Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



Parliamentary Record
Debates and Questions



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Larrakeyah Primary School

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

Members: Hear, hear!

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Drysdale

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Drysdale be granted leave of absence for today due to illness.

Leave granted.

YOUTH JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 31

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I present a bill titled Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 31, and table the explanatory statement.

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

This Bill represents the Northern Territory Government's continued commitment to delivering a robust, fit-for-purpose youth justice system—one that balances community safety, victim impact and the rehabilitation of young offenders.

The Bill delivers on a number of this government's strategic objectives, including the Reducing Crime strategy, the recent machinery-of-government changes that saw youth justice transition to the Department of Corrections and the implementation of real consequences for youth offending.

The Bill also delivers on the Chief Minister's announcement on 4 July 2025 that this government is taking strong action to break the cycle of youth crime and restoring community safety. We are amending the Youth Justice Regulations 2006 in relation to 13 offences, by adding eight new offences and lowering the currently high threshold on a further four offences, to ensure these serious offences have a default position of proceeding to charge.

The *Youth Justice Act 2005* no longer reflects the operational realities of youth justice in the Territory. This Bill is the first step in a broader rewrite of the Act. It equips frontline officers with the tools they need to enhance the safety and security of youth detention centres and restores consequences for youth who commit serious and repeat offences.

Importantly, it embeds the recognition of victims' rights into the youth justice framework. Courts will now be required to give primary regard to the impact of the offence on victims during sentencing.

The Bill includes a number of significant reforms, including that:

- It removes the requirement for a youth or their responsible adult to consent to diversion, ensuring that diversion becomes a mandatory tool to address offending behaviour early.

- It introduces anti-spit guards and waist restraint systems as approved restraints for use by trained youth justice officers, ensuring the safety of staff and detainees.

- It clarifies the use of force, removing ambiguous language such as 'serious damage' or 'imminent risk' to provide certainty for officers and better protect centres from harm, destruction and escape attempts.

- It provides for voluntary, behavioural and medical separation of detainees, ensuring that practices are transparent, accountable and fit for purpose, while maintaining the wellbeing of detainees in custody.

- It clarifies the CEO's powers and functions under the Act and aligns them as closely as possible with the commissioner's powers under the *Correctional Services Act 2014*.

- It clarifies the superintendent's powers, including their ability to arrest absent or escaped detainees outside of the detention centre.

- It dissolves the Youth Justice Advisory Committee and transfers responsibility for maintaining the Register of Appropriate Support Persons (RASP) to the Department of Corrections.

The Bill also amends section 122 of the Act to require the court to impose a penalty for an offence for which the youth has been put on a 'no further trouble order' if the court imposes a penalty for an offence that was committed while the youth is subject to the order; therefore, resulting in a breach of the order. This ensures that breaches have consequences and reinforces community expectations of accountability.

The Bill makes amendments to Regulation 3A in relation to 13 offences to properly reflect the seriousness of these offences. No longer will serious offences, such as burglary in a house at night, or simple robbery, have a default position of diversion. This Bill will add eight new offences and lower the threshold on a further four offences to ensure youth offenders face real consequences.

One offence will be removed from the list as, in taking a balanced approach to updating the prescribed offences list, this government identified the offence of making off without payment where diversion is generally appropriate and therefore will be removed from the prescribed offences list.

The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 aims to restore the confidence of Territorians in our youth justice system. It delivers a clear message: serious offending will be met with serious consequences, and frontline officers will have the tools they need to ensure safety, order and accountability.

This government will act with decisive actions and these amendments are only the beginning.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be declared urgent.

I move this motion because this Bill is required for Territorians who demand community safety and consequences for actions. For a long time the previous government eroded the consequences for youth offenders; this Bill brings back the consequences for offending. It restores faith in youth justice facilities because some young offenders have been getting away with what they want while there have been no consequences. For a long time there has just been a slap on the hand and no consequences for their actions.

These amendments show that youth justice will be taken seriously. It gives youth justice officers the powers to deal with detainees and prevent further harm to young detainees. That is why it is urgent.

At an event on the weekend we saw that young people thought it was okay to carry knives. The community demands action. For the last 11 months we have been moving decisively to ensure action and consequences.

This is further legislation we are moving on urgency because it needs to be done to protect the detainees, assets of the Northern Territory and youth justice officers who do a great job. The Corrections Commissioner will be able to deal with the emergencies in the youth justice facilities. We had a realignment of the machinery of government, so that they all fall under one department. That is why this matter needs to be moved on an urgent basis.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I move the following amendment to omit all words after 'that' and insert 'the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 28 August 2025'.

This is nothing but a kneejerk move from a government that is out of answers and continues to fail the community when it comes to crime. This is the fourth time this government has brought forward legislation on urgency under the darkness of its law and order agenda.

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: This is the fourth time you have brought legislation on urgency because you are failing Territorians and not keeping the community safe …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; interruption.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, let us remain silent and listen to the Member for Daly.

Mr YOUNG: During your term of government this is the fourth time you have put forward legislation on urgency. If this is so urgent, why wasn't it done in the first sittings? Crickets! It is another kneejerk reaction to something that has happened.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Mr YOUNG: Each time you have put through legislation on urgency it has not made the community any safer. Not even allowing us the time to look at the Bill is poor governance and poor process. I do not think any members on this side have seen the Bill. Have you seen the Bill, Member for Gwoja?

Ms Boothby: You had a briefing.

Ms Uibo: There was no Bill in the briefing, Attorney-General. Did you talk to your colleague about that?

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, Opposition Leader!

Ms Uibo: We had a briefing; there was no Bill.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, you are on a warning. Everyone will be quiet and listen to the Member for Daly.

Mr YOUNG: Each time the Chief Minister puts through legislation on urgency it shows that she is under pressure. She is trying to deflect from the community. She blames everyone else but herself, and takes no responsibility. The Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister should be ashamed of themselves for trying to put through legislation on urgency and not even giving us the Bill at the briefing, so that we cannot go through it in detail, clause by clause.

It was not that long ago when the Chief Minister, the then Opposition Leader, said—I quote from *Hansard*—when legislation was put through on urgency:

> *At the outset, the opposition is not supportive of the urgency motion. I want to highlight the three reasons we cannot support the bill being rushed through on urgency:*
>
> 1. *By putting it through on urgency we are not respecting the due process required of this parliament.*
>
> 2. *When you rush through legislation you are increasing the risk of making mistakes and later discovering unintended consequences of those errors.*
>
> 3. *There has not been any consultation and an opportunity to plan and roll it out in a way that takes Territorians with you.*
>
> *At the heart of our objection to the urgency motion is consultation.*
>
> *Consultation on Bills is very important and the parliament sets a 30-day time frame by which legislation sits on the table so people have the opportunity to provide feedback and comment. We always welcome additional proactive consultation. At a minimum, the 30-day period affords people an opportunity.*

They were the exact words of the Chief Minister when she was in opposition. She is now putting through this legislation against what she believed when she was the Opposition Leader, and her government is doing the same thing. The Attorney-General was there when the Opposition Leader quoted those words. I am sure she remembers—or probably not; she probably has the memory of a goldfish. She is saying yes; she has admitted it.

We will not support the motion to put through this legislation on urgency.

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, the government does not accept the amended motion. I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Guyula
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	Mr Young
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 15
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Guyula
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	Mr Young
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I move that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day at a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

ANIMAL PROTECTION AND RELATED LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 32

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill entitled Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 32, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The *Animal Protection Act 2018* and Animal Protection Regulations 2022 provide the regulatory framework to ensure animals in the Territory are treated humanely and to regulate individuals using animals for scientific research purposes. The current Act and regulations commenced in November 2022, replacing the outdated *Animal Welfare Act 1999*.

The scope of the proposed amendments to the Act and regulations has been informed by a full legislative review process and feedback gathered during a four-month public consultation campaign conducted through a Have Your Say process, which concluded in September 2024. This public consultation resulted in 229 submissions from individuals, universities, racing organisations, legal practitioners, councils, the RSPCA and other non-government organisations.

To ensure the Territory has some of the most robust and toughest animal protection laws jurisdictionally, the proposed amendments to the Act and regulations will be supported by additional proposed amendments to the Criminal Code. These amendments will increase the maximum penalties for failing to provide a minimum level of care and for cruelty. The amendments insert a new criminal offence regarding serious animal sexual or other abuse material that is used or intended for sexual or sadistic gratification.

The proposed amendments to the Act and regulations also aim to respond to community concerns with regard to the need to have better animal protection compliance oversight of premises used for commercial purposes, including animal boarding kennels and doggy day care centres and places used for training and racing animals.

My colleague, Hon Andrew Mackay MLA, Member for Goyder, tabled a petition on behalf of Evie's Bark in this Assembly on 22 May 2025, seeking greater protection of animals. I personally acknowledge and thank the Member for Goyder and the community supporters for your contribution and commitment in standing up for the safety and the respect that our pets deserve.

The amendments in the Bill strike a balance between providing modern, efficient and flexible animal welfare compliance enforcement outcomes within available resourcing, while meeting community expectations that animal protection laws in the Territory are strengthened.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has a total of six animal welfare officers covering the entire Northern Territory. These officers respond to animal welfare complaints, undertake investigations and manage animal welfare compliance and enforcement action, including prosecuting offenders in court. I acknowledge that some of them are in the gallery today; thank you for coming here and supporting it.

NT Police and select livestock inspectors appointed under the *Livestock Act 2008* are also authorised animal welfare officers under the Act.

The Animal Welfare Branch responds to more than 700 complaints each year, with this number steadily increasing year on year.

I will now go through the key amendments that are proposed in the Bill.

The Bill proposes to amend section 23(1) of the Act to increase the maximum penalties and prison terms where a person fails in their obligation to provide an animal with at least the minimum level of care for that animal. It is proposed to increase the maximum fine of 100 penalty units to 200 penalty units and increase the maximum prison term from one year to two years.

The Bill further inserts a new category of specific minimum level of care offences for less serious levels of offending where a person has failed in their duty of care obligations to provide the animal:

- access to adequate clean water and shelter
- a hygienic environment for the keeping of the animal
- treatment where the animal is diseased, injured or suffering
- is not confined or restrained in ways that are not appropriate; the animal should be able to move in a way dependent on the animal's age, physical condition and size
- is not abandoned.

Abandonment—in this case the normal dictionary definition would apply and would cover situations where a person leaves behind an animal completely. An example, depending on relevant circumstances, may include an owner moving house and leaving the animal behind without arranging someone to look after it or providing it with adequate food and clean water to sustain the animal.

The offences will be strict liability offences with a maximum penalty of 50 penalty units for each of the new minimal level of care offences, with the ability to also issue infringement notices for breaching these new offences.

The proposed minimum level of care amendments align with feedback received from the community and animal welfare stakeholders as part of the public consultation process.

I also acknowledge Evie's Bark in the gallery; thank you for doing what you have done.

The feedback showed the community wanted to increase maximum penalties for the most serious level of offending, while providing additional lesser offence categories that better aid compliance and enforcement of minimum level of care requirements.

The availability and use of infringement notice offences provide strengthened compliance and enforcement tools to the Animal Welfare Branch, offering an alternative to prosecution while ensuring that more serious offences remain available for higher level and ongoing animal abuse matters.

It is further proposed to amend section 24 of the Act to increase all maximum penalties for cruelty offences from 200 penalty units to 300 penalty units with the maximum prison term also increased from two years to three years.

Increasing maximum penalties available for the range of cruelty offences is in direct response to the serious cruelty to animal offences committed by Mr Britton. The increase in maximums also provides better alignment with the approach in relation to cruelty offences in other states and territories.

It should be noted that the increase in cruelty offence maximums will classify these offences as being indictable offences to send a clear deterrence message that cruelty to animals offences are serious and will not be tolerated.

The increases represent a doubling—in some cases a tripling—of the offence maximums that will be now available for such heinous crimes that were committed previously.

It is further proposed to clarify section 24(2) of the Act that prescribes an offence of intentionally beating an animal and causing harm. It is proposed to insert the words 'or suffering' after the word 'harm' to better clarify the offence where an animal is beaten and constitutes cruelty.

Further, the amendments clarify an offence of cruelty to use an electrical device, including an excluded electrical device, against the anus of the animal as well as against the face, udders, genitals or on an animal less than three months old.

It is further proposed to make clear that regional and community family events, such as campdrafts and rodeos, are not prohibited animal protection activities for the purposes of the Act. The policy reason supporting exempting these events is the current operation of section 32 of the Act. That makes it an offence for a person to organise or promote a prohibited activity, with a further offence where a person or member of the public attends a prohibited activity.

The intention of section 32 is to capture illegal activities, including dog and rooster fights, or where animals are being used to blood greyhounds, for example; it is not intended to capture regional and community family events, such as campdrafts or rodeos.

It should be noted that the use and treatment of animals used for campdraft and rodeo events are still subject to the minimum level of care, prevention of cruelty to animals and other animal protection offences available under the Act.

Best-practice animal welfare codes of practice and standards are to be inserted into Schedule 1 of the regulations to provide benchmark minimum level of animal care standards for these regional community events.

It is further proposed to insert a new care and protection offence for the possession and use of prong collars on dogs. Prong collars have a series of fang-shaped metal links, or prongs, with blunted points which pinch a dog's neck when pulled. The inserting of this new offence is in direct response to community and stakeholder consultation feedback, with other states and territories already banning or moving to ban prong collars.

The new offences will be strict liability offences with a maximum fine of 10 penalty units for possessing a prong collar, and a maximum fine of 20 penalty units for the use of a prong collar on a dog, being proposed. The proposed maximum penalty range is considered sufficient to deter the use of these harmful devices, with the ability to also issue infringement notices for breaching these offences.

It is further proposed to repeal and modernise the requirement in section 34 of the Act to provide clarity as to the requirement to restrain a dog when being transported in the back of a utility or in a trailer on a public street. The offence for failing to properly restrain or secure a dog, or secure the dog in a way that causes it unjustifiable, unnecessary or unreasonable suffering, will still be strict liability offences with proposed maximum fines of 50 penalty units, with the ability to also issue infringement notices for breaching these offences.

It also proposed to clarify and provide more flexible authorised officer entry and inspection powers to ensure greater animal protection and enforcement outcomes. The purpose of these amendments is to directly address community and stakeholder animal welfare concerns seeking better protection and regulatory oversight of premises used for commercial or business purposes—for example, boarding kennels, doggy day care, cattle holding yards, as well as premises used for training and racing animals.

The object of the amendments is to ensure better protection and welfare outcomes for animals through increased compliance with the Territory's animal protection laws.

The Bill amends section 83 of the Act to insert a new entry inspection power to provide that where an animal welfare inspector believes, on reasonable grounds, that the premises is being used for either animal training

or racing, or the premises is being used in connection with a business involving animals, an authorised officer will now be able to provide advanced 'reasonable notice' to enter and undertake an inspection of the premises to ensure the Territory's animal protection laws are not being contravened.

Safeguard protections have been inserted to ensure an officer, when exercising these new powers, cannot enter premises or part of a premises used for residential purposes without consent, warrant or in extreme emergencies.

As an anticipated policy guideline, advanced 'reasonable notice' in many cases is likely be at least 24 hours prior unless the occupier agrees to a shorter period. The inserting of 'reasonable notice' before being able to exercise these new entry inspection powers aligns with approaches across other states and territories.

To support the proposed amendments and assist with increased animal welfare compliance outcomes over time, it is further proposed to insert additional best-practice animal welfare codes of practice and standards in Schedule 1 of the regulations, with a focus on boarding kennels, dog day care facilities and the greyhound and horse racing industries.

It is further proposed to fix an anomaly to require a person to provide proof of their identification when asked by an authorised officer. The purpose of the amendment is to be able to properly identify a person as part of any offence investigation when issuing compliance and enforcement notices.

In addition the Bill proposes to amend section 88 of the Act to insert a new power allowing for the taking of samples from an animal or thing where an officer believes, on reasonable grounds, it is connected to an offence. An example may include the need to take blood samples from a racing animal suspected of being supplied with an illegal or unauthorised substance.

In 2023, in response to the charging of Mr Britton, the *Criminal Code Act* was amended to repeal the 'old' bestiality offence and insert a new broader offence of 'sexual involvement with an animal' and increase the maximum term of imprisonment from three years to seven years. However, it is now proposed to provide even further offences and protections for animals, including to insert a new offence relating to 'animal sexual abuse and animal crush' material into the *Criminal Code Act*, in preference to inserting it into the *Animal Protection Act*. This reflects the seriousness of the proposed new offence, including the fact that it is an indictable offence and will better align with other indictable animal sex and indecent material offences.

The Bill will insert a new section 125DA into the *Criminal Code Act* dealing with the production, sale or possession of 'animal abuse or animal crush material', with a maximum term of imprisonment of five years. To a large degree this offence is based on section 547E of the NSW *Crimes Act 1900* and is the only other jurisdiction that has such an offence. The specific term 'animal crush' in the context of this Bill is conduct where an animal is crushed, burned, drowned, suffocated, impaled or otherwise killed or subjected to serious injury or torture. Animal crush material depicts, describes or represents this behaviour and is intended, or apparently intended, to be used for sexual or sadistic gratification.

The Bill proposes to further increase the maximum penalty under section 208N of the Criminal Code for the 'sexual involvement with an animal' offence from the present maximum of seven years to 10 years' imprisonment.

The amendments to the Criminal Code to strengthen the offences and penalties relating to serious animal physical and sexual abuse are in direct response to various animal welfare groups and community concerns that tougher penalties should have been available to deter or address the extreme cruelty and animal sex offending committed by Mr Britton.

The Bill also makes a range of miscellaneous amendments, including:

- inserting a new specific definition of 'animal' to apply only to Part 4 of the Act to better capture animals used for scientific purposes—for example, scientific research undertaken on wild fish or sharks

- the Bill further clarifies membership and other Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) governance matters, including formalising the appointment of Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC) to be a member of AWAC.

In relation to timing, it is intended that the amendments will commence on a day to be fixed by the Administrator in the gazette. The amendments in this Bill demonstrate this government's ability to listen to the community and act in providing stronger animal protection laws for the Territory.

On behalf of the Assembly I convey my sincere thanks to the dedicated professionals for their commitment to the prevention of animal cruelty, ensuring animals in the Territory are treated humanely.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 27 August 2025.

Motion agreed to.

GAMING CONTROL AMENDMENT (COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND) BILL
Serial 30

Ms BOOTHBY (Racing): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Gaming Control Amendment (Community Benefit Fund) Bill 2025, Serial 30, and table the explanatory statement.

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

This Bill will make amendments to the *Gaming Control Act 1993* (the Act) to allow monies from the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) to be used to undertake capital works or improvements on a Northern Territory Government asset, where that asset is being used by a not-for-profit organisation to provide their services to Territory residents.

The House may be aware that the CBF was originally established in 2002 to allow the broader community to benefit from the introduction of gaming machines to pubs and clubs across the Territory. Each month 10% of the profits from gaming machines operated in pubs and hotels, as well as the two Territory casinos, are paid into the CBF. This money is then given to not-for-profit organisations to provide services, leisure activities and opportunities to the broader NT community.

Funding from the CBF is distributed via a grant system. Organisations can apply for minor grants, major grants, event grants or vehicle grants. Money is also available for research into gambling subjects that have relevance to the Territory. The majority of funds are expended via minor and major community grants.

Minor grants are provided for amounts less than $15,000, and applications are open each month. Major grants can be applied for twice yearly for amounts in excess of $15,000, up to the maximum of $250,000. Event grants support events such as the Greek GleNTi; Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival; and other community celebrations, and can be for multiple years; and vehicle grants provide ex-NT Fleet vehicles to organisations.

Minor grant applications are assessed by the Director of Gaming Control, and major event and vehicle applications are assessed by the CBF committee. Recommendations are then made to me, as the responsible minister, for the final decision.

Prior to 2021, money from the CBF was provided to organisations to undertake capital works or improvements on the asset they were operating out of, which included assets owned by the NT Government. Following findings in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report audit process of that year, the Department of Treasury and Finance issued a Treasurer's Direction, which put a stop to such grants. The direction was in response to the Australian Accounting Standards, which only allow for a capital grant to be given to the owner of the asset. As some organisations were operating from NT Government-owned assets, and monies from the CBF are expended by way of a grant, the direction meant that these particular organisations were no longer eligible to apply to the CBF for funding to make improvements, or to carry out capital works, to that asset.

Since that time a number of organisations have approached my office asking that they be allowed to apply for funding from the CBF to make improvements or carry out capital works on the NT Government property they are operating from. The main reason for these approaches is that the organisations need works undertaken; however, the asset-owning agency is unable to carry out the work due to competing priorities.

All members present would acknowledge the very important work carried out across the NT by not-for-profit organisations. They work in partnership with the various levels of government to support our community. This government is committed to doing all it can to help these organisations, and this Bill does that by making a small but important amendment to the Act.

This Bill will amend the Act to allow monies from the CBF to be allocated to an organisation to carry out work on an NT Government-owned asset without breaching the Treasurer's Direction or the Australian Accounting Standards. This will allow those organisations to have the work carried out faster and not have to wait until the asset-owning agency has the available resources. This will have a flow-on effect to the services provided by that organisation, helping Territorians and freeing up resources for the agency that owns the asset.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 28

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 28, and table the explanatory statement.

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

This Bill is about restoring fairness, clarity and common sense to the Northern Territory's anti-discrimination laws. Territorians value diversity and respect, but they also value the right to speak freely, to practise their faith and to hold honest opinions without fear of legal overreach.

The Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2025 delivers on the Finocchiaro CLP government's election commitment to undo Labor's 2022 overreach, which blurred the line between genuine harm and everyday conversation and stripped protections from religious schools. We are now restoring the proper balance.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* and give effect to the government's election commitments to bring back freedom of speech and freedom of religion. It also removes the requirement for the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to conduct an evaluation of complaints before a complaint can be referred to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal (the tribunal).

There are 24 attributes protected from discrimination that are listed in section 19 of the Act, and these include race, language, sex, sexual orientation, age, relationship status, religious belief or activity and disability. None of these protected attributes will be altered by this Bill.

The government supports the objects of the Act and the protections it provides against discrimination, but we want to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the objects and protections of persons with attributes in the Act—because protections from discrimination are a human right—and other human rights, such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

A balance is needed so that protections from discrimination do not interfere with freedom of speech and freedom of religion. As such, our government committed to restoring the balance that was removed through amendments made in 2022, which saw the introduction of section 20A of the Act as a prohibition on offensive conduct because of an attribute and the repeal of section 37A of the Act providing an exemption for religious schools to allow preferencing of staff of the same religion.

Our government has listened to the community and religious interest groups who have expressed they do not support the vilification imposed by Labor and the repeal of religious protections under the Act. Because of these provisions, religious bodies and individuals could not say things in line with their religious practice that may cause offence or to preference staff of the same religion without fear of a complaint being made to the Anti-Discrimination Commission.

Clause 4 in this Bill amends section 20A of the Act to omit offensive behaviour through removing the words 'offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate'. Rather than 'offensive behaviour', this Bill provides for conduct that incites hatred towards, serious contempt of, or severe ridicule of persons because of an attribute. This clearly makes the provision one that prohibits serious vilification and strengthens the object to prevent discrimination.

We do not want Territorians being vilified because of an attribute. Our amendments make this clear and will ensure that the intent of the prohibition is better understood by the community—you cannot incite hatred towards a person or group because of an attribute. It is not just about conveying hatred towards a person or group; the conduct must be capable of inciting the emotions of an ordinary member of the group that it is directed towards.

Section 20B still provides exemptions from application of section 20A of the Act. Anything said or done that is reasonable and in good faith for art, discussion or debate of genuine academic, artistic or scientific purpose or other genuine purpose in the public interest, or in fair and accurate reporting of events or matters of public interest, remain permissible.

We have not reinserted the repealed section 37A of the Act, which provided an exemption from the Act to permit religious schools to discriminate against persons on the ground of religious belief or activity or sexuality. Instead, as a result of issues identified in drafting, and in consultation with many religious interest groups, a new exemption is inserted through the new section 35B of the Act. This new provision is in clause 5 of the Bill.

It provides religious educational institutions—that is, religious schools—with an exemption in the area of work, so that the school may choose to specifically not hire a person if:

- it is on the grounds of religious belief or activity
- is in good faith to avoid offending the religious sensitivities of a reasonable person of the religion.

Currently, religious schools are not permitted to discriminate by preferencing hiring of staff to reflect the religious belief held by the school. The new section 35B of the Act will allow religious schools to preference employing persons of the same religion, and this is made clear in subsection (2) of the new section 35B of the Act.

This subsection also allows the religious school to establish requirements in the way in which an employee conducts themselves while in the school as a workplace. To exercise this exemption a religious school must make a written policy available to employees and potential employees about the religion of the school that may be taken into account when giving preference to employing staff of the same religion, and for the requirements for the conduct at the workplace. The intention of the written policy is to ensure applicants and employees are aware of the standards and expectations of the school.

Section 35B of the Act only applies to religious schools, not religious institutions generally, and not to non-religious schools.

Clause 6 of the Bill provides for transitional provisions for complaints under section 20A of the Act arising prior to the amendments in this Bill.

Other than amendments to meet government's election commitment, this Bill also makes amendments that provide operational efficiencies in the office of the Anti-Discrimination Commission. The Bill removes the requirement for a complaint to be evaluated before it can be referred to the tribunal for hearing. The Bill therefore amends Division 4, Part 6 of the Act to remove the requirement for the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to evaluate a complaint. This is covered through clauses 7 to 13 and the Schedule to the Bill.

The existing evaluations process is time consuming and has limited value for the operations in the Anti-Discrimination Commission. This is because the complaint and the evaluation report are referred to the tribunal for hearing if the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner considers the complaint has a reasonable prospect of success. It means the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, in conducting an evaluation, takes the same actions that the tribunal already has powers to do when it conducts a hearing. It means a complaint is again 'evaluated' so to speak, once it is referred to hearing.

The new process under this Bill will streamline the complaints process so that complaints get to the tribunal for hearing faster, rather than leaving parties wondering when it will be referred for hearing. The new process will only require the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to provide a statement of reasons to the tribunal as to why the complaint was accepted and is being referred. It means complainants will not have to wait for a lengthy evaluation process before having the complaint heard at the tribunal and obtain a final outcome and, in addition, allow the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to direct resources to progressing other matters.

This Bill restores the commonsense balance that Territorians rightly expect. It protects them from real harm while safeguarding freedom of speech and belief. We do not apologise for standing up for fairness, clarity and the rights of all Territorians to live, speak and work in accordance with their values—free from fear, confusion or overreach.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

MOTION
Suspend Standing Orders

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 252, I move that so much of the standing orders be suspended that will prevent me moving a motion to refer the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 28, to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee.

The Attorney-General has brought forward the Northern Territory's Anti-Discrimination Bill amendments. She spoke at length about the changes the government is proposing. Let us be clear what this Bill is proposing. It is including changes that wind back vilification protections and open the door to unlawful discrimination under the guise of freedom.

These are not minor tweaks; they go to the heart of equality, safety and dignity for many Territorians. I urge the government to support the suspension of standing orders to allow this to go to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee because that will provide an important opportunity for proper scrutiny of the Bill's real-world impacts. It would be a chance for Territorians, especially those in remote, diverse and vulnerable communities, to be heard. It is accountability for decisions about hard-won protections.

If the government believes this legislation is sound it should have no problem putting it under the spotlight. Anything less looks like an attempt to ram it through without public consent. Let the committee do the work. Let us be open and provide the opportunity for Territorians to have their say. You only have to look online this morning at the *NT News* and all over social media to see that hundreds of Territorians are already voicing their concerns or asking questions.

This should go to a public inquiry to allow people from our community to have a say and ask questions. It would be a chance for all stakeholders to come together, put forward their position to the committee—whether it is for or against—and be clear about why changes are needed or why the Bill should remain as it is. This is important for the Northern Territory.

It is not just one group who should be consulted on this; it affects many people. In fact, this affects every Territorian. The *Anti-Discrimination Act* is an Act of rights. It is about important protections for people—protecting people from harmful, hurtful, offensive bigotry and racism. It is about protecting vulnerable, multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; Territorians who are subjected to discrimination because of domestic violence; and Territorians who are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

This is an important Bill that should be open and transparent for Territorians to have a say. Look online at the number of people already concerned, and the CLP government will not even give them a hearing to voice their concerns and ask questions.

I understand and acknowledge that you won the election; no-one is disputing that. You made a number of commitments to the Australian Christian Lobby; you failed to deliver some, but for this it looks like you will deliver. Let us be clear that people have a right to put forward their concerns, and it should be done through the Legislative Scrutiny Committee process where their voices, concerns and worries can be cemented into *Hansard* or, if it is the other side, why they think it is a good idea.

We should not be scared of that. If this government thinks that its amendment is so whiz-bang amazing, let it go to a committee and be out in the open; do not do it in secrecy. Vulnerable Territorians deserve the opportunity to have this go through a scrutiny committee for us to do the work. I am on the scrutiny committee; there is not a lot of work before it. This government has sent only six pieces of legislation to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee since being elected.

This has an impact on Territory lives and should go to a scrutiny committee; it is important for Territorians. I urge the government to support the suspension of standing orders to allow the motion to send it to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee where it belongs, because Territory rights are everyone's rights, and everyone should have a say on this.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I support this, specifically in relation to this Bill being referred to the scrutiny committee.

I welcomed the re-establishment of that committee by the CLP. The job of the scrutiny committee is to examine whether a Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, and does not adversely affect rights and liberties or impose obligations. That is exactly relevant to this Bill.

Let us do our job as elected representatives of our communities. When a Bill like this goes to the rights and liberties of individuals, let us do our job as the scrutiny committee—which you appointed—to examine this Bill, what the impacts of it may be and whether we can improve or change it and make sure it is the strongest and best law for everyone in the Northern Territory.

I strongly support the motion to suspend standing orders in order to refer it to the scrutiny committee.

Madam SPEAKER: The motion is to suspend standing orders, under Standing Order 252, to debate a referral of this Bill to the scrutiny committee.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Paech	Ms Cahill
Ms Uibo	Mrs Carlson
Mr Young	Mr Charls
	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

LANDS, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 34

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Lands, Planning and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 34, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to amend various lands, planning, water and environmental legislation to increase efficiency in administration, reduce regulatory duplication and modernise regulatory functions, through changes to the:

- *Building Act* and Building Regulations
- *Heritage Act*
- *Licensed Surveyors Act*
- *Place Names Act*
- *Planning Act*
- *Special Purposes Leases Act* and regulations
- *Swimming Pool Safety Act* and regulations
- *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* and regulations

- *Valuation of Land Act* and regulations
- *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* and regulations
- *Water Act* and regulations.

This Bill continues the work of this government to deliver on its commitment to rebuild the economy through a range of reforms that enable economic growth within robust regulatory frameworks. As Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment and Minister for Water Resources, the different legislation within my portfolio provides important regulatory functions for the protection and appropriate use of Northern Territory resources. This Bill aims to uphold these functions, while simplifying regulatory processes and removing red tape that can impede economic growth.

This government supports economic growth through initiatives that establish certainty for stakeholders doing business in the Territory, removing lengthy and outdated processes and increasing accessibility and transparency in regulatory processes for the general public.

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

- fast-track approvals for low-risk projects under the *Planning Act*
- modernise processes to allow the use of email and websites as the method of publishing a notice or providing notice
- expediting processes for minor technical amendments to a water licence and environment protection approvals or licences
- removing duplication of processes
- promoting certainty in decision-making by addressing legislative inconsistencies and clarifying ambiguity.

The initiatives captured in this Bill are wide-ranging and impact regulatory processes for a variety of projects and actions, ranging from large commercial developments to small home renovation projects. However, the aim remains the same: simplified and fit-for-purpose regulatory frameworks that support economic growth.

A good example of simplifying regulatory frameworks to support economic growth is the amendment to the rigid 'five per cent rule' under the *Planning Act.* The current five per cent rule means that the consent authority is unable to approve variations to a planned development that affect a measurable aspect by more than five per cent, regardless of the benefits of the change or consideration of the real impacts. We acknowledge that renovations are not one-size-fits-all, and home owners' plans can change.

Currently the *Planning Act*'s five per cent rule can restrict the kinds of changes that can be accommodated through variations to permits. For example, if you are building a shed on your block, and you need to move its location because once you got your builder onsite he or she might want to move the shed further back from a tree or make it easier to reverse your boat into the shed, the five per cent rule can limit how much you can tweak your setbacks. The planning approval in this example is not proportionate to the risk of that project.

These amendments will mean that as long as you are not increasing your noncompliance, you have more scope to amend your plans. We want home owners to be investing in their homes, and we want to make the approvals required simple and fast. Territorians are frustrated by the paperwork, and builders are frustrated with spending more time filling out paperwork and waiting for approvals than they are on the tools. We are taking action to reduce the red tape and get builders back doing what they do best.

Economic growth is supported when regulatory processes are able to adapt and ensure the rigidity is appropriate to the risk. This government is committed to fast-tracking approvals. There is more work to do, but this Bill makes clear progress towards supporting greater efficiencies for planning approvals.

Changes to the *Building Act* and Building Regulations will increase the maximum term of registration for building practitioners from two years to four years. This means longer registration periods and time between renewal applications. This will reduce the administrative burden and costs for building practitioners renewing their registration. There will be no net increase to the cost of registration, as the registration fee will remain at 345 revenue units ($500) per year. The renewal application fee will remain at 230 revenue units ($333).

Continuity of licence during the renewal period has been included in this Bill and will provide certainty for building practitioners to continue to work under their licence while awaiting a decision on their renewal application. Under the current legislation a registration remains in force for two years from the date it is granted. A builder's registration can expire even if the builder has applied to renew their registration, and they may be unable to work until a decision is made by the Building Practitioners Board. With the changes proposed, a building practitioner's registration will continue after the expiry date where an application has been made for renewal by the required date and is pending decision by the board.

There is a minor change to allow the minister to declare that specified provisions of an adopted code do not apply for a period of time. This will support greater flexibility in transition to changes in codes—for example, the National Construction Code. Under the current legislation, updates to codes are automatically applied. With this change the Territory will be better able to determine the right time for our local industry to apply changes to codes and clearly communicate any transition timeframes to people and businesses affected.

The amendments to the *Heritage Act* are simple and allow for notices to be published online on the department's website. These changes replace the requirement to publish notices in a newspaper. These are practical changes that modernise the method of providing notice. The publishing of notices online is faster and more cost effective. It also provides a single accessible website that interested persons can access regularly and will not have to purchase or find access to a newspaper.

There are minor amendments to the *Licensed Surveyors Act* to correct reference to an institute that no longer exists. Currently, the Act provides for the institute to provide nominations for appointment to the Surveyors Board. The amendments remove reference to the institute and provide for nominations for board appointments to be made by a recognised professional surveying body representing land boundary surveyors in the Territory.

The amendments also include that the Surveyor-General may require a licensed surveyor to submit further information or documents relevant to consideration of a plan for approval. This change will support better communication and understanding of supporting documents required to accompany the submission of a plan for approval and will help to reduce delays due to insufficient information provided.

This Bill amends the *Place Names Act* to provide for a minimum of four members, but no more than six members, to be appointed to the Place Names Committee. This change will allow for more members to be appointed, providing greater capacity for the Place Names Committee to meet its statutory functions.

Changes to the *Planning Act* seek to avoid the need for a fresh development approval process for low-impact and desirable variations. The current rigid application of the five per cent rule requires variations that fall outside of the rule can only be permitted through a complex approval process that can cause substantial delays, costs and uncertainty for developers. Amendments will allow the consent authority to issue a varied permit if the proposed amendments will not materially affect the amenity of adjoining or nearby land or premises and do not authorise a substantive change to what is already approved.

The proposed amendments will remove the need for full notice requirements where written agreement has been provided from the relevant service authority, local government council or affected landowners. This will remove duplicative process, provide certainty and reduce processing times. It will also provide a pathway for developers to fully inform their proposals with meaningful feedback from service authorities and councils, further streamlining the assessment and reducing uncertainty.

For prescribed low-risk and uncomplicated applications, as well as for applications that do not require full public notice, the minimum submission period will be reduced to seven days instead of 14 days. Low-risk applications are typically small scale and not complex and are able to progress quickly with the application of standard conditions. People or agencies affected can apply for an extension of time to respond, if needed.

We are working with some old legislation within my portfolio, and the *Special Purposes Leases Act* is from 1953. Special purposes leases are an historic form of tenure and not routinely granted.

The amendments in this Bill seek to provide for more efficient administration of special purposes leases. There are minor amendments to the Act to remove forms from the regulations, in line with modern practices. Instead, forms will be managed as approved forms by the relevant decision-maker, which in this case is to be the minister. Minor amendments are made to provide that notices can be served in a range of ways that include electronic communication. These changes provide for more efficient administration, allowing forms to be updated without amending regulations, and providing for the service of notices by email.

Amendments will modernise the process of setting the annual rent payable in respect to land within the Darwin town area or within a municipality, which is currently set at 10c per annum, if and when demanded by the minister. The change will allow the minister to determine the annual rent payable, if any, and not perpetuate an inflexible 10c requirement. This change will not apply to any current leases, and any determination of rent would be part of the negotiation for new arrangements.

The Bill transfers administrative review functions from the Swimming Pool Safety Review Committee to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, commonly referred to as NTCAT. This change improves efficiencies and removes the requirement to maintain a separate and dedicated body to review administrative decisions made by the swimming pool safety authority.

The review committee was formed before the establishment of NTCAT. NTCAT is our main forum for reconsidering government decisions, and it is appropriate for this tribunal to review administrative decisions of the authority. Affected people will still be able to apply for a review of a decision, and such reviews will be undertaken under NTCAT's procedures, providing consistency in processes and promoting certainty in decision-making.

The amendments also remove forms from the regulations in line with contemporary processes. Instead, forms will be managed as approved forms by the relevant decision-maker which, in this case, is the swimming pool safety authority.

The amendments to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* recognise that appropriate consideration of the impacts of an action or project on protected wildlife and threatened species may occur under separate legislative requirements. For example, if a project proponent undertakes all processes required for an environmental impact assessment and obtains a grant of an environmental approval under the *Environment Protection Act*, under current legislation they would then be required to undertake the same process to obtain a permit under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*. There is no additional benefit in undertaking two processes for the same action or project.

To reduce duplication, the proposed amendments remove the requirement for an additional permit when a person holds a statutory approval prescribed by regulation to take or interfere with protected wildlife to the extent necessary to carry out an action permitted under the prescribed statutory approval.

As with the changes to the *Swimming Pool Safety Act*, the Bill transfers administrative review functions to NTCAT. Landowners can object to a notice of valuation to the Valuer-General. This process will not change. The Valuer-General will consider the objection and may allow it in whole or in part, or disallow it.

However, rather than a further objection to the Valuer-General's decision being made to the Valuation Board of Review, a request to review the decision can be made to NTCAT. This change improves efficiencies and removes requirement to maintain a separate and dedicated body to review administrative decisions. Owners of land will still be able to apply for a review of the Valuer-General's decision, and such reviews will be undertaken under NTCAT's procedures, providing consistency in process and promoting certainty in decision-making.

Other minor amendments will also be made to modernise the Act and regulations, including removing outdated forms from the regulations in line with contemporary drafting processes. Instead, forms will be managed as approved forms by the relevant decision-maker which, in this case, is the Valuer-General. Administrative updates can be managed where appropriate and allow for better use of government resources.

This Bill introduces amendments to improve the efficiency and administration of the *Water Act*. It makes practical changes by modernising and simplifying processes, while maintaining a strong regulatory framework and world-class environmental protections. With these amendments the advertising of water licence applications and water licence decisions will be modernised. These notices, which provide the public 20 business days to comment on applications and decisions, can now be published online. It will also increase transparency and accountability by making it easier for interested parties to find information about water licences, so that they can provide their input and have their views considered in water licence decision-making.

This Bill also changes elements of the *Water Act*, to streamline and simplify routine administrative decisions. The first of these are the administrative amendments of licences and permits. This Bill will allow for administrative changes to water licences and permits, without the requirement of the Controller of Water Resources, or their delegate, to make a formal decision under the legislation.

Simple changes, such as the correction of a clerical error or the change of a company name, will no longer require lengthy considerations as currently required by legislation. Instead, such changes will be done swiftly and efficiently by administrative staff, who can make the simple administrative amendments themselves and update licence and permit holders immediately.

Secondly, water licence renewals will also be streamlined. This will improve certainty and decision-making for developers and proponents who rely on water in the Territory. Water is an economic enabler, and it is imperative that where compliance is satisfactory, circumstances have not changed and the volume of water to be taken remains the same, that licence holders can count on their water licence terms being extended to align with the life of their project. This Bill will provide that certainty.

With these amendments, licences must be renewed where there have been no material changes to the original circumstances on which the licence was granted and where there has been substantial compliance with licence terms and conditions. In all other cases, the controller's discretion to refuse the application will remain.

This Bill will enable the trade of water entitlements outside of water allocation plan areas. Trading water entitlements stimulates the productive use of our water resources for the benefit of licence holders, the community and the Territory. These amendments will broaden the current trade rules, which only enable trade within water allocation plan areas. This Bill will allow licence holders anywhere in the Territory, who are accessing the same water resource, the flexibility and option to transfer their entitlements between each other.

This Bill updates and modernises the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* and regulations. The key amendments include:

- providing an option to serve notices to the recipient by email
- removing the requirement for copies of documents to be available for purchase from the agency
- allowing the NT Environment Protection Authority to make administrative amendments to an environment protection approval or licence, similar to changes to the *Water Act*; these amendments remove lengthy considerations as currently required by legislation
- renewing the infringement notice offence provisions to reflect the modern drafting of these types of offence provisions.

Finally, this Bill amends the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* and regulations to clearly prescribe 'waste substances and articles containing or contaminated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)' as a listed waste Schedule. PFAS has been added in response to national and international prohibition and controls to prevent further contamination and managing existing PFAS in the environment. The prohibitions and controls arise from increased awareness and concern about the potential risks and impacts these chemicals pose to human health and the environment.

PFAS currently falls within the category of another listed waste; however, this Bill increases certainty and transparency about its categorisation. Explicitly including PFAS in the listed waste Schedule provides certainty to industry that appropriate authorisations are required in relation to these waste materials.

The amendments to various lands, planning, water and environmental legislation contain practical and sensible measures—measures which will streamline administrative processes to enable the delivery of robust regulatory functions with greater time and cost efficiencies for the public, business and regulatory agencies. These efficiencies and reduction of red tape initiatives support this government's commitment to rebuilding the economy.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 33

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 33, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which I will refer to from hereon as 'the Bill', is to make numerous targeted and discrete amendments to several pieces of Northern Territory road transport legislation to achieve practical advances in the operation of these laws across a variety of areas.

The Bill amends the following legislation and the regulations made under them: the *Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act 1991*; *Motor Vehicles Act 1949; Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008;* and *Traffic Act 1987*.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure is responsible for administering transport legislation that contributes towards achieving safe, efficient and responsive transport systems that meet our community's needs.

Transport laws impact all road users and the lives of Territorians that rely on safe transport systems to travel to work, school, or holiday across the NT. As transport systems evolve, transport legislation requires updating to respond to road safety risks; respond to and provide for new and emerging technologies; address local operational needs; provide for efficiency measures; align with national policy; close regulatory gaps; and correct technical issues.

The Bill amends Territory transport legislation in the following key areas:

- trailer registration
- abandoned vehicles
- NT Police enforcement options for certain unlicensed or unsupervised learner drivers
- expanded sentencing options for traffic offences resulting in a licence disqualification
- automated decision-making
- the commercial passenger vehicle regulatory framework
- transit officer operations
- other miscellaneous technical amendments to ensure that the legislation is operating as intended.

Territorians elected this government to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. We promised to make immediate changes to give Territorians more of their time back so they can spend it enjoying our unique lifestyle, not navigating lengthy administrative processes and government red tape.

As promised before we were elected this government quickly implemented Motor Vehicle Registry reforms to contribute to driving down costs of living and giving Territorians their lifestyle back. We implemented a temporary freeze on increases to light vehicle registration fees, a 12-month free driver's licence and a three-year registration option for light trailers.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure implemented the three-year trailer registration option on a temporary basis, using powers under the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* until planned amendments to legislation could be progressed. The Bill makes these amendments to lock in the option for Territorians to register their light trailer—being 750 kilograms or less—for up to three years at a time. This change means less time organising yearly registration renewals and avoiding administration fees and registration fee increases that would otherwise be paid each year.

For automotive decision-making, the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* has served the people of the Northern Territory well. However, it was first drafted at a time when government service delivery was entirely paper based, much lower in volume and when the concept of computer-based systems was not contemplated.

The reality today is quite different. The MVR processes approximately 600,000 transactions each year, including 510,000 vehicle registration transactions and 56,000 driver's licence renewals. The MVR has already transformed the way it does business with industry and the community, including offering Territorians the option to access these services online. This has vastly reduced the amount of time Territorians need to spend attending MVR offices and has improved service delivery for those of us living in remote and regional areas.

Territorians have demonstrated a strong preference for digital delivery of MVR services. In recent years approximately 70% of all MVR vehicle and licensing renewal transactions were completed online. While other legislation enables or facilitates the MVR's use of digital systems, these are not integrated into the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949*. As a result the current *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* does not provide a coherent or consistent basis for digital processes within its own structure.

The Bill amends the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* to provide an updated and robust framework supporting current and future digital initiatives. These initiatives include the use of existing computer-based systems like MVR online to receive and automatically process routine transactions, as well as anticipated future initiatives.

The Bill marks a significant milestone in the Northern Territory Government's commitment to modernising service delivery and embracing digital innovation. It is part of our commitment to giving Territorians back their time to enjoy our lifestyle.

Reducing crime means affording Territorians the right to feel safe in our communities. For most of us, part of our day includes travelling on our roads, and we should be able to feel safe travelling through our community. Unfortunately, there are those amongst us that continue to make bad decisions and put lives in danger by engaging in high-risk behaviour on our roads. As most people are very aware, 2024 was a tragic year. Sixty people lost their lives on Northern Territory roads. This is unacceptable.

While road safety is a whole-of-community responsibility, the NT Police Force plays a crucial role in enforcing our road laws. The traffic infringement notice (TIN) scheme under the *Traffic Act 1987* (the scheme) provides police with the option of issuing monetary penalties or TINs to persons allegedly caught breaching road transport laws and are a quick and efficient way to discourage risky behaviour on Territory roads.

The scheme is intended to act as a deterrent against offending whilst also providing police with a swift enforcement mechanism for dealing with alleged offenders. Police retain the option of enforcing all offences through the courts. The scheme enables police to focus their court prosecution resources on more serious offences that involve a higher risk of serious injury or death to other road users.

The Bill fulfills a police request to introduce two new TIN offences: first being a learner licence holder driving a motor vehicle without the required supervising driver; and, second, a person driving a vehicle for which they have never held a licence.

Unfortunately, there are more serious acts on our roads that command more attention than the issuing of a traffic infringement notice. The following dangerous driving behaviours are known as the fatal five for good reason: speeding; drink and drug driving; not wearing a seatbelt; distraction; and fatigue. Between 2020 and 2024, 6,690 drink and drug driving-related offences were proven through NT courts. That is on average 1,672 offences each year over that period. Ten-year road safety data for the period 2014 to 2023 indicates alcohol as a contributing factor in at least 53% of fatalities and at least 20% of serious injuries, while drugs were a contributing factor in 30% of fatalities and 7% of serious injuries.

In 2023 police conducted 107,714 alcohol tests, of which 7.2% of those tested were found to be exceeding 0.05% blood alcohol concentration. In 2022 police conducted 1,119 drug tests on drivers on Territory roads, and 16.2% of those drivers tested positive to a prescribed drug in their system. This is a serious problem, and things need to change.

Under the Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024–2028 this government is focused on reviewing penalties and enforcement measures for repeat and high-risk offenders. This includes reviewing the framework behind the enforcement of drink and drug driving laws. We will look at the testing and analysis of alcohol and drugs, and the adequacy of penalties for drivers who are found putting themselves and everyone else at risk by making the stupid decision to drive while effected by drugs or alcohol.

The Bill takes a small, first step toward broader drink and drug driving penalty reforms by giving sentencing courts greater flexibility in how they impose licence disqualification periods for drink and drug driving offences. Currently, when a person is found guilty of a drink or drug driving offence and is already subject to a disqualification or is being sentenced for multiple offences that attract disqualification, such as drink or drug driving alongside other serious driving offences, disqualification periods are generally served concurrently. This can lead to outcomes that do not adequately reflect the seriousness or repetition of the offending conduct. The amendment enables a court to order that disqualification periods for new offences be served cumulatively, rather than at the same time, in circumstances where the person is already disqualified or is being sentenced for multiple disqualifying offences. This ensures that courts can more effectively structure sentencing to reflect the nature and gravity of the offences committed.

Importantly, this reform promotes more proportionate and transparent sentencing in cases involving multiple or repeat offences. It ensures that the law does not inadvertently dilute the consequences of serious or repeated unlawful driving behaviour. The amendment is a targeted and practical measure to enhance road safety and uphold the integrity of our driver licensing system.

This government has also acted on community safety when it comes to public transport. We moved quickly to install driver safety screens in every public bus across Alice Springs and Darwin. We passed legislation for mandatory sentencing for assaulting frontline workers, including bus drivers. More recently we announced a comprehensive Bus Safety Reform Strategy, a multi-stage plan to reduce antisocial behaviour, improve safety and enhance service delivery for passengers and drivers.

We are closing problematic bus interchanges, expanding CCTV at known hotspots, providing on-board duress alarms and direct radio links to police. We are launching a new and improved NT Bus Tracker app and continuing free bus travel as an interim measure to improve driver safety by eliminating the need to carry cash on board. This government wants every Territorian to feel safe when they catch a bus. Key to maintaining safety on our buses is the fantastic work our transit officers do under the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008* to manage safety, security and comfort on our networks.

In June, as part of this government's significant law and order reform, the Chief Minister announced that we will deliver stronger community safety outcomes by developing a new police public safety officer (PPSO) stream. PPSOs will be deployed on the frontline in NT police uniform, operating under NT police command and will be empowered to tackle antisocial behaviour head-on. Along with public housing safety officers, transit officer functions will transition to PPSOs, which are expected to be deployed in 2026. In the interim, however, transit officers will continue their important work.

Antisocial behaviour on public transport is a major problem, and despite the impending PPSO reforms it is as important as ever to ensure our transit officers are supported by effective powers under the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008*.

Transit officers have broad powers under this legislation to deal with antisocial and dangerous behaviour on our buses and at our bus stops and stations. These powers include the ability to direct a person to get off a bus or leave a bus stop or bus station if the person is not complying with a set of rules of behaviour prescribed under the Act. However, these powers are currently limited to circumstances when the person has already been given a direction to comply with the rules and subsequently contravenes that direction.

Transit officers have told us that when a person is breaking the rules, often the best course of action to swiftly ensure the safety and comfort of drivers and passengers would be to immediately direct the person off the bus or out of the area. The Bill makes the required amendments so that a transit officer has the power to do this in the first instance, rather than following the issue of a direction to follow the rules and waiting for that direction to be contravened.

In addition, the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008* provides that a transit officer can possess a device that discharges oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray and, under the right circumstances, use that device. There are two types of OC products on the market containing different viscosity agents. One is thinner and is delivered in a cone-shaped spray; the other, referred to as a gel, is thicker and is delivered in a more targeted direct stream that is less prone to wind interference and has a longer range. The gel version is more suitable for dealing with individual targets and lessens the risk of the user being affected by the agent.

Amendments in 2023 to the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008* to provide for the possession and use of OC spray did not intend to limit the viscosity of the contents of the OC devices possessed and used by transit officers. To avoid any doubt that transit safety officers can possess and use the gel-type OC product, the Bill amends the *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008* to clarify that both products can be carried and used.

Given the broad powers that transit officers possess, it is important to ensure that the officers appointed with these powers remain fit and proper to carry out their work. The *Public Transport (Passenger Safety) Act 2008* includes disqualifying offences that, if charged with or found guilty of, may lead to the suspension or revocation of a transit officer's appointment. The Bill makes technical amendments to ensure these disqualifying offences remain consistent with changes to relevant provisions under the *Criminal Code Act 1983*.

The commercial passenger vehicle regulatory regime (CPV) industry provides essential services to the Northern Territory community. These services range from a taxi or rideshare vehicle providing transport for Territorians going about their business to specialised medical transport helping people attend appointments,

to a coach company providing the transport to support the tourism industry that is so critical to the Territory's economy.

Because Territorians and the Territory's economy rely so heavily on this industry and the industries it supports, it is crucial that locals and visitors have the confidence that the industry will provide a safe, courteous and professional service.

Whilst the regulatory framework under the *Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act 1991* has undergone major reform over the years, including enabling ridesharing services in 2018, ongoing maintenance is required to adapt to changes and address issues identified through the daily operations of these services.

The Bill makes various amendments to CPV legislation to support industry and meet community expectations by:

- removing the requirement to establish a Commercial Passenger Vehicle Board that has been defunct since 2012 and has been replaced by other fit-for-purpose industry forums
- increasing the penalty for a taxidriver overcharging for a fare so it provides a proportionate deterrent to the practice
- aligning the penalties for operating a CPV or operating a communications or dispatch network without approval
- aligning and clarifying the consequences for breaching the conditions of a commercial vehicle licence or a communications or dispatch network approval
- ensuring that relevant requirements of approved codes of conduct apply at all times when a CPV is operated for hire or reward
- transferring the forum of appeal against accreditation, licensing and related decisions from the Local Court to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- aligning the infringement penalties for a minibus driver refusing a request to carry a passenger in a wheelchair with the equivalent offence for a taxidriver
- introducing an infringement penalty for the existing offence of a rideshare driver not carrying their identity card or not producing their card when requested by an inspector
- various technical amendments to correct errors, clarify the application of the Act, update the appointing authority for testers of taxi equipment, update regulations that provide for the refund of a levy and updates to clarify the source of existing exemption powers.

These amendments will increase regulatory certainty, close gaps, ensure responses are proportionate to the conduct and provide for more efficient outcomes for the industry, passengers and the department.

Vehicles that are left on a public street or public place for extended periods can be a safety hazard and an eyesore for the community and visitors alike. If the vehicle is not dealt with quickly it is often prone to being stripped for parts and vandalised, potentially exacerbating the safety and visual impacts, and complicating the eventual removal of the vehicle. Territorians are proud of their communities. Visible, vandalised, burned-out car wrecks are an embarrassment for locals and are a shock and deterrent for visitors, harming our community pride and our tourism industry.

While road authorities, including the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure and local councils, do their best to deal with vehicles that are deemed to have been abandoned as quickly and efficiently as possible under provisions of the Traffic Regulations 1999, there is room for improvement.

The Bill makes amendment to the Traffic Regulations 1999 by:

- expanding the definition of abandoned vehicles so authorities are clearly empowered to deal with vehicles causing problems on both public streets and public places including, for example, those left on a verge or across a footpath

- reducing the timeframe before a registered vehicle left in a parking area is deemed to have been abandoned, from seven days to three days

- expanding road authority powers to remove vehicles that cause danger, obstruction or inconvenience to pedestrians, not just drivers

- removing the outdated, expensive and slow requirement to advertise removal of a vehicle in the newspaper

- increasing the assumed value of a vehicle before it can be disposed of from $1,000 to $2,000

- enabling police and authorities to enter, or cause a vehicle to be entered, so that it can be moved and providing the required protections from liability for police, authorities and their agents for the entering, moving, or storing of vehicles.

The Bill also makes consequential amendments carefully designed to ensure procedural fairness, including the provision of adequate notice and opportunity for owners to retrieve their vehicles before any disposal occurs. The amendments also require a search of the Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) before any disposal action and provide that net proceeds of any sale after costs are to be applied first to satisfy any valid Personal Property Securities Register interests and also enabling the vehicle owner to claim any remaining balance.

An omnibus Bill provides the opportunity to enact miscellaneous technical amendments to deal with issues that arise through the operational administration of legislation but are not part of any specific reform package. The Bill makes the following such amendments:

- amendments to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* and the *Traffic Act 1987* clarifying the operation of owner-onus provisions in the case of enforcement action in respect of those offences, where the driver of the vehicle is unidentified at the time when the offence is detected, to provide certainty in future potential legal proceedings

- an amendment to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* repealing a historical provision that prevents the Registrar of Motor Vehicles from revoking their own appointments. This will remove an unwieldy and time-consuming process to seek approvals from the minister for a standard administrative function that should be exercisable by the registrar, especially given the expansion in the number of appointments that has occurred since this provision was first enacted

- an amendment to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* removing a historical power for the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to issue a licence to an underage person. This power was created in the context of an underage person requiring a licence to drive a motorised wheelchair, which is no longer considered a vehicle. As a result, motorised wheelchairs no longer need a licence to drive

- an amendment to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* updating the wording to a clearer and inoffensive way to describe a person with a disability

- an amendment to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* to repeal redundant provisions relating to a temporary revenue-raising measure used more than 20 years ago.

The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 makes a raft of real, effective, practical changes to increase safety, reduce red tape and contribute to this government's mandates to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

The Assembly suspended.

QUESTION TIME

Fuel Price Disclosure Bill

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Diesel prices today were 199.9c a litre in Alice Springs, 300c a litre in Ali Curung and 185.9c a litre at Acacia Hills. Now that you are Chief Minister when are you intending to bring your fuel price disclosure Bill back to the parliament to tackle the cost of living for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, she is right; fuel prices are extremely high off the back of nearly 20 years of a Labor government that did nothing but drive-up crime and the cost of living and drive people out of the Northern Territory. It is shameful.

Do you know what? That is why the CLP is now the government and the Opposition Leader, who was part of a failed Cabinet for eight long years, is sitting on the other side.

It is a bit rich for her to talk about cost of living. What the CLP is doing to address the cost of living is significant. Where should I start? We are addressing the cost of living for small business by removing payroll tax for small business. Some businesses will save $22,000 a year, which means the costs are not being passed on to consumers—that is, Territorians.

We have provided free swimming lessons for every child who goes to school from Years 1 to 6, because swimming is such an important skill when you live in the Territory—lifesaving as well. This means that parents do not have to use their school Sport Voucher to pay for their kids to get the basic necessities of life—learning to swim—it is being spent on sport …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. It was a specific question purely about fuel and the Bill that the Chief Minister formerly brought to the House. It did not have a wide scope.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, it was specific, thank you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is on top of all the other work we are doing on three-year trailer registration. We brought online the country's most competitive first homebuilding scheme, with $50,000 grants for people to build their own home. That is the best scheme in the country, and we are proud of it. We worked hard to make sure that grant would go towards the deposit. People are finding it difficult to save for a home. That $50,000 can go straight onto the bottom line, which is making an impact. We have a range of reforms …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was specific about the fuel price disclosure Bill, which the Chief Minister intended to bring on. She is not answering the question. I would like her to answer that question. When will you bring the fuel price disclosure Bill on …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, please take your seat. It was specific. We always give ministers some latitude. If you can rein it in, Chief Minister; it is your call.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The cost of living is a profoundly important issue. We took a commitment to the election to reduce crime; rebuild our economy after Labor dismantled, broke and tore it apart—which is why the cost of living is so high—and, of course, restore our beautiful, unique Territory lifestyle, of which a huge component is cost of living.

We have already implemented a wide range of reforms that we took to the election. We are delivering on election commitments. That is what we have done and are working through …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As a government, we will continue to look …

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister …

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Speaker, the relentless interruption …

Madam SPEAKER: I agree. Member for Daly, the minister has heard your calls to be focused and relevant. I think this is as good as you will get.

Mr YOUNG: She has not even touched on the fuel price disclosure Bill …

Madam SPEAKER: She has 17 seconds left. Hopefully, she can …

Mr YOUNG: She does not want to talk about a Bill she has not brought on.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, you made your point. The Chief Minister has the call. Her answer may not be to your liking, but it is her interpretation.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is despicable, disrespectful behaviour. I had 20 seconds; I was about to make my point, but he is too busy listening to himself rather than listening to the answer. That is his problem, not mine. We are out there listening to Territorians. If you want to grandstand, fill your boots.

Cost of Living – Supporting Businesses

Dr RAHMAN to CHIEF MINISTER

I am passionate about supporting the many hundreds of businesses we have in my electorate of Fong Lim which, as you all know, is the business and industrial engine of Darwin. Some of the local hardworking businesses I frequently visit include places like Daily Eatz, the Dinah Beach yacht club, Besser Brew Bar and the One Mile Brewery. That is just to name the ones I eat at, more or less, daily.

Jokes aside, Chief, I am proud to be part of a government that backs our local businesses, large and small. This year we delivered our historic payroll tax reforms, which will save businesses in Fong Lim and across the Territory considerable sums of money. I am excited to hear that this is just the start. As part of our plan to rebuild the economy, how will we be cutting down on approval times and further supporting local businesses?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Fong Lim electorate is a fantastic place with so many wonderful businesses, small, medium and large. The Member for Fong Lim and I have walked around and visited many of them. He is committed to Daily Eatz; I have been there with him. It is a fantastic place. We went to Mates4Mates. There are many fantastic businesses in and around the Stuart Park area, East Arm and everywhere in between.

It is important to those people—we were talking about cost of living earlier, ironically, Member for Fong Lim—for it to be easy to do business. When you put taxation impost on a business it passes it on to consumers. That means everyday Territorians, people in your electorate, have to pay more, which Labor did not fundamentally understand.

Our significant reform with payroll tax reductions for small businesses, and excluding apprentice and trainee wages, is moving the dial for businesses to employ more staff, invest in better products and equipment, more resourcing—whatever it is they need to continue to grow as a business rather than paying more tax and Territorians paying higher prices. It is a significant and important piece of reform, and it makes us highly competitive interstate, having one of the most competitive payroll tax jurisdictions in the country. We are proud of that.

We have taken it step further as we work through delivering our election commitments. One of our election commitments was the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce headed by Mark Garraway, the former president of the Property Council, and a panel of industry leaders. I thank him and the team who worked hard to develop the Saying ‘Yes’ to Business report. We have made that public. It identifies 70 key actions to remove barriers for small and medium businesses to drive growth in their business and in the Territory’s economy. We have fully accepted 60 of them; we accepted 10 in principle, and we have delivered another two. That is a great start. We are focused on reducing delays, cutting red tape and reducing timeframes across government by 50%, as we promised Territorians.

We will fast-track 48 of the 70 recommendations in the next 12 months. Member for Fong Lim, you hold us accountable to that and so will your community, and rightly they should. We want to be held accountable because we are excited about making it easier to do business in the Territory.

To give people a taste, some of the fast-track commitments are to:

- improve the timeliness for payment of invoices for tradies, which is important for cash flow
- expand builder's licence renewals to four years
- extend food business registrations to 36 months
- exempt low-risk electrical works from needing a certificate of compliance
- extend renewal periods for RSAs from three to five years.

That is some of what is to come, Member for Fong Lim; it is great to have you in the team representing the good people of Fong Lim.

School Attendance Officers

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

You have spent $21m of taxpayer funds on truancy officers, yet school attendance rates have dropped in the Barkly, Big Rivers, Central Australia, the Top End and East Arnhem regions this year. Will you now admit that this reheated policy is a failure and agree to invest this funding in programs that engage children and young people with their schooling?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am glad the Member for Daly asked the question about attendance, because upon coming to government we brought back attendance officers. During eight years of government Labor failed to ensure that kids were going to school. Kids going to school leads them on a path to meaningful employment.

Under the previous government more than 1,500 kids were not included in attendance data. They were forgotten, hidden, not counted and therefore lost in the system by a Labor government that did not care whether kids went to school. The Opposition Leader was one of four Education ministers who turned a blind eye to this because they did not care. That left our government with the momentous task of getting these kids back to school.

Mr Young interjecting.

Mrs HERSEY: I note the Member for Daly interjecting, but he might like to listen to the answer to his question.

The Northern Territory had eight years of declining school attendance rates under the former Labor government, falling from 80.8% in 2016 to 71.7% when it left office last year. Yesterday we talked about law and order, and I have no doubt that some of the offences that have been committed by youths are a direct result of them not going to school; they have not had the opportunity of an education.

Our school attendance officers are engaging with families and kids across the Territory to get them back into the classroom to give them the opportunity of a better education, a better life and the skills and pathways to real jobs.

We have targeted support from school attendance officers, which plays an important role in turning around and increasing attendance across the Territory, in some of the most challenging regions. In remote and very remote areas it is challenging to get kids to school, but we have great teachers and schools. We need the attendance officers to work with these families to boost attendance rates. We will then have better NAPLAN results and pathways to meaningful jobs for these children.

Beetaloo Sub-basin

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

In the media recently we heard about several major milestones in the development journey of the Beetaloo Sub-basin, delivering on the CLP government's commitment to rebuild the Territory. The economy is closely tied to the development of affordable and abundant energy from the Beetaloo Sub-basin. You recently attended Beetaloo Energy Australia's operation with industry and investment stakeholders. Could you update

the Assembly as to the outcomes of the trip and the work our government is doing to deliver affordable Beetaloo gas to Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina knows how important it is to have cheap energy in the Northern Territory. This will bring indirect jobs to the Northern Territory, such as mechanics, hairdressers, boilermakers and riggers. All the people in those indirect jobs will have the opportunity to work in the Northern Territory and expand their businesses. As the Chief Minister said, raising the payroll tax threshold will give everyone an opportunity to grow their businesses.

Last month I visited the Beetaloo Energy—formerly known as Empire Energy—project in Carpentaria. I was proud to be there as two milestones were achieved. Beetaloo Energy conducted the largest fracture simulation in Australian history and reached agreement with the traditional owners, which was endorsed by the land council, for the sale of appraisal gas, which means that Territory gas now has a pathway to the Territory market.

The resources sector is a central focus of our government's strategy to rebuild the economy. Gas, mining, agriculture, Defence and tourism are five important words; we will focus on them as they will help us rebuild the economy.

Our government is making history with the development of Territory resources, having the first Beneficial Use of Gas agreement signed and ready to go to get gas out of the ground and into generators in the Territory to keep the lights on. That will be a great new industry because for 10 years there has been a lot of work and money spent in the Beetaloo, but there has been no gas flowing, no royalties have been paid or there has been no revenue for businesses doing the hard yards. This will be a game changer, and we hope to get gas out either later this year or early next year. For the first time, there will be a clear pathway for getting Beetaloo gas into our market. This will mean royalties and jobs.

I was also privileged to speak to Joanie Wilson, one of the traditional owners. She was working for Beetaloo Energy. She is known for her fight for those people. She is working there and, as with other traditional owners, she supports the industry. That is because it will be a well-regulated gas industry which will supply jobs and royalties. It will put gas into the Northern Territory market, not only into Power and Water but into The Granites and McArthur River, and then potentially to the east coast where there will be a gas shortage. There is gas available in the ground—some 200 years' worth of gas.

This will be a game changer. Ms Wilson told me that this is an opportunity for her to stay on country and for her and her family to have jobs on country. To be able to stay on country and have jobs is super important.

School Attendance Officers

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Your Chief Minister had this to say regarding your twice-failed truancy officer initiative:

> *The CLP's plans will be able to be measured on publicly available attendance data, and we look forward to that scrutiny and watching the trend change over the years.*

So far the trend is very much on the way down. At what point will you decide that spending $21m on truancy officers is a waste of taxpayers' money and start investing that money into engagement strategies that will work to get kids to school?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love getting questions on education because, as the Education minister, I can report that over the past eight years we saw a failed effort from the previous Labor government to get kids to school. Attendance, literacy and numeracy were failing under its watch.

As I have said numerous times in this House, the Opposition Leader was one of four Education ministers who did nothing to make sure that these kids were going to school and were getting educated for a better life and go into meaningful employment.

We brought back attendance officers across the Territory; they work throughout the communities. The shops have 'no school, no service'. They are working with families and talking with the students. During Term 2, 401 compliance notices and 111 infringement notices were issued by authorised officers; for the same period in 2024, 148 compliance notices and six infringement notices were issued. That is an increase of 253 compliance notices and 105 infringement notices.

Having attendance officers working with the school, the school community and the families is one way we will get children back to school; we hold fast on that. As the minister for Education I know that our attendance rates are not that great; we acknowledge that. That is why we are working hard with the department, the school attendance officers and the communities to get these kids back to school.

In the previous answer I highlighted the fact that under the previous government 1,500 students were not included in the attendance data. Shame on the previous government for not having them in the main attendance data. These 1,500 kids were on a secret roll on the side. We have managed to get about 500 of those children back in school through working with families and attendance officers.

That is what we on this side of the House are trying to do. We want kids to go to school, and we acknowledge that there is a lot of work to do. We are getting on with the job of doing that work, which is a far cry from what the opposition did during its eight years in government.

Housing Initiatives

Mrs ZIO to TREASURER

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for opening the conversation on the cost of living. I will expand on that. The CLP has changed more than 2,000 Territorians' lives, by getting them out of Labor's never-ending rental cycle and onto the property ladder. The Fannie Bay electorate is almost 50% rentals. A lot of those tenants want to get themselves into the property market.

These real results for Territorians, and the expansion of housing options available, is why the CLP has extended the program in our first budget. Can you update the Assembly on how this program is helping Territorians to put down roots in their home?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay is correct; the CLP's HomeGrown Territory program has changed thousands of Territorians' lives by fulfilling their dream of home ownership. That is great to hear.

Whilst the issue of home ownership, especially for young first homebuyers, continues to plague the nation, data from the Department of Treasury and Finance shows that the Territory is well and truly bucking that trend; that problem is changing in the Territory. Almost a quarter of the people the CLP helped into their own homes are Territorians under the age of 28. That speaks volumes for what we are doing in the housing space. Eighty-five per cent of those who received grants were millennials or younger. Furthermore, under our government's HomeGrown program, home buyers have overwhelmingly been couples, showing that this scheme is helping families put down roots and stay in the Territory, helping to grow our economy.

With the HomeGrown Territory Grants, the CLP has changed thousands of Territorians' lives and is helping them to build their future here. These new Territory home owners are not just fulfilling their dream life in the Territory; they are helping us rebuild the Territory after Labor left Territorians with no future to look forward to. More than one-fifth of those who have achieved home ownership under the CLP work in the health sector. Treasury data shows that the grants attracted other professionals working in education and business and people who are central to this government's requirements to build our economy and service the needs of other Territorians.

The CLP promised that this would be a year of action. With more than 200 new builds in the pipeline for everyday Territorians the CLP is delivering on that promise. That is a marked difference from Labor's years of inaction to increase the Territory's housing supply and boost home ownership. In 2023–24, Labor's last full financial year in government, a measly $747,000 in grant money was used to stimulate the Territory's residential construction industry.

Obviously no-one wanted to build under Labor, because under the CLP's watch more than $5m has gone into Territorians' pockets to kickstart our residential construction industry. We would have lost young Territorians, their growing families and important healthcare, education and business workers, to other states

without the CLP stepping in so that Territorians finally had the necessary backing to build new homes and become home owners.

I am proud to be part of this CLP government that is delivering on the FreshStart and HomeGrown Territory Grants to benefit the Territory.

Yipirinya School Review

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

More than 100 days ago, on 20 May, you stood in this parliament and said that you would release the findings of the government's review into Yipirinya School. This review was undertaken after community members raised serious concerns about the school not meeting compliance and registration standards, including child safety standards. The community is still waiting to see the findings of that review. Can you inform the Assembly whether you have received the review and, if so, when will you release it? When will you let me have a copy of it as you promised?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is great that it is an education day today. As the Education minister that makes me happy.

Under the previous Labor government several complaints were made suggesting that Yipirinya School was not meeting all its obligations under the *Education Act*. Mark Monaghan was the Education minister when they were failed to be addressed.

In December 2024 an assessor did a report with 26 recommendations to improve how the school is run, covering governance, finance, curriculum and student safety. The report was shared confidentially with the Department of Education and Training and the school, but is not appropriate for public release. Member for Gwoja, if you want any more information we are happy to give you a briefing, as that report will not be published.

The school council has been briefed on the findings and is required to submit monthly updates to the registrar showing its progress. The council continues to do this.

One key recommendation was about financial management. That was completed in June this year following an independent review.

There was the special investigation. Generally, that would not be tabled. Those recommendations will be worked through over the next 12 months. A statutory manager has taken over the council's responsibilities while the former council members stay on in an advisory role. It is a constructive step to help the school reset and strengthen its foundations.

There has been a lot of talk about Yipirinya School; it is a great school. I have been there to see the work that was done before this happened. Member for Gwoja, if you would like any more information we are happy to give you a briefing, but it is not appropriate for the report to be tabled.

Yipirinya School Review – Supplementary Question

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

You said on 20 May in parliament, 'I don't have that information in front of me. It's an operational issue. When I get that information I will share it with the Member for Gwoja.' Why now are you not willing to commit to releasing the report as you did then? What are you trying to hide?

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: I am not the community; the community deserves to hear this.

Madam SPEAKER: No arguing across the Chamber.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I just answered the Member for Gwoja's question. I did not have the report at the time. When the report came out I said that it was not appropriate to table it or pass it on. I am happy to give you more information if you would like to contact the office, or we can reach out and give you the information. It is not for the public to view; it would not benefit anyone in the community. The school council has been briefed on the findings and has been required to submit …

Mr Paech: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Member for Gwoja.

Mr Paech: You would not know; I have not asked.

Madam SPEAKER: She has answered your question and is reiterating the answer. There is no point of order.

Mr Paech: It is disappointing that the community is being ignored, by you and by her.

Madam SPEAKER: Please sit down.

Mrs HERSEY: Member for Gwoja, I do not think the community has not been heard or will not get the information. The school is happy to have a conversation with many members in Alice Springs, or you can go back to the community members to give that information, if you like. That is your choice. I have answered the question.

Exercise Talisman Sabre

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

Under our government's plan to rebuild our economy, Defence is one of our five strategic areas of focus. This month our Defence capabilities have been on show. Many people in the Karama electorate and I have heard the roar and seen the lights of fighter jets in the sky as part of Exercise Talisman Sabre in the past few weeks. Can you update the Assembly on how the Territory is playing a vital role in Australia's largest military exercise and what plans our government has to further reinforce the Territory's importance in the defence of our nation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know how passionate the Member for Karama is about rebuilding the Territory's economy. A huge component of that is our importance in the Indo-Pacific, and Defence is a significant injection into our economy. That money goes into feeding Territorians. When Defence money is spent in the Territory it predominantly stays in the Territory. Pound for pound, bang for buck, Defence dollars spent here feed Territory families.

It is important, and we have more to gain. We can do more work to continue to show the Australian Defence Force and our allied partners that we are the allied training partner of choice. The Territory's indisputable location, vast training opportunities, exercises and bases all provide a huge opportunity. Talisman Sabre concluded its domestic part of the exercise in the Northern Territory. The exercise runs from 13 July through to 4 August; the August component has moved over to PNG.

This is the largest Talisman Sabre exercise since its inception in 2005, with more than 42,000 personnel from 19 nations training between the Northern Territory and Queensland. Australia was represented, of course, along with allied partners from the United States and Japan. For the first time we saw 1,500 troops across the Northern Territory from the Australian Army 2nd Division. You might have seen them at East Point or the Waterfront; there were military people everywhere. We had an opportunity to speak with them, and heard that they were enjoying their time in the Territory.

There were significant firsts. There was the first live firing of a precision strike missile in Australia. That happened at the Mount Bundey Training Area, and it went all the way to Bradshaw. It was an excellent training opportunity, particularly for our United States partners.

We had an Australian first with the HMS *Prince of Wales* UK aircraft carrier under the stewardship of Commodore Blackmore in Darwin, which showed the significance. To back that up Rt Hon John Healey, the

United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence, was here for that flagship event, along with Australian Minister for Defence Richard Marles. It was fantastic to have them in Darwin.

I had the chance to catch up with significant allied partners, including the Joint Operations Command commander General Nagumo Kenichiro from Japan and US Indo-Pacific Command Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Joshua Rudd. Later in the year I will travel to Japan to further unify Northern Territory and Japanese relations—I acknowledge Richard Finch from INPEX is in the gallery today—and further our economic and Defence investment and cooperation in the Northern Territory.

Territory Day Flyover

J DAVIS to MINISTER for DEFENCE NT

Many people in my community have things to say about fighter jets. On the morning of Territory Day I attended, with many people here, a citizenship ceremony in this House to welcome new Territorians, many of whom are from conflict-affected regions. That night during the celebrations the fighter jet flyover caused distress to many people in my community, who contacted me wondering what was going on. They had fear and PTSD. I understand that Major Events received a petition asking for the flyovers to be reconsidered or removed from the day.

Has the government consulted with those affected before including such displays in the future? What was the total cost of the ADF F-35 flyover? Who paid for it? Was it funded by Territory Major Events or the ADF?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what I know is that our Australian Defence Force personnel pull on a uniform every day to defend our freedom, democracy and people. Everyone who lives in this country is part of that fight and continued defence of those freedoms. We hold them out and thank them for their service to our community, nation and people.

Our Defence Force has a significant role to play. We are privileged in the Northern Territory to be home to more than 5,000 Defence personnel and more than 5,000 Defence veterans. We are doing many things with the Minister for Veterans to make the Territory a place where they want to stay following their career.

We have the privilege of them being a part of significant training operations. I mentioned Talisman Sabre, which is a huge operation in Australia to allow interoperability with our allied nations and partner Defence forces in our region and further abroad. Every other year we host Pitch Black. Last year we had 13,000 Air Force personnel from a range of nations in Darwin to focus on important training to protect the very freedoms and the democracy this parliament has the opportunity to enforce. Without it, we would not have …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Stading Order 110; relevance. What was the total cost of the ADF F-35 flyover on Territory Day, and who paid for it?

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you have the call. You will be uninterrupted from this point.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am the Minister for Defence NT, not the Minister for Defence; that would be Richard Marles MP, and you would have to ask him. I do not run the Air Force. That is a question for him.

We are a proud multicultural community in the Northern Territory. We have always embraced multiculturalism. We had trade relationships in the regions since time began, like the Yolngu people trading with the Makassans. These are well-trodden paths for the Northern Territory and things we defend fearlessly. I have two colleagues who were born overseas—at least two; there are probably more. The Northern Territory is an important place, and I am proud to have hosted a citizenship ceremony for Territory Day, as every Chief Minister has since self-government.

I am not sure what else to say to you, Member for Johnston, other than we support the ADF and our allied partners. We thank our Defence men and women who pull on that uniform every day to protect our freedom.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; did the Territory contribute financially to …

Mrs Finocchiaro: I answered it.

J DAVIS: Is the answer no? It was paid for by the Commonwealth?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, take your seat. The Chief Minister answered that part of the question. She said that it was not paid out of the Northern Territory Government budget.

Investment Summit

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Two weeks ago the CLP government hosted its inaugural Northern Territory Investment Summit. What a fantastic and energising event it was! I was fortunate to attend and saw firsthand the strong interest from international investors and the positive energy in the room. There were over 80 organisations across 12 countries; many of them our neighbours. It was clear there was real momentum building behind the Territory's economic future.

Given this is the government's year of action, certainty and security, can you update the Assembly on how the Investment Summit is helping position the Northern Territory as a globally competitive investment destination and what are the impacts on the jobs, business confidence and long-term economy of the Territory?

Mr Paech: The real Chief Minister stands up.

Madam SPEAKER: She will be heard in silence.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know how passionate the Member for Wanguri is about her electorate and the opportunities that a strong economy gives to her constituents, especially those who operate small to medium businesses.

As the Member for Port Darwin I am equally excited about what happened in this space. As the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations it is my job to attract investors from across the country and around the world and convince them that the Northern Territory is the place to look to secure their financial future, as we work to secure ours.

Economic growth is critical. That is why our government partnered with the Darwin Major Business Group to run the Territory's first Investment Summit, which was held here from 15 to 17 July. This has never been done before; we never had these people come to the Northern Territory, even though we know that if we want people to invest here they have to understand that we offer an incredible array of opportunities.

Bringing together 150 delegates, investors from around the world travelled to Darwin from companies based in Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Switzerland, Vietnam, China, India, Kuwait, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. To a person, they said that they had no idea of the opportunities in the Territory until they came to see it for themselves. I say shame on those on the other side that nothing had been done before and that it took us bringing the Investment Summit here.

Well done, particularly to the team from the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations that worked tirelessly to put together this three-day program, which—most critically—held an immersive journey for the people who attended this summit to experience our tourism opportunities and see our infrastructure firsthand. They saw the energy opportunities. They visited and talked to the people who will bring gas online into the Northern Territory and deliver the best gas opportunity this country has ever seen, with enough gas to keep the lights on in the country for at least the next two centuries.

Keynote speakers and international and national presentations allowed us to show what the Territory has to offer. I am pleased to continue that work as we sell the story of the Territory to our near and far neighbours.

Aged-care Facility – Palmerston

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for YOUTH, SENIORS and EQUALITY referred to MINISTER for HEALTH

You parade around claiming to support seniors but, when push comes to shove, you and your team are responsible for ripping out $12m from critical land servicing work for a new 120-bed aged-care facility in Palmerston. This week the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner of Australia is travelling around the Territory talking to seniors about aged care. This is not just a spreadsheet; it is slap in the face to our older Territorians, aged-care workers and the families supporting them, who are crying out for better senior

services in one of Australia's fastest-growing regions. You did not consult or front up; you axed the funding and hoped that no-one noticed.

Why were you responsible for signing off on gutting $12m of funding tied to the 120-bed aged-care facility in Palmerston? Have you spent time explaining this to our senior Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I think the Opposition Leader is confused because we do not have a minister specifically for aged care. I will pass this question to Minister Edgington to respond.

Mr EDGINGTON: Madam Speaker, there is a shortage of residential aged-care facility beds in the Northern Territory. This has been impacting aged-care-related discharge delays at the hospital. On any given day there are anywhere between 60 and 80 aged-care patients in our hospitals in the Northern Territory.

We have been working with, and having many conversations with, the federal government since coming to government. This is one of the critical shortages we have been facing. Labor was in government for eight years prior to us coming to government, so the question must be asked: what did Labor do during those eight years to support and work with aged-care patients to provide the aged-care facilities that patients in the Northern Territory need? That is the real issue.

The federal government recently promised $60m to contribute to an aged-care facility in Darwin. The longstanding position under our government has always been that we need a 120-bed facility in the Northern Territory. Whilst the federal government has committed $60m, our position has always been that the Palmerston hospital site is the preferred place to build new aged-care facilities. We have committed the land and the headworks for the new aged-care facility.

To suggest that $12m has been ripped out of the budget is misleading the parliament. We committed right from the start and picked up from where Labor did nothing to focus on aged care. We have been working with the feds, and there is a promise of $60m. We are committing the land and will do the headworks when that facility is ready to go ahead.

We have also exempted …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the conciseness of the answer. The other part of the question that the minister has not referred to at all is: has anyone met with seniors to explain the decision to rip $12m out of that part of the budget?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, complete your answer.

Mr EDGINGTON: Aged care is a responsibility of the federal government. The former Labor government did nothing to advance that in the Northern Territory. We are working across the board to get this facility. We have committed to providing land and the headworks to make sure that project goes ahead.

Anti-Discrimination Act – Amendment

Mr O'GALLAGHER to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

In 2022 the former Labor government made sweeping changes to the *Anti-Discrimination Act* that blurred the line between real harm and everyday opinion. It confused those of us, including me, who are strong supporters of free speech. The former Labor government made it unlawful to offend or insult someone and removed longstanding protections that allowed faith-based schools to employ staff who shared their religious values. The CLP strongly opposed those changes at the time. Before the 2024 election we committed to reversing them, and we won a mandate to do so.

Can you update the Assembly on how the CLP government is delivering on that promise and restoring fairness and balance to the *Anti-Discrimination Act*?

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; I ask you to make a ruling, as this is pre-empting debate. The Bill was introduced today.

Madam SPEAKER: In past Assemblies you could not do that, but in this Assembly you can.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, thank you for your ruling.

Member for Karama, you are passionate about this because your community continues to talk to you about this issue, since it was introduced by Labor in 2022. You have some wonderful schools in your electorate, some of which are faith based. I am sure they are keenly watching what is happening in parliament this week.

Territorians would remember that we opposed the Bill Labor brought forward in 2022, which eroded freedom of speech. That made it an offence to say offensive words, which is subjective: who knows what others would think is offensive? It was left to the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner—one person—to decide whether that was the case.

We believed that was an overreach, and so did Territorians. We spoke to them about this, leading up to and after the election. They asked us to revert to the protections for religious schools so that religious and faith-based schools in the community could employ staff and teachers who could teach their same faith and not worry about civil proceedings if they did not choose a teacher who was not of that faith. Territorians called for us to make that change if we were fortunate to govern, which we now are. They included the parents who wanted the choice to send their children to a faith-based school and know that all the teachers in that school were of the same ethos and beliefs. Territorians believe that is a part of being Territorian. We are a multicultural and multifaith community, so it is important they have those protections.

From when I became the Attorney-General to now we have been out to the community to consult on the fact that we would make these changes, and we asked for feedback about what that might look like. We spoke to a range of people, including the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner; NTCAT, because it is involved in this; Health; LGBTQIA+ communities, including Scarlet Alliance, NTAHC and Health Equity Matters; legal and community stakeholders; and religious organisations, such as NT Christian Schools, Catholic schools, Zion Church, Greek Orthodox—everyone you can possibly think of. I sat with them individually and as groups, and they shared feedback.

That is why we ended up not repealing altogether the offensiveness clause; we have made changes to the words. After this legislation is passed, people cannot incite hatred, severe ridicule or serious contempt. I look forward to debating the legislation in the next sittings.

Watch Houses – Children in Custody

Mr GUYULA to CHIEF MINISTER referred to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

The ABC has department data which stated that a child had been held in a watch house for 25 days. If this is incorrect, what is the longest amount of time that a child has been held in a watch house?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am glad that the Member for Mulka asked this question, because what was reported is incorrect. The main amount of time a young person would spend in the watch house is three to four days.

It was widely reported that there was an 11-year-old kept for an extended period; that is not true. The person was 12. They were brought to the watch house after the court had closed, which is why we are working so hard on court reform. The court had closed, which meant that bail could not be processed, so they stayed overnight. As soon as court reopened in the morning that person's bail was processed. In fact, the court remanded that person, if my memory serves me correctly.

Sometimes adults are spending around the 20-day mark in a watch house if they have been sentenced and are waiting to transition to one of our correctional facilities in Alice Springs, Darwin, Berrimah, or wherever it might be.

The Corrections minister might have a bit more data for you, Member for Mulka, so I will pass over to him.

Mr MALEY: Madam Speaker, I can outline the process involved when a young person is remanded in custody.

As the Chief Minister pointed out, a young person is taken to the watch house and then brought before the court as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, because Labor did not invest in the courts, the courts on the weekend are struggling to keep up with the load, so sometimes the cut-off period is missed. As soon as

a young person is dealt with by a court—it could be an after-hours court—they are either released on bail or remanded in custody. That young person …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. What is the longest period any child has been held in a watch house?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, the minister is answering this.

Mr MALEY: I will continue to explain the process. This is the process we have been dealt, and we are refining it because the previous Labor government failed to invest in any Corrections infrastructure. Labor had the catch-and-release program. Its answer was: if you commit a crime in the Northern Territory, we will let you go because we will not invest in the infrastructure needed to put criminals behind bars.

That is unlike the CLP government, which is focused on the victim. We are making sure there will be fewer victims in the Northern Territory. Our laser focus is on protecting the victims. That means if you do a crime in the Northern Territory and are remanded in custody, you will go into custody. There will be rehabilitation programs and those sorts of things, whilst people are in there to try to break the cycle of offending, but we are making sure these young people go into the Holtze Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible.

The process is that as soon as they are remanded in custody they are delivered to Holtze. Youth justice officers will pick up the young people if they have to. They make special trips to get them out of the watch houses and into Holtze for them to get wraparound services as soon as possible.

Defective Homes – Bellamack

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

A number of residents and families in Bellamack have spent more than a decade living with the stress and uncertainty caused by defective homes built under a failed affordable housing scheme. The previous government failed to act, leaving these home owners in limbo. Can you update the Assembly on how this government has brought long overdue closure to Territorians affected by the Bellamack homes disaster?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, since day one the Member for Blain has been in my office advocating on behalf of the people of Palmerston and Bellamack, trying to get the best deal possible for them. This government has delivered.

Buying a first home should be one of the most exciting and rewarding moments in someone's life. It is a foundation for the future and a chance for stability. For some Territorians that dream turned into a nightmare, which was drawn out for more than a decade. Under a failed Labor government affordable housing scheme that kicked off in 2009, 18 elevated homes were constructed in the suburb of Bellamack. These homes were built with serious structural defects, leaks, corrosion of cladding and steel frames and tiles lifting and cracking throughout. They were not even built to withstand cyclones. These families were left trapped in properties that were unsafe, unsellable and steadily falling apart. They were ignored by the former Labor government and forced to carry the financial and emotional burden on their own.

Unlike the former government we are not content to leave Territorians in limbo. Once again we acted quickly and cleaned up a mess that went on for too long under Labor. You could say that I am a fixer. As soon as we came to office last year we took swift decisive action. This government instructed my department to negotiate the voluntary acquisition of the affected properties. This is well and truly underway.

As part of that process we will seek agreement from landowners to assign their court-awarded compensation to the Territory. This will allow the government to pursue the builder directly if owners choose not to or are unable to. This is another thing the previous government failed to consider or act on. Once the homes are acquired they will be demolished and the land returned to open market through a public auction, ensuring the community can finally move on from this sorry chapter.

That is the difference with this government. We do not walk away from tough decisions; we do the right thing. We get on with the job of delivering for Territorians no matter where they live. We are restoring trust in housing, government and in the institutions meant to protect Territorians. Labor left this problem to rot; we are fixing it.

Children's Commissioner

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has said that despite numerous requests she was not consulted on your rewrite of the *Youth Justice Act*. This appears to be a pattern of your government attempting to reject and undermine our independent statutory bodies, which are there to strengthen our democratic decision-making. Could you explain to the Assembly what you understand the Children's Commissioner's role to be and why you did not meaningfully consult with her on this Bill?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Children's Commissioner's role is to investigate child abuse, and I am sure she does a great job. I can also say that the Children's Commissioner meets with Corrections every fortnight. When she says that she was not consulted and does not know what is going on—she has regular meetings with the Department of Corrections. I have met with her and know that the Attorney-General has met with her. She has an opportunity to talk to us, and we can talk with her.

Our role is about getting on with keeping the community safe; that is what we will do. That is what we are laser focused on. I feel like a broken record. We are laser focused on keeping the community safe. We have been in office for 11 months, and that is what we continue to do.

Unfortunately, we were left with such a mess that we cannot fix it overnight. This is a big ship to turn around, and the ship is turning around. We are doing it, and we will continue to make the tough decisions. We will make sure the community is safe; that is our number one priority. We will keep the community safe; we will rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. They are three principles that are simple and easy to say; we are steadfast and focused on continuing to do that.

The previous government had programs in place for wraparound services and rehabilitation. One program was Back on Track. This program …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I did not ask about Back on Track. You said that she just investigates child sexual abuse. I will give you a second go because that is not everything she does. What does the Children's Commissioner do, and why did you not meaningfully consult? Why did you not consult with her?

Mr MALEY: I will go back to what the previous government did. Back on Track was a program from 2019 to 2024; it was funded $2m a year, and last financial year it went up to $7m a year. That is a total of $34m. Have a guess how many participants were in that program over that time? It was 342. How many participants graduated from that program? It was $34m for 35 successful participants. That is almost $1m per child.

When you talk about wasting taxpayers' money that is why we have to stop these programs—$1m per child is unacceptable. We want to focus on keeping the community safe and not wasting taxpayers' money. That is why we have a master plan. We are working towards making sure the infrastructure is value for money. We will move the prisons to Holtze for value for money and to make sure we rehabilitate offenders, turn them into better people and break the cycle of reoffending.

The previous Labor government failed to break the cycle of crime. We are working hard to do that; young offenders are going to school; and we are doing rehabilitation programs. We are working hard to make sure the community is safe.

Water Security

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

Ensuring that Territorians have access to a clean and reliable supply of drinking water is a key priority of mine and of this government. In many remote communities water stress is a real barrier to new housing and infrastructure. Water security is essential to economic growth, health and community wellbeing. We are committed to ensuring secure water for all Territorians.

Can you update the Assembly on the practical steps this government is taking to improve water security in remote communities and the funding you are providing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, over the last few months the Member for Goyder has been the strongest advocate we have for securing water for Territorians. Last month, along with my colleague the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, Bill Yan, we announced the CLP government's $25.1m package over four years to deliver clean, dependable water to our most remote communities.

This funding will help unlock a further $100.4m from the Australian Government's National Water Grid Fund, supporting critical upgrades to water systems in high-needs areas. We are working closely with the National Water Grid Fund to replace ageing infrastructure, drill new bores and support future growth.

The redevelopment of Numbulwar's water supply system will be the next project submitted to the National Water Grid Fund. A new high-quality water source has already been located through bore drilling under a successful phase 1 submission, with phase 2 focused on supporting a proposed new subdivision.

Improving water supply directly addresses issues like overcrowding, poor health and social disadvantage in remote communities. This is a practical step in our year of action, certainty and security.

The CLP government's investment will help leverage further funding and accelerate development. For example, Numbulwar has been facing long-term water challenges. Securing water is critical to building new homes and supporting regional growth.

Two joint NT–Australian Government funding proposals are currently before the National Water Grid Fund: $17.85m to upgrade the water supply at Galiwinku; and $14.98m for new water infrastructure at Gunyangara, west of Nhulunbuy. The Northern Territory Government is contributing $5.6m, and the Commonwealth is contributing $26.5m, with the Gumatj Corporation contributing $1m for the Gunyangara project.

To date the Territory has secured $102m for seven water projects across communities, including Yuendumu, Milingimbi, Numbulwar, Maningrida, Yirrkala and Gunyangara.

I am proud of our government's commitment of $25.1m to provide remote Territory communities with clear and reliable water. This will make a difference to everybody living in those remote areas.

Air Pollution Levels – Answer to Question from 29 July 2025

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, in line with Standing Order 115, I will give a further response to the question asked by the Member for Johnston yesterday.

You asked a question in relation to the air quality monitors at Winnellie, Stokes Hill and Palmerston:

Is it being disabled to hide the pollution levels people are being exposed to?

I have an answer to that question.

To imply to the public that the independent NT Environment Protection Authority is deliberately trying to hide or lie is a serious allegation. The Member for Johnston suggested that the NTEPA has switched off the Palmerston ambient air quality monitor in an attempt to hide pollution levels. The National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) standards refers to the international standards used to ensure technical compliance and reliability. In accordance with those standards, contractors conduct routine monthly maintenance and calibration procedures at all air quality stations in the Northern Territory.

I have been advised that maintenance and calibration works were carried out from 21 July to 24 July 2025, prior to the dates the Member for Johnston accused the NTEPA of switching off the monitors. It is only during this period that a brief interruption of data may have occurred. However, I have sought information from the department and the experts, who have assured me that all data remains within the required standards.

As always, as Territorians should be assured that real-time and historical air quality data measured at the four ambient air quality monitoring stations is available to the public on the NTEPA website.

It is important to ensure that whenever we make these accusations we can back them up. If we want to do politics differently in the future, if the Member for Johnston wants to ask me these questions before making public accusations, I am more than happy to undertake to seek the answers she requires.

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

MOTION
Coronial Inquest into the Death of Kumanjayi Walker

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move that the Northern Territory Government:

1. acknowledges the findings and recommendations of the coronial inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker and the impact of this tragedy on his family, the Warlpiri people and the wider Yuendumu community

2. commits to implementing all recommendations from the inquest in full, in consultation with Aboriginal communities

3. establishes a community-led oversight and implementation group, including Aboriginal elders, legal experts and community advocates to ensure transparency and accountability

4. acknowledges that NT police officers work in challenging and complex circumstances and that strengthened health and wellbeing support should be prioritised

5. reinstates funding to the NT Police anti-racism review to ensure that NT Police are properly supported to address any systemic cultural issues within the force

6. calls for a pilot program in Yuendumu, co-designed with traditional owners and leaders, to restructure local governance and service delivery based on kinship and cultural authority as a model for other remote communities.

Today I speak with a heavy heart and steadfast in resolve. We gather not just to reflect on the loss of life that was Kumanjayi Walker, but to reckon with the truths his death revealed—truths his family and the Warlpiri community of Yuendumu have carried every day since 9 November 2019.

Kumanjayi was more than a headline; he was a grandson, a nephew and a young Warlpiri man still finding his way in a world that is not only sometimes unfair but also unkind to Aboriginal people. His death was tragic but not isolated. It was a result of systemic failures that we can no longer ignore.

The coronial inquest did not just deliver findings. It held up a mirror to our justice system, our policing structures and our ability to listen to Aboriginal voices and act with courage and care. I bring forward this motion not as symbolism but as a call to action, because we owe Kumanjayi's family and every family who has lived through the pain of injustice more than sympathy; we owe them accountability and change.

This motion calls for six things. First, it formally acknowledges the findings and recommendations of the inquest and the deep and ongoing impact of this tragedy on Kumanjayi's family, the Warlpiri people and the community of Yuendumu, who are still grieving.

I remember the night we got the call, with families telling us what had happened. I remember the sadness, trauma and shock in their voices. I remember being at the sorry camp with the then Member for Stuart, Scott McConnell. I remember being at Kumanjayi's funeral in Yuendumu. I returned only a few weeks ago to his grave; the heartache is still there, the sadness still heavy.

Second, this motion commits to implementing all 33 recommendations in full, not behind closed doors in Darwin but through genuine consultation with Aboriginal communities. Reforms must be done with communities—not to them—hand in hand and on country. This needs to be the new minimum standard when making decisions about communities. It needs to be done by communities.

Third, it establishes a community-led oversight and implementation group including Aboriginal elders, legal experts and trusted advocates. Rebuilding trust must begin with transparency, cultural authority and self-determination.

Fourth, it recognises what is often forgotten—that NT Police officers work in highly complex, demanding and often dangerous conditions. While we pursue reform, we must also strengthen support for mental health and wellbeing for those serving on the front line.

Many of my own family work in the force as Aboriginal liaison officers (ALOs) and community constables, and they have carried the weight of this tragedy every day, continuing to serve their communities through incredibly difficult times. I honour their commitment to community safety, but I also acknowledge how uncomfortable it has been for many of them, sometimes serving alongside members who do not respect or acknowledge them and discriminate against them.

Fifth, this motion calls for the reinstatement of funding for the Northern Territory Police anti-racism review, a critical step in confronting systemic cultural issues within the force. Cutting the review sent the wrong message. Reinstating it is not about blame; it is about ensuring that our systems are fair, just and safe for everyone. I know that not everyone in the force is racist. We all acknowledge that, but we must work to identify ways that systemic and institutional racism can be stamped out because it does exist.

Sixth, it proposes a bold new path—a pilot program in Yuendumu, co-designed with traditional owners, cultural leaders and representatives from the 16 skin groups from the Warlpiri nation, a model of governance and service delivery grounded in kinship, culture and community, because the most effective solutions are community solutions.

The inquest made clear the harm caused when Aboriginal people are excluded from the systems that govern their lives. It reminded us of the pain that lingers when culture is disrespected, voices are silenced and justice is denied. This is a moment and a chance to do better. This motion is not an end point; it is a foundational step for real healing, genuine partnership and systemic and systematic change.

If we are serious about truth-telling, reconciliation and justice, we must be serious about acting on what the Coroner has told us. Instead, the CLP government has done the opposite. Rather than engage in a considered response, it has undermined the separation of powers, publicly criticising the Coroner and the counsel assisting. Rather than work collaboratively, it is considering changes to the *Coroners Act*, a move seemingly driven not by good policy but by discomfort with the truths revealed.

We have heard talk about the cost of the inquest—nearly $8m. Let us be clear that cost was necessary to uncover the truth, to allow the community access and for people in the community to interact with that system, to prevent further deaths and to honour the life of Kumanjayi Walker.

The Coroner gave us a clear, achievable path forward. The 33 recommendations are not radical; they are reasonable, evidence based and life saving.

We have now had two coronial inquests provided to the government with workable recommendations. We cannot keep shelving them and ignoring them; we must act. More than 683 pages of testimony, lived experience, pain and truth is what the Walker coronial inquest has given us, yet we are still debating whether to listen.

We sat on the red sunburnt earth of Yuendumu as the final report was handed down by the Northern Territory Coroner. It was a moment of mixed emotions. For some it was closure, and for others it was deep anxiety about what would follow. For years the Warlpiri people have carried this burden with dignity. They have remained calm, resilient and focused on justice.

As the Coroner began reading her findings I saw in the faces the validation of what many had long known—racism exists. Rolfe was a racist, and his racist attitudes were allowed to flourish. It told us that systems are repeatedly failing.

The report made it clear that it is time for new responses to old problems. That means building alternative first responder models—ones that put culture, care and community at the centre. Policing alone cannot address the complex social challenges we face in our community. We need mental health professionals, social workers, elders, trained mediators, peacekeepers on the ground and people trusted by our communities. We must invest in Aboriginal-led law and justice groups, not as side projects but as central pillars to our justice system. These groups hold the knowledge, the trust and the solutions.

The Territory government has a chance now to lead—to shift from reactive crisis-driven responses to proactive community-driven models, but that takes political will. It means resourcing communities, not just police stations and police operations. It means handing over decision-making power, not just running consultations. It means confronting the uncomfortable truths of structural failure and acting on them.

Kumanjayi Walker should still be here. If we are serious about stopping more deaths in custody, we need a justice system that sees, hears and values Aboriginal lives, not treats them as afterthoughts. We need

a justice system that people can see themselves in. To my knowledge, not one Aboriginal person was on the jury in the matter we are discussing. We must look at alternative ways of ensuring First Nations people are represented in all aspects of our justice system.

As an Aboriginal man, a representative of Gwoja and someone who deeply believes in the strength of our people, I say this to our people: the days are dark and sometimes seem endless, but I will continue walking with you through that darkness until together we can step into the light. The Warlpiri people are a proud, strong people and I am proud to call them family. I am Japanangka.

Our journey is far from over. In the lead-up to the handing down of the final report we lost another Warlpiri man, Kumanjayi White, a relative of mine through my kinship system. A 24-year-old man with a disability died after being restrained by off-duty police in the confectionery aisle of a Coles supermarket. That was two months ago, and we still do not know whether charges will be laid. He died in the lolly aisle in public, yet there are still no answers.

Since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 602 Aboriginal people have died. This is not a number to gloss over; this is a national shame; it is a national disgrace. It is beyond debate that there is a problem, a systemic structural problem, and until we are all prepared to acknowledge that, we are all complicit in allowing it to continue.

We must do better. We must invest in what works. The government must lead by accepting and implementing the Coroner's recommendations, not resisting them.

This afternoon I will table a letter from the Justice for Walker campaign. Before I do so, I will read it out for the *Parliamentary Record*. This is a letter on behalf of the family of Kumanjayi Walker and the Yuendumu community, alongside 23 Aboriginal, community, family violence and legal organisations, asking the Finocchiaro government to publicly commit to the findings of the review and recommendations of Coroner Armitage in the coronial inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker and to engage with Aboriginal communities and the legal sector.

The letter is addressed to the Chief Minister; the Attorney-General; the Health and Aboriginal Affairs minister; the Minister for Children and Families; the Minister for Education and Training; the Minister for Youth, Seniors and Equality; and the Acting Police Commissioner, Martin Dole. It says:

Dear Chief Minister, Ministers and Acting Police Commissioner,

No more Aboriginal deaths at the hands of police: The time to work with yapa is now

Yapa means Aboriginal:

The family of Kumanjayi Walker and the Yuendumu Community, alongside 23 Aboriginal, community, family violence and legal organisations, today calls on the Finocchiaro government to publicly commit to the findings and recommendations of Coroner Armitage in the coronial inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker and engage with Aboriginal communities and the legal sector. Aboriginal deaths at the hands of police must stop. Aboriginal people have the solutions and now is the time to work with us to ensure that our people thrive and our children grow up safe and supported. Change is not only possible, but also well overdue.

Kumanjayi Walker was killed after being shot three times at close range by a police officer who the Coroner found was 'a racist', had 'derived satisfaction' from using excessive force and had not been properly disciplined or supervised by the NT Police. The Coroner formally found what Aboriginal people in the NT have always known—that no-one is holding NT Police accountable when they use excessive force and hurt Aboriginal people, and that there is entrenched systemic and structural racism within NT Police. Devastatingly, Kumanjayi Walker's death was found to be 'entirely avoidable'.

It is clear to the Yuendumu community, as well as to the Aboriginal community and legal sectors, that there must be independent oversight of police. We are calling for the establishment of a NT Police Ombudsman to independently investigate police misconduct, excessive use of force and systemic racism. Most importantly, a Police Ombudsman should have clear powers and resources to independently investigate Aboriginal deaths in police custody.

The coroner also made specific recommendations for the Finocchiaro government to implement. Many of them involve working directly with Yuendumu community representatives and the legal sector to

implement community-led solutions. These include developing Aboriginal led on country programs, rehabilitation and diversion services for young people, resourcing culturally skilled mediators, elevating the work of our Aboriginal community police officers and developing an anti-racism strategy.

These recommendations recognise what we have been trying to tell the government for many years—that it is only through self-governance, self-determination and full-community control that Warlpiri people can begin to heal, and then dream of a safer, happier future where our children flourish.

Warlpiri people and all Aboriginal people want lasting change that uplifts our people and ensures a strong, healthy future for generations to come. We do not need to be 'fixed' by others—now is the time to genuinely listen, to clear the path for our autonomy, and to provide the resources and support that will enable us to shape our own future. This is what will bring lasting solutions and restore trust. These are not only the right things to do, they are essential steps to prevent needless loss of life and build a better future for all. We are ready to work together for profound, lasting change. We urge you to act now and to act boldly.

We call on the Finocchiaro government to:

1. *Publicly commit to implementing the recommendations of Coroner Armitage from the coronial inquest into Kumanjayi Walker's death*

2. *Publicly commit to establishing a Police Ombudsman in the Northern Territory so that there is independent investigations of police misconduct and deaths in custody*

3. *To commence working and engaging with Kurdiji Wita Cultural Authority Yuendumu Aboriginal Corporation consisting of representatives from the 16 Skin groups in the Yuendumu community, and from the Aboriginal community and legal sectors, to progress the implementation of Coroner Armitage's recommendations.*

Sincerely,

It is signed by Samara Fernandez-Brown, cousin to Kumanjayi Walker; Joyce Brown; Leanne Oldfield; Margaret Brown; Steven Marshall; Ned Hargraves; Derek Williams; Robin Granites; Karl Hampton; and Rachael Hocking.

In addition to the family representation as stated, the letter is supported by these organisations: Human Rights Law Centre; Central Australian Women's Legal Service; Justice Not Jails; Her Story Mparntwe; First Peoples Disability Network; Australian Child Rights Taskforce; Justice Reform Initiative—Jailing Is Failing; Northern Territory Council of Social Service; Central Australian Youth Justice; Smarter Justice for Safer Communities; ANTAR; Amnesty International; Australian Childhood Foundation; Liberty Victoria—Clothing The Gaps; Liberty Victoria's Rights Advocacy Project; Children's Ground; Indigenous Allied Health Australia; Save The Children—54 Reasons; Democracy In Colour; Dhadjowa Foundation; The Warlpiri Project; and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services—True Justice for Our People.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to place that letter on the *Parliamentary Record*.

Leave granted.

Mr PAECH: I thank every individual, family member and community member who gave testimony, evidence and spoke about your lived experience to this inquest. Your courage has moved us, your stories have changed us and your calls for justice shall not go unanswered.

People may dismiss coronial inquest findings and reports. Yesterday we heard the government speak about the coronial inquest into four amazing Aboriginal women who had lost their lives; it completely discredited that coronial. Like this coronial, they are people's stories, people's truths and they deserve to be respected, not ignored.

It has nearly been five years since Kumanjayi Walker's life was taken in Yuendumu. In that time, the pain from that moment has not faded. It is pain that sits deep in the hearts of his family, the Warlpiri people and the Luritja people. Kumanjayi—a proud Warlpiri-Luritja man. The broader community of not only Yuendumu but also the Northern Territory and Australia feel this pain.

It is a pain that must be acknowledged by us who serve in public life. To the family, the elders, the community members of Yuendumu and our country, and all our First Nations brothers and sisters, I stand with you in your grief. I see your grief, I hear your calls for justice and I remain committed to ensuring that this tragedy leads to meaningful change, not just words but actions.

The Coroner's finding of the Walker inquest must be a turning point. We simply cannot afford to express sorrow and then go back to business as usual. The systemic failures laid bare throughout this process require a response that is bold, structural and grounded in justice.

We have an opportunity before us. The Coroner's inquest has given us a blueprint, a pathway to do things differently, an opportunity to make real and lasting change and an opportunity to stop people like Kumanjayi Walker and Kumanjayi White from dying, because the loss of any life is a loss too many.

I encourage members of this government to come to Yuendumu. It is a beautiful place. While many people talk about it in a negative way, it is much like all of our remote communities; they are places of love, hope and aspiration and are home to amazing people of strength and resilience. I acknowledge that there are people who are not with us today, elders, who five years ago stood up on the lawns of the court house in Alice Springs demanding justice for Walker. We need to honour them as well, our ancestors who have joined the *tjukurpa*, who have joined the night skies and shine brightly down on our communities.

This government has a chance to go there. I am the Member for Gwoja, and I will never turn away an opportunity to take one of the government ministers to Yuendumu, to introduce you to *yapa*, to let them talk to you about what we can do to change. This is not just about changing the justice system; it is about changing the landscape in remote Aboriginal communities.

If we dive deep into all those coronial inquests—the Kumanjayi Walker inquest and the inquest into the death of those four amazing women—they tell us that we need to also invest in the social determinants in the Northern Territory. We need to do more work to build more houses; to ensure there are strong protections for our children—their safety should always be paramount; to make sure there are stronger and better health services in our remote communities; and to ensure that our crisis systems are working. We should never have allowed an entire health network to leave the community of Yuendumu, not only for that community but for the staff. Our frontline workers were also going into that community with no health service.

We celebrated 50 years of bilingual education in Yuendumu, and we could not get one member of the CLP government there. The Attorney-General, the first law officer of the Northern Territory, has not even been to a Central Australian remote Aboriginal community in 11 months.

A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: A law and justice group is being set up in Yuendumu. Community members would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Attorney-General because they want to get that group up and running and to be strong. We all need to do work. No-one in this parliament—any side, party or member—is absolved from responsibility; we all have a responsibility, and we all must do better.

I acknowledge all the hard work of government agencies and members of our legal community who were all involved in that coronial inquest—counsel assisting, the Coroner's office, the Department of Health, the Attorney-General's Department and all the other relevant departments that may have been required to come and give testimony or provide submissions. It was important work.

I also acknowledge the Aboriginal Interpreter Service which made sure that it could be put into Warlpiri and Luritja so that when the Coroner was handing down her findings, family had the opportunity afterwards to talk and decompress and get the language clear so there was no opportunity for any barriers. That is important work.

It cost money, but we are talking about a life. People in remote communities deserve access to justice, not just in courts but also for coronial inquests and all justice services.

I acknowledge everyone in the Northern Territory who has supported members of our community in times of crisis and need. I know how much that is appreciated, particularly by the Warlpiri nation, not only during the time of the loss of life of Kumanjayi Walker but also most recently in May this year when Kumanjayi White

was taken from us. We live in an amazing place, and I thank all those people who have rallied to support *yapa* (Aboriginal people) in those times of need and crisis. It has been greatly received and respected.

Samara Fernandez-Brown has been so strong. I acknowledge my family. Ned Hargraves is a leader; he is strong, resilient and has continually called for calm. Robin Granites, whom most people from Central Australia know, is always there at a time of need for the Warlpiri communities. I acknowledge Robin for his continued contributions and support for peace, calm and justice. Robin is an amazing man. I also acknowledge Derek Williams who works in the Northern Territory Police Force as an officer in the amazing community of Yuendumu. That is leadership. He is an amazing man who always looks after his community and has worked diligently over a number of years to serve that community.

I acknowledge the resilience and strength of the Warlpiri and Luritja communities—Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Mt Liebig, all the way to Pintubi lands, Kintore. They are all related to Kumanjayi Walker and are all still feeling and carrying that pain.

There is a long road to go, but this is a moment when we have a clear pathway. All the recommendations from the Coroner are designed in a manner which can allow them to be accepted and delivered over time if work is needed to be done to ensure that they have effective implementation and delivery. When you look at those recommendations, you see that they are, to some, moderate. They can and should all be achieved.

I commend this motion to the Assembly. We should all reflect on where we are. Yes, there are matters that require us to work with the Commonwealth. We should, because since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 602 Aboriginal people have died in custody.

I call for a review of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. We need a health check. We need to look at what was accepted, what was not accepted and what was implemented but is not working and needs to be fixed, because we need to do better. We owe it to our communities to make them safer.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, the Coroner handing down her findings into the death of Kumanjayi Walker marked the conclusion of a long and difficult chapter for many people across the Northern Territory.

The death of Kumanjayi Walker was a tragic event that has deeply affected his family, the Warlpiri people and the Yuendumu community. This time has been incredibly challenging for everyone involved, including his family, the community and members of the NT Police. Its impact has been broad and far reaching, affecting community trust and the morale of the NT Police Force.

This inquest, which was initially scheduled to run for three months, extended almost three years, making it one of the longest and most complex inquiries ever undertaken in the Northern Territory. We welcome the conclusion of the lengthy process.

Our work in response has now begun. We are taking the necessary time to carefully consider the Coroner's findings and each of the 32 recommendations, while noting that much has changed since Kumanjayi Walker's death nearly six years ago. The Coroner's 683-page report into this inquest took three years to deliver. We owe it to the community to take the time necessary to properly assess and respond. We must be deliberate and considered in our approach. Our priority is to assess each of the findings in a thorough, responsible manner informed by agency input and legal obligations. We must take our time and get this right. We will not rush to announce positions without doing the work. When the time comes Territorians can be confident that our government will be clear and transparent.

As Attorney-General, I have obligations, as per the *Coroners Act 1993*, to coordinate the government's response to the Coroner's findings. I will receive responses from relevant agencies which will contribute to a coordinated and consolidated report that will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and provided to the Coroner. The report will identify what actions have been taken, those currently underway and any that are proposed in response to each recommendation.

We understand that this process has been long and painful for many people, and the effects are still being felt today. However, the care we take now will shape how we move forward. Our government is committed to delivering a response that is considered realistic and responsible, shaped by what is in the best interests of all Territorians.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I stand alongside my colleagues to speak on this necessary motion that we all know needs to be treated with respect and decency.

It has been more than three weeks since the Coroner delivered her findings into the tragic death of Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu on 9 November 2019. As the Coroner outlined in her report, Kumanjayi's passing and the circumstances that led to it are a tragedy for him, his family, his community and Australia.

The inquest report, spanning more than 600 pages, was handed down with 32 recommendations for reform, 10 of which were directly aimed at the government. Since the Coroner's final report was released, we have heard from various sources—police, legal experts, the NTPA and the federal government. We have heard the family of Kumanjayi Walker and the voices of the Yuendumu community crying out for action. What we have not heard is the official plan from the Chief Minister and the Police minister moving forward.

Instead, we have seen the Chief Minister downplay the recommendations outlined by the Coroner, suggesting that some are much less relevant than others and criticising the timeline of the inquest and its financial cost. This is not the leadership Territorians deserve. Territorians deserve decisive leadership and action from this government. It claims to be doing this in every media release, but when it comes to showing tangible leadership this is what we get—nothing.

That is why this motion is essential, because today we are taking the critical first step in this Assembly to acknowledge the findings and recommendations of the report. We are acknowledging the impact of the tragedy of Kumanjayi Walker's death on his family and the community of Yuendumu.

The Chief Minister must outline the CLP government's plan to implement the recommendations of this inquiry. The government owes it to Territorians, the family and our communities so that families can heal and communities can have a chance to create a better future.

The recommendations go beyond policing. They include youth diversion, community safety, community-led solutions and culturally appropriate service delivery—approaches that we have raised on the floor of the Assembly time and again, like strengthening community-led governance in communities such as Yuendumu, co-designed youth strategies and culturally appropriate services and investment in diversion, rehabilitation and trauma-informed supports. This is not some bureaucratic wish list pulled from thin air; it has come from direct consultation with Aboriginal Territorians and the people of Yuendumu. What we require is targeted, adequately funded, evidence-based proposals to rebuild trust and deliver real change, not just words.

We know it works. We consistently turn to Groote Eylandt as the clear-cut example of this. Offending has halved since the community justice group started operating because of strong community leadership and alternative justice programs. That is the positive outcome we see from genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities and should continue to see across the Territory.

We believe that people need to face consequences for their crimes and bad behaviour, but we need to ensure that crime prevention and community safety measures are balanced with the right investment to prevent crime in the first place.

We also need to see the anti-racism strategy, the ongoing delivery of cultural awareness and anti-racism programs, training reforms, the disbanding of the immediate response team involved in this incident and the creation of the cultural reform command, led by Leanne Liddle.

We welcome the NT Police Force efforts to improve, heal and build a better path forward with Aboriginal leadership and the broader community in Yuendumu. There must be a clear direction set out by the CLP government on how it intends to renew this trust with our Aboriginal leaders.

Our first point would be to restore the $300,000 for the NT Police anti-racism review that was cut by the Attorney-General. You cannot fix what you refuse to examine. You cannot reform a culture if you do not properly investigate it. We owe it to the memory of Kumanjayi Walker, his family and every officer who wants to serve with integrity and pride.

This motion is not just about words; it is about action. Ongoing neglect and inaction destroy lives. True justice will continue only when we start respecting the leadership, knowledge and authority of Aboriginal people. The Coroner has again given the CLP government the blueprint. All that is left is for this government to show the courage to act.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion and join my colleagues in calling for the government to respond in a timely and meaningful way to the coronial inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker. It has been more than three weeks since Coroner Elisabeth Armitage handed down her findings into the tragic avoidable death of Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu. After three weeks there is still no response, commitment, timeline or plan from the CLP.

We have heard from police, legal experts, the NTPA, the federal government and, most importantly, the Warlpiri people, Kumanjayi Walker's family and the Yuendumu community. We have heard crickets from the Chief Minister and her government. The Chief Minister has chosen to hide. She has decided to discuss the cost of the coronial process rather than the content of its findings. She has tried to downplay racism, sidestepped responsibility and shifted the conversation to legislative reform that no-one asked for.

What do Territorians want? What does the Yuendumu community deserve? It is leadership. Leadership means acknowledging hard truths, listening to the voices of those who have been harmed and taking action—real, meaningful action—to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again. That is why we have coronials in the first place.

The coronial inquest laid bare some painful truths about racism and the mistrust between some Aboriginal communities and the NT Police and about gaps in how we deliver policing and services in the bush. These are not easy conversations, but they are necessary.

Let us not forget the Coroner found that Kumanjayi Walker's death was avoidable. The recommendations should not be buried in bureaucracy or watered down in spin. They demand urgency, respect and change.

The inquest made a series of clear reasoned recommendations. These were not political statements; they were the product of a long and careful process informed by evidence, expert testimony and the lived experience of those most affected.

This government cannot claim to care about community safety if it refuses to act on the very recommendations designed to improve it. The Coroner made 32 formal recommendations, 10 of which are directed at the government. These include strengthening community-led governance in Yuendumu; codesigning youth strategies in culturally competent services; reinvesting in diversion, rehabilitation and trauma-informed support; and fixing the dangerous gaps that still exist between frontline agencies. This is what community safety looks like—no more rhetoric or blame, but investment into prevention, alternatives to custody and the traditional knowledge that communities know works.

We know these approaches work; we have seen it with the success on Groote Eylandt where offending rates have dropped through strong community leadership and alternative justice programs. We know that law and justice groups are vital, early behaviour screening can change a young person's life and properly resourced rehabilitation inside and outside the Corrections system reduces reoffending. People need to face consequences for serious crimes, but we must balance that with investment in what prevents crime in the first place.

We also acknowledge the important role our police officers play. We know they operate in some of the most complex and challenging environments in the country. The vast majority do their jobs with integrity, courage and care, but the system must support them to do that. That means investing in health and wellbeing services. It means equipping officers with the training and cultural knowledge they need. It means confronting racism wherever it exists so that every officer, Territorian and community can have confidence in the force's integrity.

This motion is not just about justice or accountability, although those things matter deeply; it is also about healing and listening. It is about whether we will let this be just another report that gathers dust or will honour the pain of the community by doing something with it. It is about trust because the trust between the government and bush communities is broken. We have heard this message loud and clear. We know the Chief Minister has heard it too. It is time she listened, stopped hiding and gave the moment the respect and urgency it deserves.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the Walker family, the Warlpiri people and the broader community in Yuendumu. As the Coroner found, the death of Kumanjayi Walker was avoidable. It is our great shame in the NT that there continues to be structural racism that is killing First Nations people. I am sorry that this legacy of racism continues and that it has taken the life of someone you loved.

I also acknowledge that in an open letter the family and a number of frontline organisations called for the NT Government to publicly commit to establishing a Police Ombudsman in the Northern Territory so that

there are independent investigations of police misconduct and deaths in custody. We cannot have police investigating police any longer. Alongside this, they are also calling for the implementation of all the recommendations of the Coroner's report. I stand behind both of these calls.

We cannot sit by and allow the lives of Aboriginal people to be prematurely stolen at the hands of police. We are lucky to have the system in place where an expert meticulously examines such tragedies and provides recommendations on how we can prevent them from happening again. The Coroner has done all the hard legwork for us and now this government has the opportunity to listen and act.

These coronial findings are from an independent expert of law—Ms Armitage. She delivered 33 recommendations that came from her comprehensive investigation in which she consulted widely. This is what an evidence-based approach looks like, with recommendations that have been deeply considered with expertise from the community and sector alike. I thank the Coroner for her work on this matter.

I understand that implementing all these recommendations will take time, resources and energy and that it would be much simpler to just ignore or criticise them, as we saw the Chief Minister do last week on ABC radio Alice Springs. Through a deep commitment to do better, to make the evidence-based changes that we see in the report, we can make sure that there are no more preventable deaths of First Nations people at the hands of police. Surely that is worth investing in.

The CLP government consistently likes to remind us that it is putting community safety first. This, too, is an issue of community safety. As the Coroner found, NT Police is not an institution of safety for many First Nations people; rather, it is one of racism. In this case that led to the death of a young man.

Your responsibility for community safety does not just apply to some people in the community; it applies to everyone in the NT. Let us take the safety of all Territorians seriously by implementing all the recommendations in this final report, and let us do that in consultation with Aboriginal communities.

As identified in the family's open letter that everyone in the Chamber was sent yesterday:

> *These recommendations recognise what we have been trying to tell the government for many years—that it is only through self-governance, self-determination and full-community control that Warlpiri people can begin to heal, and then dream of a safer, happier future where our children flourish.*
>
> *Warlpiri people and all Aboriginal people want lasting change that uplifts our people and ensures a strong, healthy future for generations to come. We do not need to be 'fixed' by others—now is the time to genuinely listen, to clear the path for our autonomy, and to provide the resources and support that will enable us to shape our own future. This is what will bring lasting solutions and restore trust. These are not only the right things to do, they are essential steps to prevent needless loss of life and build a better future for all. We are ready to work together for profound, lasting change.*

What a generous offer is being made. Despite the harm at the hands of the police and the government that the Warlpiri people have experienced, they are willing and ready to work together. Let us say yes to this offer and establish a community-led oversight and implementation group, including Aboriginal elders, legal experts and community advocates, to ensure transparency and accountability and, alongside this, work towards giving power and governance back to communities.

Communities want to be engaged and empowered. Let us not get in the way of this. Community-led approaches are more effective and lead to long-term change. Since the death of Kumanjayi Walker, the family and broader community have been calling on the government to give back power to Yuendumu and Aboriginal communities more broadly. It is well established across the community development sector that communities know what is best for them, far more than any external entity. Communities know what will work to solve issues they are facing.

It is time that we affirm the rights of Indigenous peoples as per the call from Aboriginal people and as per obligation under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 3:

> *Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.*

Time and again Aboriginal communities have told the NT Government that its approach to crime and justice will not work. Once again this government is ignoring these calls and charging ahead with policy and legislative changes that only further disenfranchise and alienate First Nations people.

We do not have to continue charging ahead with approaches that do not work. It is a sign of true leadership to recognise when we get it wrong. The Warlpiri community has humbly offered to work with the government. Let us respond with the same humility. Let us listen to and acknowledge the wisdom of communities and affirm their right to make decisions about things that will affect them.

In the 2024 coronial inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women and now again in this inquest, the Coroner has found racism within the police force. The Coroner found that Mr Rolfe was racist and showed racist behaviour and that this was:

… reflective of a work culture that tolerated … racism.

We desperately need to address this. I do not know how any government in 2025 could possibly not act on findings of structural racism within the police force, yet during Estimates we found out that the CLP government had scrapped the review into racism in the NT Police Force. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away.

In recognition of the findings of racism within Police, I implore the CLP to reinstate funding and commit to a thorough review that, with time, implements changes as per the findings. This investigation should look at not only NT Police but also the NT's approach to policing and our criminal justice system more broadly. The punitive justice system is only institutionalising and traumatising members of our community. The significant over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system is yet more evidence of systemic racism, and we cannot allow it to continue.

I urge the CLP government to stop its anti-evidence-based tirade that is not only costing the taxpayer an excessive amount but also, more importantly, killing people. Let us fully commit to the recommendations of the Coroner alongside the calls from the community of Yuendumu and the Walker family.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this motion to the Assembly.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion brought by the Member for Gwoja and thank him for bringing this important motion.

I acknowledge the family of Kumanjayi Walker. For the past six years they have been on a painful path. Their family member was shot and killed in their house, and this never should have happened. He was dragged to the police car and then kept behind a locked door as he passed away. His family members were locked out, not knowing that he had died. Despite the sadness, grief and anger, the family have peacefully fought for justice. They have shown leadership and courage. They have been diplomatic, calling on the government for justice.

The information the public had before the coronial inquiry was that an upstanding police officer had killed a man in self-defence. By the end of the coronial inquiry we had a different picture of what had happened. This coronial was about truth-telling; it was an opportunity for the truth behind the death to be told. Zachary Rolfe was not an upstanding police officer; he was a troubled officer who was racist and had many arrests that were being questioned because of the violence used against Aboriginal people in those arrests. The Coroner also found that Rolfe was not one bad apple but part of a police force that had significant hallmarks of institutional racism.

The truth-telling that happened as part of the coronial process provided some healing for the family and community and those of us who looked on from other communities. We knew what had happened that night in 2019 was not right and that the real story must be told.

The Coroner did her job in telling the reasons for this death. Her report was needed for the people of the Northern Territory because we all had a right to know how a police officer had walked into someone's home and shot them three times at close range. In this coronial inquiry the entire story was told.

The death of Kumanjayi Walker did not highlight a new problem; it highlighted an issue that has always existed and will always exist in this system if it is not changed.

Families in Galiwinku remember and still grieve the death of my *wawa*, my cousin brother Mr Garrawurra, who was suffering severe mental health issues in 1990 when he was shot on the beach by police after he had been violent and unwell. Following my *wawa*'s death, the family still recall their distress when they were not allowed near the body. The body was left on the beach overnight without the protection of family. They could not provide ceremony for the deceased and this caused much hurt—the same hurt that Kumanjayi

Walker's family felt 30 years later when they were tricked into thinking he was still alive, but he had passed away.

These actions illustrated that our authority, culture and ceremony were not considered important. The obligation that we have to the deceased and our law, to perform the ceremony of singing their spirits home and treating their body as a sacred object, is treated with apathy and contempt. It is dismissed by the balanda system as though we are no-one and our culture is nothing.

Policing in our remote communities is not the same as policing in town. The police who come to our communities need to be supported by a system that understands community policing on Aboriginal country. Our language and law remain. There are leaders and elders on our land who hold authority.

When police come onto our country there needs to be a way to work together, not police walking over the top. These are the systemic issues. It is a broken system that does not observe two-way laws or partnership. It is a hierarchy from the top to the bottom, and it places us, the First Nations community, on the bottom.

There are many good police officers who spent time in our communities who try their best in a broken system to work with people. I know this happens when leaders stand with police and the law and try to bring in people and calm things. We can quietly go and collect a person in strife who is walking around with weapons and stuff. I have done it. I have collected a person quietly and asked them to go to the police and said that if they give themselves up, nothing will happen. They have done that so many times in my time. That is what can happen. If leaders stand together with police and law and order, nothing will happen because we are all working together. It is much safer that way.

In 1991 the Coroner, His Honour Alasdair McGregor, made many comments, suggestions and recommendations in his report that addressed the importance of police working with elders, leaders and community. We outlined that in our remote Aboriginal community it would have been appropriate for police to meet with the chairperson of the community council beforehand to provide information about the police operation. He also made a point that police aides or Yolngu working with police should be given equal status to the senior police officers so that an alliance can be formed.

All these points are still relevant today. They speak to the tragedy of what happened in Galiwinku in 1990 and Yuendumu in 2019. If elders and leaders had been given the respect of the police as authorities on their land, the outcome of both cases would have been different.

Following another police incident in Galiwinku in 2006, the community of several hundred people came together with police for mediation. The result of the mediation was the Meshach agreement, named after a young man who was threatened by police with a gun. Today, not many police are aware of the Meshach agreement, but it outlines the way that the community of Galiwinku wanted to work with the local police.

There were several points to the agreement. It began with an apology by the police to Meshach for his treatment. It outlined a cross-cultural training program for all police officers in Galiwinku, provided by the local community. It included the creation of a police advisory group whereby local elders and police would work together to create a mutually respectful working relationship between the police and the community, having regard to Yolngu and non-Yolngu systems of law. The agreement outlined that the arrangements set out were intended to be long-term commitments.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this motion, and I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing it to the Chamber.

This motion calls on us to acknowledge the findings of the coronial inquest into the death of Kumanjayi Walker and to call for urgent, meaningful and community-led action to ensure that what happened to Kumanjayi Walker never happens to anyone ever again.

I cannot continue without acknowledging that we are already too late; it has happened again.

I also stand in solidarity with the family of Kumanjayi White whose tragic death underscores the urgency of this moment. I acknowledge Kumanjayi's family, the Warlpiri people and the wider Yuendumu community. The grief you have carried, the strength you have shown and the dignity with which you have pursued truth and justice is something that we all must listen to and learn from. Thank you for your courage, grace and leadership.

This inquest and its findings reveal something painful, but essential—that our systems, even when they are filled with people who believe they are doing and want to do the right thing, can still create outcomes that are deeply unfair, harmful and tragic.

The Coroner's role is not to assign blame but to determine how a person died and identify what must change to prevent future deaths. That role is part of the separation of powers in our democratic system. A fundamental principle of that system is the judiciary must be independent and when a Coroner makes findings it is not political; it is based on law, evidence and truth seeking. Respecting the Coroner's independence means taking these findings seriously, even and especially when they are uncomfortable.

We must listen carefully to the Coroner's findings, not just read and file them, but sit with them, learn from them and act on them. It is not only a failure of policing that this inquest uncovered but also a failure of our institutions to uphold the dignity, safety and humanity of all people, particularly Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

The Coroner described a police culture with embedded racism, a failure to listen, a breakdown in trust, a leadership failure to confront warning signs and a system that treated cultural knowledge as an obstacle and not an asset. We must face this truth without defensiveness and delay. That is why the first part of this motion, to formally acknowledge the findings and the pain that has been caused, is so important. We owe that at a minimum to the Warlpiri people, to Kumanjayi's family and the many Aboriginal people across the Territory and throughout Australia who saw in this tragedy something deeply familiar.

It is not enough to simply express sorrow. What matters now is action, and not action that is done to Aboriginal people but with them.

The Coroner made 35 recommendations. They include cultural safety training, supporting the Yuendumu peacemakers, changes to police recruitment and deployment, improvements to community policing and many other things. This motion calls for those recommendations to be implemented in full. That must be our baseline commitment. Implementation must happen in consultation with Aboriginal communities as equals.

To truly understand what needs to change we must first understand what the Coroner's findings revealed. There is so much discomfort in this Chamber when we hear the word 'racism' that sometimes when a question is asked about racism, it is shut down. When we talk about systemic and institutional racism we are not talking about bad people; we are talking about systems, rules, cultures and policies that, without meaning to, create unfair outcomes and harm all of us. Even when people have good intentions, the systems they work in can produce results that are deeply unjust. I said that in this Chamber yesterday, and I will keep saying it until I feel it can be heard. It is not just bad for Aboriginal people; it is bad for every one of us.

It is bad for the police. When racist behaviours or language are allowed to go unchallenged, it damages the reputation of the entire force. I have had so many police officers contact me and say, 'We want this to be addressed. This harms us. This harms our reputation. It undermines the good work that we do with integrity and commitment.' When the system protects the worst behaviours instead of stopping them, it creates a culture where good officers are judged by the worst examples. That is exactly what the Coroner found happened in this case in the Northern Territory Police.

I hope that everyone here has read the Coroner's findings. They are long, but I recommend them to everyone. For people who have not, I will share a few of the examples outlined in her findings.

She found that racist awards like 'Coon of the Year' and offensive certificates were given out annually, and no-one in leadership challenged them. She heard that racist language was widespread and normalised, including terms like 'animal bar' to describe places where Aboriginal people gathered. She heard that senior officers knew about these practices but did not act. She found that the Northern Territory Police displayed significant signs of institutional racism, meaning that racism was embedded in how decisions were made, who was stopped, who was arrested, how people were treated and how force was used—in this case, fatally.

This means that the system dehumanises Aboriginal people, seeing them as threats rather than as citizens and as problems to manage rather than people to serve and work alongside. She found it made excessive force more likely. It made accountability less likely. In the words of the Coroner, 'grotesque examples of racism' that were normalised by the Northern Territory Police Force meant that she could not rule out that racism was a factor in Kumanjayi Walker's avoidable death.

As I said, that does not mean that every police officer is racist; it means the system needs to change. It is our job in this place to lead that change. That means we need to be honest. We need to be willing to listen

and have hard conversations, even when it is uncomfortable, because we cannot say that Kumanjayi's death was a tragedy and then walk away from the changes that would stop it happening again.

The Coroner's findings are not just a report card; they give us a clear path forward. They tell us what has gone wrong and what needs to be fixed. Now it is up to us—not just police leadership or lawyers but every one of us in this Assembly—to make sure that the recommendations are followed, that the community is at the centre of change and that Aboriginal people are treated with the dignity, respect and fairness that is every person's right in the Northern Territory.

In this Chamber we are tasked with making laws that serve every person here. Many of the recommendations in this coronial are relevant to the law that this government is asking us to pass on urgency tomorrow with the changes to the *Youth Justice Act*. For this law I have been given 24 hours for understanding, consideration and response. The government says that it needs careful deliberation to properly respond to these coronial recommendations, yet at the same time it asks us to vote on laws that will fundamentally impact human rights and lead to more Aboriginal children being locked up, all on urgent notice with barely a day to consider them. How can we on the one hand demand time to consider some changes while rushing through others that carry profound consequences? We cannot have it both ways.

If safety and justice are truly the priority for every person in the Northern Territory, every decision must be made with the same level of care and respect. We now have the truth before us, the voices of families, the findings of the Coroner and the calls from the community. Let us act on what we have learned. Let us do the hard work of turning this knowledge into action so that the laws we make in this Chamber and the systems we uphold protect every life and every culture and build a safe and fairer future for us all.

We have heard the Walker family's generous invitation already in this Chamber:

> *Warlpiri people and all Aboriginal people want lasting change that uplifts our people and ensures a strong, healthy future for generations to come … We are ready to work together for profound, lasting change. We urge you to act now and to act boldly.*

Let us accept this invitation. Let us work together boldly, with honesty, courage and care, to make sure that this never happens again.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been more than three weeks since Coroner Elisabeth Armitage delivered her findings into the tragic death of Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu on 9 November 2019. Three weeks—and the community is none the wiser about whether the CLP government will respond to the 33 recommendations delivered by the Coroner. They are sensible, practical recommendations that support safer, stronger communities across the Territory.

The Chief Minister, who is also the Police minister, has ducked questions about her government's response. She has also avoided a straight answer. Chief Minister Finocchiaro has criticised the process of the Coroner. She talked about how long it took and how much money it cost, but she has not talked about the government's response to the report.

The Chief Minister has not acknowledged those findings or engaged with them in any meaningful way. We have heard from NT Police, the NT Police Association, Kumanjayi's family and the community of Yuendumu, but it is clear that the one person Territorians are missing in this conversation is Chief Minister Finocchiaro. It sounds as though she would prefer it all went away. Three years is a long time to dodge questions.

I am not saying that she cannot raise questions or queries about the timeframe or the cost, which has been a concern for people. It is reasonable to ask those questions and raise those concerns on behalf of Territorians, but the Chief Minister is well aware that the specific issues which impacted on the timing and cost of the inquest, including a number of legal appeals, are things that she has not acknowledged publicly, and she should. Chief Minister Finocchiaro conveniently sidesteps those facts in every conversation, just as she sidesteps anything that is too hard or uncomfortable for her or her CLP team to answer and to lead with—particularly when anyone gets in the way of the Chief Minister's glossy, shallow sloganeering.

The coronial recommendations fit into that category for the Chief Minister—too hard, too uncomfortable, too slack to lead. Rather than action and certainty, which is the CLP's slogan for this year that those opposite like to spruik, we see ducking and weaving from the leader they follow.

We see deflection, finger-pointing, blame and pathetic name-calling. It is starting to become a pretty standard tactic for the CLP government led by Lia Finocchiaro. Quite frankly, any conversation or public statement

which does not fit with the highly staged rhetoric and practised messaging is ignored or the government throws rocks at it. In doing so, the government is letting down Territorians—all Territorians, black and white. It diminishes who we are as a community. It denies individuals, communities and organisations the chance to learn from mistakes of the past, to make sure there is space for change and improvement and, ultimately, make this a better and safer Territory for all. The CLP denies families the chance to heal, communities the chance at a better future and our police the chance to have more—and better—support to do their incredibly difficult work. It is poor leadership under Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro. It is simply not good enough for Territorians, and they deserve better.

In this motion brought to the Assembly by my colleague the Member for Gwoja, who represents the community of Yuendumu and lives in Central Australia, we call on the Chief Minister to do the right thing, to engage fully and meaningfully with the outcomes of this important inquest, to commit to implementing the recommendations in full and to work with and walk with the community members of Yuendumu and, indeed, all our remote Aboriginal communities for community-led solutions for a safer and fairer justice system across the Northern Territory.

We ask the Chief Minister to work with our police to improve community policing and to rid the force of those elements, the very small number of individuals, who do not serve the community as they should. That was highlighted in the inquest. We call on the Chief Minister to do this because it is not just about the people of Yuendumu, and it is not just an Aboriginal problem; it affects the whole Territory community. This goes to the heart of community safety, the very thing the CLP says that it is focused on.

The coronial report—I doubt that the Chief Minister has bothered to read it—contains distressing content. There are a few things that, unfortunately, stand out. For example, the particulars of Kumanjayi Walker's short life is a story that, sadly, is more common in the Territory than one would think. A baby boy born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) which was never properly diagnosed, his parents passed away when he was still a child. He was exposed to domestic violence and alcohol abuse from a young age. He lived in overcrowded and unsuitable housing. His hearing problems went largely untreated. He had difficulties at school due to the aforementioned elements.

This is not to deny the fact that Kumanjayi Walker committed serious crimes that negatively impacted his community and the people around him; he did, and he deserved to face the consequences for those actions. However, it is clear from the coronial report that the cards were stacked against him, sadly, from the beginning of his life. He was on a collision course with the justice system, but the report has highlighted that he did not have to be. When he was receiving the right supports, Kumanjayi Walker is reported to have thrived. When those supports were not available to him, any progress that he made, unfortunately, fell away; he would be back to chaos, dysfunction and offending.

There are real lessons in this story that we should heed if we are to genuinely tackle crime and the root causes of crime. This is what the community expects of us as parliamentarians and of its Territory government.

All the evidence tells us that early intervention and prevention in the life of a child who may be struggling with a host of social, health, cognitive and wellbeing issues can make a difference to help them thrive.

I am unsure how many members of this Chamber have spent time reading coronial reports. It can be quite heavy—this one in particular—and reports in the past, when I was formerly the Attorney-General, were extremely distressing, particularly the ones about children. This is why it is beyond belief that this CLP government, which has staked its entire reputation on fixing crime and making communities safer, would deliberately disregard and, in fact, talk about defunding such an important process.

When it comes to policies and initiatives that prevent crime in the first place, early intervention can make a difference. The coronial findings include five recommendations for NT Health along these lines.

The first is screening for every child under five years of age who comes into contact with an NT primary healthcare service and to ensure any child presenting with indicators of FASD is referred and followed up for an early childhood intervention plan under the NDIS. Children and young children with FASD are disproportionately represented in our Territory justice system, and it is a no-brainer to focus on investment and effort in this area.

The federal government has committed funding through the Central Australian Plan to ensure more children can be assessed for neurodevelopmental issues. There is a real opportunity for the NT Government to partner with the federal government and communities to ensure every child who needs screening has it. For the sake of all Territorians, I strongly encourage the CLP government to take up this one as a primary action.

Community safety cannot be achieved in isolation. It cannot be achieved with punitive measures alone. It requires a coordinated, sustained and deliberate effort, which is why it is of great concern that the Chief Minister seems incapable of having strong and meaningful relationships with the federal government, frontline organisations, community grassroots organisations and, indeed, it seems as of last week, Aboriginal leadership across the Territory. This is becoming alarming to us. The Chief Minister and her CLP government make expedient decisions in isolation and seemingly for the purpose of media headlines. There is no effort to consult or engage with frontline organisations, communities and with those who have expertise in the areas that decision-making requires.

We hear time and again from Territorians and Territory organisations that the CLP government now gives them no time. It does not want to listen to or collaborate with these organisations. It is an extremely dangerous way to govern. The government is turning its back on, closing its ears to and pointing the finger at Territorians who are seeking to be part of a collaborative solution. Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro is attacking, criticising, name-calling, finger-pointing and deflecting everything from her leadership. This week we are starting to see the CLP ministers following suit. Many Territorians, not just in our electorates but across the Territory, have raised concerns with us about the government's approach. Organisations are too scared to speak out because they are being threatened with funding cuts. This is not leadership, and this is not governing at its best.

Parts of the coronial report make for difficult reading, but it also acknowledges the incredible work done by many members of the Northern Territory Police Force in conjunction with the communities they serve in and with. It is a testament to all those police officers serving in remote communities who do not just see themselves as law enforcement, but as a part of those communities. These police officers make every effort to learn from and integrate into the community they are serving. In doing so, they play an integral role in community safety and community thriving.

NT Police Association President Nathan Finn has recounted on a number of occasions in the media his own experiences as a police officer working in remote communities. Mr Finn spoke about the way officers back then took the time to kick the footy with the kids and integrate into community life to be part of the community and build those relationships. There are still officers doing that in our communities, and there is no doubt that much of their time is taken up, unfortunately, with complex and heavy workloads. There is a lot of pressure on them every day to do this work and not get to the community engagement relationship stage.

I travelled to Alice Springs just after the tragic death in custody of Kumanjayi White last month. I met with a number of elders from Yuendumu who were in Alice Springs at the time, some community members and organisations and a couple of businesspeople. Despite mourning these two tragic and avoidable deaths, these elders and leaders from Yuendumu told me that they want to be part of the long-term solution. They want to help come up with better ways to shore up community safety, working with police. That is why it is so important to support this motion from the Member for Gwoja, the local member who has been tasked by his electorate to bring it to the parliament. These elders are sad and angry, but they want to be part of a real and constructive solution. They also asked—unfortunately I could not answer—why the Chief Minister was not in Alice Springs to meet with and talk with them and walk alongside them?

The coronial report recommends a mutual respect agreement for Yuendumu community. This would effectively put in place clear rules of engagement between police and the community. It would outline what is and is not acceptable from both sides of the agreement.

I have knowledge of and respect for this process, as there has been a mutual respect agreement in the community of Ngukurr in my electorate of Arnhem since 2009. It builds on lessons learned after an unfortunate arrest involving a respected elder in that community. The agreement in Ngukurr includes cross-cultural training, clarity and understanding of relationships in the community, the importance of respect and communication, awareness of sacred sites and ceremonial grounds, introductions for new police officers to elders and key people in the community and the region and regular community–police consultations. It is an important and enduring agreement that has helped to ensure good relationships between police and the community members in Ngukurr. The mutual respect agreement was reinvigorated through the local decision-making process when the new police station was completed in Ngukurr in 2022.

There is no reason why a mutual respect agreement cannot be reached in Yuendumu and other communities with these other models already in place. It does not cost much money at all; it just requires everyone to sit down together and agree on the standards of behaviour and engagement for the community, based on what is culturally and respectfully appropriate.

I acknowledge the work that has already been done or is underway by our NT police and the people of Yuendumu towards shared goals of understanding since this sadness. I commend NT Police for its willingness to look at how it can work more effectively in our remote communities. This is a sign of true leadership—accepting that there are lessons that can be learned and that the mistakes of the past should never be repeated. There are opportunities to make changes which benefit everyone for the better.

Turning to some of the other recommendations, the Coroner also highlighted the critical role of Aboriginal liaison officers and our Aboriginal community police officers in building and supporting community safety. The Coroner talked about the important work they do in these roles in de-escalating situations, understanding relationships, providing cultural advice and supporting the community in a grassroots-led approach to policing. We know these officers do incredibly nuanced work with enormous dedication and sensitivity and often go home and do not clock off. It is critical that the government continues to invest in recruiting and retaining our amazing Aboriginal liaison officers and Aboriginal community police officers across the Northern Territory.

The Coroner also recommended further work goes into making our NT Police Force more representative of the community with a target 30% Aboriginal workforce, reflecting the Territory's population. The Coroner also recommended that more Aboriginal people in the police force are given the opportunity and support to move into leadership positions.

After seeing what has happened in other departments with growing our own, the police are definitely taking the front foot on this, and I commend them for that. This is vital for a number of reasons.

It ensures a more culturally responsive workforce, improving communications, strengthening local relationships and reducing misunderstandings. It opens up career opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians across the NT in the force. It ensures that one in every three of our police officers will be homegrown. We know that recruitment and retention is a constant challenge for police forces across the country. This will help to ensure that there is a steady, stable workforce with less turnover in the Territory because our officers will be Territory born and bred. The cost–benefit of investing in our Aboriginal police is clear.

What is less clear, unfortunately, is why the Chief Minister does not seem interested in these important and practical options for improving community safety. There is no leadership on that.

It is important to recognise the work that NT Police has already undertaken in the wake of Kumanjayi Walker's avoidable death. This includes the ongoing development of an anti-racism strategy and the establishment of the cultural reform command. If the Chief Minister would care to update the parliament on this strategy, I think Territorians would stop and listen. Instead, she is avoiding responsibility, criticising the Coroner for taking too long or saying that she will take her time to respond in her so-called year of action and certainty.

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: Meanwhile, we see NT Police has already got on with the work of reform. Police have acknowledged that this process requires ongoing responsibility and a continuous journey. Police have pledged to work with the government, Aboriginal leadership and the broader Territory community to make sure that policing is fit for purpose, particularly in remote areas.

I commend our police for their work and their commitment to focus on the restoration of trust and relationships across communities. We call on the CLP government to show a similar level of interest and care in working together on real solutions with community and not just punitive measures.

The most recent crime stats, released just the other week, clearly show that the community is not feeling or being safe. This is not improving under the CLP, despite its promises. This is supporting the work and reforms by police—without the leadership of the Police minister—is so important to the bigger picture.

Police watch houses have been talked about in the media recently, particularly the Palmerston one. They are bursting at the seams with remand prisoners. We have more people languishing in jail waiting for their case to be heard than we have people who have been convicted and sentenced for a crime. Courts and the legal community are under enormous pressure, dealing with a backlog of cases and being forced to operate in a state of chaos. We heard in Estimates last month that the jails are so full that there are few rehabilitation

programs running. Funding for youth diversion has been cut. We also learned today what the Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill looks like.

Young people in jail in the Territory, unfortunately, face a stark reality. Most have FASD or a range of chronic cognitive disorders, often severe hearing loss and mental health disorders or other disabilities. These young people do not have access to culturally appropriate healthcare because one of the key health providers, Danila Dilba, pulled out its services due to the conditions there. This situation is untenable, and it is growing worse day by day, yet the CLP government, which said it would provide certainty, action and security, has doubled down on its approach to supporting real justice. This will not better the Territory.

It is critical that the CLP government starts to reinvest in alternatives to custody. We have seen these programs work in communities all over the Territory, including in my electorate of Arnhem. We have spoken many times about the Groote Eylandt cultural rehabilitation centre, where young Anindilyakwa men between the ages of 17 and 25 who have offended are focused on and supported by community members, family members and cultural leaders on Groote and Bickerton Island.

The cultural rehabilitation centre was built with Anindilyakwa money from the mine trust and community members' input and solutions so that there can be healing and support for those who have been lost and find themselves in trouble for doing the wrong thing. Anindilyakwa leaders and elders, particularly the past chairman of the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) the late Mr Wurramarrba, showed leadership. They said, 'We are not giving up on our young people. We want our young people to heal. They must heal here with us in the community, on our island, in the culturally appropriate way.' In a few years' time, they will start to work through the pathways of leadership to become the next generation of elders in that area.

With the work that is being done, particularly in regard to justice, reoffending and reinvestment, on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island the rates of reoffending have dramatically decreased; the numbers have almost halved.

This needs to continue—the Member for Arafura mentioned it as well—across the Northern Territory. It needs to be community led, and it needs to be supported by not just the community but also the government.

The CLP government needs to be direct and deliberate in its commitments to investing in law and justice groups. Yesterday the Member for Gwoja asked the Attorney-General how many law and justice groups she had visited. I looked at the Attorney-General's website yesterday. There are only six officially registered law and justice groups that are linked to the community courts process, which our former Labor government brought back. The Member for Barkly was digging desperately and deeply back to 2005. We brought it back in 2023. The Member for Barkly is talking about 2005, desperately living in the past and deflecting.

That is working. We have seen it on Groote Eylandt. The Attorney-General talked about the results on Groote Eylandt. She can claim it all she wants, but it is Anindilyakwa work, not hers.

I have heard that in another part of my electorate an established law and justice group, which covers three communities—it is a regional group—has been told to go back and prove that it deserves the funding that it has. This has been years in the making. Aboriginal law and justice groups, community elders and leaders who are offering community solutions are being pulled back by the CLP government—which does not believe in making a difference and making justice better—and asked to defend the work they are doing.

On the other hand, I have heard CLP government members ask, 'Where is the Aboriginal leadership in all of this? Why is the Aboriginal leadership not standing up and talking about it?' They are. They are out there doing it, but they need the government's support. If you care, please make sure you tell your Attorney-General to do her job, visit those six law and justice groups, sit down in the dirt and listen to the big difference it makes when community leaders and elders are in charge of the justice solutions in their communities and regions. There are only six, so she can plan to visit two for every year that is left. She will get to all six of them by the end of the government's term if she is that well planned, but I do not know. She is an Attorney-General who would not visit a law and justice group in 12 months of being in government.

Young people need to face the consequences of the crime or bad behaviour that they are responsible for. They also need to see that there is a balance between punitive approaches, crime prevention and community safety measures. It is like we are on a ship listing to one side and in danger of capsizing—perhaps slightly sinking—under Lia Finocchiaro's Chief Ministership. We need to see changes in the government's mentality, concept and practice so that it balances out.

We are not seeing a government brave enough to do better for the Territory. We hear the same message loud and clear from many sectors across the Territory. The Chief Minister and her team, who are always talking about being out and about, are hearing the same messages. It is time they listened and acted in the way that Territorians are asking them to. We need smarter, safer and fairer justice to improve the Territory's future. If they keep saying the words they are saying and not doing the action required of them, we will never see anything change for the better in the Territory when it comes to justice.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the contributions made by honourable members and extend my heartfelt thanks to those who have contributed to this important motion, that I brought forward on behalf of the *yapa* of Central Australia and the community of Yuendumu and the Walker, Robertson, Lane and the Brown families. We heard from a number of opposition members, the Attorney-General and crossbench members.

As we heard from the contributions, a complex range of circumstances led us to where we are today. Kumanjayi Walker was killed; he was shot three times in his home in Yuendumu. That is not to dismiss, as we have heard from members, that there were challenges in Kumanjayi Walker's life. He was exposed to a number of areas where he needed help—mental health, substance abuse and FASD. The coronial noted areas that can be improved, to better respond, so that we do not see that happen again.

Silence is the biggest injustice because silence means turning away from people and their suffering, instead of confronting it. Silence means letting harm continue because speaking up is inconvenient or uncomfortable. It allows those in power to avoid accountability and sends a message to victims, families and communities that their pain does not matter. When leaders stay silent in the face of violence, systemic failure or injustice, they become complicit. Silence might feel safe, but it protects the status quo. In the Northern Territory where lives are being lost, communities are grieving and young people are crying out for help, silence is not neutral; it is fatal.

The letter that was provided, on behalf of the Justice for Walker Never Again movement, was addressed to the Chief Minister; the Attorney-General; the Minister for Health and Aboriginal Affairs, Steve Edgington; the Minister for Children and Families, Robyn Cahill; the Minister for Education and Training, Jo Hersey; and the Minister for Youth, Seniors and Equality, Jinson Charls. It was also addressed to the Northern Territory Acting Police Commissioner. Only one of those named is not here today—that is, the Acting Police Commissioner. Out of all the other names one person had the courage to stand in this parliament and speak, not because she wanted to but because she had to—that is, the Attorney-General.

Minister Edgington, Minister Cahill, Minister Hersey, Chief Minister and Minister Charls, shame on you. You all had an opportunity to speak in this Chamber. Whether you responded head-on to the coronial recommendations—that was your prerogative—or talked about what you are doing as a responsible Cabinet minister to make life better for Aboriginal Territorians, you had a choice to speak, but you were silent.

Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs and Disability, your silence—in this Chamber today and when Kumanjayi White's life was taken in Alice Springs in the confectionery aisle in Coles— is the worst. There was no offer of condolence and no visits to the sorry camps of the families. They were met with silence. Let that silence be known for what it is.

I thank everyone who contributed for their meaningful contributions, whether it directly responded to the motion or shared a lived experience from a community in their electorate and their family members, as the Member for Mulka did. The Members for Arnhem, Daly, Arafura, Nightcliff and Johnston all spoke about the importance of us doing better as a parliament and a Territory together.

People have called for a number of things. I will reflect on what Ned Hargraves has continually said in our communities—no guns, more peace, keep culture strong and keep guns out. These are all important things to speak about because they mean something to people and to my community. Many things need to be done.

The only government contribution was from the Attorney-General. She said that the CLP will not commit to anything now because the government is working through it. Everything deserves to be worked through. Young people's lives deserve to be worked through, and this government picks and chooses what it considers and what it does not.

This week the government said that it will pass the amendments to the *Youth Justice Act* on urgency, and it has not given anyone any time to consider the implications of that. It has not given anyone time to consider what the consequences are or the unintended consequences. The *Youth Justice Act* and the death of

Kumanjayi Walker are interconnected. If we do not get the settings right for youth justice and do not provide the appropriate supports and resources for diversion and programs, we risk seeing this continue to happen.

I reject the Attorney-General's comments that in three weeks the government could not have a response to those recommendations. When I was the Attorney-General and a Cabinet minister, we were forced by our Chief Minister to read the coronials and recommendations. We would have a special Cabinet meeting and talk about how each of us had to be responsible for implementing the recommendations. We would also have regular meetings to inform and give progress updates on how the work was happening. We must do better; there is no excuse. Every Territorian matters.

Yes, I acknowledge that Kumanjayi Walker might not have been a perfect person, but who is? There should have been appropriate support services over successive governments to support this young man and his family. Successive governments have failed, regardless of who they are. We have gotten to where we have because a young man fell through the cracks. He was not supported or provided with the interventions, therapeutic responses or help to get his life sorted and to stop the trajectory of him entering into the criminal justice system and, later, being killed. Three bullets were shot at him.

Nobody in the Northern Territory or in the world deserves to die. There are things we can do, and the coronial inquest provides that pathway for us to ensure that every death in the Northern Territory is preventable; that is incredibly important.

This has been difficult for a number of members in this parliament, and it will continue to be difficult as we wait for the government to table its response to that coronial. I hope government members approach it, having heard the contributions from members and reflected on the Coroner's report that we discussed yesterday. Regardless of whether you like it or agree with it, those 683 pages of the coronial inquest into Kumanjayi Walker's death are testimony of lived experiences, pain, truth and reform. That is important for us to reflect, build and work on.

I remind members that not everyone has the luxuries that you will all go home to tonight; I am included in that. Not everyone in the Northern Territory goes home to a physical house every night and has a bed, a fridge full of food or a loving family. Until we address abject poverty across the Northern Territory we will continue to feel the effects of crime and antisocial behaviour. That is not only the responsibility of the government; it is the responsibility of all of us to work and champion on a local level, a Territory level and the federal level to improve the living conditions for everybody.

I acknowledge all the remote communities. I encourage members who have not yet had the opportunity to get out into the beautiful bush to do so. If you ever want to come to Gwoja, I will gladly meet you, take you out and introduce you to the amazing people who call Gwoja home, because they are pretty special.

If ever we are in situations where we see the loss of a Territory life, there is an opportunity in our culture to express condolence, to go to a sorry camp to talk to family and to express that. That is incredibly important.

I thank everyone. This is an important motion that sets out the key parts. There will be more to say on this as time goes on, but I acknowledge and thank everyone who has done the work.

I acknowledge the Justice for Walker Never Again movement which has been incredibly strong and resilient. I acknowledge all those people in the Northern Territory Police Force who do a good job and work every day alongside First Nations Territorians. I give a shout-out to all my brothers and sisters who are the Aboriginal liaison officers or community police officers in their remote communities who have had to work in a difficult climate for some time as we have navigated the pathways and processes of the coronial inquest. They have had a difficult job and it is important to acknowledge that work.

A great opportunity is before the minister for Local Government and Aboriginal Affairs to get out to Yuendumu and meet with people. You talk about local government reform; the Coroner has given you the ideal place to start that in Yuendumu. There are 16 skin groups in Yuendumu. Each skin group recognises and represents the strength and resilience of our continued culture. It is imperative that we keep that culture alive. It governs us, sustains us and will help us all—black and white—in the future because when our culture is strong, our people are strong. That is what we all must remember.

I commend the motion.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Mr Paech	Mr Charls
Ms Uibo	Mr Edgington
Mr Young	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Underground Power in the Northern Territory

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- recognises the importance of rolling out high-voltage underground power in the northern suburbs to deliver more reliable and safer electricity for residents, schools and businesses, particularly over the Wet Season

- condemns the Finocchiaro CLP government for failing to tell Territorians before the 2024 election of its plans to scrap the 10-year program to underground power to the northern suburbs.

This motion goes to the heart of what Territorians expect from their government—honesty, responsibility and a basic commitment to keeping our communities safe. Today I stand with the residents, families and small businesses across Darwin's northern suburbs who have been blindsided by their local members, let down and, frankly, betrayed by the CLP government with its decision to walk away from the underground high-voltage power rollout in 13 suburbs across Darwin.

This project should have been above politics; any government which is serious about cyclone resilience, infrastructure planning and community safety would see this project through to completion. Instead of delivering, the CLP has dumped it. It has scrapped a program that was already funded, designed and ready to roll out. It has done so in the most cynical and dishonest way imaginable to Territorians. Make no mistake: the CLP had a plan to axe this project before the 2024 election, but it did not have the guts to tell Territorians that it would do so.

There was no announcement in the CLP's pre-election budget fiscal outlook. If you have not heard of that, CLP members, go back and have a look. It is a requirement before any Northern Territory election that the government of the day and the opposition have their pre-election budgets costed—not just on the back of an envelope or a scrappy napkin—by the Department of Treasury and Finance. It is not made-up figures and numbers; it is costed. Each major party—the government and the opposition of the day—has to do this process. They go to the Northern Territory general election with their budgets.

The underground power project was not costed as being removed, reduced or taken out of the CLP—then in opposition—pre-election budget before the August 2024 election. There was no word of this in its budget reply. Just months after forming government—there was barely an hour's notice to the media—Treasurer Bill Yan told Territorians that the $60m allocation for underground power was gone. It was not delayed or redesigned, just gone without even going through a budget Cabinet process.

Let us be crystal clear about what this means: residents in Nakara, Wagaman, Larrakeyah, Alawa, The Narrows, Fannie Bay, Jingili, Moil, Stuart Park, Coconut Grove, Ludmilla, Parap and The Gardens will remain connected to an ageing overhead power network that is exposed to the extreme weather events of the

Top End. It means that the lessons of Cyclone Marcus, which left more than 29,000 homes without power, are being ignored by the CLP government. It also means that the safety and comfort of thousands of families across Darwin have been sacrificed so that the CLP can fund its political priorities, even though it has no plan. This is not responsible governing or budgeting. It is reckless politics at its worst, and Territorians are being left in the dark to bear the cost.

Let us go back to the beginning. This underground power rollout was not just a back-of-the-envelope idea; it was a carefully planned, staged, long-term infrastructure program designed to improve power reliability, reduce repair times and protect public safety in cyclone-prone areas in Darwin. The former Labor government committed $60m over three years to begin the rollout in Nakara, Wagaman and Larrakeyah, the first step in a 10-year plan to underground high-voltage power across 13 suburbs.

The design work was completed. The procurement was underway and construction was due to begin. This was real progress, planning, delivery and outcomes for our community. Frankly, it should have come sooner. The reasons for doing this were as strong as ever when it came to protecting power in Darwin, the Northern Territory capital.

After Cyclone Marcus, we saw what happens when power poles come down—days, even weeks without electricity for many Territory families and businesses. Fridges were full of spoiled food; homes had no fans or air con; there was no way to stay cool in the hot humidity of cyclone season. It was also considered a health crisis. It was a significant economic blow to families and small businesses across the Top End, and a sharp and painful reminder of just how vulnerable our overhead power network is, particularly the ageing infrastructure.

That is why Labor restarted the underground power program. That is why we completed the works at nine Darwin schools first, including Wagaman Primary School, Moil Primary School and Jingili, and it is why we committed to extending that work into residential suburbs. The schools were done first because they were always, and still are, recognised as cyclone shelters and places of safety. If someone does not feel comfortable in their home or are visiting, those schools act as emergency cyclone shelters.

What did the CLP government do? The CLP cancelled it, tore up the plan, scrapped the funding and pretended it was not real. The government claims the project was not scoped, despite the fact that civil works procurement had been scheduled, designs were underway in the three suburbs I mentioned and the community consultation was about to commence. The CLP government claims that the project was too expensive even though the $60m commitment was already budgeted and accounted for. It claimed that it will maybe look at it again if the budget improves. That is a promise as hollow as any other commitment we have seen so far from the CLP when it comes to the people of the northern suburbs.

Let me remind the parliament of something else. This is not the first time that the CLP has scrapped underground power; it did that when it was in government in 2012. I had a dig previously about the past, but this is what happens when bad habits creep into a pattern of behaviour for the CLP. In 2012 when the CLP was last in government it stopped the rollout of work for undergrounding high-voltage power, which had already been completed in Nightcliff, Millner, Rapid Creek and Coconut Grove. The decision left more than a dozen suburbs unprotected when Cyclone Marcus hit in 2018. We saw the consequences. That short-sightedness and lack of planning by the CLP has crept in again. Instead of learning from their mistakes, the CLP members have just repeated them.

The suburbs affected are Nakara, Wagaman, Alawa, Larrakeyah, The Narrows, Fannie Bay, Moil, Jingili, Stuart Park, Coconut Grove, Ludmilla, Parap and The Gardens. Those 13 suburbs have been left hanging in the wind—all in CLP electorates. CLP members did not tell the constituents in those suburbs that this was their plan; everyone found out after the Territory election. These are working communities full of families, pensioners, renters, small business owners and those who rely on the government to do the basics—plan ahead to protect infrastructure and put community safety first. They are the same people who were told by the CLP that it would fix essential services and live within its means. Instead, they got secrecy, spin and abandonment.

The Treasurer said that he would approach the federal government for funding but not before he scrapped the project, pulled the plug, disregarded the plans that were already underway and broke the trust of every voter who believed that the CLP had a normal government plan to underground high-voltage power. Maybe he should have stayed out fishing.

As for the numbers—the so-called budget savings of $115m from cancelling this project and the $90m from cancelling the Convention Centre upgrade—they simply do not add up. Even basic media scrutiny has shown

that the CLP cannot explain where the rest of the money came from. It cannot explain how scrapping a $60m project saves more than double that amount; that is scary. The CLP government cannot explain how leaving communities at risk is a better use of taxpayer funds than investing in the basic infrastructure that Territorians deserve.

This motion is about more than one project; it is about the character of this government and the credibility of the CLP, which cannot be trusted. When a party says one thing before an election and does another afterwards, it is a betrayal of Territorians' trust. When a government cancels infrastructure projects in cyclone-prone communities while splashing money on a do-nothing Territory Coordinator and political deals, it is shirking responsibility and duty. When it comes to turning its back on people who most need it, who need the help and to be respected, the CLP loses all rights to call itself a government for all Territorians. I think the CLP could extend to calling itself a government for some Territorians, but definitely not a government for all Territorians.

Labor will continue to stand up for the people of Darwin's northern suburbs. We believe that underground power is essential. It affects the Darwin–Katherine system as well. We believe it should be delivered suburb by suburb, step by step, as the 10-year plan had coordinated. The government should honour this commitment to Territorians and not hide from them or at least be up-front and tell them before you do it.

To the people of Nakara, Wagaman, Larrakeyah and every suburb I mentioned earlier who will be left behind by the CLP government, we are sorry that the government was not up-front and honest with you. Our Territory Labor opposition is here to support you. We will not stop fighting until the lights stay on, the power stays safe and the promises that were made to you are finally kept.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I speak in favour of this motion which calls on this Assembly to recognise the critical importance of underground power infrastructure and to condemn the Finocchiaro CLP government's betrayal of Territorians on this issue.

Let me be clear what has happened. The CLP went to the 2024 election without telling Territorians that it planned to scrap the $290m 10-year underground power program. This was a deliberate deception of the electorate. The CLP knew this program was important to communities across Darwin's northern suburbs, yet it stayed silent, only announcing its cancellation after taking office in what it euphemistically called a budget saving measure.

Nightcliff and Rapid Creek have underground power. My constituents in Coconut Grove are still waiting. These residents are still living with the daily reality of above-ground powerlines that leave them vulnerable to every Wet Season, every storm and every cyclone that threatens our Top End.

This issue goes far beyond simple infrastructure; it is about building climate-resilient communities for the future. Darwin sits, obviously, in one of Australia's most cyclone-prone regions, and climate change is intensifying these threats, making extreme weather events and cyclones more severe.

When Cyclone Marcus hit in 2018, which was a relatively modest Category 2 storm, it left 28,000 homes without power, some for weeks in Coconut Grove, and more than 400 powerlines were brought down. Schools could not open, businesses could not operate and families were left in Darwin's oppressive heat and humidity without electricity or, in many cases, even telephone service.

Research from the International Energy Agency confirms that underground transmission and distribution systems are significant less vulnerable to climate hazards than above-ground infrastructure. When extreme weather events occur, underground systems enable fast recovery and maintain essential services that communities depend on. We have seen this story before. After Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin 50 years ago, we rebuilt with stronger building codes and better planning, yet half a century later we are still failing to learn the fundamental lesson that prevention is better than reconstruction.

Other research by the IEA has demonstrated that for every dollar invested in climate-resilient infrastructure, $6 can be save in recovery costs. It is about more than just convenience; it is about community resilience, economic continuity and ensuring that our most vulnerable residents are not left without power during our most challenging weather events.

This is not the first time a CLP government has abandoned the underground power program. The project began under Labor in 2004 and made progress through the 2000s but was put on hold by the CLP in 2012 under Terry Mills, who simply said that the government did not have the funds. Does it sound familiar? Labor restarted the program again after 2016, recognising its importance for community safety and resilience.

The suburbs left waiting, including part of my electorate, are filled with families, schools and businesses who deserve the same level of resilience and reliability that other Darwin suburbs enjoy. This is about recognising that infrastructure investments are not just line items in a budget; they are investments in our community's future resilience and our capacity to thrive in a changing climate. As we face an uncertain climate future with more intense Wet Seasons and more severe storm events, the question is not whether we can afford to underground our power infrastructure but whether we can afford not to.

The residents of the northern suburbs deserve honesty from their government and infrastructure that works when they need it the most. They deserve a government that plans for the future, rather than one that breaks promises and abandons essential resilience projects.

I commend this motion to the Assembly and call on members to support it. Our community's safety and resilience depend on it.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, underground power is an issue that matters deeply to the people in my electorate. I am lucky enough to live in Millner where we have underground power, but the other three suburbs do not. The people in those suburbs know too well the risk of power outages from extreme weather in Darwin—we just heard that from the Member for Nightcliff—and the heavy costs that come with them. They also have felt the weight of broken promises. It is one of the issues that is raised with me over and again.

People tell me their concerns about cyclones growing stronger. We saw after Cyclone Marcus in 2018 that nearly 29,000 houses lost power, many for more than a week. That is not just an inconvenience; it is dangerous, with families enduring scorching heat without any way to cool off and being without refrigeration. Some people were without running water and schools and businesses closed. Vulnerable people and people with health issues suffered the most.

In times like these, communities need to rely on their government to have the infrastructure in place to keep power flowing and support recovery. One proven way to address this and improve extreme weather resilience is by undergrounding power, especially in older suburbs like mine, where residents have waited an incredibly long time for upgrades that were promised and have never been delivered.

Underground power will not stop storms, but it can prevent the damage that comes from them—the widespread, sometimes weeks-long power outages. It reduces cleanup costs, protects homes and businesses, keeps critical services running and, most importantly, keeps people safe, so why are we not doing it?

The government says that it cannot afford it and that $60m will not go far enough, but every dollar spent on preparedness saves multiple dollars in recovery. It is not about whether we can afford it; it is about whether we have the vision to prioritise it. If we can spend half a billion dollars on prisons, we can invest a fraction of that into underground power.

It also raises the question which people ask me: what is this government's plan to address the growing risks from climate change and extreme weather? This goes way beyond powerlines. It is about building a safer, smarter, more sustainable and more affordable future for us all. Underground power is just one part of that puzzle. There are many other smart, community-focused upgrades that can build resilience and fairness into our energy system.

It is positive that Power and Water has conditional approval to install community batteries in Darwin and Katherine, and this will hopefully help to lower bills, stabilise the grid and allow more homes and businesses to benefit from solar power. These kinds of practical, community-centred approaches should be central to our energy planning. We have enormous solar potential, but it requires political will and investment to unlock it.

It is not a pipedream. Places like South Australia and the ACT demonstrate that clean, reliable and affordable power is possible. With wise planning, Darwin can lead here, too. We do not have to choose between reliability and renewables, and we do not have to choose between people's welfare—my battery just went flat, so I will have to make up the rest.

I want to say to my community that I know this issue is important to you. You have raised it with me over and again. I know you are concerned about what will happen as we start to get into the Wet Season and the threats of cyclones.

We have heard the government say that there is no money for it, but there is plenty of money for other things. Let us invest wisely up-front so that we save money and look after people in the long term.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that this has come back today after the discussions we had about it yesterday. I am happy to speak on this again.

Once again, the opposition is trying to rewrite history, gaslight Territorians and mislead this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory. The motion says:

> *… condemns the Finocchiaro CLP government for failing to tell Territorians before the 2024 election of its plans to scrap the 10-year program to underground power to the northern suburbs.*

I thought I was pretty clear on that yesterday. You can read in *Hansard* what I said, but I will say it again: nobody on this side of the House and nobody in this government made commitments to undergrounding power in the northern suburbs. The fact Labor is saying that we did is a falsehood; it is not true. It was Labor's plan to do it.

As I said yesterday, within six to eight weeks of being appointed as a minister and being the shareholding minister for Power and Water, I had my first meeting with the CEO and the Chair of the Power and Water Board, along with some of the other executives. They told me, 'We cannot do the undergrounding of power for $60m that Labor has been pushing. We cannot do it, and we need to stop it. There is more work that needs to be done.' That was six to eight weeks after the election, not prior to the election. There were no promises from anybody; this was Labor's election commitment.

I have a press release from the Leader of the Opposition when she responsible for this in 2023. I will speak about that later, and I will table it so that people have it.

It was not our commitment, so I reiterate that for the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite to say it was is a falsehood; it is not true.

I made the decision to cease the undergrounding of power because only $60m was allocated to it. I will go back through the history, as I did yesterday. The previous government said that it had allocated $60m in its last budget for undergrounding only the high-voltage network—not the HV and LV—in Nakara, Alawa and Wagaman. This was reprioritised by our government. The previous government costed fully undergrounding the power for the northern suburbs at $290m.

When I went to Power and Water the first time, it requested me to cease, and I agreed and stopped it. I said, 'Go away and give me indicative costs of what it will take to actually do it'. Power and Water's first indicative price came back to me at more than half a billion dollars. The caveat was in order to make it cost effective, for economies of scale, the HV and the LV had to be undergrounded together. It says in this press release that it would be only the HV network.

Since then, Power and Water has continued to work on what it will cost to underground all the power—you have to do it together; otherwise, it will cost 50% to 60% more—in the 13 northern suburbs. It is nearly $1bn.

I agree that undergrounding power is a good idea because of the weather events in the Top End; I have no issue with that. However, we need to come up with $1bn and a comprehensive staged plan to do that.

If we went ahead and spent $1bn on underground power throughout the northern suburbs—happy days, off we go—which is what Labor wanted to do, who would pay for it? Would I have to borrow $1bn? That is what Labor used to do. As I said yesterday, it came, it spent and it borrowed. We find ourselves in the debt position we are in because Labor went ahead and did things without considering the cost. If we have an appropriate plan that is robust and fully costed and we can come up with the money to underground the power, so be it. I would back that, but I have to find the $1bn first.

Let us look at this press release from the former Minister for Essential Services. That was Minister Uibo at the time, who is now the Leader of the Opposition. It said:

> *Nakara, Wagaman and Larrakeyah are programmed to be the first of Darwin's northern suburbs to have their high voltage overhead infrastructure power lines undergrounded.*
>
> *The rollout is part of the Territory Labor Government's $60 million investment over six years … to underground Darwin's power network.*

There is a list of the 13 suburbs in chronological order. Guess what? Work was supposed to commence in 2023–24 in Nakara and then in Wagaman and Larrakeyah in 2024–25. Is this just a glossy press release? Did Labor really plan to do it, or did Labor realise that it could not do the undergrounding because it did not have the money and that is why the project never progressed?

The fact is that the CEO, the executives from Power and Water and the board members were, I suppose, brave enough to say to me, 'We cannot do this. We cannot do it for the money, and we should stop.' I listened to them because I realised that it was a bit of pipedream or a fallacy. I wonder whether that same advice from Power and Water was given to the Labor Party and as usual, like it did with so many projects, it said, 'We will not accept the advice of the experts. We will just plough ahead anyway. It will cost what it will cost. We will just borrow the money and put Territorians in more debt just to pull it off.' It boggles the mind.

I also wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition has brought this motion because her name is on this press release. The previous Member for Casuarina ran around during the lead-up to the election, telling the people in that area that they would have all their power undergrounded for $60m. It would never happen; it was a fallacy and a pipedream.

The Territory Labor opposition is trying to rewrite history, saying that we made this decision before the election, which is garbage. I made the decision; I stick my hand up for it. I made it many months after the election because the experts who know the system and what it costs came to me and said that we cannot do it.

I table this press release, 'Nakara first cab off the rank for Darwin's underground power project', from 29 March 2023.

It contains quite a bit of information that the people in the northern suburbs would probably like to know. The previous government had been gaslighting them for years. The money was never there to do this project.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about some of the reprioritisations and savings we made. She mentioned the Convention Centre upgrade, and I will touch on that. That Convention Centre upgrade was part of another dream, which would probably land Territorians in even more debt, to bring a basketball team to Darwin and base it here. The money that Labor had put up for that, when you looked into the overall cost, was not costed correctly.

It is the same with the underground power. It seems like Labor's typical accounting—$60m was allocated to do the underground power, but if you look at some of its other press releases, you see a figure of $290m. That is only $710m short of what it would take to do the task properly.

We saw that in previous budgets. I do not know what sort of calculator was used. I found a calculator in a drawer when I moved into my office. I knew it was a Labor calculator, so I quickly threw it in the bin because I knew that it would not work. I have seen what Labor did with its calculators. One and one does not seem to equal two; it might equal 10,000 or a million.

It beggars belief that Labor is again trying to rewrite the history of undergrounding of power. Yes, the undergrounding of power will happen at some stage. It probably needs to happen, but it is a bit like our renewables targets in the Territory. We know that it is something we need to do. It is the right thing to do, but we will do it in an economically responsible way. I cannot in all good conscience say to the people of the northern suburbs tomorrow, 'Okay, I will underground your power, but I will borrow $1bn to do it', because that is what it would take, unless the feds will stump up the money. I do not see them doing that in a hurry.

There are two options. One is that I borrow $1bn, which would put us in another $1bn of debt. When we look at the interest repayments on that debt in the future we see what our children and grandchildren will have to pay to service that debt. The other option is changing the bills for the people in the northern suburbs to cover the cost of undergrounding that power, and I believe the back-of-an-envelope calculation was it would be in excess of $1,000 per year to pay for that.

What does that say to the rest of the Territory where people want things as well? What we do for the Territory needs to benefit all Territorians. I think that the people of the northern suburbs will at some stage need to see that undergrounding of power. Services across our remote communities, in Alice Springs and our other towns of Tennant Creek and Katherine also need work done. We have to prioritise those, but it comes down to the budget. We need the money to be able to do these things. We need to have them costed properly—not like we saw from Labor with $60m that was going to do it all, as it told people in the northern suburbs, or $290m for all 13 suburbs. The numbers do not stack up.

It is not surprising that the opposition wants to keep talking about the undergrounding of power because back in the day it was all just talk. The previous government never properly funded it. It put out a press release, which I have tabled, that said it would start in 2023–24. The previous government never actually started the job because I believe that it knew it did not have the money, the project was not costed and planned properly and it told people in the northern suburbs that the government would do it, knowing full well that it could not.

Labor lost the northern suburbs because it did not fight for them in government, but all of a sudden Labor members are trying to fight for them now with this motion about undergrounding power. I can tell the opposition members that it is too little too late. You were not listening to people in the northern suburbs in the years leading up to the 2024 election. The people in the northern suburbs can probably see right through what you are trying to do now. If you were serious about undergrounding power in the northern suburbs and serious about the people in the northern suburbs, you would have started the project when you said you would in 2023. It is as though Territory Labor is not serious about anything.

I do not know how much more I can say on this topic. I spoke at length about it yesterday. I answered a number of questions on this topic in Question Time. I do not think Labor likes hearing the truth or it is not listening to what we are saying.

Mrs Hersey: They are just not.

Mr YAN: Member for Katherine, I agree; I do not think Labor members are listening because I have said on many occasions that there was never any plan from the CLP to cease undergrounding of power before the election. The decision was made many months after the election. I made the decision on the advice from the experts. It seems, back in the day, that Labor was not listening to the experts.

It looks like the Opposition Leader, through this motion, is continuing to try to gaslight Territorians about what her government was doing or, more precisely, what it was not doing on this topic for the people in the northern suburbs.

To put a couple of things into perspective, Power and Water provided some estimates on the costs of undergrounding power, now that it has had the time to go away and have a good hard look at not just the equipment and material costs but also the labour costs. These estimates are based on current unit rates.

The estimate to underground HV is $2,260 per metre. The low-voltage underground installation, which is the stuff we use in our houses—remember that LV and HV travel pretty well on the same poles; one is up the top and one is down the bottom—is approximately $2,120 per metre. It is much cheaper when we are building a suburb or doing a subdivision and that is put in place at the outset. Getting power underground is much cheaper to do in that context. When we have to do it post-installation—dig trenches through people's nature strips, go under and across roads, change transformers and put them on the ground and all these other things—that cost increases.

Power and Water did excellent work on calculating the kilometres of powerlines—HV and LV—within the northern suburbs. The overhead HV length in the northern suburbs is 68.11 kilometres. The LV length in the northern suburbs is 131.52 kilometres. That gives us an idea of why that cost is so high.

These figures were probably made available to Labor, but once again it probably chose not to listen. Labor picked an arbitrary figure of $290m but it would only spend $60m. Labor told everybody that it would do it all for $60m, but when we look at those numbers we see that $60m does not get you much.

Mr Edgington: Just be honest.

Mr YAN: You are right, Member for Barkly; they are just not honest. Labor members do not listen. They are trying to rewrite history, gaslight Territorians and make themselves out to be something they are not. They did not listen to the people of the northern suburbs, but all of a sudden they are trying to win back those people through the only means they have. This is something they could not even do when they were in government. For over 20 years the Labor Party has been in government. In the last eight years Labor had the reins of power and the opportunity to kick off this project, and it chose not to. Labor did not do the project because it knew its figures were wrong and that it could not get the project over the line for the money it had.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge my Uncle Laurie in the gallery behind the CLP members. He has come all the way from Lismore and is heading out to the Garma Festival tomorrow. Welcome. It is good to see you here, with my brother as well. I look forward to seeing you after this.

I find it hypocritical that the Treasurer tells us that we are not listening to Territorians, when he went fishing one week before his budget was handed down. He is not going out to listen to Territorians. He is worried about fishing, one week before his budget is handed down. Only two weeks ago he was seen in Tennant Creek towing his boat, going fishing somewhere else. Two times this year he has been more worried about himself catching barra than about what Territorians want.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance to subject; his motion is about the northern suburbs of Darwin. He is talking about everything but the subject at hand.

Madam SPEAKER: All speakers are allowed some latitude. It is the early part of your speech, Member for Daly, so please continue.

Mr YOUNG: This is relevant to the motion about underground power in the northern suburbs because the Treasurer talked about listening to Territorians, yet he is more worried about heading out fishing on his boat a week before the budget is handed down. Then only two weeks ago he was seen in Tennant Creek towing his boat. Only the other day the *NT News* held its economic forum in Darwin—a key forum that the Treasurer should be at—and he was hiding away. He could not even show up to the economic forum that the *NT News* held, so do not tell us that Labor is not listening to Territorians. We are out everyday listening to Territorians. We are not out fishing, hiding away or pretending that there are no issues in the community.

Treasurer, I suggest you get back to your budget book and look at where you can help the people of the northern suburbs to ensure that they get underground power. That is the issue, but the Treasurer is too busy worrying about his fishing trips rather than Territorians. Please do not tell us that we are not listening to Territorians.

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: They do not like the truth. He has gone red now because he has been caught out.

I recognise the importance of rolling out underground high-voltage power to deliver reliable and safer electricity for northern suburbs residents, schools and businesses, particularly during the Wet Season, and condemning the CLP for failing to tell Territorians before the 2024 election of its plan to scrap the 10-year program to bring underground power to the northern suburbs. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this important motion for the people of the northern suburbs who want underground power.

We heard from the CLP government—particularly the Treasurer—that it was not an election commitment, but that is not what this is about. It is not about a commitment; it is about the CLP's lack of credibility to be up-front with Territorians before an election. It is about Territorians deserving an honest, responsible government that keeps its fundamental commitment to keeping the community safe, particularly during and after an emergency event.

Scrapping this investment leaves suburbs vulnerable during major storms, such as Cyclone Marcus, which left 29,000 homes without power. It is a true betrayal of trust for thousands of Darwin residents and families because the CLP did not go into the election saying that it would cut this project. Last night we heard the minister for Infrastructure ask, 'Can Territorians blame the CLP government for walking away from this?' I think they can, and they will.

When the CLP announced that it would scrap this vital program, Territorians were gobsmacked. I have been speaking to residents in the northern suburbs, and this is one of the issues they raise. I hope that the Member for Casuarina is telling his constituents that the government has scrapped underground power.

Mr Patel: We did not promise, so how did we scrap it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr YOUNG: He has not spoken to his constituents in Casuarina, which is a real shame.

Mr Patel: I did. When did you come to Casuarina?

Mr YOUNG: You scrapped the underground power network for the northern suburbs.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind members to direct their comments through the Chair. Member for Casuarina, let the Member for Daly speak in silence.

Mr YOUNG: Territorians such as Jon Graham and David Taylor spoke to ABC News on 6 November last year, following the CLP's scrapping of the program. Mr Graham said:

> *The lack of fans and no air con just means, especially at night-time, trying to sleep is really, really hard.*
>
> *There was five of us in the house and we were all suffering.*

Mr Taylor said:

> *You could say it was fine by candlelight for a couple of nights, but after six, seven, eight nights it starts to really wear thin …*

Wearing thin is something Territorians are coming to do with this CLP government's cheap rhetoric and political slogans. Mr Taylor went on to say:

> *It was hot as Hades, it really was bad and very humid after the cyclone.*

These are just two experiences from a media report, but there are many more Territorians who would say the same.

Territory Labor stands with the residents, families and small businesses of Darwin's northern suburbs because they deserve a secure electricity supply.

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: It is a shame that there are members on the other side who think it is funny; they are laughing in the faces of northern suburbs residents. I hope that the Member for Katherine will speak to them because she seems to think it is quite funny that people in the northern suburbs will not be getting underground power.

Mrs Hersey: I can laugh at anything. I am laughing at Khoda. Seriously, you are wasting your time.

Mr Mackay: Jo goes to Darwin, but Selena cannot go to the Coffee Club.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Goyder, cease interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: Look who is upset. The Member for Goyder cannot handle it.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20; no interruptions. I know that power means a lot, and it is obviously going to the heads of the CLP.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are correct. I remind all members not to interject. Let the Member for Daly speak in silence. The Treasurer was heard in silence; let the Member for Daly be heard.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 18; the Member for Daly is directing his commentary to other members rather than through the Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have reminded him of that, and I will remind him again—through the Chair, please.

Mr YOUNG: I have been going through the Chair.

Territory Labor stands with the residents, families and small businesses of Darwin's northern suburbs because they deserve a secure power supply.

We should not be shocked because the CLP scrapped the underground power program in 2012 when it came to office. Cutting is in the CLP's DNA, but it is shocking that it did this to residents whom its MLAs now represent. I wonder how CLP members feel about explaining that to their residents, Member for Casuarina.

Mr Patel: It was supposed to be finished by 2024.

Mr YOUNG: We have all experienced a power outage. It is those opposite who will have to take the blame when Territorians' patience wears thin with the CLP government which refuses to deliver certainty during a crisis—certainty for small businesses that could lose thousands of dollars, for families who already struggle to put food on the table but lose it because the fridge is not working and for seniors whose medicines need to be stored in a cool place. Minister for Infrastructure, during the next cyclone that brings down powerlines and leaves Territorians without power, people can and will blame this CLP government for not continuing the program.

Territorians are also aware that the CLP struggles with the concept of climate change. At Estimates the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment googled the definition of 'climate change' when he was asked. He did not even know the definition of 'climate change'.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Let him continue.

Mr YOUNG: With a changing climate we are told consistently that natural disasters are happening more frequently and more harshly, causing more damage more often and at a greater cost. Instead of having a vision for the Territory's future and moving forward with a three-year plan to build a more resilient power network, people are left with a lack of direction because the government scrapped it. That is the issue here. Years of design, procurement and consultation were scrapped without warning—no notice.

The question is: if not now, when? We cannot keep going with a start-and-stop, funding-cut, plan-and-scrap mentality when it comes to the long-term vision for the Territory because it will only become more expensive as we move ahead. Territorians deserve certainty about their essential services, now and into the future.

The CLP claims that this saves money, but Territorians will pay the price when the next cyclone hits.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the important motion brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I speak on behalf of many Territorians, not just in Darwin and the northern suburbs but across the Top End, who know exactly what it means when CLP governments fail to invest in basic infrastructure.

I represent the electorate of Arafura. Communities across the West Arnhem and Tiwi Islands regions have had more than their fair share of cyclones over the years. We know exactly what it means when government fails to invest in proper preparation and the power goes out for days, when families lose food, when elders and babies suffer through heat without fans and air con and when there is no safe place to go during a storm. When you live in a cyclone-prone part of the world you do not get to ignore the weather or pretend that the next storm will not come—you prepare, invest and build resilience.

That is what the underground power project was all about. Labor's plan to underground high-voltage power in Nakara, Wagaman and Alawa was a sensible staged investment. It was about protecting families, schools and businesses, learning from Cyclone Marcus when almost 29,000 homes lost power and making sure it does not happen again. It was a smart staged investment in safety, and it was already underway.

What did Territorians get from the CLP before the election? Silence. The CLP scrapped the entire project—a $60m investment in safer, more reliable power—without saying a word to the public about it before the election. The government says that it is making tough choices and looking for budget savings, but let us be real: it did not save money; it dumped a vital safety project without a plan to replace it. This means that more people in the northern suburbs of Darwin will be left vulnerable when the next big cyclone hits. It means longer blackouts, more spoiled food, more sweltering nights without fans or air conditioning and more pressure on our emergency services.

This sends a message to every community across the Territory that when the CLP needs to cut, it will cut things that keeps people safe. Can you believe the CLP ran for election on a safer Territory? This does not fit with what it promised. The CLP government scrapped this project just like it scrapped ranger funding and walked away from health services in my electorate. It wants to believe that was just an accounting decision. It even pulled money from last year's budget for the Maningrida cyclone shelter. The CLP must be banking on a couple of quiet cyclone seasons.

Meanwhile, this is not just numbers on a page; this is real people, homes and lives. We know what happens when power and infrastructure fail. We have seen it across the Territory. If we do not build for the future, we will pay for it later with longer outages, higher repair costs and more harm to families and businesses.

That is why Labor committed to this project in the first place; it was the start of a bigger plan with 13 suburbs lined up. It was about doing the work steadily and responsibly, step by step. Labor understands what is at stake; that is why we made the commitment to underground power. That is why we funded it and delivered underground power to schools across Darwin, including the northern suburbs, so that kids could at least be safe if a cyclone came through. That is why we will keep fighting to get the project back on track.

When the next big storm hits—it will—the cost of doing nothing will be felt in every home that goes dark, by every family left in the heat and humidity, by every business that loses stock and by every community like Maningrida that is left waiting for cyclone shelters and essential services. That will be on you mob, so I hope you are ready for it.

The people of Darwin's northern suburbs deserve better and so do all Territorians who expect their government to keep them safe, plan ahead and deliver on its word.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition's motion on the undergrounding of power in Darwin's northern suburbs is, unsurprisingly, another attempt to rewrite history and mislead Territorians—something its members perfected in government and continue to do in opposition. This motion accuses the Finocchiaro government of scrapping a project. In reality there was no project to scrap, only a wish list of unfunded promises that Labor never had the money to deliver. Let us take a moment to walk through the facts, not the fiction that the opposition is peddling.

In 2018 Labor announced a grand plan—$290m to fully underground power across 13 suburbs. That sounded impressive, but Territorians were never told where that money was coming from. It was an announcement without a business case, proper funding and a real delivery plan. By 2022 that $290m promise had shrunk to $60m, not for full undergrounding but only for high-voltage lines and not for all 13 suburbs, but supposedly across them over six years. By early 2024 even that was watered down further. The same $60m now covered only three suburbs—Nakara, Wagaman and Larrakeyah—and only the high-voltage network. There was nothing for low-voltage lines to homes or for the other 10 suburbs.

Today, Power and Water's own advice is clear: to underground the entire network would cost between $750m and $1bn, far beyond Labor's $60m fantasy. That is the Labor legacy—big talk, small delivery and zero honesty.

Labor members are pretending that we somehow ripped a working project out of the ground. People in Wagaman, in my electorate, know this firsthand. They were told that their suburb was next in line. They were given the impression that undergrounding to every household was coming soon, yet even when Labor was in power, no such program existed. There was never a plan to deliver to individual homes; it was only high-voltage and to only three suburbs.

To accuse this government of scrapping something that was never funded, scoped and scheduled is disingenuous at best and dishonest at worst. If Labor was serious it had six years to act, but it did not. Instead, it left Territorians with false hope and a $290m promise that magically shrank to $60m and then to a three-suburb pilot.

The opposition still refuses to acknowledge the reality that you cannot fund a $1bn project on a $60m allocation. You cannot promise underground power for 13 suburbs and then quietly scale it back to three without coming clean to Territorians. You cannot blame this government for reprioritising unfunded Labor wish lists when we have inherited the books it left behind.

This government is focused on projects we can afford, fund and deliver. We are making targeted investments that improve safety and reliability without misleading people about what is possible.

In 2019 Labor promised $10m a year from 2021, yet by 2024 even its scaled-down plan was unfunded beyond three suburbs. Labor went to the 2024 election knowing full well that it could not afford full undergrounding but never told Territorians the truth. If anyone should be condemned for failing to tell Territorians about undergrounding power, it is the opposition.

This motion is nothing more than a desperate attempt by the opposition to distract from its failures. It had six years to underground power. It promised $290m and changed it to $60m, and even that was never costed. Labor misled Wagaman and the other 12 northern suburbs about what was possible.

This government will not play that game. We are committed to reliable and safe power, but we will do it honestly, transparently and responsibly.

I reject this motion and call on the opposition to finally come clean with Territorians about its record of empty promises and financial mismanagement.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak against this motion and a lot of lies that Labor has brought.

Labor's promise was never real. Let us be clear: Labor's promise of $60m does not exist for the northern suburbs. Labor did not even deliver anything in the northern suburbs. In the press release, as the minister said, the work in Nakara was supposed to commence in 2023–24. Who was in power at that time? What happened? Nothing was done.

Now that the CLP has come to office you are asking for the same project, which if you do the maths is not even viable in the northern suburbs. How will you underground 68.11 kilometres of high-voltage power? Labor did not even include undergrounding the low-voltage power. It did not even budget full connections to homes, and it did not explain that $60m would barely scratch the surface in the northern suburbs. It was a false promise and just a headline, not a plan. Those opposite accuse the CLP of scrapping the project when Labor never funded it to begin with.

The CLP's approach is always honest, responsible and deliverable. When the CLP came into government, we reviewed Labor's infrastructure pipeline. What did we find? A long list of underfunded unrealistic projects, with this underground power plan being one of the worst.

We made the responsible decision to reprioritise. That does not mean we do not believe in underground power. It means that we believe in being honest about what we can afford and delivering what we commit to.

We are focusing our energy on projects that improve safety, grow the economy and build up the Territory. We will not continue with Labor's fantasy infrastructure for which promises were made without budgets, timelines or any genuine intent to deliver.

Let us have an honest conversation with the community. If we want to have a real conversation about underground power, let us do it the right way. Let us talk about the actual costs involved, the benefits for community safety and resilience, the funding sources—whether that is NT revenue, federal support or cost-sharing models—and a staged plan that does not pretend we can do it all at once.

Underground power is a worthwhile investment. I do not disagree with it, but only if it is done properly, planned transparently and explained honestly to the public. We will not go back to Labor's old playbook of promising everything, delivering nothing and blaming others for its mess. Infrastructure needs to be built on truth.

Underground power is important. It is expensive—up to $1bn for a full rollout. It deserves a real plan, not political fantasy. The CLP will always be honest with Territorians, make responsible decisions and keep delivering real outcomes, not just press releases. Labor failed to tell the truth about the cost, and we will not make that mistake.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not going to speak on this motion, but I will say a few words and not take up too much time.

To be honest I am gobsmacked that the Labor opposition is choosing to prioritise this in General Business. We have spoken so many times in this parliament about underground power and exposed what the Labor government did to Territorians in promoting what it could not deliver. I am gobsmacked that Labor members are bringing this back so that we can tell them again that they made mistakes.

Territory Labor members said that they stand with the people of the northern suburbs, but clearly they do not. Our government stands with those people. I have spoken to so many constituents in nearly a year. Only one constituent has said that they were disappointed that the undergrounding of power did not happen in the Fannie Bay electorate, which includes The Gardens, Parap, Ludmilla, Fannie Bay and Coconut Grove. Those suburbs are impacted by this, but only one person has said that they were upset by it.

When I explained to them the reason this program was cancelled, they accepted that decision. They said that of course we need to make decisions in the best interests of Territorians and in the best interests of our children and grandchildren, because they do not want to be paying back a billion-dollar debt in the future.

The Member for Arafura made the comment that our government cuts funding to things that keep Territorians safe. That is the worst comment I have heard all day. We are doing everything to keep Territorians safe. We have delivered a record budget for Police, Emergency Services and Corrections to keep Territorians safe. Territorians understand why we have cut the underground power project.

Although those on that side of the Chamber tell you that they stand with people in the northern suburbs, none of them lives or works in the northern suburbs; they all live and work out bush. They do not speak to the people of the northern suburbs and therefore do not know what they are thinking, so those members cannot pretend that they know what is happening.

This government will stand with all Territorians and make the best decisions for not only Territorians but also the economy so that our children and grandchildren are not paying for the mistakes that could have been made.

Underground power is important and deserves proper consideration, conversation, debate and a chance to get up. At the moment we cannot afford to do it as we are in a massive mess because of what we were left with. We need to make cuts. Everybody on this side of the Chamber who has spoken today has agreed with that. We are responsible and want to be fiscally responsible, so we will not make decisions that throw future generations under the bus.

Labor has been in government for 19 of the last 25 years. It did not make any progress on this. It decided to run with it in the election campaign and knew that it could not deliver. Labor does not stand with Territorians. We do, and we are working every day to make it safer for Territorians.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the members who contributed to the motion—namely, the Members for Namatjira, Nightcliff, Johnston, Daly, Arafura, Sanderson, Casuarina and Fannie Bay.

It is interesting how much energy people get when they are fired up about protecting the legacy of their team and being drawn out to speak on something they were not already considering was important for their electorates. As I mentioned, every one of the 13 suburbs that were named in the 10-year program—not a three-year, two-year or one-year program, but the 10-year program that was planned by Power and Water Corporation experts and engineers—are in CLP members' electorates. It was great to see people contributed, although apparently it was not an issue or a topic they had considered for their electorate prior to being prompted or fired up. That is great; it is all about democracy—firing up to make a contribution on behalf of your electorate.

There are a few members' contributions which I will specifically comment on in terms of the processes they understand or perhaps that they have fabricated to make their speech sound better. It was gold.

The Member for Namatjira is the Treasurer of the Northern Territory. I will bask in the glory of this one when *Hansard* comes out this evening. For anyone who was not listening carefully to the Member for Namatjira, the quote of the day was, 'Why would we ignore the experts?' Bill Yan said tonight in front of everyone in the Chamber—it is in *Hansard* for all to see and read forevermore, infinity—'Why would we ignore the experts?'

It appears that the Treasurer is selective with his CLP team and ministers. In particular, the CLP Cabinet members listen to the experts only when it suits them. That is the quote of the day—it is probably the quote of the week, month or year—from the Member for Namatjira. Thank you so much for providing that quote, 'Why would we ignore the experts?'

I pose the question to the CLP government, backbenchers, ministers and all 17 members: why would you ignore the experts when it comes to justice? Why would you ignore the experts when it comes to domestic, family and sexual violence prevention in the Northern Territory? Why would you ignore the experts when it comes to education policy for attendance and engagement? Why would you ignore the experts when it comes to making a difference in the Territory? Why would you ignore the experts like those in our police force, who are asking for their pay to be increased because their workloads, and the complexities of the work, are increased? Why would you ignore the experts, CLP government? The quote from your Treasurer, the man with the money, is, 'Why would we ignore the experts?' Why don't you ask yourselves that? Thank you, Member for Namatjira.

Mrs Zio: Wrap it up.

Ms UIBO: The Member for Fannie Bay wants me to wrap it up. That is how important this issue is to Territorians from a member of government, from the 13 suburbs that the CLP members cover as their electorate. 'Wrap it up; we do not want to hear about anything that is to do with our electorate. Wrap it up; we do not care about the northern suburbs. Wrap it up; I do not have time for you to talk about the important issues that Territorians have brought to you as the opposition. Wrap it up; I have disrespect for Territorians.' Thank you, Member for Fannie Bay. It probably is not your finest hour, so I will not make that the quote of the day.

However, I have another quote from the Member for Fannie Bay, 'People understand why we cut the program'. There it is; the Member for Fannie Bay has undermined every CLP minister by admitting that the CLP cut. CLP members have started to go back to their own DNA in 11 months of governing. The CLP has already started to cut. It has now become part of its language to cut. It is now part of CLP members' mentality—they are proudly and openly showing their DNA—that the CLP cuts important programs, policies and funding for the Territory. Thank you, Member for Fannie Bay, for your contribution. The CLP cuts.

That is not a wrap yet, because I have another one. I appreciate that the Member for Casuarina contributed, because we talked about quite a few suburbs in the electorate that he represents. I was astounded by this one, 'The CLP will always be honest with Territorians'. It is selective in the honesty, from what we have seen so far with the CLP government and what its members tell, or do not tell, Territorians.

'The CLP will always be honest with Territorians'—thank you, Member for Casuarina. It is either that you will now turn a new leaf and change your DNA from the cutting and be honest with Territorians—changing from the lies—or, unfortunately, it may be that the Member for Casuarina is not aware of the many dishonest, untrue things that the CLP, his team, has done in the last 11 months. I would be happy to send him the *Hansard* from the last 11 months of parliament where we have outlined the continuous dishonesty of the CLP to cover its tracks when it lies to Territorians. There are many examples.

Although I honestly believe the Member for Casuarina has a good heart and is a great person, I do not agree or believe that the CLP government that he is a part of is honest—no way, shape or form. I respectfully disagree with your views, Member for Casuarina, and I hope that you speak to your electorate about some of those dishonest announcements, or lack of announcements, and the information, or lack of information, that your CLP government has chosen or not chosen to present to Territorians.

It has been a great opportunity for me to hear from members of the Chamber, particularly government members, on what they think about the motion I put forward on behalf of my Labor team. There was the disregard and disrespect for and the lack of understanding in regard to—our capital city is in the cyclone-prone Top End—how severe weather affects the people we represent, especially in the 13 suburbs that were part of the 10-year plan. It was not a three-year plan.

We are asked, 'Why didn't you do this two years ago?' It was a 10-year plan provided by the experts, engineers and those who have worked on this for a long time. Yes, it could have happened more quickly, but the planning and design were done properly. I thank the Member for Namatjira for tabling my media release from the last term. That was helpful, because I had it in front of me. I am glad he did that—or whoever from his office did his work for him, because he relies on other people doing his work.

To highlight the lack of regard and respect from the CLP members for their own electorates, none of the opposition members have those suburbs or represent the people there. I hope that the CLP's lack of respect and regard is something that northern suburbs constituents are not afraid to bring up with their CLP members. The CLP already cut the program, so they have nothing to lose.

The Member for Namatjira laboured the point that a decision about the project was not made before the election, which is why it did not come up in the CLP's pre-election budget. He spoke about the timing of this. He said it was 'many months later' and also that it was 'six weeks later'. Treasurer, doing the maths, six weeks to me is a month-and-a-half, not many months.

The Member for Daly spoke about some quotes from November, after the announcement.

I highlight that on 16 August last year, a couple of days before the Territory election, in an article by Camden Smith of the *NT News* there was the reaffirmation and confirmation that if Territory Labor was re-elected to government, post-election we would continue work on undergrounding the high-voltage power. I will table

this article to make sure I am transparent and open about where I am quoting from. I have the link, which I will send to Hansard electronically. The last line in the article by Mr Smith was:

The opposition Country Liberal Party has been contacted for comment.

The CLP could not even be bothered, a couple of days before the election, to comment on whether it would keep the project.

Sorry, Member for Casuarina, but I do not trust your party in what it would say face to face. That line from the *NT News* leads me to believe that it was already on the books and was ready to cut—as the Member for Fannie Bay said—the program well and truly before the Territory election results were in.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

1. recognises that all members of this Assembly have firmly committed to addressing domestic, family and sexual violence as a priority

2. acknowledges that domestic, family and sexual violence is our true crime and safety crisis and that this crisis disproportionately impacts Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory

3. recognises the findings of the coronial inquests into the deaths of Kumarn Rubuntja, Kumanjayi Haywood, Miss Yunupingu and Ngeygo Ragurrk, which highlight urgent reforms needed to protect Aboriginal women and children from domestic, family and sexual violence and ensure victims are seen and heard

4. commits to fully resourcing and implementing all recommendations of the Coroner arising from these inquests as a matter of urgency

5. directs the Attorney-General to provide a report to this Assembly on an update to the implementation progress on the recommendations after six, 12 and 18 months

6. further commits to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities and frontline services to ensure effective implementation of these reforms.

This Assembly stands united in addressing the domestic, family and sexual violence crime and safety crisis and ensuring all women and children are safe, protected and supported.

In November last year I gave notice of this motion, committing this Assembly to the full implementation of the 35 recommendations made by the Coroner. That notice was given in the week the Coroner's report was handed down eight months ago. Yesterday I amended the motion to include an accountability mechanism that the minister must report to parliament on the progress of implementing these recommendations. This is the bare minimum that the people of the Northern Territory deserve in order to know what action is being taken in response to the systemic failures that cost these women their lives.

After eight months and in response to the report yesterday, I put this motion to the Assembly. I look forward to the support of all the members in this Chamber who have time and again expressed their commitment to addressing this issue. Now is the moment to show that support.

What we heard yesterday was not the bold, urgent response these deaths demanded. Instead of a clear plan for action we heard a political speech deflecting accountability that downplayed the recommendations of the Coroner, dismissed the experience of survivors and criticised the Coroner in a way that is deeply troubling.

The minister's characterisation of the Coroner's work in this coronial as underwhelming, protracted and lacking humility is inappropriate and dangerous. It undermines the principle of separation of powers, a cornerstone of our democracy. A minister of the Crown should not be publicly attacking the integrity or

professionalism of a judicial officer who is fulfilling their legal obligation to scrutinise state failure and reveal the truth. The attacks on the Coroner in this Chamber and in the media from the CLP is deeply troubling.

The separation of powers exists to protect all of us. It ensures that governments do not interfere with the independence of the courts, including the Coroner's Court. When a minister publicly criticises a Coroner for doing their job, it is not just inappropriate; it undermines the validity of this parliament, the representatives in it and our broader democracy. It sends a message that evidence-based findings can be ignored or attacked if they are politically inconvenient. That undermines public confidence in the justice system. It risks silencing truth-telling and accountability, especially for families who are seeking answers after a death.

This is not my opinion. Separation of powers is not a policy position or an ideal; it is foundational to our Westminster system. It is the foundation of the Constitution. It is our responsibility as members of this Assembly to uphold those principles of our democracy and to act in accordance with them.

Governments do not have to agree with every finding, but they must respect the role of the Coroner or we risk weakening the institutions that are meant to keep us safe and hold power to account. The Coroner's role is to scrutinise, to reveal truth and to challenge the state where it has failed. That is precisely what happened here. To attack the messenger is to undermine the independence of our justice system and to diminish the gravity of these women's deaths.

The minister also described the 35 recommendations as largely unnecessary because many are already in place, but that misses the point. If those systems were working, these women would still be alive. 'Already in place' does not mean already effective. A recommendation repeated is not redundant; it is a warning that the status quo is not protecting the most vulnerable.

The Coroner stated that her recommendations were not radical and were built on the work done by the ICRO in close partnership with the sector over many years. We now have a situation where the minister is insulting the Coroner, ignoring the specialist sector and abolishing the domestic, family and sexual violence forum. How is this working to address this issue?

It was also distressing to hear the minister reduce the complex lived realities of Aboriginal women to a single phrase—cultural coercion. Although naming the dynamics of coercive control is essential, singling out culture in this way without acknowledging the systemic drivers of violence, such as racism, poverty and institutional failure, risks reinforcing harmful stereotypes and shifting blame onto communities rather than confronting the structures that disempower them.

This framing risks pathologising culture rather than understanding how colonisation, poverty, housing insecurity, systemic racism and ongoing disempowerment are the conditions in which this violence is allowed to persist. Let me be clear: Aboriginal culture is not the problem; lack of action, political will and structural reform is.

The so-called report tabled yesterday offers only brief one-line responses to many of the 35 recommendations. There is no accompanying budget, clear framework, overarching strategy or plan for implementation or evaluation.

The minister's response to the recommendation for the establishment of a peak—'We already have one'—shows how out of touch she is. If you are really talking to services as you say you are, you would know that there is no peak. There is a policy officer at NTCOSS. That is not a peak; that is one person. Every other state and territory has a domestic, family and sexual violence peak. Why do we not have one? If we can have a peak in the Northern Territory for amateur fishermen, surely we can have a peak for domestic, family and sexual violence.

We have been told that $36m is allocated in the budget for domestic, family and sexual violence, and the commitment to ongoing funding is welcome. However, there is no clear alignment between this funding and the coronial recommendations.

Where is the detailed plan outlining how these recommendations will be implemented? What are the specific timeframes and milestones? How will progress be measured and reported to Territorians? How can the community be assured that this $36m will result in real and lasting change?

I want to be sure that the voices of survivors, frontline workers and communities are heard in relation to this issue. Holly Gurruwiwi, an Aboriginal advocate and domestic, family and sexual violence lived experience specialist, who has personally supported 183 women and children escaping violence, not through

government systems but through community resilience and the power of belief, says, 'These women did not die to inspire anyone. They died because systems failed them, systems that continue to fail the women and families we fight for every single day.'

Minister Cahill's dismissal was a public betrayal of women, of truth and of every person holding this broken system together with grit and hope.

The voices of frontline organisations speak as one. A coalition of domestic, family and sexual violence services released a joint statement which reads:

> *This was a moment that should have honoured the lives of women who were killed, and the strength of those who spoke up in the hope of saving others.*
>
> *… But the overall response remains underwhelming in the face of the Northern Territory's biggest criminal issue … the services best placed to prevent this violence—community-based, specialist, trauma-informed programs—continue to be overlooked.*
>
> *This is about more than programs. It's about a system that is currently failing women and children, and the urgent need to redesign it alongside the people who know what works.*

I will also share the words of my *yapa*, Bettina Danganbarr, Chairperson of Galiwinku Women's Space:

> *We know what works for our people—support that is grounded in culture, language, and respect. Government services must listen to us and work with us, not over us. If you want real change, invest in our women, support our organisations, and walk with us—not just today, but for the long road ahead.*

We cannot afford another decade of inaction disguised as progress. We have heard from the minister that she is also committed to addressing this issue, and we know that Territorians, particularly Aboriginal women, deserve better.

We have the recommendations and the ongoing funding. We have hardworking frontline services. This is the time for us to be working together with respect and commitment. It is not the time for derision or division. The minister should be leading, not playing politics.

I am grateful to the Coroner for the work she did. I am grateful to the witnesses from DCF, Police, Corrections, Health and specialist services who gave evidence. I am grateful to the families who participated in what would have been an incredibly difficult process. I am grateful to the women who told their stories. I am grateful that everyone came together in the spirit of cooperation and compassion. The least we can do is respect the outcome.

I urge this government to do what is right; implement all 35 recommendations of the Coroner; commit to ongoing transparent reporting to this Assembly; and build a system which is shaped by community and led by the people who know what works. We owe that to Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurrk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood, and to every woman who has been lost, forgotten or left behind.

This is our opportunity to do better and to act for real change.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 44, I move that the motion be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley

Mr O'Gallagher
Mr Patel
Dr Rahman
Mr Yan
Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Cameras in Gallery

Madam SPEAKER: For the information of guests in the gallery, cameras are not allowed to be used. That has been addressed. It is one of the rules of this parliamentary Chamber.

PAPER TABLED
Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory – First Interim Report

Dr RAHMAN (Chair of Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee report, Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory – First Interim Report, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Voluntary assisted dying is a complex issue that raises difficult and challenging questions for individuals, groups and society as a whole. What is clear, though, is that it remains an unresolved subject matter in the Northern Territory and a matter of significant interest for Territorians. With that in mind, the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is pleased to have the opportunity to progress resolution of the issue in our polity.

I am pleased, as Chair of the committee, to present this first interim report on VAD in the Northern Territory to the Legislative Assembly and the public at large as testament to the work undertaken to date by the committee to address the VAD inquiry terms of reference provided to us by the Attorney-General. The committee has been working cooperatively and constructively, ably assisted by the secretariat to produce this document and ancillary materials in a timely fashion.

We remain committed to engaging with the issues at hand systematically and fairly and communicating our work regularly to keep Territorians abreast of our progress.

We trust the report will be of assistance to interested parties.

Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I proudly speak about a special occasion for the Djalkiripuyngu people across the Blue Mud Bay area, located on the Gulf of Carpentaria in north-east Arnhem Land. Today, 30 July 2025, marks the 17th anniversary of the historic decision by the High Court of Australia to grant the Djalkiripuyngu traditional owners their hard-fought native title rights to the intertidal waters of Blue Mud Bay in 2008.

This decision stands as one of the most significant affirmations of Aboriginal legal rights in Australian history, a decision which subsequently led to the inclusion of intertidal waters within the boundaries of land covered by the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. This significant change for Australia came from the remote coastline of the Northern Territory. The outcome of this case is a testament to the ongoing strength of the Djalkiripuyngu traditional owners, Yolngu people and Aboriginal Territorians when it comes to having their say about what happens on their country and their sea country.

Last year the Member for Daly and I had the immense privilege of welcoming a delegation of leaders from Blue Mud Bay, including Dr Djambawa Marawili AM and Waka Munungurr, to perform ceremony at the

Northern Territory Parliament House and raise the sea rights flag here to make sure, for the first time in the Northern Territory parliament's history, the flag was flown proudly.

Madam Speaker, thanks to your approval, the flag flew proudly again today outside Parliament House on the Speaker's Green. I thank you very much on behalf of my constituents. I hope for many years to come that this is now a parliament practice.

The sea rights flag was designed by Donald Nuwandjali Marawili and was created for the future celebration and recognition of sea rights in the Northern Territory and across Australia. It is recognised by many saltwater communities and groups, and is used by land councils, national cultural institutions and the Australian Defence Force. It is a flag that symbolises the movement to recognise the rights of Aboriginal Territorians to the sea and their unbroken connections to the coastline.

I am wearing a small version of it, but I will explain the flag. The white of the flag symbolises clouds, the blue symbolises the sea, the black symbolises the landowners, the red represents their blood and the yellow disc symbolises the sand on the beaches.

The importance of water is associated with its own creation stories in many First Nations cultures. The connection of people to water—both freshwater and saltwater—has helped to shape thousands of years of language and culture for the Yolngu people of the Northern Territory coastline. The currents in the ocean and the tide have their own movements and energy. The rivers and the areas between the low and high-tide watermark is associated with renewal and abundance of fish and sea life.

Blue Mud Bay is a special place. The homelands remain a place of strength and opportunity to continue to provide a platform for Djalkiripuyngu self-determination and the advancement of strong culture and strong lives on homelands. The Baparru leaders and residents are successfully preserving their language, customs and laws, as well as their custodianship of land and sea, culture and the continued unbroken songlines. The Djalkiripuyngu people continue to grow from strength to strength in their advocacy, vision and aspirations for the Blue Mud Bay region.

In 2022 the Djalkiripuyngu leaders signed the Djalkiripuyngu Local Decision Making Agreement, covering the homelands surrounding the beautiful Blue Mud Bay area. These homelands include Baniyala, Wandawuy, Gan Gan, Garrangali, Mandjawuy, Barraratjpi, Djarrapi, Baygurrtji and Gurkawuy.

Through their local decision-making agreement, the Djalkiripuyngu leaders have a platform for their vision and aspirations and an avenue to advance their homelands for themselves, their children and the future generations of their families and for better support for leadership—asking for more capacity to make those local decisions—for the leaders now and those who will follow in their footsteps in the future.

They have asked for support for enabling infrastructure and essential services, which are critical to supporting homelands and those who live there; for new housing on homelands to be supported; for industry and jobs to grow on country to ensure that those who want to live on country can always do so and to keep homelands safe and resilient in times of emergency; for improved access to early childhood and family services to support young people to grow up strong; and for access to good education in homelands that confirms both Yolngu and balanda perspectives.

These are only some of the key priorities outlined in the local decision-making agreement. I strongly encourage the CLP government to continue the work that the Djalkiripuyngu leaders have advocated for so far for their homelands and their people.

Another critical aspect of the sea rights *da-whu* (story) is the Sea Rights Yingapungapu sand sculpture located in Baniyala. I believe it is the only heritage-listed sand sculpture in Australia. It was listed in 2024.

This large, oval-shaped sand sculpture is pointed at each end, resembling the shape of a *lipalipa* (canoe). Its perimeter and internal designs are formed by raised compacted by the sand. Historically significant flags and two wooden ceremonial poles painted with sacred patterns by acclaimed Yolngu artists are positioned within, representing the two moieties, *dhuwa* and *yirritja*.

The sand sculpture and the flying sea rights flags mark the high and low water mark, and powerfully assert Aboriginal land rights and sea rights in the intertidal zone for the Blue Mud Bay clans.

This story also connects clans and country across Blue Mud Bay, linking three peninsulas: Garra-para of the Dhalwangu clan; Baniyala of the Madarrpa clan; and Djarrakpi of the Mangalili clan. It illustrates the connections between places and patterns that form the basis for sea rights.

I highly recommend that anyone in this Assembly and anyone who is listening who can visit this beautiful part of the Territory that is Blue Mud Bay and Baniyala takes the chance to view this living sculpture. It is a highlight and an incredible experience when it coincides with the sea rights anniversary celebrations. The celebrations were held in Baniyala today. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend as the proud local member, but I have been to those celebrations in the past and they are special. That is when you get to see this living memorial and Baniyala itself become the epicentre of cultural performances and the passing on of knowledge of the ancestral songs and dances for sea country. This truly showcases the Djalkiripuyngu leaders' rights to the cultural and economic management of their country over thousands of generations.

In closing, I congratulate the Djalkiripuyngu leaders on another successful anniversary of sea rights. I hope to attend their fantastic celebrations in Baniyala next year. Congratulations to the Blue Mud Bay leaders on 17 years of sea rights.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I will be quick. I have a very special guy in my electorate who has a birthday today. Jason, if you are watching, happy birthday. If I get my maths right, you are turning 20. Happy 20th, and I hope you have a great one. Cheers.

Madam SPEAKER: Wow, that was brief.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, members may recall that on 21 May I foreshadowed my intention to launch a fledgling music festival in my electorate. It is my great pleasure to report tonight on the inaugural Fong Lim Fanfare Festival, held from 4 to 6 July.

The purpose of the festival was manifold but primarily to bring some joy and vitality to my electorate via celebration of band music. The festival was presented under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and delivered in association with partners from the University of Sydney's Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Sydney Grammar School, Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association, Ton's Bistro @ Dinah, Haileybury Rendall School, Northern Territory Music School, Australian American Association and Government House.

I thank the branch president of the CPA for allowing us to raise the profile of the CPA with branding across all these events. As I have pointed out, the CPA is a powerful organisation that we all belong to across countries, and we could all do well to have more involvement with it.

The mini festival we ran over a few days featured three exciting performances by the renowned 21-piece jazz big band Dr V's Swing Thing from Sydney. That was led by acclaimed saxophonist, band leader, conductor, educator and composer Mr David Theak, who is the leader of the jazz performance program at the University of Sydney and one of the giants of Australian jazz and music generally. We were blessed to have him and a range of other people volunteer their time to come from interstate, put on a three-day music festival and spread a bit of joy.

We ran three events over three days. They were all different and, I am pleased to report, all successful.

On 4 July, at my beloved Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association, we did an event called Swing, Swing, Swing! We had a glamorous Territory formal 4 July dinner dance. Guests were invited to dress up, dine and dance the night away to the sounds of classic Rat Pack tunes. It was quite the contrast; we had ballgowns versus the beloved crusty barnacles in hi-vis at the Dinah Beach Yacht Club, but it was proof that the Dinah Beach Yacht Club scrubs up all right as well.

It was a sold-out event with tonnes of swing dancers, amazing food service by Ton's Bistro, which I commend for being short-listed for a bunch of catering awards recently. It even made a modest start towards fundraising for the new pontoon that Dinah Beach is seeking to replace, which is an essential piece of infrastructure that is important to all mariners in the Northern Territory.

It was also a useful opportunity to build bridges with the Australian American Association and the US Marines who are part of our society here and often do not have terribly much to do with civil society. I was pleased to see that some off-duty people came to help us enjoy the event.

On 5 July at Government House we held a special outdoor terrace concert hosted by Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO, PSM to support the Administrator in recognising the contributions of community musical volunteers. There were about 150 of those volunteers from organisations and ensembles, including the Darwin City Brass Band; Hot and Cold Big Band; Darwin Beach Choir; Darwin Chorale, which recently celebrates its 40th anniversary; the Army Band of the 1st Brigade; the new Royal Australian Navy Band; Vocalective Singers; Darwin Symphony Orchestra; Arafura Wind Ensemble; and Arafura Music Collective.

I was delighted to also see the Members for Port Darwin and Johnston at the concert. Thank you so much for coming down. It was wonderful to have parliamentary colleagues there. I note, of course, that everybody else was more or less at the Alice Springs Show. I could not compete with the Alice Springs Show, so fair dues to those of you who could not make it, and thank you to those of you who could.

It is fair to say that it was a well-received event. The first response of a lot of the people who were contracted by those organisations was, 'You want me to play at what when?' It was a case of, 'No, we want you to sit in the audience and for once be thanked for the contribution you make towards social cohesion, art, culture and the economic impact of the arts'. It was nice for a lot of those people who sing the national anthem for us at all the events, fly the flag for us and make these event happen to have an opportunity to be recognised.

Again, it was a good opportunity to fly the flag for the CPA and for people to ask, 'What is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association? How is it involved with these initiatives?' I might add that cultural exchange programs through the CPA are a core part of its business.

The third event we ran was on the following day, 6 July, entitled Dave Theak's Jazz Jamboree. We did an interactive holiday masterclass and performance aimed at inspiring our next generation of young artists, particularly musicians. As some of you know, growing up in Darwin I benefited from an amazing musical education. I fondly recall the excitement of watching touring band performances. Our hope was to provide something similarly fun and inspiring for young and old alike.

I am pleased to say that even though we had slightly smaller numbers than we had hoped for, every kid who turned up would have walked away inspired and with something to aim for. A series of kids, who all play in our public schools and some of our private schools as well, were all able to sit in on an interactive masterclass to learn from some of the best people in the country in what was a privileged opportunity. I was delighted to put on that event for a select few because it made a profound difference to the people who could attend the event.

My priority will always be, first and foremost, delivering for my electorate, but it is worth noting the economic footprint of this modest event. A conservative estimate would be that I generated, in partnership with all the people who contributed their time, a six-figure contribution to our GSP (gross state product) from a three-figure investment in operating costs. That is basically a return on investment of a thousandfold-plus, notwithstanding the absolute versus relative quantum of that impact.

We are not talking about a big-ticket project that generated millions, but it is safe to say that I generated hundreds of thousands in three days of putting on free music. There is an economic argument and a logic to supporting the arts here. I keep explaining to everyone in this House that it is the small things added together that compound into sustainable economic growth models. You need people, but you also need regular activity and not necessarily chasing white elephant projects the whole time. That is my subtle dig at the fact that the arts pay off and it is worth us investing in the arts. I extend a courtesy to the Member for Gwoja who also makes a similar point on a recurrent basis, we both being the Parliamentary Friends of Live Music, as it were.

How is it that I can calculate such a generous sum? If you think about the cost of flights, accommodation, production costs, ticket sales, food and beverage costs, catering contracts and all the money those guys spent at the Mindil Beach and Parap markets, as well as all the secondary tourism tours, I had 25 people come here with their families for at least four days. Then there is the knock-on effect of everyone who was involved in that event. The return on investment is extremely high, and it is worth us considering what actually generates bang for buck in the Northern Territory economically.

Going back to the artsy side of it, the festival was a lot of fun; it was a delight to put on music and spread joy. It was great to see parliamentary colleagues being part of it. It was also heartening to see so many people invested in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and asking questions about what it did, what we could for it and what it could do for us.

We started small but mighty in 2025, and fingers crossed we will expand Fanfare over the next few years and hopefully involve a lot of local wind bands, brass bands, big bands and put on gigs through some of Fong Lim's hidden gem locations. I represent an electorate with a lot of cool places to make music that a lot of people do not know about. There is a lot of airport hangars, industrial warehouses, microbreweries, gin distilleries and seaside venues. There are pretty great schools as well, all of which had a small part to play in this year's festival and which I hope will have an even larger part to play in next year's festival.

I appreciate that it is a congested time of year, and it was a no slight on the Alice Springs Show; we organised this some nine months in advance and ended up clashing with the show. I make this commitment, though: if it is the case that we end up doing this on the same weekend this time next year, we will make sure we get to Alice Springs on tour because I know a lot of the people who were involved with the tour really love the Territory and were delighted to be a part of promoting the arts and music education in the Territory. I might add that some of them have longstanding connections to the Territory as people who lived or worked here in the past.

It was a fantastic opportunity to get an initiative off the ground, and I very much appreciate the support of everyone in the House for helping me to make it a successful event. Thank you very much.

I look forward to reporting back on the Fong Lim Fanfare Festival in 2026.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will speak again about the escalating horror that Israel is perpetrating in Gaza. Israel continues to slaughter and starve the Palestinian people, and I speak on this today because we all have a moral obligation to speak against these blatant war crimes. We have an obligation to amplify our community's distress at the genocide. We have a duty to stand up and support in particular our Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities in this time of unbearable pain.

We also have a duty to call out the federal government's sickening complicity with Israel's actions through our two-way arms trade and our support of the US military, which supports and finances Israel's actions. With weapons parts being sent directly from RAAF Base Tindal in Katherine to Tel Aviv, you cannot tell me that this is not relevant to us in the NT.

The past 21 months have been witness to a deliberate planned genocide carried out by Israel on the people of Gaza. For those who have been listening, Israel made its intentions clear. Amnesty International reviewed statements issued by the Israeli Government and military officials between 7 October 2023 and June 2024 that dehumanised Palestinians and called for or justified genocidal acts, and it found 22 separate statements made by senior officials that called for or justified genocidal acts, providing direct evidence of genocidal intent, which is important in humanitarian law.

As if those admissions, the horrific proof on our screens every day and the arrest warrants from the ICC for Netanyahu and his war Cabinet were not enough, leading genocide scholars across the world have confirmed this is a genocide. That includes two prominent Israeli human rights groups in the past two days that have come out and said, 'Our government is enacting a genocide in Gaza'.

This makes it hard for me and the millions of people in this country who are distraught and who have marched in protest, written letters and shared articles to understand how most of our political representatives stay silent. How can you do this during a livestreamed genocide? I still cannot believe there are people so cruel and so deadened to their humanity that they can simply ignore the suffering we are witnessing. When I listen to the deafening silence from most people in this Chamber, I am left to think, 'Surely, you must not be seeing the images and videos that we are'. I cannot believe that even the most heartless person in this room cannot be moved to action once they see the reality.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table some images and share some stories.

Leave granted.

K McNAMARA: This is only a drop in the ocean of the suffering and trauma, only a minuscule fraction of the sheer numbers of destroyed families and traumatised children. Honestly, I collected these images in five minutes. There is just so much more.

We have the paediatrician, Dr Alaa al-Najjar, who was in hospital, working with patients who were being brought in, when the ambulance brought in the nine charred and mutilated bodies of her children. Nine out of 10 of her children were killed in an Israeli strike as she was working at the hospital.

One of these images is a more recent one that I saw from a video of a little two-year old, Zeina. Luckily they blurred it out; I do not want to spare anyone the gruesome details. She is a little two-year-old, just a bit older than my child. Not only is she starving but she has had her leg blown off in an Israeli strike. In the video, her father—so desperate—can see her parched mouth and is trying to put his saliva on her mouth because that is all he has to offer her, no food, no drink.

On top of the bombardment, Israel is now starving the children, the doctors, the aid workers and every person in Gaza.

I have only 10 minutes, and I could not possibly cover even 1% of the horrors that have happened. I want you to see the video of workers uncovering the 15 bodies of ambulance workers that Israel buried in a shallow grave. I watched the video. I saw their hands still had the blue plastic gloves that ambulance and medical people wear.

I want you to listen to the recording of Hind Rajab pleading with emergency dispatchers to come and save her as Israeli troops fire hundreds of rounds into the car she is sitting in. I want you to hear her little voice as she explained that she was trying to stop the blood from coming out of her mouth because she did not want to get her dress dirty so her mother did not have to wash it.

Go online and open your eyes. Israel has destroyed every bit of critical infrastructure in Gaza. It has bombed hospitals into oblivion. No, Israel has not managed to present a scrap of evidence that there were any supposed tunnels under the hospitals. These hospitals are run and staffed by dedicated Palestinian and international doctors who, in deteriorating conditions, are trying to save lives and who themselves are now starving, operating on bloodstained floors, doing amputations on children with no anaesthesia and holding the hands of innocent people as they die of preventable diseases or treatable injuries because there is no medicine left.

We have international humanitarian law which dictates that health establishments, including hospitals, should never be attacked. This protection extends to the wounded and sick as well as to medical staff and means of transport. Article 18 of the Geneva Convention demands that medical units, like hospitals, may in no circumstance be attacked.

How is anyone defending Israel at this point? Targeting hospitals and medical personnel intentionally and as a strategy of war is a war crime. In 2024 the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense minister Yoav Gallant, alleging that they are intentionally depriving the Gazan civilian population of essential resources such as food, water, medicine, fuel and electricity. These are war crimes. There are babies who are starving to death. Less than an hour away from where their little bodies are lying, there are trucks full of baby formula and aid that Israel is blocking. This is a war crime.

Despite the conniving weasel words of our Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign minister Penny Wong, we are complicit. For 21 months they lied to the public. They repeatedly said that we do not export weapons to Israel. Recently, irrefutable proof revealed that Australia has sent F-35 parts directly from Tindal to Tel Aviv. Just this week we heard the cowardly Penny Wong say, by way of explanation, ‘They are nonlethal parts’. I am sorry, but what part of a jet that is entirely designed to indiscriminately bomb is nonlethal? This is an insult to our intelligence and an insult to Australians in general. We literally have weapons being sent from the Northern Territory to Israel to be used in acts of war crimes. This is an abomination, and it is unacceptable. The Australian people did not give their consent to become complicit in Israel’s war crimes. Our governments at all levels are allowing this.

The Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people is the greatest moral and legal failing of our time. Future generations will study this, just like we study the Holocaust. Just like us, they will ask: who were the collaborators; who were the enablers; and who was complicit in allowing it to happen? Because of the Australian Government’s relationship with Israel and the US, they will study us. Elected representatives and the media will be scrutinised.

There are roughly 750 elected officials across Australia in all state, territory and federal parliaments. You each in this Chamber are one of them. That is 750 of us out of 26 million Australians who have a platform and can get media attention, make real change and take action. With this platform, we have a responsibility to speak and act on grave human rights abuses, no matter where they are. Your actions will be studied, and if you choose to remain silent, how will you answer when they ask, ‘What did you do? When the world allowed Israel to attempt to exterminate the Palestinian people, what did you do?’ You will have to answer to them. Your children will ask you, ‘What did you do?’, and the answer will be whatever it is you are doing now.

I implore you to use your platform. Make your stance on genocide known. There are people in each of your electorates who are beyond distressed. Do not just wait for people to come to you; be proactive. Go and speak to your community, visit the mosque and talk to our Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities. If they have not been reaching out to you, maybe ask yourself, 'Why is that? What kind of values do I put forth to the public that people don't believe I would support them in their grief, that people don't trust or know what side I would be on in a case of blatant genocide?'

At the very least, if you cannot take a stand against genocide, you stand for nothing.

[Clapping from the gallery.]

Madam SPEAKER: Could I ask that clapping be ceased, please.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing this matter to the attention of the Chamber. Many people say that this is not our business and it does not belong in this Chamber, and what I want to say is that could not be further from the truth. It is our issue. It is impacting our constituents, people who have family and friends in Gaza and people who are grieving, fearful, watching the devastation unfold, wondering where their government stands. It is being supported in the Northern Territory through Pine Gap, RAAF Tindal and the use of land and infrastructure to enable military cooperation.

As people know, I am a Jewish woman. My history is deeply entwined with the history of Gaza, Palestine and Israel. My people know what it means to be targeted. We know the horrors of persecution, genocide and silence, and it is precisely because of that history—not in spite of it—that I stand here to say, 'Not in my name'. I do not stand alone as a Jewish woman; many Jewish people across the world are saying that this is not okay.

I want to be clear: it is not anti-Semitic to criticise the state of Israel. I want to put that here in this Chamber, because it is a way of silencing talking about the genocide that is happening in front of our eyes. It is an incredible catastrophe. The Member for Nightcliff shared some photos which are confronting, and we cannot look away from that.

Palestinian artist Feras Shaheen was here recently. When he was speaking and clearly distressed, he said, 'It's not wrong to cry. If you aren't crying, then that's when something is wrong.'

When we are seeing something of this magnitude in front of our eyes every day, we have a choice. We can look away or we can stand and say, 'No. We do not want this to happen, not in our name.' Not in our name if we are Jewish, Australian—it is not okay.

When people ask why I raise this here, I ask back, 'When weapons components are transported through our ports, surveillance data is shared from Pine Gap in Mparntwe and military operations are coordinated from bases here, how can we say it is not our business?' We need to stand up and do something about this.

I am not sure what we do in this House. Obviously, this is an emotional issue for me and for everyone. We can call on our federal government—which has not taken the action that many people want it to take in relation to this—to impose sanctions, end our military and intelligence cooperation, terminate the Force Posture Agreement and stop what we are doing to aid this live streamed genocide.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for her ongoing bravery in talking out about this issue when many people say that it is not our business and we do not need to be talking about it here. We absolutely do.

I ask everyone to stand for justice. I have talked to people in this Chamber and know that many of you are deeply distressed about what is happening and what we are witnessing. Let us stand together to do something about it.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I will speak about a constituent of mine, but before I do so, I feel compelled to follow on from the Members for Nightcliff and Johnston.

This evening I also stepped outside of Parliament House to meet a group of passionate, committed Territorians rallying against the horrific and heartbreaking events unfolding in Gaza. Many of my Jewish friends and family flew back to Australia on 7 October because of the horrific events unfolding in the Middle East. Many of my Jewish friends and family are also deeply distressed and grieving because of the actions of the Israeli Government.

The Israeli Government does not speak for all Jewish people, just as governments rarely speak for all their citizens. I want to be clear that I am not a Zionist. I stand for human rights, dignity and justice for all people. That includes Palestinian people who are suffering and who cannot and should not be ignored. This is a human rights crisis. Innocent children, elders and families are being killed. This is a genocide. Our response must demand compassion, courage and clarity, not silence.

I spoke in this parliament today about silence being the biggest injustice, because silence means turning away from suffering instead of confronting it. Silence means letting harm continue because speaking up is inconvenient or uncomfortable. Silence means allowing people in power to avoid accountability. Silence means sending a message to victims, families and communities that their pain does not matter. When leaders stay silent in the face of violence, systemic failure or injustice, they all become complicit. Silence might feel safe and protect the status quo, but when we are silent, innocent lives are lost. Silence is not neutral; it is fatal.

I will speak about a wonderful person in my community. It is with the saddest and heaviest of hearts that we acknowledge the passing of a beloved leader, artist, mentor and friend, O Jungarrayi Sims. Jungarrayi passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by love. He was cared for with immense devotion by his sisters Wendy Nungarrayi Brown and Lyn Nungarrayi Sims; his beloved wife, Ormay Nangala Gallagher; and their extended families and communities. I also acknowledge the support of Alice Springs Hospital, the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Yuendumu clinic and Purple House, who helped fulfil his wish to pass away on country.

Born in 1960 in Yuendumu, Jungarrayi, known to us as grandpa, was one of seven children of the two founding members of the Warlukurlangu Artists, the late Paddy Japaljarri Sims and Bessie Nakamarra Sims. From a young age Jungarrayi was immersed in culture, story and country. Some of his most cherished memories were travelling and camping with his family, learning the songs, stories and law of his ancestors.

He undertook his schooling in Yuendumu and later at Yirara College. His pursuit for knowledge continued through study in Alice Springs at Batchelor Institute and further education in Sydney, Perth and Townsville, where he also trained as a Christian evangelical pastor, a reflection of his deep faith and spiritual connection.

For more than three decades grandpa painted with Warlukurlangu Artists. He served on its executive from 2002 and led as Chair from 2007 until 2023—a remarkable legacy. He also brought his wisdom and guidance to Desart, serving on its board as Chairperson.

Jungarrayi was immensely proud to walk in the footsteps on his parents as not only a painter but also a cultural authority, a keeper of Warlpiri law and of tradition. He was a joyful and charismatic figure, known for his colourful personality, warm humour and spellbinding storytelling. A true ambassador for Warlpiri art, culture and law, he cared for his culture and carried his culture to audiences across the country and the world, always returning home to share those experiences with his family and community.

His artworks, like the stories of his ancestors, will continue to speak long after his passing. Through his painting, his leadership and his spirit, Jungarrayi leaves an incredible mark on all of us—a legacy woven into the fabric of Warlpiri pride.

May he rest in peace, unified with his father, mother, brothers and dear sister. He will be greatly missed and forever remembered.

Jungarrayi was larger than life. In the final days of his life we sat down and spent time at the 50th anniversary of the Warlpiri bilingual education. As sick as he was, he was there to see the next generation of children—passionate, committed and lively—to learn their culture and language and know who they are.

For years he was the strongest of advocates, standing up against the Northern Territory Emergency Response, the intervention. For years he called for better services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. He was at every rally, standing up for our people, the most vulnerable people. Every aspect of his life was given to his community and his people.

I place on the record the love for Jungarrayi, my grandfather, and thank him for the years of memories of love and his commitment to keeping culture strong.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.