculous, considering that there are more EBAs on the table that need to be completed over the next couple of years. This is either incompetence or a deliberate lack of transparency and accountability in answering questions about the Territory's future and jobs in the public service.

The CLP government must come clean about public servants and whether it is taking away entitlements and using the EBA negotiations to sack by stealth. Our public servants deserve much better than what they are getting from the CLP government which claims to value them.

We found out yesterday that the CLP government has cut $635,000 from the environmental assessment unit, including cutting staff. That is a fair indication of how the government will expect departments to meet its $20m austerity measure.

Speaking of EBAs, more funding is going to police services that is well and truly offset by an inefficient and insulting pay offer to our hardworking police officers. These are the police whom the now Chief Minister promised to back no matter what. Again, there is more talk and none of the action expected by the people who went to the polls and supported the CLP with their vote. We strongly urge the Minister for Public Service to get back to the table and start negotiating in good faith with police on their EBA.

Unfortunately, she scrapped portable long service leave for 10,000 community service workers. We can only hope that there is a win for those working day-in and day-out to support Territorians in their respective sectors and that perhaps there will be a population strategy at hand.

We are in danger of seeing more of our police officers make the decision to move interstate where they will receive better pay and conditions and perhaps feel supported by their government which will make sure that they will get action, not just talk.

During Estimates we heard the Chief Minister brush off questions about rising crime statistics under her watch. She made a number of misleading comments questioning the credibility of statistics published on the

NT Police website—the government website. These are the same crime statistics that the Chief Minister quoted often while she was the Opposition Leader. It is a different story now that she is in government. Apparently, the crime statistics are just fake news or used to cherrypick her own statistics. According to the Chief Minister, it is not true that violent, sexual, domestic violence or property offences are worse, or no better, under the CLP government, but the data speaks for itself.

Let us not forget that the Chief Minister came into power on the promise and mandate that she had a law and order agenda. She came into power saying that she would stop crime. She told Territorians she would make our community safer. Now, all she can offer is that the crime stats are wrong and that we should celebrate the small wins—which I agree we should. However, the Chief Minister is ignoring the rest of the statistics by her own department. These statistics do not suit her narrative and should not be taken into account according to her. That is a genuine reflection of the lack of leadership by the Chief Minister, making gimmick announcements and arming the public with OC spray, with no details. She makes important decisions and announcements for the Northern Territory, yet there is no detail behind it.

The irony is that this is effectively an admission of failure by the Chief Minister that she has not done anything meaningful to prevent or reduce crime or to keep our communities safe. She has simply passed on the responsibility to the everyday Territorian to defend themselves in the event of crime. It is every Territorian for themselves on their own.

Every Territorian has the right to defend themselves and their families, but OC spray is not the long-term answer for their safety. It is beyond disappointing that this government has failed to invest in any measure that will stop crime from occurring—a promise the CLP made to Territorians in the election. If people are looking for answers in the budget about the government's plan in this space, they can save themselves the read because we have done the reading for everybody; it is simply not a priority in the CLP budget.

It is bitterly disappointing to receive confirmation that those opposite have slashed more than $3m to law and justice groups, putting their future at risk. We heard that the Attorney-General has not even bothered to visit any of these groups in the 10 months that she has been in the role. I was contacted by a law and justice group in my electorate of Arnhem which knows that the CLP government is trying to backtrack on an important agreement that supports community safety and is led from a grassroots level to prevent crime and family and domestic violence in its region.

We know that cultural and community leadership is an integrated part of everyday life, particularly for our remote Territorians. When it comes to the justice processes this is not a short-term fix or an easy journey but one that was already embarked on and demands the respect to continue to be supported financially and morally. Law and justice groups work with victims and families at the community level and are supported by government and non-government services in their region. It is beyond belief that the Attorney-General has effectively thrown up her hands in defeat, put it in the too-hard basket and said that she would slash $3m from those important groups. There is no clear answer, respect or care for the hard work that our law and justice groups are putting into their communities day-in and day-out. Their efforts try to make a difference for the better.

One of the law and justice groups in my electorate, the Barunga–Wugularr Law, Culture and Justice Committee, is in serious danger of being unable to operate. I will quote from the committee's action plan:

'The Barunga-Wugularr Law, Culture and Justice Committee project stands as a powerful expression of community determination to deliver safer, more culturally grounded features for young people—the future of the Territory'.

We have seen the failures of the Corrections minister, which the Member for Gwoja spoke about at length. There are many discrepancies, and I will give you one, in the essence of time. The Deputy Chief Minister claimed in his evidence to the Estimates Committee that 1,100 of the Territory's 2,400 prisoners were engaged in some form of employment, but then he changed his answer and said, 'Actually, no, 1,100 prisoners were engaged in behaviour change programs'. Both are great if they are true, but which one is it? He could not provide that detail. It beggars belief.

Meanwhile, a sledgehammer was taken to the infrastructure budget. A whopping $1bn is out of the infrastructure program for upgrades and new builds. Territorians, wherever they live, all appreciate it when there are infrastructure investments in their street, community, town or region.

The funding of roads, bridges, barge landings, hospitals, health clinics, schools, homeland centres, community development projects and more have been cut by the CLP government, which is too cowardly to

talk to the very people affected by the decisions made in its first budget. I asked the Infrastructure minister to speak to people in my electorate about an important project that has been cut from the budget. With just the swipe of a pen $20m is down the drain. It had been years in the making to get the Phelp River crossing done on Numbulwar Road. The Treasurer could not even commit to a visit to Numbulwar or Ngukurr, places he has been to, or been close to, but has never gone back to.

Those people of the Northern Territory, who are out of sight and out of mind because they do not fit with the government's so-called agenda, are the ones who will miss out. I will be here, not just as the Member for Arnhem but as the Opposition Leader, to make sure that those Territorians are not forgotten by the CLP government.

CLP members would like to reinvent the history of the decisions made in this budget, but we know those decisions will be telling, because the CLP government is an economic vandal, not just for one but for all.

**Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training):** Mr Deputy Speaker, the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025 and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 are part of the first budget delivered by the Finocchiaro CLP government. For all of us on this side it was our first Estimates process being in government. It was different being on the other side.

I thank our hardworking public servants and Legislative Assembly staff for their contributions to the budget and Estimates process. I also thank the Estimates Committee, which did a stellar job. I thank the Chair and Deputy Chair for their contributions to what is part of an important parliamentary process.

The Estimates process showed us that the Labor opposition still has not learned a thing about the election drubbing it had in August last year. We just heard the Opposition Leader go off on a bit of a rant; I pick up on some of the Opposition Leader's comments. Economic vandals—really? That is rich coming from a party that has been in government for 19 of the last 23 years and which, over the last eight years, has left us with an almost $11bn debt. It is shocking.

This was not a flashy budget; it was a responsible budget after we had inherited almost $11bn of debt after eight years of Labor. With that in mind, we continue to hear the current Opposition Leader, with a diminished team no doubt, screaming uncontrollably about all of the government's cuts.

I remind the Opposition Leader, who was one of the four former Education ministers from the previous government, of what she has left us to clean up. We have had to reprioritise many projects. We have not cut them; we have reprioritised them to other times because there is no money to put to those projects. Some projects have to be finished because they had already started, but there are many we have had to reprioritise because of the lack of fiscal management over the last eight years under the previous Labor government.

I am the minister for Education for all students. Whether they are remote, regional or in Darwin—it does not matter where they go to school—I represent them. We have had to reprioritise budgets. School attendance rates were at record lows. We discovered the secret list of students—I have spoken about this many times—the intensive support roll. These are kids who had not attended school for 20 days or more, and the former government used this roll to mask their poor attendance rates.

During the Estimates process the opposition claimed our government is cutting school infrastructure. The Member for Gwoja gave a bit of a backhanded compliment before, but I will take a compliment nonetheless, that Labor signed up under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. I also remind those opposite that as a team they did not take into consideration that there was no consultation with the non-government sector in education. The minister for Education sits as the minister for all students in the Territory—government or non-government—no matter what they are.

We heard a lot about Alekarenge School. The Member for Barkly is probably watching from his bed because I know he would not like to miss out on this process. I can just see him yelling at his screen and rolling his eyes at the rubbish that came from the opposition. This is a furphy. Labor was in government for 19 of the last 23 years and had every opportunity in the world to make sure that the project for infrastructure at Alekarenge School went ahead. The CLP had to reprioritise the money for that project.

The CLP government spent days agonising over what would be reprioritised or not. I can tell you it was not a nice conversation I had with the Member for Barkly when it was decided that we were not going ahead with that project. He knows more than any of us how important new infrastructure would be at Alekarenge. I have had conversations with Chris, the principal at that school. I spoke with kids there when I was at the NT Board of Studies in February this year. All these children and teachers deserve infrastructure that is fitting for their

school. It is not that we do not care about the bush. We have members from Darwin to Alice Springs representing the bush in many areas. We care about all people across the Territory.

Announcing projects without budgets was a hallmark of the former Labor government. The projects that went ahead went over budget, again wasting Territorians' money. I will remind the opposition of why the CLP government had to agonise over reprioritising of funds that we could not deliver: the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass went from $61.5m to $160.9m; the State Square gallery project went from $47m to $143m; the Royal Darwin Hospital mental health expansion went from $38m to $86.3m; the $12m Nightcliff Police Station, which is not fit for purpose; the ship lift went from $100m to $515m; the Darwin youth justice centre went from $50m to $135m; and let us not forget the Opposition Leader's legacy, the $61m Acacia blowout. She was the Health minister when that project blew out.

Budget 2025–26 delivers a record $1.6bn for Education and Training, including $120m for vocational and higher education. The CLP government is committed to investing in the future of our children, and we are driving reforms to improve school attendance and hold parents accountable for ensuring their children go to school. We will not shy away from that. In our year of action, certainty and security we have allocated $12.9m to boost school attendance through the school attendance officer program which is an increase of more than $4m from last year.

Since the introduction of school attendance officers statistics show that there are almost 500 fewer students on the intensive support roll compared with when Labor was in government. The CLP is delivering on our literacy and numeracy plan with a $14.2m boost for explicit teaching across the Territory to ensure schools are getting back to basics and supporting students to build these fundamental skills. We want every child to have the strongest start in life, and that starts with a solid foundation in literacy and numeracy.

The CLP is delivering on its election commitment to keep and attract teachers in the Territory. This budget invests $13.8m to keep and attract teachers in government schools by giving them financial certainty and moving them from short-term contracts into permanent positions so that they have confidence to put down roots and stay in the Territory.

The CLP has increased the permanent classroom teacher workforce, and we are on our way to achieve 75% by 2027. As of now, 69% of classroom teachers are permanent employees, which is an increase of 6.7% compared with the same time last year.

The CLP is committed to ensuring qualified school counsellors are based in schools and not offices, unlike the previous government. We are properly resourcing that by committing $1.9m for it. To improve candidate eligibility and interest, the school counsellor role will have broader essential qualifications like counselling, social work or psychology and a more focused scope of practice.

The CLP has also announced the swimming in schools program which was a $3m election commitment. We know it is crucial for our Territory lifestyle, and it is great to speak to schools and parents of students who have not had lessons before and hear their positive feedback. The swimming in schools program will ensure all children learn essential swimming and water safety skills as part of their education. This is part of the broader initiative to provide cost-of-living relief to Territory families. A total of 127 schools have committed to the Swim and Survive program so far and will be working with School of Sport Education NT.

In addition to those education initiatives, the CLP has delivered Back to School and sport vouchers that provide cost-of-living relief to support families, and we have expanded our school-based policing program. Unlike the former Labor government, the CLP is focused on delivering funding certainty for Territorians. Members of the opposition can make as much noise as they like, but it will not distract Territorians from the disastrous eight years that they were all a part of. It is a mess the CLP continues to clean up.

Getting back to Alekarenge School, I will correct the idea that we have not been there and are not representing or going to remote communities. We had a great trip booked to Ali Curung, but we had to cancel due to that fantastic late rain at the end of May. I was heading there with the Member for Barkly, so I look forward to rescheduling that soon.

Overall, I found the Estimates process okay. We heard the Member for Nightcliff say that she did not get time to ask questions. It is up to opposition and crossbench members to allocate their time accordingly. If they choose not to allocate their time accordingly, that is on them and not on us. The CLP will continue to clean up the mess that Labor left behind.

I commend the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 to the Assembly.

**Mr YAN (Treasurer)(in reply):** Mr Deputy Speaker, this is the first budget delivered by the Finocchiaro CLP government. Before I speak on the significance of these Bills and the work they enable, I place on the record my appreciation for the hard work and dedication shown over the past fortnight.

To the Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the Estimates Committee, I thank you very much. Your scrutiny and questions are a vital part of our parliamentary process. I also extend my thanks to the staff of the Legislative Assembly and to all the public servants and departmental officers who worked tirelessly to prepare and participate in the hearings.

It is through this robust process that Territorians can see not only how their money is spent but also who is focused on fighting for them and who is distracted on fighting for themselves.

This is not just a budget; it is a reset. It provides a strong financial foundation for the CLP's responsible, focused and ambitious plan to rebuild the Territory. The Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025 authorises $9.18bn in spending, including $2.2bn in new policy commitments, sweeping tax reforms and long overdue infrastructure repair. It is a budget built on reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring the Territory lifestyle we all love so much.

It stands in sharp contrast to the chaos and recklessness we inherited from those opposite. Let me remind the Assembly of the position the former government left us in when we took office. We found record debt of $10.55bn and rising. We found frontline services held together with sticky tape and time-limited funding cliffs worth over $350m a year. We found press releases with no delivery plans, promises without budgets and projects that existed only on paper. Let us look at some of those projects. The Mandorah marine facility has gone up from $50m to $84.3m. The Royal Darwin Hospital mental health ward changes have gone up from $38m to $86.3m, and that is just scratching the surface.

If it was not clear enough during Estimates as to why some projects had been delayed or rescheduled, the answer is simple: because Labor misled Territorians about what could be delivered. The CLP government is now having to clean up the projects that Labor could not deliver. We will not follow Labor's example. We will not announce projects that we cannot pay for. We will not pretend something is shovel-ready when it has not even been costed. We are delivering infrastructure on time, on budget and with integrity. That is why we referred the Darwin ship lift to the Public Accounts Committee, because Territorians deserve to know the truth and what the cost of that project will be.

With over one month to go through page by page with your pens and highlighters—I remember the Leader of the Opposition saying that, and I am not sure whether she managed to do that during this Estimates process—and if after two weeks of Estimates the opposition still cannot find the money, maybe the budget is not the problem; maybe it is those opposite.

When the CLP came into office, the so-called record infrastructure program we inherited was a circus. Projects were overpromised, costs were hidden and communities were misled. Projects were lucky to make it off the shelf, and if they did, they were over budget because they sat on that program for so long with old costings. We heard some of those examples, including the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass which is a $99m blowout; the State Square art gallery, which is a monument to political vanity, went from $47m to $143m; and the youth justice centre went from $50m to $135m. The former government's approach to budgeting was like a pyromaniac managing the fire brigade, setting fires and blaming others for the smoke, and it is pertinent today.

Again, we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition a refusal to take any responsibility for the position the Territory finds itself in due to the budget that the CLP inherited. The Leader of the Opposition called us economic vandals, but she might want to look in the mirror.

During Estimates we heard constant complaints from the opposition that $1bn worth of projects were scrapped. The opposition's claims over the last two weeks have defied belief. Even in opposition, it has continued to mislead Territorians. The projects referred to were never properly funded to begin with. It is not as though the CLP scrapped them; these projects were never real. They were just press releases.

Let us be clear: announcing a project without a budget is not governance; it is fantasy. Unfortunately for the Territory, the former government spent eight years governing in its own make-believe world where projects did not need to be cashed and debt did not exist.

If members of the opposition want to know where the money went, it is all in the budget books they received over one month ago to go through page by page with red pens and highlighters.

The Territory's biggest ever investment into public safety has occurred in this budget, and the CLP makes no apologies for prioritising law and order. We have committed $1.5bn to public safety—the largest investment in Territory history. This includes $608m for Police; $495m for Corrections, which the previous government seems to have forgotten about; $78m for court system resourcing; and $180m to support initiatives that combat domestic, family and sexual violence over five years. We are backing police, courts, Corrections and, of course, victims, because community safety is not optional for us. The previous government put offender welfare ahead of victim safety and criminals ahead of the community, letting violent offenders walk, reoffend and then walk again.

The Member for Gwoja said today that the CLP has not provided anything for Alice Springs and that there is no new money. We are investing $1.5bn in Alice Springs. We all remember what the Member for Gwoja did for Alice Springs when he repealed the liquor laws a few years ago. We all know what happened in Alice Springs, and the people there have not forgotten.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 1; the Member for Namatjira must correct the record. Legislation was not repealed. It was Commonwealth legislation. This parliament did not repeal any law.

**Mr YAN:** I will happily correct the record. Yes, it was federal legislation falling away. The previous Labor government had the opportunity to bring in legislation to provide a safety net for the people of Central Australia but did not do it, letting the legislation lapse, not bothering to put anything in its place and letting Alice Springs burn. To be lectured by the Member for Gwoja that we are not investing in law and order or social order in Alice Springs is a joke and an insult.

Under Labor, you could break into somebody's home and get a warning. Under the CLP, you will face consequences. Under Labor, victims were told to be patient. Under the CLP, we have introduced Australia's toughest bail laws and new offences for ram raids, knife crimes and glorifying violence online. With this budget we are delivering not just words but laws and consequences.

This is also a roadmap for economic renewal. We inherited an economy that was stagnant with 1% growth on average for eight years, four years of actual decline, families leaving and businesses closing. We are starting to turn that ship around. Forecasts now show 7.8% growth in 2025–26 and 5.9% growth in 2026–27. This is the fastest growth in the country, and that is no accident.

We are making the Territory the best place to do business by creating conditions for private investment, with $2m into workforce attraction and skilled migration, $6.4m for the Office of the Territory Coordinator and $88.4m into tourism and streamlined approvals to cut red tape and get projects moving.

We are also backing gas, agriculture, mining, Defence and tourism—sectors where the Territory holds a natural competitive advantage over the rest of the country.

We have passed tax reforms to stimulate and rebuild the economy and reward Territorians. We introduced the highest payroll tax-free threshold in the country, now at $2.5m; abolished payroll tax on more than 3,700 apprentices and trainees; simplified exemptions for charities and not-for-profits; and introduced a fair 50c floor for online lottery and gaming taxation.

These are pro-growth and pro-jobs policies. That is what you will get from a CLP government—an economy that people want to invest, work and operate in.

I take a moment to reflect on the opposition's conduct during Estimates. The opposition, as a party, was completely unwilling to reflect on its own record in government. It refused to reckon with the debt it racked up, the services it hollowed out and the communities it left behind. It is like the past is a foreign country to Labor. Instead, all it offers now are cheap, lazy and hollow personal attacks. There was no vision or policy, just noise. That is not scrutiny; it is deflection, and Territorians see right through it.

The opposition has not taken this process seriously. I am not exactly sure it was serious about the entire budget process. You can see that in the previous budgets it delivered and the fiscal path it placed the Territory on.

Members of the opposition fixated on infrastructure projects that were already broken, budgets that were already spent and press releases they apparently never read. They are not here for Territorians; they are here for themselves and fighting over political legacy projects while the CLP gets on with the job of delivering a budget that repairs the legacy of the opposition's mess.

One project that the Labor members cannot let go of—even posting about it on social media after I gave them a clear answer about its status during Estimates—is the removal of the Peppimenarti Police Station from the infrastructure program. The clear answer that I gave was that the community and the police expressed to the government that they did not want it. Why would we progress with it when the community and police force say they do not want it? The opposition always carries on, saying we are not talking or listening to the community. This is a clear example of where we have listened to the community and the organisation, and we are not progressing with it.

As the CLP delivers a budget that puts the Territory on a path to recovery after Labor's eight long years of a fiscal fiasco, the last thing we need to do is a repeat of the Nightcliff Police Station. Money was wasted on building useless infrastructure that is of no use to the community.

After two weeks of Estimates it is clearer than ever that the opposition has the wrong priorities. It used Estimates to advocate for projects it could not deliver and that Territorians do not want its advocacy on. The opposition's inability to focus on what matters makes it even clearer that, with the CLP's first budget, this government is putting money where it is needed and wanted. We are showing Territorians that we believe that every community matters. This budget shows Territorians that the CLP is serious about making every Territorian family feel safe and that every child has the future they deserve.

The CLP has its priorities right. Unlike Labor, we will not fund status symbols in Darwin at the cost of Territorians' future while Alice Springs is in crisis. This budget invests in what makes the Territory feel like home. We have committed $615m for remote housing, $4.34bn in total capital works, $290m in household relief and subsidies, $2.5bn for health and $1.6bn for education.

I picked up on the comments from the Member for Arafura, who is trying to gaslight and mislead Territorians. He spoke about a cyclone shelter in Maningrida. We cannot build all these cyclone shelters in one go. The priority cyclone shelter happens to be in Nhulunbuy. It will be built first, and then the program for the one in Maningrida will come second because that was the second priority.

The Member for Arafura said that we have stopped the money for the Kahlin Compound. I met with members from the Kahlin Compound, and I spoke about this in Estimates. I cannot deliver it in this financial year, but I gave the commitment to people from the Kahlin Compound that I will deliver it in the outer years because we just do not have the money to deliver everything in the one budget.

The Member for Arafura also spoke about housing targets and how we were reducing delivery of housing over the next 12 months. I explained that in Estimates and will explain it again today. This is where Labor has made a mess of this. It did not deliver enough lots to put the houses on. We can build the transportable houses, but if we do not have anywhere to put them, what is the point? The focus in the next 12 months is delivering the all-important lots in communities so that we can then start delivering housing to them.

I will go back home to Alice Springs. The Member for Gwoja said that we were not investing and that there was no new money for Alice Springs. There is $168.7m to restore safety and liveability …

**Ms Uibo:** You are an Alice Springs member; you should be appalled.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Silence, please.

**Mr YAN:** … with a new library, a skate and play precinct, a multicultural centre and a visitor centre. We saved Anzac Oval and restored it. Land is being released for new housing at Kilgariff, and there is free pool access in summer to beat the heat.

The CLP government is also investing in Alice Springs events and culture, with $36.5m for major events, fireworks protected on Territory Day, new walking trails and new sports facilities to support Aboriginal sport. The Territory is not just a place to live; it is a place to belong and is worth putting down roots and staying for good. We want people to come and call the Territory home.

I will address this again: the CLP is not cutting services. We are doing the opposite and funding them properly. We are delivering $1.5bn for hospitals, $313m for primary care, $135m for mental health and $100m in annual

funding for health operations. In education there is free TAFE, bonuses for apprentices and trainees, $120m for vocational and higher education and remote Aboriginal investment funding of $842m. Labor made big promises with short-term funding, but we are delivering funding certainty and continuity, which those opposite could not do.

Territorians did not elect us to sit on our hands and watch crime and our economy descend further into crisis. They elected us to act. In our year of action we are putting victims before offenders, cutting taxes not services and fixing and delivering infrastructure, not just headlines. We are funding the front line not just in this budget but into the future, and we are backing every Territorian, not just the politically connected.

This is what real leadership looks like. To those opposite who are still clutching onto their cut-and-paste press releases, still confused about where all the money went and still asking why we did not fund their pet projects, I say this: if you had done your job, you would have your pet projects and we would not have to clean up your mess. We are cleaning it up, line by line, project by project and community by community because that is what Territorians have asked us to do. We will not let them down.

I commend the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill and the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 to the Assembly.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The question is that the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation (2025–2026) Bill 2025, Serial 25, stand as printed and that the report of the Estimates Committee be noted.

Motion agreed to.

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

Bills agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bills read a third time.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, I point out some of the dire things for the Northern Territory in terms of the future of the economy under the CLP budget.

The Treasurer spoke about the Friends of Kahlin Compound and how the CLP is apparently still committed to the $3m that it agreed to when it came to government. That money would remain for the important work that the Friends of Kahlin Compound has done over many years to make sure there is a memorial and a place of healing and reflection. This is a place for people to remember, and hopefully never repeat, the mistakes of the past and the traumatic and ongoing impacts to Aboriginal Territorians with the systemic government institutional removal of Aboriginal children from their families in the Northern Territory. The rest of the country also experienced this under that horrific government policy.

I had to report to the Friends of Kahlin Compound the shocking news that the CLP had removed the $3m that was cashed against that project. This affects the stolen generations in Darwin and their representatives. Unfortunately, many Aboriginal Territorians who were impacted by the stolen generations are no longer with us.

The $3m for the memorial site at Myilly Point has been scrapped from the CLP budget. I sent the transcript of the Estimates Committee to the members of the Friends of Kahlin Compound so that they could see the minister for Infrastructure's response. They will do what they need to do with the information I provided.

It is disingenuous of the Treasurer to say that he did not scrap this and that the CLP would reprioritise something in later years, with no definitive answer on when. He said the government would definitely do this, but I would not believe the Treasurer. Before the August election, the Member for Namatjira said that if the CLP was elected to government it would honour a $12m commitment for Aboriginal ranger grants for the next four years.

We heard the Deputy Chief Minister fob off any responsibility for the CLP's election commitment to Aboriginal rangers. He said the federal government is the one paying for rangers. We know that and have been advocating for support for Aboriginal rangers in the Northern Territory for many years. In his contribution, the Deputy Chief Minister failed miserably to admit publicly—because none of them have had the guts to do it—that the CLP broke its election commitment to fund the $12m over four years for Aboriginal rangers.

It may not seem like a lot of money in the bigger scheme of government funding, but to each of the 47-plus Aboriginal ranger groups in the Northern Territory that have applied for those grants, have benefited from them in the past and support the ongoing commitment from the government of the day, it is deeply disappointing. As the local member, I am disappointed.

The CLP promised Territorians, 'If we become the government, we will put $12m of ranger grant funding over four years into the Territory budget', yet in the first CLP government budget it was cut. The opposition asked about this funding in the budget sittings in May just a few weeks ago—it feels like years ago now because it has been that terrible—but the government fobbed it off. The CLP did not take responsibility.

One thing I learned when I was a teacher, and then from becoming a local member, is that even if people are not happy with your decision, you need to take accountability. You need ownership for that decision, and you need to tell people why you broke a promise or made a decision.

The CLP made this election commitment and then in the first 10 months broke its promise. Every time we have asked why this decision—let alone many more—was made and who made it, the government says, 'We had hard decisions to make'. Do not make an election commitment you cannot keep, because people vote based on the decisions they think you will make when you are in government. They vote because you told them to their faces, in writing, in a press release, in a news article or a radio interview that you would keep these election commitments when you come into government. It does not matter whether you are CLP or Labor; that is what voters expect when you are getting their vote and making promises.

One fundamental failure of the CLP is that it does not take accountability for the decisions it is making. It is too scared to face the people it is making decisions about and to own up to those decisions to break election promises. We have seen this in the two weeks of Estimates. We have heard some good stories, and I commend the good things that have happened; however, the lack of accountability, responsibility and ownership for the budget, the decisions being made, the election promises that have been broken and the commitments to Territorians that have been scrapped is appalling. You do not have to be the best or the worst government, but you need to do what you promised Territorians you would do when you became government.

The CLP promised to double the solar feed-in tariff for the peak time, between 6 am and 6 pm, but said, 'Now that we are in government we have changed our mind because even though we have people's votes, we are now doing it this way'. At least they had some type of commitment; they got a half-arsed commitment for that. The CLP did not uphold the commitment it made to Territorians when it was in opposition, fighting for people's votes, saying, 'When we are in government, we will do this'. CLP members did not do that. This is a disingenuous attempt by the CLP to scrounge any type of accountability in that space. CLP members can trash Labor for the next four years, but while they are doing that, what are they doing for the Territory and what will they deliver for Territorians? What are they doing in the town centres, regional centres, remote communities and homelands?

The bleak and bitter reality for all of us is that it does not matter where you live because we have a government that is more interested in chasing headlines and the most popular news story for a day or two than in accountability on the details of how it will deliver a new policy that it has plucked out of the air. There is no accountability or responsibility for or ownership of who, how and what will pay for these things that have been plucked out of the air.

The Member for Katherine talked about education, essentially making excuses for the $8.7m ripped out of Alekarenge School. I am sure the Member for Barkly, who unfortunately is unwell today, would not be happy with his electorate being spoken about in such a way by his own colleague. I hope she has more guts than the Treasurer and keeps her commitment to the Member for Barkly to go to the Ali Curung community and to that school to tell the members of the community to their faces why—she is the minister responsible—the government ripped $8.7m of new classroom infrastructure out of the budget. It was in the previous budget and cashed against the program, even though the Treasurer will fluff around and pretend it was not. It was taken out of the budget, so Alekarenge School will continually miss out now until one of the ministers decides to chuck some money in there when there is another election coming up so they should try to deliver for the school.

It is appalling, and I will continue to hold the government to account.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, there were some things I did not get to say in my speech because I ran out of time, so I will say them now.

As an Independent member and representative of the community, I am tired of time being wasted by the two parties slagging each other off. It is a waste of time, and it is not respectful to Territorians. I wish we could move on from that. We are not in an election; we are here for people, so let us get on with what is in front of us and do it.

I will go through some of the other things I learned in Estimates that people maybe did not get to hear.

When asked about changes to the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, the Attorney-General said, 'We are reigniting the flames of freedom'. She likened offending an Aboriginal person or a gay or lesbian person to her being offended by a glass of water. The new Bill focuses on inciting hatred, and when asked in Estimates the Attorney-General could not detail what that means. When the Attorney-General was asked in media, she said that she had consulted on proposed changes to the law, including with the commissioner. These are the changes that she announced on the weekend when Darwin Pride celebrated 40 years. When asked what advice he had provided, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner said that he had advised:

> *the current version holds, and it is the strongest piece of vilification law that we have in Australia and there is no need for further amendments to that provision.*

He said that the commission's recommendations were:

> *to retain the current version of section 20A and section 20B and … not to revive or re-enact section 37A.*

It was good to hear the minister commit to further consultation and listening to the community.

The Attorney-General also confirmed that the government removed $300,000 from the Anti-Discrimination Commission to conduct a racism review into police. In Estimates last year there was a lot of discussion about racism reviews in various parts of the public service. It appears one of them may have happened, but it has not been released yet, and it does not seem to be that there is any progress anywhere else.

When asked, the Attorney-General could not define *doli incapax* despite having introduced laws to imprison 10-year-old children. To be clear, this legal principle is Latin meaning 'to be incapable of wrong' and presumes that children under 14 do not fully understand the difference between right and wrong to have criminal intent. To be convicted of a crime in Australia you need both a guilty act and a criminal intent. Children that young often do not have either.

We heard that records on conflicts of interest in Cabinet will be released in 30 years. That is in 2055, so do not hold your breath.

The Attorney-General stands by her statement:

> *… we are not worried about the trauma you may have by being in a watch house or correctional facility.*

Attorney-General, many of those in custody are also victims. More than half of them have not been sentenced yet. Is it not your job to uphold the rights of all Territorians? I am tired of hearing that it is mutually exclusive to care for victims and for the rights of people in custody. It is not either/or. I have a long history of working with victims of crime. I know we need to do things to make sure that everyone is safe, but that does not mean we need to cause harm to other people.

The Northern Territory Government previously restated its commitment to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement in this Chamber, which is welcomed. That includes reviewing recommendations from the various royal commissions, including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. That commission recommended that police should not investigate police deaths in custody. When asked whether the government would honour that commitment and support an independent inquiry into Kumanjayi White's death, the answer was no.

The Minister for Health told us that the public health system can handle a 10% increase in births after the closure of the private maternity services with existing staff and no extra funding. I note we are all grateful for

our public health system and know that every woman who goes to have a baby will be looked after appropriately, but where are the extra resources coming from? What other services will be stretched? You cannot just keep adding pressure without a cost somewhere.

The Minister for Health also told us:

*We do not make decisions without the professional clinical advice …*

This is a wonderful thing to hear. When asked if he sought such advice for the trial introduction of OC spray, the answer was no.

We heard that every day 60 to 80 hospital beds are occupied by older people who are not sick; they are just stuck in hospital because there is nowhere else for them to go. This is not their fault. It is a sign of a broken aged-care system and a lack of community support services. Our elders deserve dignity, not hospital hallways. To be clear, many people contacted me about this afterwards and wanted to make sure that everyone understands that those people are not there by choice and are not there for free. They have to pay up to 97% of their pension.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said it is disappointing that the previous government failed to progress treaty. I am disappointed, too, minister, as are so many people in the Northern Territory. I am disappointed further to hear you say that you will not be progressing treaty either.

The Housing minister told us there are 283 vacant houses in the bush, and we are waiting to hear how many vacant houses there are in town. We know there are 3,619 remote and 5,439 urban applications on the waiting list. Each application represents not only an individual but a whole family. The average wait time for a house in every region is eight to 10 years. Those kids spend their whole childhood waiting for a home.

The Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence confirmed that $9.5m has been cut from two women's frontline services, one of which, the Katherine Women's Crisis Centre, she has not even met with. Centre staff did not know anything about that until they heard it in Estimates. This is a budget where we are housing DV perpetrators in prison rather than victim–survivors in refuges.

We heard there are 879 children in care, and this does not take into account more than 1,000 unallocated cases. The Minister for Child Protection told us that she does not have the data on how many of these children have a care plan. I note that I think the minister was as disturbed by that as the rest of us.

When asked, the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment could not answer what his definition of climate change is and what causes it.

We were told once again in relation to conflict of interest in the public sector that it is managed through a conflict of interest register. We were told once again that we cannot see it. No-one is asking for personal details like where someone's children go to swimming lessons; people want to know whether private interests are influencing public decisions. That is a reasonable expectation in any democracy.

Thank you for allowing me to finish that speech. As an Independent and someone committed to representing my community of Johnston and the interests of people beyond that in this Chamber where we are making laws, I thank people who come to these processes with that broad interest of the whole Territory at heart. All of us are here to try to make things better. I look forward to a future where we can put aside the political pointscoring—I am saying this to both parties—the sniping and saying, 'You did this, and you did that' and get on with the job of making this the place it could be.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.