Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



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Debates and Questions



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 2 – Assent to Bills Passed in November 2024

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members I have received Message Number 2 from His Honour the Administrator, notifying assent to Bills passed in the November 2024 meetings of the Assembly. The message is dated 7 January 2025.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS
Public Accounts Committee – Correspondence

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee advising that the committee has resolved to conduct an inquiry into Northern Territory Government roadworks in the Alice Springs CBD.

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee – Correspondence

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also received correspondence from the Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee advising that the committee has received an inquiry referral from the Attorney-General relating to historical regulations in force in the Northern Territory.

Address in Reply – Presentation to the Administrator

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, at 11 am I will present the Address in Reply to His Honour the Administrator at Government House. At 10.45 am the Assembly will be suspended, and I will invite all members to walk with me to Government House for the Address in Reply ceremony.

Adjournment – Westminster Tradition

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, it is a tradition in Westminster parliaments for the Presiding Officer to be escorted out of the Chamber by the Serjeant at Arms or Usher of the Black Rod when the Houses adjourns each day. From my studies of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I note that we have not been doing this. I think this would be nice to do and have taken it upon myself to introduce this. As detailed in my email last week, in keeping with this tradition the Serjeant at Arms will lead the Speaker out of the Assembly when it adjourns.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
2025 Year of Action

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to Sessional Order 5 the Office of the Clerk has circulated a ministerial report topic.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, yesterday it was a privilege to outline our blueprint for the year ahead to more than 500 key business and industry stakeholders and Territorians at the Darwin Convention Centre. It was fantastic to have all 16 of my parliamentary colleagues with me to announce how we will deliver our plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Our team has hit the ground running since the election, listening to Territorians and hearing their concerns. I thank every member of my team for their hard work so far, for their commitment to making the Territory a better place and for their commitment to delivering our promises to Territorians. Last week we welcomed the Lunar New Year—the Year of the Snake. It is said that the Year of the Snake is a year of rebirth and transformation. This is auspicious, given where the Territory is at now. Just as a snake sheds its skin for its next chapter, the Territory can transform itself and renew, positioning itself for a better future.

Our pledge for 2025 is simple: 2025 will be a year of action that will deliver certainty and security for all Territorians.

Delivering a critical response with our plan to reduce crime remains our top priority. Labor let crime spiral completely out of control. Our plan to reduce crime in 2025 builds on the back of our reducing-crime laws that we passed in October last year, just six weeks after the election. These laws expanded the wanding powers of police and delivered Declan's law, stronger bail, new nuisance public drinking powers, mandatory sentencing for assaults on any Territory worker and new ramraid and posting-and-boasting laws.

These new laws and the strong backing of our hardworking police supported them to put an additional 500 criminals in prison since the August election last year. This is our government putting the rights of people to be safe above the rights of offenders. Our newly established and now permanent Fugitive Task Force has seen over 100 high-risk, high-harm offenders who have been on the run arrested and taken off our streets. That policing intensity will continue.

This week in parliament we will put forward laws that increase police powers. We will make sure police are supported at every opportunity.

We will see more police on our streets soon. There are three constable recruit squads currently at the police college, with 29 set to graduate on 7 March. Our police retention bonus, a commitment we made, will start on 1 July and will increase police numbers by supporting experienced police to stay in the job for longer. I am proud to report that our police attrition rate has improved to the best it has been since 2019, but we know there is much more work to do. Police retention is the fastest and most cost-effective way to increase our police numbers, and we are determined to support them to keep our community safe.

We will also implement a remote police infrastructure plan to map out where investments are required. This is to make sure politically motivated projects—like the previous Chief Minister's $12.7m Nightcliff Police Station, which is just an office building with no cells or watch house—will never happen again. We have seen over the past week what a farce this building has become, with a spate of crime next door to the police station, yet it cannot operate as promised by the previous Labor government.

We know that much more work needs to be done to reduce crime across the Territory, and we will not rest. The crime statistics are out there for all Territorians to see; they are published openly and transparently monthly. However, referring to that data is not a measure of success; the measure of success for our team is when Territorians feel safe.

There will also be action in 2025 to give certainty and security to our courts and to Corrections, key parts of our justice system and in making our community safe.

Our Corrections infrastructure master plan launched last year has already produced an additional 160 male adult prisoner beds at Berrimah, and almost 100 more beds are about to open in Alice Springs. Our police and Corrections officers are doing an exceptional job in difficult circumstances, courtesy of a lack of investment and focus by the previous Labor government. Planning for our new women's prison, two youth boot camps and two adult work camps is well underway. This work will take time, but it is our highest priority given the situation.

We tasked our courts to work harder, longer hours and more over Christmas. We put on more judges and are working to drive efficiencies in the court process itself through things like expanded audiovisual conferencing.

In 2025 we will make our hardworking prosecutors permanent to secure their jobs and expertise in the Territory on behalf of victims. It is a shame that Labor had our prosecutors on short-term contracts. We provided an extra $5.2m in funding to Legal Aid to make sure that offenders can be represented and put through our court system faster, getting better outcomes for victims.

We must also address the root causes of crime, and this will be a key focus in 2025.

This year we will see a rewrite of the *Youth Justice Act* to ensure there are mandated diversion and early intervention programs. We will balance that need for community safety and create real pathways for young people to turn around their lives.

We said that we would focus on getting kids to school and off the streets, and we are delivering that commitment. Last year we launched our new school attendance officers; this year we have already expanded that program, with 47 school attendance officers now in action across the Territory.

Parents who wilfully deprive their child of an education will be held accountable. They are breaking the law and will be fined $370. While Labor looked the other way when a parent was depriving their child of a future, we will not. The care and protection of children is our highest priority. All children deserve to grow up in a home where they are safe, clothed, fed and can get a good night's sleep and access to education. Concepts and culture cannot be put ahead of the safety and welfare of children. We make no apologies for the changes we will make regarding care and protection of children to ensure their safety and protection is always the first priority. We must change what we are doing and invest Territorians' money in the right areas. This year our

government will spend $36m in domestic and family violence measures. We will expand our Circuit Breaker Program which is showing positive signs in its early days of holding parents accountable.

Alcohol is a major contributor to domestic violence and crime in general. This year our review of the Banned Drinker Register will take place as well as, excitingly, consultation on a new model for compulsory alcohol treatment. This is on top of the positive results we have already seen from our nuisance public drinking laws. Since the new laws began in November last year 122 infringement notices have been issued and three people charged with nuisance public drinking. This year we will also commence consultation on empowering bush communities through local government reforms designed to return greater community control and strengthen service delivery for Aboriginal people.

There is still much work to do to reduce crime across the Territory, but we have shown Territorians through our actions that we are willing to do what is necessary. We will remain laser focused on reducing crime and underpin it with major economic reform. The need for economic growth over the next 12 months cannot be understated.

The financial position of the Territory is much worse than we expected upon coming to government and much worse than Labor had Territorians believe. We must take immediate action to fix it. Last week the Treasurer and Under Treasurer set out a clear picture of the Territory's debt position—$11.6bn at the end of the financial year projected to hit $15bn by 2028–29. This is a debt legacy left by the previous Labor government that burdens the future of the Territory. To paint a picture of the level of incompetence, we uncovered $1.1bn in unfunded project blowouts, which include Tiger Brennan Drive, the MXGP track upgrades and the Holtze Youth Detention Centre. There were many projects that had no ongoing operational funding, including Darwin and Alice Springs art galleries.

As a consequence of Labor's debt legacy, we have outlined critical budget repair measures that we must take. These include removing Labor's debt cap, which we will do in parliament, and capping non-frontline FTE growth. For six years we have had the worst-performing economy in the nation, and Territorians do not deserve that title. From June 2004 to June 2024 public investment in the Territory increased by 190.8% while private sector investment increased by only 33.9%. We must turn that around.

That change starts with major economic reform in the Territory Coordinator, and we will introduce those laws this week. This will give us a competitive edge on the rest of the country. It will signal to the world that we are a mature jurisdiction with the capability and capacity to play a major role in the advancement of energy security, mineral security, food security and Defence security.

Merits review was announced yesterday, and we will be taking action to make sure third parties have no opportunity to undertake merits review in the petroleum, planning and water Acts. This is a signal to investors that a decision means a decision under our government, and we will not pander to people who use lawfare as a way to play delay games. The Territory is in too fragile a position to allow this to happen.

We are keen to continue with a reform agenda that delivers for Territorians. Payroll tax will be debated today, and we are excited that on 1 July we will be offering small businesses the opportunity to pay less tax and put that money back into their business to grow jobs, services and opportunities for all Territorians.

The Approvals Fast Track Taskforce I stood up in November—chaired by Mark Garraway, the former President of the NT Property Council—will report to our government in June 2025 on how we can reduce red tape. We are excited to have the opportunity to implement those recommendations which will specifically target small and medium business.

We are sending a message to all Australians to come and do business in the Territory if they want to run a business and pay less tax. With our HomeGrown Territory Grants we are giving people 50,000 reasons to move to the Territory, secure home ownership and build their lives here.

Middle Arm will have a significant role in industrial development. In 2025 we will establish a governance framework for that project area. Our HomeGrown Territory Grants have had more than 400 applications totalling about $87m in our property market so far and are expected to deliver construction stimulus for another 18 months.

We know how important connectivity is to Territorians and how Labor failed. We have seen a trifecta of aviation announcements in the last four weeks, including increased capacity with Jetstar flights from Darwin to the Gold Coast, Airnorth flying Alice Springs to Cairns and Indonesia's Air Asia flying Darwin to Denpasar. All routes give Territorians and tourists access to major international airports.

We are focused on pursuing more aviation opportunities for Territorians. With the business confidence we are creating with growth and stimulus in our economy, we will see more airlines put on more flights and routes to support Territorians.

When it comes to our lifestyle, we are supporting cost of living because we know Territorians are hurting. Car insurance, home insurance and grocery prices are up. When budgets are tight, people cannot enjoy their life as much. We have a beautiful lifestyle that Territorians should have access to. Our commitments concerning cost of living this year are free drivers' licences, three-year trailer registration, free swimming lessons for all primary school students in Years 1 to 6 and free meningococcal B vaccinations for all babies under two and adolescents aged 14 to 19. Our HomeGrown Territory Grants range from $10,000 to $50,000, and we have doubled the rooftop solar battery bonus.

Many of our cost-of-living measures began only on 1 January. In just six weeks we are seeing a huge take-up of the scheme, which shows that Territorians need the reprieve and appreciate the opportunity. For example, 12,000 people took up the new free drivers' licences, and more than 600 families have accessed the free meningococcal B vaccinations for their children. We have 56 schools lined up, booked in and ready to go for free swimming lessons in Term 1 and 87 more schools throughout the rest of the year. It is an exciting time.

We will also be expanding park recreational spaces. We brought back croc permits because if you cannot own a pet croc in the Territory, where on this Earth can you? We have fixed something, again, that Labor made a mess of for no reason other than it was determined to destroy the Territory's lifestyle. Labor did not understand that fishing, hunting, camping and owning pet crocs is an intrinsic part of our way of life, and we are committed to expanding these opportunities for all Territorians.

We will amend the *Anti-Discrimination Act* to fix the mess that Labor made so that religious schools can prioritise same-faith teachers, and we will remove the ridiculous inclusion of offending someone as some type of discrimination. Labor wanted to tell Territorians what to say, when to say it and how to say it, but we know that our role is to create the environment where Territorians are in control of their lives, making the best decisions for their families and having the opportunity to deliver on their families' aspirations and dreams for the future. It is not for us to tell people how to live their lives; it is our government's responsibility to give every Territorian every opportunity to achieve their goals in life.

We are proud to stand here with the year ahead of us. We know that 2025 is full of promise. We are full of hope and optimism about what this year will bring as a time of great change and reform for the Territory. Less than six months ago Territorians made the right decision, and we will not let them down. We look forward to presenting our plan and implementing our commitments to Territorians, as we promised, to make the Territory a better place for everyone.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, in my first speech to parliament as the Leader of the Opposition I said that my opposition team would hold the CLP government to account. We are now six months in, and it is clear that so far accountability and transparency are not strong points of the new CLP government.

There has been no shortage of spin, press releases and glossy images on social media by the CLP government. There have been carefully worded press releases, and Territorians are starting to think that this government governs by press release. This is the most carefully curated government in the history of the Northern Territory; things are precisely put in place. No-one in the government team is allowed to talk out of turn; they cannot express themselves or the views of their electorate, and they have to toe the line. No creativity whatsoever is allowed by the CLP government.

All the gloss has come at the expense of genuine consultation and engagement with Territorians, businesses, industry stakeholders and our non-government organisations that are often working hard at the coalface dealing with traumatic things in our Territory community and not getting the time nor the importance of replies or responses from the CLP government.

Time and again the CLP government is holding setpieces of roadshows and presentations, talking at Territorians and not listening or understanding the things they are raising with the opposition. Unfortunately, the government members are not being genuine in sitting down and listening to Territorians, as they said they would do when they were in opposition. The government is leaving behind many Territorians in this process.

On the face of it, the year of action sounds great from the Chief Minister—I wish her success—but in reality, there have already been broken promises by the CLP government. The reality far outweighs the gloss and prints that have been provided by the Chief Minister and her team of followers.

The opposition supports progress, development and growth of the Territory economy. We hope and wish that the Chief Minister's initiatives will be good for Territory businesses and those who come to the Territory to do business.

The payroll tax cuts and homebuyer grants are good ideas to stimulate the economy, and we hope that Territorians and Territory businesses will benefit. Beyond that, the substance of the CLP government's plans for the Territory fall short. We are yet to see the government clearly articulate its economic vision for the Territory's future. Where is the support for the agribusiness, tourism, renewable energy and creative arts sectors? We have none of this from the Chief Minister or any of her CLP members. I am sure many people in various industries across the Territory will be flipping through the Chief Minister's statement—that carefully worded and curated glossy release—and wondering where they fit in this puzzle. Where is the action for those sectors in what the Chief Minister calls her year of action?

In six months of CLP government, the CLP has dismantled many projects and initiatives that were based on growing and strengthening the Northern Territory. The nationally significant art gallery in Alice Springs would have injected millions of dollars into the local Centralian and Territory economy—80% from the federal government and 20% from the NT Government.

How do the CLP ministers and members in Alice Springs feel about the vision that has been downscaled and will now be a gallery smaller than the regional museum of Shepparton in country Australia, not a nationally significant project nor the injection of millions of dollars Centralians have been hoping for and projecting in all their business plans? What do the Alice Springs CLP ministers and members say to that? I would love to hear because some of them are on hiatus when asked questions by key industries and businesses in Central Australia, which I learnt from my visits recently.

The State Square art gallery in Darwin is another important tourism initiative. The former Labor government laid the groundwork, and the CLP only needs to rock up and cut the ribbon. This is also a significant project on the chopping block.

How do the northern suburbs CLP members feel about the underground power? This was not a promise made in the lead-up to the Territory election. How do they look their constituents in the eyes regarding that 10-year program to underground high-voltage power in the northern suburbs? How does the CLP explain that to northern suburbs voters? I am yet to hear a single word from any of the northern suburbs members on this issue. You would think as a local member you would still advocate for your electorate, but unfortunately we are not hearing anything.

The CLP government pulled funding from the trial of three-year-old preschool. This was a key initiative in education aimed at engaging families and early learners in the school system and setting up Territory kids for success at a young age so we can see a difference in the long run for our Territory kids.

A huge challenge facing the Northern Territory is domestic violence. When we talk collectively about community safety domestic violence must be front and centre of conversations. We continue to highlight that the domestic violence sector has been calling out for the critical $180m funding. Labor made this commitment prior to the election, and the CLP matched that commitment. This is above politics. It is about making sure communities across the Northern Territory are safe by addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. Have we seen a single dollar or cent of the $180m earmarked for the domestic and sexual violence prevention sector? No, we have not. I hope the CLP members are hanging their heads in shame, because the 25 of us who have been elected know that our electorates …

Mr Maley: You should be ashamed of yourself!

Madam SPEAKER: The Chief Minister was heard in silence, and the Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Ms UIBO: I am ashamed of myself because I am not doing more regarding domestic, family and sexual violence prevention. Deputy Chief Minister, yes, I am ashamed because we all must deal with this. Every one of us, as elected members, has a responsibility to our electorates to keep people safe.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please take your seat.

Mr BROWN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20—if the Opposition Leader could talk.

Madam SPEAKER: I agree. She will be heard in silence. All members remain silent during this deliberation.

Ms UIBO: We should all be ashamed, Deputy Chief Minister, that we are not doing more to advance …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 19; the Leader of the Opposition continues to direct her commentary; she should be speaking through the Chair.

Madam SPEAKER: All comments will be directed through me. Leader of the Opposition, you will be heard in silence. Your comments will come through me, and we will all be happy.

Ms UIBO: When we do our job as the opposition and point out these hard-hitting home truths, the CLP government has a glass jaw. Its members cannot take criticism and stand up and articulate what they are doing to support the domestic, family and sexual violence prevention sector.

The CLP government has not rolled out a single cent or dollar of the $180m that the Chief Minister promised to deliver; we are still waiting. We are seeing horrific levels of domestic violence in our communities and Territory women allegedly murdered at the hands of their domestic partners. This must stop. We look forward to seeing the action of the Chief Minister, as well as the CLP government, on this issue which affects everyone across every electorate in the Northern Territory. Avoiding accountability is something this CLP government is doing quite well; I commend it on avoiding its responsibility.

The CLP has broken another promise in its six months of government—the doubling of the solar feed-in tariff between 6 am and 6 pm. The government has backtracked on this key election promise. The CLP made a big hoo-ha about the changes made to that system when Labor was in government. The CLP's broken election commitment is the hours of the tariff, which will now be between 3 pm and 9 pm. I do not know who in the Territory is creating solar power at night, but I will be happy if the CLP can prove me wrong on that. Many Territorians are outraged by the CLP's broken promise to double the solar feed-in tariff. I would love to hear about the Chief Minister's action on this; maybe she has learnt how to keep the sun out until 9 pm for these solar benefits. If she has, good luck to her and the CLP. We will ask those questions of the government because it promised Territorians that it would deliver and has already broken some of its promises.

Evading scrutiny has become a bit of a routine and habit for the CLP government. If legislation is introduced in this House on urgency, it does not need to go to a scrutiny committee; because it is urgent it is passed within a day or two of being introduced. For years when the Chief Minister was the Opposition Leader she spoke about the importance of scrutiny and committees, but in its first sittings the CLP government had multiple pieces of legislation affecting Territorian workers …

Mr Edgington: That is right; we brought in the scrutiny committee.

Ms UIBO: … and it did away with what it said it wanted for the last eight years the CLP was in opposition.

Mr Edgington: We brought it back; you scrapped the scrutiny committee.

Ms UIBO: The CLP members completely dismantled …

Mr Edgington: You scrapped it.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Member for Barkly continues to interrupt the Opposition Leader. She is putting her commentary through the Chair.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, please stop your interjections.

Ms UIBO: The CLP government members are showing they are all talk; there is a lack of action, and they are doing it in the Chamber as well.

We saw how badly the CLP handled its key election commitment regarding the Territory Coordinator. It snuck out a discussion paper behind Territorians' backs and said, 'There is nothing to see here. We will go through the whole process correctly.' Then it missed the consultation package for Darwin and Palmerston, so half of the Northern Territory population was out of the minds of the CLP government. This is outstanding when the

CLP promised to engage, consult and provide the opportunity to listen to, learn from and act on the voices of Territorians. For the Darwin and Palmerston consultations on the key point of legislation the CLP was looking to introduce this year, some people could not engage even if they were at the consultation online. They were muted, and the questions were vetted. If you are wanting to be a government for all of the Territory, I do not understand how you think that it is appropriate behaviour to drown out, ignore and literally mute the voices of Territorians on something you told the public you would consult on.

The Chief Minister spoke about 500 public submissions. Will the government make those public submissions available for all Territorians to see? That is usually the process. Madam Speaker, you have been in parliament a lot longer than I have. That is the normal process; the government would receive all the submissions which would be available online, then we are of the understanding—we hope it keeps this promise—that it would go to a scrutiny committee once it is introduced in the House later this week.

We have heard from the Chief Minister regarding the action. We have not heard about key areas of concern raised with us as the opposition. We look forward to hopefully hearing more information from the government on what it is doing with local government reform. We estimated the CLP has committed to about $1bn of local government reform in this term of government. We look forward to learning what that means across the Territory. There is not a lot of detail; there are a lot of motherhood statements, glossy media releases and social media tiles, posts and pictures but no detail to this.

I have been travelling across the Territory in the last couple of weeks and hearing concerns. People are anticipating and wanting reform in local government, but people are nervous about the CLP's vision for reform. They do not have any idea of what it will look like, and that is creating anxiety, particularly in municipal and regional councils across the Northern Territory. Local government is the first tier of government, as the Member for Gwoja will say. It is the government level that more Territorians are exposed to in the first instance.

In regional, remote and urban areas most people know what their council does. They have access to their councils; they receive services from their councils and ask questions of councillors and elected members at the local government level. We are interested to see and understand what local government reform will look like. A former CLP government in 2012 promised it; that government did not get its gears in line and failed miserably for Territorians in this space. We want to see what the local government reform looks like from the CLP government. Those figures are important. How much will it cost the Territorian taxpayer to see local government reform by the CLP government? We estimate $1bn, so let us hold on to our hats when that ride starts.

There have been many opportunities for the CLP government to listen to Territorians, and it has failed in doing this. We know from some processes last year that the CLP government promised it would provide opportunities for Territorians to raise their concerns, ideas and issues across the Northern Territory, but we are now hearing in the Chief Minister's Year of Action report that it will downscale, downgrade and remove important mechanisms for Territorians to have safety nets and safeguards. We have not heard of any replacement procedures or mechanisms for Territorians to have an extra level of scrutiny or processes they can follow when an issue concerns them. The Labor opposition is concerned about what, if anything—we do not think there will be anything—the CLP will put in place to ensure Territorians have mechanisms to look at their concerns about things like legislation.

We have heard many vague statements by the Chief Minister about issues of rolling out funding in one area but on the same hand rolling out money straightaway in other sectors. The government has the ability to do that, but it is silent on key issues for the Territory. We look forward to seeing what action the Chief Minister outlays and whether the CLP will take responsibility and be accountable for the Territory that we know and love.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, we will go to Government House to present the Address in Reply.

The Assembly suspended.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Address in Reply – Presentation to the Administrator

Madam SPEAKER: Accompanied by honourable members, I attended upon His Honour the Administrator this day, and there presented the Address in Reply to the speech His Honour delivered on the occasion of the opening of the 15th Legislative Assembly. His Honour was pleased to accept the Address in Reply from honourable members of the Legislative Assembly. Thank you all for attending; it was a pleasant occasion.

NOTICES

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Territory Coordinator): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Territory Coordinator Bill 2025, Serial 17.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Correctional Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 12.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 15.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 11.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Mr Neil Bell

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Before I ask a question, I ask your indulgence, Madam Speaker, to acknowledge Mr Neil Bell, former Labor Member for MacDonnell, who is in the Chamber. Neil served as the Member for MacDonnell from 1981 to 1997. It is an honour; thank you for joining us for the opening ceremony but also for your continued connection to the Northern Territory, particularly Central Australia, and your service to Territorians.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition; it was remiss of me not to do that before. Please continue.

QUESTION TIME

Lobbyist Register

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

This morning you issued a media release saying that you have established a lobbyist register, with no detail or substance to this announcement. It was an announcement about a transparency measure which was completely devoid of transparency.

Can you please show some respect to Territorians and outline the detail of your lobbyist register, including who will be included on the register, how Territorians can publicly access the register, how it will be monitored and what consequences there will be for your CLP ministers who do not abide by keeping the register current?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a fantastic question from the Leader of the Opposition because we delivered yet another election commitment this morning with the lobbyist register.

I remind the Opposition Leader that Labor refused to do that. The Territory has never had a lobbyist register. When we were asked last year, after increasing community support, for a lobbyist register and transparency measures after eight years of a terrible government afflicted by integrity crises, there was a need for it, and we were quick to put up our hands and say that we would be happy to bring in the Territory's first lobbyist register.

Unlike Labor, we have done what we said we would do. We brought in this new integrity measure on top of existing measures such as you, Madam Speaker, being an Independent Speaker; doubling the debate time

for petitions; and having the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, which the previous government refused to bring to the parliament.

The Legislative Scrutiny Committee will review the Territory Coordinator legislation once I have introduced it tomorrow.

The lobbyist register is simple, and it is the Northern Territory's first time to have one. It creates a register—we are working on the website, but it is available on paper now. Proponents or lobbyists send in their details, then they will be sent the paper version of the form. We are hoping to get the website online as soon as possible.

If people are official lobbyists, they must register all the details of who they are paid to lobby for and all that transparency. When they are to engage with a government minister, whether it is in writing or face to face, the obligation is on the lobbyist to make sure that minister knows exactly who they are, who they work for, who they are being paid to lobby for and for what. Therefore, there is an increased awareness on the part of ministers to understand that this person is on a clear mission, being paid to do a particular job.

It is for third-party lobbyists—those official professional lobbyists, I suppose you would call them, from lobby firms. It does not include, for example, industry bodies like the Chamber of Commerce, Northern Territory Minerals Council or Master Builders. They are not lobbyists; they are member-based organisations, and it is transparent for government to know what they represent and who they are rallying on behalf of. We are proud to deliver this, and we are excited to see it in full operation.

Action, Certainty and Security for Territorians

Dr RAHMAN to CHIEF MINISTER

It was wonderful to attend yesterday's 2025: A Year of Action, Certainty, and Security event, with our united 17-strong CLP team where you outlined our key priorities as a government for the next 12 months and our continued commitment to reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring the Territory lifestyle. I represent hundreds of businesses in my electorate of Fong Lim, and I am particularly interested to hear about our plans to back business, save money and grow our population. Can you explain, for the benefit of the Assembly, how 2025 will deliver action, certainty and security for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fong Lim represents a huge number of local Territory businesses. He also acts as the assistant minister for the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations in his important area of expertise of migration, population growth and international education. I understand how important growing the economy is to you, Member for Fong Lim, and your community. It is important for every Territorian.

Last week the Treasurer and Under Treasurer did a roadshow across the Territory, being open and transparent with Territorians about Labor's debt legacy. Because of Labor's reckless fiscal mismanagement, the Territory is set to hit a $15bn debt by 2028–29. This year it will be over $11bn. To give you an idea, when the CLP left government in 2016 debt was around the $2bn mark, so you can see a huge unprecedented spike in reckless spending.

This must serve as a wake-up call to Territorians that the only way out of this mess is not through severe austerity, because that will hurt everyone at a time when people are already hurting the most. We must grow our economy. That is how we will generate own-source revenue, create jobs and get people to live in the Territory.

We outlined our plan of action for the next 12 months—a year that will be marked by action, certainty and security for all Territorians. It has already started. I have just given notice of the introduction of the Territory Coordinator Bill, which is a Territory-first, cutting-edge piece of economic reform for the Territory—the best we have seen in a decade—leading the country by a country mile. It is a new way of doing business for the Territory, and we are excited. Yesterday we announced that we will be abolishing the third-party merits review, sending a signal of confidence to investors that when they get an approval under the petroleum, planning or water Acts it means it is an approval. You can take that approval to the bank. It will not change.

I am not pre-empting debate, but later we will be debating payroll tax cuts for small and medium businesses, putting more money back in the pockets of the people creating jobs and opportunities for Territorians and for

our future. I could not think of a better way to spend the afternoon than debating that legislation, Member for Fong Lim. We are excited. This is on top of our police retention bonus, which will start on 1 July, further backing our police and our remote policing infrastructure plan so that disasters like the Nightcliff Police Station under Natasha Fyles never happen again. There is so much going on this year; we are excited about the future, and we cannot wait to deliver.

Prevention of Sexual and Family Violence – Funding

J DAVIS to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

On 23 January you said that the $180m your government has committed to domestic, sexual and family violence prevention would 'start to flow before the end of January'. Can you update the Assembly on how much of the $180m funding has been rolled out? Can you detail which frontline services you have met with and what processes the government is using to make decisions about funding allocations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have been waiting for that question. One of the reasons the full round of funding was not discussed until now was that there were processes I had to follow. We launched the Circuit Breaker Program across the Northern Territory before the end of January, which addressed recommendations 7 and 15 of the Coroner's findings into the recent tragic deaths of four Aboriginal women. I am delighted to say that we will provide ongoing funding beyond the five-year commitment made at the election, with $36m per year dedicated to domestic, family and sexual violence services.

We appreciate there is a lot of work to do in this space, as we are dealing with the outcomes of neglect over the past decade or so of what was and was not working. We are dealing with the fact that we must break the vicious cycle; that is one of the agendas of the Circuit Breaker Program. We can get to kids at an early stage in their life, break that cycle and address the root causes that are leading them on a path of being perpetrators in the future.

The organisations currently funded until the end of this financial year will have their funding extended until June 2026. We will continue to work with them over the next 18-month period to make sure we get the best possible results for all Territorians in this space. We have a horrendous track record of an 82% increase in domestic, family and sexual violence assaults over the last eight years. That cannot continue. We will focus on behaviour programs not just targeting men's behaviour but supporting young people so that they can learn the skills to stand up for themselves and prevent …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! It is wonderful news there is ongoing funding. My question was: what funding has been rolled out since the end of January, and what frontline services have you met with?

Ms CAHILL: As I have already said, we rolled out the Circuit Breaker Program across the Northern Territory. I have met with multiple organisations: DAIWS; Ruby Gaea; and a number of service delivery organisations in the Big Rivers region and Alice Springs. I was recently at Wurrumiyanga talking to the amazing women in that environment about their wonderful programs.

Economy

Mrs CARLSON to TREASURER

It is no secret that it has been a tough year for the Territory and the economy, with the NT ranking last out of its state and territory peers in the CommSec State of the States report and forecasts that our gross state product over the 2024–25 financial year will go backwards. Territorians are looking to the CLP to rebuild our economy, which is what we went to the election with. Can you please update the Assembly on the state of the Territory economy and point to signs that the CLP is turning it around?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as we know, over the last week I have been travelling across the Territory speaking about the situation the Territory budget is in. We need to differentiate between the Territory budget and the Territory economy. I have said that in all the talks I have given over the last week.

The previous Labor government members did not believe in CommSec; every time we asked about CommSec they said, 'We do not believe in that; they do not know what they are talking about. Those numbers

are wrong; they do not give a true reflection.' They give a reflection of the Territory economy and where it sits after eight years of fiscal mismanagement by the previous Labor government.

CommSec is smart about how it does things. It realised that doing the measurements on that 10-year average did not work for small jurisdictions like ours, and changed the reporting to do it year on year. Unfortunately, for year on year we also saw the Territory going backwards in nearly all those components.

We have seen some turnaround on the CommSec report. We are doing okay, particularly in the area of equipment spending, but that is off the back of Defence spending. Yesterday in the year ahead speech, and today in this parliament, the Chief Minister spoke about our focus on Defence, where the Commonwealth sits on it and the Territory playing a key part in that. Those spends are good.

We have seen turnaround in some economic figures, which shows that the Territory is on the path to economic recovery. There is a lot of work to do, and the work we are doing is already in train. We are speaking this week about the Territory Coordinator.

The Chief Minister spoke about that yesterday in her year ahead speech. This will be a game changer for the Territory. It will provide confidence and attract investment. We can make the Territory the place to do business. We have the resources sector to rival Western Australia, but we have not had investors with the confidence to invest in the Territory.

That is the work we are doing as the CLP government in the next four years. We will work with investors and proponents to make the Territory the place to do business because investment from people outside the Territory and other proponents will help us grow own-source revenue. Own-source revenue will start to dig us out of the financial hole the Labor Party put us in. I remind everybody in this Chamber that eight years ago Labor started with $2m in debt; after eight years it left us with $11.6bn of debt, with $2bn in the last 18 months.

Lobbyist Register

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

In your press release today about your so-called lobbyist register, you say that only certain kinds of lobbyist organisations will need to register to meet with you or your ministers, whilst others do not. What is your definition of a lobbyist, and who can decide who is supposed to register and who does not? Can you please tell us who will maintain this register? Will it be your political office, government department or an independent body? Can you please provide details of the register so that Territorians can understand it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Opposition Leader's interest. I think what she is getting at is that she wants to know if the unions will have to register on the lobbyist register. That is what I am hearing. It is okay. You can tell your union masters that they are off the hook. Every time you meet with them to get your riding instructions you will not have to put it in a lobbyist register.

The lobbyist register—I was clear about this in my first answer—is for third-party lobbyists, the professional people of firms being paid to represent a client to lobby; unions, Master Builders and those types of industry groups are not included. Master Builders represents the construction industry; it is clear that it is a member-based organisation, and ministers know that when they meet with Master Builders it will be about issues its members raise.

The transparency this brings means that someone you might not know—we meet with people all the time on the street, in the shops or in official meetings. A minister might meet or talk to someone who they did not know was a lobbyist if that person does not disclose it because it is not obvious. Their responsibility and obligation is to make sure the minister is informed, and the minister cannot meet with them or engage with them unless they are on the lobbyist register, which will be kept by the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet so that it is all transparent.

You can be kicked off the lobbyist register if you fail to meet those obligations, and a minister cannot meet with someone who has been kicked off the register. All the usual sanctions are in place for ministers if someone meets with a banned lobbyist; for example, I can make them give an apology. I can make them do a whole range of measures, but the onus is really on the lobbyist because that is where the transparency comes in. It is so important that they are the ones being up-front about it. We meet with people every day of

the week in different circumstances; if they are pretending to advocate on an issue and there is not transparency, the onus must be on the lobbyist to do that.

We are proud to deliver this register. It is the first time the Territory has had a lobbyist register, so it is new. We will ensure we reach out to known lobbyists around the country to ensure they understand the new rules in the Territory. As I said, it is starting as paper based, because we wanted to kick it off for the start of the year, but it will go online, including the watchlist for those people who have done the wrong thing and breached the lobbyist register.

Operation Ludlow – Alice Springs

Mr MACKAY to CHIEF MINISTER

Our government's new reducing-crime laws that passed in October last year, together with our strong backing of police, have seen an additional 500 people enter prisons. That is 500 more people off the street than under Labor's failed soft-on-crime approach.

As part of our plan to reduce crime, Operation Ludlow in Alice Springs saw considerable additional police resources deployed over the summer. As part of your many visits to Alice Springs, I know that you have seen firsthand the work police on the ground are doing and heard the community's concerns about safety and what must be done to improve law and order. Can you update the Assembly on the positive progress the police operation has delivered in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know how passionate the Member for Goyder is about the regions, supporting community safety and backing our police. I thank all our hardworking police over the school holiday period. It is a peak demand time for the Territory, particularly Alice Springs. Having been to Alice Springs seven times, most recently coming back Friday, I can start to see the change; however, there is so much more work to do.

From day one there was all this ridiculous noise with people asking where the summer plan is. My answer to them is: what did the summer plan do for anyone? Nothing. Labor's summer plan delivered the highest crime rates that town had ever seen and the highest rate of demoralisation, with people crying out for action.

We did not deliver a fake, glossy summer plan brochure for people in Alice Springs who had enough; we delivered a comprehensive and consistent response to that town which continues. We brought in Operation Ludlow early, increasing the number of police and having targeted operations. It was exceptionally successful.

We then created the Fugitive Task Force, following the horrific brutal attack on the beautiful baby girl in the Siguenza family. I have met that family a couple of times. The Fugitive Task Force targeted high-harm, high-risk offenders. In Alice Springs alone it arrested more than 60 people and more than 100 Territory-wide. There were more than 350 arrests in Alice Springs during Operation Ludlow. We saw the ATVs and patrols, increased traffic policing, RBTs—you name it.

One thing I am proud of as Police minister is resolving the issue of drone operations in Alice Springs. Drone operations were limited until I had the opportunity to work with the federal government to get the CASA exemptions lifted. It has changed policing in Alice Springs. It has made it not only easier and quicker to, for example, intercept stolen vehicles but also safer for our police.

The measures we are taking have made a real impact on the ground. There is still much more work to do; this is not job done. The Circuit Breaker Program in Alice Springs has been fantastic. It had a 100% strike rate, following up with every child's family within 24 hours. There have been 46 youth workers on the street every night. We had great results in that space, and we will continue to work hard. On 7 March we will deliver 11 more fresh recruits from the college to the people of Alice Springs. We are proud to support that important town.

Economy

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

In August last year you told Territorians that you would not be bringing in austerity measures because you would be spending responsibly. Since then, you scrapped economy-building projects midstream, wasting

millions of dollars in the Territory. You announced new projects without costings. You also removed the debt cap and accountability measure of reporting to the parliament. You announced an uncosted prison plan, which is likely to run into the billions of dollars, while at the same time saying that you would not cut the public service.

When will you be honest with Territorians about how much all this will cost and who will pay for it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I find this question interesting. Number one—our Corrections infrastructure master plan has delivered another 260 male prisoner beds since coming to government. We put more than 500 people in prison since the August election. They are people who under Labor's watch would be on the streets destroying people's lives. We have a Corrections infrastructure problem because the Labor government buried Corrections in the bottom of the Attorney-General and Justice department where people had to beg, borrow and steal for every penny to run a broken Corrections system. That was before we put 500 more people in it.

Yes, Opposition Leader, there is a crisis. That is why we are delivering our infrastructure plan. You will see the costings of that in the budget; that is where these things go—in a properly structured and funded budget process. We will build this infrastructure because community safety is our highest priority.

People do not want us spending $143m on a Darwin art gallery that no-one will visit; they would rather us build prisons. Labor's legacy will be that white elephant sitting in State Square. Labor's legacy will be spending money where we do not need it and not spending where we do. We are bringing in legislation to support Corrections officers for this reason of underfunding and lack of support by Labor.

The Opposition Leader claimed that we were scrapping economy-building projects; I would love to hear a couple. What are they? What are these economy-building projects we scrapped? I would love to know.

In terms of the debt cap, this is a fake number that Michael Gunner and co plucked out of the air years ago to fake to Territorians that they were doing something to manage spending. Look where we are now. That was when debt was about $7bn. We are now at $11bn. It was projected to be about $35bn at that time. They are astonishing, mind-blowing and unconscionably bad numbers.

We must make the hard decisions regarding spending money. We will spend it on prisons, courts, Corrections and the front line where it is needed. People in our communities need to be safe above everything else. We are putting every other bit of energy into growing the economy because that is where we will get more revenue to grow the Territory.

It is easy to be given a question and ask it here, but think about what you are saying in this parliament. The reality is in eight years Labor destroyed our budget, economy and lifestyle and let crime destroy our lives. That is its legacy; ours will be fixing the mess and making the Territory a better place.

Environment – Economy

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Rebuilding the economy was one of the three key commitments the CLP took to the 2024 election. To achieve this, we must provide industry and businesses with regulatory processes that support certainty in development and investment.

Can you tell us what you have done to crack down on environmental lawfare and provide certainty and consistency in regulatory decisions for investors and industry to drive economic growth?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, for too long those with ideological and destructive agendas have stifled economic growth and investment in the Northern Territory. This week we have shown that we are serious about taking action to provide certainty, employment opportunities and prosperity for Territorians and industry.

Earlier this week I, with my parliamentary colleagues, attended the launch of the 2025 Year of Action, Certainty and Security. The Chief Minister spoke strongly at that event about the Territory economy. We promised that we would build and rebuild the Territory economy. To do that, we must provide industry and

businesses with regulatory processes that support certainty in development and investment. This is a huge part of what Territorians voted us in for.

We have doubled down on our commitment to stamp out green lawfare and open the Territory for economic growth.

I have introduced today the Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 which will remove the ability for third parties to seek merits review of decisions made across the *Petroleum Act*, the *Planning Act* and the *Water Act*.

For years third-party merits reviews have been weaponised by those with no genuine stake in projects and no evidence to back their claims, only a disruptive agenda to delay crucial developments.

We have a robust regulatory regime in the Northern Territory which has undergone significant reform over the years. We have an independent Water Controller who makes decisions on granting water licences; an independent Development Consent Authority which makes planning decisions; and an independent Environment Protection Authority which can review any projects it considers necessary and add additional conditions to those approvals.

A move away from this recommendation of the Pepper inquiry does not mean that we do not support a robust, safe and well-regulated onshore gas industry. We must recognise that this recommendation is not concerned with the ongoing safety of the industry and is, in fact, damaging to the economic prospects of the Northern Territory.

This change will provide greater consistency across legislation, put trust back in the experts and give industry the confidence it needs to invest in the Northern Territory.

I have been clear that I will not enable green lawfare to continue to delay economic progress, which is why I have also terminated taxpayer-funded support for the Environment Centre NT and the Arid Lands Environment Centre. These agreements saw $100,000 to both of those organisations. This follows us last year ensuring the $100,000 for the EDO was also cancelled.

Stringybark Centre

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

I understand the Stringybark facility, which has an operational capacity of 160 beds, is empty. I have been informed that the only barrier to it operating is a requirement for razor wire on the existing fencing. I have also been advised that for under $1m the necessary fencing and other security updates could be rapidly completed and this centre could be fully staffed and operational within six weeks.

Can you outline whether this has been considered as a means of addressing the crisis in Corrections, particularly overflowing watch houses. If not, why not?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have considered all options in relation to this. I want to clarify why we are in this budget crisis situation. For the last eight years the Labor government failed to invest in the prison system, which has resulted in overcrowding and overflowing into our watch houses. This is not ideal but is the legacy the Labor government left us to deal with.

We are dealing with that because we have a master plan we are moving forward with. We are over and above our master plan in relation to a number of things. The CLP is committed to keeping the community safe. It is the number one priority of this government, unlike the Labor government which let safety concerns go through the roof. It let people do what they wanted to do, commit crimes and keep our community unsafe. We are …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. That was not the question I asked the minister.

Madam SPEAKER: He has plenty of time to answer your questions. He has more than two minutes.

Mr MALEY: Yes, we have considered that. Ultimately, we have committed to moving out of that area. Part of the CLP's commitment is to make Holtze the prison precinct. That is where we will move prisons because it is important that we keep them all together. The CLP is thinking about the budget, money and resources.

Having places spread across the Northern Territory is expensive. Of course, staff numbers are another issue—another legacy left by the previous government.

In relation to that fence, it is not $1m; it is over $6m to get that fence put up. If this government is to rationalise its spending, then $6m for a year or so does not make sense to me—not to mention the issues with staffing, which would have to spread across another facility.

Because of the lack of investment by the previous Labor government, staffing is at a crisis point. That is why I will introduce legislation tomorrow to help ease that pressure point in the short term. We need to deal with this Corrections crisis—which has been caused by the Labor government—in a thoughtful manner to ensure we do not waste government money and to keep staff and prisoners safe. More importantly, we need to keep the community safe. That is the number one priority for our government.

Ms Uibo: Have you seen the watch houses?

Mr MALEY: I note the interjection about watch houses. That was brought in by the previous Labor government; it put prisoners in watch houses.

We are dealing with that issue and moving forward because our number one priority is to get them out of there, but unfortunately we cannot build a prison overnight. It is not like blowing up a balloon and, pop, there it is; prisons are expensive and take time because they need to be done correctly to make sure the staff are safe.

I shout out to the prison staff. They do a wonderful job in a difficult situation caused by the previous Labor government.

School Attendance

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Under the previous Labor government annual school attendance from 2016 to 2023 dropped from 62% to 46% in the Barkly region; from 71% to 58% in the Big Rivers region; to 66% in the Central region; and to 54% in the Arnhem region. There are seven schools in my electorate, and you have joined me on a couple of visits to them. The education of our children is vital.

Over the last few months of 2024, I heard stories of children not going to school, particularly in Knuckey Lagoon. I was pleased recently to meet in the electorate office with some school attendance officers, and they are doing a great job. It is crucial that we get our kids to school. Can you update the Assembly on the school attendance program?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama is right in acknowledging the dismal school attendance rates that occurred under the former Labor government. When Labor came to power in 2016 the annual attendance rate for NT schools was 80.8%. When it left office last year the rate had dropped to 71.7%.

The more remote the schools the worse the attendance rates are. This is why the Finocchiaro CLP government has introduced school attendance officers. They will work with families to get their kids to school and have the power to fine parents who repeatedly fail to send their children to school.

I have been out across the Territory—in Darwin, Palmerston, my community of Katherine and as recently as last week in Alice Springs—with those attendance officers. We kicked off the media campaign last week in Alice Springs. The campaign is on radio and TV, and it is in language.

Sending your children to school is in fact law. Parents who repeatedly fail to send their children to school without a valid reason will get a $370 fine. We are not just leaving it there; we will be making referrals to the Commonwealth for income management if fines are unpaid. We are now advocating to the federal government to accept the referrals of parents who neglect their children to additional income management.

The Chief Minister brought that up with the Opposition Leader recently regarding our seven-point plan, which is about implementing 100% income management for parents of youth offenders.

We make no apologies for holding parents accountable for their children's education. Every child deserves a right to an education. We will no longer accept the status quo and keep doing more of the same, hoping things will get better.

Over the school holidays the Department of Education and Training has been recruiting and training school attendance officers. I have been on patrol with them. I have a quick story about how great the work they do is. In my community in Katherine, we came across a family I know; they have lived in Katherine for a long time. The young child who was with them was not at school. When we were talking to him about the fact that he did not want to go to school—I will call him Johnny for the record—I said I would come and pick him up. He was happy to do that. He was not at his house the next day when I went there because he had gotten himself up and knows the importance of going to school and getting an education. I was so proud of him that he made it to school on his own accord. That is a good job for the school attendance officers.

Lobbyist Register

K McNAMARA to CHIEF MINISTER

The NT Greens and I have been calling for a lobbyist register for a long time, and I have been listening keenly to your responses. I understand that you said that third-party lobbyists need to register so that ministers know who they are dealing with, but what about transparency for the public? That is meant to be the real intention of a lobbyist register to ensure genuine transparency and accountability. Ministerial diaries must be published with the register, including which lobbyist they are meeting with, when they met and what topics were discussed. Will this be included in your register?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I note the member's interest in a lobbyist register. I also note that the Territory has never had one before. Today's announcement delivers a commitment we made to Territorians last year that Labor flatly refused to make and did not deliver. That is why we have never had one, despite it being in power for the last eight years.

Our lobbyist register is simple, clear and takes into consideration the size of our jurisdiction. It will provide important transparency, which was otherwise lacking, so that people are conscious and aware of who they are meeting with and what they are meeting about. Where we landed on this might not satisfy you, Member for Nightcliff, and there are different ways of doing it across the country.

We are proud of where we have landed on a practical bit of integrity measures on the back of other measures we have already taken, such as having an Independent Speaker; doubling the time for petitions to be debated in parliament, which we were rarely afforded under the previous Labor government; and the Legislative Scrutiny Committee to provide important oversight of substantive legislation, such as the Territory Coordinator Bill.

Our lobbyist register is up, and the website is being worked through. We are hoping to have that website online by the end of the day, but it may be tomorrow. If anyone is rushing to apply to register now, there are paper versions of it. It is about having a process where paid professionals who lobby ministers for certain outcomes for their client are responsible for making sure the minister is aware of that and that they have disclosed all the information required so that the right transparency levels are being coordinated.

We are proud to be bringing in the Territory's first lobbyist register. Again, this is something Labor flatly refused to do …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I would like an answer to whether the ministerial diaries will be published.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I note that it is in some jurisdictions, but that was never a part of our commitment for a lobbyist register and is not a part of the Lobbying Code of Conduct.

Ms Uibo: Shame!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I note that the Opposition Leader just called out 'shame'. Shame on you, Opposition Leader. Your government never did this. You refused to do this; you did not promise to and flatly refused it. Now all of a sudden, the shoe is on the other foot. She has had a rush of blood to the head and thinks, 'I wish I did that earlier'. You had your chance, and you failed. Do not tell us how we should be doing transparency better from a government that lacked integrity.

Early Intervention and Prevention Programs

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Early intervention and prevention programs are essential for supporting youths in overcoming challenges and building successful futures. In recent years youths in the NT have faced rising rates of disengagement and antisocial behaviour; this is evident in my electorate of Drysdale. Can the minister outline what steps are being taken to enhance early intervention and prevention programs for our youths and how the government plans to address the current gaps in service delivery?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as a former youth worker the member has knowledge and understanding in this challenging environment and the pressures it places on our community. I commend him for the advocacy he put in on his community's behalf toward how we can resolve challenges Drysdale is facing.

Our youths face unique challenges. We deal with distance, challenges regarding school attendance and health issues, so it is a unique environment in which we need to intercede at an early point.

In the past, basic taxi services were run where children were on the street in early hours of the morning and were picked up, collected and returned home, then they would leave again, be picked up, collected and returned home. That vicious cycle needs to be broken.

In December we looked at opportunities for how we could start to close the gap in this environment, and we created the Circuit Breaker Program specifically to intervene with young people to give them the chance they had been missing out on. Importantly, it is giving youth workers the chance to do more than operate as a taxi service. This program intervenes at a point when we have a chance of breaking the vicious cycle and can work with young people and their families to find out why they are on the street in the early hours of the morning; what is in their home environment that does not make it possible for them to feel safe, comforted and cared for; what is happening that we could assist them with; and whether there is an issue with domestic violence, alcohol or simply a family desperately trying to keep their child on track but cannot manage to break the interaction with groups that are leading them down the wrong path.

The real difference in this program is that the families are followed up within 24 hours. Meetings are held, and family responsibility agreements are entered into so that the entire network around the child is working closely to make sure they go to school; they are healthy; and, if they are living in an environment where things are not going the way that you would want them to, that we work with the family to help them. Is there an issue where we can help mum, dad, aunty or grandma to get their life back on track? It is a holistic approach, and I am delighted to say since commencing we have had 75 children come to this program. Around 45% of them are under 12, so this is addressing issues we face with young kids.

Economy – Corrections

Ms UIBO to TREASURER

You have uncosted prison plans that could run into the billions. You have committed to no public sector cuts. You have also repeatedly said we cannot keep borrowing. When will you level with Territorians about how you are paying for your underfunded commitments?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know a bit about Corrections after spending 18 years there. I have said it publicly and in this House before. There was a report done in New South Wales many years ago because New South Wales correctional services and its justice system crashed. It crashed because New South Wales invested heavily in its police and failed to invest in the justice system. I asked those opposite when they were in government what they have done to invest in Corrections. They invested heavily in police because crime was going through the roof, but they failed to invest in the justice system.

New South Wales found that for every dollar you spend on police, you need to invest $1.50 in your justice system—that is Community Corrections, courts and Corrections. That failed to happen. We called on the opposition when it was in government to invest in Corrections. It was only in the last part of Labor's term in government that they finally started to listen and invested a bit into Corrections, but it was too little too late.

Numbers in Alice Springs were going through the roof, so they finally decided to increase capacity in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre. It also failed to invest in the staffing required to man the facility. Our government is now doing the hard work and heavy lifting. Labor's failure to invest in Corrections is appalling and has put the community and Corrections officers at risk. We are doing the hard work to find the beds to accommodate those prisoners.

We make no apologies for picking up people for committing crimes and putting them into custody to keep the community safe. We need those all-important beds, but significantly we also need the staff to manage those offenders. That is why the Minister for Corrections is bringing that all-important legislation to this House to provide the ability to get staff from other jurisdictions interstate to alleviate the pressures.

Picking up on the Leader of the Opposition's issues about the budget, yes, we will need to spend money and invest in Corrections because the former Labor government failed to do that all-important investment, which is why Corrections is in this position. Yes, we will probably have to borrow money to spend on Corrections, but we will also reprioritise some money. We will stop the wasteful spending we saw under the previous government and invest Territory money where it is needed to provide security and safety for Corrections personnel and prisoners.

Prisons – Bed Capacity

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

We heard you speak about the rising number of prisoners and the challenges of accommodating this 18% rise over the last five months. Action was required as far back as 2017, with continued stress on the system throughout 2020, 2022 and 2023, including the use of police watch houses to avoid creating new beds in our prisons. Despite this, Labor sat on its hands and ignored the rising numbers. The Treasurer tells us that spending in the justice system stagnated, failing Territorians and enabling a crime crisis.

Can you update the Assembly on what action you are taking to build capacity to manage the rapid increase in prisoner numbers?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a great question. The Member for Casuarina is concerned about community safety, as are all the people on this side of the Chamber. It seems that the previous government had no concerns about community safety because it let crime go through the roof. It made the Territory one of the most unsafe places to be, to the point where my wife was confronted by a man with a knife. I am sure that there are lots of people in the Chamber who have seen or heard of these violent acts that should not occur in any capital city, let alone Darwin. Shame on the previous government for letting us get into this situation; it is an embarrassment.

For eight years the former government ignored mounting pressure and left us in a costly Corrections crisis. Overcrowding in our prison system is a legacy years in the making; this is not a new problem. In 2017 it was obvious that action was needed. A report on the Darwin prison in 2017 said that it was at 99% capacity. The Labor government had no idea how to fix this issue. In fact, I heard a rumour that its plan was to let out prisoners early. The former government had Cabinet discussions about it. I am sure the Opposition Leader would remember it because I heard that people in Cabinet said, 'Just let them out because we cannot deal with the issue. It is so embarrassing.'

The 2020 Paget report about the riot said that there would be significant issues. Again, no action was taken; the former government let it go through to the keeper.

Today prison officers still face the challenge of finding beds, but we are doing something about it. We are bringing on beds at the Berrimah Corrections centre and the youth detention centres in Holtze and Alice Springs. I remind members that the Holtze Youth Detention Centre was two years late and $70m over budget. The 96 beds at Alice Springs were budgeted at $20m and came in at more than $32m—an extra $12m. Imagine how much of that could have been used to keep the community safe, increase capacity or develop staff. Instead, the previous Labor government failed to manage the projects.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Then they trashed it in 27 minutes.

Mr MALEY: Yes, they trashed it in 27 minutes.

All this planning and the experts were overseen by the previous government. The Member for Gwoja was the Corrections minister; he oversaw that. The Cabinet knew that it was spending this money, yet it failed.

We are building capacity. We have already added 164 beds to the system—48 in Berrimah will open this month, another 100 beds at the end of the month and 96 beds added to Alice Springs in the near future.

This is a crisis.

Corrections – Aboriginal Prisoners

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

On Friday the government announced that there were 500 more prisoners in our jails since the 2024 election. Of these 500 people, how many are Aboriginal people; what is the current percentage of Aboriginal people detained by Corrections in the Northern Territory's adult and youth facilities; and how does this situation align with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not have those exact figures here; that is technical data. I will undertake to get that to the member.

I will continue to talk about this crisis caused by the previous government that put these people in prison. If people do not want to go to prison and experience overcrowding, do not commit the crime. It is simple. We will do our best to deal with this crisis caused by the previous Labor government. We have added beds in Berrimah; the Holtze Youth Detention Centre; and the Paperbark facility in Alice Springs, which we will convert into a bail support facility.

It is not only about putting these people in prison. We all understand that putting someone in prison is probably not the best; they need to be rehabilitated and educated. I have been to these watch houses and youth detention centres and seen these children and young offenders going to school and being taught. We heard earlier from the Education minister that it is against the law not to send your child to school. Unfortunately, that is what happens to some of these young offenders; they do not go to school for whatever circumstance, so they are being deprived of what it takes to be an educated person.

I make no apologies; people need to be educated in this world. People need to do their daily finances; go to the shop, give money and get the right change; and balance their budget, unlike the previous Labor government which clearly could not balance its budget because it spent approximately $1bn more than it had each year.

It is important that we deal with this crisis. It will be expensive. It is not nice in prison; it is overcrowded and not ideal. However, this is a problem caused by the previous government. We have a plan to fix this, and we are moving forward step by step. We have advanced; we are moving down the path of our prisons master plan quickly because we have extra numbers. We are bringing more beds online and acknowledge that there will be a staffing cost.

I have heard people in the workforce cry out that they are working 16 to 18-hour days and are short staffed. We are doing something about that as well. We are here to work with the Corrections union and the commissioner to make sure that Corrections officers are safe and will get home and not be overworked. We do not want to burn people out. Living in Darwin is a great lifestyle; people need to have time off to spend with their families.

We make no apologies; if people commit a crime in the Northern Territory we will find them a bed.

Justice System – Reform

Mrs ZIO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Our 17-strong team came to government with a broken justice system that was left in crisis, with long-term overloaded courts, capacity issues and delays that put strain on our system. Instead of taking action, the former government sat back and allowed the system to further deteriorate. It is something I have witnessed as a prosecutor for the department of Education.

Since coming to office I have watched you waste no time meeting with key stakeholders and identifying and fixing issues. Can you update the Assembly on the urgent reforms this government is delivering?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay's constituents will be surprised to hear that the member worked in the prosecutions area. Well done for that—and look at you now, helping to sort out the mess that Labor left.

You are right. Since day one when we came to government, we have been committed to fixing the mess that Labor left behind after eight years of neglect. In my role as Attorney-General I have been on the ground seeing the pressures in our justice system firsthand. I even sat in the court watching the live cases, which Labor Attorneys-General never did.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 109; the Attorney-General is misleading parliament. As a former Northern Territory Attorney-General, I attended multiple times in court for a number of hearings.

Madam SPEAKER: You can only do that by a substantive motion.

Mr PAECH: Stop lying.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, that is unacceptable. Please withdraw.

Mr PAECH: I will withdraw, but I remind honourable members to fact-find before they make statements in this House about the validity and truth of what is being said.

Ms BOOTHBY: I think I hit a nerve.

Unlike Labor, which ignored the problem, we are delivering real reform.

One of the immediate steps we took was to lift the cap on prisoners being held in court cells. Courts were artificially restricted in the number of cases they could process each day. We worked with the courts to remove this unnecessary cap, allowing more matters to be heard daily. This simple, sensible decision has improved efficiency at no cost to the taxpayer.

We also expanded the capacity of the Local Court in Darwin and Alice Springs. Courts now have the flexibility to run two bail-and-arrest courts simultaneously. This is about making the most of the resources we already have rather than ignoring the pressure our justice system faced under Labor's watch.

To address judicial shortages our government acted swiftly, appointing three new acting judges. This was particularly important over the busy Christmas and new year period when demand peaked. We are also investing in modernising court processes, including expanding the use of audiovisual link technology to speed up hearings and reduce transport costs, which is important for Police and Corrections.

Can you believe that Labor gave our prosecutors only 12-month contracts? Shameful. There was no job security for these essential members of our justice system who play a critical role in keeping criminals off our streets. We will fix this.

We recognise the critical role that the legal services play, and we have delivered proportionate increases in funding because it ensures justice for victims sooner.

Labor allowed court backlogs to spiral out of control. We have made a lot of changes, but we are not there yet. This is not a set-and-forget approach; this is real reform, and we will demonstrate real results this year. People will continue to see our government getting things done.

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

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 7

Continued from 24 October 2024.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, one of the worst jobs that any government has to do is to tax its constituents. No matter which party is in power, no government takes any joy in doing this.

When Labor was in government we made sure that any decision regarding revenue measures was properly debated and explained to the community prior to those measures coming into force.

At the outset I confirm that the Labor opposition will support this Bill. We are hopeful that the CLP government's assumption that the payroll tax cut will help to stimulate growth is correct and that the end growth will make up for the predicted $52m shortfall, which hopefully will be recouped as the CLP government has said.

We talk about informing our communities about important legislation that affects different parts of the Northern Territory; this is one of those Bills that will provide more clarity and detail on the processes of government revenue and the decision to change payroll tax in the Northern Territory.

The last Commonwealth Grants Commission assessment during our former Territory Labor government term assessed that the Northern Territory had the lowest taxation in the country. This was done by design. Raising taxes is often difficult for the Territory; for everyday Territorians; for small, medium and even large businesses that come to the Territory to do business and provide services and options; and for big industries.

The issue of payroll tax is complex. Just about every Chamber of Commerce in Australia has said that it is complex, inefficient and can be detrimental to businesses around the country. In the Territory context due to our limited tax base, payroll tax is the largest and most important contributor to Territory own-source revenue. Even the Langoulant report, which the government is now keen to champion, stated that there appears to be little evidence to support the need for significant reform in the Territory's payroll tax arrangements. Whilst today the Labor opposition is supporting the Bill, there are still several questions and concerns unanswered which hopefully the Treasurer can address in his wrapping speech.

There will be an impact to the Northern Territory's budget, and if we go by the figures that were released before the Territory election in August, the Territory's budget will decrease by $56m. For anyone keeping count of the rolling tally of CLP government spending commitments, it is now $322m we will need to find somewhere, which means budget cuts will be made at some point. We assume that is the prediction by the Chief Minister and her team. I would love to have confirmation through the Treasurer's reply.

At some point we urge the CLP government to come clean to Territorians about what it intends to cut to pay for the commitments. The CLP members are good at promoting the winners of the changes they make and instil; however, they are not so great, honest or open when it comes to announcing and being up-front with Territorians about who the losers are of any decision, policy or cut they make. It is pertinent at this point to recognise some of our extremely hardworking Corrections officers in the Northern Territory who have been placed under significant pressure through the changes the CLP government implemented over the last four to six months.

I recognise that many Corrections officers put their lives at risk every day. They are hardworking Territorians. They are our mums, dads, aunties, uncles, friends and family members who work in a high-risk environment doing a professional job on behalf of Territorians, keeping our community safe by working in the Corrections system.

A lot of Corrections officers are strong advocates for justice. They are strong professionals keeping our community safe, and they deserve a strong voice to be heard. Some of the changes the CLP government made without providing information on funding affect Territorians day-in and day-out, and Corrections professionals—some of whom are in the gallery—are extremely distressed and nervous about the decisions.

We have heard from the peak union representing Corrections staff and officers that fear and stress is mounting that Corrections staff will come under fire at some point in the intense environment. We do not want to see any workplace injuries. There is a huge fear that Corrections staff will be put at further risk due to decisions being made by the CLP government and that a Corrections officer will be injured or, worse, fatally injured.

It is pertinent to recognise the great work of Corrections staff. Many are spending time today—either their personal time or through their union work—to front the government. I hope the Corrections minister listens and talks directly to Corrections officers.

What looks good on paper and in the budget—we are talking about payroll tax in this debate and about saving a dollar somewhere. We heard a motherhood statement by the Treasurer about the lack of investment—but the care and knowledge of real Territorians working to keep our community safe behind the wire, and we are honoured that some are in the gallery today. On behalf of the Labor opposition, we thank them for their amazing work in a job that is often tough, unseen and unfortunately forgotten about by fellow Territorians. We do not want the CLP government to forget about our Corrections team.

In general, Territorians support tax cuts, but every Territorian wants to make sure that it is not at the expense of schools, hospitals and frontline services, such as police and Corrections. We are also concerned that the loss of this revenue will result in subpar wage offers put to frontline public servants during enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations.

For unfunded commitments the CLP government has spoken about in the last six months, $322m is a lot of money. We know that one of the losers in that is the northern suburbs. The CLP was not up-front prior to the Territory election; it made the decision to cut the underground high-voltage power program. The power program was not part of the CLP's open and accountable commitments, decisions and—to quote the Chief Minister—year of action. I am concerned for those representing the northern suburbs that their constituents have been let down by their CLP government. Underground power was about to roll out in the northern suburbs, and residents looked forward to it. Unfortunately, it is now out the window, and there is no plan by the CLP for when that will be brought back.

It is clear the CLP was intending to scrap undergrounding power before the election but did not tell anyone that, if elected, it would do this. This is a tricky move by the CLP government, and it needs to be accountable for those decisions made behind Territorians' backs. It will be interesting to see what happens as severe weather and climate change increases and the CLP government's future plans, particularly in the northern suburbs and for the underground power program it has scrapped.

The CLP has not provided any details about additional funding that will be invested to ensure that interstate businesses are not taking advantage of the high payroll tax threshold. The CLP says that this tax break will stimulate the economy, as it will allow businesses to bring on more staff. That sounds good in theory; however, I doubt that the CLP has modelled this to back up its claim. It would be unconscionable for the CLP to give a tax break to interstate companies which take the money and run without any intention of investing these tax breaks and the dollars back into the Northern Territory.

This Bill also does nothing for small Territory businesses that have a wage bill of less than $1.5m. It is unfortunate that the CLP has forgotten about these businesses, many of them local family-run Territory firms and companies. It is not good enough that the CLP has no plan to support smaller family businesses. Many of them are the backbone of the Territory and are usually 100% Territory owned and operated. They deserve support from the government of the day.

Good intentions and media releases will only get you so far when you are in government. What really matters to Territorians is being serious about supporting them. We want the CLP to release a support package for small businesses also.

This Bill provides a payroll tax exemption for apprentices and trainees; we support this measure. It is one of the few things the CLP is doing to support young people instead of demonising them. It should be noted that the last CLP government took away this exemption. At the time, the CLP Treasurer, Dave Tollner, was a mentor, I believe, of the Chief Minister. When he was in government the mantra was:

… the way in which the exemption operates makes it inefficient and open to widespread misuse.

He continued to say, 'The exemption is not result driven, and some employers can obtain an exemption even if an apprentice does not complete a course. The exemption is untargeted and not focused on sectors where there are workforce shortages. Small employers received no benefit from it as they pay no payroll tax.'

The government should heed the warning of its former mentor, ensure that the intent of the changes is complied with and that the new exemption is not being used to undercut paying workers what they are entitled to. It should also serve as a reminder to those opposite that there are other ways to help businesses, not just the one-trick pony they have proposed. If payroll tax is the only plan the CLP has to support apprentices, then we are unlikely to see an increase in training opportunities for young Territorians or Territorians looking to change career and profession.

It should be a concern for all that we have not heard anything from the CLP government about compliance measures and how they are policing the new exemptions. If the Treasurer can address that in his reply, it would be appreciated.

Although we are supporting this Bill, the CLP government cannot for a moment say that its job is done and ignore our small businesses for the rest of the term.

During our time in government, Territory Labor spent close to $11bn in infrastructure programs alone just to back Territory businesses, many of which continue to see that pipeline of works until perhaps the CLP budget in May. To date we have heard nothing about what the CLP will do to boost the Territory economy. What is its vision? We would love to understand the CLP's vision for the economy.

Attacking the Environment Centre and creating a taskforce sounds great to the CLP government, but unfortunately they are not plans for the future. Scrapping the debt ceiling and the mechanism for accountability and reporting to parliament is also not an accountable measure by the new government.

Scrapping housing construction targets, which the Treasurer is also responsible for, indicates a lack of understanding and maturity of the CLP. It is out of its depth and lacks vision when it comes to supporting social and affordable housing options in our urban areas …

Mr Edgington: You can talk!

Ms UIBO: I note that the Member for Barkly, one of the fiercest advocates for the Barkly and Tennant Creek housing, is part of the team which is neglecting urban housing investment. This seems crazy considering the work Labor did to make sure there was strong and sustained investment in remote housing. We got to the tip of the iceberg by including homelands in that new national 10-year partnership agreement.

The CLP members can continue to take selfies in the Barkly and claim the good victory of Territory Labor when it comes to remote housing. They have now turned their backs on urban centres in Darwin and Palmerston where they had a strong victory and where CLP members are spouting how great it is to be the local member. They turned their backs on Territorians regarding the injection of housing that is needed in urban centres and particularly in regional centres.

We continue to advocate for and focus on the huge housing need in urban and regional centres. The Labor opposition does not understand how the CLP can scrap national targets that would make the Northern Territory a better place.

When we invest in housing it is an investment in infrastructure, local businesses, the pipeline of works, opportunities for trainees and apprenticeships and more opportunities to address social issues and help grow the economy locally. Scrapping urban and regional housing targets—social and affordable housing in particular—is a backwards move by the CLP government, which claims to be a government of action.

The trend of the CLP government has become concerning, and we are only six months into a four-year term. The CLP said it had a plan for education, but all it gave us was truancy officers. We love the fact we have great people in education, but we want to see a holistic approach, not just a one-policy program from the Education minister.

We would love to see a full range of diverse programs and investment in education because long-term investment in education means more opportunities for Territory kids and young people, growing the economy, providing jobs and allowing young people to thrive and flourish. If they choose to leave the Territory, hopefully they will choose to come back and have careers and families here. Investment in early years like the three-

year-old preschool—which Labor committed to and the CLP has now scrapped—is an investment in the future for young people.

The short-sightedness of the CLP government is becoming more and more concerning, and we will continue to fearlessly point that out as the Labor opposition, but we will also ask questions the CLP government refuses to answer, outline or plan for. We will draw attention to that in our role because we know Territorians are counting on us to do just that.

The CLP said that it has a plan for healthcare; the only thing, unfortunately, we have seen from the Health minister, the Member for Barkly, is him running scared and hiding from the possible protest of regional and rural doctors. Any decision about future healthcare in the Northern Territory by the Health minister is crickets. It would be great to see the CLP government's vision. Does the Health minister have a vision for how we will invest in the health and wellbeing of Territorians? We are yet to see and hear.

The CLP said that it has a master plan for Corrections. Today we were fortunate, honoured and privileged to have many Northern Territory Corrections officers in the gallery of the people's parliament. Unfortunately, so far all we have seen the CLP do in its term of government is drive prisons and Corrections staff to breaking point. We have also heard directly from the Northern Territory Police Association about the toll it is taking on police and Corrections staff who are working in overcrowded watch houses.

We acknowledge that prisons are not supposed to be comfortable places for prisoners—that is one of the key lines the Chief Minister has thrown away in the last two weeks—but we are asking for safe and protected environments for the professional hardworking staff who do that job day-in, day-out. It is not just a lifestyle choice; this is a professional job that Corrections staff do, and we want to make sure they are supported.

The police are also doing tough times, with extra responsibilities that have been placed on them by the CLP government. We are not seeing any point where Corrections staff or police officers who are minding the watch houses are given any type of relief or reprieve by the CLP government, so we continue to ask those questions.

There is a real fear—not just for police and Corrections staff but also legal services—that someone will die in one of the watch houses. There is a real fear that Corrections staff will be injured or worse on the job because they are at breaking point.

We look forward to hearing what the CLP government will do. The catchphrases, glossy media releases, social media tiles and smiling faces do not go further to having proper plans in action—and, as we are talking about the economy and the legislation at hand, the economic toll under the new government's regime.

The payroll tax does not scratch the surface to properly support local businesses in the Territory. Many businesses based outside the Territory will benefit, but the Labor opposition's clear focus is what benefits will come to the Northern Territory, particularly Territory businesses.

We want more from the CLP government apart from its couple of announcements, which seem to be devoid of the robust and solid economic plan and vision that most Territorians are expecting from the government. Six months in, we are still yet to see it.

Territorians want more from their government. So far, the CLP's go-slow approach of scrapping things and winding up important five-year contracts for community and social services without any warning—which are now on the brink of being cut by 31 March for things like the Back on Track program. That is for youth diversion and getting young people back on the right track; it is scrapped. That is disappointing.

We will see nothing improve in the Territory in the long run if the short-sightedness of the CLP government remains.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2024 is a flagship component of rebuilding the Territory's economy, as we well know. Payroll tax, in short, is a tax on jobs. We have been clear for a long time that payroll tax reform is needed.

We heard a tirade from the Opposition Leader about a wish list of things she should have done when she was in government but did not. It is incredibly rich of her to say that we did not go far enough when we are lifting the payroll tax-free threshold for the first time in 13 years.

Those opposite say we did not go far enough; they did not go at all. Their car did not even start! They were broken down with the bonnet up; they had no tools and were all sitting around saying, 'Bloody hell, what do we do now?' That is where Labor was and is still.

Labor members come here today, when we are reforming payroll tax for the first time in 13 years, and make potshots that lack any semblance of credibility; it is embarrassing. She again is peddling their rubbish about big interstate businesses benefiting. She clearly has no idea how payroll tax groupings work and has not read the legislation, which clearly explains that if you are a business with a payroll over $7.5m there is no payroll tax relief.

Again, the detail does not matter to Labor members. It is pretty easy going on that side of the Chamber because they do not care and do not have the capacity to understand these things, which is why they never did anything about it when they were in government. For eight of those 13 years, when she was in government, it did nothing.

We are proud of these reforms and the fact that we are excluding apprentice and trainee wages. I note how she likes to raise comments from over 10 years ago, which was a different time and place in the Territory. We have skills shortages across the board, an entirely different workforce demand pressure and an entirely different economy for that matter. Ten years ago, things were looking pretty bloody good compared with now. It is entirely different, and it shows the ignorance of a group of people who have no care about the detail and what it takes to grow an economy, otherwise they would have done it. She talks a lot about a lack of vision, yet this is the same person who stood for years in this parliament and spruiked a long list of what they would call major projects that were never delivered.

Labor's idea of governing is to tell Territorians what publicly funded projects it would do, only to deliver none of them or just the ones that benefit no-one, like the art gallery in State Square that will be built for the next two years at an exorbitant cost to the taxpayer with no tangible benefit to the community when we could have spent that money on anything other than an art gallery. To rub salt in the wound, the Labor government built an art gallery in Darwin that we did not need while Bullocky Point museum is being chronically underfunded and crumbling into the ocean and while people in Alice Springs have been waiting a decade for their art gallery.

In Darwin we will enjoy an art gallery that we never wanted and cannot afford while people in Alice Springs continue not to have a gallery. This is the level of incompetence we are dealing with, and the ramble and rant from the Opposition Leader shows how divorced from reality Labor really is. It clearly learnt no lessons following the election.

For her to come in all puffed up about undergrounding powerlines as if this would happen is unconscionable. This is a $60m saving. It was described to me by people from Power and Water that Labor's plan would never deliver underground power to people's homes. What a joke. That $60m we saved would have removed one strand of cable running down Bagot Road where there would still have been other cables hanging up. We saved $60m for that. You are right, Opposition Leader; we did not fake it to Territorians that we would deliver something that you would never do, and you continue to peddle that rubbish to them. You had eight years; if you wanted to do it you could have but did not. The reality is you never would have.

A bit like Question Time, the Opposition Leader is leading with her chin but devoid of detail. Unlike Labor, payroll tax reform is real. Everyday businesses will feel and see a tangible impact from this. About 200 businesses stop paying payroll tax straightaway, and hundreds of other businesses will have important payroll tax relief. For the everyday Territorian, this means running a business with more skin in the game than anyone. Territory businesses can spend that money on diversifying their business; increasing the type of services they provide or products that they produce; increasing their staff; and making sure they are incentivised to bring on more apprentices and trainees, which we desperately need in the Territory. Their wages will now not form part of that cap.

The threshold was originally set for the Territory in 2009 at $1.25m. It crept up ever so slightly in 2011 to $1.5m but has not changed since, and—gosh—the world has changed in 13 years. There has been wages growth and everything else, which means the number of staff you could hire in 2011 for $1.5m was a lot more than the number of staff you can hire in 2025 for that same amount.

This is deliberately sneaky; it effectively lowers the payroll tax threshold by stealth. That was Labor's methodology because it knew that wages growth meant that businesses were pushing into that threshold sooner and tipping the scales. Labor wanted that because it was desperate for revenue as it was blowing the budget books every day of the week. Labor members could not bring themselves to do what was required to

grow our economy, so their only way to bring revenue to Territorians was through increased taxation. This was taxation by stealth under Labor.

That ends because payroll tax is a tax on jobs, and the private sector is much better than the public sector at spending that money, investing in our future and growing our economy. I have given a number of speeches recently in which I talked about the increase in public sector spending over the last decade or two. It has gone up by 190% compared with private sector investment of 33%. That is way out of kilter.

I return to the art gallery out the front or the $8m we magically had to find for the Motocross GP. Labor did a deal in the dying days of its government to spend more than $5m to bring the grand prix to the Territory, signing us up and locking us in but not funding the track to anywhere near the amount required. I think it was budgeted at $1.6m, and it has come in at more than $8m. More than that, the track needs to be removed and put back every year. These are the types of deals Labor did for eight years. That is the level of unwinding and unpicking we must do while simultaneously advancing the Territory forward.

A legacy has been left to us, but payroll tax will not be part of that. We will not allow this to go on any further. It is a regressive system. It is not acceptable. We can do better, and the private sector will be better off spending that money.

It sends a message to this country that the Territory is a good place to do business because we will be the most competitive jurisdiction on a payroll tax basis, and that counts. I was on a national media program last night and said, 'Come to the Territory. Do business here. Take that opportunity.' When you match that with our $50,000 home-building scheme it paints a prosperous picture, particularly for younger people living in Sydney and Melbourne who would never be in the position to afford their own home. This is a game-changing opportunity that this government wants to put our heart and soul into to get it right. It is not just payroll tax; we have a range of other measures and regulatory reform.

I go back to the incompetence of the Opposition Leader. I do not know what she thinks vision is; to her, vision is listing projects that will never happen and hoping someone believes her. That is not vision. We understand what businesses need and will deliver certainty so that they can invest. That is why we are doing this payroll tax reform. That is why the Territory Coordinator legislation will be introduced tomorrow. That is why we are scrapping third-party merit reviews. That is why the Approvals Fast Track Taskforce will report to us in June so that we can remove unnecessary red tape. That is why we are making these important regulatory reforms.

You do not need to under-promise and over-deliver; you can just do your job and create an environment where people can achieve their aspirations and dreams for the future. We are going down the road of creating the environment where everyday Territorians, no matter where they live, know that the decisions for their lives are in their hands. The decisions are there to be made for the individual.

We will give everyone an equal opportunity to succeed in life and achieve their dreams. We will create the framework so that where you live is safe, there are jobs and opportunities for everyone, you can have a good life and you can raise your family the way you want to with the values that you believe in. That is the Territory we are building, after eight years of devastation under Labor. That is a Territory where people can move forward.

Payroll tax is one piece in that puzzle. It could save some businesses $22,000; imagine what you could do with that as a small business. So many small businesses have already come to us excited about what they will do. Some have their sights on employing more staff; some have already employed more staff. They are excited about the opportunity.

For other small businesses nearing that threshold in the next couple of years, there is relief on their faces because embarking on a payroll tax journey is a whole other level of running a business, having a family and all those other things. To give up-and-coming businesses a bit of relief where they do not have to turn their minds to that hurdle anymore, where they can continue to grow, do what is right for their business and deliver their services and opportunities for Territorians—the relief on their face is priceless.

People will make investments. I spoke to a business owner who cannot wait to purchase a new piece of equipment for her cafe. The excitement and new opportunities for that business are real. You can take that to the bank; it is tangible, meaningful and important.

Frankly, with the way Labor spent Territory taxpayers' money it should be refunding businesses for the payroll tax that government collected because it is a disgrace. We uncovered $1.1bn in budget blowouts and a range

of projects it contracted the Territory into that have unfunded ongoing operational expenditure. Our hands are tied, and we must find money from that from somewhere.

Going back to the Opposition Leader's point about not building 11,000 homes in whatever arbitrary timeframe the Albanese government decided that the Lawler government just agreed to—you are having a go at us about how we will spend more money on Corrections. On one hand, you stand in front of the Corrections officers and talk about how tough their job is, yet you are worried about how much we will spend to fix it.

We are not worried about how much money it will take to fix it because it must be done. This is a crisis that requires a crisis response; that is why we have the Corrections master plan. We will put it in the budget for all to see. It will all be there for Territorians to understand just how much Labor neglected that system. It will be a substantial amount of money, but there is no avoiding it. It would not even be an issue if we did not have so many ridiculous monuments Labor built, would it, Minister for Corrections?

There was $12.7m for the Nightcliff Police Station; the bus stop that moved and was moved again; the shadeless shade structure; the playground at Myilly Point that has a slide and a swing; $26m for the car park next door; and the list goes on.

We are proud to be cutting payroll tax for small businesses. It is a fantastic step forward for our government, and it means a lot. We have been listening to the concerns of the business community, and we can clearly see in our economic results that something must change.

We make no apologies for delivering reform and change, as Territorians did not elect our 17-strong government to do more of what Labor was doing. In fact, they put us here to do the exact opposite. They sent Labor walking for an important reason: it lost touch with the community's expectation and let crime get out of control. Our economy was in freefall, and our lifestyle was being ripped out from underneath us. The Territory became a place that those of us born here or who have lived here a long time could hardly recognise. We had packed up family and friends, said goodbye to them and cried with them as they moved interstate. We came to hear that story every day.

We will fight for this Territory because we believe in the future of this place and will do whatever it takes to make sure our systems are strong; our budget is under control; our spending is purposeful and deliberate; that we meet our election commitments and promises to Territorians; and that we focus on our key areas of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle because that is what we have been put here to do.

In four years Territorians will look back and judge us on our actions. That is what they should do. If we stick to our plan, life in the Territory will be better for everyone. That is what we are working towards. The year 2025 will be remembered as a year for delivering action, certainty and security for all Territorians. We have outlined our plan on how we will achieve that. Payroll tax reform is one critical component of rebuilding the Territory's economy.

I thank the Treasurer and all Treasury staff—the Under Treasurer and the team—for pulling this together. It is a key milestone for us. The waiver started on 1 January. Making this law will mean, come 1 July, our payroll tax reforms are in full swing. Territorians will be better off for it.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2024 aims to alleviate the pressure on small and medium businesses and to simplify the process for hiring apprentices. As a small business owner in the Territory for more than 25 years, this sounds like a great idea, but as someone who cares about the whole Northern Territory and is now in this Chamber making law, I have serious questions.

According to the Auditor-General's November 2024 report, more than three-quarters of NT revenue is from the Commonwealth and only one-quarter is internally generated. Payroll tax is a significant contributor to this vital revenue. We have not heard anything about where the money to replace this will come from.

This is not just a matter of taxation; this money directly supports essential services and keeps the Territory functioning. Without a concrete plan to replace this revenue, we are not rebuilding the NT economy; we are dismantling it further.

We have heard the government's claim that cutting payroll tax is part of an effort to stimulate the NT economy, but there has been no explanation on how it plans to replace this income or how the return on this significant decision will be measured. Cutting payroll tax without a clear plan for a replacement is not responsible

economic management. It is nearly impossible to assess the effects of tax cuts, making it difficult to guarantee that they will actually result in meaningful economic development.

The people of the Northern Territory deserve more than vague policies and wishful thinking. They deserve a detailed transparent economic plan that identifies where the revenue to replace payroll tax will come from, ensuring that essential services and the stability of the Northern Territory are not jeopardised.

Last week we heard the Treasurer's plan, yet there was no mention of how the loss of payroll tax revenue will be addressed. If we are to trust the government's proposal to remove the NT debt ceiling, we must first trust that it is responsibly managing the Territory's finances.

The government provided us with no clarity on these economic decisions, so we are left in the dark about how funds are being managed. For instance, we still do not know what happened to the $60m defrauded by companies through the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum scheme. This is Territory money, and people have a right to know where it is coming from and where it is going.

Economic decisions affect the lives of real people. Without evidence supporting the removal of a crucial revenue stream, like payroll tax, I cannot overlook the lack of clarity and transparency in the government's approach to these changes. It is our responsibility to ensure that we do not make short-term politically driven decisions that could have long-lasting consequences for our economy and public services.

The CLP repeatedly claims that it wants to rebuild the economy, but we have yet to see a comprehensive long-term strategy that recognises the role of government and community services in our economy. The primary goal of our economy should be to protect and serve the people and the environment of the Northern Territory.

I firmly believe in transparency and good governance, as we heard from the Chief Minister. It is not enough to simply debate policy in this Chamber; we must ensure the processes behind our policy decisions are clear, robust and accountable.

If we are to make changes to payroll tax, we need a broad sustainable plan that moves beyond political slogans. We owe it to the people of the Northern Territory to ensure that any changes made are in line with the long-term needs of our community and economy and are based on sound economic principles and planning.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I support the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2024.

During the election the CLP put forward a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. Our plan ensured Territorians would know, without question, what they could expect from a CLP government, and we are delivering on the commitments we made. We are creating a safer Territory, stabilising and rebuilding our economy and restoring our amazing Territory lifestyle.

Restoring the Territory's reputation as a competitive destination to live, work, visit and invest in is a key focus of our new government. An important element of rebuilding our economy is to look at how we can support our Territory's small to medium business enterprises.

As the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, I met with business owners, where it became apparent that one of the impediments to growing their businesses was the looming threat of hitting the payroll tax threshold. The commitment made by our CLP government in the lead-up to the election was well received by those businesses.

As a significant disincentive to expanding their businesses, it was also a disincentive to taking on trainees and apprentices. Local businesses are critical to our agenda of rebuilding our economy; they are the engine room of our economy. They are the heart of our community, and their success is founded on their ability to adapt to changing environments, being agile and responding to the many challenges faced by businesses in today's economic climate.

This legislation is a critical component of the work being undertaken to achieve that goal. Raising the payroll tax-free threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m for small businesses and exempting apprentice and trainee wages from payroll tax is a clear demonstration of our commitment to provide Territory businesses with the capacity to expand and create more jobs without the need for additional capital.

It sends a clear message to those who may be considering a move to the Territory that our government wants people to invest in the Territory. We want to see existing business owners thrive and prosper and, through initiatives such as the increase in the payroll tax-free threshold, encourage new businesses to make the Territory their home.

Speaking with local business owners, it is clear this initiative will have a positive impact, with comments made along the lines of:

'The changes to payroll tax is a great incentive to support local businesses'.

'We have a range of employment opportunities and, like many businesses, we are keen to get more people on the books. This makes it possible without us having to breach that payroll tax-free threshold.'

'We employ a number of apprentices in the electrical and refrigeration field. The ability to have their wages exempt from payroll tax means we can potentially increase the number of apprentices and trainees we take on. These skillsets are hard to come by, and if we can get involved and build a local workforce, this change will allow us to do that.'

'With the exemption coming into play later this year, it is another incentive to hire more apprentices to support our young people and support our workforce.'

These are the thoughts and views of businesses in the Territory—local businesspeople who have built their lives here and have their families here. Unlike those on the other side would have us believe, they are not businesses working interstate. They are on the ground employing Territorians and providing opportunities into the future.

It is estimated the changes in this legislation will eliminate the payroll tax expense and administrative burden for about 200 employers, delivering savings of up to $68,750 per year for eligible businesses while reducing the amount of payroll tax paid by another 380 businesses with wages between $2.5m and $7.5m.

Sometimes people think that you have to be a large business to generate a wage bill of that capacity; however, as a previous business owner with a small business, our wage bill sat in the vicinity of $5m a year with just 20 employees. You do not have to be a large business to generate large wage bills.

It should be noted that the changes will not only positively impact small to medium business owners by delivering savings and exempting trainee and apprentice wages from payroll tax but also will provide a framework that will support and encourage our Territory homegrown businesses to offer traineeships and apprenticeships to young people, showing them that there are fantastic opportunities for them to build careers in the Territory.

Too often when I was campaigning I came across families who felt they had no choice but to encourage their children, as they were finishing high school and were looking to advance their careers, to leave the Territory. The opportunities that can be created through this reform will provide us with an opportunity to increase the capacity for our kids to see a solid career path at home in the Territory.

As Minister for Workforce Development and for International Education, Migration and Population, this component is particularly welcome as it provides capacity for Territory businesses to actively participate in the growth of our skilled workforce. The bonus for them will be that if they come from outside the Territory, they can also achieve the Australian dream of owning their own home with our homeowner grant scheme, which is another example of how the Territory is leading the way.

This payroll tax reform gives the Territory the most attractive payroll tax regime in the country, sending a clear message to the rest of the country that the Territory is the place to come if people want to build their own business. These changes show that the CLP is doing what it takes to rebuild the economy and make the Territory the place to do business again.

Unlike those on the other side who are happy to tax Territory small businesses into the ground, our government is giving them the oxygen they need to grow and thrive. It shows that we have listened to Territorians. Combined with our commitment to reducing red tape, cutting the burden and giving businesses a fighting chance, this payroll tax reform delivers our commitment to make the Territory the place of choice to live and work.

The Territory was the least competitive environment for small businesses when those on the other side were at the wheel, but no more. We will become the most competitive place for small businesses to thrive.

In creating an environment of growth and opportunity for our local businesses by encouraging small business growth through reducing red tape and the financial burden through payroll tax, the flow-on benefits of the reform to the Territory will be significant. As our economy grows, our population will grow. As our population grows, we will become a more attractive place for investment. As investment increases, our economy will diversify and build, leading to further increases in our population, which will lead to greater connectivity with the rest of Australia and the world.

We have said repeatedly that for the Territory to thrive we must grow our population and encourage business and investment to come here. We need to support smaller business owners who have dedicated their lives and made the commitment to be in the Territory to grow their businesses further. That is what this payroll tax reform will do. I commend it to the Assembly.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, first I wish you, all Members of the Legislative Assembly and the wonderful DLA staff a happy new year.

I support the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2024. It is a great measure to support small to medium businesses, which I have openly declared many a time to be the heart and soul of our economy.

I am proud to be part of a united 17-member government team that shares that sentiment. It has taken many steps to create a business environment that will enable small to medium business to grow and employ more local people, including trainees and apprentices.

I am philosophically against payroll tax in any form. I said many times when I was the deputy CEO of the Chamber of Commerce that I and many local businesses consider it an oxymoron of a tax because payroll tax is essentially a tax on employment, and all governments should encourage and incentivise employment, not tax it. Pragmatically, I understand why governments, including the NT Government, need to levy payroll tax. It is one of the few sources of own-source revenue available to governments, along with resource royalties and gambling revenues.

This revenue is required to help provide essential services to our community, including health, education and policing services. The challenge for all Territory governments is how we grow our local economy to bolster our levels of own-source revenue and reduce our future dependence on federal government funding. Growth in own-source revenue from sources other than payroll tax may present opportunities for the NT Government to provide additional support for our essential frontline services and further relief from payroll tax in the future.

Imagine if we could become the first jurisdiction to have zero payroll tax. What a wonderful marketing tool that would be to attract new business and investment in the Territory and to support existing businesses to flourish and employ even more people. Unlike my Labor counterparts, I do not live in la-la land. The removal of payroll tax cannot happen soon, given the parlous state of the budget inherited by our government. However, I urge members to hold that vision and aspiration for the future.

Ultimately, this all depends on growing our local economy. The CLP government is enacting a plan to support growth in five critical sectors in our economy: tourism; Defence; agriculture; gas; and mining. I will leave it to the Chief Minister and other ministers to highlight the advances we are making in growing these sectors; however, I draw attention to the growth and opportunities being facilitated by this government in the onshore gas industry, including developments in the Beetaloo basin.

The CLP has always stood up for and supported the Territory's gas industry. This industry can now proceed with certainty under our government. We have this incredible resource here, and thousands of Territory jobs can be created from it over the next 20 years. I leave it to the Deputy Chief Minister to update the Legislative Assembly on our progress to realise this opportunity.

My disappointment is that this opportunity to grow own-source revenue could have commenced five years ago, but this opportunity to improve our economy for the benefit of all Territorians was stymied by a shambolic Labor government that did not know if it was Arthur or Martha.

It was a schizophrenic Labor government that pandered to the Greens and the whingeing from institutions like the disgraced Environmental Defenders Office to delay decision-making for misguided political and ideological purposes at the expense of the Territory economy and its community.

In the lead-up to the last election, former Chief Minister Eva Lawler found her road-to-Damascus moment and correctly decided that gas was truly part of our future, but I cannot say that all her colleagues—including some opposite—shared that view. The Greens and Independents rallied against it. Good grief! Imagine if the election had delivered a Labor–Greens coalition government. We would have a government of total inertia. Thankfully, Territorians voted for a growing economy and not one of decline.

Some people believe that the former Labor government was a one-trick pony, a phrase I heard the Leader of the Opposition say. This is incorrect; it was a three-trick pony. Not only did the Labor government destroy our economy; it also demolished our community safety and ruined the Territorian lifestyle. Territorians sent a clear message at the last election that they had enough. They wanted a government that had a plan focused on action, certainty and security, which the Chief Minister eloquently shared with the Assembly.

Enough of the past; let us move to the future. I have said before and say again that Territorians deserve and need a credible opposition. I am always willing to offer constructive suggestions as to how it can achieve this. I saw a glimmer of hope in the last sittings when two opposition members joined our united 17-member government team in voting for legislation to provide minimum mandatory sentences for assaults on frontline workers, but obviously some members were still deaf to the widespread community support for that legislation.

I have free hearing test vouchers that opposition members should avail themselves of so they can truly start listening to the community. As I am a caring and sharing person, I make the same offer to the Independent members of the Assembly.

Despite recent confused ramblings by the Opposition Leader in an interview with Katie Woolf—which left the community confused about whether she fully understood why Labor was voted out of office—and Labor's recent descent into toilet wall poster policy announcements, I encourage the Opposition Leader to rally her divided team, take a strong humility pill and get behind this government's plan to truly grow this economy with a strong focus on action, certainty and security. Unanimously supporting this Bill will be a step in the right direction, and I urge those opposite to do so.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I support the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill. It was interesting to hear the Opposition Leader's words; on one hand she supported our payroll tax Bill, but on the other hand she was trying to rewrite history regarding a significant number of issues. I will come to that later.

Since 1 January 2025 payroll tax has been waived for more than 100 employers with taxable Australian wages of $2.5m or less. From 1 July 2025 the *Payroll Tax Act 2009* will be amended to increase the tax-free threshold to $2.5m and exempt wages paid to apprentices and trainees from payroll tax. The overall changes will increase the payroll tax-free threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m, giving the Northern Territory the highest payroll tax threshold in Australia. This is something to be proud of, as it is a first in Australia and is being delivered by the CLP government.

During the election the CLP promised Territorians that businesses with wages below $2.5m will pay no payroll tax. This amendment delivers this promise and will save eligible businesses up to $68,750 per year.

As I said earlier, exempting trainees and apprentices will provide further savings for businesses and encourage them to invest in growing the number of Territory apprenticeships and traineeships.

It is estimated that the changes will eliminate payroll tax expense and administrative burden for about 200 employers, whilst also reducing the amount of payroll tax paid by another 380 businesses with wages between $2.5m and $7.5m.

These changes show the CLP is doing what it takes to rebuild the economy and make it the place to do business again. We are delivering certainty and security for businesses in the Northern Territory.

It was interesting to hear the Opposition Leader try to suggest that in some way reducing payroll tax may not only have an impact on our budget but would impact the building of houses in the Northern Territory. She tried to single out the Barkly, suggesting that we already neglected Tennant Creek and the Barkly when it came to rebuilding houses. As we know, Labor has been kicked out of government. It had eight years governing the Northern Territory, from 2016 to 2024, but in reality was in government for 19 of the last 23 years. To suggest that the CLP is not delivering houses in the Barkly and somehow link that to the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill was quite astounding.

I have said many times that the Barkly was significantly neglected under the Labor government. I talk about the Barkly, but Labor was a disaster across the Northern Territory.

I will point out a couple of things about housing in the Barkly. A number of promises were made by Labor to deliver housing in the Barkly. In 2020 the Labor government said it would build houses for Health staff, with 12 units at the hospital. At that point, it committed about $3.5m. In 2018 it also committed $5m to build a new alcohol rehabilitation facility in Tennant Creek. The critical thing about building a new facility in Tennant Creek is that Labor said it would free up 19 public houses to be used for this alcohol rehab program. Of course, we are in 2025. Prior to being kicked out of government, not one shovel had hit the ground in six years. Those 19 houses were not freed up. The 12 units for the Health staff were not delivered.

Importantly, under the Barkly Regional Deal, which was signed on 13 April 2019, Labor also agreed to build 20 social and affordable houses in Tennant Creek. You must do the basic sums; the reality is that 51 homes in the Barkly were never delivered.

The Opposition Leader tried to rewrite history by suggesting that the CLP would now be relaxing some of the targets and not delivering because of this Payroll Tax Amendment Bill. It is important to put it on the record because we cannot have the Opposition Leader trying to rewrite history of the failed Labor government. All we heard from the Opposition Leader was things she wanted to do. She was in the Cabinet for eight years and obviously had no influence because Labor simply failed to deliver all the things she spoke about today. Labor has been left with just four members, with an Opposition Leader who knows that Labor has significantly failed over the last eight years in government. Coming in here and rewriting history, Opposition Leader, is simply unacceptable.

We are delivering the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill. It will give small businesses the opportunity not only to employ more people, expand their business and focus on employing more apprentices and trainees; it will drive the economy.

We went to the election saying that we would reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore the Territory lifestyle. This is part of our plan and what we committed to in 2024; it is what we are delivering. Opposition Leader, to talk about what is not being done in the Barkly, trying to rewrite history—the fact remains that under Labor 51 houses were never delivered in the Barkly region. People are still living in tin sheds and overcrowded housing because of the incompetence and inability of Labor to deliver what it should have been delivering over the eight years it was in government.

The CLP is delivering. Just three weeks ago I was at Canteen Creek and Epenarra; eight new homes are being built at Canteen Creek and four at Epenarra. The people living in those areas are thrilled that new houses are being built in remote areas.

I thank the Treasurer for bringing on the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill. It delivers our election commitment. We have delivered several election commitments in the first 100 days of government. Not only do I support the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill, but I regard this as valuable legislation that will give small businesses the opportunity to invest further in the Territory and employ more people, including apprentices and trainees.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr YAN (Treasurer)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all the speakers who participated in this important debate. I will highlight a couple of facts. I listened with a lot of interest, as the Chief Minister, the Member for Barkly and other members did.

The Member for Barkly is right; the Leader of the Opposition was trying to rewrite history, but I thank her for her support of this bill. It is important reform that has been a long time coming. I note that during her entire input the Leader of the Opposition spoke only for a minute or so on the tax reforms and spent the rest of the time talking about all sorts of things that were not related.

I will touch on the way the Leader of the Opposition was gaslighting the people of the northern suburbs on the undergrounding of the power. Labor brought this promise in from one of its members leading into the election and allocated only $60m to it. As the Chief Minister said, that would do only a small proportion.

My understanding from the people at the Power and Water Corporation is that it would have been only a small part along Bagot Road. The promise made to the people in the northern suburbs was that they would not see powerlines outside their houses, which is a load of garbage. Unfortunately, that was never going to happen. The Leader of the Opposition said we were planning this before the election, which is untrue.

Funnily enough the Power and Water Corporation came to me well after the election once we were in government and I was the minister responsible. It said that the money there to do this was not enough and that it is not a viable project. That is when the decision was made to stop it. It is unfortunate—I will say that to the people in the northern suburbs—but to do this properly we need a lot of money that we do not have.

In response to the Leader of the Opposition, there are only winners with this legislation. We are cutting red tape for small businesses and encouraging employers to upskill Territorians by creating jobs for trainees and apprentices.

The forgone revenue from these reforms is $17m over 2025–26; however, any forgone revenue is a small cost to pay for the support and growth of our local businesses. The Chief Minister touched on this as well during her contribution. That support for small and medium businesses will help grow our economy.

In her contribution the Member for Johnston asked where we would recoup the revenue. There are only winners in this legislation. We may lose $17m in revenue, but we will see increased productivity, business growth and revenue from other royalties through different parts of our economy that will well and truly offset the $17m we will forgo in revenue per annum.

I thank the Member for Port Darwin because she understands small business. She spoke at length of how this will benefit small and medium businesses across the Territory.

Member for Karama, I do not like tax either, but tax is a necessary evil. We need that revenue to provide those all-important things we need in the Territory. It goes towards our social services, those nice-to-do things and pieces that help our community.

Mr Maley: You love tax.

Mr YAN: Yes, yes. I hate to say it, but I like tax now. Unlike the Member for Karama, I never used to like it, but I do now. In all seriousness, tax is an all-important part of our revenue stream for the Northern Territory. We need that revenue stream, but by forgoing that $17m we will recoup it in spades through the growth of small and medium businesses.

I thank the Member for Barkly. The Leader of the Opposition was trying to rewrite history. I listened incredulously to some things she said. Those things were within her power as a member of the previous Cabinet. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition also sat in budget Cabinet at some stage. There was the ability to address these issues. In eight years the previous government took our debt from $2bn to $11.6bn. We as a government must work to turn that around. I thank all the members for their contributions.

These measures will come into effect from 1 July 2025 and will benefit business with wages between $1.5m and $2.5m, which will now be exempt from payroll tax. Businesses with wages between $2.5m and $7.5m will also see reduced payroll tax.

For businesses that employ apprentices and trainees, wages paid to these employees will now be exempt from payroll tax. These reforms will encourage more businesses to take on new staff under apprenticeship and traineeship programs. We suffer a deficit of tradies in the Territory. This is one way we can make that move towards growing our own tradespeople in the Territory.

I am pleased to note that these changes will result in the Territory having the most generous tax-free threshold and annual deduction in the country. This sends a clear signal that this government is committed to supporting local businesses and attracting new employees to the Territory.

These changes will save small and medium businesses thousands of dollars per year, many of which are locally based and employ local workers. They are the people who then invest in our communities.

This Bill delivers the government's election commitment to reform payroll tax as part of our plan to support Northern Territory businesses and workers.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REPEAL OF MINIMUM PRICING) BILL
Serial 10

Continued from 28 November 2024.

Mr MALEY (on behalf of Tourism and Hospitality): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, today the Country Liberal Party government will be planting a flag in the sand to make it clear to all Territorians that, in its view, the experts and evidence on alcohol harm minimisation do not matter. Regarding alcohol harm reduction across our community, the CLP will ignore the experts.

The CLP government is flagging to the Northern Territory community that it wants to make it cheaper and easier for people who struggle with alcohol to access the thing that causes them and their community members the most harm.

Today the CLP government is admitting that, in the absence of a plan to combat alcohol-driven harm across the Northern Territory, it is happy to throw the floodgates open and let more alcohol flow to those who least need it and who will only cause more harm to themselves and the community.

It is a fact that the most effective measures we have seen in the NT to combat harm caused by alcohol pricing policies are not a one-trick pony. Those measures need to go hand in hand with other measures and be independently monitored by health experts.

One of the measures was the price point. The CLP Perron government introduced the Living With Alcohol Program in 1992, which was funded through an excise tax on all beverages containing more than 3% alcohol. The CLP Perron government went even further and added an additional levy of 35c per litre to cask wine. Ultimately, the High Court struck down this policy in 1997 when it effectively removed the power for states and territories to levy fees and taxes on alcohol products.

An evaluation at the time showed that the program led to reductions in acute and chronic alcohol-related deaths, per-capita consumption and road trauma hospitalisations. At the time, the cask wine levy was shown to significantly reduce alcohol consumption in the Territory. This highlights that we have grappled with alcohol harm in the NT even in the early days of self-government.

We have the benefit of decades of knowledge, experience and experts to draw upon when it comes to pulling levers to reduce alcohol-induced harm. We need to learn from that experience and use the most effective measures we can so that all Territorians can still enjoy a drink responsibly, and we achieve a reduction in alcohol-related harm.

It is a dark day and a shame that the Country Liberal Party will walk away from its history in politics and legacy in alcohol-harm reduction, instead choosing to remove a measure that is proven to reduce alcohol harm.

Territorians deserve a safe and vibrant community, and they deserve a government that wants to deliver this.

When Labor was returned to government in 2016, we promised Territorians that we would take an evidence-based approach to tackling alcohol-related harm. Our response to the Riley review provided a clear road map to a safer Territory.

Our former Labor government made tough decisions to deliver generational change through our extensive alcohol reforms. Famously—or infamously—the Member for Brennan, who is now the Attorney-General, said, ‘Does the Labor government understand that it takes a generation to make generational change?’

I can assure the now Attorney-General that we know what we say and do in this place matters. We were indeed targeting long-term generational change because there are no quick fixes to alcohol harm minimisation in the Territory.

There is no quick fix or easy way to stop alcohol harm in our community, which is why a suite of measures needs to be in place. There needs to be accountability, data and statistics, but there also needs to be change when it comes to the level of alcohol harm in the Northern Territory. That was the approach we took as the former Labor government.

As part of this, we undertook to implement 119 of the 120 Riley review recommendations. We re-established the independent Liquor Commission; created a community impact test for significant liquor decisions; extended sobering-up shelters up to 24 hours a day in Darwin; extended and expanded a moratorium on all new takeaway liquor licence venues in the Northern Territory; and rewrote and modernised the *Liquor Act* so that it better reflected the needs and expectations of the Territory community.

This was a huge body of work, and it took many years to complete some of these recommendations. We also re-established the Banned Drinker Register after the CLP scrapped it. Unfortunately, we are now hearing *Back to the Future* language, with the Chief Minister saying that she and her team will also scrap the Banned Drinker Register in their new term of government.

The former Labor government empowered police auxiliary liquor inspectors (PALIs) to conduct point-of-sale duties in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and my home town of Katherine.

We gave the Police Commissioner emergency powers to suspend liquor licences for up to 48 hours; the Liquor Commission the power to hold public hearings; and police additional powers to engage in undercover operations regarding alcohol harm minimisation in our community.

Most importantly, our Labor government introduced a minimum unit price which ensured that a standard drink could cost no less than $1.30. There should be no doubt about it; the issues the Territory faces every day with alcohol harm are both regulatory and market issues.

Alcohol is taxed. It is a legal commodity, and therefore it is priced. In an environment where higher alcohol content does not necessarily lead to higher prices, it is not possible for a state or territory to introduce volumetric tax, so the floor price was seen as a fair and equitable measure.

At the time it affected only the cheapest products that had a proportionally high alcohol content. When the legislation was debated, we heard nothing from Lia Finocchiaro; there were no objections or contributions—crickets.

To the credit of the then Opposition Leader, he contributed to the debate and ultimately supported the Bill on behalf of the CLP opposition. The legacy of the CLP occasionally supporting evidence-based policy was still alive thanks to the former Member for Daly, Gary Higgins.

Unfortunately, that legacy lasted only 70 more days. The contribution that Lia Finocchiaro made to the debate at the time was to roll her own leader and introduce a Bill to immediately repeal the floor price. The work that was put into alcohol policy did not matter to Lia Finocchiaro, the now Chief Minister; she was interested only in playing petty politics at the time. Unfortunately, it looks as though things have not changed.

The CLP hated the fact that an idea legislated by a former Labor government could work in practice, be evidence based and be shown on the record by independent health experts to minimise harm. The CLP's pettiness has gotten us to where we are today, debating something that has been proven to work only to be scrapped because the CLP says, 'We do not think it is working'. The CLP Attorney-General, the Member for Brennan, can claim that this is just a cost-of-living measure or that somehow letting problem drinkers access cheaper alcohol in our community is a good thing, but the CLP has opposed this legislation for as long as it has existed simply because it was introduced by a former Labor government.

The dishonesty from the Attorney-General in this debate has been shocking. She told the Chamber that scrapping the floor price will save Territorians money, yet just yesterday the Chief Executive Officer of Hospitality NT confirmed that Territorians are not likely to see any changes to the price of alcohol at their local bottle shops. Where are the savings—the cost-of-living measure—that the CLP promised Territorians? It is not telling Territorians the truth.

Yesterday the Chair of the Alice Springs Liquor Accord spoke about the takeaway liquor operators and those interested in community safety in Alice Springs voluntarily vowing to keep the floor price in place and even look at indexing it. That is from the liquor accord in your home town, Madam Speaker. The government is not listening to the experts, the key industry body and the crucial relationships with the liquor accord in Alice Springs about the desire to keep the minimum unit price for alcohol in place. Although the government decided not to show any leadership in this space, it was fantastic to see that the industry will take leadership on its own.

The floor price should be judged by the effect it has and not by the CLP government's spin. Independent research conducted by health experts shows that the introduction of the floor price was associated with a

14% reduction in alcohol-related assaults in the Northern Territory; an 11% reduction in domestic and family violence assaults; a 21% reduction in alcohol-involved domestic and family violence assaults; and a 19% reduction in alcohol-related emergency department attendances. Meanwhile, the only alcohol measure the CLP spruiked was to scrap the floor price for alcohol.

In 2020 the first evaluation of the MUP (minimum unit price) found that it had been associated with significant declines in total alcohol wholesale supply per capita; alcohol-related assault offences per 10,000 people; the number of protective custody episodes per 10,000 people; alcohol-related ambulance attendances per 10,000 people; alcohol-related emergency department presentations per 10,000 people; the number of alcohol-related road traffic crashes resulting in injury or fatality per 10,000 people; and the number of child protection notifications, protection orders and out-of-home care cases. The CLP continued to oppose the floor price despite all the data and evidence at hand.

A 2022 evaluation found that the MUP reduced the consumption of cask wine, leading to a reduction in total alcohol consumption; there was no evidence that it negatively impacted the industry or the Territory economy; it had been effective in reducing the supply of low-cost high-volume alcohol products; it was a cost-effective measure; and it should be retained. There is clear independent evidence showing that the floor price has been working in the Northern Territory, yet the CLP government still opposes it with no data or evidence to suggest why it is making this decision.

Mr Edgington: Show us your evidence.

Ms UIBO: Unfortunately, the Member for Barkly must have his ears closed because I just went through two pages of evidence. I am happy to send that to his office so he has that data, as the Minister for Health and the Minister for Alcohol Policy should have it at hand …

Mr Edgington interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20. I find it concerning that the Member for Barkly seems to have an obsession with interjecting when the Leader of the Opposition is on her feet. He has continually done it throughout the day.

Madam SPEAKER: Please stop your interjections, Member for Barkly.

Ms UIBO: I am extremely concerned that we have a CLP minister in charge of Alcohol Policy and Health whose office has not done the right thing and asked his department for clear data and independent work.

I received a copy of an open letter that was sent to the Minister for Health and for Alcohol Policy—the Member for Barkly—signed by health experts across the Northern Territory. It clearly stated the alcohol harm-reduction statistics related to the floor price in the Northern Territory.

I am concerned on behalf of Territorians—even more so now—that the Member for Barkly fails to do his job as a CLP minister to inform himself, which will inform government policy and in turn what impacts Territorians when it comes to alcohol harm in our community.

I would love to see what the Member for Barkly will say about the alcohol harm-reduction policy that will be backed by the CLP government. If I could find the data and the statistics, I am sure a minister of government could find it too. I will be happy to be proven wrong, but I hope the Member for Barkly is well informed and doing the job he is paid for as minister. His parliamentary colleagues are banding together to vote to scrap this important policy that has been proven by independent health expert data to reduce alcohol harm in the Northern Territory.

If consumption rates go up and the social evils of alcohol abuse increase in the Territory, the CLP government will need to take responsibility for that effect. What we do in this place matters for the rest of the Northern Territory, even though those opposite might feel it does not because they are petty and like to play personal politics.

If the CLP scraps the floor price today without having a single pricing measure to replace it or an alternative idea or policy to reduce alcohol harm in our community, it will have devastating effect in not just in Darwin or Palmerston but also the rest of the Northern Territory—which I am sure CLP members are not concerned about because they have not spoken about it.

The CLP policy platform is incredibly shallow. This is further evidenced by how little the CLP has to offer the community beyond its tired, catchy and ill-informed slogans.

The Member for Barkly might like to listen to this: the research that has been conducted by the independent Menzies School of Health Research shows that the social cost of alcohol harm per year is about $1.4bn in the Northern Territory. This evidence points to lowering costs linked to alcohol consumption, while hospitalisation and assault rates decreased when the floor price was introduced.

Rather than scrapping the floor price, the CLP government can look to improve the floor price by following the evidence of the experts. The Member for Barkly should have a copy of that open letter, because it was addressed to him in his portfolio. We are not above working together on this matter. We want to make sure the ideas and policies that have been proven to work, are evidence based and reduce harm in communities across the Northern Territory continue. We want to work with the government to make sure policy proposals, programs and regulations are improved when it comes to alcohol management, but we are not seeing a single idea, policy, piece of regulation or legislation that goes to the heart of the issue in the Northern Territory, which is the unacceptable level of alcohol harm.

The Riley review recommended a floor price of $1.50 per standard drink, and our former Labor government went to $1.30. Experts have consistently said that indexing the floor price would be beneficial to ensure continued deterrence against high-risk drinking behaviours and would contribute to better health and safety outcomes for individuals and communities. If increasing the floor price per standard drink increases the effectiveness, the Labor opposition is happy to work with the CLP government to raise it. We will also give the CLP government the credit it deserves if it chooses to do this because if we listen to the experts, we will see the benefits for the rest of the Territory.

We would also like to work with the government to support and achieve better outcomes in broadening data collection methods on how alcohol is consumed and what data can be used to better support government policies. If there is one lesson we can pass on to the CLP government, it is that any measure regarding alcohol harm reduction should always be community and expert led.

Scrapping the floor price is a policy that those on the front line, our community and even industry experts are asking the CLP government to abandon, because they know it will have a detrimental impact on our entire Territory community. Evidence from other jurisdictions, such as places overseas like Scotland and Canada, show that maintaining an indexed alcohol pricing policy contributes to long-term public health and safety improvements, which is what we desperately need in the Territory.

The floor price is a practical and evidence-based approach that supports reducing alcohol-related harm and fosters healthier and safer communities. Keeping the floor price would send a positive message to the Territory community and the industry that the CLP government is committed to reducing alcohol consumption and improving public health outcomes.

Scrapping the floor price sends the wrong message to the community and reinforces the perception that the CLP government does not value the community or experts in the field and decisions the community and experts want their government to make. Scrapping the floor price will only cause more harm across the Northern Territory, and the CLP members better be prepared to hang their hats on that one. The Territory Labor opposition believes it will lead to a less safe community across the NT. We will see more issues caused by cheaper and more accessible alcohol, and the CLP will leave a devastating legacy over the next four years.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I support the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill.

One date etched in my mind clearly is 17 July 2022; for those in this parliament who do not know, that was the date the Stronger Futures legislation ceased in the Northern Territory and my home town of Alice Springs was unimaginably impacted by alcohol.

I find it extremely hypocritical that the Leader of the Opposition would speak about things that were ‘proven’ to have worked after she was a part of a government that saw the Stronger Futures legislation cease. We were in this parliament, and new legislation was put in its place …

Members interjecting.

Mr BURGOYNE: In Alice Springs we faced crime and domestic violence-related incidents like we had never seen because of the former Labor government. It was shocking and ignorant of the former government to do that.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay, let us restore some order in the room.

Mr BURGOYNE: Stores had a 300% increase in sales. There were health experts speaking to the government of the day and telling them not go ahead with what they were about to do, but they chose not to listen.

I want to make clear why the repeal of this legislation is the right thing to do. If this legislation was working when we saw the Stronger Futures legislation repealed and when it ceased, there would have been no harm in our community. This floor price would have saved us all; that is not what happened. The floor price did nothing to protect Alice Springs and nothing to protect the people in the 179 domestic violence-related callouts police responded to in the first week after those restrictions ceased.

Today we are ensuring the legislation is amended. We have the right settings in place. We are continuing to resource police with additional resources so they can be at the ready. We are ensuring we have the settings right into the future. PALIs are a huge part of that. Previously, under the Labor government, PALIs were not prioritised. In my community of Alice Springs, I want to make clear as it relates to alcohol policing that there are these things called restricted areas; they relate to the former Stronger Futures legislation. If you visit Alice Springs from a restricted area and try to purchase alcohol, a police officer—a PALI—will ask you where you will be drinking it. If you cannot prove you have an address where you can legally consume that alcohol, you will be refused service.

These PALIs are the single most effective policy we have seen in Alice Springs for years. With the ceasing of Stronger Futures, we saw their role become null and void. The only way we could ensure restricted locations across the Northern Territory were enforced was by having a police officer there checking that person's identification, knowing restricted areas and the communities where they were not allowed to consume alcohol—whether they be town camps or other living spaces—and refusing access to that alcohol.

By not prioritising PALIs and by removing the Stronger Futures legislation, we saw an avalanche of alcohol throughout our community. Alcohol sales went up by 300%; DV went through the roof; property offences went through the roof; and one of our own health experts, Donna Ah Chee, spoke on radio at the time about the impacts to her when her home had been broken into and the people allegedly yelled at her for alcohol.

This is what we experienced when alcohol policy was dictated by the former Labor government. This culminated in a visit from the Prime Minister of Australia in January 2023. He told then Chief Minister, Natasha Fyles, that they needed to put back in place these restrictions so that alcohol was not readily available to those who unfortunately were abusing it and then harming others—vulnerable people in our community. It impacted our community more than any other, and we lived through this crime wave and domestic violence; it went on for six months.

Let us remember that date, because I will never forget it—17 July 2022. The Prime Minister of Australia had to fly to Alice Springs six months later in January to ensure the restrictions previously in place were brought back and peace and justice was restored somewhat—I say that because Alice Springs has borne the brunt of the reputational damage ever since.

I am convinced that this Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill will not impact my community because it was still in place when Stronger Futures ceased. The fact that alcohol was limited by $1.30 per standard drink did not stop people from accessing it. We have heard stories from people in remote communities paying upwards of $500 to $600 for bottles of spirits. Money is not the issue here. The value of this alcohol is not the issue.

Our government is doing this now to ensure that those who are chronically addicted to alcohol will have mandatory help to assist them through this process. We are working to get these systems and policy positions right.

The Minister for Health knows this better than anyone; his community of Tennant Creek has been immeasurably impacted by alcohol, as has my community of Alice Springs.

The former Attorney-General reportedly owned shares in a wholesale company that supplies alcohol to bottle shops. It is one of many stories that came from the former Labor government when this debate was centred on alcohol policy.

Property offences in Alice Springs doubled over the eight years of the former government; they went from around 4,000 incidents a year to a peak of 8,000 incidents a year as a direct result of failed alcohol policy by the previous Labor government. Alice Springs has struggled to rebuild its reputation since these incidents.

I would not support a Bill that I thought would negatively affect my community again. I support the Attorney-General in what she is trying to do with this Bill. Changing the alcohol floor price will not make one bit of difference. We have heard time and again—and we have seen with our own eyes—the impacts of previous decisions regarding this issue.

I support the Bill and know that the Attorney-General, along with every member of this government, will work tirelessly to ensure we have the policy settings right. I have seen what happened when the previous Labor government got it wrong, and I never again want to relive that.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about cask wine sales. We cannot even access cask wine in Alice Springs, for those who are unaware. As a result of floor prices, people moved on to hard liquor. This has been lived out through real experiences.

I, like many members of this Chamber, attend my Clean Up Australia Day and have done so for years. Over an extended period of time we have seen, as a result of floor prices, people moving from alcohol like beer to hard liquor. As a result, there is more smashed glass and impact on people. In some cases, people are resorting to hand sanitiser in Alice Springs. How can we say a floor price is working at all if people are accessing other forms of alcohol such as hand sanitiser that is then leading to other health implications? This has been seen in my home town; our local reptile park owner, Rex, has spoken to me many times about it. He has entire bins full of hand sanitiser that has allegedly been consumed in our town. It leads to serious health concerns.

I lived through bad alcohol policy by the previous Labor government. I do not want to see that again. This government is ensuring, through these amendments, that the bad history of the previous Labor government is not continuing. This will be a positive thing for our Northern Territory, and I support this Bill.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, many people in my community have spoken to me about this Bill. They are bewildered as to why the CLP wants to introduce these amendments to repeal the minimum unit price.

Why would we want more access to cheap grog in the NT? Whose benefit is it for? It is not to benefit disadvantaged communities who are vulnerable to alcohol advertisements or struggle from addiction. This is to benefit the alcohol industry, plain and simple.

The MUP is known as a population-wide measure. These measures are generally known to be most effective when looking at reductions in harm from substances. They are much more effective than individually targeted measures, such as the BDR. There is ample statistical evidence to back this up. This success is why the alcohol lobby does not like it. It impacts the industry's bottom line.

The MUP was introduced with a specific purpose, which is to minimise the harms associated with high-alcohol, low-cost drinks like cask wine. The MUP targets a minority of drinkers—those who will abuse as much of the cheapest alcohol as they can buy. It works.

There is evidence to show that after the MUP was introduced, cask wine consumption in Darwin and Palmerston close to halved. Why is the CLP on one hand saying it wants to address nuisance public drinking and, quote, 'problem drunks' but then on the other hand scraps the measures that work?

When considering the success of the MUP, it is important to note that the recommendation was to have it at $1.50 per unit of alcohol. This was watered down to $1.30 after a backlash from the alcohol lobby. Furthermore, this price was not indexed to inflation. As inflation has increased, this has rendered the floor price much more ineffective than it otherwise would have been.

From a peer-reviewed paper titled 'The market matters: Shifting the minimum unit price', written by Taylor and Livingston, I quote:

Indexation should also be properly implemented to maintain the impact of the policy; stronger wording may be required in the legislation to avoid the lack of indexation seen in the NT. Political and industry resistance will make implementing another MUP difficult, it is important for public health advocates to ensure that the version implemented is as effective as possible. The NT's MUP was an intervention with a limited impact due to its implementation …

If you think it is not working, do not remove the MUP. Instead, strengthen it so it can work as intended. Then you will be doing something positive to help reduce crime, domestic violence and the pressures on our emergency departments.

Alcohol is a major driver of crime. The CLP's entire platform was to reduce crime. What about acknowledging that there is evidence that shows that after 2018, at the time the minimum unit price was introduced, the rate of alcohol-related offences decreased?

As recently restated by Menzies in an alcohol policy briefing, alcohol-related domestic assaults were down by 26% in Darwin and Palmerston after the MUP was introduced, yet we are introducing a measure that will make it easier to access cheap, high-alcohol content drinks, which drives violence. Strangely, we do not seem to be hearing any talk about investment in alcohol and other drugs prevention and rehabilitation.

What about domestic, family and sexual violence? Alcohol is a driver of the horrific rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in the NT. It does not cause it on its own, but it exacerbates it. Most DFSV offenders in the NT courts were intoxicated at the time of the offence. If we know there is a way to effectively reduce the purchase of low-cost, high-alcohol content products in the NT, why would we not do it?

We just heard the Member for Braitling talk passionately about the terrible impacts of the sudden removal of the Stronger Futures policy. I agree; that was a catastrophic move and had terrible impacts on communities, but that is not related to the MUP. No single strategy or policy we try will work on its own. We need to tackle this from many different angles. The MUP should be one of many strategies.

Let us talk about health. I hope the Minister for Health would be deeply concerned about the health impacts of removing the MUP. There are significant health impacts alcohol has on people in the NT. This includes various types of cancer, heart and lung disease, higher risks of stroke and more.

It also creates a significant burden on the public health system. Evidence shows that after the MUP was introduced, the number of alcohol-related ED presentations per capita decreased significantly across the NT. After the introduction of the MUP in 2018 there was an immediate 2% to 9% reduction in acute alcohol-related admissions and then a 4% to 9% reduction in chronic health-related admissions.

These numbers may seem small. It is important to note that the MUP was not as effective as possible. It is only one of many strategies we need to use. The statistics are not just made up out of thin air; they come from real data and experience in our hospitals. Less hospitalisation is not just good for these individuals; it is good for our overworked hospital workers, other people who are accessing health services and taxpayers.

On the government's website there is a published report titled Investigating the Introduction of Alcohol Minimum Unit Pricing in the Northern Territory. The 12 experts who wrote this report found that the introduction of the MUP has been associated with significant declines in total alcohol wholesale supply per capita; alcohol-related assault offences; protective custody episodes; alcohol-related ambulance attendances; alcohol-related emergency department presentations; sobering-up shelter admissions; alcohol-related road traffic crashes; and the number of child protection notifications, protection orders and out-of-home care cases.

We want to see a safer and healthier Northern Territory. Our constituents have placed their trust in us to do this. How can we, in good faith, remove the mechanism which does exactly this?

Some people like to say that all drinkers are being punished for the failings of a minority, but this is not true. MUPs were not designed to affect other alcohol like beer; the numbers show that. There is little evidence that the MUP directly affects the consumption of other drinks. Let us be clear: everyday consumers are not affected by the MUP, but they bear the brunt of the negative impacts of alcohol consumption.

Alcohol costs taxpayers in the NT over $1.4bn every year, with $100m in health costs, $74m in road crash costs, $288m in crime-related costs, $170m in child protection costs; and $653m in premature death costs. By removing the MUP, with the costs of alcohol harms, most Territorians are losing out. Do you know who is winning? The alcohol industry.

I spoke nonstop about NT's integrity crisis during the election campaign, and it resonated with so many voters. The influence of the vested interests in our governments and on policy is a stain on our democracy. The alcohol lobby is now embedded in the Chief Minister's staff. We have not had adequate answers on how the CLP's alcohol policy was developed and who was consulted.

The CLP is throwing out a measure that has demonstrated impacts on lessening some alcohol-related harms but has the potential to be more successful if implemented properly. It is doing this due to pressure from the alcohol lobby and its desire to be seen doing something different from Labor. It is shameful.

I said this last year in the Chamber, and I will say it again; it is so simple: if you give people access to much cheaper alcohol, they will drink much more of that alcohol, so alcohol-related harm like assaults and presentations to emergency departments will increase. It is blindingly, infuriatingly stupid. If you pass these amendments, you are showing Territorians that you do not care about preventing crime, about their safety or about the health and environmental risks of alcohol, and you do not listen to evidence. All you care about is keeping big industries happy and pocketing the political donations you get from them.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support the repeal of the minimum unit price. This decision, a key election commitment of our government, marks a departure from the previous administration's approach and reflects our commitment to finding effective, evidence-based solutions to the complex issue of alcohol-related harm.

The minimum unit price, introduced in 2018, mandated a minimum price of $1.30 per standard drink for low-cost alcoholic beverages. This policy, a recommendation of the Riley review, was intended to curb excessive drinking while minimising the impact on moderate drinkers. However, as we have seen over the past few years, the minimum unit price has fallen short of its objectives.

The minimum unit price has proven to be a blunt and ineffective tool. Firstly, enforcement of the minimum unit price has been lacking. Shockingly, despite the existence of numerous grocery store liquor licences, not a single compliance check or minimum unit price-related condition was imposed during its implementation. This lack of oversight fundamentally undermines the policy's effectiveness.

Secondly, the minimum unit price has led to unintended and concerning consequences. Data reveals an alarming trend: while the sale of cask wine decreased, consumption of higher-alcohol content beverages surged. This suggests that the minimum unit price merely shifted consumption patterns towards more potent and potentially harmful alcohol products.

Thirdly, the minimum unit price has failed to deliver any measurable benefits in reducing alcohol-related harm. In fact, during the minimum unit price's implementation we witnessed a concerning rise in alcohol-related assaults and emergency presentations. This underscores the ineffectiveness of the policy in addressing core issues.

Finally, the minimum unit price unfairly penalised all Territorians, forcing them to bear the brunt of higher alcohol prices without seeing any tangible reduction in alcohol-related harm. This burden disproportionately affects responsible drinkers and those struggling with the cost of living.

It is crucial to note that the Northern Territory stands alone as the only Australian jurisdiction implementing the minimum unit price as an alcohol harm-reduction strategy. This isolation raises questions about the policy's validity and effectiveness.

Frontier Economics, on behalf of the Northern Territory Department of Health, prepared a report titled Evaluation of Minimum Unit Price of Alcohol in the Northern Territory. A pertinent question arising from this report is whether the minimum unit price can be definitively identified as the sole contributor to any observed decrease in alcohol-related harm. The evidence presented in the report does not support such a conclusion. Instead, it suggests that although the minimum unit price may have contributed to a reduction in alcohol-related harm, its impact cannot be isolated from other factors.

The report highlights that the observed effects were influenced by multiple interconnected interventions and external events. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted alcohol consumption patterns and related harms, with changes observed post minimum unit price introduction being relatively minor compared with the pandemic's influence. This complicates efforts to attribute reductions in harm to a single policy measure, such as the minimum unit price.

Other concurrent policy measures, including the Banned Drinker Register, police auxiliary liquor inspectors, local licensing agreements and regional variations in the implementation of these initiatives further confound the data. As a result, the available evidence does not establish a causal relationship between the minimum unit price and a reduction in alcohol-related harm.

The report also notes that while the minimum unit price reduced the consumption of certain alcohol products, such as cask wine, there was a corresponding increase in the sales of other types of alcohol, most notably spirits. This evidence of substitution indicates that reductions in one category of alcohol consumption were offset by increases in another, further complicating the assessment of the minimum unit price's effectiveness as a standalone measure.

The minimum unit price also failed to address the realities of alcohol access in communities struggling with alcohol abuse. The thriving black market for alcohol in Wadeye, where a bottle of Bundaberg rum can fetch exorbitant prices, demonstrates that price is not a deterrent for those determined to access alcohol.

Additionally, critics argue that the minimum unit price primarily benefited bottle shop profits without effectively tackling the underlying issues of alcohol-related harm. This raises concerns about the policy's true impact and its potential to exacerbate existing inequalities.

Our government's decision to repeal the minimum unit price signifies a shift towards a more pragmatic and evidence-based approach. We are committed to tackling alcohol-related harm, crime and violence through targeted community-driven initiatives. We are implementing new public nuisance drinking laws that empower police to address alcohol-related offences in prohibited areas. Additionally, we are developing community-led alcohol management plans that focus on addressing the root causes of alcohol misuse.

We also recognise the importance of alleviating cost-of-living pressures. We expect liquor businesses to pass on the cost savings from the minimum unit price repeal to consumers, ensuring all Territorians benefit from this change.

The repeal of the minimum unit price necessitates amendments to the *Liquor Act 2019* and the Liquor Regulations 2019. These amendments will remove provisions related to the minimum unit price, including the definition of 'minimum sale price' and 'sale price' and the operationalisation of the minimum unit price.

Specifically, Part 5 of the *Liquor Act 2019*, which deals with minimum pricing, will be repealed. The definition of 'standard drink' will be updated, and penalties related to minimum unit pricing violations will be removed from the Liquor Regulations 2019.

Although the minimum unit price effectively targets harmful consumption and mitigates alcohol-related health inequalities, its effect on public drunkenness and crime is less definitive. Most studies suggest the minimum unit price is part of a broader suite of policies needed to address alcohol-related harms comprehensively.

In addition, there was discussion about data and expert advice regarding this. As a person who worked in the hospital, especially in Northern Territory and as the director overseeing alcohol and other drugs services in the Top End region, I have seen that the quality of the data is not something we can rely on. This is because we are still using the data system that most likely was developed 20 to 30 years ago. The ability of the system is not something we can take on, which is a real concern. One solution was Acacia, which Minister Edgington has clearly outlined issues about over the past few weeks. That was the promise from the previous government to healthcare workers to ensure we have clear data to address alcohol-related issues and a range of issues where the data is relevant. There are concerns when it comes to the data and expert advice based on the current data. We have had discussion in this Chamber about how we can use specific datasets that complement our discussions.

The minimum unit price has not demonstrated public health benefits, especially for reducing harmful alcohol consumption and its associated harm. In addition, it must be combined with support systems for those with severe alcohol dependence and other policy measures to address broader societal impacts.

The repeal of minimum unit pricing, in conjunction with these complementary strategies, signifies a commitment to evidence-based policymaking that considers the broader social and economic context of alcohol consumption. The government's focus on collaboration with communities, stakeholders and experts further emphasises this approach, suggesting a shift toward a more inclusive and participatory model for addressing alcohol-related issues.

By focusing on targeted interventions, empowering communities and addressing the underlying social and economic factors contributing to alcohol-related harm, we can create a safer and healthier Northern Territory for all.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Mr Deputy Speaker, this Bill will remove the minimum unit price for alcohol in bottle shops. Currently the unit price is set at $1.30 for a standard drink. This is quite a low price; it allows someone with $10 to buy 7.6 standard drinks. These drinks are likely to be cask wines that can be purchased this cheap.

Since the floor price was introduced, I have had no complaints to me or my office about this small restriction. Generally, when there is less alcohol available I hear the community relax because there are less issues caused by alcohol. This was also the case during COVID when the police in Nhulunbuy saw a huge reduction in alcohol-related crime when there was limited access to bottle shops and bars. We all know that when there are alcohol restrictions we feel some benefit for the community.

Aboriginal Congress recorded its data in a paper titled 'Effects of Alcohol Policy on Alcohol related harm in Alice Springs, 2015 to 2024'. This paper states:

> *The Minimum Unit Price … of $1.30 per standard drink was significantly associated with Territory-wide declines in alcohol-related assaults; protective custody episodes; alcohol-related ambulance attendances; alcohol-related ED presentations; alcohol-related road accidents; and child protection notifications.*

An independent evaluation concluded that the MUP did not lead to a shift to the consumption of spirits. Congress stated that the alcohol reforms of 2018 and those introduced in 2023 were both associated with the fall in the rate of serious crimes, such as murder, attempted murder, manslaughter and driving causing death. Alcohol-related mortality has dramatically improved in the Northern Territory since sustained action to reduce supply and other reforms began, falling from 3.1 times the nation's rate in 2017 to only 1.2 times the national rate in 2022.

The trends are consistent, showing how the evidence-based alcohol policy has reduced high consumption of alcohol in the NT and thus reduced hospitalisation, violence, serious crime and mortality. The independent research body Menzies has also produced research for across the NT that shows the same in its data—when there is less alcohol available there are real improvements for the community.

This legislation is not needed. There is no good reason to remove the floor price. Few people in the Northern Territory want to buy alcohol that costs less than $1.30 per standard drink.

We need government attention on support for people who need help. I want detox and rehabilitation programs on country for people who want to come home and be safe on country. Darwin no longer feels as though it is a safe place for people. I call on the government to build houses and provide services on country so that we can bring our people home.

We need to also support homeland towns, not just the overcrowded hub towns. Resources need to flow to our homeland towns because these are the safest places for our people to be and where we are most likely to see strong education outcomes, the possibility for business development and economic independence and much-improved physical and mental health. If the government works with First Nations people to build sustainable homelands we will see positive outcomes across the NT and communities healing.

The current plan of throwing people in jail will continue the intergenerational harm. It will create the next Stolen Generation. It will create the next children of the intervention. This will become the incarcerated generation. This government is doing irreparable damage to First Nations people that will not heal us; it will create bigger problems.

There are big issues in the NT that must be addressed. They need big solutions, not simple solutions, and partnership, respect and hard work.

This Bill removes the floor price for alcohol. It will increase the amount of alcohol in our community and do nothing to address the issue of alcohol-related harm. We must see more action from this government to address the real problems so that there are long-term solutions. All I am seeing is a quick-fix government that will cause long-term harm.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, along with my Territory Labor colleagues, I oppose this amendment Bill.

Simply put, this Bill will see the return of ultra-cheap alcohol to the Territory and make it easier for those struggling with addiction to access the substance which causes them the most harm. As the Leader of the Opposition said, this Bill plants a flag in the sand and makes clear to Territorians that experts and evidence do not matter to the CLP when it comes to the harm caused by alcohol.

We know that the Territory has an alcohol problem. The Territory has the highest rates of alcohol consumption and of alcohol-related harm in the country. Alcohol-attributed death rates are 10 times the national average for Aboriginal Territorians and twice the national average for other Territorians.

We have decades of knowledge, data and experience that alcohol is a contributing factor in much of the criminal behaviour across the Territory. Alcohol has a terrible impact on antisocial behaviour, leading to violence on the streets and in the home. It leads to chronic health conditions and entrenches poverty and homelessness.

It is beyond belief that the government of the day wants to make high-level alcohol products, such as cask wine, more accessible at a cheaper price to problem drinkers. The evidence is overwhelming, and the warnings are clear. This government's decision to scrap the minimum unit price is reckless, dangerous and cheap politics, plain and simple.

Reducing alcohol-related harm is a complex problem with no silver bullet to fix everything. That is why the former Territory Labor government developed and introduced a suite of actions and reforms to address alcohol-related harm, including the minimum unit price, which was one of the recommendations from the Riley review.

The minimum unit price requires alcohol retailers to sell liquor at or above $1.30 per standard drink, a price point that was chosen to target cask wine consumption in particular. Cask wine, as those in the Assembly are aware, has a high alcohol content and is associated with many harms; however, alcohol retailers can charge less for cask wine than other alcohol products. This happened in the past.

The minister said that repealing the minimum unit price is a cost-of-living measure, but that is a hard sell, especially with the social and economic cost of antisocial behaviour and the strain on health and emergency service workers and department budgets. The minimum unit price did not raise the price of beer in the Territory. For example, a slab of Great Northern would cost about $53. The slab includes 21.6 standard drinks, so if the floor price of $1.30 per standard drink was applied, the slab would cost roughly $28. There is not a change in the retail price because the minimum unit price is not a tax; it is a floor price. This argument also applies to spirits and cider. Where is an individual saving money?

We heard from the head of Hospitality NT this week on ABC radio that this change would not reduce the price of alcohol in the NT. This is the argument that Gary Higgins, the then Opposition Leader, made when the CLP initially backed the minimum unit price Bill before backflipping for political trickery, which still applies today. The minimum unit price was implemented to ensure that retailers could not sell high-level alcohol for less than $10 or $12.

Since its introduction in 2018 the minimum unit price has consistently delivered measurable lifesaving outcomes across the NT and has undergone multiple evaluations. Research outlined that since the implementation of the minimum unit price, cask wine and cider wholesale supply per capita declined. There has been a 21% reduction in alcohol-related domestic violence assaults in Alice Springs; a 14% reduction in alcohol-related assaults Territory-wide; a 19% reduction in alcohol-related emergency department presentations; and a dramatic drop in alcohol-induced deaths.

There is no evidence that the minimum unit price had a negative impact on the liquor industry due to there being no significant changes in the number of liquor licences. There is no evidence that the minimum unit price had a negative impact on the tourism industry or the amount that visitors spent in the NT.

Research made it clear that the minimum unit price has been successful in significantly reducing wine consumption. The CLP is trying to fool Territorians into believing that the minimum unit price led to the rise of spirits as an alternative for heavy drinkers. According to the research this is not the case because spirits sales began trending upwards two quarters prior to the introduction of the minimum unit price.

Furthermore, to date there is no direct evidence that the individuals who consume less cask wine are the same individuals who are consuming more spirits, as a substitute. According to research, substitution

generally involves a person consuming alcohol moving to the next cheapest liquor product, not the highest on the shelf.

The minimum unit price is not intended to target responsible drinkers, and never has been. The minimum unit price is a cost-effective approach, with minimal cost to government and Territorians. It shows positive returns through reduced harms to health and in community safety and public spending.

Drinking too much alcohol leads to many serious health issues like liver disease, heart problems and mental health struggles. This causes a lot of hospital visits and puts a strain on our healthcare system, taking away resources from other patients in need. With fewer people ending up in emergency rooms because of alcohol-related injuries and illnesses, hospitals have more resources available to treat other urgent medical cases. It is these same health professionals who witness the devastating impact of alcohol harm every day, alongside frontline workers, community leaders, organisations and researchers who are calling on the government to maintain the minimum unit price.

The evidence is clear; the experts are united. For those women, children and communities who will be adversely impacted by this reckless decision, we call on this government to listen and maintain the minimum unit price.

I will also speak about illegal alcohol sales in our remote communities, also known as grog running. The minister tried to link grog running and the CLP government's removal of the minimum floor price in her speech reading, taking a swipe at the residents of Wadeye along the way.

I also heard the Member for Sanderson talk about understanding the underlying problem and trying to link Wadeye residents with grog running, yet the Member for Sanderson has not once come to Wadeye or talked to community leaders to understand what the underlying problems are. I find it hypocritical that you come in and say that you speak to community members, but you do not go to Wadeye to speak to them. They will be here tomorrow, and I am more than happy to line up a meeting for you, minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind you to speak through the Chair, please.

Mr YOUNG: Grog running has dangerous consequences and causes extensive damage and harm to our communities. However, scrapping the minimum unit price will not impact the sly grog runners who seek to exploit some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Territorians. NT police know that spirits are the alcohol of choice for grog runners. It is nonsense that this CLP government thinks the answer to tackling grog running is to scrap the minimum floor price.

If the minister is concerned about grog running, the Territory Labor opposition would be happy to work with her and the Police minister on genuine solutions to stomp it out. These solutions include:

- targeted police operations and the use of technology to stop illegal alcohol sales and keep communities safe in remote areas

- working with Indigenous leaders, such as the Member for Mulka, to support their efforts to enforce community alcohol restrictions

- enforcing laws aimed at those who sell alcohol illegally so that they are less likely to continue these harmful activities

- effective alcohol management plans and well-managed social clubs in the communities that want them.

Together we can ensure a safer, healthier and stronger Northern Territory. I highly encourage all of us to keep the minimum unit price in place and provide more funding to appropriate health services, responders, organisations and community-led programs to tackle alcohol-related harm.

It is hypocritical for the Member for Braitling to attack us on the sunset clause for the Stronger Futures legislation, which he well knows was federal legislation sitting under the Liberal government at the time. He attacked us, saying that we are not listening to the experts, yet the members of the Alice Springs Liquor Accord say that they will keep the minimum unit price because they have seen the number of alcohol-related hospitalisations reduce. Health organisations such as Congress in Alice Springs have said that reducing the price of alcohol will have harmful effects on our community. Hospitality NT said that this will not reduce the cost of living or the cost of alcohol. The Member for Braitling is throwing stones at us, yet he is not listening to experts from his own community where he lives; he should be hearing those concerns from his community.

I note that we should be investing in proper alcohol-harm reduction and in a healthier and more prosperous Territory.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I strongly oppose the proposed amendment to remove the minimum unit price for alcohol in the Northern Territory. Given the amount of damage alcohol does to our community, I have significant concerns about the removal of any measures which can protect us against harm.

I note that in 2018 the then CLP leader was supportive of this measure to minimise the effects of low-cost alcohol on the community, noting:

> *It costs the government millions of dollars per year to deal with the effects of alcohol, and a disproportionate amount of police, emergency services and health resources are taken up dealing with problem drinkers.*

If a floor price reduces the harmful effects of alcohol by even a small amount we will all benefit. There is overwhelming evidence that this policy is working, and I stand with the many people who are actively preventing and responding to alcohol harms every single day. They are looking at the data and the reports and they are seeing the difference that this policy has made.

When we see things like a 19% reduction in emergency department attendances and a 14% reduction in assaults recorded by police, it is important to remember that these numbers represent real people—Territorians whose lives have been impacted. These figures reflect the tireless work of our frontline workers who are often stretched thin and burnt out but who are seeing their jobs made easier thanks to policies like the minimum unit price. These policies cost the government nothing to implement or maintain but work effectively to reduce harm and to save lives.

It is critical to acknowledge that the voices of those who do not stand to benefit financially from alcohol sales, those who are working to address alcohol harm, are united in their support for the minimum unit price. More than 200 Territorian leaders in health, including emergency department doctors and nurses, leaders of health organisations, alcohol and drug treatment services and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have signed a letter calling for this pricing policy to stay in place. They know that minimum unit pricing is an essential tool in addressing the alcohol harm that devastates our communities.

Unfortunately, we are seeing a great deal of misinformation spread about the evidence surrounding this policy. I have spoken to many people in my community and more broadly, and what they want is simple: they want solutions that work and policies that make a real difference. They want the truth. If you are wondering why there is so much conflicting information I urge you to follow the money. Alcohol companies have a vested interest in distorting the evidence because the minimum unit price threatens their profits. They will fight hard against any measure that does not suit the narrative they wish to promote, and we have seen this playbook before.

Previous research, including studies from our Territory, has shown some of the key tactics used by alcohol companies to undermine policies like the minimum unit price. These companies make unsubstantiated claims about the negative effects of such policies, promote alternatives that have no evidence to support them, misrepresent strong evidence and even emphasise complexity to create doubt. They want us to believe that alcohol is a problem for only a small minority of people when the reality in the Northern Territory is that even non-Indigenous people die at twice the national rate from alcohol-related deaths.

The truth is that pricing policies, especially minimum unit pricing, have been proven to reduce harm. They act as a counterbalance to the alcohol industry's tactics that keep heavy drinkers drinking at harmful rates. No single policy will solve all our problems, but the minimum unit price is a vital component in a comprehensive strategy to address the drivers of alcohol harm. That is why it is recommended as part of the National Alcohol Strategy by states and territories across Australia.

We need to support people who are struggling with alcohol addiction. We need treatment and support systems to help people break the cycle of harm, but we also need to ensure that the alcohol industry cannot continue to target vulnerable individuals with cheap harmful alcohol. Pricing policies like the minimum unit price protect our investment in treatment by making it harder for alcohol companies to prey on those who are most at risk.

It is worth noting that while there seems to be a lot of focus on the finer details of the data and reports surrounding the minimum unit price, the alternative strategies being pushed like public intoxication fines have

zero evidence to support their effectiveness; they have been shown to do nothing to reduce crime or alcohol problems.

I ask this government to consider the overwhelming evidence in front of us. The minimum unit price is making a difference, saving lives, reducing harm and helping to create safer communities for Territorians. Removing it will only take us backwards and undermine the important work it has done. Keeping it will cost us nothing. I strongly urge this government to listen to the health and community leaders who have called for the continuation of this policy and to prioritise the wellbeing of Territorians over the interests of the alcohol industry.

I am encouraged to hear from many across this Chamber that there is a shared commitment to tackling the great harm that alcohol causes to our community. However, a scattergun approach simply does not work. What we need is a unified strategy where every policy and process we implement works in harmony to effectively address our alcohol crisis.

That is why tomorrow I will be giving notice of a motion calling for the development of a comprehensive, evidence-based alcohol action plan for the Northern Territory. I greatly look forward to collaborating with all of those who have expressed their commitment to addressing this critical issue and working together to create a solution that will make a real difference for our communities.

Today in this Chamber we have heard many questions about data, evidence and research. The Opposition Leader and I referred to the open letter to the minister, signed by 230 experts on 16 October 2024. Leaders in health, community, Aboriginal and research organisations asked for the minister to engage, listen and consult with them. This letter was not responded to until 17 January this year—three months later—and the response was three short paragraphs.

I have been asked to read out the open letter, dated 16 October 2024, which I now do:

Dear Chief Minister,

Putting the Health, Wellbeing and Safety of Territorians First

We are writing to you to urge you to put the health, wellbeing and safety of Territorians first, by keeping in place measures that work to reduce harms from alcohol.

Alcohol causes a great deal of harm to far too many Territorians. Measures that control the availability and accessibility of alcohol, like the Minimum Unit Price and reduced trading hours for alcohol outlets have proven to reduce harm, which has been proven to save lives.

As leaders of health, community, Aboriginal and research organisations, we see the impact of effective alcohol policies in keeping our communities safe, and we strongly oppose any moves to remove these policies.

If these policies are removed or relaxed, we know we will see increases in violence against women and children, more people hospitalised because of chronic diseases and more deaths.

Please engage with us, listen to us and consult with communities who experience firsthand the impact of alcohol on our families.

We know all too well what happens when decisions are quickly made without community engagement and consideration of the evidence.

As you know from July 2022 to early 2023, restricted area legislative provisions were allowed to lapse across the Northern Territory despite warnings from community leaders of the increased harm that this would cause, and the result was a very significant increase in violence and other harm, especially to women.

At the recent National Cabinet meeting, alongside the Prime Minister and all First Ministers you acknowledged the role of alcohol in exacerbating violence against women and children and committed to reviewing alcohol laws and their impact on victim–survivors of family violence.

Your government's consideration of the removal of Minimum Unit Pricing will not make women and children in the Northern Territory safer. It will increase violence and harm. Any increase in trading hours will have a similar effect.

We urge you to abandon any plans to remove or relax these policies, and to prioritise the health, wellbeing and safety of families and communities

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was asked to read out the names, but there are 230. Therefore, in the interest of time, I seek leave to table this letter and to have the names incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to talk on this issue today, but I feel compelled to because this issue of alcohol has been the bread and butter of my political life for a long time. I have been around and watched the development of different alcohol strategies over many years. I am well placed to gauge and give a reasonable assessment of what has worked and what has not worked over the years from an Alice Springs perspective.

You cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach with alcohol strategies. Although people might think that a Territory-wide alcohol action plan—I heard the Member for Johnston mention that—sounds like a good idea, I do not think that works particularly well. When we look across the length and breadth of the Northern Territory over the last 20 years, we see that most regional areas and centres have had their own approach with the same sorts of ingredients but in different measures.

I have always said that the people of Alice Springs are the experts when it comes to alcohol policy. They are the experts in what works and what does not work. It is all very well for people to come in and make decisions and judgements regarding what will be best for us, but when you live and breathe it—there are people in this Chamber who know exactly what I am talking about for their own communities as well as mine in Alice Springs—it is a little offensive because who do not understand the community do not necessarily get it right or even close to right. That has happened in Alice Springs over the years.

There are some things that work. A range of things have been tried over the years. We do not need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to alcohol policy because there is enough experience and data to direct us to what works and what does not work.

I wanted to stand up tonight because there are things that different governments have done that have worked. The first one that comes to mind in Alice Springs is police outside bottle shops. We have had lots of different iterations of that over the years. It started as police outside a bottle shop and turned to PALIs and POSIs and God knows what else. The principle of having police stand outside bottle shops has been controversial, but it is probably the single most effective strategy at reducing alcohol harm and supply in Alice Springs. That is why successive governments kept it, despite the fact that at times it looks not to be as effective as it used to be. We know that with full coverage of our 10 takeaway liquor outlets in Alice Springs, it works.

It was an initiative brought in by the Henderson Labor government in 2011. I remember it because I was campaigning outside Pigglys, and I remember seeing coppers there and thinking, 'Wow, that's interesting'. It was the start of the whole concept of having police outside bottle shops.

We saw different phases. I remember former Chief Minister Gunner decided for a while that it was an operational issue for the police and coverage of those bottle shops lapsed for a couple of years. That caused a lot of destruction in the town. By doing that, by taking things away and stopping things, you get a clear picture of whether it works. In a backhanded destructive way, Chief Minister Michael Gunner demonstrated to us clearly that police outside bottle shops works.

Another thing that has worked well in Alice Springs is taking certain products off the shelf. Someone talked about how we do not have cask wine. We have not had cask wine in town for years. Limiting access to certain products is effective. Access to fortified wines was an enormous problem in town, maybe 15 years ago. The number of people presenting to hospital with pancreatitis was through the roof. By taking away access to fortified wine pancreatitis almost disappeared. The Member for Gwoja and people who were around at that time would remember that. It was a successful initiative. No-one has backtracked and said that we need greater access to fortified wines, because there is unquestionable proof that it worked. Having cask wine taken out of the equation worked too. There are lots of other examples.

Rolling forward many years, we have reduced opening hours in Alice Springs. Although it is not particularly palatable to most of us, most people agree it has provided an important break every week on Mondays and Tuesdays. Whenever I go away I wonder how we survive in Alice Springs when I experience the opposite, with almost unlimited opening hours of bottle shops elsewhere.

The point I am trying to make is that clearly some strategies work well and others do not. The underlying premise of all this is that alcoholics will access alcohol no matter what and in any way they can.

I have never been sold on the minimum unit price. An amazing liquor accord in Alice Springs has been operating for probably close to 20 years. Its members took it upon themselves many years ago to basically implement a floor price and get rid of really cheap, tacky grog. I remember years ago there was a spate of alcohol sold from plastic containers. I do not know whether people remember that. It was gross; there were pallets of chardonnay in plastic containers. The chardonnay sold for a couple of dollars and people were walking out with these containers; the proprietors could not keep up with it. The health implications were dire.

Through this accord the responsible bottle shop and liquor outlet owners got together and made sensible decisions about what products they should not sell and pretty much set a floor price, but I do not know that they called it that. We had a Claytons' floor price put in years ago by the local liquor accord. That group of people continues to demonstrate a great sense of responsibility and cooperation for the sale of alcohol in our town.

Going back to the idea of an NT alcohol action plan, it is the local plans that I think will work best. Get behind local people and local proprietors and come up with a plan that suits your community and the dynamics of it.

No matter what, alcoholics will access grog. I have always thought that the cost of grog is almost immaterial because of that. The comparison can be made with the sale of tobacco. I listened to a program on Radio National the other day about the dilemma of whether to further raise the price of tobacco. People were trying to weigh up the cost of it. The cost of increasing the price of tobacco is that more people are accessing chop-chop (illegal tobacco). That industry is flourishing. Bringing that back to alcohol in the Northern Territory, we all know in Alice Springs—I cannot speak for anywhere else—that if we increase the price of alcohol or make it inaccessible to any extent we will just bolster demand for illegal alcohol, which someone else already spoke about. Therefore, it is a balancing act.

I am open to anything that works because my life and that of everyone I know living in Alice Springs is being compromised pretty much by the effects of alcohol, so I do not have any prejudice or pre-existing view on anything that could possibly work. However, I have never been sold on the minimum unit price. I do not think it works.

A study was done on the impact of the floor price, probably four or five years ago, whenever it was brought in …

Ms Boothby: There was one in 2022.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That was only a few years ago. The study heralded it as a great success and people said, 'Look here; we have evidence.' However, at the same time the study was done, the Banned Drinker Register was reintroduced in its entirety and other things were at play. It would have been virtually impossible to pull apart all the strategies and separate them to say, 'The floor price is a success'. This research was published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, a credible periodical, yet reading it gave me an overwhelming sense of disbelief that people would buy the story being told; it was not credible. There is no overwhelming evidence for a floor price; I wish there was because we wasted a lot of time and energy on implementing this.

From my perspective, it has been of the lowest order when it comes to other strategies and ordering them in terms of effectiveness. The floor price, in my mind, is at the bottom. I am only sharing this—I am the Speaker, and I do not want to be controversial—to give you a perspective from someone whose life has been all about alcohol policy for many years, even when I was in local government and the last 15 years in this Chamber.

It has been about alcohol, the intervention and the introduction of the 2 pm opening hours for alcohol shops in Alice Springs. That is going back to 2008; I was part of that debate and the dissatisfaction generally when those things were introduced because they were so extreme and aggressive. I have been on the voyage and bandwagon for years and have come out the other end accepting that it is the number one problem facing us in Alice Springs and the Northern Territory. We must do whatever we can to address it, help people with alcohol problems, rehabilitate, find a different path and—more than ever—stop the scourge of alcohol and the access to alcohol to minimise harm. My contribution is just that.

In my view, the minimum unit price may have had some minor impact, but in the scheme of things from an Alice Springs perspective it has been insignificant.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. As the Member for Araluen rightfully acknowledged and spoke at great length about, any member who thinks that being

a Member of the Legislative Assembly will not involve talking about alcohol and the impacts of it over our time in this Chamber will learn quickly that it is something we will always talk about.

A number of contributions to the debate are worthwhile to explore further. Local alcohol action plans are incredibly important. I echo comments made in the Chamber about the local liquor accord in Alice Springs. I acknowledge the phenomenal work the liquor accord has done over a number of years, being insightful and innovative regarding a number of measures and techniques that could be adopted to respond to the community's concerns but also the aspiration and desire to see change. An accord exists in the Member for Fannie Bay's electorate as well; it is a group of people who are passionate and interested in coming together and working in this space.

There are many facets in the alcohol space. There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to addressing alcohol addiction and addictive behaviours or responding to alcohol-fuelled violence. That is an important topic to talk about.

To be clear, we must not allow people to use or blame alcohol as a cause of domestic, family and sexual violence. As we have heard time and again, it exacerbates the existing behaviour and intensifies the experience people and victims have from a partner, friend or community member. It does not excuse their bad behaviour; that still needs to be owned by the individual.

The government has the numbers, and this legislation will pass the Assembly today. I am not here to say that it will not happen or to put any other view forward, because we know it will pass. I am here to remind the government that not everyone gets everything right. I acknowledge that, but there are good initiatives that exist, and I encourage the government to keep them in place.

The Banned Drinker Register is important. While for some people it may be an inconvenience and some may not think it works, from the perspective of my family members—predominantly my grandmothers, mothers, aunties, sisters, nieces, daughters and grandchildren in my cultural kinship system—they have put themselves on the Banned Drinker Register to alleviate the humbug on payday from family and friends who pressure them into buying alcohol. That is a measure of success, being able to reduce the impact on family members who were being bullied or harassed into buying alcohol, and it is important.

The Member for Fong Lim knows data well; we always talk about it in the Chamber. The Member for Araluen highlighted the review that was done. Data is important, but how we interrogate that data is also important. If you look closely you see that data could be broken down into many areas, particularly to isolate where the Banned Drinker Register and the minimum unit price were in place. It is somewhat difficult to break down that data—I acknowledge that—but it can be done.

The Minister for Alcohol Policy has a big job in all his portfolios and it is an area that will continually require reform. The Riley review was done in 2017, seven years ago. Of course, things should always be contemporised to suit best practice. I am supportive of any measure, whether it is a select committee looking into initiatives to address alcohol harm in the Northern Territory, commissioning a review or working with communities on localised plans, it is important that we look at it, respond to it and adapt to those measures.

The Member for Braitling spoke at length about a number of areas related to alcohol. He emphasised that he sees this as having little or no impact. We are not here to make rules based on our individual perception. It is what we hear from our communities, organisations and stakeholders.

I am a born-and-bred Central Australian person. I am proud to call Mparntwe (Alice Springs) home. As the Member for Araluen rightly said, we lived with a minimum unit price before the legislation was even in effect. We heard today the level of concern but also the willingness of the accord in Alice Springs to continue a minimum unit price, because its members believe it has merit. I acknowledge their foresight and their vision to keep it going.

The Member for Daly spoke about secondary supply. That work will always need to happen across the Northern Territory. Whether it is in remote areas or suburbs, there is always that level of activity. We need not to be afraid to dob in a dealer or a runner, so we can crack down on secondary supply because it has a significant impact on people in our community.

I have experienced the benefits and the negatives of various governments' alcohol policies over the years. I have experienced firsthand the benefits of a number of those policy settings. I experienced the negatives of those policy settings when colleagues and, in fact, Members of the Legislative Assembly, were dressed in their casual clothes and had a particular tone to their complexion were racially profiled at bottle shops. I was

walking in with them. I have fair skin. I am a proud Aboriginal person, but I acknowledge my skin is somewhat fairer than that of my brothers and my sisters and some Members of this Legislative Assembly. It hurts to see the racial profiling of people going into bottle shops and the interrogation that has occurred over many years. I am not saying that it happened only over a particular period, but we need to be aware of it.

When we talk about these measures we also need to understand that we have all experienced people who suffer with the addiction of alcohol. I have always said and will continue to say—I share a similar view to the Health minister—that prohibition does not work. I know that because a number of my family members have been and are alcoholics. They need help, and we need to support them. We do not need to support them through criminalisation; we need to support them through harm minimisation and access to wonderful organisations across the Northern Territory like DASA and BRADAAG which help people overcome alcoholism so that they can live better lives.

I acknowledge the processes that the Health and Alcohol Policy minister is taking today, but there was a fantastic program in the 1990s: the Living With Alcohol Program. It was a fantastic program. When in Cabinet I advocated all the time to bring that program back because it is so important and worthwhile. I encourage you to consider that as a mechanism or as a measure to bring into the community because it was an amazing program.

In the DV space we talk about men's behavioural change. We also need to be having these conversations when it comes to alcohol policy and education for family, friends and community members about the devastating impacts that alcohol can have on not only the safety of our loved ones and communities but also the health of all our family members. That is incredibly important.

The debate today and the debate well into the future will always be robust. However, this Assembly wants to see change in our responses in our community. The desire of people in our community is for reform in the alcohol harm minimisation space. Often we talk about overcoming these challenges and sometimes we choose different roads to get there, but the outcome is the same. I am hopeful that the outcome we can all agree on tonight is to continue to work with vulnerable people who need assistance to overcome addiction.

We need to work with people on access to alcohol and to work with the community when it raises concerns about people drinking alcohol obtained through secondary supply. It is quite easy to pick up where that activity is happening in our communities. I am not saying that it is everyone. Please do not forget the bush. I was out bush two weeks ago. As I arrived at the community I saw on one side of the boundary a group of cans and on the other side there was not. We need community safety, but it is important to ensure that we are not pushing the problem out by not dealing with it at its core.

The concern about hand sanitiser and mouthwash is not new. I remember speaking about this before my time in parliament. I remember talking about it, as the Member for Araluen highlighted, on the Alice Springs Town Council when we were elected members. Our rangers at the time were always finding hand sanitiser or mouthwash under the bridge on Stott Terrace. This is not a new issue, but we need to work on education and support people to overcome this issue. It comes back to understanding the root causes that push people to pick up a bottle or can. Overcoming those challenges is important and requires us to look at it through a comprehensive, therapeutic harm minimisation lens and talking to people to understand what drives that behaviour.

I believe that the Alcohol Policy minister—I do not want to verbal him—is putting a process in place through the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet for working with remote Territorians on any future discussions on alcohol or alcohol consumption in remote communities. I have always taken the position that it should be a community's decision which involves children having a say. It is important that all community members can have their say.

I highlight that members may not be aware, but this has been an innovative space for a long time. The Member for Araluen, as a social worker at the hospital, will probably remember a number of years prior to the Northern Territory emergency response (the intervention), which brought with it a raft of legislative changes, that there was foresight from the NPY Women's Council. The council worked with local publicans in its footprint, made a stand and got to a position where local people from that region were not allowed to buy alcohol from the local roadhouse or pub. That decision was largely driven by the NPY Women's Council, but it was a consultative group. It was important because a lot of people were dying on Territory roads due to people driving under the influence of alcohol.

I acknowledge the alcohol rehabilitation organisations across the Northern Territory that do an incredible job.

I support the minimum unit price. I urge the government to consider the other suite of measures. As the Members for Johnston and Araluen highlighted, any kind of action plan involves the local community driving it. It must be local in each and every corner of the Northern Territory, which is not homogenous; community goals and aspirations are different and require local input and foresight.

I also flag that it would be interesting to ascertain the federal Coalition's stance on removing the minimum unit price, given that the federal Opposition Leader has a firm position on alcohol.

It has been said by some people in the Territory that removing this provision is a sad time. Alice Springs will maintain a floor price, but other areas of the Territory will not which is disappointing to see.

I thank all members for a respectful debate.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, a degree of civility has descended on the House, mercifully, in respect of this debate, and there is an aspiration for cooperation in this space. This clearly affects all of us across our electorates, so I will try to honour that and temper what I have to say in that regard. I am confident that somewhere beneath it all we have a shared aspiration to reduce harm in the Northern Territory. There is no doubt that all of us acknowledge that alcohol lies at the root of a lot of problems that we have in the Northern Territory.

At the risk of being a teacher's pet or sycophantic, I am delighted to have heard from the Member for Araluen. I say that on the basis that I may have gotten the most kindred spirit in terms of a rational academic, empirical and/or economic contribution to the debate from somebody who has seen this over a long time horizon. I note that there are other people, like the Member for Gwoja, who similarly have been through various iterations of trying to deal with the vexed issue of alcohol policy and what the right mix is. Unlike the Members for Barkly, Braitling or Katherine, I do not have a nexus to these problems in the electorate I represent in quite the same way. That is the truth of it. I represent a lot of businesses and people who live in fairly affluent suburbs who are not really affected by this issue in a meaningful way. That is all the more reason why I freely admit that this is not my area of subject matter expertise.

I am mindful that I contribute to making a decision here that affects places where alcohol policy, generally speaking, is quite literally life and death. That is why I do what I can with the tools that I have to take the time to look at what the evidence and the data—which we keep bandying around in general terms—actually says.

I am encouraged that since we started sitting in October everybody is upping their game in bringing forward a diversity of opinions. It is clear from today's debate that there is a range of data sources and evidence—anecdotal, empirical, peer-reviewed, weight of testimony, lived experiences, ministers, people who have been in parliament for five terms—and all of that adds up to something. In this regard what it adds up to for me is that there is a lot of uncertainty; nobody has definitive wisdom on how to deal with alcohol policy.

After looking through hundreds of articles and hearing what everyone else has to say, I am clear that the silver bullet is not minimum unit pricing. That is why I am sufficiently satisfied to vote with my government to say that the legislation, essentially, is a straw man; it is not achieving what it was intended to. It may not be doing any harm and it may not be doing any good. It could be doing some harm if you control for other factors, but it is difficult to say.

As everybody in the Chamber freely admits, we are not interested in living in a prohibition state; nor do we think that we would ever raise the minimum unit price to the point that it is punitive on the wider Northern Territory populace. Based on all of that, rather than having some sort of culture war about it or empirical battle about whose data is better than everyone else's data, I will simply point out a couple of bits that tell me getting rid of this is fine. I do not think it will cause any great harm. I am not convinced that it will cause any great good, but I hope we will move towards a more holistic agenda that this government will hopefully lead and work on in partnership with people across the House.

I have reviewed more than 100-odd papers in relation to this. The fact is that they are predominantly about Canada and Scotland. They are the places where people have been genuinely interested in digging under the hood to see whether minimum unit pricing works, under what conditions does it work and what levers need to be controlled and pulled to make it function.

Mercifully, I will not, in the interest of time, cite hundreds of papers today. I will point out, essentially, that the contrary view is the one that is applicable, in my opinion, in this place. Therefore, I will not demonstrate the weight of opinion in defence of my position, because the weight of opinion in the literature is that minimum unit pricing in other jurisdictions has been quite successful in respect of population-level effects. However,

my contention, based on my reading of a lot of data and studies, is that it is simply not the case in this place. I am validated in maintaining that position, not just by the Member for Braitling's on-ground testimony but probably much more so, with no disrespect to him, by the Member for Araluen's testimony in respect of all the different levers we have tried to pull over time.

The recent focus in the literature is always on Scotland because that is where people have invested the most in the debate and where there are the most heavy drinkers drinking concentrated high-proof alcohol. The public health debate is set up in a specific way there.

The nuts and bolts of it is that less than 18 months ago there was plenty of stuff out there. In fairness, some of the critiques put out by the alcohol lobby and industry groups suggest that it was simply not doing any good in Scotland; there is plenty to suggest that. However, there is also plenty to suggest that it was working pretty well at a population level for Scotland. The floor price was set in 2018 at 50p in the UK. That was upped to 65p to adjust for inflation and to continue having the same effect so that a more controlled study could be run. It works there to a certain extent, and as a result the government decided to run with it as a public health policy measure.

However, it did not start yesterday in Scotland. The focus is that this is a policy we grabbed from Scotland a few years ago to try to save us, as though it is a silver bullet. That is simply not true. The truth is that minimum pricing for alcohol was introduced in Ontario, Canada, in I think the 1920s, soon after Prohibition was repealed. This has been around for a long time. Originally, minimum prices were used to stabilise alcohol markets that were operated by government-controlled alcohol monopolies, which was an important source of government revenue at that time. This goes to more than just dealing with problem drinkers; this was a serious economic agenda at one point. Widespread adoption across all Canadian provinces began in the 1990s when there was more evidence to suggest that there was a generalised public health benefit, controlled across population groups.

We only talk about those two countries, whereas a lot of countries have an MUP for spirits but not alcohol more generally. These countries include Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, where it has been difficult to evaluate what the unique effects have been owing to multiple policies being enacted at the same time. That is the point I am driving towards. Controlling for the cause and effects is difficult.

I will come to what I think are the best controlled studies in our space in a second. The reason I mentioned that laborious backstory is to explain that if you cannot control for the effect there is no point dying on a hill for this. I am convinced that there is no point dying on a hill for this one measure which I do not think has a statistically significant effect on minimising alcohol-related harm.

There has been considerable interest in evaluating the effects of the MUP in Scotland. As a result, it was introduced in Wales in March 2020 and in the Republic of Ireland in January 2022. It has stalled in the UK because people are not convinced that it might not disproportionately punitively affect one group of people without fulfilling its stated aim. That is the real challenge: how do you put something in place to be effective as a policy? The MUP is also under discussion in Northern Ireland, and it has not been implemented in England. Even in South Africa, which is not a vanguard jurisdiction for trying to do this kind of work, there has been modelling to work out whether it will help to reduce the number of heavy, problematic, chronic alcoholic-class drinkers.

Most of these places have not gone ahead with it. Most of the time it is because nobody is willing to bite the bullet on pricing this so high as to cause a significant disincentive to drinking.

I am trying to be civil in this debate. My contention is that there has never been a serious effort to use the MUP to reduce alcohol-related crime or problem drinking—$1.50 was always a very low target, even when it was introduced initially. The Labor government had its opportunity to fight for this as a matter of principle a long time ago. If it wanted to burn its political capital on pricing it extremely high and causing population-level effects to reduce alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory it could have, but Labor chose not to.

We have been stuck with a policy that is in no-man's land and does very little other than to basically punish the populace without delivering anything back into the rehabilitation or restorative space. The money from this mark-up does not go back into the health system; it just goes into retailers' pockets. We are not pricing anyone out of the market. Everyone gets it. No-one has more credibility making that argument than—again, I do not want to seem like a teacher's pet—the Member for Araluen, who simply pointed out that people have the means to purchase at this price point. I cannot speak for the government in totality, but I cannot see any

version of a future where we make the minimum unit price $10, so on that basis this is largely a moot argument.

There is a litany of research regarding this matter. I had a look at 250-odd papers and did the best I could to make some sense of it. I did not read them all cover to cover, but one of the best sources to get information about this is the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ). There is a tonne of stuff about minimum unit pricing, and there has been over a range of years.

I would not cite hundreds of articles, but I will point out one. It is an article from last year, published in the *British Medical Journal*, by Anderson et al titled 'Minimum unit pricing for alcohol saves lives, so why is not implemented more widely?' I am not shooting myself in the foot—relax. I am letting you know that there is stuff out there saying that this works just fine in some other places, but the point I am making is that it is not working in our jurisdiction. The key argument that these authors—whom I have no bone to pick with otherwise—make is:

> *… two major counter arguments impede wider rollout. The first argument is that MUP will not affect the intended target group—people who are very heavy drinkers and who might be dependent on alcohol—and might disproportionately penalise those with lower incomes, including those who are lighter drinkers. The second argument is that MUP might lead to increased production and consumption of illicit alcohol, particularly in low income settings.*

They are the arguments posited for why this is not more widely rolled out. This article goes on to make the case for those two contentions not being true in the context of the spaces that they are working in. The irony is that it is those two arguments that prove why this is not worth maintaining in this place. That is exactly what happens here. We are punishing the majority for the sins of the minority without affecting the people who are most in need of help.

This is a straw man policy. We can all, with a clear conscience, get rid of it and move towards a better future where we cooperatively work under the auspices of this government to try to come up with a better set of ideas for how to manage alcohol policy.

We heard some sensible things bandied around. I maintain that I am not a subject matter expert in this area; I cannot say with clarity what will and what will not work. However, I am compelled by what I hear across the floor. There must be a better consensus position with which to move forward.

I have consistently maintained that context matters. That is the thing. Drawing random bits of this to defend my weak position here and drawing a bit of that is not helping us to progress the debate in respect to anything. We will keep having to face tough discussions about tough areas, over the next few days no less. If we consistently cling to the crappiest one-line bit of data that we have to justify a position, we will go nowhere.

I do not want to foreshadow the debate that is coming, but we are doing our best to be tough on crime, to reduce crime and to restore confidence, safety and security in the Northern Territory. That has necessarily had a knock-on effect for Corrections and the justice system. We must do something about that; we cannot be wilfully blind to it. I am not foreshadowing debate; I am simply saying that when we have these arguments more generally we need to start thinking holistically about how to solve problems rather than figuring out how to shoot down a line of argument based on one line item of data. We will not move forward in the Northern Territory to solve any problems unless we can have a more mature debate. I welcome that we are bringing in information, but let us be specific about it and agree to disagree rather than simply say, 'Your data is garbage or my data is superior'.

The most compelling evidence in this space suggests to me that MUP has not worked well. It is not that MUP never works—it works in some places—it is just that it does not always work. I argue that it has not worked here.

This is not a new argument I am making. On 22 October I spoke in this Chamber on the matter of public importance in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence. In that debate I shared with all of you a small portion of what I learnt when preparing for what we debated in October. I will not reiterate it with specificity, but I will flag it again. I raised recurrently the need to be mindful of expert evidence with specificity, rather than in generalised terms.

There were two articles I pointed out that day, both by Sarah Clifford et al 2024. Sarah Clifford is based at the Menzies School of Health. The articles were from the *International Journal of Drug Policy* and the *Drug and Alcohol Review*. One was called 'What are the impacts of alcohol supply reduction measures on

police-recorded adult domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory of Australia?' and the second was called 'Police-recorded adult sexual assault in the Northern Territory, Australia: Alcohol involvement and alcohol policy effects'. I cited them because they are recent and geographically specific to the place we are in; they are not about what is happening in Scandinavia, Timbuktu or Aberdeen. The contributing authors have real skin in the game where we are and they are associated with the core bodies we are trying to work with, like the Menzies School of Health Research.

I sought hard that day—I say this with sincerity—to avoid cherrypicking data selectively to distort the argument or the totality of the work. Instead, I spoke to the parameters of the studies and their conclusions by using specific quotes I read in totality from the abstracts and conclusions. I encourage you to look at it again.

Now I am paraphrasing, to be clear. Those journal articles suggested that when you controlled for everything, the only thing that probably had a statistically significant impact was PALIs. I do not have the lived experience to support that, but it seems like police auxiliaries—which the Members for Braitling and Araluen maintain are the most effective tool we have had in this space for a number of years—statistically speaking in a controlled study with proper rigour, had the greatest impact. It is not that MUP could not have more of an impact or that the Banned Drinker Register might not be part of the solution; the whole point about it is that we cannot hitch our star to a single wagon. That is where we are going wrong with a lot of these debates.

If we are to have evidence-based strategies going forward—evidence-based means something specific as well—we have to be clear that what has been done over the last eight years in particular, but even longer than that, does not have strong evidentiary support. The package in totality of the previous government's alcohol harm minimisation legislation has not amounted to statistically significant improvement in most spaces. We can isolate singular pockets of improvement, but we cannot find definitively, overarching and overall 'this is definitely the thing that is working; we cannot afford to lose this'. It is not there, so we must come up with something better.

I hear lots of reasonable ideas. I would like us to talk about them, in whatever context introduced by whoever as a notice or Bill, and come up with a coordinated plan and strategy for that going forward. I genuinely think it may be the one issue that we all are bound by; it is the case that we cannot avoid talking about alcohol and alcohol policy in this place.

There is no strong evidentiary support for what has been done for a while, no matter what our intuitive or anecdotal feeling. That is a problem with some of what has been presented, with respect, by the opposition and the crossbenchers. Intuitively it seems a good idea to put in place a minimum unit price and that it might work here based on it having worked well elsewhere, but it is just intuition. It is not a substantive evidence-based proposition or it is, at minimum, a contestable proposition. If I had to fight for arms of alcohol policy, I would fight the least hard for this one because it is clear, based on the controlled evidence, that it is the weakest statistically, anecdotally and empirically. I have no problem supporting its repeal.

I will not descend to unduly politicising the debate, because as the preceding speaker pointed out it has been a civil and constructive debate, and it is one that we will return to. I note, though, the idea that the pricing put in place by the previous government was 'fair and equitable' is disingenuous; I disagree with that proposition. It was weak and a token effort at best.

If we wanted to use minimum unit pricing as a policy mechanism to genuinely influence population-level effects as well as the problems for seriously chronic alcoholic-level drinkers, the price would have been much higher a long time ago. Spare me the arguments that once we remove this the ceiling will fall in. I do not believe that will happen.

Having said that, I respect that people are fighting for this, in no small part because they want to reduce harm and they want to do good. I believe that is a shared aspiration of all of us in this place, so let us come up with a better set of strategies to band behind, because I do not believe minimum unit pricing is the strategy we all need to get behind. Internationally, the strongest support indicates population-level effects, but I am happy to say that in my assessment the evidence is unclear at best as to whether MUP substantively assists chronic and heavy drinkers.

In sum, we need to address alcohol policy in context-specific ways. That is the language I am using for what other members have expressed in relation to local solutions, community solutions, working with people on the ground and working with people in community. Context specificity is what will take us forward in this regard, because we need to think about the people in our jurisdiction who have a problem with alcohol, their

specific preconditions and how they behave as economic agents, rather than relying on what happened on the other side of the world and assuming it will work here.

I believe that the CLP is genuinely committed to constructively moving forward in this space. I encourage all of us to think about how to make constructive contributions to debates on alcohol policy.

On the basis of all that, I am happy to commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I will not keep you long. I do not have a lot to add, but it is important that I add it.

There has been a lot of talk by those opposite about evidence, academics and research papers. They tell us to listen to the experts. I have said it before and I will say it again: the experts I listen to are the good people of Blain. They tell me, and I have seen it with my own eyes, that before the minimum unit price—the floor price—was brought in by the previous government, the containers discarded by problem drinkers around Palmerston were broadly cans and the silver balloons from cask wine. Since that came in, it has changed; it is now stubbies and spirit bottles.

These often become weapons late at night, which then prompts some of the people drinking in parks, as they tell me, to smash those bottles so that they cannot be used against them later that night. This means that the people of Blain cannot take their kids out on the footpath without shoes. People must make sure they have their shoes on because there is broken glass everywhere. There are hotspots that are much worse than others. This goes onto our council rates because the council must get a streetsweeper to sweep up all the broken glass, which adds more costs to ordinary taxpayers.

There is a lot to be said in the space of dealing with problem drinkers. I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing up the Living With Alcohol Program which, by and large, in a bipartisan way and in research is acknowledged as a successful program. It would be great if the federal government would allow us to excise alcohol so that we could maybe have another crack at it.

If there was an excise on alcohol and the funds were directly allocated towards helping problem drinkers, like the Living With Alcohol Program did, that would be great. That is not what the minimum unit price did. The increase in prices went straight into alcohol providers' pockets; it did no good for the community in that way.

I recommend that those opposite speak to their federal counterparts and ask them to come to the table with the Chief Minister's seven-point request. I thank the Prime Minister for acceding to the CASA regulation request, but it is critical that the federal government starts accepting our referrals for income management.

I see a lot of people in my electorate who struggle to resist the allure of alcohol instead of putting food on the table for their kids, buying clothes for their kids and making sure their kids get to school; they end up just drinking their payments. If we can put people who have a problem with drinking on income management plans and quarantine their income, there would be a better chance that they would use that money to feed their families.

These kids are going hungry. I deliver sandwiches to the schools. Woodroffe Primary School has a regular breakfast program because the kids come to school hungry. If a kid comes to school hungry, they are not focused on learning. It is a simple fact.

There are a lot of different parts to this. People in my electorate have not seen evidence that the minimum unit price had any real effect. We need places to put people who drink, consequences for public drinking and income management and a health response for problem drinkers. I eagerly anticipate our alcohol treatment plan, which will come out later this year, that will deal with the problem drinkers directly and not punish the rest of society for the sins of a few.

Let us get the broken glass off our streets. Let us deal with the problem where it lies.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all the speakers who have contributed to the debate on this legislation. To the members who requested a briefing, which was all the CLP backbench and the Member for Johnston, thank you for having a briefing with me today.

I note the Member for Johnston brought Dr Cassie Wright from Menzies, which is the second time I have met with Dr Wright. She has a wealth of knowledge in that research space. She has given me a lot of information about alcohol and policies. The Member for Johnston and I had a chat about that today as well. The Minister for Health, who is also the Alcohol Policy minister, is doing a lot of work in that space.

Although the Leader of the Opposition started this debate with all sorts of crazy words, she did not request a briefing from my office. Actions speak louder than words; those who show up are the ones who change the world.

I will highlight a couple of things said during the debate. The Member for Araluen talked about decisions regarding alcohol policy being made by community leaders and the people in the community on the ground. That is a good point about having local plans in place. Alice Springs knows all too well the horrors of when alcohol policy has failed, and the history of this goes on for years under the previous Labor government, so it is a valid point. Alice Springs has an active liquor accord, which a number of members mentioned, but it is not like that everywhere in the Northern Territory. The arrangements under those accords are voluntary, and that is okay; government does not need to intervene with that, which is part of the point. It is all local and community driven, which I think is excellent.

Interestingly, the Member for Gwoja had a tempered speech today compared with what I have experienced over a number of years. Maybe he was showing the Opposition Leader how to be an opposition that had its butt whopped last year. Maybe that was him saying, 'Maybe we need to be a bit downplayed in this argument, seeing as we failed over a long time, and show Territorians that we can be humble in opposition and do not have to fight every single thing'. The Member for Gwoja was showing his colours in a different light, which was fascinating for us on this side of the Chamber.

The Member for Fong Lim made interesting comments about whose data is better, and we hear a lot of information about data. We have experienced this cherrypicking of data for a long time from all sorts of sources.

The data that speaks the loudest is what the Member for Blain talks about; that is, those smashed glass bottles that are in our playgrounds every day for councils to pick up.

Ms Uibo: Where is the data? That is a story.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Ms BOOTHBY: She is getting all twitchy because I mentioned the Member for Gwoja and how he might be trying to take her job—interesting. Leader of the Opposition, maybe you should be a bit humble. Territorians wanted this to go through.

Ms Uibo: You do not understand the difference; that is a bit of a shame when you are the Attorney-General of the Northern Territory.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, silence. Let the minister speak.

Ms BOOTHBY: The data that speaks louder than words is what Territorians want, and that is …

Ms Uibo: That is not data.

Ms BOOTHBY: The best data and the best evidence you can get is what Territorians want.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: All communication will come through me. No interjections; we will listen to the minister in silence.

Ms BOOTHBY: The minimum unit price which took effect on 1 October 2018 has not demonstrably reduced the harms associated with irresponsible consumption of alcohol. The Assembly will be aware that for many years the Northern Territory has had the highest per-capita alcohol consumption rate in Australia. This is not a distinction of which we are proud, and this government remains committed to addressing this issue.

The minimum unit price applied exclusively to takeaway alcohol and was intended to deter the consumption of low-cost, high-alcohol content beverages such as cask wine. Rather than achieving its objective it drove excessive drinkers towards higher-alcohol content products such as spirits and pre-mixed drinks. Wholesale

supply data indicates that around the same time the Bill to introduce the minimum unit price for alcohol passed there was a notable shift in consumption patterns.

Since the introduction of the minimum unit price, sales of standard spirits have risen by 17% and sales of pre-mixed spirits increased by 36%. Interestingly, alcohol-related assaults across the Territory increased over eight years by 38%. In Darwin it was an increase of 56%; in Palmerston it was 95%; in Katherine it was 97%; in Tennant Creek it was 43%; and in Alice Springs it was 33%.

The shift in alcohol-related assaults and in the sales of hard spirits and pre-mixed spirits demonstrate that the measure failed to curb harmful drinking patterns and alcohol-related assaults. It basically encouraged the consumption of stronger alcohol. Walking around public spaces, as the Member for Blain said, you see the impact in our playgrounds and our parks. The minimum unit price did not stop problem drinking, it merely changed what was being consumed. Instead of plastic and cardboard cask wine boxes we now see broken glass spirits bottles littering our public areas. This highlights that the policy has backfired, exacerbating safety concerns while failing to reduce harm. Unfortunately, broken glass bottles have been a weapon of choice in some horrific instances.

The increased cost of certain liquor products has not dissuaded determined drinkers from acquiring alcohol. It is well documented that some residents in remote communities have been willing to pay exorbitant prices for alcohol, demonstrating the policy's ineffectiveness in addressing underlying consumption patterns. For example, in communities like Wadeye a bottle of Bundaberg Rum has been sold for up to $500, despite the median weekly household income being $1,096. This black-market surge highlights how the MUP has failed to curb harmful drinking behaviours.

There was no significant decline in emergency department presentations in Darwin and Palmerston following the introduction of the minimum unit price. Research could not identify significant decreases in alcohol-related harm in Katherine and Nhulunbuy. Further, in Alice Springs where some reductions were observed, evidence suggests that the key factor was not the minimum unit price, but the role of police auxiliary liquor inspectors (PALIs) stationed at bottle shops. A number of members spoke about that.

The minimum unit price legislation has not and does not mitigate alcohol-related harm. If it had been effective the Northern Territory would not have remained the only jurisdiction in Australia to have implemented such a measure. The absence of similar legislation elsewhere in the country underscores its lack of efficacy. The policy did not reduce alcohol consumption.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about how we should instead introduce indexation of the minimum floor price and consider that option. It is interesting that there was a long time between 2018 and last year when Labor was still in government, but it did not introduce that. It was a half-baked effort to try to make a policy sound great but not have any impact.

The CLP went to the election clear about our intention to repeal the minimum unit price, and that is what we are doing today. This is not about lifting price restrictions on alcohol; it is about taking a smarter community-driven approach to tackling alcohol-related harm. The CLP government will focus on the demand for alcohol, not just the supply. This government will continue to work on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our way of life.

To ensure any issues arising from the removal of the minimum unit price are addressed, the CLP government will have routine reporting that will continue to monitor alcohol-related harm in the community. We will continue to work with licensees and relevant agencies to support community-driven efforts and minimise alcohol-related harm through demand and harm reduction strategies.

I mentioned the local liquor accords, which the government supports because they play a key role in managing alcohol-related issues in the community. By engaging key stakeholders such as local businesses, law enforcement, community groups and health professionals, these accords can create tailored locally driven solutions. These partnerships will ensure that alcohol sales are managed in a way that reflects the specific needs of a community.

Section 113 of the *Liquor Act* provides for the Liquor Commission on its own initiative to vary the conditions of licences where necessary. This further strengthens and safeguards against alcohol-related harm. In other words, if someone is doing the wrong thing and selling things outside the law, they will be dealt with under the Liquor Commission laws.

Irrespective of individual views on this matter, it is undeniable that many Territorians enjoy consuming alcohol responsibly. Indeed, the Territory is renowned for its vibrant social culture and enviable lifestyle where socialising with friends and family over a drink is a valued tradition. There is nothing wrong with that. Having a beer at the pub with mates or sharing a bottle of wine over dinner are part of our Territory lifestyle. We do not believe that governments should get in the way of that. In any case, the vast majority of the population consumes alcohol responsibly and should not be subject to the impact of the actions of a small minority who engage in excessive drinking.

Scrapping the minimum unit price is a line in the sand. It demonstrates that this government will not settle for the status quo. We will not keep doing what has been done before and over the last eight years. We will keep delivering real meaningful change.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the Bill be now read a second time.

The Assembly divided:

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 2:

Ms UIBO: Can the minister speak to the commencement date for the legislation?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes, that will be 1 March 2025.

Ms UIBO: Have you already created communication packs for the industry on these changes?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes, we have.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 and 4, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 5:

Ms UIBO: New section 5A deals with the meaning of 'standard drink' and new section 5B has the standard drinks in liquor products calculation. If you are repealing the MUP, what is the purpose of inserting new section 5C?

Ms BOOTHBY: New sections 5A and 5B have been inserted because we did not want to lose the definition of 'standard drink' in other sections, which may be repealed under the new Act.

Ms UIBO: Does the purpose of the insertion of those definitions provide an industry guideline for indexation of what a standard drink should cost?

Ms BOOTHBY: This section is unchanged from the last amendment to the *Liquor Act* by the previous government; all we have done is move it from where it was to these new sections.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Ms UIBO: Clauses 6 and 7 repeal that part of the Act; we understand that. In doing so, who led the consultation for this repeal?

Ms BOOTHBY: The Leader of the Opposition knows that we took this to the election; we spoke about that during the debate. Licensing NT ensured this change could happen, and I thank the department for working hard with industry to ensure we could get this happening quickly.

Ms UIBO: Who was consulted for the process?

Ms BOOTHBY: We took this to the election, so every Territorian who tuned in to what was happening at the election would have heard about this. We meet regularly with Hospitality NT, as does Licensing NT. We have a good relationship, and have had for a long time, with industry, which was on board with this happening.

Mr YOUNG: You mentioned Hospitality NT. Was the now chief of staff part of that consultation process?

Ms BOOTHBY: We have been talking about removing the minimum floor price for a long time. Hospitality NT, no matter what its form, has been supportive of this.

Mr YOUNG: Can the minister specifically name who was part of that consultation with Hospitality NT?

Ms BOOTHBY: There is a number of board members at Hospitality NT and all of them have been in my office for meetings. They are fully aware of this, as are bottle shop owners, publicans and people involved in this industry.

Mr YOUNG: You talked about leading into the election with constituents. Was that consultation done before or after the election?

Ms BOOTHBY: We have talked about repealing the minimum floor price for a long time, watching the alcohol-related assaults increase. This consultation was done with a lot of Territorians. It did not matter what you did; they all wanted to know about what was happening with it. It was before the election, post-election and up until now when we are talking about this Bill.

Mr YOUNG: Do you have a list of people and peak bodies you met with and consulted?

Ms BOOTHBY: There is a huge list of people who live in the Northern Territory who have been consulted about this. I believe that there are 250,000 Territorians. A lot of them voted for the plan and the policy. The minimum floor price scrapping was part of that plan.

Mr YOUNG: Outside of constituents who came to vote on election day, you mentioned that there were particular groups you met with, such as Hospitality NT. Do you have a list of such groups that you have consulted with?

Ms BOOTHBY: I have answered the question.

Ms UIBO: The minister mentioned the peak body that she consulted with. Did you consult with health experts in your decision to repeal this part of the legislation?

Ms BOOTHBY: I spoke about Dr Cassie Wright in the speech I just delivered. She came into my office twice this week, which was helpful. Yes, there were people throughout the Health department, with minister Edgington who is our Health minister, plus other people.

People have been writing to me about the minimum floor price since the election, both those who are for it and those who cautioned us on those changes. At the end of the day we took this commitment to the election.

Territorians voted for us overwhelmingly; that is why there are 17 people on this side and only four Labor members. We are delivering on our commitment. That is exactly what Territorians expect of us.

Mr PAECH: You mentioned that you met with a doctor twice this week. I want to highlight that is since the development of the Bill was undertaken, so no further changes could have been done because Cabinet would have approved it, and it has been drafted. Can you confirm whether there were any meetings with health professionals in the development of the Bill? If so, can you provide written or verbal advice who they were?

Ms BOOTHBY: I have answered that question a number of times.

Mr PAECH: Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a direct question, and she has not answered it. The question was clear. We heard in a number of speeches today about a letter that was written and the response of three lines from the government. I want to ensure that the question, appropriately, is asked that there was consultation done with health professionals on this Bill …

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 158; no repetition. This question has been asked and answered. Can we move on, please?

Mr YOUNG: Speaking to the point of order, this is a separate question. It has not been answered. He is talking about health experts.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will give the Member for Gwoja another chance to continue.

Mr PAECH: Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity.

The Attorney-General referred to meeting with a health professional twice this week. Obviously, that is post the development of the Bill. It was just a simple question. Had health professionals been consulted and advised outside of the election cycle and the development of the Bill?

Also, was the Department of Health consulted extensively on the impacts, given that a number of hospital presentations are in relation to this?

Ms BOOTHBY: I answered that question. We received lots of letters after the election about this issue. We would have had time to make changes throughout all of those meetings, including the ones that I had this week and last week with health professionals.

Mr YOUNG: You mentioned that you have received a number of letters regarding this legislation. Can you provide a list of those people who have sent concerns in those letters?

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 158; repetition. This is the same question. The question has been answered. They may not like the answer, but it has been answered.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Member for Daly is asking a new question.

Ms BOOTHBY: I have answered the question.

Mr YOUNG: Mr Deputy Speaker, you stated before that this is a new question. The Attorney-General said that she has answered the question, but she has not. She stated that a number of letters were sent to her regarding this legislation. We have the right to ask the question of who those letters came from and whether she can provide a list of people who wrote to her.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 109; this is getting argumentative. The Attorney-General said that she has answered the question. He does not like the answer. Now it is turning into argument. Under Standing Order 109 it is time to move on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Daly, you have one more chance.

Mr YOUNG: Standing Order 109 applies to Question Time, so that point of order is irrelevant to consideration in detail. You cannot consider that.

I asked the question. The Attorney-General said that she has received a number of letters in regard to this legislation, so she should be able to provide that to the Assembly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hear what you say, but I also heard the Attorney-General say that she has answered this question many times. It is now time to move on.

Ms UIBO: How many public consultations were held to repeal this Act?

Ms BOOTHBY: I will say it again because you do not seem to understand. We took this commitment to repeal the minimum unit price to the election; it was an election commitment. It does not matter what we have done between that point and now. We committed to Territorians that we would repeal this legislation. That is what we are doing. All Territorians, no matter what industry they work in or what they do, had a chance to have their say about the floor price during and post the election period. This Bill has been on the Notice Paper for at least 30 days for that opportunity. I have answered this question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members—as the Clerk has reminded me—this is consideration in detail. We are looking at the operational matters and clauses. We do not need to drift back into policy and so on. If we have specific issues about the clauses, that is fine.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Ms UIBO: This will repeal Part 5, Minimum pricing. Is there something that will be replaced through policy or regulation?

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

Ms UIBO: Will there be any safeguards around alcohol policy and management around harm reduction, because of the repeal of this Part?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is not relevant to this clause.

Ms UIBO: It is repealing a whole Part which provides the response around alcohol minimisation and harm reduction. Is there something else that will replace that for Territorians?

Ms BOOTHBY: Mr Deputy Speaker, this is not a relevant question to this clause.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has expressed a view.

Ms UIBO: Is the answer that there is no harm reduction policy by the government?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The answer was that it is irrelevant.

Ms BOOTHBY: We just had hours of debate on all the things the government will be doing instead of this. It does not go to this clause, and you just heard the whole debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has stated it clearly, so we will not repeat that question.

Ms UIBO: In regard to the opportunity to understand what that is and why nothing else is now in place, I want to correct the record. To the Attorney-General there was a request from my office, in writing via email, on Friday 7 February 2025 at 1.06 pm that specifically asked for briefings for the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill 2024, as one of the requests. It was an email sent by me. I put that on the record and correct, on behalf of the Attorney-General, her assumptions that we did not request a briefing. There was no reply to that request.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 12, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 13:

Mr PAECH: I have two questions in relation to clause 13, which is to do with the repeal of the minimum pricing unit and the commencement of the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Act 2024. Can the minister confirm whether there will be a review period for this legislation? Is a review period built in or has Cabinet determined a review period for this legislation?

Further to that, how will the government measure whether this legislative reform has been successful?

Ms BOOTHBY: Part 4 clause 13 will repeal the Act. Basically it says that it is repealed altogether. The review mechanisms are the same as they would have been in the previous *Liquor Act*, so there is no change.

Regarding your second question about how we would measure this, the government is looking at all the impacts to all the policies we have seen over a long period, and this work will continue.

Mr PAECH: You are making a legislative change because you believe you have a mandate and a reason to look at and see statistics change because of this. Where could the opposition, crossbench and Independents monitor this legislative change to see whether it has taken effect?

Mr MALEY: A point of order!

Mr PAECH: You have called a point of order, but the minister has answered, in part, the question, so it would be up to her, Deputy Chief Minister, to respond.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 155; this discussion has to be confined to the clause. We are talking about policy. The opposition can talk to anyone it wants to about how it is measured. The government will do its bit. This is not confined, so it is not relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I agree with the point of order. As said, we must stick to the clauses.

Mr PAECH: Speaking to the point of order, I have not been asking a policy question—Deputy Chief Minister, you may wish to pay attention—I was asking, and the minister was responding in part, about how the government would measure the success.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! You made a decision and said to move on. This is Standing Order 155 again; it is not confined to the clause.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are correct.

Member for Gwoja, do you have another question?

Mr PAECH: Yes, I do.

I thank the minister for her response and want her to further elaborate on it. How will the government measure the success or failures of this legislative policy change?

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This is the same question; it is repetition.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will give the minister one chance to answer.

Ms BOOTHBY: I answered that question before.

Mr PAECH: Can you confirm that it is how it was in the previous legislation, so the same review mechanisms remain in place, but there is no measure to determine whether this legislation is successful?

Ms BOOTHBY: I answered the question, but I will add to my response. I am not trying to hide behind this at all, so please do not think that is what is happening.

In my summing-up speech I said that routine reporting will ensure that alcohol harm in the community continues to be monitored. The government will continue to work with licensees and other relevant agencies to support community actions to minimise the harm caused by the consumption of alcohol through demand and harm reduction strategies. During debate we spoke about the liquor accords, including in the member's local area. We will continue to monitor those impacts. We still have crime stats which are put out every month, hospital presentation stats—there is a heap of measuring of data that we can use.

Mr PAECH: You are looking at how you measure it. I ascertained from elected members who spoke today that there is a single change. What key performance indicators will the government use to determine whether the repeal of the minimum unit price has worked? How will the government be able to say that the level of antisocial behaviour or alcohol-fuelled violence is down because of this? How will it be measured?

Ms BOOTHBY: I have answered the question.

Mr PAECH: So, there is no mechanism in place to measure …

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, I think the minister has answered it. I will put the question.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! To ensure we run smoothly through each clause, there should be an opportunity to allow for other questions and not just put the question unless the opposition has been asked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did ask.

Mr YOUNG: No, you did not. You said that you would put the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Take it that I have put the question, and we will go on.

The question is that the Bill be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

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

Bill agreed to.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

The Assembly divided:

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

Mr Yan
Mrs Zio

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

PAPERS TABLED
Independent Commissioner Against Corruption General Report

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption General Report. I note that pursuant to section 49 of the ICAC Act this report was published on 23 January 2025.

Auditor-General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Territory Coordinator Radio Advertisement Review

Madam SPEAKER: I also table the Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Territory Coordinator Radio Advertisement Review.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS
Petition No 2 – Driver Protection Screens on Darwin Buses

The CLERK: The following response has been received and forwarded to the member for distribution to the petitioners from the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure to Petition Number 2 requesting the immediate installation of driver protection screens on Darwin buses.

Community safety is the Country Liberal Government's top priority. Unfortunately, an unacceptable level of crime and illegal activities are being experienced on the public transport network.

Due to the safety risk, on 18 October 2024, the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure (the Department) took urgent action by intervening in the bus contractor's rollout of upgrading the driver screens and took immediate steps to keep drivers safe through:

- *expediting installation of the modified driver screens; and*
- *providing security officers on all buses that did not have modified driver screens by 5pm of that day.*

From 21 October 2024, the Department provided a daily report on the progress of the upgrade of driver screens in both Darwin and Alice Springs until all screens were completed.

I am pleased to advise that as of 4 November 2024, driver protection screens were installed on all operational buses in Darwin and as of 13 November 2024, all driver protection screens were installed in Alice Springs.

The Government will continue to put bus driver safety at the forefront and with the introduction of new legislation addressing serious anti-social behaviours, it is envisaged that a reduction of these behaviours will be evident in the future.

Petition No 5 – Repeal Amendments Introduced by the Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Legislation Amendment Act 2021

The CLERK: The following response has been received and forwarded to the member for distribution to the petitioners from the Minister for Health to Petition Number 5 requesting the repeal of amendments introduced by the *Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Legislation Amendment Act 2021*.

Termination of pregnancy occurs in accordance with Northern Territory legislation, regulations and well-established clinical governance mechanisms, including evidence-based guidance for health professionals.

Northern Territory data on termination of pregnancy shows that termination of pregnancy beyond 20 weeks gestation is uncommon, with only 1.3 per cent occurring after this gestation. All other jurisdictions in Australia have a similar low proportion of late termination of pregnancy.

MOTION
Note Petition No 3 – Protect Litchfield National Park from the Spread of Gamba Grass

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be noted.

Today we heard an announcement from the government about how it will be responding to the gamba catastrophe in Litchfield in response to this petition. I am heartened that the CLP listened to the petitioners from the petition that I tabled. This shows that community pressure can work. Governments can occasionally be pushed by members of the community to do the right thing and respond to their concerns.

I am also heartened and slightly shocked, as this is the first time I have seen this new government listen to expert advice. It is a shock but a welcome shock. The actions listed in the press release, particularly the creation of a gamba coordinator, are essential and have come directly from scientists.

However, the $250,000 that was mentioned in the release is existing funding—it is not new money—and it is not nearly enough money to get rid of gamba from Litchfield. The announcement does not fulfil the request of the petition for funding to follow the report's recommendation of $1.3m annually. Any invasive weed specialist would laugh at the idea that $250,000 would solve the problem. It is fiddling around the edges; perhaps it is enough to slow the spread, but not nearly enough to eradicate it.

It must be noted that the day—today—the government announced that it cares about weeds in a national park is the same day it announced gutting the funding to the ECNT and ALEC, two environmental groups that have fought tirelessly for this very same thing. This is unbelievably hypocritical and duplicitous.

This petition asks the Northern Territory Government to take serious and sustained action to protect the future of Litchfield National Park from being ruined by invasive gamba grass. Specifically, it asks the government to implement actions proposed by CDU scientists in 'The cost of not acting' report released in 2023.

The petition was organised by Gamba Grass Roots, a nonpartisan advocacy group under Landcare NT. The petition is in support of an open letter from 100 businesses, organisations, scientists and environmental professionals similarly asking the Northern Territory Government to implement the gamba management plan for Litchfield National Park proposed by the scientists. Signatories to that open letter included Tourism Top End, Litchfield Regional Tourism, many of Australia's foremost ecologists and dozens of Top End tourism businesses. I tabled that open letter during the last session.

The impacts of invasive species like gamba can be difficult for non-scientists and people who do not work in agriculture or land management to understand. Furthermore, there is a widespread mindset within government agencies that the Top End's gamba problem is a bottomless pit that we cannot afford to pour money into; the horse has already bolted, so we can now only pay lip-service to action against its spread and impacts in the Top End; and it is now a problem for future generations to deal with. I invite you to challenge that mindset.

Litchfield is a park where many of us take our families to enjoy nature. It is a part of our love for the great outdoors—part of our lifestyle some might say. It is also a park that is crucial for the Top End tourism industry. In 2022 it was by far the most visited national park in the NT and that includes Kakadu, although most recent figures from 2023 show it slipping behind Elsey and Nitmiluk, possibly due to the infestation of gamba. Nevertheless, it is a huge tourism destination and a valuable recreational area for Darwin people too. In recent years at least $20m has been invested in the park's future as a tourism destination, particularly for camping facilities and road access for the new central valley area. This area is now under threat from gamba.

In addition, our own Parks and Wildlife Commission classifies Litchfield as a biodiversity class 1 park and a visitor class 1 park, the highest possible rating for an NT national park, with ancient savanna and monsoon forest habitats beyond the waterfalls and swimming holes that most visitors see.

It is also home country for the Koongurrukun, Mak Mak Marranunggu, Werat and Warray people, for whom there are many sacred and precious areas within the park.

Our Parks and Wildlife Commission also identifies that the two key threats to the future of the park are wildfires and gamba grass, but in a sense these converge into a single one—gamba. This is because gamba uses wildfire to take over landscapes and outcompete other plant life. It burns several times hotter than native grasses. After the hottest fires, it just regrows. To quote the Litchfield National Park Plan of Management:

Management of Gamba grass is essential to ensure the long term safety of visitors and the integrity of … the park.

It will be crucial to the future of the park.

In 2023 CDU scientists in 'The cost of not acting' spelt this out for us. Litchfield is heading towards an endpoint of ecosystem collapse due to the spread of this invasive grass, transforming ancient savanna woodland into four-metre-high monocultures which burn so hot that nothing else can survive. To quote these scientists, if serious and sustained action is not taken soon the gamba fires will 'impact all key visitor assets in the park' and present 'a potential risk to visitors at these sites' as infestation rapidly worsens over the next decade. This is a serious crisis.

They also point to how the costs of taking effective action against this are dramatically increasing every year while we avoid biting the bullet. This goes back to the mindset that gamba is a black hole or resource need that we can never fill, so why bother?

In the case of Litchfield, scientists put a lot of work into looking at how much of the park is feasible to protect from the spread of gamba. They laid out a detailed costed plan of how to do it. That is the plan the petitioners are asking the government to implement. Their three key points are as follows.

First, expand the current gamba eradication zone within the park from a very small area, which includes no visitor sites, to a much larger area which includes the vast majority of visitor sites. This larger eradication zone would exclude those parts of the park that are already badly infested with gamba, which are known as the infested lowlands, and protect the areas which are least infested and are the most important for tourism, recreation and biodiversity. Importantly, today's funding announcement of $250,000 will not do this.

Second, carry out a five-year gamba eradication program within that enlarged eradication zone. This includes annual aerial gamba surveys, gamba control and employment of a gamba coordinator, which was announced today.

Third, after the five-year eradication program is over we would switch to ongoing maintenance, keeping the annual aerial surveys going and removing any new infestations promptly. In the report the scientists costed this at $6.5m for the five-year eradication program. After that it would cost $111,000 annually for ongoing maintenance—granted this is all in 2021 figures.

It is important to note that the second figure of $111,000 annually after the five-year eradication program is half of the $250,000 that we are already spending. The scientists are telling us that if we bite the bullet and spend what we need to spend now, over the next five years not only will we end up with our tourism icon being protected but also the annual cost of protecting it will drop. Invest now in what needs to be done and we will reap the benefits. I therefore invite honourable members to take a look at what the CDU scientists proposed in 'The cost of not acting', which this petition quotes.

I am heartened to hear that the CLP will take some action on gamba in Litchfield, but the announcement comes with no new money. If we are to make any dent in the gamba infestation we must fund it adequately. We can act now to protect this treasure of Top End natural heritage for the sake of future generations and our tourism industry. If we do not, we will be handing to future generations a gamba-infested landscape and our natural heritage in ruins.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this important petition before the Assembly. Litchfield National Park sits in my electorate. We all know the implications that gamba grass has across the Territory.

The Territory's natural environment is one of our greatest assets. Territory Labor understands that a strong economy relies on a healthy environment and that smart environmental policy is smart economic policy in the long term.

Gamba grass is a weed of national significance. It is one of the most destructive weeds in the Territory as it spreads easily and invades our pastures, bushland, river corridors and transport and other infrastructure corridors.

Bushfires with gamba grass are up to 14 times more intense than native grass fires. This intensity, with the height of gamba grass, can threaten human health, safety and life, and infrastructure. It can cause irreversible damage to our ecosystems.

Gamba grass threatens our biodiversity, environment and economic assets such as the great Territory gem known as Litchfield National Park located in my electorate of Daly.

We all know and love Litchfield National Park. It is the Territory's most visited national park and is easily accessible for locals and tourists alike. It is a vital drawcard for tourism and is a key source of income for hundreds of our Top End businesses.

If we are to effectively manage and stop the spread of gamba, all of us must take the issue seriously and understand that ongoing action is needed to mitigate and eradicate gamba grass where possible, and that this needs to be done in a coordinated, targeted and appropriately funded way. However, as we know, achieving this aim requires action at a range of levels. It involves effort, commitment and investment by land managers and owners, community members and industry groups alongside the Northern Territory Government.

Territory Labor has a strong track record of investing in gamba grass management. A former Territory Labor government commenced the Gamba Action Program in 2010, supporting landholders to manage gamba on their properties, providing free herbicide and loaning spray equipment. The program works closely with Bushfires NT and the NT Fire and Rescue Service to minimise the threat of bushfires caused by excessive gamba grass fuel loads.

In 2020 the new Weed Management Plan Gamba Grass 2020–2030 was developed by the Gamba Grass Weed Advisory Committee in collaboration with the Weed Management Branch. Territory Labor made the investment in reducing gamba grass by creating the Gamba Army which provides targeted support in areas of significance and creates local jobs for Territorians.

Over eight years in government Territory Labor also:

- invested $6m per year on weed management, including gamba grass, to improve the control of gamba grass on government-owned and managed land through a coordinated multi-agency response
- established a dedicated weeds officer to better manage efforts on Crown land
- established the Weed and Fire Working Group to coordinate the management of weeds and fire on government lands, including gamba grass
- established the Gamba Fire Mitigation Unit, a dedicated unit focused on reducing the risk associated with unmanaged gamba grass
- rolled out fire mitigation assistance vouchers, an investment of $50,000 in a new fire mitigation assistance scheme for rural landlords to address land management matters relating to firebreaks and gamba grass fuel loads on their property
- increased funding to Bushfires NT at Acacia Hills to support volunteer brigades and construct a new facility for Bushfires NT to improve responses to fires
- supported more than 2,000 landholders each year to manage gamba grass on their properties through the provision of free herbicide and equipment loans
- increased the cost of a permit to graze gamba grass on pastoral land
- provided Aboriginal ranger and environment grants to support Aboriginal ranger groups and local councils to purchase capital items and support project activities.

I thank the Indigenous ranger groups, land councils, environmental groups and local communities that have been instrumental in putting in the work on the ground. Over the years we have continued to see momentum in the fight against gamba grass, thanks to strong community action, increased compliance and dedicated funding support from the former Labor government. However, there is still a lot more to do. We acknowledge that Territorians want stronger action.

Ahead of the election last year the CLP made some motherhood statements about gamba grass, but like so many of its commitments and plans there was no substance and no detail. Ahead of the election, the CLP said that Territory Labor failed in addressing gamba grass.

Mr Maley: You did.

Mr YOUNG: However, only today—if the Deputy Chief Minister wants to listen—the minister put out a curated press release reannouncing Territory Labor's investment of $250,000 for an integrated conservation strategy for Litchfield and outlining that the CLP government will continue the policies that Territory Labor put in place. This is not new money; this is existing money. The CLP government has decided to copy Territory Labor.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr YOUNG: This government has come out with this pretty press release to say, 'We will fund the reduction of gamba', but the money was already there. Government members can yell and scream all they want, but the reality is that money was already in the budget. There is nothing but smoke and mirrors from this government, dressing things up to look like it is delivering something different. It is truly baffling.

That being said, the hope is to see this government pick up, continue and build on the investment and partnerships established under the former Labor government to manage and eradicate gamba. This is critical to the community, landlords and our tourism industry.

Ms BOOTHBY (Parks and Wildlife): Madam Speaker, I put on the record that this petition—I thank the member for bringing it on and the 1,000 people who signed it—has been talked about for a long time. In this Chamber we have debated heavily gamba grass. The opposition at the time fought the lack of action that was Labor's legacy of not delivering.

The Member for Daly talked about the existing money. This is not just about money; the press release today is all about the action that this government is taking. We have only just come into government and we are already taking action. We knew about this a long time ago. We tried to fight the then Labor government on these issues and it chose not to listen. It had a scattergun, hope-and-pray proposition to Territorians which was not delivering anything.

In fact, the former government did not have a plan for Litchfield specifically. It was a scattergun approach across the Top End instead of just Litchfield, which is why so many people continue to talk about this. It impacts our tourism, the ecosystem of Litchfield, the biodiversity—all those things. It is not just an environmental issue; it is an economic issue as well. It is also a fire hazard.

We are deeply passionate about this issue because we want to see Litchfield grow. It is one of our most wonderful natural assets that needs to be protected. It is about our lifestyle. People and families love to go to Litchfield and have a swim in the one of the many rock holes. They love camping there. It is a fantastic destination. We are deadly serious about this. Labor members can come in here and make up all the things that they want to make up.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing on this petition. Those thousand people have a right to want action on this. They had no action for a long time under the previous government. That is why I did my press release and why the Member for Braitling, the minister for Environment, and I have been working together on this. We came up with this really quickly. It is dedicated to Litchfield and the Litchfield Loop. It is integrated with a lot of different areas and people who are doing this job, rather than a scattergun approach. That is why this will work.

If it does not work we will not just forget about it like Labor did. We will continue to be on the front foot and look at what is working and what is not. We will make sure that we can invest in the right areas and have the right people doing things together, not working in silos and just having the Gamba Army doing one part, Coomalie Council doing another part and Aboriginal rangers doing something else. Everyone will work together with this integrated system because we all want the same thing. We want Litchfield to be gamba-free and a beautiful natural asset now and into the future.

Motion agreed to; petition noted.

MOTION
Note Petition No 7 – Improve Humpty Doo Primary School Crossing

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be noted.

Let me begin by thanking those who organised this petition, those who took the time to sign it and those who have been lobbying and advocating for the safety of the children, parents and staff of Humpty Doo Primary School for a number of years.

The lack of suitable car parking and an insufficient drop-off zone have been a longstanding infrastructure and safety issue for the school staff, parents and students.

The school is located on Freds Pass Road within my electorate, in the middle of Humpty Doo. The school serves more than 400 students—I believe enrolments are currently 422 for the year—almost all of whom reside in the rural area in either my or the Member for Nelson's electorate.

For those unfamiliar with the area, the school is located on a land island formed with Challoner Circuit and Freds Pass Road, with access through Freds Pass Road. Parents park their cars in a makeshift car park located on Litchfield Council land across Freds Pass Road. They must cross the road on a zebra crossing to get to school. Freds Pass Road is busy, especially around school drop-off and pick-up times, as it is the major feeder road onto the Arnhem Highway. I have massive issues with that intersection with the Arnhem Highway, but I will save that for another day.

Many students attending the school are dropped off each morning by private transport. Unlike urban schools to which students can walk, ride or take public transport, many of our families do not have that luxury as a convenient option.

When I set up around the corner from the school at my regular roadside mobile offices, I see firsthand the amount of traffic this road gets and the large volume of cars that pull into the existing car park—if you can even call it that—on the other side of the road to the school.

During the school term there are flashing lights in the slow down zone. You will see it flashing 'slow down' more than you will see it display a yellow number, which is disappointing. Every day parents with multiple children of differing ages—with siblings in strollers and others carrying schoolbags—struggle to navigate this crossing safely, particularly during the Wet Season when they are hampered by rain and poor visibility. I have seen parents carrying their children through knee-deep puddles in this makeshift car park so that the kids' brand-new school shoes do not get wet and ruined on the first day of school.

The requirement for parents and children to cross this busy road to get from the makeshift car park to the school presents an undesirable level of risk. For many years parents, teachers and the local community have voiced their concerns about these safety issues, and for the last eight years they fell on the deaf ears of Labor ministers who ignored them.

Implementing a solution to this issue is fundamentally the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training, with clause 5.8.2 of the Northern Territory Planning Scheme 2020 stating that an education establishment must meet the needs of students and staff and not unreasonably interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the local road and pedestrian network.

Further, the planning scheme lists a requirement of an education establishment as:

> *Locate pre-school, primary and secondary school facilities to maximise* access *by public transport, safe walking and cycling routes, and are provided with safe vehicular drop-off zones.*

The local council has limited authority to undertake upgrades to the road that would involve alterations to the infrastructure of the school. However, in 2018 to its credit, the council did try. In 2018 the Litchfield Council upgraded a section of Freds Pass Road, including the addition of traffic islands and a minor realignment of the kiss-and-go area. These changes were done before my time on that wonderful council. Although I am sure the council had the best of intentions at the time, these upgrades had the effect of reducing the number of car spaces and the capacity of the kiss-and-go area and made traffic worse. These upgrades simply did not alleviate the safety issues which are prevalent at school drop-off and pick-up times, as I have said about eight times.

I have been informed that during the planning phase for these upgrades to the road, discussions were held to outline additional works that could be considered by other agencies to improve the safety of the school. I have also been advised that in 2016 and 2018 plans were drawn up for an additional car park adjacent to the school's sports oval with access off Challoner Circuit. This potential solution, however, has not come to fruition.

We find ourselves in 2025, seven years on, still dealing with the same safety risks, congestion and lack of adequate parking, coupled with higher school enrolments and increased local traffic. Given the longstanding nature of this issue, it is clear from the failure to listen to the repeated calls for change that those opposite did not and do not value the safety of our rural school students.

Child safety is and needs to be the paramount concern of this government. Addressing this issue is an opportunity to show that every child matters. It would be a failure of this government to do its duty to protect the community if we take no action and wait for a fatality to occur. It is a basic expectation that school zones are safe, that roads and educational facilities are designed for the communities they serve and that government decisions prioritise children's wellbeing.

There are some positives. Located next to the school is a 4,390 square metre parcel of Crown land adjacent to the existing staff car park. If this land was cleared of vegetation and formally granted to the school, it could be developed into a safe and permanent parent parking area. This would mean that all drop-offs and pick-ups could happen within the school property, eliminating the need to cross Freds Pass Road. This would also immediately ease general traffic congestion by providing a fit-for-purpose parking area, eradicating the need for parents to park where they can find space.

Other options include revisiting the construction of an additional car park within the school near its sport oval; construction of a pedestrian bridge over Freds Pass Road; and a significant upgrade to the pedestrian crossing to include installation of barriers, flashing lights and/or traffic lights. However, there are issues with these options. Given the plans for the additional car park were not pursued in 2016 or 2018 it may be that this was not considered a viable solution. A pedestrian bridge could prove to be a significantly more expensive option and would look out of place. The installation of flashing lights and/or traffic lights would interfere with the flow of traffic, potentially worsening the bottleneck effect that already presents when the school has lollipop persons directing traffic during drop-off and pick-up times.

Consideration also needs to be given to the possibility of the local council revoking access to the land where people park their cars and future development of 320 Arnhem Highway. This would make the situation worse.

Rectifying the school parking and kiss-and-go zone is a matter of not only convenience but also safety. Multiple near-miss stories have been shared with me as the Member for Goyder. I have also witnessed incidents that can be described only as near misses, 'Oh no' and 'Please, no'. I do not want to see parents and children take risks every school day to get to school. The lack of proper infrastructure is putting our community's youngest members in danger.

On behalf of the Humpty Doo Primary School community, the petitioners who signed this petition and the ones before it, the parents who worry every day about dropping off their children safely and the students who deserve a secure and safe environment to learn and grow, I call on my government colleagues to commit funding and to finding a suitable solution, addressing the concerns of our community as soon as possible. I call on my government to act before we are forced to deal with the consequences of inaction.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Goyder for bringing this petition before the Legislative Assembly.

Upgrading road infrastructure to ensure that it is fit for purpose and safe for motorists, pedestrians and our younger generations should be a priority for any government. Our road networks are the backbone of the Territory's economy and communities. That is why the former Labor government made major investments into our urban, rural and remote road infrastructure.

Territory Labor knows that strong investment in our roads has many tangible benefits, including stimulating economic growth, connecting our communities and improving the overall safety of Territorians. When we improve road infrastructure we create jobs, attract investment and support the growth of our local industries. Be it agriculture, mining, tourism or Defence, they all need efficient transport networks. That is why Budget 2024 allocated $2.3bn in transport infrastructure investment, including $6.5m for pedestrian road safety infrastructure.

By continuing to improve road infrastructure we can ensure that all Territorians have better access to jobs, education opportunities and essential services without unnecessary delays. Critical upgrading and maintenance of our roads provide safer conditions for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians and ensure that emergency services can reach those in need faster. That is what Territory Labor did.

The investment commitments sit with the CLP government, which is now responsible for delivering the road upgrades committed to by the former Territory Labor government for Territorians. These include $340.5m for priority industry roads; $209m for Central Arnhem Road upgrades; $189.3m for upgrades to Plenty Highway as part of the Outback Way corridor; $127.9m for the Territory national network; $112.4m for the Buntine Highway upgrades; $80m for remote and regional roads; $80.1m for Tanami Road upgrades; $77m for Tiger Brennan Drive and Berrimah Road; $66.8m for Kakadu National Park roads; and $51.8m for upgrades to Tiwi Islands roads.

I understand the member's constituents called for upgraded road infrastructure to improve safety for the community, but the CLP government has not yet confirmed whether it will deliver the $60m selected upgrades to Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa, which was put in the 2024–25 budget.

Only a couple of hours ago three organisations from the Thamarrurr region—the Thamarrurr Development Corporation, the Murin Association and the Kardu Diminin Corporation—called on the CLP government to reaffirm its commitment to upgrading Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa. The project is supported federally …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. This is a debate about a petition on Humpty Doo Primary School, not Port Keats Road.

Madam SPEAKER: The Member for Barkly is right; you are branching out to a different area. Can you bring it back to this petition.

Mr YOUNG: Yes. I am basing my debate—I still have six minutes and 16 seconds to go. I am talking about the overall importance of infrastructure, including at the Humpty Doo school, which I acknowledge is important. All infrastructure projects across the Northern Territory are important. I do not understand why the minister would try to gag the debate. He clearly does not see the importance of roads and infrastructure to all Territorians. It does not matter where they live—whether it is rural, in the city or in the bush—that should be seen as just as important …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, these debates are particularly on petitions. Hundreds of people, if not 1,000, signed these petitions. They are specific. I know it is an opportunity to branch out and talk more broadly about roads, but if you can bring it back—in the spirit of the people who have signed, who will read what you said about their petition—it is a respectful thing to do. I hear you; branch out and bring it back in.

Mr YOUNG: I will bring it back, noting that I have five minutes and 30 seconds. This is all connected through the importance of infrastructure, whether that be at our schools, in our remote areas or our rural areas. We know that critical infrastructure has been allegedly cut by the minister in Wadeye. Is he redirecting funds from Port Keats Road to electorates where the government was voted in? It seems that members of parliament …

Mr HOWE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance; we have been listening to Labor trying to rewrite history, and we are now branching into other areas that are not relevant.

Madam SPEAKER: If you do not have anything more to say about the Humpty Doo Primary School infrastructure and roads, you need to sit down because this is about a specific petition. Many people signed this petition. In the spirit of people listening and following this debate, they want to hear you talk about what they have gone to the trouble of signing. Your call, but bring it in, please.

Mr YOUNG: I will touch on the petition about the upgrades to Humpty Doo Primary School. As members would know, my electorate in Berry Springs borders the Member for Goyder's electorate, and I know many people who attend that school. They speak to me about the importance of all infrastructure, not just for the Humpty Doo school and our cities; they would like to see more infrastructure in our rural and remote areas.

I speak to a lot of those people about the importance of infrastructure in Humpty Doo, and we talk about other pieces of infrastructure that could potentially be cut because the minister has not come out and confirmed that, which is concerning.

This has a real impact on Territorians. We are looking at things that will lower the cost of living, economic growth, business development, improved access to essential services, reduced government and household expenses, cultural and social significance—which the people of Humpty Doo Primary School understand.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. The Member for Daly clearly has contempt for the people of my electorate and instead only cares …

Madam SPEAKER: Please sit down. We will not have argy-bargy across the Chamber. Say what you have to say, Member for Daly. I will not give you any more latitude. If you go off on a tangent, I will shut you down. There are other people who want to speak.

Mr YOUNG: It is worth noting that the Member for Goyder is not there when I am having conversations with constituents about things that affect the Humpty Doo community. We are talking about the overall significance of infrastructure in the Northern Territory. I find it greatly concerning that members would try to shut down that debate. Government members want to shut down debate about the importance of infrastructure in the Northern Territory.

I am not disrespecting the petition; I am talking about infrastructure. I have said how important infrastructure is for Humpty Doo, I am not taking that away, but the minister seems to think it is okay to take away infrastructure, the road upgrades, from people from Wadeye. You cannot have it both ways when you are in government. You cannot get upset because I am speaking in general terms about the importance of infrastructure.

I reiterate the importance of infrastructure for Humpty Doo Primary School. I look forward to other members contributing to this debate.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, what a load of garbage that contribution was. Holey moley! People of the rural area were neglected by his government.

The Member for Daly should be embarrassed to talk about Port Keats, Tanami and all those other roads when we are here to talk about Humpty Doo Primary School.

This is a school I drove past every day on my way to Taminmin. I have been to school assemblies there. It is just outside my electorate, but lots of people in my electorate go to this school. It is a good local primary school, with more than 400 students.

The car park is unsatisfactory. I do not know whether the Member for Daly has parked there; by the sound of it he does not know where it is. It is nowhere near Port Keats or the Tanami Road; it is in Humpty Doo on Freds Pass Road.

It is amazing to hear the dribble come out of his mouth about the good rural folk who want their kids to be safe. It is garbage. They are good rural folk who want to keep their kids and themselves safe. I have parked in that car park, and the Member for Goyder is right; there are puddles and it is dirty. Basically, you park under a big water tank, and then you must walk across the road which is also the intersection with the kiss-and-go area. You are dealing with not only the traffic coming up Freds Pass Road but also the traffic coming out of the kiss-and-go area. It is a double banger for these little kids who want to go to school and learn and the parents who take them there.

The rural area is a great big area and with buses that travel around it, but the buses do not get everywhere. Lots of parents drop their kids at that school, and they deserve to be safe. They are rural kids who just want to go to school, go back home, catch a fish or shoot a goose or whatever they want to do. This is a real concern for me.

The Member for Daly talks about irrelevant garbage when we are here to talk about Humpty Doo Primary School—a school where the kids deserve to be safe.

It is common sense. I encourage people to continue to push this idea because it is about keeping children safe, keeping parents safe and the drivers coming back and forth. Who wants to have an accident involving a schoolkid? Even if it was not your fault it would be traumatic knowing you hurt a little child going to school.

The roads that the Member for Daly spoke about are government roads. This is a road in the rural area controlled by the council, so all this funding the Member for Daly spoke about does not even apply. That is how stupid he is when it comes to talking about government money.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I ask him to withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, please withdraw.

Mr MALEY: I must say …

Mr YOUNG: He has not withdrawn.

Mr MALEY: Sorry; I withdraw that.

Madam SPEAKER: Let us keep this civil. We are almost at the end of our first day.

Mr MALEY: This is about making Humpty Doo parking safer, and I fully support the people who signed that petition.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Goyder for bringing forward this petition and the community for its advocacy on this important matter. The petition states that the traffic volume on Freds Pass Road has reached an alarming level, the road has deteriorated and there is an absence of official designated family parking and school signage.

I will not treat the people of Humpty Doo with contempt and talk about anything other than Humpty Doo Primary School, unlike the members opposite. That was disparaging and disregarded the people of Humpty Doo. If they are at home listening, I certainly understand their frustration.

Every child has a right to be safe at school and on the journey to and from school. Territory parents should have confidence that the necessary safeguards are in place to protect their children from the dangers of the road network during the school run. Upon receipt of this petition I requested the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure to provide advice to me on the situation at the Humpty Doo school.

As the Deputy Chief Minister said, it is not an NT Government road; it belongs to the Litchfield Council, I believe. Given the road is managed by council, the department has not inspected its condition recently. However, as the department works closely with the Department of Education and Training and the council, and it has worked closely in response to this petition, I will be provided with a more comprehensive update specifically in regard to the state of that road.

Improving student safety on and around our roads means investing in not only infrastructure around the schools—not on roads elsewhere across the Territory—but also initiatives designed to better protect our students and increase education about road safety.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure has a road safety team that delivers road safety sessions to schools, community groups and private organisations throughout the Northern Territory. These sessions are available on request at no cost to those schools. They talk about pedestrian safety, passenger safety, bike safety, sensing traffic, road rules, road signs and playing safely around roads.

Now that this has been raised by the Member for Goyder, the residents of Humpty Doo and those people accessing the Humpty Doo school, the government can investigate the options available for improving the school crossing infrastructure around the Humpty Doo school. I am pleased to say to the residents of the Humpty Doo area and the school that we definitely will look at it. I am not here talking about anything else but the Humpty Doo school.

Motion agreed to; petition noted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I will not talk about Humpty Doo Primary School, even though I love that school.

On a more serious note, I pay my respects to a well-known Territory cattleman, Ian McBean, who sadly passed away recently. He was a Territory legend. Ian led an incredible life. I am honoured to talk a little about his achievements and what brought him to this industry.

Ian was a life member of the NT Cattlemen's Association. In 2012 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to the cattle industry. Over a 60-year career he saw some big changes in the Territory.

He was born in Melbourne in 1931 and grew up on a farm in the Riverina of New South Wales. At the age of 21, seeking adventure, he travelled to be a ringer north-east of Alice Springs. I can imagine what it would have been like back in those days. He spent 10 years contract droving and living in Camooweal on the NT–Queensland border. He would go on to spend more than 60 years working in the Territory cattle industry, including a decade as a contract drover.

In a statement the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association said:

> *Ian was a devoted husband to Kay and a father to seven. His passing is a profound loss to his family, friends, and the NT cattle industry, where he was not just a pioneer but one of its strongest advocates.*
>
> *Ian's legacy is one of resilience, leadership, and an enduring commitment to the industry … His influence extended far beyond his own operations—many of today's industry leaders had the privilege of working for or alongside Ian, learning from his vast experience and unwavering passion … His dedication to the industry and its people never wavered, and his wisdom and presence will be deeply missed.*

Ian was awarded an AM. He said that when he looked back at his time droving, it was what he drew his life experience from. He also said:

> *A lot of people talk about the hardship of it. I only had packhorses when I first started, no trucks and no communications but it was the only life you knew and you were young and happy to do it.*

It seems I may have missed my calling. I would have loved to go back and do that—take my horse.

While Ian was still on the road droving in 1964 he drew from a ballot a block of land that would become Innesvale Station in the Victoria River district where he started from scratch. After being there for about 16 years he sold it and bought Bradshaw Station. At the time Bradshaw was one of the largest stations in the Northern Territory. After 15 years Ian decided he wanted a quieter life and bought into Bonalbo Station in the Douglas Daly region. A tiny property by lofty Territory standards, Bonalbo was still a massive cattle station which had improved pasture.

The NT cattle industry has lost a true icon. I extend my deepest condolences to his family, friends and all those in the industry. As the NT Cattlemen's Association said:

> *Ian's passing marks the end of an era, but his contributions and the values he championed will endure.*

Vale, Ian McBean.

Madam SPEAKER: Hear, hear!

Mr MALEY: In relation to the Australia Day Awards, the Australia Day Council identifies and celebrates Territorians who contribute to our community. The Litchfield Council celebrates outstanding members of our community every year on Australia Day and recognises their contributions to the community. I acknowledge and recognise the selfless efforts of those individuals and groups within our community.

Congratulations to Citizens of the Year Val Wilkie and Eric Chalmers from Litchfield/Palmerston Rotary Club. I have known these two for many years. In fact, I went to school with Valerie Wilkie's son. These exceptional community leaders and their tireless efforts have made a profound impact on the Litchfield area and beyond. They are founding members of the Litchfield/Palmerston Rotary Club and have dedicated their years to serving and consistently putting others before themselves. I know that from personal experience.

Their contributions range from mental health in the local community to providing medical support for children in Timor-Leste. Val's work as a Rotary Youth Exchange Coordinator, along with her initiatives like Day for Girls and Books for Babes, showcases her commitment to empowering youth and supporting disadvantaged women. Eric, meanwhile, has played a key role in advocating for the Howard Springs skate park and bike path and demonstrated dedication to improving community spaces. He is also known as a local bore man, so if you have an issue with your bore Eric is the man to go to. Through their consistent voluntary work, Val and Eric have touched countless lives, improving the community and moving it forward.

I also congratulate Liam Fischer on receiving the Young Citizen of the Year award. Liam is a Year 7 student who has made a significant impact in his community through his involvement in St John, where he recently competed as the youngest member of the NT cadets team to help them secure the national championships

title. His dedication to first aid, leadership and teamwork are demonstrated by his regular contributions to St John events and volunteering in the community. Liam's leadership extends far beyond St John, having served as a junior school captain. He visited the Governor-General. A brown-advanced belt in Tang Soo Do and a former competitive swimmer, Liam's well-rounded achievements highlight his commitment to personal growth and community service.

Congratulations to the Community Event of the Year which recognises the achievements of a group or entire community. This award went to the Bike You BBQ Bike Ride, which is run by Tim Walker. Bike You is a rural business where you learn to ride a motorbike safely. You can go there on a Thursday afternoon with your registered bike and go for a trail ride out the back of Howard Springs, come back and then have a barbecue.

This event has made a significant impact on the community by offering a welcoming space for individuals, particularly men, to connect through a shared passion of riding dirt bikes. Through these weekly events, Bike You fosters an inclusive environment where you can come together, build relationships and engage in important conversations, especially about mental health. We all know that men perhaps do not talk about this as much as they should; however, when you are there with a group of likeminded people you open up, and those conversations might help to save a life. The team, led by Tim Walker, are strong advocates for men's mental health, using their initiative on their weekly ride to provide a supportive space for mental health—which is a gap in the rural area. By promoting connection and offering a safe outlet for conversations, Bike You is helping the community.

I have known Tim for many years. I see him in the street and he comes in and has a chat. I am organising to go on one of those bike rides to check it out and see what is going on. I am going through a midlife crisis, so I will get into motorbike riding. We will see how that works out. I will go there and learn from the professionals. Being able to go there and talk to local men and young people is about that community safety and spirit.

I congratulate Tim on his barbecues and Bike You.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, a strength of the CLP in recent years has been its commitment to local engagement and problem-solving. That has been led by the Chief Minister in setting the standard for maintaining our accessibility to the community. People see this displayed in our commitment to attending multicultural events, mobile offices during parliamentary sittings and the electorate events that we collectively attend.

A related strength has been the willingness of our team to work together in support of problem-solving at all scales. I say 'all scales' because whilst there are big issues to tackle in this place, there are also the everyday local issues which are no less important. I am fortunate to have ministerial colleagues who have been supporting me with local problem-solving in the Fong Lim electorate. Tonight I will draw attention to a small number of things we have been working on in the expansive Fong Lim electorate, which covers 10 suburbs, focusing on Berrimah Northcrest and Stuart Park.

As I have pointed out on a number of occasions Berrimah Northcrest is a place replete with potential, but it is also filled with challenges whilst it works towards achieving critical mass as a development. It has an absence of a postal service and council services, water pressure problems, no supermarket and no prospect of local schools. We cannot deal with those things overnight, but we are trying to make strides in the right direction for the people of Berrimah Northcrest. You have to start somewhere, and we decided to start with bus services.

The CLP government is actively progressing this task to make it easier for parents and students to get to and from school every day, noting that very few of the kids who live in Berrimah Northcrest go to Haileybury; most of them go to schools in the northern suburbs and, until this point, have been disconnected from those schools.

I am grateful to the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure and his staff for the efficiency they have displayed in helping us get to the point where we are now conducting consultations to help get bus services for a range of kids living in that area.

Consultation for students in Northcrest is officially underway and closes this Friday. We now have route 100 leaving from Reuben Avenue in the middle of Berrimah Northcrest for kids to get to Darwin High School and Darwin Middle School. It also detours through Nightcliff.

A concerned parent in that electorate, Kieran Jones—I am sure he will not mind me naming him—was good enough to collect some of the information on the ground that I could work with to help us move things forward so that now his kid can get to and from school in Nightcliff every day.

Similarly, there are kids living in Berrimah Northcrest for whom the closest primary school is in the electorate of Karama at Manunda Terrace Primary School, where I went to primary school, and at Karama Primary School, where I went to Transition. We now have route 206 leaving from Berrimah Northcrest to go to Manunda and Karama Primary and on to Sanderson Middle School and Dripstone Middle School.

These are small things in the context of all the big issues we discuss in this place, but these are the things that really matter to people. This government prides itself on staying engaged with the local community. The new routes are anticipated to commence on 3 March, all things going well. Likewise, we are working on Berrimah Northcrest in its totality. Speed limit changes on Berrimah Road have been implemented, which we hope will improve pedestrian safety for all those kids who cross the road to go to Haileybury Rendall School.

I have maintained that I am committed to helping this area actualise its potential as a suburban haven for young families, and I mean that sincerely. For all our talk about stimulating housing development, population growth and housing supply, that is one of the areas which must be focused on and supported in order for us to create places for young aspirational families to get a leg up. I put the Assembly on notice that, in conjunction with the people of Berrimah Northcrest, in the coming months I will tackle council affiliation, which should long ago have been resolved for Berrimah Northcrest.

On the matter of bus routes, Stuart Park similarly had a bus servicing Stuart Park Primary School which did not go through Stuart Park. I could not believe that. It seems cheeky in adjournment to have a pot shot at my predecessor, but I was flabbergasted that Stuart Park, being the enormous suburb that it is, had a school bus that did not take half of the kids in Stuart Park to their school.

I am pleased to say that the route 464 bus, which used to cover Defence areas through Woolner and Bayview, will now extend to cover Tipperary Waters and the southern part of Stuart Park from Dinah Beach Road up, including Eden Street, Mary Street, Meigs Crescent, Gothenburg Crescent, Margaret Street, Duke Street, Frances Bay Drive, Flinders Drive, Ashley Street, Graham Street and Nudl Street. That is dozens of families with little kids with little legs who will have an easier commute.

On a related note, Stuart Park Primary School has been in desperate need of an essential security upgrade which should have been covered by minor works rectification years ago, but it was not due to whatever mismanagement took place. I am pleased to report that we have found the funds for and completed the work on essential security upgrades for Stuart Park Primary School to improve the locks and doors for the upper primary school and the main office. That work was all completed in time for the start of the year.

I am indebted to the minister for Education and her staff for ensuring that work was completed in a timely and efficient manner. I applaud the decisiveness with which she tackled the issue. There have been security issues at that school over a period of time, with doors that simply do not lock and cannot be opened from both sides. These are the essential and enabling infrastructure upgrades that somehow we lost sight of whilst we have been focused on the big-picture stuff. Thank you to the Minister for Education and Training for assisting me to help the people of Stuart Park Primary School in that regard.

I will focus on addressing local infrastructure issues, including enabling infrastructure affecting Stuart Park and, by extension, the CBD. As I have mentioned in this House several times, metaphorically speaking the neck of the body of the Northern Territory is the Stuart Park/Stuart Highway precinct leading into the CBD, which is the head of the Northern Territory. Without a strong neck you cannot have a strong head that supports itself. Over the next three years I will be championing the reinvigoration of that area focused on the Stuart Park high street. I will begin public consultations on that over the coming months with all stakeholders and the community, in conjunction with my ministerial colleagues who have been exceedingly helpful and supportive.

Plans to assist Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association (Dinah Beach Yacht Club)—or for those who are more familiar, the Grotty Yachty—will commence over the coming months. Do visit. If you have not been there for a while, it ain't the Grotty Yachty anymore! It is a beautiful seaside venue with excellent food, regular live music and a great atmosphere. I freely declare that I am proud to be the new patron.

Permit me to share this personal indulgence: the CLP wing went on a Wednesday night in the November sittings to have 'wings for the wing'. You will not find finer chicken wings anywhere other than those at the

Dinah Beach Yacht Club. I extend an open offer to the opposition and crossbenchers to join me at Dinah Beach for chicken wings on any given Wednesday.

In closing I note that I will never have the vigour and valour of the Members for Drysdale and Blain with their Palmerston lawnmowing service. My life's aspiration is simply to do well enough so that I never have to mow a lawn again in my life. I have not managed to realise that aspiration to this point. Notwithstanding that, my commitment to the people of Fong Lim is that I will do my best to maintain the CLP's commitment to local engagement and problem-solving.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I will take up the offer from the Member for Fong Lim to go to the Dinah Beach club to have chicken wings. I love chicken wings. I will reach out at some stage during the week, and we might head down there.

I place on the public record my congratulations to the recent Australia Day Award winners in the Daly electorate. Many members have recipients and award winners in their electorates, so I am sure we will hear more about that. The Citizen and Student Citizen Awards celebrate the remarkable efforts of Territorians who inspire us and contribute to our community every day.

I congratulate our wonderful Student Citizen Award winners: Kevin Commans, Adelaide River School; Leon Selems, Batchelor Area School; Terran Ray, Berry Springs Primary School; Bridie Lock-Grimes, Dundee Beach School; and Brendon Saunders from Tipperary Station School.

I congratulate all our Daly Citizen of the Year recipients. I will start with Belyuen community near where I live; I am down the road. Young Citizen of the Year Sally-Anne Nilco has connections to Wadeye. Many residents from Belyuen have that connection. Congratulations on being the Young Citizen of the Year. The Citizen of the Year is Denise Mclean and the Senior Citizen of the Year is Trudy Mardi. Congratulations.

Congratulations to the Coomalie region winners. The Young Citizen of the Year is Blake Harris-Jacobs. The Citizen of the Year is the wonderful Mary Ashley, who organises Friday church catch-ups on a fortnightly basis. She usually invites service providers such as CatholicCare and Anglicare to give a presentation to the constituents of Batchelor and the region. Congratulations, Mary; I look forward to catching up with you soon.

The Community Event of the Year—I know the Member for Katherine goes to this on a yearly basis—is the Rosella Festival in Adelaide River. It is a wonderful festival where we pick up different rosella or chilli jams. Congratulations to the Rosella Festival organisers in Adelaide River.

The wonderful Prue King is the Senior Citizen of the Year. She helps organise the markets and sells books at her stall. I usually purchase a book when I see her. She is also a figure in the Batchelor community. Congratulations, Prue; your award is well deserved.

I had the pleasure of going to Nauiyu community (Daly River) last week to attend the morning tea and hand out the awards. The Young Citizen of the Year is Danzel Green. He is doing amazing things. He completed Year 12 and has joined the Army. Member for Drysdale, I know that is something close to your heart. The Member for Arafura was also in the Army. Danzel is inspiring people from Nauiyu community and the region, demonstrating what can be achieved when people finish school. The Citizen of the Year is Janine Cooper. The Community Event of the Year is the Community Wellbeing event hosted by St Francis Xavier Catholic School and Patrick Fox. Congratulations to all the award winners.

The Pine Creek Citizen of the Year is Sam Forwood. I am sure many CLP members know Sam—I see the Member for Katherine just gave a fist pump for Sam—and everyone in Pine Creek knows him. One thing I respect about Sam is last year I sat with him at the seniors' Christmas dinner in Pine Creek—speaking about politics, he is a CLP member and he helped the candidate running against me—and it was heartening to put aside the politics, have dinner and talk about the issues of Pine Creek. We know there is a time for the politics to come. Congratulations, Sam; it is a well-deserved award.

In Litchfield—the Deputy Chief Minister mentioned this, but I will go through it again because it is important—the Young Citizen of the Year is Liam Fischer; the Citizens of the Year are Valerie Wilkie and Eric Chalmers and the Community Event of the Year is the Bike You BBQ Bike Ride. Congratulations.

I turn to my home community, Wagait Beach. Congratulations to the Young Citizen of the Year, Georgia (Alex) Bowers. The Citizen of the Year is Maureen Chalmers, whom we refer to as Molly. She is of Irish heritage and a delight to be around. She is hilarious and always playing tricks on people. We are never sure what she will come up with, but she always keeps us on our toes. Congratulations, Molly.

The Community Event of the Year went to the Mandorah Mealy Mashers' eradication of the infestation of mealy bugs. Congratulations. I remember I had to purchase bugs for my plants. I cannot remember how many bugs the group had ordered, but it was in the thousands. Those bugs wiped out the mealy bugs in Wagait Beach. It was well organised, and the group advocated well to government to purchase the bugs.

The Senior Citizen of the Year is Kerry Courts. I play tennis with her. She organises tennis matches three times a week to which I pop down every now and then. The players have me on my toes, testing out my game for tennis; they run me round down there. Kerry does everything in the community. She works for the local government council and is always someone you can rely on if you need a hand with anything. Congratulations, Kerry; I look forward to having a hit of tennis with you soon.

The West Daly region Young Citizen of the Year—another one for the Members for Arafura and Drysdale—is William Curwen-Walker. He used to be a part of NORFORCE. I saw him at the Barunga Festival helping set up about eight years ago when I first met Selena. He is also a youth worker in the community of Wadeye. I give a huge shout-out to William; I am part of one of the group chats where people post what the community is doing. He worked throughout the Christmas period organising activities at the pool to ensure that young people had access to it. A huge congratulations to William. He is a hard worker and a mentor to his community and the other young people coming through. It is wonderful to see young people supporting young people in their own community.

Citizen of the Year was dually awarded to Max Ridgway and Marlena Flynn. The Senior Citizen of the Year is Raphaelia Bitting. I used to work with Raphaelia. She is a wonderful person. She is officially working with the Yellow Shirts, on top of all the other work she does as a senior. She helps at Christmastime, organising activities for young people. She is an asset to the community. When I worked with her, she was always planning ahead how she could engage young people to get them to school and into the workforce.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I put on the record the 2025 Australia Day Citizenship Awards which recognise outstanding contributions to our community. The awards were held at the Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre on Friday 24 January; we did not have it on Australia Day.

The Citizen of the Year is Karl Kratschmer. Karl has been recognised for his dedication to the Katherine community as unit officer of the Katherine Volunteer Unit for the Northern Territory Emergency Service. Since joining the NTES in 2011 Karl has demonstrated exceptional commitment through deployments interstate and intrastate, often in challenging conditions. Karl also contributed to the unit's capabilities by securing grants for training and equipment, representing the unit on the local emergency committee and working to increase volunteer engagement through local media initiatives. His leadership extends to his active involvement in the NTES committees and the NT SES Volunteers Association, advocating for the needs of Katherine volunteers.

People like Karl are well worth having in our community. Beyond NTES Karl's community contributions include his work with the Greyhound Rehoming Association NT where he served as treasurer and helped rehome greyhounds across the region from 2018 to 2022.

The Young Citizen of the Year is Rupert Trembath. Rupert is a vet at Katherine Vet Care. He was honoured for his exceptional contribution to veterinary services in Katherine. His father, Peter, was the flying vet. He has big shoes to fill following in his father's footsteps. They have a good vet service in Katherine. He is in the process of taking over his family's practice and is working towards establishing an equine surgery facility, which will significantly enhance veterinary services in the Northern Territory.

Since returning to Katherine in 2021 Rupert has played a pivotal role in the local and regional cattle industry, gaining his private pilot's licence in 2022 so that he can reach further into the region. Over the last four years he has pregnancy-tested more than 400,000 cattle.

The Community Event of the Year was won by Katherine Multisport Club for the Katherine Ultra Challenge. For those members who do not know, the Katherine Ultra Challenge is an event held in August every year. It is a fantastic event that sees people from across the Territory come to Katherine. It starts at the gorge. It used to be a 100-kilometre race in a day, but the constraints of not being able to use the river, the road and the rest of combined for it to be held at Katherine Gorge, which is fantastic.

The annual event provides a significant economic boost to the town and strengthens community spirit and engagement through volunteers and local business involvement. A lot of visitors come each year to participate in this event, and accommodation is booked out with competitors. Lasting memories are made from competitors'

experiences. The event is a testament to the dedication of the small but extremely passionate volunteer team which also organises other popular activities, including the Katherine Run Festival.

Each year I am pleased to volunteer my services at the Katherine Ultra Challenge. It is a great time to catch up with many people who have left Katherine, but come back to enjoy the event. I am always directing traffic at the visitor information centre. It is fantastic; you get to do a little work, a little socialising with tourists and learning where they are from, as well as telling people, 'Wait, there is a bike or runner coming'. It is a great event; it is social.

Each year Katherine schools are invited to nominate students who display outstanding citizenship qualities, including a sense of fair play, generosity of spirit, concern for others, cultural understanding and a positive attitude. This year's recipients were Kooper Sauer from Katherine South Primary School and Swaran Lachaiya and Taitt Green from St Joseph's Catholic College.

On Australia Day it was fantastic to join members of the Katherine Vehicle Enthusiasts Club at the Katherine Club. The staff cooked a beautiful breakfast. We celebrated everything that is wonderful about Australia Day. Members of the community joined in. There was a display of old cars by the Katherine Vehicle Enthusiasts Club, Heidi from Barnyard Petting Zoo and face painting. A huge thanks to the Katherine Club and the members of the board who cooked the breakfast, set up and cleaned up. It was quite a warm day, so it wrapped up by 10.30.

I went to the Top Didj Art Gallery where, with the Katherine Town Council, a small function was put on for seniors. About 35 seniors were there, and we enjoyed the morning tea put on by Tegan from Dragonfly Catering. It was fantastic. There was a quiz with all things Australian. Not being competitive—not! I am very competitive—we were on a good table with the CEO of the council, the mayor and some seniors. It was all about making sure we got the right answers. We happened to be on the winning team so that was even better. Shirley and Graham managed to take the packet of Tim Tams home. They were excited about that. It was a lovely morning tea.

It was a busy morning in Katherine with community events for Australia Day. I look forward to bigger and better things next year.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I celebrate a remarkable milestone for hockey in the Northern Territory. The Territory Stingers have embarked on an extraordinary journey as participants in the prestigious Malaysian Hockey League. This marks the first time a team from the Northern Territory has competed in this internationally renowned competition. It is a testament to the resilience, determination and talent of our athletes.

The Stingers' inclusion in the Malaysian Hockey League is a transformative moment for hockey in the Northern Territory. I put on the record my thanks to the CEO of Hockey NT, Mr Jason Butcher, who spearheaded the campaign following the refusal for the NT Stingers to join the national Hockey One League. It has been a successful outcome for them.

The participation in this competition reflects not only their skill but also their ambition to compete on a global stage. The partnership between Hockey NT and the Malaysian Hockey Confederation has paved the way for this opportunity to foster collaboration and strengthen ties between Southeast Asia and Oceania. This partnership extends beyond competition, involving coaching exchanges, umpire development and community engagement initiatives that will leave a lasting legacy for both regions.

The two teams of 25 players, plus coaching and support crews, flew out of Darwin heading to Kuala Lumpur on Monday 6 February. With an intense schedule compressed into just three weeks, they are required to play up to 12 games if they reach the grand final. Despite this demanding format, the Stingers have already showcased their talent with their first victories in the league—a proud moment for all Territorians. Given this, there is every chance that they will make it through to the finals.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that this achievement would not have been possible without the support of key stakeholders. The Northern Territory Government provided $150,000 to help prepare these teams for this monumental challenge. Additionally, partnerships with local organisations have further strengthened community backing for the Stingers.

This historic endeavour not only elevates our athletes but also highlights the unique culture and spirit of the Northern Territory on an international stage.

As we cheer on both our men's and women's teams in Kuala Lumpur, let us reflect on how this opportunity inspires future generations of athletes and strengthens our commitment to excellence. I attended the farewell a couple of weeks ago and heard the story of one of the players who did not have the opportunity to compete on the national stage. She is now a mother and a little older, but she now has the opportunity to compete on a global stage. That was inspiring to hear.

Players across the men's and women's teams represent a young squad, with five players under 18 and 11 players under 21. If you will all indulge me for a minute, I will quickly list all the players for the record.

The women's team is Sophie Aranha; Sydney Auld; Holly Beath; Jordan Bliss; Ellie Buckley; Jemma Buckley; Shaykoda Carne; Niesha Casmiro; Isobel Cowell; Tiana Crompton; Ashleigh D'Souza; Macenzee Dixon; Naomi Evans; Estelle Hughes; Julia King; Stacey Luck; Natalie Lynch; Millie McLaurin; Maya Nunn; Samantha PangQuee; Chloe Pendlebury; Destiny Peris; Elle Richardson; Amy Stripling; and Zita Varatharajan.

The men's team is Luke Broadway; Lucas Camara; Joel Carroll; Cameron Cooke; Billy Fahy; Calvin Farmilo; Isaac Farmilo; Matthew Fisher; Max Fraser; Tarrant Haami-Jones; Leon Hayward; Karl Hochman; Nathan Hochman; Jamie Hullick; Tobias Jenner; Joe Lauritsen; Adrian Lockley; Adam Luck; Jeremy Mayne; Mitchell Northcote; Ayden Parkin; Zach Rakkas; Jason Talbot; Lachlan Walter; and Huw Wiltshire.

As I am sure you would all agree, these players and their support teams carry the pride of an entire community and the NT. One of the best parts of my job as the assistant Minister for People, Sport and Culture is to pretend that I am a small part of their journey.

You may or may not be interested to know that a long time ago I was selected to represent South Australia in the National Hockey Competition. I will live vicariously through these guys as they compete in the global competition. I will continue to live stream as many games as I can. If you want the link to those let me know.

We wish these guys every success in their campaign. We look forward to celebrating many more victories ahead and their return, following the competition, after 22 February.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will talk about an issue that has been brought to my attention by several Territorians recently. It has been left unspoken for some time. It is hurting people across the Northern Territory, particularly those in Central Australia and Darwin in the Top End. It is time we shine a light on this matter and demand urgent action from the Territory and federal governments.

I will talk predominantly about home insurance. It has been reported to me that many Territorians have experienced staggering increases in their home and contents insurance premiums, which have been driven largely by floods, fires and storms on the eastern seaboard.

I heard from residents in Alice Springs in the electorate of Braitling who recently had insurance quotes soar by $20,000. One resident stated that their insurance premium is now $23,000 a year for a home on Barrett Drive. It is $13,000 for a property on Giles Street in Alice Springs' old East Side. In Darwin a home owner in Coconut Grove is facing a premium of $15,000 a year for coverage for storm surge, flooding and fire.

These premiums have continued to rise since the previous CLP government sold TIO to Allianz, a company that is headquartered in Germany, not the Territory.

Although floods and bushfires are serious concerns, it is difficult to understand how some of these homes—many of which I visited—could be impacted by flooding, considering when floodwaters get to them the entire town of Alice Springs would have to already be underwater. In some cases Territorians have been that told they cannot get any coverage at all for floods, storms or fires if they live in particular locations.

This is a significant issue that demands action. First and foremost, the Commonwealth Parliament should by directing its energy to establish a royal commission to investigate the practices of insurance companies. However, that occurs after floods have happened; we need this work to happen before. Additionally, the Northern Territory Government must consider reviewing the flood maps and fire zones to ensure that they reflect the true risk faced by our communities.

This issue deeply affects Territorians, and not only in terms of the cost of living; it also hurts our real estate market and the broader economy.

I have written to the federal minister, Stephen Jones, and will reach out to the Northern Territory's Planning minister, Josh Burgoyne, in the hope that we can work together to resolve this issue for the community.

I spoke to residents in Alice Springs in old East Side. They said first and foremost that the importance of getting insurance is to be covered for flood, fire and storms. In some instances they were told by the insurance companies that if the flood mapping and mitigation were undertaken that could have a direct impact in the reduction of insurance premiums.

It is important that we do this work. I acknowledge that work is due to commence this year on the design of flood mitigation strategies for Alice Springs. I look forward to hearing from the Planning minister about those strategies and what will be proposed and funded because it will have a direct impact on people's insurance premiums in Central Australia.

It is hard, given the cost of living. For those of you who know Alice Springs, imagine on top of a mortgage having to pay $23,000 a year just to have your house covered for flood, fire and storm. People are already spending money to buy their piece of the Territory, their dream home, then are having to pay $23,000 a year to get coverage. They have been told by some insurance companies not to get the coverage for flood, fire or storm, but that defeats the purpose of having insurance to protect your home, your most treasured asset.

This is a serious issue. We have seen in the rural area of Alice Springs that those people who live along Lhere Mparntwe (Todd River) experiencing an increase in insurance premiums. A friend of mine had a quote of $30,000 to renew the insurance on her home because she was near what they said was stormwater drainage and the river. The Todd River in Alice Springs does not flow a lot and it has to have a lot of rain to be what we call a banker banker. Fortunately for her, she is a smart and educated woman. She shopped around and significantly reduced her insurance premiums by about $15,000.

This highlights how the system needs reform. We need to tackle insurance companies and the outrageous premiums they are charging people, because it is hurting people.

I give a shout-out to everyone who has spoken to me about it. I appreciate it. This is something that we can all work on. I give a shout-out to all the Alice Springs real estate agents I have spoken to about this who have been forthcoming in saying that quite often this is an issue that stops people from buying a new home in Central Australia. People who are borrowing $500,000 or $600,000 to buy a beautiful house are often put off when they have to buy insurance worth $23,000 a year to get coverage for flood, fire and storms. In beautiful old East Side in Alice Springs it is $13,000 a year for insurance. People are trying to sell beautiful homes and buyers wonder whether they can afford to pay insurance premiums after buying a house.

I talked to the Member for Nightcliff about Coconut Grove and the sudden change in insurance premiums. They are going up because of storm surge. Coconut Grove has been there for a long time; it is an established suburb.

We have been experiencing natural disasters and events in the Northern Territory for some time—it happens; they are called natural disasters. We acknowledge that they will intensify with climate change. Royal commissions looked into the impacts of east coast flooding events on insurance after those events have already happened and the practices of accessing funding, but we need work to be undertaken in the Territory before it happens so that we can relieve the cost of living for people because what people are expected to pay for insurance premiums is outrageous and not fair.

I look forward to working with the Planning minister on flood mitigation. Money from the sale of TIO was put aside to do flood mitigation in Katherine and Alice Springs. I am not by any means dismissing the complex nature of that flood mitigation, but it is important that we step this through, look at the recommendations and consult the community on any remediation works or flood mitigation. Good flood mitigation strategies is one way that this government can tackle the cost of living. By sending that information to insurance companies the government can see whether they will respond with reduced premiums because the risk has been reduced.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute and honour the winners and the many nominees of the 2025 Palmerston Australia Day Awards. I cannot get through them all tonight, but I will have a go and probably complete them on Thursday.

I will start with the winner of the 2025 Citizen of the Year, Rodney Greenwood. Rodney is a long-term President of the Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Football Club who has stepped down from that role and passed the baton to others. He is now busily involved with the Palmerston Raiders Rugby Union Club. The man cannot sit still.

Rodney was named the 2025 Citizen of the Year for his exceptional leadership, community spirit and unwavering dedication. Since becoming president in 2019, Rodney has transformed the Palmerston Raiders club, increasing membership by 56% and establishing a successful women's team. Under his leadership the Raiders have flourished, with notable achievements such as winning the Banitba Shield. Rodney supported numerous community events, including Youth Week, NAIDOC family days, the City of Palmerston Territory Day celebrations and the Palmerston Youth Festival.

Mental health awareness is evident in his efforts to provide support services at home games, offering a safe space for individuals to seek help. Rodney's resilience, stemming from his background as a former Army member, has made him a true advocate for wellbeing, family and community unity. Rodney's passion in sports makes him a deserving winner of the 2025 Citizen of the Year.

I will speak about some of the 2025 Citizen of the Year nominees. Sanjeev Patel was nominated for the Australia Day Awards for his valuable contributions to cultural and community life in Palmerston. As the mastermind behind the successful Musical Nights at Goyder Square in 2023 and 2024, Sanjeev planned and delivered these events by bringing together the local community through music and entertainment.

In addition to those events, Sanjeev is organising a Bollywood musical event in Malak—Member for Karama, you may be interested in checking that out—which will, no doubt, be attended by many Palmerston residents. He is also involved with the Multicultural Council of the NT, the Gujarati Cultural Association of Darwin and the Tamil Society.

His passion for community engagement extends beyond music events, as he organises street food festivals with plans for one in Palmerston in 2025. Through his dedication to fostering cultural experiences and bringing people together, Sanjeev has made a significant impact on the Palmerston community. Thank you, Sanjeev.

I also honour Paeatia Reea who was nominated for his exceptional leadership and dedication to rugby union and the Palmerston community. Since January 2024 he has coached various teams and community clubs and is committed to prioritising the development and inclusion of young people. His passion for rugby and creating safe, positive environments has helped many Palmerston athletes explore new opportunities, including pathways to represent sports.

His selflessness extends beyond coaching; he worked tirelessly to establish the All Nations Rugby NT program, providing inclusive opportunities for athletes of all backgrounds. Pae invests time in mentoring and fosters team unity and the need for respect both on and off the field. Providing players with transport, training, equipment and pathway opportunities shows his commitment to Palmerston's young people. We definitely need more people like him giving their time, energy and commitment to our young people so that they have positive avenues in which to pass their time.

Natalie La Pira was nominated for her significant and lasting impact on the Palmerston community through various initiatives that promote creativity, youth engagement and community welfare.

The creation of a legal paint space for street artists in the underground car park at Palmerston Shopping Centre—Member for Brennan, that is yours—has transformed the space into a vibrant hub that fosters local talent and reduces graffiti. This space, managed by a local artist, has become a beacon of creativity and pride, encouraging positive community engagement. Natalie worked alongside local artists and approved its use.

Natalie has supported youth healing by facilitating memorial murals after community tragedies and establishing a drop-in music studio, providing young people with a safe productive space to explore their musical talents and build confidence. Natalie's support for community events such as the Palmerston Street Art Festival and her donations for youth sports prizes have enriched local activities and motivated youth participation.

I honour Young Citizen of the Year nominee Penny Ralph from Satellite City BMX Club. Penny was nominated for her contributions to the Satellite City BMX Club where she volunteers as a coach and has a general club support role. Penny's mentoring and positive influence supports younger riders and fosters a welcoming environment. Penny's efforts not only enhance the club's inclusivity but also contribute to the overall wellbeing and cohesion of the Palmerston community. Well done, Penny and Satellite City BMX.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I speak in adjournment this evening on several key items, acknowledging people across the Northern Territory. I will start with the 2025 Australia Day Awards.

We know some of the Territory representatives who went to Canberra on 25 January. I congratulate the Senior Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory, Michael Foley OAM from Casuarina; Young Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory, Nilesh Dilushan from Darwin; Local Hero for the Northern Territory Mignon McHendrie from Darwin River; and the Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory, Mr Grant Ngulmiya Nundhirribala from Numbulwar community, my cousin and a constituent. Congratulations to all the Northern Territory representatives.

We are proud of the 2025 cohort. Unfortunately, we did not have any national winners this year, but we had a high calibre of Northern Territory representatives on the national stage. I look forward to continuing to watch and appreciate the journey of these four outstanding Territorians in the work they do across the NT.

I also place on the record a great event that happened in the Arnhem electorate, the Australia Day barbecue breakfast and family fun day in Mataranka. I have attended that event as local member for many years. It is always a fantastic family day.

I drive down from Katherine early in the morning in time for the cooked full barbecue breakfast, which is all done by volunteers in the Mataranka community. Thank you to all the volunteers. They get up super early and organise everything. It is a free breakfast and family fun day for anyone in Mataranka, Mulggan Town Camp and those passing through on the highway—the visitors and tourists who are brave enough to endure the Wet Season which we all love. Thank you to all the Mataranka community members who always openly welcome me as the local member.

I presented two awards at the family fun day. They were both in recognition of the fantastic work the Roper Gulf Regional Council municipal services crew had done in the Tidy Town Awards. I believe the awards were officially presented in Alice Springs last year, but it was the first time the MUNS crew was recognised in front of fellow community members and town residents. It was a great honour to present that as the local member. Thank you to Karyn from Roper Gulf for the invitation to do that in front of the community.

The day was well planned. There was a doughnut-on-a-string eating competition for kids and adults. I did not participate, but my daughter, Radiance, did. She had a great time. There was also the ice-cream eating competition. I got out of it this year because Judy MacFarlane was not there. She normally eggs me on to do it. Unfortunately, Judy was on call at the clinic, so I missed out this year. I was enthralled seeing who the winner would be. There is always a kids, adult female and adult male competition. This year was my break. I thought that maybe Rae Rae would have a go at it, but she was a little shy.

It is always good fun. The community gets together. The local businesses put in the prizes for the kids and adults. There was the jumping sack race and the apple bobbing. I did the apple bobbing. I jumped in a couple of the teams. That was fantastic fun. The kids had a water slide.

The exciting part of the day was the digging up and unveiling of the time capsule that was put in 20 years ago. It was under the flagpole. There was a huge rock with a plaque on it. The forklift removed the rock and all the community members started digging—and digging and digging—and we did not get to the time capsule. There were a few conversations like, ‘We think the flagpole rusted out a couple of years ago and someone moved the flagpole and the rock as well’. They went back but unfortunately did not get it. They went about four feet down with their digging. It was pretty hot at Mataranka—about 37ºC on Australia Day, so the water slide was a great idea for the kids. They moved the forklift and got a bulldozer in and scraped through. The hole was about two metres off, but they were close to the original spot. Well done to the community members for their perseverance.

All the items that were put into the time capsule 20 years ago can be seen on the Mataranka Facebook page. It is interesting. A little wet weather had soaked into the metal time capsule, but the community members dried it out and had a look through some of the maps and other items of special history from the Mataranka community from 20 years ago. It was great that they found it and could open and share it with the community.

Thank you so much to the community members of Mataranka for a fantastic Australia Day barbecue breakfast and family fun day. I spent about six hours enjoying that with my kids in Mataranka.

Lunar New Year speaks of new beginnings. It is the year of the snake, so fresh beginnings, shedding of the old and starting the new. To all our community groups that celebrate Lunar New Year, it was wonderful to host an event and recognise the huge contribution that our multicultural groups give to the Northern Territory and the generations of families who lived here and helped build the Territory. It was wonderful to celebrate the Lunar New Year in Darwin.

A big shout-out goes to the Chung Wah Society for the wonderful Chinese lion dancers. They did a great job; we saw that firsthand today, but it feels like so long ago now. They also presented the dancers and musicians who are so talented. They train and practise—some from a young age and others start at an older age—and are always professional.

A big shout-out goes to Roland Chin and the Chung Wah Society for their huge contribution. They have been extremely busy over the last two weeks going out to all the businesses around Darwin and Palmerston doing the blessings. It has been fantastic for not only the community members who celebrate Lunar New Year but also fellow Territorians who love to see our beautiful, diverse, rich culture and the fabric that holds the Territory together with all the amazing diversity and respect for the cultures we have here.

Happy Lunar New Year to everyone, and I look forward to a great 2025.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I give a big shout-out to the Filipino Australian Association—including the team on the committee, Emcille Wills and Edward Ocampo and many others—for another great celebration, the Darwin Sinulog Festival. Sinulog is an annual celebration and not just a festival; it is a powerful reminder of the rich cultural and religious heritage of the Filipino community and the friends we have in the Northern Territory.

From the moment I arrived with my colleagues we were dancing in celebration of Santo Nino, including the Cebu Dance led by the Sinulog Queens, Iselle Grosskopf and Lee Plowman. They were beautiful in their handmade gowns.

A special shout-out goes to Outback Beats for the music on the night and the Holy Family Parish—the Member for Karama speaks fondly about the work its members do—which was instrumental in bringing this event together.

We had delicious traditional food made by the cooks from Zhen's Corner, Pizza Overload and Pizza King who donated their time. We did not just have pizza; there was plenty of Filipino food.

The event was supported by the Hermano and Hermana Mayor and Mayores Ramon Ferrer and Ronilda Ferrer and their families. We thank them very much. They are hugely important part of the Filipino community.

I was there with my colleagues the Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro; the Member for Fannie Bay, Laurie Zio; the Member for Karama, Brian O'Gallagher; and our CLP candidate for the federal election, Lisa Bayliss. We all danced our little hearts out; we had a fabulous time.

Thank you to our Filipino friends who always make us feel so welcome.

It was an honour to attend the vibrant and joyous festival that brings together the Tamil community of Darwin, the Pongal Festival.

I thank the president, Narayan Narayan, and the vice president, Pavalan Vickraman. Those who were there would remember the drummers Balachander Mohanraj, or Bala as we call him; his son, Surya Laxsman Balachander; Ramanan Thamutaran; Dhinesh Mohan; and Heraa Bai. They all participated in this deeply spiritual and cultural Pongal Festival.

Pongal is one of the major festivals celebrated by Tamil people. It is not our first rodeo; we have been to a few of these and they are fabulous. They have tradition games such as tug of war and uriyad, which is like a pinata but it is a clay pot that you have to bang while blindfolded. It is a lot of fun. We also participated in the ancient tradition of stirring the Pongal pot, which cooks the sweet desserts, basically giving everyone who goes near it good blessings. It was a wonderful ceremony. We danced the Pongal pot dance as well.

I was joined by my colleagues the Member for Wanguri, Oly Carlson; the Member for Fannie Bay, Laurie Zio, who loves an event; and Lisa Bayliss, who also loves an event with our friends in the Tamil Society.

Thank you to everyone who was involved.

The other event I attended was with the Puja and Cultural Association of NT (PCANT). I thank its members for their warm welcome to the Saraswati Puja, particularly Swadhin Paul, the president, who is always so welcoming when we attend their events.

I was there with Oly Carlson, the Member for Wanguri. We spent some time listening to the performers with drums and other instruments on stage, singing their traditional songs. It is about their divine grace who guides them with their studies. It had a children's theme—a knowledgeable and educational theme—in relation to Goddess Saraswati. It was great.

Included in the committee were Pritam Paul, vice president; Debabroto Roy, general secretary; Tapu Saha, treasurer; Manoshi Modak, cultural secretary; Soma Mondal, who has the Puja portfolio; Kabita Gosh, public officer; and Anik Deb and Sourav Nandi, executive members. The committee members work incredibly hard to pull together these beautifully planned traditional events for their community and allow us to join in those celebrations. Thank you so much to that group.

The last couple of weeks have also been the start of the school year. We were blessed to have new school captains at some of the primary schools in my electorate.

I speak about Bakewell Primary School in this House a lot; it is one of my favourite primary schools. This year it elected Evie Griffith of 6M and Keya Patel of 6W to be the school captains. They are the leaders of the school in Year 6, being the highest grade there. They will perform assembly duties, running the assembly and announcing people to come on stage. They do a fabulous job and will be great leaders.

The other school that announced its school captains and leaders is Rosebery Primary School, which is another fantastic school with great students. The Member for Blain and I share a boundary. David Fashu from Year 5/6 Gray and Mya Kong from Year 5/6 Rahman were elected student leaders and school captains. They will do all the duties required of them as leaders. Several times when I have visited that school they have greeted me at the door, wanted to show me around and looked after whatever I was looking to do at the school that day. Well done, David and Mya; good luck for the school year.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, this evening I speak in adjournment on the Alice Springs Australia Day Fun Run and subsequent awards and citizenship ceremony that were held on 26 January—your birthday, Madam Speaker.

The Australia Day Fun Run was a staple of the yearly Alice Springs calendar for many years before it was wiped off the Australia Day events list. This year the Alice Springs Town Council brought back the event to the delight of many in the community. I later found out that Councillor Melky, a keen runner in our community, was the impetus behind this. Thank you, Eli.

Along with Eli, the Mayor of Alice Springs, Matt Paterson, started the event and welcomed everyone across the line. Brendan Heenan was on hand to cook the pancake breakfast with his trusty helper Bruce Clifford. Kate Walsh and other staff of the Alice Springs Town Council also assisted on the morning, and I thank them all for their efforts.

Later that morning the citizenship ceremony and Centralian awards were held. Alice Springs welcomed 70 new citizens from Bangladesh, Cameroon, Colombia, France, Germany, India, South Korea, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, United Kingdom, United States of America and Zambia.

The celebrations continued with a group of Centralians being recognised for their valuable contributions to the Alice Springs community, along with the Youth Education Scholarship and Student of the Year winners.

The 2025 Centralian Citizenship Award recipients were Centralian Young Citizen of the Year, Armani Francois; Centralian Senior Citizen of the Year, Jovita Price; Centralian Event of the Year, 2024 West Macs Monster; and Centralian Citizen of the Year, Peter and Jeanette Gurrie.

The 2025 Youth Education Scholarship recipients were Tuakura Schwalger, Oliver Phelps, Aaron Paul Tony, and Latoya Miller-Martin.

The 2025 Student of the Year winners were Hercules Jones, Emma Vakapora, Joel Connell, Gurasees Kaur and Kaylah La.

A big congratulations to all.

Later that morning the Aquatic & Leisure Centre threw a pool party to celebrate Australia Day with families of different backgrounds. I was more than happy to help out on the barbecue with local ASTC employee David Heir, more commonly known as Kiwi. Kiwi is always on hand to assist and does an incredible job

helping out at the local pool. Jay Scott-Hunter was also on deck to assist on the day and ensure everyone at the pool was enjoying the wonderful day, as well as working on the barbecue.

Thank you to everyone who made the day one of the best Australia Days I have been involved in for some time.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, in my maiden speech in this Chamber only a few months ago I made it clear that I believe the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. The Leader of the Opposition has once again made it clear that it will accept far worse than I would tolerate.

There is a stench in this building—a stench of bullying; harassment; cheap political potshots; waste of taxpayer money, time and resources; and fake apologies. This stench comes from the fourth floor of this building in the Leader of the Opposition's office.

I believe that everyone has the right to feel safe at work. I believe that everyone should feel safe to use the bathroom at work. I would like to think that everyone in this Chamber has the same views, but this month a member of staff in the Leader of the Opposition's office sunk to a new low. One of her taxpayer-funded lackeys emerged from the shadows and lurked into a bathroom to leave a photo intending to inflict harm and harassment on another. This is a massive violation of taxpayer trust, money, resources and other public servants' rights to have a safe environment to work. You should be able to use the loo without worrying about someone coming over your shoulder. You would have thought that the thrashing the Labor Party members got in August last year would have been enough for them to look themselves in the mirror, reflect on their failures and allow them to move forward. Instead, we have more of the same gutter tactics in play.

Those opposite who have sat for a number of years in this Chamber consistently demonstrate their lack of understanding of this place or of human decency. I will not even start on their lack of understanding of how petitions work. This is not a first-time occurrence for these gutter tactics and poor behaviour by the Labor Party in the Territory. You will remember a few short years ago a Labor staffer was involved in an incident where they were a bully; they were aggressive and threatened a member of this Chamber. What was their punishment? A fake apology and preselection for the seat of Daly. They now sit as a fake deputy in a party of four with no voice of their own.

If the member of the opposition's office—the staff member involved in this incident—was employed in any other industry, business or workplace, and they did what they did, they would have been shown the door. I commend Madam Speaker for banning this individual from the building for a week; however, I believe this behaviour needs to be shut down for good. This toxic behaviour and history of bullying, harassment and gutter politics needs to stop. The stench, the rot and the rort must end.

The future Leader of the Opposition—I reckon by the end of the year—the Member for Gwoja, made a public statement on his social media account the same day as this incident occurred. I do not often read what the Member for Gwoja posts on his socials, but this one was reasonable. In it he said:

> *It's time for leadership that brings us together, not pulls us apart.*
>
> *Being deflective and hateful do nothing to solve real issues. We need leadership in healthcare that focuses on meaningful change, not cheap political moves.*

Perhaps those opposite would do well to heed the message of the Member for Gwoja and instead of trying to dismiss the matter, issuing a fake apology and carrying on the toxic behaviour, they focused on making meaningful change, not cheap political moves, they would be able to focus on working for the Territory instead of themselves.

I look forward to hearing about the sacking or the resignation of the taxpayer-funded political hack in the Leader of the Opposition's office, and for those opposite to take a stance against bullying, harassment and cheap political potshots. If not, the next time I rise in adjournment, I will name that member of staff to ensure the failures of the Labor Party to condemn poor behaviour are not repeated.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I place on the record the events that I have been invited to in my electorate and the wider Northern Territory community.

On 30 November 2024 I attended the interfaith gathering coordinated by United Muslims NT (UMNT). The interfaith gathering focused on building cohesion in a diverse community. This event was a shining example of the spirit of collaboration and understanding that is essential in our society today.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Mohammed Raziuddin, whose vision and dedication made this event not only possible but also profoundly impactful. The atmosphere was one of mutual respect and genuine dialogue, providing a platform for people from diverse backgrounds to come together, share their perspectives and forge stronger connections. It was also my distinct privilege to be joined at this event by Oly Carlson MLA, the Member for Wanguri, and the Member for Johnston. I am deeply encouraged by the commitment of all those who participated in the event. The work on building cohesion in a diverse community is ongoing and requires all of us, as leaders and citizens, to play our parts.

I congratulate Mr Nilesh Dilushan, NT Young Australian of the Year, who travelled to Canberra to join other award winners in January 2025.

I acknowledge the exceptional evening I recently attended at HPA's Christmas party on 30 November 2024, held at the Convention Centre. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Stephanie Ransome and her team for orchestrating such a remarkable event. The environment they created was warm, festive and truly reflective of the holiday spirit.

The evening also provided an opportunity to recognise the dedication of HPA's staff through the presentation of service awards, ranging from five to 20 years. Witnessing the joy and enthusiasm displayed for the recipients was uplifting and inspiring. It was evident that the gathering deeply appreciated the acknowledgement of these individuals' contributions. Events such as these highlight the importance of celebrating commitment and fostering a sense of community. I commend HPA for its dedication to its people and its mission. Thank you for a memorable evening.

On 1 December 2024 I attended Darwin Malayalee Association Arts and Sports Club's Padippura fifth anniversary celebration at the language school at Ludmilla. I thank Rajesh Nair, Padippura principal; Bibin Mathew Pazhoor, Padippura manager; and administrators Robin Mathew Kakkanattu, Denoy John and Jimmy George for creating a wonderful environment at the DMAASC Padippura fifth anniversary celebration.

It is a program where dedicated staff deliver Malayalam language for the students. Initiatives like this help to preserve the language of migrant communities. I was joined by the Member for Wanguri, Oly Carlson, and Khoda Patel, the Member for Casuarina.

On 7 December 2024 I joined the Filipino Australian Association of the Northern Territory to welcome nine Filipino Indigenous leaders who were in Darwin to participate in a fellowship hosted by Charles Darwin University. These leaders, representing Indigenous groups from Luzon and Mindanao, are sharing cultural knowledge and learning from Australian First Nations leaders to address pressing environmental challenges.

This program in collaboration with the Philippine Eagle Foundation and led by its director for operations, Dr Jayson Ibanez, exemplifies the power of partnerships in fostering positive change. By combining Indigenous wisdom with scientific methods these leaders are equipping themselves to protect biodiversity, manage natural resources and combat climate change.

The fellowship also highlights Australia's enduring relationship with the Philippines and the commitment to ongoing collaboration, with Australian experts set to visit the Philippines in 2025. This initiative is a testament to the strength of global cooperation in empowering Indigenous communities and protecting our shared environment.

On 7 December 2024 I attended the CCM Northern Territory Christmas event. I spent a wonderful evening with the Members for Casuarina and Wanguri and Mr Bagus Hendraning Kobarsih, Consulate-General of the Republic of Indonesia, celebrating the Christmas festive season at an event hosted by Andriyan, vice leader on behalf of the chairwoman, and Pastor Sunny. The evening showcased extraordinary performances. I commend the volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to making the event a resounding success.

On Sunday 8 December 2024 the NT Youth Round Table concluded its yearlong program with presentations at the Northern Territory Library addressing key issues impacting young people in the Northern Territory such as mental health services, leadership opportunities, food insecurity in remote areas and civics education. I thank all the participants of the 2024 NT Youth Round Table.

I commend the outstanding achievements celebrated at the 2024 Gymnastics NT (GNT) Awards of Recognition held on Sunday 8 December at the Palmerston Golf and Country Club. This event recognised the exceptional contributions of athletes, coaches, volunteers and leaders who continue to elevate gymnastics in the Northern Territory.

I give special thanks to Gymnastics Australia CEO Alistair Edgar, whose presence underscored the importance of this celebration. My appreciation also extends to Gymnastics NT Chairperson Ruth Palmer and the awards committee for their diligent efforts in recognising excellence. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists whose dedication and passion are integral to the growth of the sport. These awards not only celebrate individual and team success but also highlight the incredible community spirit that drives Gymnastics NT forward.

I attended this event with the Member for Blain, whom I came to know is a gymnastics instructor. He was supposed to complete some of his certification. I hope he does that soon.

The 2024 Gymnastics NT Awards of Recognition club award winners were Facility Development Award, ENRG Gymnastics; Staff Engagement & Mentoring Award, Darwin Gymnastic Club; Event or Competition of the Year, Territory Gymnastics Academy Invitational; Promotion & Community Engagement Award, Elemental Gym Inclusion Program; and 'Gym for All' Club of the Year, Territory Gymnastics Academy.

The service award winners were Service Award, Gisi Lamche; Volunteer of the Year, Elemental Coaching Team—Monique, Larissa and Kirsty; Judge of the Year, Emily White; Remote Engagement Award, Matthew Archer; Rookie of the Year, Honey Miller; 'Gym for All' Coach of the Year, Stacey Kessner; and Club Administrator of the Year, Olivia Antonelli.

The gymsport award winners were Acrobatics Team of the Year, Emily and Madalyn from Elemental Gymnastics Club; Acrobatics Coach of the Year, Monique Grubb from Elemental; Men's Artistic Gymnastics Junior Levels Athlete, Alexander Campbell from TGA; Senior Levels Athlete, Rhy Miller from TGA; Coach of the Year, Dakota Smith from TGA; Rhythmic Athlete of the Year, Lyla Gray from Elemental; Rhythmic Coach of the Year, Monique Grubb from Elemental; Tumbling Athlete of the Year, Alexandra Allen from DGC; Tumbling Coach of the Year, Rhys Barden from DGC; Women's Artistic Gymnastics Junior Levels Athlete, Emily Campbell from ENRG; Senior Levels Athlete, Annabelle Mammino from ENRG; Coach of the Year, Kat Bolton from ENRG; and Club of the Year, Darwin Gymnastic Club.

I attended the Integrated disAbility Action Members Gala Lunch on 9 December 2024. It was great to engage with many people with disabilities and stakeholders. I thank IdA Inc for coordinating the event.

I acknowledge President Bupe Kyelu and the committee of the Association of Tanzanian Australians NT Inc and their esteemed guests who attended the remarkable celebration of Tanzanian Independence and Swahili Cultural Day, an occasion filled with pride and reflection.

I acknowledge the recent Christmas celebration hosted by the Tamil Society of the Northern Territory, under the leadership of its president, Mr Narayanan. This event was a true testament to the vibrant cultural heritage and remarkable talent of the Tamil community in Darwin. The evening featured enthralling cultural performances and the joyous singing of Christmas carols, bringing together people to share in the festive spirit. The dedication and passion of the society's committee were evident in every detail, ensuring the event's success and fostering a strong sense of community engagement. I commend the Tamil Society for its commitment to celebrating cultural diversity and enriching the social fabric of the Northern Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, on Saturday 8 February Deputy Chief Minister Gerard Maley and I had the privilege of attending the MotorSports NT awards night. It was a cracking night, as it always is.

I thank Gary Pendlebury and the entire board of MotorSports NT who do an incredible job delivering motorsports for everyday Territorians and at the most elite level across the Northern Territory. There are more than 10,000 people involved in motorsport in the Territory. It represents a huge portion of our economy with $90m generated from motorsport, let alone the enjoyment it brings and the important part of our lifestyle that motorsport represents.

What I love most about motorsport is the way it builds community. There are young people at events supporting their parents and there are parents supporting their children. All generations are there representing, supporting and helping. It is a wonderfully wholesome way to spend time as a family.

Congratulations to MotorSports NT on another exceptional year. Late last year I was asked to be the patron of MotorSports NT, and I proudly accepted that. I attended MotorSports NT's annual general meeting to welcome its new committee for the year, which is doing an outstanding job.

I thank all the clubs that are part of MotorSports NT. On the night we heard reflections from many people about their contributions. It is a sport that is built on the back of volunteers. People pour hours of their time, and money, into various motor sports across the Territory. I commented on the night that the $90m probably adds up pretty quickly for a lot of the families out there. It is not a cheap sport to participate in.

I give a huge shout-out to everyone who is part of MotorSports NT. I congratulate all the finalists. It was great to see everyone coming up on stage. I congratulate the winners, who are well deserving. No doubt, the judges had a difficult time picking the winners.

It was also fantastic to catch up with the Territory's homegrown Rossi Johnson, one of the V8 SuperUte drivers. We have upcoming stars in Bryce Fullwood and Joel Kelso. They are big names that we are proud to call our own.

To the winners, congratulations. I will name them on the *Parliamentary Record*. They were:

- NT Junior Official of the Year—Sylanne Preston from TEDKA and Declan Kelly from TEMRA
- NT Junior Rider of the Year—Nathan Lawrence from Top End Motocross Club
- NT Junior Driver of the Year—Memphis Cross from Top End Dirt Karts Association
- NT Rising Star—Jordy Butler from Darwin Karting Association
- NT Volunteer of the Year—Glen Holmes from Top End Motocross Club
- NT Official of the Year—Jenny Henwood from Darwin Motocross Club
- NT Administrator of the Year—Jodie Simpson from Acacia Hills Motocross Association
- NT Rider of the Year—Kurt Eade from Darwin Motorcycle Club
- NT Driver of the Year—Dan Hodgins from Central Australian Drag Racing Association
- NT Event of the Year—TERRA Territory Challenge
- NT Club Person of the Year— Jenny Henwood from Darwin Motocross Club
- NT Club of the Year—DOSE
- NT Champion of the Year—Dan Hodgins from Central Australian Drag Racing Association.

MSNT life membership was awarded to Ray 'Scruffy' Henry from TERRA NT.

MSNT appreciation awards were given to Mike Walker, who is the MSNT treasurer; Rossi Johnson from the V8 SuperUtes; and Clive Baxter from Ride Against Cancer.

I got an award for being the patron, which was lovely. I thank everyone for presenting me with that special award that will feature proudly in my office.

A big thanks to all the sponsors; it would not be possible without their support.

We look forward to a big year ahead for MotorSports NT. Congratulations to all the finalists and winners. It was well deserved. We look forward to attending next year's awards night amongst all the excellent events across our racing calendar this year.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.