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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Canteen Creek School and Palmerston Senior College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students and their teachers from Canteen Creek School, as part of their week at the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre; and Year 8 and 9 students from Palmerston Senior College Special Education Centre, accompanied by their teachers. Welcome to Parliament House; it is wonderful to see you all here this morning.

Members: Hear, hear!

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT (EXTENSION OF SCHEME) BILL
Serial 38

Continued from 3 September 2025.

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

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, from the outset I make it clear that the opposition will be supporting this legislation. I also make it clear that Territorians should not be fooled. When it comes to addressing housing issues in the Northern Territory—whether they be issues of supply, affordability or security—the CLP government does not have a long-term strategy.

At a time when costs are rising across the board—rent, groceries, power bills—the CLP government has chosen to make things harder, not easier, for Territorians trying to take their first step on the property ladder. The CLP has chosen to turn a blind eye to 50% of Territorians who rent and to anyone looking for a secure and affordable housing option under their government.

I will start with the CLP's decision to scrap the First Home Owner Grant scheme for established homes. It is incredibly short-sighted policy that will lock countless young Territorians out of the market. Not every first homebuyer can afford to build a new home. For many—nurses, teachers, tradies, young families and individuals—the only realistic pathway to ownership is through an established home purchase. By scrapping this support mechanism, the CLP government has slammed the door on these Territorians.

The majority of grant applications over the years have been from people buying established homes. The data tells us that. Earlier this month when we were briefed on this Bill, the 12-month figures by grant category were as follows: 798 for the $10,000 First Home Owner Grant for established homes had been accessed, taken up and utilised by Territorians; 102 for the $30,000 FreshStart New Home Grant had been accessed; and 189 of the $50,000 grant for buying or building a new home.

You can see where the real demand is—where Territorians are looking to get a step up in the property market and purchase their first existing property. That is where the grant has been the most effective, as shown by the CLP's data for this grant scheme, yet for some reason the CLP decided to abolish this popular and useful part of the grant. I would love to hear from the Treasurer how that decision was made, based on the CLP's data showing that the highest proportion of people accessed this grant to buy established homes.

Instead of a genuine first homeowner buyer strategy, Territorians are getting short-term election bids. It demonstrates how little the CLP government thinks of the next generation of Territorians who deserve a fair chance to buy their first home.

Before the Treasurer tries to lecture me about the focus being on stimulating construction and bringing new housing supply into the market, I am well aware of the levers he is trying to pull. It is a massive shame that the CLP has missed this important opportunity to support our young Territorians and those looking to find a way out of the rental market, which would see first home ownership numbers increase with people having an affordable place of their own.

There are a few other kickers with this one. Few grants were applied for or taken up outside of the Palmerston and Berrimah areas. It is fantastic for households and families looking to move into those areas, and I am pleased that these grants have supported them to build their own homes; however, the rate it has been taken up in other parts of the Territory is minimal. We asked for a breakdown from the Treasurer's office, but unfortunately that has not been forthcoming—the briefing was several weeks ago. It is probably because it shows that there have been few grants applied for or handed out in the Treasurer's home town of Alice

Springs or the Member for Barkly's hometown of Tennant Creek. In my home town of Katherine there have been a few, but a few is still good. I do not think the CLP can claim that it is a government for all Territorians when it is focuses only on the Top End.

It has been great for some. I am not diminishing it, but for people not living in the places I mentioned with the bigger uptake—the Darwin, Palmerston and Berrimah area—there have been no new land releases under the CLP government or other settings that allow for stimulus and construction to occur. The government is silent on this. This legislation for the 12-month extension will make it even more difficult for people because the grant will only be for new-build homes.

The CLP government also spoke about this being a game changer and that we would see mass migration to the Territory from interstate. It foresaw a stampede of southerners wanting to take up the grants and settle in the Territory, but that has not happened. Many grant recipients are Territorians; that is wonderful to acknowledge, but we will see whether the Treasurer's wrap-up speech acknowledges it has not been the population booster he claimed it would be. In fact, when I attended the briefing from the Treasurer's office, we asked how it looked at the data collection and how would we know whether Territorians are using these grants. They have a survey—it is not mandated—that anyone who takes up the grants is encouraged to complete, to get the data. When people complete the survey, it is informative. I am unsure why it is not mandated, considering Territory taxpayers' dollars are going into the scheme. It should be something the government enforces so that it knows who the grants are going to and how the data is broken down.

Home ownership is more than bricks and mortar; it is about stability, our community and giving Territorians—particularly young Territorians—the opportunity to stay here, build their lives and invest in the future that will support growth of the Territory.

We support the extension of this grant through this legislation, but the government should look at many other things to ensure that Territorians struggling to make ends meet have the opportunity for a secure, stable home to live in and support themselves, their partners and their families. Whether they are renting or looking to buy, this could be a game changer for them. Unfortunately, a large part of the grant scheme has been completely knocked out, which is disappointing for all Territorians. The data speaks for itself: the most popular part of the scheme has gone.

If the Territory keeps making it harder for young people to rent or buy a home, we should not be surprised if they leave or stay in other states where governments back their first homebuyers with meaningful strategies or by honouring the commitments under the national rent reform agreement. Territorians need a genuine first homeowner strategy that does not just look good at election time and in the first 12 months of headlines but looks at builds and at support for established homes. We need a strategy that is long term, fair and designed to keep Territorians in the Territory. The strategy needs to include rental reform and a greater focus and investment from the CLP government on social and affordable housing. We hear from industry stakeholders that the government is not engaged at all with this area.

An NT Shelter and NTCOSS report released last week shows that the Northern Territory has the highest proportion of renters in Australia—almost half the population—and the second highest rent. When drilling down further into the stats that were released, we start to appreciate how many Territorians are under significant housing stress, with half or more of their weekly income taken up by rent before any other expenses are even considered by their household. The Treasurer has a low opinion of Territorians who rent. He somehow thinks that they are less than human beings. He has said that in this place before. We are talking about half of the Territory's population that he has no regard for.

I said in the House in September that we need more focus on renters. The previous Labor government signed up to the national reform agreement aimed at harmonising and strengthening renters' rights and set about bringing the legislative changes to the Territory. The only time the CLP government mentioned renters was to sneer at them, which is highly concerning behaviour from a government that is supposed to represent all Territorians, let alone the 50% who are renters.

The government has not contemplated any initiatives to support the cost-of-living crisis we are experiencing. Meanwhile, the CLP is going nowhere fast with social and affordable housing. The Treasurer will talk about worker shortages and other barriers in the Territory, but one big barrier the Treasurer continually fails to mention—there is a complete lack of political will from those opposite—is the lack of social and affordable housing. The government has no interest in or drive to build social and affordable housing across the NT. As with renters, the government does not care about the battlers doing it tough who need support to get themselves into decent and secure living arrangements for the sake of their kids and families.

Looking at the stats, we know how little the government cares about this group of Territorians. The National Housing Accord aims to increase housing supply across the country by 1.2 million homes, of which the Territory had a target of 11,000 new homes by 2029. The CLP government immediately scrapped that target because it intends to only build about one-third of those houses. There are goals to track what government does; removing them provides no accountability, which is exactly what the CLP government has done.

We are the worst-performing jurisdiction by a country mile under the National Housing Accord. Rather than building more homes, the CLP will not even bother to try, which is why it scrapped the target. With the national Social Housing Accelerator program the Territory was signed up to build 100 new affordable homes over the next few years, and so far it has built only four.

In September I called for a parliamentary committee process to look at housing matters in the Territory for renters, landlords, people in public housing and those trying to get a foot on the property ladder, and for developers and builders to have input. I again call on the government to get serious about housing issues across the Territory. These grants are great when they are at the start of a term, but they slowly drop off. We see that with this legislation to extend the scheme; a huge proportion—the popular part—of the grant is being scrapped.

These sugar hits do not address the broader issue of housing availability, affordability and security now and in the future. Territorians deserve better, a government which puts them first and not interstate landlords who benefit from them; which listens to and supports their aspirations, not makes life harder; and which has the courage to invest in a real first homebuyer strategy and social and affordable housing—which the CLP government is silent on—to help lift more Territorians out of housing stress and allow them to breathe financially and thrive for generations, not just survive in the rental market.

We support this Bill, but we will keep calling out the government's failures to deliver for first homebuyers and ensure that Territorians who need social and affordable housing, and renters, are supported. If new housing benefits the entire Territory economy, as the CLP likes to say, surely housing would have the biggest benefit when new builds deliver high value in the economy and people are supported to purchase an established property for the first time. Territorians deserve a government that can do more than just hand out sugar hits.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, like many in this Chamber I was excited to hear the first line of the Leader of the Opposition's speech. It was a positive moment, but it was followed by about 15 minutes of rubbish. It was a great opening line, and I welcome Labor's support when we vote on this matter.

We heard attacks on the Treasurer and that more work needs to be done on affordable housing in the Territory. That is why—I will refresh everyone's memory—last week we asked whether the Leader of the Opposition would call her federal colleagues to expand the federal scheme. Maybe she can pick up her phone, search for 'Luke' at the bottom and give him a ring?

I will not tarnish the reputation of the already failed opposition but will speak in strong support of the First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill. I am proud to be a part of this Country Liberal government which is delivering for Territorians, helping people achieve home ownership while also stimulating our construction industry.

Data from Master Builders shows that the 253 new homes supported by this government's housing grants have stimulated $152m of private sector investment in the Territory. That investment has supported more than 600 jobs in residential building and potentially up to 1,000 indirect jobs across the economy. Someone has to feed these construction workers, and they are making a killing in Winnellie selling pies.

This Bill extends the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant and the $30,000 FreshStart New Home Grant for another year. We are keeping the Territory's nation-leading home building program alive and thriving for another year. This is about keeping Territorians here, helping families put down roots and restoring the great Territory lifestyle that Labor forgot.

This program was promised during the 2024 election campaign. I am proud to stand as a part of a government that delivers on its promises and doubles down on them. The CLP said that we would rebuild confidence, reward hard work and help more Territorians call this place home. We are getting on with the job.

Recent news reports show more than 1,000 Territorians have benefited from these grants in the first 12 months alone. That is a $20m boost into the hands of families and builders, with more than $9.5m going directly into new-build first homes. There has been a 42.4% increase in dwelling starts over the last year and close to 300 new builds in the pipeline. That is 300 more houses being built in the Territory. That is not just

a statistic; it is shovels in the ground, tradies in work and families building futures here in the Territory. This scheme works.

The year-long extension of the scheme—which started on 1 October 2024—to 30 September 2026 means $50,000 is available for first homebuyers building or purchasing a new home and $30,000 under the FreshStart scheme for non-first homeowners. With this extension, the government is giving even more Territorians the chance to reset and rebuild. Importantly, the 12-month residency requirement continues, ensuring these grants support real homeowners, not interstate investors, encouraging people to move to the Territory or stay and put down roots.

The Leader of the Opposition touched on allegations that the Treasurer does not like renters. I am a renter; I like the Treasurer, and he likes me. I do not know how many of those opposite do not own their own home, but as a renter I feel fully supported by this government because it genuinely cares about ensuring young Territorians, especially my fellow zoomers, can afford to live in the Territory.

The previous Labor government left us with the lowest rate of home ownership in the country and a generation of Territorians trapped in the rent cycle. The Leader of the Opposition brings up the 50% of people who are renters and uses it to try to whack us a bit, but where did that number come from? Under eight failed years of Labor government that number kept climbing.

Our construction industry was flatlined, our young people were leaving and confidence was gone. This Bill is part of the CLP government's plan to reverse that trend. It gives young Territorians a reason to stay, families a reason to invest and builders the confidence to expand and hire new employees. Treasury's review showed that almost 85% of grant recipients were millennials or younger, including my fellow zoomers. It is proof this program is helping young people get that all-important foot on the property ladder. Among those surveyed who had thought about leaving, most said that the grants were a key reason they decided to stay. This Bill keeps people here, building lives, not just houses.

The program is helping people in the city and people in God's country—the rural area, which I am proud to represent. In Goyder, 46 households have benefited so far, including 24 homes in Humpty Doo, six in Bees Creek, six in Virginia, five in Acacia Hills, three in Lloyd Creek, one in Lambells Lagoon and one in Marrakai. That is 46 families who now call our rural paradise home, spending their money in our local shops, hardware stores, pubs and taverns, and going to local schools. It is 46 new houses being built.

When I drive around and see the builders' signs, I see there a lot of local Humpty Doo businesses involved in the construction process; it brings a tear to my eye. That is millions invested in the Territory economy and families who now get to be a part of the rural area, which is the best community in the Territory.

When a family settles in Humpty Doo or Bees Creek the whole community benefits. It is more kids in the classroom, more business for local tradies and more life on our streets. Every new home supports Territory jobs—builders, plumbers, sparkies, tilers, concreters and landscapers who are the small business backbone of our economy. Expanding this program gives developers and tradies the confidence to ramp up operations and allows apprentices to stay in work and gain skills.

When new homes are built, renters benefit. A bigger housing supply eases pressure on existing stock, opens more long-term options and helps drive down rent. It helps keep Territory housing affordable and gives young people a genuine shot at saving for a deposit instead of being stuck renting forever. Would it be easier if the 5% scheme also applied to builds costing more than $600,000? A search on realestate.com.au for rural properties shows $600,000 does not go far—there is the cost of the land plus the build, which means the 5% scheme does not work for the rural area.

Our home building scheme is helping people. That $50,000 or $30,000 grant can go towards a deposit. The banks—at least the major ones—are accepting that, making it a bit easier to stop paying someone else's mortgage to pay your own.

This Bill does not just help individuals; it drives an entire economic ecosystem. Every dollar spent on new homes flows throughout our community, from the concreter who pours the slab to the painter, the cabinet-maker, the local garden centre and Nutrien Ag Solutions if you are doing a bit more. It is a multiplier effect that supports hundreds of small businesses, apprentices and families across the Territory.

This program was not written in an ivory tower; it was built through consultation with the Housing Industry Association, Master Builders, the Chamber of Commerce, real estate agents and local councils. We listened, and they told us the same thing, which is that Territorians want stability, affordability and the choice to build

the home that they want so that they can raise their kids and stay in the community they love or move to the rural area, which is a great place to live.

When people own homes they invest in their neighbourhoods; join local sports teams and put in money, time and effort to their local conservation areas; and they care about their neighbours and their community. That is what builds a strong, safe and connected community.

The FreshStart grant deserves a special mention. It is the $30,000 grant for people who owned a home previously but want to put down roots and build a new one. Life does not always go to plan. People separate, divorce, downsize or start again. For many the $30,000 FreshStart grant is the helping hand they need to rebuild. I have spoken to people in my electorate who used it to downsize and be closer to their families. Yes, in my electorate downsizing can mean moving to a five-acre block. Others use it to start again after a tough few years. It gives people dignity, security and a renewed sense of independence. It is a practical compassionate policy, the kind that the CLP government is proud to deliver.

I have said it before, and I say it again: rural families think long term. In my electorate of Goyder about 15% of people rent; the rest either own or have a mortgage on their home. That is 85% of people who think long term and have put down roots with the block they want and the shed and pool where they want them.

At one point I lived in a donga on my parents' block. For the record, I no longer do. Many people want to build a second dwelling on their property, whether it is a donga for ageing parents or somewhere young adults can put down their roots. I often travel around my electorate and notice there are a lot of driveways, compared with the number of blocks. That is because families like staying together, and we have the land to allow that. This scheme makes it all possible. It keeps families close and land productive, ensuring that the next generation can stay on the block rather than move away or to Palmerston. I have seen families in Virginia, Marrakai, Humpty Doo and Noonamah building a second home to keep the kids nearby—but not too nearby. That is the Territory way: family helping family and community helping community.

Another big improvement under the CLP is how easy it is to access support. I have called the hotline on behalf of constituents and was pleasantly surprised at how quickly we could get answers to questions about what counts as a dwelling or a shed, the certificates needed and self-build projects. Every time, support staff answered the phone and got back to us promptly. Well done to them. We know we must make interacting with the government as easy as possible because there is nothing worse than being caught in a bureaucratic loop.

Applications are made through the Territory Revenue Office First Home Owner Grant portal or via GrantsNT. We have authorised local banks and mortgage brokers to handle applications because people should not have to battle bureaucracy to get the help they are entitled to. That is the difference between us and those opposite; they talk about helping people, and we do it.

This is more than home ownership; it is about rebuilding the Territory's economy brick by brick. It may not sound important to those opposite, who seemed unconcerned by eight years of a declining economy, but construction drives everything—apprenticeships, small business, population growth and local confidence. The July CommSec State of the States report ranked the Northern Territory as leading the nation in housing finance and construction work. That is not by accident; it is the result of a CLP government that believes in reward for effort and backs Territorians to have a go.

Labor left us with red tape, stalled projects and a shrinking population. This CLP government is turning things around by investing in people, infrastructure and opportunity. This program helps locals and attracts new Territorians. Why pay $2m for a shoebox in Sydney when a dream home can be built in the Territory surrounded by space, lifestyle and opportunity? There is interest coming from interstate families who have had enough of city congestion and want a better life for their kids.

I know that if I pull up to the traffic lights and have to wait for more than one cycle, I am bewildered; it blows my mind. This is an entitlement when growing up in the Territory. If I see more than five cars at a roundabout, it confuses me; I am not used to it. If you want to avoid city traffic and enjoy a great lifestyle, come to the Territory. People are discovering that this is not just a place to visit; it is a place to live, work and thrive. With the 12-month residency rule we ensure that people do not just buy a house but become part of our community. I tell everyone that if you can survive one Build-Up, you can survive them all.

For too long, governments have failed to give young people a fair go. There is no greater shame than a generation unable to afford to live where they grew up. This CLP government is fixing that, ensuring young Territorians can build their lives here rather than somewhere else. As mentioned earlier, it would be great to

see the federal government back the Territory the same way this government is, by expanding the 5% deposit scheme to help even more people to buy and build, especially in rural areas. I for one would like a strong voice in Canberra advocating for the Territory alongside Senator Price, not spending their time and energy campaigning for Aldi.

Mr Young: It is the first time I have seen her in the Territory for a while.

Mr MACKAY: This Bill says 'You belong here' to every Territorian, that if you are ready to rebuild your life in the Territory, this government stands with you.

I pick up on the interjection from the Deputy—for now—Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Daly. He might not think home ownership is important for young people in the Territory, but I do.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; I did not say that. It was regarding Senator Price. I said that I had not seen her in the Territory for a while, so I do not know what the Member for Goyder is talking about.

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr MACKAY: A group I forgot to mention is the glaziers—the tradies who repair broken windows, doors and all of that fun stuff. Unfortunately, under Labor they spent most of their time fixing broken windows. Now they are working on new builds. Good on them.

This Bill is a smart, responsible, nation-leading policy. It is about people, not politics. It is about young families in Humpty Doo, Virginia, Bees Creek and Acacia Hills finally getting their own keys. It is about apprentices learning a trade and small businesses thriving again. It is about keeping Territorians here building, investing and believing in our future. This government is growing, investing and backing Territorians to build and stay. To anyone deciding where to build their future, I say this: come to the Territory and the rural paradise that is Goyder, and be part of our story.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I speak about the Territory home grants with enthusiasm, as I did when we first introduced them. It seems we also need an economics class, as we have heard that Labor does not understand economics. We will break down what this does, why we are targeting new builds and the flow-on effect on our economy.

There is a simple graph we learn in about Year 9 economics called 'supply and demand'. That is what this government is targeting through this Bill. We will tackle the housing crisis with supply. It is simple: get land on the market and new houses built. That means more houses for sale, which in turn lowers the price of houses and then lowers the cost of rent because renters are competing less. Supply and demand is a crazy thing. Our government is targeting supply so we bring the price down. It is economics 101.

With these grants we have already seen an explosion of new builds. We want to continue that trend, which is important for a number of reasons. One is housing affordability. I do not want to see the Northern Territory go the way of our major capital cities like Melbourne and Sydney, which live in a market bubble where young people do not have access to home ownership. We cannot let that happen here.

We have plenty of land across the Top End. Palmerston has lots of land we can develop. We must unlock that land and make it easy for the free market to get houses up and people into them. I want young people—those looking at getting a home now or in 10 years, or who are still in school—and young families to get into a home because home ownership is one of the most empowering things any family can have. Owning property makes them buy into the community and stay for the long term. It creates all-round benefit. That is what we want to see.

For renters, increased supply means there will be more landlords competing to have someone in their property. This means they will do things like renovate because they want to attract good tenants. The free market will force them to ensure those properties are well maintained. It will also reduce rent prices and create cost-of-living relief for the families who are renting, which we also want.

If people are here for a short term, I want them to spend their money on Territory goods and services and not spend all their income servicing rent. This government does not want that, so we will increase supply to ensure people have more income free to spend on things they choose. I firmly believe the individual is best placed to spend their money, not the government.

The cornerstone of this is the release of land. The minister has worked tirelessly on his reforms throughout the year to ensure the process is eased and the bureaucracy behind it is as small as it needs to be.

Another major thing this scheme does is leverage financial markets. A government can spend millions of dollars on an art gallery and say, 'Look how much development and how many jobs this is creating'. A much better way is to create an incentive so financial markets put up the money. That is what this scheme does. By giving first homebuyers $50,000 we incentivise private lending, so we have money from the banks flowing into the Northern Territory rather than taxpayer dollars. That is a different equation.

The Labor Party does not understand simple economics or free markets. For every dollar of tax money spent we can see up to $9 or thereabouts from the financial institutions coming into the Northern Territory. This means taxpayers are not propping up the whole system, which they should not be. Another economic lesson for the Labor Party is how to use financial markets; the taxpayer should not be funding whole industries. We leverage what we have and let the financial institutions do the heavy lifting.

To prove this scheme has worked, CommSec data shows the Northern Territory has the highest rate of new loan approvals. The CommSec report has proved that the strategy is working. We have money from the banks flowing into the Northern Territory; it is not the taxpayer funding these works. That is an important point.

Having come to this House from the construction industry, this is personal. Here is a shame: under the last Labor government, over eight years, one in three construction workers lost their jobs. Those opposite have no idea what it was like to be in that industry when one in three of your mates was out of work. That affects families. It is husbands and wives who go home without work because the incompetent NT Labor Party does not understand economics. Having no work meant those people packed up and left, so their partners and children left too; those people did not stay in the Territory.

These grants have created 600 direct jobs and a further 1,000 indirect jobs. According to Master Builders, that is 1,600 jobs created through using simple economics. It would cost vastly more than this figure for taxpayers to fund those jobs. It is this understanding of how markets work that has created the success of the scheme in this Bill.

The construction industry was shattered by the previous government, but we are now starting to see signs of confidence re-enter the sector. This means tradesmen have reliable lines of work, which is exactly what they need. A salary does not come out of thin air in the private sector; work has to be lined up across multiple areas. By creating this, trades are working, which means apprentices have jobs, the skilled workforce is improving and young people have opportunity. That is what we want.

Private industry is throughout the supply chain. When the construction industry is healthy the flow-on effect is that the economy is healthy. It is the backbone of production and creation; it feeds everything because it needs everything. The construction industry needs raw minerals, engineering expertise and other professions. Job creation spreads across the entire industrial sector.

The construction industry should never go through what it did under the last Labor government. We should never see one in three construction jobs lost in the Northern Territory. The scheme was taken up by 34 people in my electorate of Drysdale. It has established suburbs, so most of these people had the $10,000 grants. However, we are extending the new builds because everything I have spoken about comes through new builds. That will drive supply. We are focusing on the new build element because it will create the supply to bring down housing and rental costs, which is what we are targeting. We are not a government that will throw money into thin air; we are taking a targeted approach, and we know how to leverage the market appropriately. When we drive up supply, we push the levers that will lower rents and create jobs. This is a good thing for the Northern Territory.

It is truly a shame that Labor left the construction industry in the state it did. We will not find many construction workers who have faith in NT Labor. For a party that considers itself to be for the workers it needs to have a good, hard look at itself because I do not know many construction industry workers who want to have much to do with NT Labor. They understand that the CLP will back the construction industry. We want them on job sites working and making money so that they can look after their families and have a good life. They can buy into home ownership and settle in the Territory knowing that there will be continuous good work.

To all those in the construction industry who had to drag out the eight years of Labor, I am proud to say that it is over; the CLP is here for your industry, and we will get the economy back on track. To every young Territorian, we want you to aspire to home ownership because that is how the Northern Territory will charge ahead.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, home ownership is important for many people across the Northern Territory. While many in this parliament have had the opportunity to own a home, many, I assume, rent. Regardless of home ownership or rental status, we are talking about something that is important.

We heard the Member for Drysdale give a tall tale of history, and we have heard a lot of verbal diarrhoea. We had a thing called COVID-19, when we stood up for Territorians. We closed the borders, which had an impact on various sectors in our community and put pressure on economic drivers. However, ensuring Territorians were safe, first and foremost, was the responsible thing to do.

I will support any measure that encourages home ownership in the Northern Territory. I am a Territorian who, under a previous Labor government, accessed first homeowner grants. I bought my first house when I was 21 years old, under a generous Northern Territory Government home ownership scheme which at the time was $7,000. It could be used as a deposit towards buying a first home. I was able to buy that home and live in it for many years.

When talking about home ownership it is important to understand the challenges that many Territorians face getting into it. I acknowledge that I am supportive of the measures being put forward today, but I am disappointed in the government removing the $10,000 measure for existing homes. That was a worthwhile measure. The biggest number of applications was for buying existing homes in some of our beautiful suburbs throughout the Northern Territory. People may have wanted to be closer to their families who live in the suburb; to live around the corner from mum and dad to support each other, or near aunties, uncles or grandparents.

I draw everyone's attention to Alice Springs. We do not have the huge land release that is happening in the Top End. There is only one suburb going ahead with land release, which is Kilgariff. It is about seven or eight kilometres from Alice Springs' central business district and is still a growing suburb. This opportunity is only allowing Central Australians to move to one part of Alice Springs, which is Kilgariff, near the airport. It is restrictive on people who want to buy their first home and look at the incentives and opportunities the government has in place for them.

The second part to that is if someone wanted to buy a block of land at Kilgariff they have been restricted, as the land releases at various times did not have a huge number of blocks for sale. Most pressing is that if someone wants to engage a local builder, there are severe wait times to have new homes built. Often local families in Alice Springs will opt for an existing home in the older suburbs or newer areas that have already been built because they cannot wait to have a home built at Kilgariff or in other pockets, like Heavitree, Bonanni Circuit and Stirling Heights, where there might be vacant land.

It is important to acknowledge that other parts of the Northern Territory do not have the level of land release happening in the Top End, and we are always forgotten. Kilgariff is moving ahead, but many people in Alice Springs have to make a choice between that suburb and buying an existing home. It would be good if the government could look at bringing back the $10,000 First Home Owner Grant for people buying existing homes in Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory has a unique housing system. From private home ownership to social, community, affordable and public housing and homelands, the makeup is unique. We need to acknowledge that not one size fits all.

It is also important to look at systems that have worked in the past. Many years ago there was a scheme in the Northern Territory called Homenorth, which allowed Territorians who could not quite afford to buy a home to borrow up to 70% of the value of that property, and the Northern Territory Government would take on the remaining 30%. Once they were in a better financial position they could refinance and purchase the remaining 30% from the government. That system was incredibly important in parts of the Northern Territory where some people did not have the luxury of being in a higher-paying job to help them afford to get into the market.

I know firsthand of a number of people in Alice Springs who accessed the Homenorth scheme run by the Northern Territory Government in line with TIO. Obviously, that will not happen again because the CLP sold TIO, but these incentives should not be dismissed. They worked successfully in the past and are things that we should consider for the future. It is important that we do that work.

These investments are important, as are the rights of renters in the Northern Territory. Stages 1 and 2 of rental reform have been done. There is work within the Attorney-General's Department on tier 3, which is to deliver the remaining aspects of rental reform. We need to look at that.

We need to look at schemes for people in public housing. Are rent-to-buy schemes possible? We need continuation of housing stock as well. Is there an opportunity for the government to work with someone who is in public housing long term—for 10, 20 or 30 years; old Territory families—so that they can buy a home that is full of their love, laughter and long-term memories? The Territory government could then start to replenish stock in other areas, which is important.

I support any measure that increases home ownership in the Territory. There are other areas where we should look at various schemes to encourage home ownership. I emphasise that I support consideration of the return of the $10,000 First Home Owner Grant. I acknowledge that the time for that is lapsing. I always supported it, even when we were in government. Treasury is sometimes apprehensive about that scheme, but it encourages people. As someone who benefited from it under a previous government, It was important in helping me get my first home.

I acknowledge that there are market consequences of these schemes, and any conversation about that is important, but people need to understand that. There are other areas of the puzzle that is the Northern Territory's housing system that we need to look at reforming and make fit the Territory.

I am supportive of those aspects, and I acknowledge the opportunity to speak today.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I speak in strong support of the First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill 2025. It delivers real results for Territorians. It extends our HomeGrown Territory Grant and the most generous homeowner schemes in the nation, ensuring that more Territorians can turn their dream of owning a home into reality. I thank the real Opposition Leader, the Member for Gwoja, for supporting this extension.

This extends the $50,000 homeowner grant for first homebuyers to 30 September 2026—an additional year. It is keeping faith with Territorians who have worked hard, saved carefully and want to build their future. Since its commencement on 1 October 2024 the HomeGrown Territory Grant program has already changed lives. In its first year more than 1,000 Territorians successfully applied, with more than $20m paid or approved for payment. Of that, $9.5m has gone directly to new home builds—new houses rising from the red dirt, new jobs created and new confidence in our local economy.

This Bill is about more than housing; it is about stimulating our economy. It is creating jobs and encouraging people to stay, live and invest in the Territory, just like my family.

The July 2025 CommSec State of the States report tells the story clearly. The Northern Territory has experienced a 42.4% increase in dwelling starts over the past year. That is the best performance in the country. That is not luck; it is leadership. That is this government's vision at work.

Every new home build supports dozens of local jobs, from carpenters to electricians, plumbers, tilers, suppliers, transport operators, landscapers and real estate agents. It does not stop there. Growth in construction ripples across our whole economy—more customers in local cafes, such as the Mudhouse cafe in Hibiscus, more kids in local schools and more demand for retail, manufacturing and professional services.

This extension of the grant gives the construction industry certainty to, as mentioned by the Member for Drysdale, expand operations and hire more staff. Builders and developers have told us that the initial 12 months did not give them enough time to plan major expansions. This now gives them time to invest in new equipment or to take on new apprentices. By extending this scheme for another 12 months we are unlocking that investment.

This is where the Northern Territory's payroll tax threshold becomes a major advantage. The Territory already has one of the most competitive payroll tax thresholds in Australia, allowing small and medium construction firms to grow their workforce while staying under or close to that threshold. That means builders can take on extra apprentices, project managers and support staff without being burdened by excessive tax liabilities. It is a genuine incentive to expand local employment.

Territorians are hiring Territorians, keeping the economic benefit in our community. It is a powerful example of smart, coordinated policy. It is a grant that fills demand, an industry ready to respond and a tax system that rewards growth. That combination means more local jobs and skills training, and a stronger, more resilient construction sector.

Treasury's six-month review showed that 85% of grant recipients were millennials or younger Territorians—younger than me—who want to build a life and a future here. For many Territorians this grant was the deciding

factor between leaving or staying here to build a home and have a family. That is population growth in action—young families planting roots, sending their children to our local schools and supporting local businesses. These families are shopping at local shops, such as Territory Butchers and Lenard's at Hibiscus, and using the friendly pharmacy at Hibiscus and the Wanguri supermarket. Families are eating at Bill's Bar & Grill and Tracy Village. Students from these families are being tutored at Amber's Tutelage and strongly supporting sporting clubs that continue to grow, such as the Casuarina soccer club and the Tracy Village football and basketball clubs, just to name a few.

When people stay, our economy grows; our sporting clubs, schools and small towns thrive. That is the social dividend of good housing policy. Let us talk about what that means for everyday Territorians.

A young family on an average combined income of about $100,000, can take five to six years to save $50,000 for a home deposit—years of scrimping and sacrifice, often paying high rents. This grant effectively gives those families a five-year head start. It turns the dream of home ownership from a distant goal into immediate reality. It means they can stop renting and start building equity and their future sooner. They can buy land, engage a local builder and create something of their own in the Territory.

This program also plays a critical role in addressing housing affordability and rental pressures. When first homebuyers build a new home they expand the housing supply, freeing up existing properties for rent and helping to ease pressure in the rental market. That is a win–win, with more homeowners and more housing options for renters. As supply increases there is downward pressure on rents, making life a little easier for families across the Territory.

This extension maintains the 12-month residency requirement, ensuring that the grants are used for genuine home ownership and not speculation or investment flipping. This means recipients must live in their home for at least a year, putting down roots, getting to know their neighbours, joining their local clubs and embracing our Territory lifestyle. That is what building community is all about.

Let us be clear that Labor never cared about home ownership. Under Labor, first homebuyers were forgotten, construction slowed to a crawl, confidence disappeared and young people left the Territory, as the Member for Drysdale mentioned. Labor talked about affordability but did nothing to make it happen.

The CLP stepped in, took action and delivered real results. We launched this HomeGrown Territory Grant program and made it the most generous in the nation. In doing so, we have ignited the housing market and restored faith in the Territory's future. We did not just talk about helping first homeowners; we delivered.

Reflecting on my time working in the financial industry, I know that saving $50,000 could be difficult and sometimes homeowners had to lean on the bank of mum and dad. Now they do not. This is a great initiative to get into the market.

With this Bill we are not just extending the grant and confidence. For families planning their futures, businesses hiring more workers and growing communities, the HomeGrown Territory Grant is about more than money; it is about giving people the freedom to choose the Territory as their permanent home. Combining this grant with our payroll tax settings and strong economic management creates a Territory where businesses can thrive, workers can find secure jobs and families can afford to build their life. This is how we grow sustainably, confidently and together.

This Bill delivers for all Territorians, for the young people in Muirhead saving for their first block of land; the builders across the northern suburbs taking on new apprentices and creating job opportunities; and the renters who are finally seeing housing options open up. This Bill keeps our economy moving, communities growing and people investing in the Territory for their future.

I support this Bill. I support our builders and families. I support the Northern Territory where every Territorian has a fair shot at owning their own home.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I speak on the proposed extension of the *First Home Owner Grant Act* for another year. Almost a year ago I spoke on the Bill when it was introduced and, at that time, raised concerns about whether first homebuyer grants make housing more affordable or whether they risk inflating housing prices by enabling buyers to meet higher prices, rather than addressing the underlying causes of housing inequality and lack of supply.

A year has passed, and we are now being asked to extend this scheme for another 12 months. I support whatever will work towards addressing our housing crisis and building our population and economy. If this scheme is genuinely helping Territorians into homes and building our housing supply I want to see it continue.

My concerns from a year ago remain, and before we extend this policy I believe Territorians deserve answers about whether it is achieving what this Assembly hoped. What have we gained from the scheme? We have heard a lot of about this in the Chamber today. We know that it has cost Territorians $200m in its first year, a significant investment of public money given our current economic situation.

I am interested in what we have gained from spending that $200m. Has this scheme built our population in any meaningful way? Has it stimulated our economy? Has it made house prices go up? Has it had an impact on our housing crisis, homelessness, the lack of affordable rental options or the social housing shortage?

I believe when we are passing laws we need to see the data and the evidence, because if the scheme is working the evidence will show us we are on the right track. If it is not working as intended, we need to adjust our approach.

I asked these questions in the briefing I attended on this Bill, and the answer was, 'No, we do not have that data as yet'. When I asked explicitly how many new homes were being built because of this scheme and how many additional homes would not exist without this investment, I was told that they do not have the data. I celebrate more people being in work, housing and in the Northern Territory, but when we are spending Territorians' money, we must spend it in ways that we know will work.

Today we are voting on extending a $200m scheme. There has been much talk in this Chamber about how it is working, but we do not have the data. The questions I ask again are: how many additional homes have been built or are being built that would not have been built otherwise? What impact has this scheme had on house prices? What impact has it had on the construction sector and building costs? Has it increased our population in any meaningful way? Has it genuinely stimulated our economy, or is it simply subsidising what would have happened already? What impact, if any, has it had on our broader housing challenges? Without this evidence we are asking Territorians to trust us with their money while flying blind. That is not good enough when families cannot find homes and our housing crisis deepens.

The government is not extending the $10,000 established home grant. That grant paid people to move from one house to another, putting nothing into the Northern Territory economy, creating no new housing supply and simply shuffling existing residents around. In the case of the $30,000 grant, existing homeowners were shuffled around while inflating prices for everyone else. The decision not to extend that component is sensible but that makes this question more important: if the established home grant was not effective enough to continue, what evidence do we have that the new home grant is achieving better results?

I am not asking for assurances from government members; I am asking for measurable outcomes on housing affordability, ownership, the economy and population growth. The fundamental question that we need to answer is: how many additional homes are being built or have been built that would not have been built otherwise?

I asked this in the briefing and was told that the government will evaluate that in the future, but measuring after the fact is not accountability. We need to know whether this scheme is making a difference or whether we are simply handing taxpayers' money to developers for projects they would build anyway.

A year ago I raised concerns based on the evidence from decades of similar schemes around Australia. Between 1965 and 2021 Australian governments spent more than $38bn on cash grants for first homebuyers and $9.4bn on stamp duty concessions, yet during this time home ownership rates steadily declined and house prices skyrocketed far out of reach of regular Australians.

More recent examples, like the Morrison government's HomeBuilder program, created a sudden surge of demand for builders and building materials. Without a corresponding increase in builders and materials, this pushed up costs across the construction sector, making new builds less, not more, affordable. Critically, these price increases also affected industries beyond the construction industry that were dependent on similar materials, making life far harder for small business owners and their employees.

A year later, these concerns remain. I genuinely want to know whether the experience here has been different. Are we making it work better? How can we have confidence that this scheme is working better here than in other places?

I understand the intent behind this Bill. I share the government's commitment to improving housing affordability and helping Territorians into homes. We also must ensure we address the full spectrum of housing need in the Northern Territory, including homelessness, lack of affordable rental options and limited social housing.

My question is not whether we should help first homebuyers. Of course we should support Territorians to own their home. Is this the most effective use of $200m—or now $100m—to address our housing needs or are there complementary approaches we should pursue alongside this scheme so that we do not just inflate house prices and thereby intensify the problem?

Investing in social housing, for example, makes economic sense. Every dollar spent on building new social housing stimulates the economy, creates jobs and reduces the long-term cost to the health and justice systems. Providing affordable stable housing reduces pressure on emergency and homelessness services, and the health system.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive; it is not either/or. We can support first homebuyers while investing in social and affordable housing, but to do that we need to understand what is working, what is not and why. We cannot rely on wishful thinking when these policies affect everyone.

I am not asking the government to abandon this scheme; I am asking for transparency about its effectiveness, when today we make the decision to commit to another year and another $100m of Territorians' money.

I support genuinely addressing our housing crisis. I want Territorians in secure affordable homes, whether they are renting, in social housing or buying or building their own home. Like the other people in this Chamber, I am committed to building our community, having people stay in the Northern Territory, supporting workers and building our economy. I want to ensure that the significant public investment we are making is achieving the outcomes we all want to see.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, when we talk about housing, it is not just buildings; it is people, families, hope and the future of the Northern Territory. This First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill 2025 is not just about money or policy; it is about giving Territorians the chance to achieve one of life's greatest dreams—owning a home.

A home is much more than bricks, walls and a roof; home is where families grow, children take their first steps, birthdays are celebrated, laughter fills the air and where we find comfort after a long day. Home gives people a sense of belonging, a foundation of love and security. It is where we plan our future and feel safe.

Owning a home brings pride and independence. People are investing in their own futures, not paying off someone else's mortgage. When people own their homes they put down roots and care about their streets, schools and neighbourhoods. When families have stability and pride in where they live. That is how communities grow stronger.

For many Territorians that dream has felt out of reach. That is why the First Home Owner Grant and the HomeGrown Territory Grant matter so much to Territorians. These grants are not just financial assistance; they are the difference between dreaming of a home and owning one.

The $50,000 HomeGrown Territory grant can make all the difference to the lives of a young couple trying to save while paying rent. For a single mum it can allow her kids to grow up in a safe place, a stable home of their own. For older couples it gives financial security in retirement.

Every dollar that goes into this program creates an opportunity for buyers, builders and local businesses. It turns hope into action and builds confidence in our economy. It keeps Territorians here because when people buy a home they stay, raise their kids, work and support local schools and businesses. That is how we will build a strong economy.

When the CLP government launched HomeGrown Territory in October 2024, we set out to do something big—make the Northern Territory the best place in Australia to own a first home. We did it because we listened to Territorians—young families, tradies, teachers and nurses. They told us the same thing: 'We want a fair go. We want a home we can call our own.'

In one year this program has delivered outstanding results. More than $21m has been paid or approved through the grants, including more than $9.5m going directly to first homebuyers building new homes. Behind those numbers are hundreds of real Territorians—people now living the dream of home ownership. A young

couple in Palmerston, a single mum in Katherine and families in Casuarina all have a place to call their own because of this program.

Let me bring this closer to my home of Casuarina: in my electorate this program has changed the lives of many. As of October 2025, 45 families have received support through the First Home Owner and HomeGrown Territory Grants. Here is what it looks like: Muirhead, 16 families; Lee Point, eight families; Nakara, six families; and Brinkin, Tiwi and Lyons, five families each. They are all now homeowners in their own suburbs. That is 45 sets of keys, front doors and stories of pride and stability in our community. These are not just numbers; they are lives changed. These are the children enrolled in schools, parents joining sporting clubs and families shopping in local stores. I have met many of these families in my electorate, so let me share those stories.

In Muirhead, a young couple, both nurses at Royal Darwin Hospital, used the First Home Owner Grant to buy a modest three-bedroom home close to work. They told me, 'Khoda, we thought we would be renting forever. This grant gave us the confidence to buy.' In Lee Point a single mum working in retail used the FreshStart New Home Grant to start building her first home. She said, 'It's not just a house; it's the future my kids deserve'. In Nakara an older couple who had rented for more than a decade used the established home grant to buy a place of their own. They told me, 'We love this neighbourhood, and now we never have to leave it'. Each story reminds me why this program matters. It is not about figures in a budget; it is about Territorians having a fair go.

It is remarkable what a year can do. Not long ago a drive through Muirhead or Lee Point would show empty blocks. Things were quiet; builders were complaining and tradesmen were worried. Confidence was gone.

Then this government stepped in and launched the HomeGrown Territory Grant program, and everything changed. Today we can drive those same streets and see progress everywhere. New homes are going up, roofs are being laid and families are moving in. You can hear nail guns and laughter. That is not just construction noise; that is the sound of confidence returning and the CLP delivering. Those once-empty blocks are now new neighbourhoods. Families are planting gardens, tradies are busy and local businesses are thriving. That is what good government policy looks like—when action turns into results we can see and touch.

I thank all the local builders, tradies and contractors who make this possible in my area. To every carpenter, electrician, plumber, concreter, roofer and painter, thank you. You are not just building houses; you are building communities and the future of the Northern Territory. Every time a new house goes up, it means more jobs, apprenticeships and confidence in our construction sector.

Builders have told me they have taken on extra apprentices because of the HomeGrown Territory Grant demand. That is the kind of real-world impact that makes a difference.

I acknowledge Minister Yan's tireless leadership and work to make this program a success. He has not just sat behind the desk; he is out there meeting families, talking to builders and ensuring the program works where it matters most—in the real world. His leadership and wisdom have helped hundreds of Territorians take that step into home ownership, and I thank him for that.

A Department of Treasury and Finance review made it clear that this program is working. Almost 85% of recipients are millennials or younger. That means our next generation—young families, key workers and first-time buyers—are choosing to stay, work and build their lives in the Territory. That is what this is all about—keeping Territorians in the Territory. When young people buy homes, they are investing in not just the property but also their future.

This Bill will extend that opportunity to even more families. It will extend the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant to 30 September 2026. It maintains the 12-month residency requirement to ensure these homes will go to Territorians who plan to live here. It extends the $30,000 FreshStart New Home Grant for non-first homeowners, helping even more people build new homes.

While the $10,000 established home grant will close as planned, our focus remains clear: drive new builds; expand housing supply; and support local jobs. It will make housing more affordable and our economy stronger. Every new home creates a ripple effect through our economy. It is work for electricians, plumbers, landscapers, concreters and suppliers. It will be hours for truck drivers, kitchen fitters and painters. Once those families move in, it will be business for cafes, childcare centres and local shops in Casuarina. They are all connected.

According to the CommSec State of the States report from July 2025, the Northern Territory had a 42.4% increase in dwelling starts over the past year, the highest growth in the nation. That is not luck; it is leadership. It is what happens when Territorians are backed with the right policy at the right time. Already, more than 300 new builds are in the pipeline, and that number keeps growing. Every one of those homes represents confidence in our future.

For Casuarina residents, this program is more than policy; it is personal. It means a young couple in Muirhead can finally build near their extended family, a single mum in Lee Point can give her children a backyard of their own and an older couple in Nakara can retire in comfort in the community they love. It also means more jobs for tradies; more customers for small businesses; and stronger schools, parks and neighbourhoods. This is how we grow Casuarina and the Territory.

This Bill is about more than grants and figures; it is about people—families who want to belong and young Territorians who want to stay. It is about giving every person a chance to call the Territory home. A home is the heart of family life, and the First Home Owner Grant is the heartbeat making it possible. It represents opportunity, stability and hope for the future.

This CLP government is backing the future for families, builders and young Territorians. When we drive through Muirhead or Lee Point and see new homes rising, kids playing out front and tradies on a worksite, that is progress. That is the mark of Territorians building their future and a government that delivers.

I thank the Opposition Leader, the Member for Gwoja and all the members who support this Bill.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support the First Home Owner Grant extension. It is a fantastic policy from the government to kickstart the Territory economy after eight long years of Labor's mismanagement. I thank the loyal opposition for supporting this Bill. It appears that in opposition Labor members have discovered some common sense that unfortunately was lacking when they were in government.

I will respond to a few comments. The Member for Johnston raised questions about whether it would increase supply. I quote from the *Hansard* where the Member for Johnston said:

> *… private investment never played a major role in the NT economy and the standard of living for most Territorians, and it never will.*

We can see what the Member for Johnston thinks. The CLP government believes in private sector investment and in small business getting a start, getting ahead and growing the economy—like AKJ Services, which is developing a new land release in Holtze.

The minister for Infrastructure and the Attorney-General were there the other day to announce a new suburb, Asche, named after Dr Valerie Asche, an outstanding Territorian. Leading the development is AKJ Services, a fantastic Larrakia-led corporation, which has taken the development in both hands and is getting stuck into it.

I invite the Member for Johnston to come to Palmerston and look at the land development, where machinery is running about doing earthworks, putting in the headworks so the developer can get on with it. How many lots are there, minister for Infrastructure? Is it a couple of hundred?

Mr Yan: In excess of 400.

Mr KERLE: In excess of 400. This new development was turbocharged over the last year by this government's approach to supporting private industry and small business. Later, I will get to how we leverage the private sector.

I pick up on the Member for Drysdale's comments about increasing supply. We have heard in this Chamber from the Member for Nightcliff about the rental problems and troubles in that area. I suggest that the best solution for rental affordability is more supply in the market. It is simple supply and demand: the more supply, the more people can move out of rental properties and into their own homes. Bringing supply to the market increases competition for rental properties and increases affordability. That is great. I encourage the Member for Nightcliff to take up our First Home Owner Grant and purchase a property, put down roots and become a homeowner in the Territory.

I am a homeowner; I own my house in Palmerston where I am raising my kids, who go to school in the local suburb. Not all of us are born and bred here; some of us have migrated here. To put down roots shows a great commitment to the Territory and its future, that we are planning to be here for more than just the length of this term. I encourage the Member for Nightcliff to take up the First Home Owner Grant. There are a lot of great properties coming on to the market in Palmerston or maybe the rural area—God's country, as the Member for Goyder calls it.

This first homeowner grant Bill amends the previous legislation passed by the CLP since coming to government and extends the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory grant for 12 months. This follows a comprehensive six-month review which showed it had been a success. On 13 September the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure was quoted in the *NT News* saying:

> *… the government's HomeGrown Territory grants have been a key driver of land releases in the NT.*

The story was about the Holtze land release, which is going gangbusters.

The Members for Spillett and Drysdale and I visited the development a couple of months ago. We had to watch our steps because machines were going everywhere. The place was cracking, and I look forward to seeing houses starting to spring up. Members of my family had their start in the construction industry as blocklayers and sparkies. One started his career as a block layer building homes around Palmerston during the last building boom, which was unfortunately 10 years ago or more under the previous CLP government. What a funny coincidence: when there is a housing boom and houses are sprouting up like mushrooms everywhere, it is usually under a CLP government.

The previous grant was so popular we needed to extend it for another 12 months. Unlike some other members, my electorate of Blain does not have a lot of land for fresh releases. Most of the opportunities are for established homes. The biggest uptake in Blain was for the $10,000 First Home Owner Grant for established properties, with 15 people using the grant to buy a home in Bellamack, eight people in Moulden and 15 people in Woodroffe.

Woodroffe is a fantastic established suburb in Palmerston with great water pressure, beautiful open parks and large lot sizes. After eight years of Labor's mismanagement, house prices are depressed so it is a great place to pick up a bargain, renovate or build a dream home.

Two people picked up the $50,000 First Home Owner Grant for new builds in Bellamack. Not much land is left in Bellamack, so you had best get in quickly.

Forty grants—we look at statistics all the time. That number represents 40 families: husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, kids and sometimes other generations—as they might have grandma helping to look after the kids—who have put down roots in my electorate. I believe that more than 1,000 families have taken up the grant scheme in the last year, families who have put down roots—unlike the Member for Nightcliff, although I hope she uses this grant to buy a house—and committed to the Territory. They will send their kids to the local schools; they are here for the long haul. That is why I support this Bill.

In my first campaign in 2020, after four years of Labor government, I was doorknocking in Palmerston, and I was becoming despondent at the number of empty houses. I would knock on the door and see through the windows that the entire house had been cleaned out—its owners had moved and it was sitting vacant and unwanted because no-one wanted to be in the Territory when it was run by Labor. Businesses did not want to be here; business was going down the drain.

The first thing Labor did when it came to government was to take the best chance for economic development—the Beetaloo Sub-basin, which could have made the Northern Territory a fuel supply powerhouse—and knock it on the head. It brought in a moratorium, as Labor loves to do, and killed the entire supply chain. Industry is not composed of only one business. I have talked about this before, and I will take a brief detour into it again because it is important for those opposite to understand that when you stop an industry, you do not just stop the bit that you see, there is an entire supply chain.

When Labor introduced the gas industry moratorium after coming to government in 2016 it stopped the entire supply chain. Yes, there were people exploring in the Beetaloo, but there were gasfitting supply companies in Darwin and trucking companies that were moving all those parts—hundreds of tonnes of steel—to the Beetaloo. They all went to the local sector, buying fuel and supplies, fixing their trucks and fitting new tyres on them, bookkeeping, hiring accountants—all kinds of things.

A couple of years ago I talked to one of the small business owners who lost his business as a direct result of that moratorium. He said it was heartbreaking. In one fell swoop, not only did his business lose its future, but he had to let go of all his subcontractors, a team that was trucking all the gas fittings out to the Beetaloo. He had to say to them, 'Sorry, guys, the government has killed our industry, so we are out of business and so are you'. These guys had mortgages, homes and families. It all contributed to people adding up the numbers and losing faith in the Territory under the previous government.

That will not happen from this side of the House. We understand that the private sector is not just figures on a sheet; it is families, mothers, fathers and income earners—people bringing home the bacon to pay for their family and support their kids through school. When we kill an industry we take away people's livelihoods.

Opposing gas and shutting down the industry is a great headline. You call it a moratorium and say it is only temporary, but taxpayers' dollars do not fund businesses; the private sector funds them and they must engage in business to stay afloat. You call it a moratorium, but it would be like taking a moratorium on oxygen. How could we survive that? Not for long.

It is important that government cannot just come in with the heavy hand of legislation and put an end to an industry. That is why I became politically conscious—particularly with the live export bans. The then federal Labor government killed an industry because it did not like one part of it and took out the entire supply chain—from the ships that transported cattle overseas to supply agents along the chain, the cattle stations throughout the Territory, including those in the Barkly and Central Australia, the agribusiness suppliers, such as Nutrien Ag or Territory Rural, as it was at the time.

It was shut down overnight without a care. There were a million other things the federal government could have done. I believe the High Court found it to be unlawful, and those farmers are still waiting for compensation. It would be great if the Member for Lingiari could get in her federal government's ear and say, 'Look, let's give these farmers what they are owed'. They have waited a long time, and not all are here today as we have lost a few.

In 2014 Palmerston was cranking. You could not hire building equipment over the weekend for love nor money. You would go to Kennards and the local tradie suppliers, and if you had not booked it days in advance, good luck. Saturday morning was flat out with tradies picking up gear to work on weekend jobs.

A family member had his first job laying bricks. He started as a block layer in the housing boom under the previous CLP government and helped build a number of houses around Palmerston. It gave him his start and he is doing well as the 2IC of a well-known local construction company.

I want to paint a picture of comparison. A house in my electorate—I will not give the address—sold for $265,000 in 2006. In 2024, after 18 years—14 of those under a Labor government—it sold for $290,000. In 18 years, that house's value grew by $25,000, which was not even 10% growth. That poor homeowner. I remember doorknocking that house. The owners had poured their heart and soul into their family home, which should be an equity-rich nest egg—over time the nest egg grows, and we can upsize, downsize, right size or move rural. The expectation is that the investment will grow over time. In 2016 it was probably worth quite a bit more, but over the next eight years it had dropped. I hope after eight years of this government, if it sells again it will double in value.

I want to gentrify the older established suburbs of Palmerston. Some do not have the best name, but I would love to change that. As we work on our housing reforms, law and order agenda and make people feel safe in their homes and communities, I look forward to when the large lot sizes in Palmerston become highly sought after for raising families.

Palmerston is a great place to raise a family, with fantastic local schools and principals who are doing an amazing job recruiting the best teachers. We have parks and a full deck of programs over the Dry Season run by City of Palmerston. As development moves further out, Palmerston is a great place for people to invest. Get in there now.

I am running out of time, but I will comment on the changes I have heard about since we came to government. Within six weeks of coming to government I started hearing whispers from people who had their house on the market but withdrew it due to lack of interest and low offers. They were astounded to get calls from investors down south, checking if they were still interested in selling. That only grew. Earlier this year a local real estate company was canvassing people at the Oasis Shopping Centre, where my electorate office is, looking for properties on behalf of southern investors.

They handed out flyers saying, 'If you have a house in Palmerston and are interested in selling, we would love to buy'; that is a great vote of confidence. Where was that in the last eight years under the previous government? We never had southern investors knocking on people's doors asking whether they were interested in selling. It is a vote of confidence. Part of why is because of the First Home Owner Grant scheme brought in as an election commitment to jump-start the economy.

It is not a full picture. We have a full slate of other economic drivers, like the Territory Coordinator. Those opposite opposed that tooth and nail. We were here until 3 am, but we delivered that legislation.

Ms Uibo: It was 1 am. Do not make it sound longer than it was.

Mr KERLE: Sorry, I withdraw—1 am. Thank you, Opposition Leader. We were here until 1 am delivering the Territory Coordinator.

Ms Uibo: You still have not produced a significant process.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please.

Mr KERLE: We have a full economic agenda to deliver for Territorians. For eight years southern investors regarded the Northern Territory as a leper—the poor man among the Australian states and territories. Suddenly, there is new management in town, and they are interested because they know that we value small business, families and Territorians.

A case to drive economic development in the Territory has been put forward, and there are leads and lags. Some policies take longer to have an effect, and others have a shorter timeline. The First Home Owner Grant scheme is a shot in the arm to stimulate supply and kickstart things. If you have ever hopped on a dirt bike, sometimes if it has been sitting in the shed for a while and been a bit neglected and run down, covered with cobwebs, you would have to give it a bit of a kickstart, then it would roar into life. There is nothing wrong with the bike, and there is nothing wrong with the Territory.

What the Territory had for eight years was simply bad government. We and Australia have faith in the Territory because of the CLP government bringing in a raft of changes.

The character of the First Home Owner Grant scheme is in the DNA of the CLP. There were 100% funding schemes, such as the State Square art building under the previous government. We all love art. Come and visit my electorate office, because I have art all over the walls donated by the community and produced by students from Woodroffe Primary School, Moulden Primary School, Rosebery Primary School, Forrest Parade School and Palmerston College SEC, the students in the Chamber today. It all used their creativity.

I love art, but do we need to spend $140m on a building for it? Is it good expenditure of taxpayers' dollars when we do not have enough doctors, nurses or teachers, fundamental things that Territorians need? Rather than fully government-funding white elephant projects, it is in the CLP's DNA to unlock the power of the private sector. You see that in public–private partnerships. This homebuyers' scheme is a classic example; for a modest investment, we unlock a huge amount of investment.

With a $50,000 First Home Owner Grant for a new build we can generate—I have not built a house yet, so I do not know how much a new house build costs, but I imagine it would be upwards of $600,000 for a house-and-land package.

Mrs Hersey: A house-and-land package is $650,000.

Mr KERLE: Thank you, Member for Katherine. That is at least 10 times. If you told me that I could invest in something and I would make 10 times that within a year, I would be right there.

We are outlaying a grant that unlocks investment in the private sector and, moreover, helps Territorian families get their start in life. Over time CLP governments have always done that. I like to talk about the railway because the Alice–Darwin railway was …

Mrs Zio: I worked on that.

Mr KERLE: The Member for Fannie Bay worked on that; I would love to hear that story later.

That was the brainchild of a previous Member for Blain, Barry Coulter. He was bound and determined to build that railway. It was about $1bn in late-1990s money, and the Territory could have gone into debt for $1bn and built it. Would it have been a good use of taxpayer funds when there was another alternative on the table, which was to go into a public-private partnership?

The NT Government, under Barry Coulter, the Treasurer at the time, managed to get 30:30:30 investment—the NT Government, the feds and a private consortium each chipped in a third—and the NT Government got a railway for 30c on the dollar, which was a pretty good deal. That is a philosophical difference between us and those on this side of the Chamber.

We on this side believe in the private sector and unlocking small business and the private sector, getting jobs going, helping people get started and building faith in the Territory.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Scott Buchholz

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Hon Scott Buchholz, the federal shadow Minister for Skills and Training, the Member for Wright from Queensland. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Building Legislation Amendment (Fidelity Fund) Bill 2025, Serial 45.

PETITION
Petition No 17 – Safety for Nightcliff Jetty Users

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 207 petitioners praying for enforcement of the spearfishing exclusion zone around Nightcliff Jetty. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

> *That the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly legislate for and enforce a ban on speargun fishing at the Nightcliff Jetty.*

QUESTION TIME

Bus Drivers – Strike Action

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Yesterday bus drivers were forced to walk off the job as a last resort over a call for fair pay and conditions that keeps falling on deaf ears. Thousands of commuters, workers and tourists were left confused and stranded, as there was hardly any communication about this critical strike from your government.

You claim to back our bus network, but when it comes to fair wages and safe conditions you have been silent. Have you ever spoken to CDC about the raw deal for bus drivers and how you plan to solve this? If not, isn't it time you stepped into that space to ensure Territory bus drivers get the pay and conditions they deserve for the difficult and, at times, dangerous job they do in our community? It is an important service we all appreciate.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is important. The safety of bus drivers has never been in question; it has been paramount to the CLP government.

Labor failed to take action. When we came to government we took action immediately, providing screens for the bus drivers. There had been assaults on bus drivers for some time, and the former Labor government dragged the chain on getting screens into buses. However, we moved immediately and decisively to take that action to protect bus drivers and work in conjunction with CDC to make that happen.

It was not just that; we have been working closely with CDC and the TWU on driver safety on that network. That can be seen in the work we are doing that will commence next week with the closure of the interchanges at Casuarina and Darwin to be able to place those response staff onto that network to provide additional security and safety for the drivers, as well as passengers.

I will step back to the industrial relations negotiations. These were a matter for CDC and the TWU. There seems be this misconception that the Northern Territory Government has some role and responsibility in this space, but this is a matter for CDC, the private operator that holds the contract for the buses, and the TWU and workers. People try to conflate the issue of responsibility regarding the Northern Territory Government. We are working closely with CDC. We spoke with its representatives last week about the negotiations and what it is doing. We need to ensure that it is working in good faith with the TWU and the drivers to provide what they need so that the people of Darwin and Alice Springs get the services they deserve.

We understand that the TWU has concerns for bus safety. That is why the government took immediate action. We are continuing to work with our bus operator to provide a safe network for not just the bus drivers, but also for the people who use that network.

We have seen a significant reduction in issues and matters on the network, which has been reported from drivers and CDC, the operator. We have seen a marked reduction in incidents of assaults on and abuse of our drivers, which is great to see. We are out there doing that work. We are supporting the drivers and the network, and we will continue to do so into the future.

INPEX – Miscalculation of Historical Emissions Data

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Can you explain what is going on at INPEX regarding the miscalculation of historical emissions data relating to volatile organic compounds?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an important question, as it is a hot topic in the media today. I start by acknowledging the important work of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority in keeping Territorians and our environment safe.

On Wednesday 15 October 2025 I was advised by the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment that INPEX had self-reported the miscalculation of historical volatile organic compounds emissions data. The department also briefed the board of the NTEPA on the same day, noting that Dr Paul Vogel has stood aside from this matter, with Mr Joe Woodward appointed as acting chairperson.

The NTEPA Board and INPEX are scheduled to meet tomorrow, Wednesday 22 October, to further discuss the emissions data and historical irregularities. The NTEPA board and the NT Chief Health Officer have also met, and nothing before me suggests any cause for alarm with regard to public health. This is an historical miscalculation issue dating back several years under the former Labor government. It is now important to allow the independent Environment Protection Authority to conduct its investigation and report back to me as the minister for the Environment.

Territory Coordinator

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

The Territory Coordinator is meant to drive major projects and investment across the Territory, but Territorians looking for that important information online are left empty-handed. The Territory Coordinator

website looks impressive until you try to use it. When you click on big buttons for significant projects or program of works, nothing is there. It even sends you to an NT Government website for information, which sends you back to the Territory Coordinator website with no information.

How has the CLP government managed to spend $21m to employ 16 staff in the Territory Coordinator office with nothing to show for it other than a website?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love questions about the Territory Coordinator because those opposite do not support it. They whinged and whined and carried on like pork chops saying that it would be the end of the world when the Territory Coordinator created Territory development areas and designated significant projects. What question do I get from the Opposition Leader today? He has not used his powers enough. You cannot win with Labor. They do not know what side of the bed they get out of in the morning and honestly, the hypocrisy in the question is not lost on me.

The reason there is nothing on the website, Opposition Leader—I am glad she searched through it—is because we have not provided directions to the Territory Coordinator for any of those designations.

The legislation has passed and the important work has begun. We have conducted extensive consultations working with different agencies on where the first Territory development area will be, what is of most economic significance to the Territory and which projects are significant. That is not like Labor's laundry list of major projects that never got off the ground.

I have said before that we are not playing from Labor's playbook, not picking up the Labor 'How to wreck the Territory' book and saying, 'Hey guys, do we want to do that?' That went into the bin, where Michael Gunner used to put the CommSec report—which said that the Territory has the fastest-growing economy in the nation—three times faster than anyone else.

We will not be taking our advice from the Opposition Leader who on one day says that the Territory Coordinator is the root of all evil and on another day laments the fact that he has not used his powers enough. We are not rushing this because it is deliberate, specific work, which is what I always told those opposite who were panicking about it.

We have had significant engagements around the Territory, including at Nhulunbuy, for example, with Rirratjingu, Gumatj and others who are interested in how it can benefit their people.

We look forward to the next stages, but it has to be done deliberately and properly …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question specifically asked: how has the government managed to spend $21m, with 16 staff and no projects?

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, Chief Minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I just spent two-and-a-half minutes answering that question, Opposition Leader.

It takes work. Anyone can put a list together like Labor did, walk out every day, do media and put out press releases saying, 'Project Sea Dragon is a real ripper. Aeroplanes will be great; they will be based at the airport.' A million other projects never happened on Labor's watch. That is what I am saying. We are doing the work, and that takes time. We will not be rushed to exercise the powers; they will be used strategically and deliberately for the betterment of the Territory to rebuild our economy that Labor trashed.

Crime Statistics

Mr PATEL to CHIEF MINISTER

Last week the August crime stats were released. I was pleased to see that the numbers seem to be going in the right direction—down. In my electorate of Casuarina, our major shopping centre told me that it is seeing a real change, too, with crime and antisocial behaviour dropping in the centre. There is a lot of work still ahead, but things seem to be heading in the right direction. Can the Chief Minister update the Assembly on the crime stats and what work is still to come?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, above all else the Member for Casuarina's community wants to be safe. People want to enjoy their lifestyle, raise their families in freedom and enjoy the beautiful things in the area like Casuarina Square, where for a long time people felt unsafe.

Since coming to government, Casuarina Square has reported a 93% decrease in crime. That number is huge. Of course there is more work to do, but that shows the tangible benefit of a strong government that puts the rights of people to be safe above the rights of the offender; passes laws that meet our community's expectation; delivers for our police so that they can do their job properly; builds prison beds; and supports our courts and Legal Aid NT. That is how we have an effective justice system delivering good outcomes for people like those in the Member for Casuarina's electorate.

We have reduced the number of victims by 7.4% in eight months this year alone. That is 1,273 fewer Territorians who are victims of crime than last year, and the year is not even done yet. That is a profound number of people who have not had to face the devastation of being a victim of crime.

In the greater Darwin area we have had a 45% drop in house break-ins; commercial break-ins are down by 27%; total property offences are down by 11%; and robbery is down by 30%. The numbers are going in the right direction; that is true.

There are also improvements across our justice system. Bail refusals are up by 38%, thanks to Declan's law.

I heard the Opposition Leader on radio this morning say, 'We would really love the CLP to tell us why crime is going down'. I have a newsflash—have more cops and back them, giving them the best pay they have had in 20 years; have real laws; deliver consequences; put bad people in jail; make sure our courts are working properly; and stay true to what we were elected to deliver for the people who put us there. Labor members forgot that long ago, which is why they are sitting on the other side wondering how we got on top of crime. They should be wondering how they sat idle while tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people were victimised on their watch. There are two former Attorneys-General sitting on the other side.

We have increased bail refusals by 38%. On top of that we have reduced the number of people on remand and the length of time they spend on remand, which is incredible. Best of all, Territorians are noticing. A mum explained to me that 12 months ago there is no way she would have let her teenage daughters go to Casuarina. Over the last two weekends she has taken her daughters and their friends, and they have had a wonderful time, as they should. That is a change in our life and lifestyle that we are proud of.

Economy – Construction Projects

Mr YOUNG to CHIEF MINISTER

You have been busy spruiking construction programs around Darwin, but every one of them was started under Labor: the LUXXE Residences, approved in 2023; the Darwin Data Centre, construction began in 2023; and CDU's Trades Training Centre, a 2023 project. I am guessing the next one on the list for spruiking is the new Royal Darwin Hospital mental health ward, which was a Labor initiative. Last week the Treasurer admitted that not one new project had been greenlit or started under your government. The CLP confirmed the Territory Coordinator does not have a single project underway. Every so-called rebuilding project is a Labor project.

What exactly is the government doing to rebuild the Territory economy and what new projects has it started?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you will be heard in silence.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, they are scratching around. It is week two and they are getting a little tired and weary and do not really know what is going on, because they are not connected with Territorians.

Let me be clear, we promised Territorians that we would do three things, and we have stuck to that. We promised people we would reduce crime, and the crime stats show that those numbers are going down. We promised Territorians that we would rebuild the economy, and the CommSec State of the States report said

that we have the fastest-growing economy in the nation at three times faster than the next fastest jurisdiction. Construction activity is higher and population growth the fastest in the country. The economic data is looking good. We promised people we would restore our beautiful, iconic Territory lifestyle. We purchased 30,000 hectares at Silkwood, and we have locked in the hunting season and extended it by three weeks. We are doing a lot.

Part of that puzzle is about making sure that our regulatory frameworks are correct. We have an Approvals Fast Track Taskforce and procurement reform. You name it; we have been working at 100 miles an hour on this, including the much-loved Territory Coordinator. All these things have been delivered in just 14 months of the CLP. We have been through a budget process in which many projects have been allocated.

I will go down memory lane on where the budget left us. We are up to about $15bn in debt, with no projects to show for it. There is an extreme blowout on the ship lift, handed to us courtesy of the previous Labor government …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; conciseness of answer. The Chief Minister is not answering the Member for Daly by naming a project that has been greenlit by the CLP government.

Madam SPEAKER: She has still half her answer to go.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Opposition Leader, you cannot recreate the question. I have one minute and 30 seconds to go. We have been working very …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You asked me what we are doing to rebuild the Territory's economy. We put in place a Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, who has been out across our Asian region. We have developed our reducing crime strategy, our rebuilding the economy strategy and our lifestyle strategy. We just delivered home ownership to 1,000 people. We have the best, most competitive, home build scheme in the country. We have the best payroll tax scheme in the country where we lifted the payroll tax-free threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m.

We will continue to do the work. It is hard for Labor members to understand because they had hundreds of millions of dollars, $4bn, on their Santa Clause wish list called the infrastructure program. That was the list where they all got together and said, 'Hey, I have a great idea, let's build this'. They stuck it on the list and put no money towards it, and they never did it. They wander into parliament and say, 'Where is my road'? Your road is still on the Santa Clause list, which is not coming for Christmas. Newsflash: it was not real.

We will continue to do the work required to rebuild the economy Labor destroyed, to facilitate private sector investment to get confidence in the Territory booming again and projects flowing on top of the publicly funded projects that are in our budget.

Policing and Security

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Can the minister inform the Assembly about the proactive measures the CLP government is implementing to tackle crime and custody challenges in the Territory? What effect has the outsourcing of prisoner movements to G4S had on enhancing frontline policing capabilities? I understand that the G4S initiative is set to expand to Alice Springs; how will this expansion bolster operational efficiencies? With the Wet Season on the horizon, what strategies are in place to manage the anticipated increase in prisoner numbers, particularly during the court recess and when remote communities become isolated?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri understands how important it is to keep the community safe. When we took office, we were confronted with a significant Corrections crisis. Crime rates were spiralling out of control and our prisons were bursting at the seams; they were that bad that those opposite put prisoners into watch houses. They said, 'Let's worry about the infrastructure later. Put them in there and forget about them.'

Prisons face daily lockdowns, with Corrections community programs struggling and eventually stopping as staff redirect to internal duties. That is the community lawnmowing services, the gardening and cleaning. They had to stop because the Labor government failed to invest in infrastructure.

Our government acted swiftly to stabilise the system and restore community confidence. One of our most significant achievements was to expand prison capacity. We brought the Berrimah prison online—we effectively built a prison in one year. There are about 600 prisoners in that prison. I also give a shout-out to the commissioning team, which was highly commended at the Chief Minister's Awards last weekend. The great work shows its passionate in doing what it does to keep the community and, at the same level of importance, staff, safe.

It is important to manage the staff and ensure they go home, unlike the previous Labor government, which neglected the prison system.

This is a great result, taking the pressure off the system and ensuring there will be a consequence. If someone is ordered into detention, we will find a bed for you. This is about consequences for your actions. Those on the other side forgot about that, which is why crime stats were spiralling out of control.

Community work programs are back, assisting pensioners by mowing lawns and looking after their properties. The crime stats are coming down because there are real consequences, and our prison numbers are stabilising.

Our workforce is going well. We recruited more than 200 new officers, and G4S has extended to Alice Springs. That will put frontline police back on the street keeping the community safe, instead of managing prisoners in the courts. This will free up police officers to keep working and ensure that Alice Springs is a safer community this summer, which the previous government failed to do.

There is a spike in intake, and we have a plan to keep those crime stats down. That plan will …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Rental Housing Affordability

Mr PAECH to TREASURER

Figures show that the Northern Territory has the second highest rent prices in the country, making it harder for Territory families to make ends meet. At the same time, a national rental report shows the CLP government has done nothing to progress national reforms to improve renter protections. Renters are just as important as homeowners, but the CLP government does not seem to care about them. Why has the CLP turned its back on the tens of thousands of renters across the Northern Territory—50% of the Territory—struggling to keep a roof over their heads?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to get the question from the Member for Gwoja because it allows me to speak about what we are doing to try to drive down rental costs.

The Member for Drysdale spoke about this when talking about the HomeGrown Territory scheme. We are driving new builds across the Territory through this scheme. It comes down to supply and demand, as the Member for Drysdale said. When there is a shortage in housing there are issues for renters getting houses. It is as simple as that. It is evident in my home town in Central Australia. Driving an increase in housing through the HomeGrown scheme and getting new builds off the ground increases supply. By increasing supply we reduce demand. That will drive down rents as more houses come online.

It is not just the HomeGrown scheme. This month 48 houses will be under construction for delivery next year. That works towards providing affordable housing for renters and those on low incomes and increases supply, which then reduces demand.

I pick up on what the Opposition Leader said about the HomeGrown scheme, which is that I disparage renters. Opposition Leader, I am a renter. Why would disparage myself? I do not understand how you could say that.

We are doing the hard work because Labor did not drive the housing market. The evidence is a considerable increase in new builds and housing loans to drive new builds across the Territory—new houses and more rooms coming onto the market.

I want to see the regions moving quicker. I hope that the extension of the HomeGrown scheme will allow people in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Central Australia to get new builds off the ground, freeing up other houses in the market and driving down rental prices. When there is more supply, demand decreases. There will be a reduction in rental prices because there will be more houses on the market available for rent. That is good for people looking for rentals, including me.

Rental Housing Affordability – Supplementary Question

Mr PAECH to TREASURER

Can the Treasurer confirm if the government will stand with renters and deliver all the agreed national rental reforms?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are increasing housing supply. That will reduce demand and rental prices. We are increasing our social and affordable housing, which will reduce rents because there will be more houses in the marketplace to service those people looking for somewhere to live.

Under the previous government …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The supplementary question was seeking whether the CLP government will stand with renters and commit to all the national rental reforms.

Madam SPEAKER: It is specific.

Mr YAN: Under the previous government, wait times for public housing blew out to eight to 10 years in some regional areas. We are working hard to address this by providing housing through the social and affordable housing scheme and the HomeGrown housing scheme.

Justice Reforms

Mr MACKAY to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The Finocchiaro CLP government promised to restore law and order and reduce crime. Since coming into office, the government has introduced major justice reforms, from the strongest bail laws in the country to the toughest sentencing for assaults on frontline workers and new offences to tackle serious property crime. Territorians want to know whether these reforms are making a real difference on the ground. Can the Attorney-General update the Assembly on how these laws are working and what impact they are having on keeping Territorians safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder's constituents are keen to hear how things are going across the Territory.

Under the Labor government there was a crime crisis. Things were out of control, and Territorians were leaving in droves because they feared for their safety. The previous government did not invest in our courts or the Corrections system.

When we came to government there were serious things to fix. We started straightaway. In the first sittings we passed a suite of law-and-order reforms, one of which was Declan's law. It has made a huge difference in our court system, with bail refusals up by 38%—a huge number. To put that into perspective, that is 1,256 more people this year compared with the same period last year behind bars, not back out on the streets committing crime. That makes a big difference to community safety.

Another important factor is bail refusals for youths. We also had a youth crime crisis. Data shows that bail refusals for youths are up by 33%; that is 318 youths who were committing crimes under Labor who are now not out on the streets. That makes a big difference to community safety.

We backed that with our biggest-ever law and order budget, $1.5bn for more judges and police, as well as investment in Corrections and our TIG-ER team, which can resolve court cases earlier. It has finalised 400

cases that are no longer clogging up the system. More people are being sentenced rather than in prison on remand. That is a big shift in the numbers.

One of the biggest measures we have is data on the number of victims. A 7.4% drop represents 1,273 fewer victims of crime. Data is one measure; another is how Territorians feel. They want to feel safe in their community. A hotel owner said, 'I want you to keep going because for the first time my staff feel safe'. That is momentous because this time last year that same hotel had constant break-ins, people jumping the counter and staff scared to go to work. That is an awful position for staff members to be in and for the hotel owner to have to deal with. I am glad that Palmerston hotel owner feels safer.

Territorians tell us to keep going. We have so much more work to do, but this is a great start.

INPEX – VOC Emissions

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Although I appreciate the earlier answer to the first-ever useful Dorothy Dixer, I have a few further questions.

Mr Mackay: Hello, TikTok.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

K McNAMARA: Reports say INPEX has vastly underestimated the volume of emissions it is polluting our air with. Emissions are made up of VOCs including benzene, a known cancer-causing substance linked to leukaemia. Doctors say that there is no safe level of contact with benzene for human health, but the government does not limit the volume of VOCs emitted. Therefore, when the minister say the emissions are within the guidelines, people need to know that there are no limits in the guidelines. Additionally, the minister's department does not regularly conduct air quality monitoring for VOCs.

Will the government introduce a limit on the volume of cancer-causing VOCs that the gas industry can emit? Given the massive underestimate of the emissions by INPEX, does the department or the EPA need to start monitoring air regularly for VOCs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have said all I can regarding the INPEX matter. It is important to allow the independent Environment Protection Authority to conduct its investigation.

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has finished his answer.

K McNAMARA: He did not answer any of the questions that I asked.

Madam SPEAKER: That is his call.

Public Transport Safety

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

For years under Labor the public transport system in Darwin and Palmerston, including in my electorate of Karama, became a symbol of community decline, with drivers assaulted, passengers unsafe and crime left unchecked at bus interchanges. The former government ignored calls from frontline staff and the public to fix the system and protect those going to work or school. Can the minister update the Assembly on what steps the CLP government has taken to restore safety, order and the confidence in our public transport system and how this compares with Labor's record of inaction and neglect?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I understand the issues that have taken place in Karama and how the Member for Karama has advocated for the people there.

It is great to speak about this again because since we came into government, a little more than 12 months ago the CLP has continued to be proactive with initiatives to make our public transport system safer for everyone. Under Labor the system slid into chaos, with drivers under attack and passengers and the public losing confidence.

In May we launched our Bus Safety Reform Strategy, a clear break from the failures of the past. We are taking steps to stamp out antisocial behaviour and protect drivers and the public. Already this is showing results. Reported incidents across the board are down by 20% compared with the same time last year, assaults on transit officers are down by 56%, incidents reported on buses are down by 28.5% and events classed as serious incidents are down by more than 30%. These are real results.

Next week we close the interchanges in Darwin and Casuarina. These hotspots for crime and disorder will not be allowed to fester any longer. We acted immediately after coming into government to install driver protection screens across the entire bus fleet, responding to concerns that had long been ignored. We removed cash handling for bus drivers and helped drive a 70% drop in directly related assaults. We installed expanded CCTV, duress alarms and direct radio links between drivers and transit officers, giving those frontline staff the tools they needed to be safe.

Under the CLP taxidrivers will be protected. We have listened to their concerns and are meeting to expand their right to request prepaid fares, long ignored by the previous government. Drivers can only request prepayment on Friday and Saturday nights; we will extend that to seven nights. The Territory has fallen behind Australia on this, but we are catching up fast. This reform is another step to making our transport networks safer.

There is more work to do but the numbers, such as our crime stats, are heading in the right direction. This is real action. There are fewer assaults, the technology is smarter and we are providing safer reforms. The government is implementing a transport system that puts the community first and delivers where the previous Labor government failed to do so.

Housing Affordability

Mr BROWN to TREASURER

The State of the Housing System 2025 report shows that the Northern Territory is forecast to deliver only one in three new homes promised under the National Housing Accord by 2029. At the same time the government was given $50m by the federal government to build up to 100 new affordable homes; so far it has only managed to build four.

When Territorians are struggling to find affordable housing for their families, why is the government sitting on its hands?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is great talk about housing and what we are doing in this space to deliver for the people of the Northern Territory. Speaking of social housing and the accelerator payment, we, along with the Australian Government, are delivering up to 100 new social and accessible homes across the Territory. The $50m Social Housing Accelerator Payment is funded by the Australian Government and is being delivered by the Northern Territory Government.

These new homes will be built to acceptable standards, enabling seniors and people with mobility issues to continue living in the same home as they age, which is something the previous government failed to address. Construction of the next 24 homes across Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs is expected to start this month, with anticipated completion by mid-2026.

Multiple local contractors are engaged for these works, including Greenspace Group; LA Build; DICE Australia; Katherine Constructions; and a couple of contractors in Central Australia, Blueprint Construction NT and Centrebuild. The Northern Territory Government has awarded multiple contracts totalling $16.7m to deliver homes in the following locations: two in the Top End in Francis Street and Challoner Circuit, Humpty Doo; Bradshaw Crescent in Katherine; Casuarina Street in Katherine East; Maluka Road in Katherine East; Hollis Street in Tennant Creek; Whippet Street in Tennant Creek; 20 Lewis Street in Gillen; Spearwood Road, Sadadeen; and Van Senden Avenue in Gillen.

These outcomes in our regions are great to see. We are delivering homes for those who desperately need them and driving down the unacceptable wait times of between eight and 10 years for regional housing. We are working hard to address that and will continue to do this valuable and important work.

School Attendance – Reducing Crime

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Safer communities are built on the foundations of strong families and children who are engaged in their education. There is a clear link between school attendance and youth offending, and our goal is to see fewer children on the streets and instead in classrooms building brighter futures through further study, training and job opportunities.

The Reducing Crime strategy recognises that strong families and consistent school attendance are vital to community safety. Can the minister update the Assembly on the actions the CLP government is taking to improve school attendance and whether these measures are making a difference?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the crime statistics are out. Our government made an election commitment to reduce crime and restore law and order across the Territory. Crime is coming down. In Katherine, residential crime is down by 9%, commercial crime is down by 35%, and theft is down by 18%. This reflects investment in frontline policing and a zero-tolerance approach to crime. The crime statistics in Katherine show real change for families and businesses across the wider Katherine community.

We have to address the root causes of crime; that means getting kids back to school. Children who regularly miss school can become disengaged and end up, sometimes through no fault of their own, in a life of crime. We are holding families to account, with 20 school attendance officers working directly with families, liaising with them and learning their concerns. We must ensure parents meet their legal obligations to get kids to school; non-attendance is not negotiable, and children who miss school will not be educated or led into a better life or job.

We have worked with the federal government for a long time. Last week we announced that parents with chronically disengaged children will be subject to income management.

We delivered our election commitment to expand school-based policing, recently announcing two Aboriginal liaison officers based at Katherine High School and MacFarlane Primary School. Over the next four years 40 Aboriginal liaison officers will complement school-based police.

The attendance and engagement officers and all the work done in schools resulted in a rise in attendance rates, reflected in the statistics.

Systemic Racism Audits

Mr GUYULA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement outlines that systemic racism audits will be conducted across 10 Northern Territory Government departments. I understand that the DIPL audit is complete. Will this report be made public? Which other departments will be audited, or is this government no longer working to achieve the goals of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I hope I understand this correctly. The member is talking about the Aboriginal Justice Agreement evaluation piece the Attorney-General's Department is working on. That is going out to those alternatives to custody centres of which there are two in the Northern Territory—one on Groote Eylandt and one in Alice Springs.

They will be evaluating to see how those facilities are operating, what the benefits are and the outcomes. They will look at the community courts where the community sits down with the offender, the victim and the victim's family, create an Aboriginal Experience Report and go through the process of a real-life court situation. That evaluation is taking place.

I recently visited the alternatives to custody centre on Groote Eylandt. I sat in the community court and spoke with the judge and members of the law and justice group. It was not sitting on the day I was there, but we heard firsthand how the system works and how it is a benefit for the community.

All communities are different. There are consequences for offending, and it was the same here. Offenders face families in their community, and there is real shame associated with that. It was great to get an understanding of how the Aboriginal experience reports work and how we can improve the system.

Labor brought in the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The CLP, in a bipartisan approach, signed it, and we have now had it for a number of years. As a government we want to ensure that it is working. That is why the evaluation …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the Member for Mulka asked a specific question about the departmental racism review. He outlined the one department—which was DIPL, now DLI—is completed, and he has asked for an update on the other departments. Will there be other departments going through this review process under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement?

Madam SPEAKER: You have the call, minister. I think you are on track.

Ms BOOTHBY: I was answering the question about the Aboriginal Justice Agreement that both parties have signed up to.

That evaluation work will take place. We are keen to see that because we want to save the community. We will ensure that we make the necessary changes.

The Labor government created the Aboriginal Justice Agreement but it was not funded. How they would ever continue to operate was beyond me.

Ms Uibo: Which departments will be reviewed next? Can the Attorney-General answer the Member for Mulka?

Ms BOOTHBY: We had to do all the work to ensure there is money in the budget this year so we can see if it works. If something is working we will keep doing it, but if it is not, we will not. That work is important.

Ms Uibo: Answer his question!

Mr Brown: You are not even funding it.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I cannot hear the minister's reply with all the interjections.

Ms Uibo: She is not answering it anyway.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease your interjections, and allow the minister to complete her answer.

Ms BOOTHBY: I understand the Member for Mulka was asking about the racism review—thank you for clarifying, Leader of the Opposition. There is no racism review happening. I think this refers to the one the Police was doing …

Ms Uibo: Two minutes left. No, go and check the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease your interjections, please!

Ms BOOTHBY: There was money set aside by the previous government for the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to do that. It is not happening.

Domestic Violence Rates

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Under Labor, domestic violence rates increased by more than 80%, a figure that was felt severely in my electorate of Drysdale. Labor's answer was to do the same things and expect a different result, letting down Territorians.

We have heard from a growing number of victims that this story needs to change. The latest crime figures released last week tell us it is changing. Can the minister update the Assembly on what the CLP government is doing to address domestic violence, what results we are seeing and what this means for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is passionate about advocating for his community and keeping them safe from domestic violence. His leadership in this space, showing our young men what it means to advocate for change and take the lead, is appreciated.

For eight years Labor members could see that their approach to domestic violence was not making any difference. They had the opportunity to admit that was the case; they could have shifted the dial, but they chose not to. They kept doing the same things and expected a different result.

We saw the result, which was an 80% increase in domestic violence assaults. That is a shameful statistic.

No more. The Finocchiaro CLP government understands that we need a different approach, and that is what we have done. We have addressed the root causes of domestic violence and ensured there are consequences for perpetrators. We have committed $36m per year of ongoing dedicated DV funding and focused on results driven by early intervention and addressing the root causes of domestic violence—the key to changing behaviour.

Programs such as Circuit Breaker are identifying homes in need and working with families to break the cycle before it escalates. We are sending a clear message to perpetrators that there will be consequences for their actions, starting with mandatory minimum sentencing for repeated breaches of domestic violence orders.

We are achieving results. The latest crime statistics show the incidence of domestic violence is decreasing. From January to September 2025 domestic violence assaults deceased by 1% compared with 2024, which is unprecedented. More recently there was a month-on-month reduction in domestic violence assaults in 2025, compared with 2024, of 2% in May, 14% in June, 17% in July and 19% in August.

There remains more to do, but a solid foundation to address the scourge of domestic violence has been laid and we will continue to fight to keep our community safe.

Systemic Racism Audits

J DAVIS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

This follows up on an earlier question in the Chamber.

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement signed by your government outlines that systemic racism audits will take place across 10 Northern Territory Government departments. I understand that the DIPL audit is complete. Will this report be made public? Which other departments will be audited?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I was saying in the previous answer, when I was cut short because of timing, the previous government talked about the racism review on radio saying that it would get a racism review done while in government.

The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner offered to do it, and there was talk of money being given to the commission to get it done. Then there was an election, so nothing happened. The CLP won government in the election, and we had to look at everything under the hood to see what was happening …

Ms Uibo: That is what a bipartisan agreement is.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Ms BOOTHBY: I am sure Labor remembers that we found Legal Aid to be in a world of hurt and desperately needing money to keep its services going for offenders who needed representation. Legal Aid had to do that because NAAJA was in all sorts of trouble. There were a lot of backstories. Legal Aid needed this money desperately.

Our government had to make tough decisions. We used the money that was set aside for the racism review, that would have gone to the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, for Legal Aid so that we could make sure …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, I think the minister is answering the question. She is only one-and-a-quarter minutes through.

J DAVIS: I will wait to see whether it is answered.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you. Please continue, minister.

Ms BOOTHBY: At least that slowed me down a bit because I am passionate about this.

The racism review is not happening because that money was used to prop up Legal Aid. Leanne Liddle is with Police doing a whole heap of work. The Chief Minister, who is the Police minister, talks about that a lot.

Our laws, changes, policies and anything we do in government apply equally. It is not about race; it is not about whether you are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.

The other point I will make is that when I talk about …

Ms Uibo: It is when we talk about the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Ms BOOTHBY: … victims of crime, there is demonisation of victims …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! All we are hearing is constant interruption from the other side. I am trying to listen to the Attorney-General's answer, but all I hear is disruption.

Madam SPEAKER: I agree. Opposition Leader, pipe down or you will spend some time outside.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. When will the DIPL report be made public?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call; you will not be interrupted again.

Ms BOOTHBY: This is about racism, and I have had two questions about it in this Question Time.

Our laws, policies and everything we do applies to everybody equally, as do the victims in this case. The large proportion of victims are Aboriginal people. This idea that there is racism in government or other organisations is ridiculous. If there was, why are we doing all this work to support victims when many victims are Aboriginal? I stand by what I am saying: our laws apply to everybody equally.

I explained what happened with the racism review when Labor was in and that when we came to government we had to make some changes. I have answered the question.

K McNamara: This is shameless. It is a simple question.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, Member for Nightcliff!

Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for PEOPLE, SPORT and CULTURE

Many would argue this portfolio sits directly under the restoring the territory lifestyle pillar; however, the focus of our team when we came to government was to reduce crime. How does the government link its promise of reducing crime to improving the Territory's lifestyle in a meaningful way?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, earlier this year we launched our Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy, which sets out a clear direction to champion the Territory's identity as a vibrant and inclusive place to call home and build a life.

Reducing crime is central to that strategy because safety underpins community confidence and economic growth. Our government was trusted by Territorians in August 2024 to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our Territory lifestyle. These three pillars are interconnected. When crime decreases, Territorians feel safer in their homes, at work and at events and are more confident to enjoy our unique Territory lifestyle.

We are keeping our promise to Territorians. Earlier the Chief Minister said that from January to August 2025 there were 1,273 fewer victims of crime than for the same months the previous year, which is a reduction of 7.4%. That sense of security encourages people to stay, invest and participate in their communities rather than leave due to fear or frustration.

With less crime, businesses face lower costs and confidence grows among industries. This creates jobs and opportunities, particularly for Territorians who might otherwise move interstate. When people feel confidence about raising families, accessing services and enjoying Territory life without fear, they are more likely to stay and contribute to their communities.

In my portfolio areas—specifically Arts; Multicultural Affairs; Disability; Sports; Veterans; and Youth, Seniors and Equality—we are investing heavily so that Territorians can enjoy and thrive. The CLP government is committed to ensuring the Territory is a safe place that provides equal opportunity for all Territorians.

By reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle, we are ensuring our Territory remains a place where people want to live, work and build their future. These three pillars are not just policy positions; they are the foundation for restoring pride and confidence in the Territory way of life.

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

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT (EXTENSION OF SCHEME) BILL
Serial 38

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support this Bill. Our government is investing in Territorians, backing them to build a secure future. The CLP government is helping families break free of the costly rental market and realise the dream of owning their first home.

That dream is important. When my family and I first arrived in the Territory we, like many others, began our journey by renting a small unit. It was convenient at first, flexible and low commitment, but every rent payment reminded us that we were building someone else's security, not our own.

We worked hard, saved and eventually bought our first home. Receiving the keys and walking through the front door is one of the proudest moments of my life. It meant stability, belonging and the start of a new chapter. That experience is why I am so passionate about helping others achieve that same dream. Home ownership is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about pride, stability and investing in our future as a community.

Under Labor, home ownership support was an afterthought, poorly targeted and underfunded. For eight years housing affordability worsened, investment confidence collapsed, and the construction sector struggled to find a footing. The CLP government is leading the Territory out of Labor's economic and housing crisis. We are delivering strong economic management, restoring confidence and supporting Territorians to own a piece of the place they call home. As part of our Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy, a key strategic priority is improving affordability, something that is central to keeping families here, attracting skilled workers and strengthening our economy.

That is why extending the HomeGrown Territory Grant until 30 September 2026 is so important. It is a financial measure and a commitment to Territorians that we believe in their future, and we are putting our money where our mouth is. Extending this program will drive local growth, support families and help keep

Territorians in the Territory. It is about building confidence for families, builders and developers who are creating the homes our growing population needs.

We are already seeing this excitement in Sanderson. Marrara Gardens is coming to life, and more houses off Boulter Road are on the way. There is real anticipation that this growth will create more housing and opportunities. Families are talking, couples are planning and local builders are preparing—but we need help. It is why the Treasurer and I called on the federal Treasurer to unlock more homes for families by increasing the Home Guarantee Scheme cap for the Northern Territory from $600,000 to $850,000. This is a practical step that reflects the unique reality of construction costs and housing prices in our market.

Increasing the cap will give more Territorians access to federal support to complement our grants. It is about fairness and recognising our distinct challenges. The Commonwealth should not apply a one-size-fits-all policy to housing finance. Our cost, geography and workforce dynamics are different. Territorians deserve a fair go.

I turn to the details of the Bill. The *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* will be amended with retrospective effect from 1 October 2025 to extend the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant for 12 months. The HomeGrown Territory Grant began on 1 October 2024, consistent with our 2024 election commitment. The program includes the HomeGrown Territory Grant of $50,000 to purchase or build a new home or $10,000 to purchase an established home, and the FreshStart New Home Grant of $30,000 for non-first homeowners who purchase or build a new home.

This is the most generous home ownership scheme in Australia, and it is working. Originally the scheme was due to end on 30 September 2025, but following a comprehensive review the government has decided to extend the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant until 30 September 2026. This gives families and the construction sector the certainty they need to plan and invest.

The review also recommended retaining the 12-month residency requirement, ensuring that these grants are used to build genuine homes for Territorians, not investment properties. We want people to live, work and raise their families here and to enjoy a full year of Territory lifestyle. The FreshStart New Home Grant of $30,000 will also extend, though this does not require legislative change, whilst the $10,000 grant for established homes ceased on 30 September 2025 as planned.

The Department of Treasury and Finance found that most applicants were joint applicants, and almost 85% of recipients were millennials or younger. This tells us the scheme is doing exactly what it was designed to do, helping young Territorians and families get their foot on the property ladder. Surveys of grant recipients also revealed that, for those who had considered leaving the Territory, the availability of the grant was often a key factor in their decision to stay. That is a direct investment in retaining our workforce, families and future.

As of 7 October 2025 more than $20m has been paid or approved under the scheme. The $50,000 grant for new builds is the most popular component, with more than $9.3m paid or approved. By extending this program, our government is giving Territorians more time to save for a deposit, finalise their finances or engage a builder for their dream home. It also gives builders and developers confidence to ramp up their operations.

During the review many in the industry said that the original 12-month timeframe did not give them enough certainty to expand. This extension changes that. It creates the long-term confidence our residential construction industry needs to grow sustainably. The economic flow-on effects are enormous.

More new builds mean more houses increasing supply, supporting jobs and keeping construction trades busy. Every new home built supports local electricians, plumbers, painters, carpenters and small businesses that supply materials and furnishings. As housing supply grows it also benefits renters, freeing up existing stock and helping ease rental pressure. More homes mean more options, which means downward pressure on rents.

This is not just a win for homebuyers; it is a win for renters, builders and the Territory economy. Our HomeGrown Territory Grant is the most generous and effective in Australia. It is a key part of how the CLP government is rebuilding the Territory's economy and restoring the lifestyle we all cherish. Over the last year the Territory has recorded a 42.4% increase in dwelling starts. This is the highest in the nation, according to the CommSec State of the States report in July 2025. That growth does not happen by accident; it is the result of the sound policy, fiscal discipline and targeted investment that gives families and businesses the confidence to invest in the Territory's future.

With more than 250 new builds already in the pipeline, the message is clear: the CLP is turning around the Territory's economy and changing lives brick by brick, home by home and family by family. Last October we took action so that thousands of Territorians could take their first step towards home ownership. This October we are acting again to make sure even more Territorians can build that dream.

I see the difference this policy is making in my electorate every day. In Anula, Wagaman and Wulagi, young families are talking about buying their first home. Development in Marrara will soon bring new homes and neighbours. At Boulter Road, an upcoming release of allocated lots is creating excitement and the sense that the Territory is once again a place of opportunity.

These are the real stories behind the numbers—families planning for their future, parents saving for a backyard where their kids can play and Territorians deciding to stay not because they have to but because they want to.

This Bill delivers what we promised: action; certainty; and security for Territorians. We are backing hardworking families to save for a home, put down roots and build a life in the Territory. We are giving them the chance to own their homes sooner and to invest in their future with confidence, because when more Territorians own their homes, our communities grow stronger, safer and more connected.

Territorians can now save money for the things that make life here great, from kids' sports and community events to exploring the beauty of the Territory.

I look forward to hearing many more stories from Territorians who achieve their dream of owning a home, made possible through the most generous homeownership scheme in the nation, delivered by this CLP government.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I support the First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill 2025, Serial 38.

I never tire of reading this seminal policy document. I seek leave to table this page outlining our commitment to boosting construction and home ownership, which relates directly to this Bill.

Leave granted.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: We promised the electorate:

> *The CLP will deliver the most generous Home Builder Program in the country with a number of incentives. Importantly all with no cap on build or purchase price.*

What a wonderful, stimulating initiative.

It included a first homebuyer grant of $50,000 to build a brand-new home and the FreshStart New Home Grant of $30,000 for everyone else to build a brand-new home. It also gave $10,000 to help first homebuyers buy an existing home.

Under our program anyone who built a new home to live in received the $30,000 grant. In an Australian first, it included anyone who has previously owned or owns a home. We also had a stipulation: everyone must live in their new home for at least 12 months.

When we delivered this, we said:

> *These programs together with our Action Plan on Crime will stop the thousands of Territorians and skilled workers from leaving.*
>
> *We will get people out of the rental cycle and encourage them to put down foundations for a life here.*
>
> *Once again we will be a place where people want to live work and invest.*

When we introduced this program, it was the best incentive in the country.

This is where our government differs from the previous Labor government. We deliver and fund what we promise, whereas the Labor government promised the world along with a spending program but did not fund it.

Labor treated the electorate like mugs, with an ‘all talk, no action’ modus operandi. It was focused on generating press releases for empty promises. Shame.

I will focus on the Karama electorate and feedback from constituents. While campaigning at Mullamulla Circuit in Karama, a car stopped. A man and his wife came up to me and said, ‘Brian, we have seen this policy of yours’—which I just outlined; it is in our plan—‘about home ownership. Will you deliver it?’ I could put my hand on my heart and say that we were committed to doing it. They wanted their son to take advantage of the incentives in this scheme so he could build a house. I am glad that when we brought this program out we delivered what we said we would.

We have delivered 19 grants across Karama and Malak. As we heard from the Members for Drysdale and Blain, Karama and Malak are established suburbs with no vacant land for new builds, which is why their grants focused on the $10,000 used to buy an existing home.

While the $10,000 grant will cease, the $50,000 grant for first homeowners to build a new home and the $30,000 grant for everyone else to build a new home will extend and help stimulate our economy.

The Chief Minister and I recently went to see the progress at the private sector development—I remind the Member for Johnston, private sector development—at the new Marrara Gardens subdivision off McMillans Road in the neighbouring electorate of Sanderson. It was wonderful.

Karama and Sanderson have strong shared interactions. Bordering schools such as Sanderson Middle School and Marrara Christian College have students from both our electorates. Constituents from the Sanderson electorate shop at the Karama Shopping Plaza because it is close to the post office and the library. Constituents from Karama electorate will shop at Northlakes Shopping Centre because it is close to the Darwin Golf Club. Movement between our electorates is interchangeable.

The Chief Minister and I learned that stage 1 of Marrara Gardens has just been released, offering 76 blocks. More than half have already sold, and construction has started—I saw the first build under construction.

Investors are responsible for 10% of these new builds, but most are local families and first homeowners taking advantage of our First Home Owner Grant. Many new owners are the children of residents who live across the road in Karama and Malak, building a house close to where their parents live.

This new construction activity is stimulating our economy and developers confirm that many of the tradespeople involved in this development live in Karama and Malak. These are local jobs in my electorate.

I pass on my condolences to Mary Zita’s and her family on the passing of her husband, Peter, earlier this year. I knew Peter well; we had met several times. He lived on Kalymnos Drive, Karama, and was a civil construction plant operator working on the Marrara Gardens development. He thoroughly enjoyed it.

This First Home Owner Grant program is part of a coordinated plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. Twelve months on, data such as the recent positive crime statistics, which the Chief Minister has discussed today, and the CommSec report shows we are delivering these goals and doing well on early readings. We have a long way to go, and our united team will not lose sight of these goals.

I am inspired by the many residents who congratulate the efforts of the Finocchiaro-led government and urge us to hold the course. Today I went to Salvatores. Sean Johnston, the owner and manager, said that we are doing a great job but we need to keep going at it. This is where business confidence is lifting. We know we have a long way to go—we are not taking it for granted—but we have made a good start.

This homeowner grant extension shows our commitment to keep the pace going. I congratulate the Treasurer on his Bill.

Mr YAN (Treasurer)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions and for their support for this scheme.

The Bill amends the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* to extend the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant in respect of new homes for another 12 months. The Bill extends the eligibility period for buyers and builders of new homes to 30 September 2026.

I will thank individual members and then address concerns raised by some members. I thank the Member for Goyder. I am glad to see that people in rural areas are actively taking up this scheme. The one $50,000 grant in Central Australia has gone to the rural area to someone at Ilparpa, which is great to see.

The Member for Drysdale spoke comprehensively about supply and demand and what it means to the marketplace long term and how it changes rental factors and prices in the market. We are trying to achieve that because we know that with increased supply, we will reduce demand. That works for all sectors of our community.

The Member for Wanguri was clear that this is also about building communities. As a government we are trying to build healthy and resilient communities by increasing our housing marketplace and participation.

The Member for Casuarina—I like this because it was quite poignant—specifically said it was the difference between dreaming of and actually owning a home. That is what this is about. So many people dream of owning their home, and it is hard to get into the market. This scheme is making that dream become a reality.

The Member for Blain spoke about opportunities in the Palmerston area. The new subdivision of Asche in that region is a growth area of the Northern Territory, and it is great to see things moving ahead there.

The Member for Sanderson's contribution was important because for someone moving here from interstate or overseas, starting in the rental market is always difficult. Being a renter, I understand that. Then again, being able to buy and own your home, put down roots, call somewhere home and raise your family is so important to people in the Territory. This government is trying to give Territorians that opportunity for many generations to come.

The Member for Karama was eloquent as ever. This was an election commitment coming into the 2024 election. We said that we would deliver the best scheme in the country. We did just that, and we will continue to deliver for the people of the Northern Territory.

I will address issues raised by members. I need to correct the Member for Johnston and provide some clarity. She said on a number of occasions that this scheme was costing $200m. That is not correct. To date, I believe we have spent $23m on this scheme in 12 months. I am not exactly sure where the $200m figure came from, Member for Johnston. Maybe the member added a zero where she should not, but it is only $23m so far.

There are 300 houses under construction because of this scheme. Questions were raised about the veracity of the program and whether it is having an effect; I will provide some numbers on that. There are 300 new builds. Would they all have been part of the scheme? Possibly not, but there are 300 new builds taking part in this scheme.

The Territory has reported an increase of 2.6% in construction work over the year to the June quarter of 2025. The value of building work in the Territory has increased by 1.2% to $318m in the March quarter. The value of residential work in the Territory has increased by 7.5% over the year to the March quarter, and the value of non-residential building work has increased by 1.7% over the year to the March quarter.

The value of building work yet to be done in the Territory has increased by 21.1% over the year to the March quarter. This indicates a strong pipeline of work to keep our economy growing. Building approvals is the key data driving our decisions. The number of residential building approvals in the Territory has increased by 22.2% over the year to August. These significant numbers show that what we are doing is working.

There were a number of questions about the $10,000 grant being reduced. I understand the questions around that and provide some explanation. This grant is about driving construction and the industry, which for too long under the previous Labor government was flailing and going backwards. When we came to government, apart from delivering the best scheme in the country we are also ensuring that we provide that all-important work to our construction market. We have delivered on that.

Data from the Master Builders NT shows that the 253 new homes supported by government housing grants has stimulated $152m of private sector investment into the Northern Territory. This investment has supported more than 600 direct jobs in residential building and potentially another 1,000 indirect jobs across our economy. These are figures that we need to see.

When we talk about the $10,000 grants, this is where the Labor Party could dive in behind us, back us and help us out, because the federal government did not increase the cap on its homeowner grants in the

Northern Territory. Every other state and capital city had a cap increase to upwards of $850,000. The median house price in Darwin is $640,000 as a minimum. The cap in the Territory from the Commonwealth is $600,000. That effectively cuts nearly every first homeowner out of eligibility to access those Commonwealth grants.

We wrote to the federal minister a few weeks ago outlining this fact. That federal scheme is to help new homeowners get into their first house, and the Commonwealth has cut the majority of Territorians out of it. We want the Commonwealth to step up and change the cap to provide the same eligibility and opportunity for the people of the Northern Territory to access the scheme, because we should not be second-rate citizens to the rest of the country; it is just not on.

I suggest that Territory Labor and its federal representatives in the Territory also get onto the federal minister and say, 'How about us in the Northern Territory?' We have done it; we stepped up and asked, and it will help if their colleagues here and their other federal members supported the people of the Northern Territory, because so far it has not happened.

The Leader of the Opposition said that our policy was short-sighted. I am not exactly sure where she gets that idea from because this policy is about driving the economy, investment, home ownership, home growth and new homes in the Territory. I do not believe it is short-sighted policy; I think it is good policy to invest in our construction sector and economic delivery longer term. More homes means more people. We have the fastest population growth in the country and without housing to support it we will not continue to grow; we are seeing that problem in the southern states.

We have had a breakdown by region, which most members have spoken about. We are glad to see the regions taking up this opportunity as we know there is growth there—sadly not as much as I would like, but we have land releases in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. I was heartened at the start of this scheme to see some people in homelands looking to access this scheme to build a house, because if they can get themselves a section 19 lease on their land then the banks would back them with the money to build their own home. I keep pursuing it because it is an opportunity for many people in remote areas to be able to own a home for the first time.

We are extending this Bill because Territorians said that they wanted this program to continue for another year. At the six-month mark of our nation-leading HomeGrown Territory program I tasked the Department of Treasury and Finance to undertake a review. The department heard from development and residential construction industry stakeholders, financiers, mortgage brokers and conveyancers. These stakeholders said that 12 months was not enough time to ramp up their operations to meet the high demands for these grants. That is why our government knew we had to extend them.

Most importantly, by amending this Bill we are giving Territorians more time to save a deposit, find the right block of land and contract a builder. To date, the program has added almost 300 new builds to the pipeline and counting, with 1,100 applications. Our government has already helped many first home builders, so with this Bill we are extending our support because we want more Territory families build their own home.

I reiterate this Bill is just one piece of the housing puzzle. Although we are proud that these grants are open to every Territorian, the reality is that those who do not live on freehold land, such as homelands or in many remote communities, are unable to apply. That is why our government is offering many types of housing for Territorians.

Our government is overseeing the $4bn remote housing package and delivering on federal funding agreements such as the Social Housing Accelerator Payment. We have other incentives such as stamp duty exemptions for Territorians who purchase a house-and-land package, which I talked about in Question Time. We have those builds coming through the Social Housing Accelerator Payment.

There were questions about how our government can be sure that the HomeGrown Territory Grants have an impact on the Territory economy. Do not just take my word for it; the economic data over the last year shows that these grants have not just had an impact on our economy, they have transformed it.

When Labor was in government, Master Builders NT recorded the Territory's worst year for new builds since records began. This could not be further from the state of the residential construction industry under the CLP, with the number of building approvals increasing by 22.2% over the year to August. Through the work our government has done rolling out the HomeGrown Territory Grant program, dwelling starts have increased by an annual growth rate of 42.4% according to CommSec State of the States. The value of residential building

work done has increased by 7.5% and the Territory is leading the nation in housing finance and construction work.

The proof is in the pudding, with Master Builders NT issuing 85% more fidelity fund certificates in August than at the end of Labor's eight-year housing construction crisis last August. Master Builders NT credits this to the CLP's First Home Owner Grant which is why we are extending the $50,000 grant for first home builders; because this government wants to see these numbers climb.

This is a win–win for Territory's first homeowners and renters. Through this Bill, the CLP government is supporting those who build or rent to have more affordable housing options.

In summary, the Bill amends the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000* to extend the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant in respect of new homes for 12 months. Under this Bill, the Territory government's HomeGrown Territory Grant program remains the most generous home ownership scheme in the country for first homebuyers looking to build their dream home. The 12-month residency requirement for eligibility remains the same.

The extension of the scheme is expected to cost $10m, with a direct economic impact so far of more than $130m. Extending this scheme is worth every cent we are throwing at it. For the young Territorians who we have helped unlock home ownership dreams and put down roots, this grant is worth even more to them. You cannot put a price on that.

Our government is working to fix Labor's housing mess. With more First Home Owner Grants for new builds, it is building more homes than Labor did, rebuilding the Territory brick by brick and ensuring more Territorians can access our first homebuyer support to unlock more housing options.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Safer Schools, Stronger Classrooms

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I present the ministerial report on safer schools, stronger classrooms.

Territorians trust us to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore the unique lifestyle that makes the Northern Territory the best place to live, work and invest. Our CLP Finocchiaro government promised that we would be one of action, certainty and security. We listened, and we are delivering on our election commitments. We have acted swiftly, and departments have had to be agile over the last year to set things in place. We have not just talked about it; we acted on it.

In our second year of government I can proudly say we have kept that promise. We brought back school attendance officers. I have been out on patrols with school attendance officers in Palmerston, Alice Springs and Katherine and seen firsthand the impact they are having, working with families and students to get them to school. I have spoken with the teams about the challenges families are facing and overcoming to get their kids to school.

Attendance officers have conducted more than 6,000 compliance visits this year, with more than 1,000 compliance notices issued. Of those, 531 were revoked, resulting in 531 children being back in classrooms getting an education and on their way to a better future.

Let me take you on a trip down memory lane. Coming to government last year we uncovered Labor's secret list that obscured data about children attending school. This list, called the intensive support roll, was deliberately covering up school attendance figures by under-reporting. The cover-up ends under my watch as a minister under the Finocchiaro CLP government. There are 328 fewer students on the intensive support roll compared with this time last year due to the hard work and dedication of the attendance and engagement teams.

In June we launched the Boosting Literacy and Numeracy Plan that uses explicit teaching strategies. This ensures every child has the strongest start and access to the foundations of literacy and numeracy. The plan

involves explicit instruction in reading and mathematics based on evidence and best practice and follows an 'I do, we do, you do' approach. It allows our valuable teachers to break down concepts into smaller and more practical steps to allow students to build understanding.

Improving education outcomes—something that Labor failed to do—will help NT children get jobs and be competitive. Under its watch, literacy and numeracy levels plummeted to the lowest in the country. Rolling out our explicit teaching across the Territory gets schools back to basics and improves literacy and numeracy outcomes. Whether they are in Borroloola, Oenpelli or Darwin, all children have the right to access an equitable education.

Our government is committed to supporting and working with schools to have consistency across teaching. It is already in action in schools I have visited, where students are more interested, engaged and learning. This is the foundation of providing positive outcomes for our students' learning journeys.

We can all recall that one teacher who had a positive impact on our lives. Teachers are frontline staff delivering education to our future Territory leaders. That level of engagement that cannot be underestimated. Our government is committed to supporting teachers and equipping them with guidance, resources and professional learning to roll out explicit teaching across all classrooms in the Territory.

On 25 September our government launched incentives aimed at keeping and attracting teachers, confirming a commitment in its year of action to deliver certainty and security. Our keeping and attracting teachers strategy ensures the Territory is training more teachers and encouraging them to put down roots and stay.

We have the most generous housing grants in the country, with $50,000 for first homebuyers to build a new property as we just heard the Minister for Housing Construction speak about so passionately. Two key scholarship programs, the Teach Local Scholarship and the Teach Up North Incentive, were recently launched, offering up-and-coming and aspiring teachers incentives to complete their teaching degrees in the Territory. The four-year Teach Local Scholarship program supports 15 Territorians per year to become teachers. The Teach Up North Incentive offers up to 25 student teachers an incentive of $5,000 to complete their final placement in the NT, committing them to teach in an NT Government school under a two-year contract.

People who get a taste of our unique Territory lifestyle are most likely to put down permanent roots and make a life, build a family and contribute to the economy. Along with our home-builder grants, with $50,000 for first homeowners and $30,000 towards a second home, these programs support teachers and other professionals to put down roots and stay.

It does not stop there. The government is committed to attracting and keeping teachers, giving them financial certainty by moving them from short-term contracts into permanent places; another election commitment we have commenced and will continue. We are committed to increasing the number of teachers holding permanent contracts to 75% of the workforce, giving our valued teachers certainty—something that Labor failed to deliver. These professionals are delivering the best education possible to our students.

On 5 March the government announced a planned move away from middle schools and commenced consultation with parents, students, educators, school communities and peak bodies across the Territory—another election commitment.

Secondary school reform is part of our commitment to create employment pathways to jobs. It provides students with high-quality learning pathways and greater continuity from Years 7 to 12 and prepares them for life beyond school. Our government wants to get this transition right, which is why we have consulted so broadly and listened to all school communities. Briefings were held at affected urban schools, including Casuarina Senior College, Darwin High and Middle Schools, Nightcliff Middle School, Dripstone Middle School and Sanderson Middle School and in Alice Springs at Centralian Middle School and Centralian Senior College.

When I visited Alice Springs and met with school councils, parents and staff, I heard loud and clear the concerns they had about the infrastructure upgrades needed and being ready to roll out in 2026. Along with the Chief Executive of the Department of Education and Training, we agreed those concerns were real and came back with a plan to allow them to transition to a full comprehensive school in 2027. This gives the Alice Springs community time for infrastructure upgrades. The full phase-out of middle schools will be at the end of 2028, in line with Darwin and Palmerston schools.

Supporting the creation of stronger employment pathways through reforming secondary education ensures students can finish school and move into jobs and training. School is not for everyone, and there are many pathways that students can take. Through the VET pathways and working with school careers counsellors, students can do many varied courses. In remote settings, learning-on-country programs can support pathways to an ATAR or employment, and students should be supported through these processes. Work has begun on improving secondary pathways for students in remote and very remote areas.

We are developing the Skills NT Plan which will support the vision of the Northern Territory Economic Strategy 2025 by targeting key industries such as energy, Defence, agriculture, mining and tourism. Work is taking place with businesses, industry and the community to build the NT's workforce, including strengthening partnerships between industries and schools. The Department of Education and Training is working closely on this with Minister Cahill's team in the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations.

We have continued with the Back-to-School vouchers, reporting more than 41,000 students have used them this year, which is easing the cost of living for families. This, along with the sport vouchers, enables families to spend money on more essential items such as food and rent. Back-to-School vouchers are available for each student and can be put towards educational goods and services such as uniforms, textbooks, stationery, school excursions and much more.

Next year, after hearing community concerns about the spending of the vouchers, there will be further improvements to the policy. Vouchers can now be transferred among siblings in the same household attending the same school, better supporting the families spending them. Our government understands the pressures that families are faced with on a day-to-day basis, which is why we have been proactive in making policy changes to the usability of the Back-to-School vouchers. In addition, these vouchers are now redeemable up to the end of Term 3. This allows parents to spend the funds on future activities such as camps et cetera, rather than having to budget for money later in the year.

This year we also delivered the swimming and water safety in schools program, a vital program for all primary school students and another election commitment we delivered on. Three million dollars has supported schools for this life-saving program. I was a swimming teacher many years ago, and it is a life-saving program.

I recently had a conversation with the Member for Braitling who was telling me about a family in his electorate. The mother had spoken to him quite distraught and in tears. There had been an incident in a backyard pool where that child could have drowned, and it was the fact that child had attended the swimming in schools program that made all the difference; it did not end in a death and a tragedy for that family. I think $3m to roll out that program across the Territory, where all children get such great life-saving skills and learn to swim, is amazing.

The swimming in schools program has already seen 10,000 students complete vital lessons, with more schools to complete their lessons this term. Swimming supports physical activity, overall health and wellbeing. It is an essential skill that saves lives and builds confidence in students around water environments. All government and non-government schools have accessed funding for swimming lessons for students in Years 1 to 6.

In the Territory people love to get out and enjoy our beautiful nature. They love the outdoors, whether at a swimming hole in Litchfield or Kakadu, at a dam on a remote property or just in a backyard pool. I know the swimming in schools program saves lives.

Highlights include overcoming longstanding logistical challenges for remote communities, such as Milikapiti, where students travelled to Darwin to receive swimming lessons in week 1 of Term 4. Pularumpi School is scheduled to attend in week 4. Earlier this year, four remote schools held a camp in Tennant Creek where they accessed their swimming lessons. We continue to work closely with schools, communities and service providers to address some of the barriers they have come across. Schools are continuing to be innovative, working in excursions to town and lining up lessons. I thank School of Sport Education NT Principal Tim East and the team supporting these logistical arrangements.

It would be remiss of me if I did not offer a huge congratulations to the Department of Education and Training team on winning the Chief Minister's Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Award, which Mr Deputy Speaker attended, for its swimming in schools program. Again, to the department and the School of Sport Education NT, thank you. It was a great program and a great night.

We also rolled out the police in schools program to build positive relationships between police and young people, while improving safety. Parents and students have the right to feel safe in their schools without fear. Our government is committed to keeping teachers and students safer through expanding counsellors based in schools rather than in the Mitchell Centre as the previous Labor government wanted to do. Nine new school counsellors have been recruited to date with further recruitment underway, along with recruitment for school social workers.

In Term 4 of 2025, five of the new school counsellors commenced and were allocated to Darwin High School, Darwin Middle School, Dripstone Middle School, Katherine High School and Sanderson Middle School. In Term 1 of 2026 another four school counsellors will commence and be based at Casuarina Senior College, Nightcliff Middle School, Taminmin College and Darwin High School.

What we saw under the previous Labor government, as I have spoken about many times before, is a model that had counsellors operating out of the Mitchell Centre as opposed to a student being able to access a counsellor in their school environment. We also want teachers to feel safe at school and to look after their wellbeing while feeling appreciated in the workplace. We know we cannot attract and retain exceptional teachers if they do not feel safe in their workplace.

After years of going backwards under the previous Labor government, we are slowly turning around the ship. This will not happen overnight, nor in just 12 or 14 short months, but we are well on our way.

The department and NT Police are working together to develop a staged program to place police Aboriginal liaison officers in regional and remote schools. I announced this in Katherine just a couple of weeks ago. This program is in addition to and complements the existing school-based policing program. Placing ALOs in schools to increase attendance is another measure that the CLP government is taking in its year of action, certainty and security.

As I have repeated time and again, and will continue to do so, we want better outcomes in literacy and numeracy, and improved school attendance rates. The school-based ALO program will see 40 officers over the next four years working in selected government schools. They will provide culturally appropriate responses to issues in schools and communities. As I said, a couple of weeks ago we announced two for Katherine: Ethan Woods-Alum at Katherine High School; and Sylvia Maroney at MacFarlane Primary School. These two ALOs are born-and-bred locals with a wide range of cultural and family connections that will hold them in good stead for the work they undertake. The program is about stronger connections and safer schools, which leads to better outcomes for everyone.

Our government is committed to holding parents accountable for depriving their children of an education. Our Finocchiaro-led government has a clear focus on getting kids back to school and holding parents accountable. Earlier this year new legislation was introduced to support the important work of school attendance officers by enshrining their role in legislation.

Parents who consistently fail to get their children to school will now be referred for income management. All parents have a responsibility to get their children to school. Department officers can now refer parents to income management in instances where reasonable and sustained efforts have been exhausted, with the aim of achieving compulsory enrolment and attendance. I stress that this is for chronically disengaged students. It is a simple message: if you do not want to be income managed, get your kids to school.

The school attendance officer program aims to increase attendance, protect vulnerable children from disengaging from our education system and ensure that every child in the NT has access to the education they deserve. In addition, student engagement advisers lead complex case management to support students and families to re-engage with education.

The CLP government, after consistent work with the department and attendance teams, has halted the decline in attendance rates and maintained a system-wide attendance rate of 71.7% compared with Term 3, 2024. This stabilisation confirms that the work the department is doing is heading in the right direction. The consistent work to support students to engage in education and learning and hold parents to account for sending their children to school remains front of mind and is paramount for delivering outcomes.

Attendance rates regionally have increased, with four of the six school regions recording increased attendance in Term 3, 2025. Sixty-eight government schools recorded an increase in attendance compared with the same time last year. Of these, six schools recorded a remarkable increase of between 10 and 15 percentage points, with Mbunghara standing out with an extraordinary increase of more than 30 percentage points; well done to them and the community.

School staff, along with region-based student engagement advisers and school attendance officers, are committed to continuing to work in partnership with families and students to attend school and engage in education and learning.

There has been a lot of focus on the early education and care sector recently, with concerns about safety and also the delivery of services across our regions. We have staffing challenges in the Territory, so our government has launched up to 25 early childhood education scholarships each year valued at $5,000 to support those studying early childhood education.

We have been working hard to clean up the mess Labor left us in the education space, but there is still plenty of work to do; this is just the beginning. Our government is laser-focused, determined and courageous. We are building momentum and delivering results. Our government will continue to deliver for Territorians because that is what we were elected to do.

I thank the department for working through a big year of education reform. To the staff out in our very remote regions—like Laynhapuy Homelands and Oenpelli that I visited recently, or Telka at Mataranka School—everyone has been doing their bit to lift the standard of education, and I thank them. We have a lot more work to do, but we are moving in the right direction.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, safer schools and stronger classrooms are what everyone wants to see across the Northern Territory. Every child deserves to feel safe, supported and engaged in their schooling. Every child deserves to feel valued, respected and part of a school that truly values its connection to its community. Strong relationships between schools, families, elders and communities are the foundation for a long life of learning. Without these connections students are left feeling isolated, disengaged and at risk.

Punitive measures have never and will never work in the long term, yet the CLP government has doubled down on its failed tactics from the past. Truancy officers, fines for vulnerable families and threats of welfare intervention are just some. The government has spent $21m so far, and what has it achieved? Nothing. Overall attendance has not improved, despite what the minister for Education will tell you. Not one school can point to a success under this approach.

Let us be clear: the minister is celebrating Mataranka School, a great school in the Northern Territory. This is the same minister who in March was celebrating Timber Creek School, a brilliant school in the electorate of Gwoja. As soon as that school did not have the numbers and figures she wanted to quote, she dropped that school like a hot cake, ignoring it, the kids and their requests. That is what we get under this government, an Education minister interested only in showcasing schools that will make her look good rather than showcasing Territory schools for their excellence in educating kids.

Children are more than just numbers or statistics; they are human beings with potential, curiosity and promise and deserve to be nurtured, supported and inspired, not punished or criminalised. Comments from the Education minister this week are disgusting. This is National Children's Week when we should be showcasing, talking about and elevating the positive stories within our schools of our children and their educational excellence, achievements and aspirations. That is what we should be discussing and celebrating.

The Education minister spoke about Aboriginal liaison officers, and I acknowledge that ALOs have the potential to have a positive impact in our communities and the potential to be a positive initiative, but so far this week this minister has shown confusion and a lack of understanding. She has suggested that these officers might be responsible for behaviour management, a role they must never play. They are not the police and are not there to enforce; they are there to support, bridge cultures, strengthen relationships and support inclusion and safety. They are there to work with families, schools and communities to ensure that students feel understood, valued and supported.

We are watching closely. How will the government fund these officers? The minister has not yet been able to clearly articulate who is paying for them. Is it the Northern Territory Police or the department of Education? Is the government using the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement money, which was designed for educational resources and children's support, to pay for police in schools? How will they recruit, and what training will occur? Which schools will they serve?

The Education minister spoke about deploying these ALOs to remote communities. Will they be deployed by themselves or to schools that already have a police presence in the community?

We also know that the Education minister will pay ALOs in schools more money than our hardworking ALOs in the general community, completely dividing them. There will be a category for one ALO who serves the

general community out on patrol, working for community safety, and then in a school an ALO will be paid more money than the general ALO. That is not equality, and it is not fair.

How will ALOs collaborate with police constables in schools? This is a government that promised police constables in schools and has now changed its tune. It is now saying that it is rolling out ALOs across 40 schools in the Northern Territory. It cannot tell us which schools they are. Newsflash: this is not an Aboriginal issue. Stop trying to make out like it is just Aboriginal kids who need support in schools.

The CLP government said it would roll out these constables. Now it is further fuelling a racial issue. It is making this a racial issue by saying, 'We are bringing ALOs into schools because it is a black problem'. It is not a black problem; it is a whole-of-community problem. It should be an initiative that we work on together with school-based constables.

Who is actually being consulted about ALOs in schools? At the present time all we have from the CLP is a press release with no plan, detail or accountability. The minister for Education cannot even clearly articulate the role of an ALO, the pay scale, the entitlements that an ALO will have in a remote community, which community they will be going to and whether they will be left there by themselves or have support from Education and Police in that local community.

The CLP's failings are staggering. It reduces students to behavioural problems rather than seeing them as Territorians with potential. It has failed to consult with teachers, principals and school communities about strategies that work. Attendance has not improved to the level this government would have us believe under its watch.

Meanwhile, our schools are under attack from financial mismanagement. Removing the community service obligations (CSO) subsidy, which is now gone under this government, will increase schools' electricity bills; they will skyrocket. One school saw a 636% increase in one month. At the same time, the CLP has cut critical funding to Alekarenge School, Yuendumu School and Yirrkala School; the energy smart school program; and $11.7m from homeland learning centres.

They turn around and say, 'Schools can just take it out of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement'. Disgraceful! That is not what the agreement was designed for. The agreement with the Territory Labor government and the federal Labor government at the time was about supporting kids in schools with educational resources and learning and educational infrastructure, not to pay power bills or fund infrastructure that the Northern Territory Government should already be responsible for.

This is not a mechanism to abdicate all responsibility for the government's role to support education in Territory schools. Teacher wellbeing has been abandoned. The Education minister, the Member for Katherine, used to speak in opposition all the time about teacher wellbeing.

We know that Territory teachers do a great job. The former Labor government negotiated agreements to make sure that Territory teachers were the highest paid in the nation. The CLP, however, is silent on teacher safety, mental health and classroom support for students with additional needs. You cannot expect teachers to deliver world-class education when their workplaces are under-resourced; their communities under-served; and the government has broken promises about government employee housing, infrastructure and support.

Engagement is about relationships, not punishment. To truly engage students, schools need to provide and have the ability for proper funding for classrooms and educators; culturally responsive, inclusive and flexible education; and partnership with families—not fines, truancy officers or threats.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement was a game-changing opportunity to invest in classrooms and resources and to support teachers and students. Under the CLP this investment is being diverted to cover power bills, transportation and administrative costs rather than being used where it matters most, directly in the classrooms for children and educators.

We continue to see a government that fails to understand or respect cultural learning, essential programs, school nutrition or initiatives such as Families as First Teachers. It is failing Territory children, teachers and communities.

Labor knows that there is and always will be work to do in this space. We build strong classrooms, safe schools and communities where children thrive; that is the role of parliament. We need to support teachers, educators and staff with resources, respect and the backing they need. This government must be held to

account and must fight for every child in school, because every Territory child deserves the chance to succeed. Every educator deserves the chance to support children, and every school deserves proper investment. Labor will always stand with our teachers, students and communities. The CLP will continue to fail them.

It is coming up to World Teachers' Day at the end of October, which is a chance to acknowledge and celebrate Territory teachers. We must all stand to support them.

The minister for Education has spoken today about policy and her vision, but let us not forget it is in the CLP's DNA to bring in these policies and to time and again offer a quick sugar hit. In the long term it causes destruction, despair and disadvantage in our community. You only have to look at the CLP's previous policy for failed Yellow Shirts in remote Territory communities that delivered no substantial improvement in Territory education. The minister for Education talks big and wants to act mad, as if she is the hero of the Northern Territory, and will put every parent on income management. Newsflash, sweetheart: most people living in remote Aboriginal communities are already on income management. It is completely absurd for …

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 31; I find it offensive to call a fellow member of parliament 'sweetheart'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask you to withdraw the comment, Member for Gwoja.

Mr PAECH: I withdraw.

Newsflash, Member for Katherine: talking big, acting mad and playing the hero to win a quick like on Facebook is cheap, dirty and nasty politics and what we expect from the CLP government. Every remote person in the Northern Territory is probably already on income management in some way, shape or form.

Government members make these stupid announcements so that they can knock on doors in their electorates and say, 'We are doing this, and we are being tough'. Well, income management does not work. People are already on it. This is what you get from this lazy government, 'We need to look tough; we need to look like we are doing something.'

Well, do things that work, because so far the CLP government has spent $21m, but has improved attendance rates? No. It is demonising people, saying that it will put every Aboriginal person who does not get their kids to school on income management. They are probably already on income management because it is compulsory in the Northern Territory, so the government is failing there already.

The CLP government talks about Territory schools only when it suits its narrative. It spoke tough on Timber Creek, saying that it was the best school and amazing. Suddenly its attendance rates do not suit the government's narrative, and it drops it like a hot cake. Mataranka is a great school in the Northern Territory, but be careful, Mataranka; as soon as the minister is done with you she will throw you in the bin like she throws everything else.

This is a government you would not even trust to put your bin out on a Wednesday night, let alone reform education and deliver transformative investment for our kids. This is a government that will not do the work to look at what our schools need. It says to our schools, 'Just take money out of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. We will get rid of your power subsidy; take that out of the money that is supposed to be for teaching and educating Territory kids. We need to look at our EBA negotiations; take that out of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement because we do not have any money.' That is what we get under this government.

This government promised to build government employee houses for teachers to increase their numbers in our remote schools. What do we see? We have not seen that investment moving forward into government employee houses. There are more than 30 schools in my electorate. When I talk to those schools about the Education minister, do you know what they say to me? They say, 'Who is that? I have never heard of her.' The minister has not been to one school in the most remote parts of my electorate. She turns up to the ones accessible by bitumen or that she can charter into. She has no understanding of what our Territory teachers have to do every day when they travel on those remote roads or are isolated because the weather conditions cut off roads.

We get a government which, at the end of the day, does not care. It wants to look good; it brings in this stuff so that it can look tough, but its policies are failing. Other members will get up and say that they are not.

At the end of the day the best way to get kids to school is to make school the most amazing place that it can be. Do not punish people; empower them. Resource the school. Make it so wonderful that parents of these kids want to be at school every day, because they too want to be there loving learning and supporting their children.

Labor brought the RATE program back to the Northern Territory because we knew it worked. Look at Families as First Teachers. Every school in Gwoja is fantastic, does a great job and does not discriminate against anyone. They have elders, aunties, uncles, kids and babies—everyone goes to those schools. That is what we should be supporting and empowering to get kids to school.

The Central Australia Plan, a significant investment that Marion Scrymgour brought to the Northern Territory, is to fund on-country learning programs in our remote communities and in Alice Springs to help engage kids and to look at the curriculum and say, 'How can we bring in youth ranger programs to help kids get engaged and come to school?'

This government will ask our hardworking truancy officers—when you talk to the truancy officers they say, 'This is not the type of work we want to do; this is not what we signed up to. We signed up to empower kids and parents to get them to come to school, not to be out there issuing fines and growling at parents and kids. We wanted to be involved in a more proactive way to get kids to school; we wanted to be there to bridge them.' Now we have the Education minister saying that she will use them for reporting, so chances are there will be an increase in reporting for child protection because the schools will have no choice but to report it as a neglect issue if a kid is not going to school. That avenue is the only way to get kids and families onto a higher percentage of income management. That is dirty politics if that is what this government will do.

I support any progressive initiative that works at supporting families. If kids are not going to school, then let us understand what support and programs they need. If we want to get kids to school, let us look at housing and give priority to families whose kids go to school, whose families go to work at the school or who support their local community's leadership around schools, like school councils. All this is important stuff we could be doing, but instead we continue to hear broken old rhetoric from the CLP—punishment, punishment, punishment—because that is what it believes will make change. It might look good now; we might see a slight change in the numbers, but in the long term it will not work. Look at federal programs that have been evaluated or the Yellow Shirts program, particularly in Central Australia. No significant impact has been reported through any evaluation of that work. Support language, law and culture in our schools.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is great to see the Member for Gwoja's NIDA courses are paying off. I almost believed the Member for Gwoja during that performance, but then I remembered. I looked back at the notes and could see things like Labor's hidden attendance list purposely kept out of the public eye so that its figures and stats could look better. Meanwhile, children who are not going to school long term are the ones who are suffering. That is what I remember when I hear the performance art in this Chamber.

There are a few things I will talk about. I will start calling it out because it took about two minutes for the Member for Gwoja to bring it down to race. We are discussing education for the Northern Territory, and a Labor Party member wants to make it about racial politics two minutes in.

We also heard from the Member for Gwoja that we should be talking about positive things—the good old Labor way of, 'Let us ignore the hard things and just talk about positive things'. We are here to talk about the hard things, and that is what our government is doing. We are making hard decisions across the board for the benefit of all. The irony is that after saying it should all be positive today, there was a 20-minute rant attacking the minister. The Member for Gwoja was not following his own advice on that one.

Timber Creek School was brought up a number of times. Its attendance is up by 4%, so congratulations to the students and teachers. That is a fantastic result, and our government is supportive.

Families as First Teachers will not be used as a threat by the Labor Party. It is a fantastic program in my electorate. I thoroughly enjoy attending the Families as First Teachers classes, and I will let everyone in Drysdale know that I am supportive of such initiatives.

I am passionate about education. It is a unique bipartisan topic that unites this whole Chamber. Across the political spectrum I do not think you will find anyone who is not supportive of education. That is something we can pause and think about. It is a great thing that in this democracy we are united in the need and want for good education.

Where do we differ? Definitely in the delivery of that. I make no apologies for the course our government has taken, and the measures the minister for Education has taken. In today's modern world, if you are robbed of an education, you will be robbed of purpose in life, how you can function and give back to society and what you can achieve. Our government is simply saying that no-one—parent, caregiver; it does not matter who—will rob a child of their education. It can be spun however it wants.

That is the core and why we are unshakeable in this, because every child deserves an education. It is an easy throwaway that a politician from any party can give. But it is what you follow it up with that matters. The actions of this government show that we genuinely mean that. This CLP Finocchiaro government will ensure that every child receives an education. That will come with some hard decisions and uncomfortable truths in some homes. If we are to have a brighter Northern Territory ahead for us, we must educate all our children. It is as simple as that.

I thank the minister for her hard and dedicated work in Palmerston. There are quite a few things I will talk about. It is also the great work of the Treasurer and Infrastructure minister, along with the minister for Education in delivering the Driver Primary School kiss-and-go upgrade. We moved quickly on this because of a simple thing; it was unsafe and had been for a long time. It was raised continuously by parents; they were ignored by the previous government.

During my campaign, knocking on doors and hearing from parent after parent saying that the kiss-and-go is dangerous and that a kid will die, I made an election promise. We ran with that. Well, here we are and I am pleased to say—the Member for Daly will be happy to hear—that there are shovels in the ground and workers on site. It was a CLP promise. We had planned it, and now there are workers on site because we would not wait on children's safety. I am happy to see that going ahead.

I inspected the site yesterday. Member for Daly, I encourage you to look at my Clinton Howe MLA Facebook page and watch the video. It is fantastic. If you are in the area, please drop by and have a look.

Mr Young: I think you blocked me.

Mr HOWE: No, I definitely have not.

This is fantastic. At the core of that is the safety of the kids. It will also make parents and commuters a lot less frustrated and reduce road rage incidents.

Something well worth discussing is the minister for Education's journey with the Palmerston special school. Politics can be a slog of a game, and the minister has shown how you fight through and deliver. In opposition she presented a petition on behalf of Palmerston families for a special school in the area. It was ignored by the then Labor government, and she has pushed through in this year of government and secured it.

We are announcing $110m for the creation of the new special school, which will see positions for up to 200 students. I cannot say enough how much it is needed. In my electorate, the Palmerston College Driver campus has around 140 special school students, and it was only designed for 40. I believe that is correct; I will correct the record if it is not. It just shows how much demand there is. I personally thank the Education minister for years of hard work from putting in a petition in opposition, winning government and as the minister delivering this for the people of Palmerston. The Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Member for Blain and I are stoked that we will get that special school. The Deputy Chief Minister's and Member for Goyder's electorates will fall under the catchment area as well.

I thank the minister for the swimming in schools program; it has been great. My girls thoroughly enjoyed it as did their friends. We are doing a few things with that; we are trying to take the financial cost off families paying for that essential skill and that way children will have that skill, which will hopefully save lives. Every child deserves an education, and they should be able to swim as well. We hope that will save some lives in the future.

I stand firmly with the minister for Education. Some of the attraction scholarships the minister has put out are a great initiative; I will touch on them. The Teach Local Scholarship will support up to 15 NT residents per year to become teachers. Recipients will receive $5,000 a year and, as a great extra part of it, a part-time job in an NT Government school while they study and a guaranteed job for two years on completion of their degree. That is a fantastic opportunity, and it is thinking like this that gives me full confidence in the minister.

I want as many school leavers as possible or those aged 30, 40 or 50 who are looking for a career change to consider teaching. I believe it to be one of the noble pursuits, to be passing on knowledge to the next

generation, so have a look at that. We also have a scholarship for up to 25 interstate residents with a similar pattern.

Thank you to all the teachers in Palmerston, particularly Gray Primary School, Driver Primary School and Palmerston College.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for the report. I will discuss some of the important education issues in my electorate.

A few months ago I visited the Garrthalala Bush University. Garrthalala is a homeland with leading education resources. There is a boarding school that elders have created so that kids from surrounding homelands can come together to learn each week. For a number of years there have been significant graduations at Garrthalala homeland schools with proud students who have confidence in their abilities and know who they are.

Garrthalala Bush Uni is a partnership between the Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation and Macquarie University. This is a welcome partnership because we have education on country where young people can continue to learn from leaders about the Yolngu education system and continue to gain knowledge from the university as well as from the bush.

One time when I was at the Garrthalala Bush Uni homeland, a bush university for school studies—I believe the minister was there—ceremonies were happening. It was a songlines funeral ceremony that everybody participated in. That gave an opportunity for children to come and learn about the songlines, ceremonies and how to carry on from there. That is education as well. That is why we say that it is important for Indigenous people to go on country. Out there, it is education when they are learning with groups of people from the elders and leaders. Songlines and ceremonies are also education. It can be done in a school building, and it can be done in places like *garma* ceremony grounds. It is all education. This is what we have all been calling for, and that needs to be recognised. Wherever ceremonies, *garma* ceremonies and funeral ceremonies occur, they are part of education.

Students spend time at the Macquarie University campus and at the Garrthalala campus. This allows young people to be successful across two worlds. Our children need to learn across two worlds with a bilingual education on land to take the knowledge of both cultures and weave a pathway for their future.

We also see the development of the Garma Institute education centre in Gove, which will further strengthen the learning-on-country options.

At the end of the year I attend as many school events as I can, and I always feel proud of the young people receiving awards and graduating. I am thankful for the teachers and the school for walking with our kids on this journey, but I am also aware that more work needs to be done; this must be done in partnership.

Department officials in Darwin need to listen to our communities about what is needed to help children attend school. Department of Education officials in Darwin need to listen to education staff in our communities who have spent decades in the field of education and can advise on curriculum content that will help our children attend school. We need to have teams of teachers developing Yolngu curriculum and advising on things that will improve education for our children.

I recently wrote to the minister for Education about Yolngu classrooms at Malak School. Shepherdson College and Malak School have formed a partnership to help kids from Elcho Island who are visiting Darwin to continue attending school while they are there. These are the kinds of partnerships we need to see and have, and I congratulate all those involved in the Yolngu classroom.

As I outlined in my letter to the minister, I would like to see this available to all Yolngu children who are in Darwin, whether they are here for a short time or a long time. This is a great partnership that can grow to ensure that kids who are in Darwin can also be part of two-way classrooms and participate in the urban school environment. This is a way in which we can learn and share our cultural practices in a balanda school setting.

When it comes to safety in remote schools, it is important that community leaders, elders and Yolngu educators are leading a school as part of the leadership team and are welcomed and supported to be part of the school environment, not as a guest but as a leader of the community. When all clans are represented in schools, and when grandparents and family members are welcome and feel they have ownership in the space, we see that kids feel safe and can participate. There needs to be representatives from across the

communities, and they need to feel respected. There needs to be cultural safety for kids and adults across the schools.

Cultural safety includes education in language so that children can start by learning in their own languages, which gives them great confidence to be at school. Can members in this Chamber understand how scary it is for children when they are sent to a school that uses a foreign language as the main language of instruction? Would members in this Chamber send their kids to a Japanese-speaking school if their children did not speak the Japanese language?

I have also written a letter to the federal Education minister in regard to the Year 1 phonics and NAPLAN tests, because I do not believe that children in bilingual education who are not learning English in Year 1 and not writing in English in Year 3 should be taking these tests in English. They should be taking these tests in their first language if they have to do it at all.

This is part of education for our children. We do not want to set up our kids for failure. We want to teach them in a safe environment. In homeland schools we see a strong sense of cultural safety as kids are learning on their country and in their closely aligned clan groups. This is the case with the Laynhapuy Homelands School, Gawa Christian School and the Yirralka Christian school in Mapuru; we see high levels of learning and attendance when there are teachers who also live on country in strongly established homelands.

We need to see the government spread new housing into the homeland towns as well so these communities can address overcrowding issues and families can reside in homeland towns where children can attend and achieve at these schools.

With technology today, our homelands schools have great capacity to provide education at a high level for people living on country. This is not just one solution for the education crisis that exists, but fining parents and referring them for income management will not create a strong partnership to improve the outcomes for children in our remote areas. We must see government working with our communities to improve the education situation and curriculum, increase local employment and create stronger relationships with communities. This is the only way to build success for our children. More needs to be done to create stronger partnerships.

I urge the government to do this work in all our communities and build a better education system for our children that includes our elders and leaders, because without the support of the community and partnerships, we will not see better outcomes.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, our teachers and school staff are doing an amazing job, working hard in their schools and communities. We all know that school attendance is the key to getting the NT back on track. If kids are not at school every day, they do not have the same opportunity as those who are. Students who disengage from school are far more likely to come into contact with the justice system or experience long-term unemployment. Returning them to classrooms interrupts this disengagement cycle and helps to reduce youth crime rates.

Most people inside and outside this Chamber know that I have a strong connection with and long history in the education system in the Northern Territory. I am passionate about school attendance, and I worked in the attendance and engagement area across urban, regional and remote schools for a long time. Last week I spoke in the Chamber about school attendance and how, because of the work I have done, I have a strong understanding of the reasons students disengage and why they do not attend school. When I stated this, those opposing made comments stating that I do not. For some reason those opposite they think they have the right to claim moral superiority in understanding the barriers to school attendance for kids in the Northern Territory, which is interesting because their record and inability to get kids to school tell a different story.

Rather than address the root causes effectively, Labor allowed attendance rates to collapse. It hid the problems by obscuring official data and resorted to bureaucratic manipulation instead of solutions. It maintained and underfunded an attendance-based funding model that particularly disadvantaged remote Aboriginal communities, leading to deteriorating school conditions, plummeting attendance and worsening literacy and numeracy standards.

While Labor talked about empathy and barriers, it failed to hold parents accountable or enforce the legal obligation to ensure children attended school, resulting in ongoing disengagement and, some would argue, higher youth crime rates. Labor's claims of understanding were, to say the least, hollow.

In contrast, our government has implemented a balance of understanding with ensuring personal accountability. Our attendance officers, Aboriginal liaison officers and school-based police work with students and families to assist in remove barriers to non-attendance. Where there is no justifiable excuse, they will move to compliance action through the potential of issuing infringement notices and the ability to refer negligent parents for income management.

This work demonstrates a holistic commitment to both support and compliance that Labor neglected. Under Labor, attendance declined and vital services to schools were cut. It is simple: students who attend school regularly consistently achieve better educational and social outcomes. That is also why we are getting back to basics and focusing on explicit teaching so that all students get the required literacy and numeracy education they need. Student engagement must be approached strategically and collaboratively to address the root causes of disengagement while also affirming parents' non-negotiable legal responsibility to ensure school attendance.

A compassionate approach alone is not enough. While schools in communities must offer safe, supportive pathways back into learning, parents and carers have a statutory duty under NT law to make sure their children attend school. Section 42 of the *Education Act* clearly states that a parent who has daily care and control of a student must ensure that the student attends school each day or each part of a school day on which instruction is provided for the student. The definition of a parent is someone who has parental responsibility for a child, including, but not limited to, a biological parent, foster parent, auntie, uncle or grandparent.

There are many options that provide students with alternative schooling participation agreements. That is great. It is amazing that there are lots of options available today—probably more than when the majority of us went to school. My son is currently participating in an alternative option, which is amazing because he was no good in the classroom all day. It was not good for him, the teacher or the other students.

School attendance in an approved option is not optional. We understand that engagement strategies must balance encouragement and accountability, and school and support staff like attendance officers are doing an amazing job to support families to overcome barriers, but we would not be doing our job if we were not enforcing the legal requirement that every child must go to school.

The Member for Gwoja made a statement in his speech just now that the government needs to do something that works. Newsflash: we are not finished, but unlike the previous Labor government we are reducing crime and improving school attendance; the stats say it.

Let us talk about those stats. In the Arnhem electorate—the Leader of the Opposition's electorate—13 schools improved attendance from 2024–2025, with many of those schools also increasing their enrolment:

- In the Arafura electorate three schools improved their attendance.
- In the Daly electorate three schools improved their attendance.
- In the Gwoja electorate, six schools improved their attendance and there has been a lot of improved enrolment as well.
- In the Mulka electorate, five schools improved their attendance.
- In the amazing electorate of Barkly, nine schools improved attendance.
- In the Katherine electorate, four schools improved their attendance.
- In my amazing Fannie Bay electorate there are three schools, including Darwin High School, Ludmilla Primary School and Parap Primary School, that have improved their attendance over the last year.

They are pretty good stats I would say.

The Member for Gwoja thinks that by raising his voice and bringing his crocodile tears into this Chamber, more people will start to listen to him. Newsflash: people are done listening to former Labor government members and the hypocrisy of their speeches.

Under the former Labor government the number and accessibility of school counsellors declined markedly, and many roles were moved out of schools and into the corporate arm of the Department of Education. By

May 2023 there were only three school counsellors serving more than 10,000 students across Darwin schools, forcing those counsellors to travel between multiple campuses, reducing student access. There is no argument that this led to poorer wellbeing outcomes. Counsellors became largely office-based, limiting their ability to provide consistent relationship-based support to students and staff. It was clear that this restructuring prioritised departmental management over student needs. What did Labor do? It stuck to its guns because it was too proud to admit that what it had implemented did not work.

Our government has reversed this policy, and counsellors are being placed back in schools supported by a $1.9m expansion of counselling services in the 2025–26 budget. This shift also fulfils an election commitment to rebuild frontline services and reconnect education support staff with communities.

I am passionate about supporting schools, their staff and students and the work that goes on behind the scenes in the department. In my maiden speech I talked about supporting schools, attracting more teachers and reducing red tape so that our frontline workers could get on with the job they were hired to do.

I am proud of the initiatives we are introducing to get more teachers to the Territory. Teachers and school staff inside and outside of the Territory can access our homeowner grants to ensure they put down roots here. The Minister for Education and Training and the Member for Drysdale touched on some of our new incentives to get people here and working in schools.

Our comprehensive approach prioritises not only physical safety but also emotional wellbeing, recognising that positive school climates are foundational to improved engagement and academic outcomes. By investing in targeted wellbeing supports, evidence-based teaching and stronger community partnerships this government is ensuring that schools are places where students and staff can thrive. Those measures reflect a clear strategy to rebuild the Northern Territory's education system making classrooms safer, boosting attendance and performance and, ultimately, securing brighter futures for all children and young people.

This ministerial statement reinforces that education is central to social and economic recovery, community safety and restoring the quality of life that Territorians value.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, this safer schools, stronger classrooms ministerial report draws a clear line between the failures of the former Labor government and the results being delivered by the Country Liberal Party.

When Labor came to power Territory school attendance was 80% and began to decline over eight years. That decline was not just a number; it was a generation of Territory kids left behind while Labor looked the other way. The CLP government is rebuilding from that mess through honest reporting, accountability and targeted investment in our schools.

For years Labor hid the truth about school attendance behind what was known as the intensive support roll. Labor used the roll to make its statistics look better, quietly removing thousands of long-term absent students from its official data.

The CLP government ended that deceit. We made the intensive support roll public, and the results show progress. In Term 3 of 2025 there were 328 fewer students on the intensive support roll than in the same term last year. That is hundreds of Territory children re-engaged in education.

Our 46 school attendance officers across the Territory have conducted more than 6,000 compliance visits and issued 1,111 compliance and 250 infringement notices while working closely with these families to return children to their classrooms. This is not about punishment; it is about partnerships. When parents step up, we support them. More than 500 compliance notices have been revoked because those children are attending school again.

I am proud to represent an electorate that embodies what safer, stronger classrooms look like. At Wanguri Primary School, attendance is 87.8%, one of the highest in the Northern Territory. The school continues to set a high bar for students' wellbeing, inclusion and achievement. It is a direct reflection of the dedication of its principal and teaching team. Likewise, Leanyer Primary School is achieving outstanding results with an impressive 90% attendance rate, showing that when families, educators and the community work together, attendance and outcomes rise.

I could not be prouder of Dripstone Middle School, which has 84.8% attendance. A couple of months ago it won the Secondary Social Sciences and Secondary Arts categories at the 2025 NT Tournament of Minds competition. Dripstone has won this three years in a row, and some of the students have been on the teams

two years in a row. It is a fantastic achievement. This showcases the creativity, teamwork and problem-solving ability of our local students as a direct result of them attending school with great teacher support.

These schools represent the best of Territory education. We have engaged families, passionate teachers and students thriving in safe, supportive learning environments.

The CLP government is also delivering the most significant secondary education reform in decades. It is creating stability, consistency and clear pathways from Years 7 to 12. Under our plan, Darwin will move to four comprehensive high schools for Years 7 to 12. Dripstone is included along with Nightcliff, Sanderson and the combined Darwin Middle School. These reforms will end the confusing middle school system that Labor allowed to drift for years. Students will instead stay in one school community supported by the same teachers and leadership through their secondary education.

In Wanguri families can send their children to Dripstone Middle School as it expands into a full Year 7 to 12 comprehensive high school. The Tournament of Minds victory is proof that children who attend school will have great outcomes. This will also upgrade classrooms and specialist learning areas to give students every opportunity to succeed from Year 7 through to their graduation.

Labor's crime crisis made schools less safe and drove teachers away. The CLP has changed that. Our reducing crime package, including Declan's law, is keeping students and teachers safe, allowing police to wand for weapons and introducing mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers.

We are also supporting the people at the heart of education, our teachers, with permanent contracts for stability and initiatives such as Teach Local and Teach Up North, which provide scholarships and guarantee employment to grow our teaching workforce.

We are ensuring that students have the support they need every day. The CLP government has committed $1.9m to embed qualified counsellors directly in those schools, ending Labor's failed model of centralised support based out of Mitchell Centre. In partnership with NT Police we introduced Aboriginal liaison officers in schools to improve attendance and community connection through culturally appropriate engagement.

Under Labor, 58% of students and 85% of Indigenous students failed to meet minimum literacy and numeracy standards. We are fixing that with $14.2m to boost literacy and numeracy plans, ensuring every NT Government school adopts consistent evidence-based teaching.

For members opposite, I can attest to attending school when English is a second language. My sister arrived in Australia when she was six and our parents understood that education was important for her. It was frightening for her to go to school and not be able to speak English, but she persisted and learned. She has become a successful company owner, working overseas.

The safer schools, stronger classrooms report tells a clear story. The CLP government is delivering what Labor never could: transparency; accountability; and results. In my electorate, from Wanguri to Leanyer Primary, our schools are leading by example and showing that when a government sets the right priorities, students thrive. This is the difference a strong government makes: safer schools; stronger classrooms; and a brighter future for every child.

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

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

PAPERS TABLED

Northern Territory Electoral Commission Annual Report 2024–25

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Northern Territory Electoral Commission Annual Report 2024–25.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2024–25

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2024–25 and its associated minutes of proceedings.

Pursuant to subclause (4) of its terms of reference, this report details the activities of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for 2024–25. Over the course of the reporting period, the Assembly referred eight Bills to the committee for inquiry and report. As highlighted in chapter 3 the committee met its reporting due dates for all inquiries and in five instances tabled its reports ahead of the due date. Given the inquiry reporting dates all reports were presented to the Speaker out of session, pursuant to Standing Order 204.

While the committee recommended that the Assembly pass all the Bills referred for inquiry and report as detailed in chapter 2, in most cases the committee proposed amendments to ensure that the Bills had due regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and the institution of parliament, were unambiguous and drafted in a sufficiently clear and precise manner. The fact that 59% of the committee's proposed amendments and recommendations were subsequently accepted by the government attests to the value and importance of the Bill scrutiny process.

Although the level of public participation in the committee's inquiries varied according to the nature of the Bill under consideration, the feedback from organisations and individuals who made submissions and appeared before the committee has been extremely positive. However, a number of people raised concerns with the short timeframes provided for the consideration of Bills.

On behalf of the committee I thank all those who made submissions or appeared before it. Your input has been invaluable and of great assistance to the committee in its deliberations. The committee thanks the chief executives of agencies and their staff for their responsiveness in providing information to the committee and appearing at public briefings and hearings. The committee also thanks Professor Aughterson for his advice.

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

RESPONSE TO PETITION
Petition No 13 – Dundee Beach School Infrastructure

The CLERK: Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 123, I inform members that a response to petition number 13 has been received and circulated to members.

Dear Mr Keith

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 May 2025 regarding petition number 13, to respond to infrastructure related matters for Dundee Beach School (the school). The petition includes three elements, namely:

- *acknowledge the dramatic growth of school students enrolled at the school and the pressures being placed on the school*
- *acknowledge the work of the school council in developing the Dundee Beach masterplan and commit to the implementation of the masterplan*
- *prioritise Stage 1 of the masterplan due to the imminent health, safety and student wellbeing.*

The school, which is located at 500 Namarada Drive in Dundee, has 47 students enrolled, including:

- *11 preschool to Year 3 students*
- *17 Year 4 to Year 6 students*
- *10 Year 7 to Year 9 students*
- *nine Year 10 to Year 12 students.*

The average enrolment for Term 2 2025 was 47 compared to average enrolment for Term 2 2024 of 37 reflecting a considerable increase for the school due to the impact of the school accepting senior students.

A recent site survey conducted by the Department of Education and Training (the department) and the Department of Logistics and infrastructure (DLI) identifies a capacity for 68 students across

4 classrooms. This comprises of 3 classrooms at the school's Namarada Drive site and a converted classroom (in a Department of Health facility) located 650 metres away.

At the school's request, the converted classroom has been secured and available for use by the school since Term 1 2025 and has a capacity of 10 students. The new classroom has only been used on occasion to date. The principal recently advised that the school intends to use this classroom full-time for Year 10 to Year 12 students.

In December 2024, the school's infrastructure masterplan which aims to align the school's physical infrastructure and future growth, was finalised and includes estimated project costs but not a commitment to investment nor a timeline. The masterplan identifies a staged approach for progressive upgrades, including:

- *Stage 1: new classroom and new ablution block*
- *Stage 2: open school yard, garden/veggie pad, genset and fuel tanks, undercover basketball court, bitumen driveway, loading bay, parking and drop-off/pick-up*
- *Stage 3: administration building, gate, footpath and flagpoles*
- *Stage 4: proposed—new classroom/storeroom and undercover veranda seating area.*

The estimated total project cost is $8.7m, with Stage 1 estimated at $1 .9m.

Stage 1 of the project was not prioritised for 2025–26 as there is capacity at the school with the additional site, and there are competing infrastructure projects across the department's portfolio of sites.

The department has a finite infrastructure budget and the budget is allocated accordingly to balance the needs of all schools across the Northern Territory.

The department places a high priority on the safety and wellbeing of its students and will continue to work with the Dundee Beach school to prepare submissions for available infrastructure funding for 2026–27 as well as work with DLI on innovative and cost-effective methods of delivering infrastructure enhancements for the school.

Yours sincerely

Jo Hersey

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Racing and Wagering Act 2024

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Speaker has received correspondence from the Member for Johnston as follows:

I propose for discussion this day the following definite matter of public importance:

The need for an urgent review of the *Racing and Wagering Act 2024*.

The letter is signed by the Member for Johnston. Is discussion supported? Discussion is supported.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I bring this definite matter of public importance to the Assembly because there is an integrity problem in the Northern Territory, and the Northern Territory Racing and Wagering Commission has recently become the latest example.

I want to be clear that gambling causes extreme harm in our communities, and Australians lose more to gambling than anyone else in the world per capita. Gambling must be regulated properly. People are losing their lives and families and, as we saw recently on *Four Corners*, hardworking Australians who do not even gamble are having their life savings taken by a loosely governed industry.

Anyone who has genuinely looked at gambling's impact and the devastation that poorly regulated systems inflict on our community should be shocked by what is happening in the Northern Territory. This is not about

stopping people from having a flutter, no matter how many times the CLP tries to frame it that way. That is a deliberate mischaracterisation designed to avoid the real issue. This is about ensuring that our legislative systems are strong, fit for purpose and protecting Territorians from harm, not enabling it, and that we are not actively contributing to the destruction of families, the bankruptcy of vulnerable people and criminal behaviour that gambling addiction fuels. Right now, that is exactly what we are doing.

The NT has created a regulatory system that operates as if its primary purpose is to serve the gambling industry, not protect the community. The Northern Territory licenses 40 bookmakers with $50bn in turnover and regulates them with part-time commissioners who meet once a month, have no full-time staff and have just published their first annual report in 32 years. This is not the level of transparency required.

The commission allows VIP programs to target problem gamblers with inducements after they have already lost millions. It imposes fines so trivial—2% of the profits made from one person—that the fines are simply the cost of doing business here. It takes four years to investigate obvious breaches. It has never cancelled a single licence, no matter how egregious the conduct. When gambling companies cause catastrophic harm, when people commit crimes to feed addictions that the VIP managers cultivate, the commission does nothing meaningful to stop it from happening again.

This is not regulation; this is regulatory capture, a system designed to look like oversight while ensuring that the industry faces no real consequences. When the CLP says that this is about people having a flutter, they are either fundamentally misunderstanding the problem or are deliberately misleading Territorians about what is at stake. This is about real harm, families destroyed, businesses bankrupted, crimes committed and lives ruined.

We have a choice: continue to operate as the gambling industry's regulator of choice—weak, permissive and profitable for companies at the expense of Territorians—or build a regulatory system that protects people. We must ask why the Northern Territory, with all our capacity constraints, is regulating a national online gambling industry of this scale. The answer is simple: our regulatory and tax settings are the weakest in the country.

I asked a written question about this, and according to the answer to written question 125 the Territory government expects to get only $35.5m in revenue from online gambling platforms this financial year. That is equivalent to 0.071% of the collective annual turnover of these companies. Most Australians pay just more than $3 in tax for every $10 we earn, but the Northern Territory expects online betters registered here will collectively pay the Northern Territory less than a cent in tax for every $10 they collectively earn.

Prior to being headquartered in the Northern Territory, these bookmakers were headquartered in Norfolk Island, an even smaller and weaker jurisdiction. Do you know why they moved to the Northern Territory? It is because the federal government stepped in and took over the Norfolk Island administration. We were the next best or the next worst option, and now we are being taken advantage of. This mess was not created by this government, but it has an opportunity to fix it.

Last week in this parliament we heard the Attorney-General defending the commission and this week the Chief Minister has continued that defence in the media. At a media event on Friday when the Chief Minister was asked whether a review is being undertaken into the issues raised in the *Four Corners* report, she defended Mr Shields remaining as the chair, saying:

> *We have public servants performing roles right across the Territory who do an exceptional job and Alastair (Shields) is performing a role. Now, if there's allegations to be made, they need to be made properly, and then if there's any findings, they'll be dealt with.*

With respect to the Chief Minister, this response misses the point entirely. This is not about making allegations against individuals; this is about a systemic failure and laws that are inadequate for the task at hand. I also entirely reject the characterisation that raising these issues is demonising our public servants. They are not the problem; the problem is that we have asked them to do an impossible job with inadequate resources and legislative framework.

The minister says that the commission supports the industry in terms of regulations, and that is what concerns me. The commission should be regulating the industry to protect consumers, not the industry.

Gambling expert Lauren Levin heard the then Executive Director of Liquor, Gaming and Racing at Licensing NT tell the Backing the Punt conference in 2023:

We are unashamedly the racing and gaming jurisdiction and are open for business.

Federal Independent MP Kate Chaney said it plainly:

It seems like it's a body that's much more about serving industry than serving the community.

The government can choose to shoot the messenger, blame *Four Corners*, accuse those who ask questions of demonising public servants and circle the wagons around the status quo or it can acknowledge what the rest of the country can see: the Northern Territory is being used as a jurisdiction of convenience by a $50bn industry that pays us less than a cent in tax for every $10 it earns while we provide it with the weakest regulatory oversight in the country.

Every member of the NT Racing and Wagering Commission appears to be complying with the law—but that is exactly the problem. The law itself allows a structure that is fundamentally unfit for purpose. The Minister for Racing was asked about the *Four Corners* allegations in Question Time this week. She said:

Every time Four Corners *comes to the Territory gets 'you-know-whatted' …*

I am sick of people from the other side demonising our public servants.

The racing commission is working well within its Act. It does an important body of work. It is independent of government, and it does that job well. It supports the industry in terms of regulations.

The minister is right on one point: the commission is working within its Act. But that is not the defence that she thinks it is; it is the indictment. If a commission that meets once a month with no full-time staff can regulate a $50bn industry well within its Act, if a commission whose chair accepts hospitality from bookmakers and maintains betting accounts is operating well within its Act and if a commission that has never cancelled a licence despite numerous breaches is working well within its Act, then the Act itself has a problem. That is why I referred the *Racing and Wagering Act 2024* to the Attorney-General to be examined by the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

The Racing and Wagering Commission was never built to be a national regulator, and it cannot act as one. We have heard from across the country that the clear and necessary response is to call for a proper national gambling regulator with full-time staff, national jurisdiction and power to address this issue. That is not my idea; a federal inquiry recommended that a national regulator and an Ombudsman replace the Northern Territory system. I hope members will join me in calling on the federal government to establish that regulator without delay. That recommendation is sitting with federal government and has not been acted on yet.

We also need to act here and now. While we wait for national reform we have a responsibility to make sure that our local laws and processes are as robust as possible. That is what motivated my referral to the LCAC.

Key concerns that people have come to me with are that the commission is drastically under-resourced despite regulating a $50bn industry, and the fact that it has no full-time staff and meets only once a month proves that it is clearly inadequate for the scope and scale of its responsibilities.

Although we have now seen one annual report over the last 30 years—tabled in parliament last week—it raises more questions than answers. It lists $1m on employee remuneration as the single biggest expense but we also understand that the commission has no full-time staff. Can the minister tell Territorians who is being paid $1m to work with a commission that meets only once a month?

The commission's current chair, Alastair Shields, has openly admitted to accepting hospitality from bookmakers and maintaining an account with one of the regulated entities. This continues a long history of closeness with the industry at the commission. Six of the last 10 commissioners have owned or part-owned racehorses. One former commissioner who disclosed a financial link to a major betting executive now works for a Darwin-based bookmaker. These connections raise questions about impartiality even if all legal requirements are technically being met.

This Assembly had a chance to address this in May when the Member for Nightcliff's motion calling for a ban on all gifts from individuals or companies in the gambling industry to MLAs, their staff and other statutory decision-makers was put up, but everyone in the government voted against that.

The commission has never suspended or cancelled a bookmaker's licence despite numerous breaches being identified. According to the ABC, of 170 investigations made public since 2017, two-thirds resulted in findings of no wrongdoing and even when breaches were found, fines were paltry.

When Ladbrokes and BetEasy exploited one person with severe gambling addiction, they were charged $78,000 and $80,000 respectively—despite Ladbrokes making $750,000 and BetEasy $3.6m in profit off that same individual. We must remember that these companies have billion-dollar turnovers annually. When we are talking about profits in the millions and fines in the thousands, that is not a deterrent.

Last year the then Labor government passed changes to appoint a gatekeeper to the new commission with powers to decide what complaints made it before the commission and—as former Chief Minister Lawler put it to parliament in February last year—ease the administrative burden.

I cannot find who holds this position. I also asked if the minister if she can tell us who the director of the Racing and Wagering Commission is—effectively the gatekeeper of the regulator for the $50bn online wagering industry in Australia.

The complaints process is riddled with delays and limitations. Some investigations have taken up to four years to resolve, like the one I just mentioned. Beyond delays, a legislative change made in 2024 introduced a two-year time limit for complaints, which means that victims cannot report an incident if it occurred two or more years ago and effectively blocking many victims of gambling harm from seeking redress. People who have lost everything are being told that it is too late and the only option left is to seek legal advice, which many of them cannot afford.

The reality is that gambling addiction can take years to address, especially if people are subject to predatory practices, like the case I mentioned, where multiple gambling agencies invited the man to VIP clubs and showered him in gifts all to prolong his deeply problematic gambling.

A two-year time limit on making a complaint is not putting victims of predatory practices first; it is giving those predators a get-out-of-jail-free card.

As far as we know, the NT Racing and Wagering Commission is complying with the law. That is exactly the problem because if this kind of structure with this level of industry involvement, lack of transparency and weakness in enforcement is lawful, then our laws are failing us.

This is about protecting the integrity of our institutions and the wellbeing of Australians who are being let down by a system not built for the scale of the challenge it faces. That is what this is about: not stopping a flutter but stopping harm.

The Territory has an opportunity to lead nationally by showing that economic contribution need not come at the expense of integrity or community wellbeing. I sincerely hope that the Attorney-General accepts my referral to the LCAC so we may begin to address the loopholes in gambling regulation in the Northern Territory that are causing immeasurable harm to Territorians and costing us millions in lost revenue every year.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, in contributing to this important discussion I make it clear that the need for accountability, integrity and transparency in this sector is not new.

While I was the minister responsible for Racing, Gaming and Licensing in the previous government, I recognised that this was an area long overdue for reform. The Act at the time had not kept pace with the growth and complexity of the wagering industry nor community expectations about governance, probity and public reporting. That is why, under the former Labor government, we undertook significant reforms to strengthen the regulatory framework and ensure greater transparency and accountability across the racing and wagering sector in the Northern Territory. However, I acknowledge that this did not mean the work was complete. There is always work to be done when it comes to racing and wagering in the Northern Territory.

One of the most important changes we made was introducing a requirement for the NT Racing and Wagering Commission to produce an annual report for the first time in its history and to table that report publicly in this Assembly. That may sound simple, but it was a vital step in bringing this industry into line with modern standards of public accountability. For too long decisions about licensing, compliance and integrity were happening behind closed doors with little visibility to Territorians or this parliament. Making it a legal requirement to produce and table an annual report ensures the Racing and Wagering Commission's activities, decisions, revenue and compliance work are subject to public scrutiny.

That reform was about trust, transparency and good governance—the values Labor brings to every part of its public administration. We undertook the broader review of the *Racing and Wagering Act* to modernise it and ensure that progress happened. The process included strengthening integrity provisions and aligning with national best practice, clarifying the commission's powers in relation to licensing and enforcement, ensuring consistency with federal legislation governing online wagering and embedding stronger consumer protections particularly around responsible gambling.

We recognise that the Territory's unique position brings economic opportunity, but it must be done responsibly and reforms must reflect community expectations and standards. Labor's approach was about balancing those interests, supporting a sustainable industry that created jobs and economic benefit whilst ensuring robust oversight and minimising harm to Territorians were priorities.

What concerns me today is that under the CLP government, this vital work has stalled. Despite inheriting a modernised and strengthened framework we have no evidence that the CLP is building on those reforms or even maintaining transparency measures that Labor introduced.

If there is now a call for an urgent review of the *Racing and Wagering Act*, it is not because the foundations laid were wrong; it is because this government has failed to uphold and progress them. We have not seen an updated report from the former NT Racing Commission or evidence of ongoing industry consultation, and we have not seen any new action to respond to the emerging risks in the digital wagering environment.

The CLP likes to talk about accountability, but its track record shows a government that resists scrutiny and avoids responsibility. Labor, on the other hand, has a clear record of action. We reformed the Act, made annual reporting mandatory, strengthened the independence of the commission—there is still work to be done there—and built transparency into the structure of the industry. We did it because we believed Territorians deserved to know that the wagering sector operating here must be regulated and for the community.

If the government now needs to look at the *Racing and Wagering Act*, it needs to get on with it. The framework for reform already exists; Labor built it. What is missing is the political will and discipline to follow through. The CLP must not use this as another opportunity to deregulate, water down protections or weaken the commission. If the Act is to be reviewed, that must be transparent, evidence-based and guided by the principles of integrity, consumer protection and good governance, not industry convenience or political expedience.

The racing and wagering sector in the Northern Territory has significantly evolved over decades and is still evolving. What we need is not another hollow announcement but a genuine commitment to accountability, public trust and modern regulation. That is what we did when we were in government—reforming the Act. That is what we will continue to fight for, because integrity in government and transparency in public institutions should never depend on who is in power. It should be the standard that communities deserve.

We are talking about legislation that not been contemporised in decades. Language in the old Act did not reflect modern standards and traditions. The previous Act made no mention of online gambling or wagering or how to deal with it.

We heard time and again from this parliament that more work needs to be done when it comes to racing, gaming and licensing. The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice has done significant work in ensuring that transparency measures are introduced.

There are different tiers to that reform. When we were last in government one thing we heard when consulting on the second stage of reform was to look at caps on pokie machines, which Labor was doing. We commenced investigating other areas such as daily limits, cashless machines in venues, restrictions on one-time and full-amount payouts and potential regulations on how long gaming machines need to remain inactive before action is taken. We also made it clear that for every dollar spent in various sectors, there must be a corresponding formula for harm minimisation to support people suffering from problem gambling.

This is a matter of public importance; making sure this work is being done is important.

I acknowledge that last week the first annual report of the commission was deemed tabled in parliament for the first time in 30 years thanks to our Labor government delivering on our commitments of openness and transparency. I hope that report can be used as a stepping stone for further questions and reform.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Mr Deputy Speaker, in 2024 Labor brought in legislation to create bodies and roles that would increase oversight of the online gambling industry. It was a minor improvement that did little. As many advocates said at the time, it was a wasted opportunity to bring real change and reforms that would protect victims of the gambling industry.

Labor stated at the time that a levy would be created as part of the Bill, which meant that industry regulation would be self-sufficient. However, as *Four Corners* outlined, there are no full-time staff employed by the regulatory authority.

I understand that this industry creates revenue in the Northern Territory. The government has always worked to attract the industry through several means, including lower tax incentives and minimal regulation, which are widely understood to be too lenient.

At the time of Labor's Bill, the Chief Executive of the Alliance for Gambling Reform, Carol Bennett stated:

> *The Bill tries to paint a rosy picture of the Northern Territory's 'tough approach' to online gambling regulation while making minimal changes that don't address the current regulatory failure. The Bill also fails to curb the conflicts of interest of the NTRC members who have a cosy relationship with the gambling industry, including owning gambling interests in some instances.*

These conflicts of interest that have also been outlined by *Four Corners* create concern that genuine regulation of the industry is not occurring, and there needs to be significant reforms to ensure there are no conflicts of interest within the regulatory commission.

My electorate has seen a huge increase in online gambling. While gambling card circles caused great concern previously, people now carry a casino in their pockets that takes money out of our communities, whereas gambling circles have always kept the money in our communities. Some websites are overseas casino sites with slot machines, spins of roulette et cetera. However, some of these websites are Australian for sports betting and Keno.

We already have a high cost of living in remote communities for food, fuel, electricity and travel. Families cannot afford to lose whole incomes to online gambling. People have started it for fun, as a game, but they are further encouraged with offers of free spins. It is like a fishing line and hook; you grab the bait and are hooked. They keep coming back, offering more bait to keep you hooked. In this way the gambling industry is hunting for victims and taking money from many vulnerable communities.

Many people do not realise how much money they are losing because they are moving money around online, but overall, extended family groups have less money for essential goods. There is also an impact on children who see parents and family members playing on their phones and gambling online, wanting to give it a try. This is setting up a bad habit for children and future generations.

Our communities need resources for educational workshops in local languages explaining the online gambling story so that people can make informed decisions about gambling and get help from people if they need it. People enjoy playing these games and want to win money to buy cars and boats and to enjoy life, but they often do not realise the darker side of it. They become addicted and lose a lot more money than they win.

I will finish this speech with the same message that I gave to the Labor government in March 2024. I hope that the CLP government is listening. This government needs to consider the economy and the income generated for the Northern Territory from this industry, but there must be an ethical and moral balance in how it is done. The NT Government is encouraging the online gambling industry to remain in the Northern Territory by allowing it to operate with weak regulations and penalties. It would be better if the NT Government encouraged the industry through other means because we should not be sacrificing the welfare of people across Australia for the NT's financial gain.

The CLP government needs to do better to protect our people from an industry that does great damage to individuals and families across Australia.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this matter of public importance put forward by the Member for Johnston.

The recent *Four Corners* report on this topic reiterated what many in our community have been saying for years: we are not doing enough to regulate the gambling industry in the Northern Territory, and it is having an enormous consequence for Territorians.

As the minister rightly said last week, 'The Greens do not like gambling'. We do not like gambling, and I will take a moment to explain why. It is because Australians lose more money per capita to gambling than any other country in the world. It is estimated that we lose about $25bn per year, which is about $1,000 per person. For comparison, the whole federal education budget is a little more than $30bn per year. The Northern Territory is no exception to this. Anglicare NT puts the number at about $4bn per year. That is almost a fifth of the nation's gambling losses inflicted on a Territory with less than 1% of the population.

The gambling industry and its political mouthpieces will tell you that gambling is all just a bit of fun and that Australians can be trusted to gamble responsibly. However, to talk about this issue in this way conceals the frankly wicked actions of this industry. It is a misrepresentation of the issue because it ignores the ways in which this industry preys on people. Gambling is deliberately addictive, and the industry is relentless in targeting vulnerable people.

This is well documented. The recent *Four Corners* episode 'Losing Streak' tells many stories like this of gambling companies actively incentivising problem gamblers to make bigger bets and taking inordinate sums from them without any regard to where that money is coming from. It is hard to quantify the extent of harm that the gambling industry inflicts on the Territory.

It cannot just be measured by the number of $50 notes swallowed by pokie machines because the costs of gambling in the NT arise in different ways such as families torn apart, jobs lost, the number of victims of domestic violence and abuse, the amount of money laundered and the lives destroyed.

Gambling, particularly the pokies, is designed to take money from those who can least afford it. I encourage everyone who has questions about gambling and pokie impacts to watch an Australian documentary called *Ka-Ching! Pokie Nation*, which I screened for people in my electorate at the start of the year. We also heard from representatives from Gamblers Anonymous Australia who spoke about their experiences. This documentary lifts the veil on the pokies industry and the malicious way that it targets vulnerable people and uses its industry lobbying power to ensure that it gets its way with policymakers.

I put forward a motion earlier in the year that detailed the excessive harm the gambling industry perpetuates on our community, so I will not lay that all out again. Menzies School of Health Research in 2018 estimated the social cost of gambling in the NT at somewhere between $165m and $380m. By contrast, the Community Benefit Fund that provides community grants only paid out $17m in that time. Less than a quarter of those grants went to initiatives to manage gambling harm.

We are letting this industry pillage and plunder, and taxpayers are left to clean up the mess. The cost of this industry is enormous, so it is shameful how little it contributes to the economy or to government revenue. Even after this government has doubled the tiny cap that was paid by gambling companies we still expect it to raise approximately $147m in tax revenue from this $50bn industry.

Do not get me started on why we have a cap on the tax liability to begin with. Why would we limit taxation on an industry that is insidious and predatory? At least I will give the gambling industry this: it probably pays more tax than the gas industry, but that is not hard.

Industries such as gambling will always be set up in the jurisdiction that has the laxest regulations and the lowest taxes. Nowhere is that more evident than the gambling industry's presence in the NT. It is unthinkable that any government would deliberately set weak regulations to attract an industry that is so harmful in our community, and successive NT Governments have just rolled over for the gambling industry.

We now have this enormous, harmful industry headquartered here and a completely impotent body that is theoretically supposed to regulate it. In the absence of proper federal regulation, the NT has become the de facto regulator for the whole online gambling industry. While the federal Labor Party sits on its hands on the matter, the NT Government has a responsibility to protect Territorians from gambling harm.

What are the issues we have with the NT Racing and Wagering Commission? First, as others have highlighted, the NTRWC has no full-time staff. How can you regulate such an industry with no full-time staff? For comparison, the equivalent body in the UK has 300 full-time staff, and the equivalent body in Denmark—a country of only 5 million people—has 150 full-time staff.

There is supposed to be independence, but there are many questions raised about the independence between it and the industry it is supposed to regulate. Six of the past 10 commissioners have owned racehorses while sitting on the commission, including current chair Alistair Shields. The commissioners have openly said that they accept hospitality and gifts from the industry. This creates questions regarding the ability of the commission to impartially regulate the industry.

It is no wonder the commission is clearly failing to hold the industry to account. The *Four Corners* program revealed that the commission has never cancelled a licence due to disciplinary action. This is despite strong evidence of terrible behaviour, such as providing financial incentives to problem gamblers to open accounts or profiting from the proceeds of crime.

The relationship between this government and the Racing and Wagering Commission raises serious questions about whether there is any genuine independence or accountability in this regulatory arrangement.

The Attorney-General recently became defensive in Question Time when I raised the issue of the commission not publishing an annual report since 1993. She claimed that I was spreading mistruths and insisted that because Labor passed new legislation in 2024 creating the Northern Territory Racing and Wagering Commission, there has not yet been an annual report because of the regulation change.

Let us be clear on what is happening. This is just word games. Yes, the *Racing and Wagering Act 2024* technically created a new commission on 1 July 2024, but this was not creating a regulator from scratch. It replaced the Northern Territory Racing Commission, which performed the exact same regulatory functions and had not published an annual report since 1993.

It was the same chair—Alistair Shields—with the same commissioners, industry, regulatory failures and conflicts of interest; it was just a new name on the letterhead.

The Attorney-General wants us to believe this is a fresh start that absolves decades of non-transparency. While I welcome the commission quietly publishing its annual report on 16 October, this is the first report from these regulators in 30 years.

When I asked the Attorney-General in Question Time about the supposed review into conflicts of interest, which was mentioned in the media, we had no answer. There were no terms of reference, timeline or commitment to making findings public—just vague waffle about looking under hoods and business as usual.

Let me be clear about what the failures are. This commission recently published its first annual report since 1993—more than 30 years. Think about that for a moment. For three decades this body has operated with virtually no public accountability, reporting on its activities, transparency about decision-making or disclosure of the gifts and hospitality its commissioners received from the industry they supposedly regulate.

Labor changed that law in 2024 to require the commission to publish annual reports, and I congratulate Labor on that. It was the right thing to do, finally bringing some transparency to this opaque body. That is the only reason we are finally seeing an annual report made public.

When pressed about the regulatory failures exposed by *Four Corners*, the Attorney-General's response was to attack the ABC, claiming that every time *Four Corners* comes to the Territory it causes problems.

Ms Boothby: It is true.

K McNAMARA: Yes, well, that is not a defence; that is deflection. When investigative journalism exposes serious problems in your government's portfolio the appropriate response is not to attack the journalist; it is to address the problems. The Attorney-General also claims that she is sick of people demonising public servants. No-one is demonising public servants. We are questioning whether commissions with clear financial conflicts of interest should be making regulatory decisions. It is basic accountability.

The commission's executive director was caught on camera bragging that the NT is 'unashamedly open for business' and that it is the gambling industry's regulator of choice. They are his words, not mine. A regulator should not be bragging about being the industry's preferred choice. A regulator should be focused on protecting the public, not attracting business from gambling companies. Those on the other side cannot utter the word 'accountability' while accepting that. It is a joke.

What has this government done? When given multiple opportunities in Question Time to commit to replacing the conflicted board members the Attorney-General refused. When asked about the review timeline she

refused to answer. If there is supposedly an investigation being undertaken into potential conflicts of interest in the commission I support that, but the review is meaningless if we do not know the terms of reference; who is conducting it beyond potentially the Tourism department; when it will be completed; or if the findings will be made public. Furthermore, we have no commitment from the government to act on whatever findings may emerge.

I urge the minister to ensure that commissioners who are found to have a conflict of interest are removed from the commission immediately—not shuffled sideways or given a warning. We have a gambling regulator that serves the gambling industry and not the people of the Northern Territory. This government's refusal to take decisive action makes it complicit in that failure.

Earlier this year I introduced a motion calling on the CLP government and all members to overhaul gambling regulation in the Territory. That included calling for a ban on gifts from individuals or companies in the gambling industry to politicians, their staff and statutory decision-makers, which would include the commission.

The CLP and Labor voted against that motion. Let that sink in. When given the opportunity to ban gifts from one of the most predatory industries in Australia, an industry that extracts $4bn a year from Territorians, both the major parties said no. We know why. In 2023–24 gambling companies donated tens of thousands of dollars to Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition as the federal government was considering gambling advertising reforms. Sportsbet donated $88,000 to Labor; Tabcorp donated $60,500; and Responsible Wagering Australia—don't you love that name—the peak body for bookmakers, donated $66,000.

Conveniently, Sportsbet's $88,000 donation came to Labor weeks before the federal government decided to reject a recommended blanket advertising ban in favour of weaker caps. At the federal level, the Liberal and National parties have also been taking money hand over fist from this industry. Over the decade from 2013 to 2023, gambling companies linked to horse betting donated $2.7m to the major parties, with Labor receiving $1.5m and the Liberals receiving $952,000. Tabcorp alone …

Mr Kerle: How much do the Greens get?

K McNAMARA: If they cease the interjections, they might learn something because they clearly do not know how to do any research into their own party's complicity in this.

Since 2014 the Nationals have accepted nearly $275,000 from Tabcorp, making it the ninth biggest donor to the Nats, and $81,000 from Sportsbet.

I am not suggesting there is a quid pro quo here, but when you are dependent on donations from wealthy interests it is awfully hard to stand up when they come knocking. The Attorney-General can fabricate all the claims she wants about the Greens taking gambling money, which is categorically false, but the facts speak for themselves. Guys, I promise you—listen up—it is coming.

The major parties are bankrolled by this industry; everyone knows it. I do not know why they are trying to hide it or make out that they are better than everyone. This is why they refuse to regulate it properly.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

K McNAMARA: That is why they vote down commonsense reforms like banning gifts to regulators and why we have a Racing and Wagering Commission riddled with conflicts of interest while the CLP defends them. Recent data shows that alcohol and gambling companies donated $2.47m to political parties in the last financial year. The Alliance for Gambling Reform said that it is a blatant attempt to undermine reform and, in doing so, is an attack on our democratic process.

When you take money from an industry you become beholden to that industry. CLP and Labor members can deny this all they want, but Territorians are not stupid; they can see what is happening. They can see a government that refuses to properly regulate a $50bn industry causing immeasurable harm because they are too compromised to act.

Both parties exclude tobacco donations, for example, because tobacco kills people. Gambling destroys lives too. The public conversation on this is starting to change. I made this point in my previous gambling speech;

sports teams used to be sponsored by tobacco companies, and as a community and society we changed that. We recognised that things overwhelmingly harm our community.

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

Madam SPEAKER: There are no extensions; sorry.

K McNAMARA: I will finish that in my adjournment.

Ms BOOTHBY (Racing): Madam Speaker, I start by speaking directly to the people who live in Millner, Jingili, Moil, Alawa, Nightcliff and Rapid Creek. I wish that your local members of parliament were as passionate about reducing crime as they are about gambling in the Northern Territory and Australia. The people in those suburbs need to know that their local members voted against every crime-reducing policy and Bill we have brought to this parliament since the first sittings of our CLP government. It is a shame.

Instead, they focus on our gambling industry. I acknowledge that gambling harm happens in our community. Some people get addicted, and it can be horrific for them, their friends and families and probably for their children and grandchildren.

Mr Edgington: The Greens are living off it.

Ms BOOTHBY: I pick up on that. The Member for Barkly reminded me that the Member for Nightcliff just listed a huge run sheet of donations received by two parties from different gambling agencies or operators. The member did not mention the Greens, which had—I need some help with how much, as I do not have the notes in front of me—I think it is about $500,000 from one gambler.

Mr Maley: Forgot that!

Ms BOOTHBY: Forgot to say that.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease the interjections, please.

Ms BOOTHBY: The Greens accepted that as a donation towards its election campaign. The Greens pretend to hate gambling yet accepts donations from gamblers.

I will touch on things the Member for Gwoja said, because I cannot believe that for the first time in a long time—maybe forever—we agree on something. This Act, which was brought forward in 2024, was really good. It had a bipartisan approach; we all supported the *Racing and Wagering Act*. The department did a lot of work consulting with industry, the community and all the different stakeholders that make up the racing and wagering industry. I will reiterate what the member said: it was an Act that replaced another Act that was more than 40 years old. It was outdated for a long time.

This Act set higher integrity standards and introduced this famous annual report that everyone is so shocked did not happen before. It did not happen before because it was not required in an Act that was written 40 years ago. It is good that the new Act allows us to see the annual report for the first time. It lets us see what is happening in the same way as statutory bodies and departments that have to table annual reports. The process allows us to identify and change legislation, policy or whatever we need to address.

The new Act set out, for the first time, members' conflict of interest provisions. This was not in the previous Act and increases transparency around conflicts of interest. It increases penalties and allows NTCAT to review commission decisions, which the previous Act did not address. We backed that change.

Under section 304 a full evaluation of the Act is required within three years of its commencement. This is to ensure the policy objectives remain valid and the provisions appropriate. That is normal for an Act. You cannot just go chopping and changing every couple of months when something needs looking at. It needs proper consultation and working through appropriate channels.

Our government brought in new gambling and tax reform from 1 July this year. The new framework delivers an extra $30m per year from the gambling industry to fund safer communities and better services. We

increased tax on the internet gaming industry and bookmakers to ensure we had more money to go into the community. A lot of it will go to things like anti-gambling messaging or promotions, or harm research.

The CBF (Community Benefit Fund) is funded from 10% of gambling revenue and used to support the community—our sporting clubs, not-for-profits, flower clubs, chess clubs and different organisations that do amazing things. These are an important part of our social fabric and Territory lifestyle, and gambling supports them. It is integral and gives back to Territorians.

A lot of the money that comes in from gambling is not from Territorians but from other Australians or people living overseas. There is an assumption that gambling is affecting every Territorian; it is so much bigger than that. We should be allowed to make money off people who want to have a flutter. A lot of flutters around the world is a lot of money that can come into the Territory to support the community groups that really need it and our lifestyle.

A portion of the CBF goes directly to research grants to support gambling research through a number of universities across Australia. CDU is one of them, Flinders is another and the third one escapes me. They all do work in that space, and that is what the CBF pays for.

More than $3m a year of that money supports Amity Community Services, Anglicare NT, CatholicCare NT and Holyoake in Alice Springs, providing anti-gambling support for families and funding for counselling and support.

A strategic review of the NT racing industry is complete. I started it last year as Racing minister, wanting to provide a clear plan for long-term sustainability for our racing industry. The review, commissioned by our government, strengthens governance, transparency and performance across all racing codes. I am proud to say that we have supported 14 of the 15 recommendations because we want a sustainable racing industry.

It includes the creation of Racing NT, a new body that will govern both greyhounds and thoroughbreds, unlike currently, and will be independent and skills based. There will be a new model that delivers multi-year funding agreements that will have transparent capital works and stronger accountability for the clubs that work across greyhounds and thoroughbreds.

This is about building a racing industry that supports hundreds of local jobs and contributes $160m to the economy. It remains a proud part of our lifestyle. I saw the Member for Gwoja at the racetrack over the carnival, and he was having a grand old time. I would love to see the Members for Johnston and Nightcliff at the racetrack one day; that would be amazing. We would pick out a horse together, put two bucks on it and see what happens. That would be lovely, because many members across the Chamber enjoy visiting the racetrack, and many partners and spouses love it as well. There are probably plenty of them who own horses. It is a really good way to be part of the community.

The Darwin Cup and other racing events are an iconic part of the Northern Territory calendar. I was in Alice Springs last week for the Red Centre Racing Awards. What people who hate gambling—we know who they are—do not understand is that this is a life for people. It is their career, job and love.

There was an announcement at the awards about the winner—I guess the equivalent of ‘horse of the year’. This horse had recently died, and the emotion in the room was touching. I was moved. The trainer was crying, and the jockey had tears. When I had to announce it, I was feeling emotional too. These horses become people’s lives; it is a big deal.

I do not like that racing is demonised across Australia and how the media makes out that gambling is this awful thing. Of course it can be awful; it can cause real harm to some people but not to everybody.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Enough of the interjections.

Ms BOOTHBY: Most responsible people can have a little flutter here and there and go down to the track every now and again for a big event. It mostly makes a genuine, heartfelt contribution to our and their lives.

I am proud to be the Racing minister in our CLP government. It was a CLP government that brought the industry to the Territory in the first place. I do not stand for people saying that the industry is taking advantage. It is a good tax regime for the industry to come here and invest in the Territory. It is building huge workplaces

that employ hundreds of people. There is a big cohort of people employed in Alice Springs, and we want those jobs. It is fantastic for them and for the Territory.

I take on board some of the issues raised, but at the same time it is not set and forget. If there are issues we will look at them. If there is evidence and proof to any real claims, give it to the right body to investigate. It is not just about online claims or standing up in parliament and accusing people of different things; put the evidence forward to the groups so that if there are problems we can fix them. We are not afraid to do that. We have been fixing everything else for the last 12 months. It is not job done.

I am proud of our industry, and I will continue to back it.

PAPER TABLED
Public Accounts Committee Annual Report 2024–25

Mr HOWE (Chair of Public Accounts Committee): Honourable members, I table the Public Accounts Committee Annual Report 2024–25 and associated minutes of proceedings. Established on 14 October 2024, the committee's work program over the past year has focused on examining Auditor-General's reports to the Legislative Assembly, responding to inquiry referrals and consideration of petitions referred to the committee.

During the reporting period the committee received five briefings from the Auditor-General covering matters raised in his November 2024 and September 2025 reports to the Legislative Assembly, the findings of the triennial strategic review of the Northern Territory Auditor-General's Office and the Auditor-General's proposed annual plan of audit work 2025–26.

In addition, as part of its inquiry into the Darwin ship lift project, the committee received a briefing on the findings of the Auditor-General's August 2018 and May 2024 audit reports of the Darwin ship lift and marine maintenance project.

In recognition of the common mission of promoting accountability and transparency across Territory entities to ensure proper use and management of public resources, on 19 March 2025 the committee entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Auditor-General as set out in Appendix 1. The MOU details the respective roles and proposed working relationship of the signatories.

As detailed in chapter 3, during the reporting period the committee received six inquiry referrals on a range of issues: three from the Treasurer; one from the Assembly; one from the Member for Araluen; and one from the Leader of the Opposition. Of these, the committee reported on two, deferred action on one due to legal issues and is finalising two inquiries for report by 31 October 2025, with the remaining referral to be finalised in the next reporting period.

Pursuant to Sessional Order 11, 15 petitions were also referred to the committee for consideration as to whether they should be debated in the Assembly. As part of its deliberations, the committee sought advice from the responsible ministers on a number of occasions and thanks them for their prompt and comprehensive responses. The committee subsequently recommended six petitions for debate in the Assembly.

On behalf of the committee I thank the Auditor-General for the high-quality and professional assistance he has provided, as well as all those who provided submissions or appeared before us at private briefings and public hearings.

I thank my fellow committee members: the Members for Arafura; Johnston; Karama; and the Deputy Chair, the Member for Fannie Bay. I am extremely proud of the work we have done this year and the respectful and collaborative culture we have developed on the PAC. I sincerely hope my colleagues feel it is a fair and honest committee.

This committee has a huge responsibility in maintaining public trust in this institution. I am proud of how the five of us have tackled, at times, sensitive issues and issues of public importance and give my sincere thanks to my colleagues.

The PAC has taken on an incredible volume of work. Already this year, it has taken on more than the committee did in the last two terms of government. I believe there was one inquiry last term. What I am getting at is that the five of us were drawn away from our electorates to do this important work, and I thank my fellow members for all the effort they have put in.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I will talk about some events that I have attended recently. I start with the Litchfield Bears Netball Club presentation night that Andrew Mackay and I attended on 21 September 2025.

It was a great night. I did not understand how wild those netball girls can get on presentation night. They beat the Litchfield Bears at their fun nights back when I was playing for them; they go pretty hard. Good on them; they had a good year. This year is also their 10th anniversary, so they were also celebrating that.

I congratulate the following award recipients: Division 1 Most Valuable Player, Lisa Ottaway; Division 2 Most Valuable Players, Ellen Murphy and Amie Wilson; Division 3 Most Valuable Player, Serenity Gameau; Division 5 Most Valuable Player, Catherine Bettison; Division 1 Best and Fairest Players, Jacinta Wishart and Erin Twaddle; Division 2 Best and Fairest Player, Abbie Twaddle; Division 3 Best and Fairest Player, Jaime Pennington; Division 5 Best and Fairest Player, Rhiannon Braley; Division 1 Player's Player, Meagan Langkowski; Division 2 Player's Player, Amie Wilson; Division 3 Player's Player, Rachael Motter; Division 5 Player's Players, Kasey Beckett and Catherine Bettison; LBNC Division 1 Coaches Award, Meagan Langkowski; Division 2 Coaches Award, Amie Wilson; Division 3 Coaches Award, Rachael Motter; and Division 5 Coaches Award, Jess Netchiporouk.

They also honoured the remarkable Team of the Decade: coach, Bonnie Spry; goal shooter, Charlie Jagst; goal attack, Lizzie Treloar; wing attack, Britanny Crescentino; centre, Lucy Murray; wing defence, Ellen Murphy; goal defence, Jess Twaddle; goalkeeper, Nakita Mullins; and reserves, Rachael Motter and Amie Wilson.

Special awards also recognised: Umpire of the Decade, Georgia Sticpewich; Here if You Need Club Spirit Award, Brooke Keogh; Game Changer Award, Tylah Mackrow; Sideline Superstar Award, Ronelle Twaddle; Dedication Award, Britanny Crescentino; Best Moment on Court Award, Tara Lee Priore-Smith; HAB of the Decade, Jacob Gates; and the Generation Award, Jess Twaddle.

I also mention life members Lizzie Treloar, Nakita Mullins, Tylah Mackrow and Bonnie Corrick.

Congratulations to all the Most Valuable Players, Best and Fairest winners, Player's Player awardees, coaches and those honoured as members of the Team of the Decade. It was a great night.

These individuals have contributed significantly to the club's success, inspiring teammates and setting a high standard for everyone involved. Special recognition also goes to the umpires, volunteers and life members whose efforts were crucial in supporting the club's success over the last 10 years.

I extend congratulations and sincere thanks to the outgoing committee for its tireless dedication and leadership in making the club what it is today and welcome the new committee. Go the Bears!

I mention a young fella named Blake Povey, a rural boy who recently took out the ATV junior class at the 2025 WA State Championship and the 250cc hybrid/air-cooled class at the 2025 Australian ATV MX National Championship in Mildura, Victoria—not bad for a local lad.

Blake's dedication, skill and determination set him apart in the world of ATV racing. His achievements bring pride to his family and friends and shine a spotlight on the incredible talent that comes from our community in the Territory. I congratulate Blake on his outstanding 2025 season. We look forward to watching his future accomplishments and wish him all the best in his racing career.

Congratulations to Tom Harris on his appointment as the inaugural Territory Procurement Champion. This appointment marks a significant milestone as it coincides with the commencement of the Northern Territory Government's comprehensive procurement reform program. The role of Territory Procurement Champion is central to this reform, serving as a vital bridge between government and procurement processes and the vibrant business community across our region. Again, congratulations to Mr Harris on this important appointment. I wish him every success into the future, and I am sure he will do the Territory proud.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I speak out against the CLP government's short-sighted plans to shut down the Darwin and Casuarina bus interchanges. These interchanges are not just pieces of infrastructure; they are vital transport corridors and community connectors for everyday Territorians. For many people, especially our most vulnerable seniors, concession holders and those without private transport these hubs are a lifeline. They connect people to essential services, family and opportunity.

If the government continues down this path of closing major bus interchanges it will create massive barriers for people who rely on public transport. These hubs were more than just transfer points; they were close to banks, ATMs and supermarkets like Woolworths where people could withdraw cash or shop without having to travel long distances to get back on public transport corridors. These changes make it harder for people to move around, stay connected and live independently.

We cannot and should not use public transport as a political football. Instead of standing up for everyday Territorians this CLP government is closing critical public facilities, including bus interchanges and public toilets. We do not fix problems by shutting things; we fix them by addressing the cause and investing in safety, maintenance and community support. Public transport should bring people together, not shut them out. It should be inclusive, accessible and responsive to the needs of all Territorians, not just those who can afford it. The government should rethink these decisions and work with the community, not against it, to keep our public spaces open, safe and accessible for everyone.

I acknowledge and pay tribute to the hardworking transport and public safety officers who work in these spaces. I particularly acknowledge the hard work of the Transport Workers Union for its strong advocacy for its members.

For many of us living in towns and cities, turning on the television is something we take for granted. Free-to-air TV keeps us informed, entertained and connected to the world around us, but for many remote communities across the Northern Territory that simple act of connection has become increasingly difficult. When satellite television was rolled out, many communities moved to that model because the cost of installing retransmission equipment was too high. At the time it was not feasible for smaller or remote communities to maintain their own systems. Times have changed, and technology has improved. The cost of small-scale retransmission equipment has come down significantly and is now far more affordable and practical for remote communities to operate and maintain.

Access to free-to-air TV is not just about watching your favourite show; it is about news, sport, education and connection. It is about ensuring that people living hundreds of kilometres from the nearest town have access to vital information during natural disasters, public health alerts and national events. It also ensures that our kids can see themselves reflected on the big screen through local programs, Aboriginal media and Territory content. For many communities, free-to-air television is a lifeline. It provides language programs, community updates and important cultural and educational material that satellite or subscription services do not.

I acknowledge the important work of organisations such as CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association), Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) and Imparja Television—proud Aboriginal-owned broadcasters that continue to serve remote Australia. Imparja has been working closely with Outback Internet to trial small-scale transmission systems that are affordable, reliable and suitable for remote conditions. These systems have already been successfully installed and trialled in Hermannsburg and Atitjere and in Warburton, Blackstone and Jameson in Western Australia. These trials prove that with the right support remote communities can once again access free-to-air television through cost-effective and sustainable means.

This is an opportunity for the Territory and federal governments to step up and support a practical community-led solution that restores an essential service. We often talk about closing the gap in health, education and digital access, but communications and information are essential services. We often talk about the need to give communities options for things to engage in. When communities can see what is happening in the world and access information in real time they are more empowered, informed and connected. Investing in this kind of infrastructure is not just about technology; it is about equity, inclusion and cultural connection. It creates opportunities for young people to stay at home and not be on the streets and for people to seek respite in our hot summer months.

I urge both governments to seriously consider supporting this initiative and to partner with amazing broadcasters like Imparja and providers like Outback Internet to help bring back free-to-air TV to the bush. Every Territorian, no matter where they live, deserves to stay connected to the world around them.

I thank the amazing community of Ntaria (Hermannsburg) for raising this matter with me and for talking up strong for community. We have heard multiple times that Territorians living in remote communities are

required and expected to fork out more than $500 individually to have a black box installed in their home just to access television services.

We talk about the cost of living and giving programs and opportunities for young people, elders and our community to engage in. A simple program that both governments could commit to would allow free-to-air TV through transmission stations, which is not cost intensive. Places in the Northern Territory like Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and Atitjere show that it can work and is cost effective.

This would be an amazing opportunity for the Territory and federal governments to work together to deliver free TV to our remote communities to ensure they are not left behind and have access to information and the services that so many of us take for granted.

When every member of this parliament goes home tonight and turns on their TV I ask them to take a moment to reflect and think about what it would be like living in a remote community where you have to pay $500 to get a black box installed just to watch TV. Consider the programs in your areas of interest that may not be part of the subscription service. Then ask yourself: when that black box is broken or the card removed from it and you have nothing to engage in at home—whether it is in the middle of summer or winter or when you are looking for things to keep the young ones occupied—what happens then?

This is a service we should be supporting remote Territorians to access, whether they are in a remote community, a pastoral property or an agricultural area. Everyone has the right to access information services for education and recreation. This is an important matter, and I encourage both levels of government to jump on board and support this initiative.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I will speak about an important matter for the Dundee community regarding the petition that I tabled in this parliament on 22 May 2025. More than 283 people from Dundee signed a petition calling on the Northern Territory Government to:

1. acknowledge the dramatic growth of school student enrolments at Dundee Beach School and the pressures being placed on the school

2. acknowledge the work of the school council in developing the Dundee Beach School master plan and commit to the implementation of the master plan

3. prioritise stage 1 of the master plan due to the imminent health, safety and student wellbeing.

We have finally received a response from the CLP Education minister, Jo Hersey. That response, tabled in this parliament only half-an-hour ago, is disgraceful. Residents, students, parents and the school council of Dundee Beach School will be shocked at Minister Hersey's response. She has not committed any funding to Dundee Beach School, even though in the last year the school's enrolment has grown significantly.

Members may wonder why enrolment at Dundee has grown so much. There is a number of factors. We have seen the brand-new tavern at Dundee Beach. We will see a new shop, which will ensure food security for Dundee, and means that people who had weekenders have now moved there full-time. We have also seen the school take on students to finish their higher education.

It is disappointing that the Education minister does not consider the needs of the Dundee primary school. It is more disappointing when you compare it with a petition tabled in November by a CLP member, the Member for Goyder. The government will fund a new crossing, which I do not have an issue with. I thought the petition from the Member for Goyder was needed and valid because the safety of students when crossing the road is an important matter.
However, I have an issue with having a Public Accounts Committee stacked with three CLP members who chose to support that petition for Howard Springs Primary School and bring it to the House for debate, yet when I as a Labor member brought a petition about an important issue—school attendance has risen and the school council has done enormous work on the master plan in a staged approach, which I thought was a sensible approach—the members of the PAC seem to have blocked it. That is disappointing. I do not know what happens in the Public Accounts Committee because I am not a member who sits on it, but it could have at least been brought forward for debate …

A member: Couldn't you do a dissenting report?

Mr YOUNG: I do not sit on that committee, so I would not do a dissenting report.

It is disappointing that it was not brought forward for debate. The people who miss out—for those calling out rudely—are the students at Dundee school and the school council that has been working tirelessly to put a master plan forward, which is a sensible master plan, I add. Stage 1 of this master plan is a new classroom and ablution block that will help with the pressures that the teachers have as well as the students in their learning. It will ensure that they have a safe and productive learning environment.

We have seen the enrolment numbers. People at the school asked me to come out and see how much it has grown. I walked through each classroom and met with students and teachers. School council Chair Kelly took me through the school to show me what was going on, and afterwards I met with the school council.

We decided that the best practice was to put forward a petition in this parliament—just like the Member for Goyder did—to try to get a response from the minister. It is disappointing that the CLP Education minister has come back and said, 'We do not care about Dundee primary school, the pressures for the teachers and students or the worries that parents have for that school'.

I will meet with Kelly again; I will give her a call shortly to discuss our next options. I hope that the minister for Education meets with the school and school council and sees those pressures. I invited her out there before when I put the petition forward, and I would happily take her there because our rural schools deserve just as much attention as schools in Darwin and Palmerston.

It seems that if your school does not sit within one of the CLP's electorates, the CLP government does not care about you and will just pork-barrel its own seats. That is what we see here with the Member for Goyder's petition. The CLP government is not giving the same attention to other schools when it comes to the infrastructure budget. There should be equity across the board no matter where you live.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will continue the rest of my speech on the MPI. I apologise; I did not realise we did not have time extensions with MPIs. I want to finish it because I was getting to the good part, which is that I must address the unhinged response I received from the Minister for Racing when I asked a question on this topic the other day.

Mr HOWE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! My point of order is about reflecting on the minister's state of mind as unhinged. I ask the member to withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: No. She said, 'unhinged response', so technically she was not calling the minister unhinged. She said that the response was unhinged.

K McNAMARA: I would have appreciated the Member for Drysdale to stand up with that same standing order when the Attorney-General was referring to my 'you know what' in her answer to that question, which was incredibly unparliamentary—so, maybe stones and glasshouses.

We are all afraid of the big L word in here. It is inconceivable to me that public officials are allowed to 'you know what' in this Chamber but cannot call out the 'you know whats'. That is okay because I consulted with my thesaurus to find other ways to describe this.

The Attorney-General told a falsehood in the Chamber when she claimed that the Greens accept donations from gambling companies. Let me be crystal clear that this is a fabrication, a fiction and an untruth of the highest order. It is categorically, demonstrably and provably incorrect, and the Attorney-General has misrepresented the facts, distorted the truth and peddled misinformation …

Ms BOOTHBY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I apologise. It was not a gambling company; it was a gambler, but it was about $500,000.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

K McNAMARA: It is not a point of order, so …

Mr Howe: It is good to have on the record.

Madam SPEAKER: Possibly.

K McNAMARA: You cannot have it two ways …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: There will be no more interruptions to your speech, Member for Nightcliff.

K McNAMARA: They cannot have it both ways. They cannot tell other people they cannot have standing orders and then just pop up whenever they want to, to correct the record.

The Greens' donations are public. We do not accept any money from corporations like big business looking to buy influence or corporations that profit from harming the community like the gambling and fossil fuel industries, and property developers. It is all publicly available. Unlike the CLP and the Liberals, we publish the list of donations on our website. Unlike those on the other side, we actively encourage transparency. Google is your friend. For anyone interested, it is www.greens.org.au/about/donors.

There are some people here who are desperate to have any kind of win or point. They all act like lemmings, heckling. Just because you are loud does not make you right. Like bullies who rely on strength in numbers, your volume does not compensate for your lack of facts.

It is like talking to a brick wall with those opposite because they have no interest in the truth, but I am not scared of transparency. I have done this once before, but I will set the record straight again. The donor they are referring to is a man called Mr Turpie who has made a personal donation. I have looked it up; he is a mathematician from Queensland, not the Northern Territory, who also happens to be a professional poker player. Yes, that is it; that is the big conspiracy.

Members interjecting.

K McNAMARA: I knew—I was waiting for this.

If the people opposite want to continue to fail to use any critical thinking skills or intellectual honesty on this, they are beyond help and can continue to embarrass themselves. The Greens never have and never will accept donations from gambling companies.

Members interjecting.

K McNAMARA: That is the fact. I love the nervous laughing; they like to get their little heckles out, but the same cannot be said for the CLP and Liberals, and that is the hilarity of this. They are bankrolled by property developers, gambling companies and the fossil fuel industry. Maybe swallow that and let it percolate for a bit. This is why we are having this debate, because the major parties are so financially dependent on gambling money that they cannot be trusted to regulate it properly.

Not content with spreading fiction the Attorney-General then accused me of demonising public servants. This is a textbook straw man argument. I asked specific questions—not that she would know what that is, obviously. I asked about commissioners with conflicts of interest—commissioners who own racehorses while regulating the industry, accept hospitality from bookmakers they oversee and co-own horses with betting CEOs. The Attorney-General cannot defend these conflicts, so instead she fabricates a different argument that I am attacking hardworking public servants and then attacks that instead. That is a straw man argument. It is a disingenuous deflection and a dishonest reframing of legitimate accountability questions. It is my job to stand here and ask legitimate questions about accountability.

I am not criticising public servants for doing their job; I am criticising a fundamentally compromised regulatory structure where the people making decisions have financial stakes in the outcomes. It is like 101 here. When the commission Chair admits accepting hospitality from the bookmakers they regulate, that is not just someone trying to do their job; that is regulatory capture. The Attorney-General knows she cannot defend those conflicts so invents an easier target and hopes no-one notices the sleight of hand.
When I raised this issue earlier this year the minister said:

> *The CLP is under no illusion that gambling can cause harm, and the Territory has one of the highest per capita gambling spends in the country. That means we have a greater responsibility to get it right.*

Unfortunately they have not got it right. Neither the CLP or the Labor Party before it got this right, and now the whole nation knows it and is watching; this is a national interest story. We are effectively now the national regulator for online gambling companies. It is not just us; the nationwide spotlight is on this.

Subsequent media investigations have shown Australia what many Territorians already knew: our gambling regulator is a national embarrassment—a commission with no full-time staff who own racehorses in the industry they regulate. This is not regulation; it is regulatory capture, and this government's response has

been to misrepresent the facts, attack the messenger and hide behind reviews about which it refuses to provide details.

The people of the Territory deserve better. The people who are losing billions to this predatory industry and the families torn apart by gambling addiction deserve better. I give a shout-out to the members of Gamblers Anonymous who have spoken at events I have held and shared stories of the ways the industry has impacted them. The victims of crime funded by gambling losses also deserve better.

I urge this government to take this issue seriously. Release the terms of reference for this supposed review, set a deadline for its completion, commit to making the findings public, replace the conflicted commissioners and for once put the wellbeing of Territorians ahead of the government's relationship with the gambling industry. The CLP has a choice to be part of the solution or continue to be part of the problem.

I want to see this Chamber and government put the wellbeing of Territorians above the financial interests of the industry. I would love to see the so-called government of action take action on this.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I begin by saying to all the people in Nightcliff and Rapid Creek who are listening tonight that the rural area is full of great kids. I am about to list some of the winners of different sporting awards. If your kid is a talented athlete or needs a shout-out in parliament please reach out to my office. If your local member will not do it I am happy to give it a go.

The Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club is one the great pillars of the rural area. It is an incredible organisation that brings thousands of families together every week throughout the Dry Season. The under-13 and under-16 presentations were held the other week and had some major award winners. The Stuart Goodwin Memorial Under-16 Best Team Man award went to Ricky Ryan; the Cale Stewart Team Spirit award went to Jarvis Pearce; and the Ron Jensen Most Valuable Junior Player award went to Jack Cogill.

Rural Athletics Centre is another great club full of dedicated volunteers, coaches and junior participants. Its presentation this year celebrated some major award winners. I give a special shout-out to President Cameron Burrows, who does so much with his time. The major award winners were: Overall Season Champion, Brianna Scragg; Overall Junior Champion, Mitchell O'Keeffe; Overall Senior Champion, Alison Reidy; Junior Age Champion 6 Years, River Crook, who is six years old and already into sport, so good on him; Junior Age Champion 7 Years, Norah Evans; Junior Age Champion 8 Years, Jordan Donovan; Junior Age Champion 9 Years, Ryder Stevens; Junior Age Champion 10 Years, Charlotte Donovan—that is two kids from the same family, which is incredible—and Junior Age Champion 11 Years, Alyssa Shiosaki.

It is not just about the young fellows: Senior Age Champion Sprints, Mikayla Bauman; Senior Age Champion Distance, Jensen Biddulph; Senior Age Champion High Jump, Max Damjanovic; Senior Age Champion Long/Triple, Kate Grimshaw; and Senior Age Champion Throws, Gayle Horne.

Other major award winners were: Club Person of the Year, Belinda Raabe; Kia Best Memorial, Dundee Overeem; Fred Munro Encouragement Award, Vicki Halliwell; Coach's Awards, Domine Jarentowski, Zoey Manski, Katie Grimshaw and Christophe Bellis.

There is plenty of sport happening in the rural area. With the Dry Season ending, more clubs have had their presentations in the last couple of months.

The winner of the Southern Districts Crocs Netball Club 2025 Gerry Wood Award was Emma Sheehan. She played, coached three junior teams and served as club president. That is incredible dedication; well done.

At the Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club under-18 and seniors presentation night the major award winners for the under-18s were: Best and Fairest, Eligh Pomory; Coach's Award, Malcom Fauntleroy; Most Improved, Jake Doody; Best Forward, Murray Fogg; Best Defender, Eligh Pomory; Best Back, Adam Rogan; Players' Player, also Adam Rogan, so well done; and Hayden Lee Memorial Award, Trevor Robinson.

Life memberships were awarded to Aaron Barnes and Paul Jensen. Paul has been a mainstay of the rural area; you often hear him screaming from the sideline at Bears' games even after he stepped down as president. He often yells, 'Go, you mighty Bears'. It is a common thing you will hear from him—amongst other words of wisdom. Congratulations on becoming a life member.

The John Adler Senior Club Person of the Year award went to Sam Elton.

Award winners in the B grade were: Illimo Raquisia Memorial (Best and Fairest), Andrew Caddy; Coach's Award, Andrew Caddy; Most Improved, Jye Burgess; Best Forward, Kahn Nelson; Best Defender, Brent Smith; Best Back, Jack Brennan; and Players' Player, Tom Harvey.

The mighty Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club women's team put on quite a show throughout the year and is an incredible group of rural people who get on the field and take it to the rest of the Territory. Major award winners were: Best and Fairest, Erin Luchetti; Coach's Award, Paige McCourt; Most Improved, Courtney Byrne; Best Forward, Kathryn Smith; Best Defender, Sarah O'Connor; Best Back, Kiyanah Toy; Players' Player, Caitlynn Ivanetz; and the Women in League Award, Laura Luchetti. Well done.

Award winners in the A-grade men's were: Troy Baker Memorial Award (Most Valuable Player), Fletcher Tomes; Best and Fairest, Trent Wedding; Coach's Award, Harry Heath; Most Improved, Patrick Manktelow; Best Forward and Best Defender—he can do everything—Ben Drayton, well done; Best Back, Nathan Dixon; and Players' Player, Fletcher Tomes.

Well done to all the players and committee members who make it all possible at the Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club.

The Member for Nelson went through all the award winners at the Litchfield Bears Netball Club, so I will not repeat his statement. My partner, Mel, is a coach for the division 3 players this season and could not play due to a knee injury in the finals the previous year. Well done to all the women in that club who put in time week-in, week-out to make sure it is all possible. It is a whole family.

Players often support each other on and off the field through tough and good times. They had a fantastic, if not hectic night at their presentation awards celebrating 10 years. A special shout-out goes to outgoing president Lizzie Treloar as well as Nakita Mullins, Tylah Mackrow, Bonnie Corrick and all the other committee members over the last 10 years who made it all possible. My understanding is they took it on after a couple of drinks on a weekend and turned it into a club that has had hundreds of players over the last 10 years—getting people active, making new friends and picking up championships along the way. Well done to every one of them.

A special shout-out goes to Litchfield Football Club—a soccer club, for those less-educated people. They are a great mainstay of Freds Pass Reserve. I attended their last senior women's game where the mighty Bears took on the Member for Drysdale's wife. It was a great game with a bit of bipartisan spirit, enjoying some soccer and having a feed. It was a great night. The under-13 boys' team was the 2025 Minor Premiers. The club is incredibly proud of them, so well done.

Turning to schools in my electorate, I give a special shout-out to Grace McDonald, who won the Taminosity Award for Year 12, which I sponsored at Taminmin College, and Paige Austin who won for Year 10. They are fantastic representatives of the rural area, and I commend them for it. Grace McDonald, I believe, recently went to the US to compete in barrel racing which is her preferred sport. I think her brother does bull riding, representing not only the Territory but also Australia. Well done to them.

Another shout-out goes to Goyder resident Tobi Campbell, the youngest member of the Equestrian Northern Territory Interschool Team which travelled to compete in Sydney earlier this month. Tobi can jump a horse higher than she stands tall. She is an incredible young athlete, and I look forward to seeing her career progress.

I give a shout-out to the mighty Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club for its end-of-season results. Unfortunately the under-18 boys went down against the Raiders; it was a sad game to watch and I did not enjoy it. In the women's premiership the Bears went down to the Sisters but put in a good fight, not giving up until the last minute. The men's premiership match was close, coming down to six points against the Brothers. In the under-14 boys the Bears took on the Nightcliff Dragons. The under-13 boys won the premiership, defeating the Dragons and in the under-15 girls the Bears took the win against Darwin Brothers.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I will talk about a wonderful event from the last few weeks. To give context, one of the community support projects we have been running in Johnston is called Cards for a Cause. We have incredible local artists in Johnston, and five of them have designed cards for us. A huge shout-out goes to Ivy Crichton, Sandra Kendall, Danny Crichton, Ciella Williams and Frank Gohier who contributed their art to raise money for community projects.

Each month we sell cards for a different community cause, and last month it was the amazing Danila Dilba Gym Group. I attended its tipping competition prize giving and even tried some of the machines in the gym under the good guidance of some of the amazing participants in the program. The stair machine was very

hard. I heard about the program that the group has run for two years and the incredible impact it is having on people's lives.

The Danila Dilba Gym Group was set up in August 2023 to support clients living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, chronic pain, osteoarthritis, kidney disease and high blood pressure. There is a mountain of evidence about the benefits of physical activity in preventing and managing chronic conditions, and it is a big issue for many people in our community.

About 90% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in non-remote areas do not meet the recommended target of 30 minutes a day most days a week. The gym group was designed to remove as many barriers as possible—cost, weather, transport, appropriate shoes and that feeling of not being culturally safe in a gym setting. Prior to this program most of these clients would not enter a gym for fear of shame or judgement. This is the only physiotherapy-led gym group of its type in Darwin specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and each client who signs up receives an individualised exercise program with support from a physio and an allied health assistant.

One amazing thing about the program is that it focuses on much more than just physical health; it also creates social and cultural connection. Participants support each other to make the lifestyle changes they need to get healthier. Some come for a short time, learn the exercises and then carry on independently; others sign up for the long term for ongoing lifestyle change. About half the participants did zero regular exercise before they started in the group and 56% had type 2 diabetes. The participants range in age from 17 to 81 and live with a range of chronic conditions.

As well as a weekly gym program the gym holds shared medical appointments where other Danila Dilba professionals attend and facilitate group appointments covering topics such as healthy eating. These group appointments allow people to learn from each other and often give them the confidence to ask questions they may not ask in a one-on-one appointment.

The numbers speak for themselves. In the gym's first year there were 78 gym group sessions with 672 client attendances. In 2024–25 there were 90 sessions and 1,718 client attendances; the numbers have tripled in two years.

The real story is in the lives that have changed. A 69-year-old man and a 34-year-old man reversed their diabetes; a 50-year-old man has stopped taking insulin for his diabetes, no longer has back pain and has been able to go back to work; a 61-year-old woman no longer needs a walker and has improved her diabetes and bone density; a 39-year-old is no longer being considered for a lung transplant; a 34-year-old woman returned to work after getting on top of chronic shoulder pain; and a 51-year-old man has lost more than 20 kilograms, no longer needs a walker and has stopped needing home oxygen.

I will share what some of the participants said about the program:

'This program has helped build my confidence in moving and exercising. It has changed my life. Even little things like walking up stairs, getting into a car, getting up onto a stool and not needing time off work for two months since I started. It is great to run into other mob who all want to improve their health.

'This group is very supportive, helpful and encouraging. I feel 100% safe and respected. Normally these places are for whitefellas; this one is for us, and it feels comfortable. It is the way to go for our mob. I cannot wait for Mondays.

'It has made me healthier and fitter. I am going for open heart surgery and it has made me more confident about that. When I told the specialist I was coming to gym twice a week and lost a lot of weight, he was very happy.

'It is really helping me. I feel privileged to come here. It is such a treat. It is a great opportunity to get me back on track, to get fitter and to lose weight. It helps me physically and mentally.'

The day that I visited the group, some of the participants made speeches about how important this program was for them. As we heard it is not just about getting healthy in their bodies; it is a wonderful chance to connect with and spend time with others.

Some of them talked about how they had played together at Parap Camp when they were little kids. These people have known each other, sometimes for more than 60 years, and are still connected and caring for

each other. Danila Dilba supports them to get healthier while they maintain this incredibly important community connection.

This program is made possible through the valuable partnership between Danila Dilba Health Services and Charles Darwin University's Faculty of Health. Through the program Danila Dilba provides CDU students with meaningful opportunities to engage in service delivery and contribute to the development of the health workforce while benefiting from access to the CDU Health Hub gym facilities. The programs help clients overcome barriers like transport costs and cultural safety and provide culturally safe women-only options when needed, with instruction and monitoring from physiotherapists and other health professionals.

In Johnston we are proud to be connected to and support projects like this. This is what community supporting community looks like and what happens when we remove barriers and create spaces where people feel safe, respected and valued. This is what happens when we invest in prevention and early intervention rather than waiting for people to end up in hospital.

It was wonderful to be there as part of that program. As you heard in some of the stories I shared, the work Danila Dilba does is transforming lives. They are not just statistics; these are our neighbours and community members—people who deserve every opportunity to live healthy, fulfilling lives. When we support programs such as this we are supporting not just individuals but also families, building stronger communities and creating a healthier Territory for everyone. These are the stories we need to be telling and celebrating—stories that are making a real difference.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge some of the many recent events I have attended around the Northern Territory, celebrating our people, culture and the great Territory lifestyle that we all love.

I begin with the Chariots of Thunder sprintcar series that I attended alongside Minister Edgington. It was an incredible atmosphere at Hidden Valley speedway watching Australia's best sprintcar drivers navigate the track with such skill and speed. My sincere thanks to MotorSports NT for the invitation and to Chris Renehan for showing us around the track and sharing his passion for the sport.

I also made it to the MXGP, an international event held in the Territory for the first time. I congratulate Marie-Claire Boothby, the Minister for Major Events, and the team for such a wonderful event. It drew an incredible crowd with 36,000 fans over three days enjoying a well-organised world-class experience.

Before the MXGP began I had the pleasure of meeting our Territory motocross riders, the Territory Dingoes, who proudly competed as part of the program. To Keeley Scott, Mitchell Thorneycroft, Blake McVeigh and the team, you should all be proud of your achievements.

For those who missed out this year, tickets are already on sale for 2026.

As one sporting season concluded another began, with the official kick-off of the 2025–26 NTFL season. I was proud to host the season launch at Parliament House, bringing together the clubs, sponsors, officials and volunteers who make Territory football what it is today. I thank Sean Bowden, Chair of AFLNT; Sam Gibson, Head of AFLNT; and Tony Saunders, NTFL Competition Lead. I also thank my parliamentary colleagues who joined us: the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, Robyn Cahill; assistant minister for People, Sport and Culture, Laurie Zio; and the Member for Casuarina, Khoda Patel. To all the volunteers across the Territory, thank you for the time, passion and commitment you give to make community sport possible.

I was also invited to the official opening of the 2025 AFL Masters National Carnival held in Darwin in September. More than 2,500 people travelled to the Territory for this fantastic event, a major boost to the economy and a true celebration of the spirit of sport. My thanks to Kim Cowan and Dean Wallington for their leadership and organisation.

I make special mention of the Member for Fannie Bay, Laurie Zio, who proudly represented the Territory team. Well done, Laurie. You have done us all proud.

At Darwin Golf Club I met some of the Territory's next generation of golfing talent. Special thanks to 11-year-old Wade Bryant from Katherine for giving me a few putting tips. I admit I still have a bit of work to do there.

I visited the Darwin Surf Life Saving Club, lending a hand at its stall and supporting the fantastic Nippers program, alongside my northern suburbs colleagues, the Members for Karama, Wanguri and Casuarina. We have been supporting the club for the last few weeks. To the volunteers and families, thank you. Your dedication keeps our beaches safe and ensures our children learn about and thrive in the water.

Our NT Library & Archives team recently hosted the 41st Northern Territory Literary Awards, an inspiring evening and a celebration of storytelling, creativity and Territory talent. These awards, proudly supported by the CLP government, encourage participation from emerging and established writers in theatre, creative non-fiction, essay, flash fiction, youth, poetry and short story.

I commend everyone who submitted entries for having the courage to share their stories and perspectives of this place we call home.

Thanks also to the judges from the NT Writers' Centre for their time and expertise in reviewing the many wonderful submissions. Seven writers were crowned winners this year, including an Alice Springs poet, a Territory doctor and a young emerging writer.

Allow me to place their names on the record:

- Browns Mart Theatre Award—Jada Alberts for *Black Light*
- Charles Darwin University Creative Non-Fiction Award—Alex Eve for *Severance and Being Seen*
- Charles Darwin University Essay Award—Sophie Collins for *Rheumatic heart disease: a call to action on preventable, poverty-attributable deaths in the Northern Territory*
- Flash Fiction Award—Roland Bull for *The important affair of the first male Moneypenny*
- Kath Manzie Youth Award—Lucy Tinapple for *Deserted*
- NT Writers' Centre Poetry Award—Meg Mooney for *In the Desert Where I Live*
- ZipPrint Short Story Award—Belinda Mawby for *Eternal*.

Congratulations to all the winners and finalists.

On the subject of awards, I acknowledge my department, particularly the Office of Youth Affairs, for its well-deserved recognition with 2025 Chief Minister's Award. The award celebrates 25 years of Youth Week in the Territory, a milestone achievement empowering young Territorians and fostering participation. Congratulations to the entire team for their passion for and commitment to supporting our youths.

I congratulate COTA NT, which won two prestigious awards at the Chamber of Commerce Export and Business Awards 2025. It received the Excellence in Business – Best Community Event/ Business Collaboration award for the Darwin Seniors Expo and the Outstanding Customer Service in Not for Profit award. Well done to Sue Shearer and her team at COTA NT for their tireless work supporting seniors across the Territory.

I visited Alice Springs in August and October. It is always wonderful to be back in the heart of our country meeting with community members and seeing firsthand the incredible work being done across Central Australia. How beautiful it was to see the Sturt's desert pea in full bloom.

During this visit I met with my Department of People, Sport and Culture team based in Alice Springs. I thank them for the fantastic work they do supporting Territorians. I met Debra Gray, the new CEO of CASA Services Ltd, who shared insights into the disability sector landscape and opportunities for greater collaboration in delivering person-centred support.

I also met Rob Clarke from the Redtails Pinktails Right Tracks program at Traeger Park. We discussed the proposed infrastructure development and the program's sport-for-development model that is addressing youth disengagement in Central Australia.

I caught up with Mick Trull to discuss the Hamilton Downs Youth Camp and the future of the facility. My office assisted with some key connections.

Alison Huhs spoke with me about the Centralian Eisteddfod, which this year supported 1,500 participants and more than 600 entries showcasing Alice Springs' finest emerging performers.

While in Alice Springs I attended the launch of the Becoming Dad program supported by our CLP government and delivered in partnership with Relationships Australia NT. This program focuses on supporting new and expecting fathers through connection, wellbeing and healthy relationships. It was a pleasure to meet Bridget Myles, centre coordinator at Birth and Beyond, and Rob Starr, group facilitator from Relationships Australia NT. I am pleased to report that five dads attended the first session that evening, which was a great start for an important community initiative.

I also visited the Pat Gallagher Netball Centre, meeting General Manager Karla Goodman and again with Debra Gray, this time in her role as President of the Alice Springs Netball Association, to discuss netball development in the Red Centre.

During the August trip I met with Desart CEO Philip Watkins to discuss preparations for Desert Mob 2025. A couple of weeks ago I had the privilege of visiting the Araluen Arts Centre to view the Desert Mob exhibition officially opened by Wendy Nungarrayi Brown. The exhibition brings together hundreds of artists and celebrates the strength and diversity of desert culture. It remains open until Sunday 26 October, and I encourage everyone to visit.

I had the company of many colleagues—the Members for Fannie Bay, Goyder, Karama, Drysdale and Casuarina. Our visit to the Araluen Arts Centre was a good experience.

While at the Araluen Arts Centre I visited Deviate, an exhibition featuring significant Western Desert paintings on loan from the National Gallery of Australia through its Sharing the National Collection initiative. This outstanding display will remain open until 24 December 2025.

The events and people I have mentioned this evening all demonstrate the extraordinary community spirit, creativity and dedication that defines our Northern Territory. From sport to literature and from youth engagement to the arts, Territorians continue to inspire through their energy, collaboration and passion for this place we all call home.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, rest assured that I will not be naming any members tonight because I will talk about the good work of NT Breast Cancer Voice. Last Saturday we had a fundraiser for this amazing organisation, attended by the Chief Minister, the Attorney-General, the Member for Blain and me. It was a great event.

This organisation is dedicated to raising awareness and delivering better services for women suffering from breast cancer and to make them aware of early intervention.

This year we heard from two young survivors, which was fantastic. They had gone through a breast cancer journey and told emotional stories as to the impact it had on a young woman's life, including the impact of mastectomies, going through early menopause—all the things that a young woman would never expect. I found that quite powerful.

The Member for Blain and I enjoyed being auctioned off to the room. I would like the record to state that I sold for a higher price than the Member for Blain; that is important. It was a lot of fun.

Thanks to Judy and the entire committee from NT Breast Cancer Voice for all their work and Cazalys for hosting and putting on a fun morning that had some genuine meaning.

We auctioned a few things as well. I do not have the figures, but we got into the thousands, so that is fantastic.

The Good Shepherd Lutheran College Palmerston campus is a primary school in my electorate. I give a huge shout-out to young Madeleine, in Year 5, who organised the school's careers day this week. Madeleine came up with the careers day plan all by herself. She thought, 'Let us get parents in, get organisations in and everyone can get their first taste of a careers day'.

I went, and it was such a good event. I thank NT Police for being there and bringing the horses, which were a massive hit. The Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service was there, and it brought a fire truck—another big hit. Master Builders, the Royal Australian Navy, Royal Australian Air Force and Airnorth were also there.

I met a pilot who is afraid of heights, which I thought was remarkable. She spoke about her experience flying in the Northern Territory. It was interesting, and not something we often think about, that pilots elsewhere in the country would not fly in the Wet Season storms we get. However, up here—the Territory way—we just get it done. She spoke about how much confidence she has built working here as a pilot, and that is fantastic.

Thank you to CDU, the doctors who were there, the hairdresser and the rangers who probably stole the show. I was next to them. When someone has a lot of animals, it is hard to beat all the animals you can hold. It was great to see young students having this experience. The stalls were experience based so that they could play and there were things they could feel and touch.

The hairdressing stand was a massive hit. There were probably about 20 girls doing each other's hair, which was cute. As someone who is becoming quite the expert on different hairstyles I have a tip for any dads out there: if you are a girl dad like me, YouTube is full of great tutorials. I am yet to master some styles, but I am getting there and have a few specialities that I am proud of. It is a great bonding experience. Get on YouTube, learn how to do hair and enjoy it.

Moving to Central Australia, the Minister for Arts just spoke about the Araluen Arts Centre, and it was fantastic. I joined the minister for that visit, and there were some incredible pieces. You just step back and go, 'Wow'. There are a couple of artists I want to mention.

I am a massive history and military history buff, and some traditional weapons were on display. There was a spear used for punishment, which I thought was an amazing piece. I will post it on my Facebook page. That piece by Glen Smith was beautiful, maybe my favourite of the day. Next to it were some incredible boomerangs by Darren Hayes and a gentleman called Clinton—I apologise, I cannot remember his last name. They were beautiful. There was a display of traditional hunting weapons. I loved it. Get down to the Araluen Arts Centre; there are things for all different tastes, so check it out.

Returning to the electorate, I thank the stallholders for another great year at Palmerston Markets as we wrap up the season. We had some trouble in the first two weeks, so the Member for Blain, the Attorney-General, the Chief Minister and I were keen to ensure we maintained a safe market environment. This was something we wanted to deliver for Palmerston because it is a huge event for us; the whole community gets together with thousands of people on a big night. It is great. We have done significant work on the Palmerston Markets, including an increased police presence.

I thank Athina Pascoe-Bell, the Mayor of the City of Palmerston; the CEO; and their staff. I give a massive shout-out to Matthew McNamara for his work; he is great with the kids and ensured we doubled security. It is fantastic. We also had the Circuit Breaker Program down there, and I thank the minister for that support. It has been a much better year. That is why we are here and what it is all about.

I thank the stallholders for being there every Friday; I know it is a long day when you set up in the morning and close late at night. Thank you to everyone involved, including the market committee and Hyper the Clown for her performances. The kids—and us adults—love seeing Hyper. Rest up over the break, and if you have other markets I wish you all the best.

I look forward to next year; we will keep pushing to deliver a safe market for all in Palmerston.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, On 17 September I had the pleasure of attending the Larrakeyah Primary School production of *Moana*. I congratulate everyone involved in staging the event. Well done to the Larrakeyah Primary School board, teachers, parents, Stormcell TV, All About Party Hire and AANT Centre for their support. I give a special shout-out to Rachael Mann from Track Dance Studio for her magnificent choreography, Jacob Gates for his skilful construction of the raft that was central to the story and all the students who took part. Whether you were a chicken—I must confess they were my favourites—a creature from under the sea or a member of the island village, you were all stars.

Performing in front of an audience is a scary thing no matter your age. I make special mention of the amazing kids who accepted the challenge of joining the main cast. To Neve Ross for her exceptional performance in the role of Moana and Navyam Paul for his charming portrayal of Maui, well done. Congratulations to Liora Devlin-Aylott who played Gramma Tala, Michael Baldry for his portrayal of Chief Tui, Eleanor Bromwell who played Sina and Christina Bairamis who played the Ancestor.

The following cast members took on the challenge of two roles: Sienna Blomfield played Pua and Te Ka; Isla Toonson played Hei Hei and Te Ka; Lexi Dorrian played Tamatoa and Te Fiti; Rita Hartney played Ancestor and Villager; and last but not least, Amiar Islan played Ancestor and Fisherman.

It was truly a night to remember, but the achievements for Larrakeyah Primary School do not stop there. Congratulations to Liora Devlin-Aylott, Eleanor Bromell, Shelby Kwok, Ryan Liu, Max Kwok and Lachlan Chan who together formed the Ink and Imagination team and won the Tournament of Minds Arts category. Tournament of Minds is an academic competition focused on collaborative problem-solving and critical thinking. Team Ink and Imagination worked together to create a dramatic performance outlining their solution to an open-ended, long-term challenge in one of four disciplines: STEM; Language Literature; The Arts; and Social Sciences. Congratulations to the team on their success.

I congratulate the recipients of my Larrakeyah Primary School citizenship awards: Isabella Samiotis for consistently displaying the school values; Sienna Frier who has been outstanding as a house captain and in Quest, showing initiative and enthusiasm in everything she does; and Sravya Lohani for consistently showing kindness and consideration towards her peers and teachers.

Finally for Larrakeyah Primary School, I congratulate Ashleigh Church, nominated as a finalist for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year in the NT World Teachers' Day Awards, which is to be announced on 31 October. It will be exciting if she takes home that award.

Small business is the backbone of the Territory economy. As the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations as well as the Member for Port Darwin I am doubly excited to congratulate the following businesses that were recently recognised at the NT Small Business Awards: Blooms The Chemist Woolworths for Best Pharmacy; Charlie's of Darwin for Best Pubs and Bar; Diamond Barbers for Best Barber; Hanuman Restaurant for Best Restaurant; Kabuki Hairdressers for Best Hairdresser and Business of the Year; Mbantua Gallery for Outstanding Indigenous Art, Crafts and Gifts; Moraitis Consulting for Outstanding Consultant; Paspaley Pearls for Best Jewellery Store; Pink Chopstix/Jiayao Lin for Business Person of the Year; Stomp Shoes for Best Fashion Shop; and Top End Women's Legal Services for Outstanding Legal Service.

I was also pleased to recently attend the NT Export and Business Awards with the Chief Minister, and I congratulate all the nominees and finalists. Hosted by the NT Chamber of Commerce, the awards were a fantastic celebration of Territory entrepreneurship and business success. Congratulations to the recipients of the business awards: Mikaela Bridge for Outstanding Customer Service for an Individual; Poké Ola for Outstanding Customer Service – Small Business; Purple Support for Outstanding Customer Service – Medium & Large Business; Council on the Ageing NT (COTA NT) for Outstanding Customer Service – Not for Profit; NC Electrical & Air Conditioning for Excellence in Business – Small Business; Coleman's Ink/More Than Print for Excellence in Business – Medium & Large; Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation for Excellence in Business – Not for Profit; Darwin Youth Services for Excellence in Business – Corporate Social Responsibility; NORSTA North for Excellence in Business – Manufacturing and Marine Industries – Small Business; NT Link for Excellence in Business – Manufacturing and Marine Industries – Medium & Large Business; Evora Care for Excellence in Business – Outstanding New Start-Up; Alice Springs Show for Excellence in Business – Best Community Event or Business Collaboration; Nighthawk Transport for Excellence in Business – Logistics and Supply Chain; and Alice Springs Convention Centre for Excellence in Business – Business Events and/or Trade Delegations.

I congratulate the 2025 NT Export Awards winners who will represent the Territory at the national awards in November this year: Australian Cattle Enterprises for Agribusiness, Food and Beverage; Brindle Films for Creative Industries; Ikuntji Artists for First Nations; Alana Kaye College for International Education and Training; Asia Pacific Aircraft Storage for Regional Exporter; Cycad International for Small Business; and SPEE3D for Technologies.

Overall winners were: Poké Ola for NT Chamber of Commerce President's Customer Service Business of the Year; Coleman's Ink/More Than Print for the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations' Northern Territory Business of the Year; and Brindle Films for the Chief Minister's Northern Territory Exporter of the Year.

The Territory is in excellent hands with all those businesses advocating for us and showing the rest of the country what we can do.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I missed out on delivering my First Home Owner Grant Amendment (Extension of Scheme) Bill speech, so I will do that this evening.

After eight years of Labor government we saw rocketing government debt, a sluggish economy and little to no population growth. The residential construction industry was an afterthought for Labor.

Unlike the former Labor government the CLP is delivering real solutions to fix this problem and get more Territorians into their own homes. Labor was all talk and no action for eight years. It took the CLP less than 100 days to start fixing the problem by offering the most generous home ownership grants in the country. Those grants are just the start of the CLP's mandate to rebuild the economy that died under eight years of Labor. We took that plan to the election.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 5; quorum. I want clarity because there were some changes to the sessional orders. There needs to be 10 members in the Chamber.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will do a quick count.

Mr YOUNG: One just walked in, so it is back to 10, but there were nine. Is it correct that government members need to ensure there are 10 members?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: A quorum is now re-established, thank you. Continue.

Mrs HERSEY: I am proud to be part of a government that has delivered the most generous home ownership scheme in the country. The latest CommSec State of the States report proves what Territorians are seeing under the Finocchiaro CLP government; the Territory is on the move, delivering growth, opportunity and a strong future.

Under the CLP the Northern Territory is leading the nation on population growth—a key driver of economic strength and lifestyle—and recording the fastest economic growth in Australia at 10.2%. This is in stark contrast to the legacy that Labor left the Territory, with the weakest economy in the nation and no plan to fix it.

The Territory has climbed from fifth to third in overall rankings in the CommSec report, driven by robust business investment and construction activity. This indicates the confidence Territorians have to build their first home in the Territory and that confidence allows businesses to put on more staff and grow.

After one year of the HomeGrown Territory Grant program we are building on more than 1,000 successful applications and are extending the $50,000 First Home Owner Grant and the $30,000 FreshStart New Home Grant.

As of 22 September 2025, $18.79m has been paid or approved for payment. The $50,000 First Home Owner Grant for new builds has the highest payment amount, with $9m paid or approved. With a 42.4% increase in dwelling starts over the last year this government is rebuilding our economy brick by brick. The CLP is turning around the Territory's economy and changing lives with more than 250 new builds, and counting, in the pipeline.

Last October our government took real action so that thousands of Territorians, no matter where they live, had a chance to call their home their own. This October we are acting again so that all Territorians can build their dream home. By expanding the scheme we are giving certainty by allowing more time for potential first homebuyers to save a deposit, find the right block of land and build.

In Katherine my colleagues and I visited the new Casuarina Park stage 3 development by Downes Graderways, a long-term Katherine family with years of experience building and maintaining roads and now delivering stages 1, 2 and 3 of the Casuarina development.

We are giving developers and the residential construction industry certainty and the confidence to ramp up their operations. Whether you are the builder, chippie, sparkie or plumber this means more work for businesses in regions like mine.
The Department of Treasury and Finance review found that 85% of grant recipients were millennials or younger, showing the program is helping younger families to get their foot on the property ladder.

As the Minister for Education and Training, I note we have committed to a target of having 75% of teachers on permanent contracts by 2027. I imagine that some of them may be accessing the First Home Owner Grant. I am proud to be part of a government that is continuing our first home ownership dream.

To complement our homeowner grant we need the federal government to step up and increase the restrictive $600,000 cap for first homebuyers to $850,000 under its new low-deposit home loan scheme. At a time when the CLP government is offering the most attractive home ownership incentives, Labor's Luke Gosling, the Member for Solomon, and Marion Scrymgour, the Member for Lingiari, failed the Territory by not getting a commitment from the federal government to increase the cap. In the lead-up to the last election federal

Labor promised increased caps on property prices for its low-deposit home loan scheme for every state and territory except the Northern Territory.

In the new suburb of Asche a four-bedroom house-and-land package costs $695,000. Labor's new scheme locks out Territorians. Where were the Members for Solomon and Lingiari standing up for us? If the Member for Solomon was as obsessed with home ownership as he was with Aldi the federal government would match our government's commitment to home ownership by ensuring federal schemes reflect the reality we face in the Territory.

A benefit of more Territorians building and owning their home is an increase in the availability of rentals. When a young couple moves out of a rental property and into their own home it adds to the housing supply and frees up a rental. More housing supply drives down the cost of rents—unlike what the Member for Johnston said today. Extending this scheme supports first homeowners and renters alike.

I will speak about a great local business. Earlier in the year I went to the suburb of Asche for a 'try a trade' day hosted by local Larrakia development group AKJ Services. Owners Jess and Antal have five young children. Speaking to the developers this morning I learned that 137 blocks have been sold in stages 1 to 4, which is fantastic. There are only 35 blocks left in stage 5, with estimations they will be sold by early December.

A lot of people in the Asche development potentially would have taken up the first homebuyers' scheme that we have been supporting. Last October the CLP took real action so that thousands of Territorians, no matter when they live, have the chance to own their home.

Casuarina Park stage 3 has started in Katherine. Twenty-eight people took up the $10,000 First Home Owner Grant for an established house while only one accessed the $50,000 First Home Owner Grant. Hopefully, by extending the $50,000 grant for the next year more people will take it up.

There was a conversation about social and affordable housing and what we were or were not doing in that space. The $50m Social Housing Accelerator Payment funded by the Australian Government is being delivered by the NT Government.

Eight homes are being built in Katherine: five on Bradshaw Crescent; one on Casuarina Street; and two on Maluka Road. These works engage local contractors, including Greenspace Group Pty Ltd, LA Build Pty Ltd, DICE Australia Pty Ltd and Katherine Constructions, which is a company run by Pat Hill. Pat has put on an extra apprentice to allow for the extra building work and development, which is a great thing for people in our area. It is great for kids who want to go from school into an apprenticeship. My children all went into apprenticeships and got their trade qualifications, and it is a great pathway for them. The other contractors are Blueprint NT Pty Ltd and Centrebuild Pty Ltd.

There are two of those houses being built in the Top End; eight in Big Rivers; three in the Barkly in Tennant Creek; and three in Central Australia.

I wanted to put that on record because I missed the jump this afternoon.

Our first homeowner scheme is great, particularly the $50,000 grant. We are not just supporting people getting into their own home; we are also supporting those in social housing. We are not a government that applies a one-size-fits-all approach. We are making sure that we look after all people in the community, whether they are on a low income and need social or affordable housing or are moving into their own homes.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): [By leave, the member spoke in French and self-interpreted in English.]

Mr Deputy Speaker, on 6 September I had the privilege to badly speak French and represent the Chief Minister at the 40th anniversary of Alliance Francaise and its inaugural French Festival.

I will speak briefly—sketchily—in French today because the next time we have a mission like this we should probably send the Member for Drysdale, whose daughters speak much better French than I do. However, I am pleased to report that there were no diplomatic incidents on this occasion.

We were blessed with the presence of His Excellency Mr Pierre-Andre Imbert, the Ambassador of France to Australia. It was a wonderful atmosphere with amazing food and beverages—such as duck confit sliders, of which I ate far too many—quality entertainment, beautiful face painting, baguette-based comedy, the Zilwa Band and DJ Mathilde. I must thank Clement and Ingrid Bresson and their delightful young son, Emile, who kept me entertained all night. It was a fantastic event.

French-speaking people have been in the Northern Territory for a long time. Some of them come from places we would not necessarily think of straightaway such as Mauritius, Morocco, Senegal and Quebec in Canada. It was, overall, a stupendous event.

[French spoken.]

Moving from French to Italian, it was likewise a great privilege to represent the Chief Minister at Brown's Mart on 1 October to witness the premiere of Lisa Pellegrino's *We Keep Everything*. This beautiful production shared the Pellegrino family story. Some of you will know Lisa as a former media personality here, and her sister is also something of a chanteuse who is seen all over the place.

Migrant stories are not heard as often as I wish they were when I was growing up here. To have something like that production was a significant contribution not only to art but also to social cohesion.

It was a special evening to be a part of. It was a great crowd of eminent Territorians and patrons of the arts and theatre. I was privileged to be there amongst them all. It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there and share your story, let alone in a one-person production—a one-woman show—and I was chuffed to be there.

It also takes courage to engage in lifelong learning and professional development. I was pleased to be at the First Circles Leadership Program graduation at the Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network, accompanied by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the minister for Education, the Opposition Leader and the Member for Blain. I am committed to professional development and the process of trying to keep learning throughout your life. It is important that we celebrate these Indigenous leaders. Our Territory needs more leaders. If anyone has not seen the event brochure they should because it is a great little read to find out about people who graduated from the last program and all the things they are involved in.

To Stacey Davis, Veronica Peters, Terrence Wilson, Selma Smiler, Casey Smiler, Simone Baker, Zelda Dhamarrandji, Patricia Puruntatameri, Lateesha Coombes, Kevin Dumoo and Corben Mudjandi, congratulations on graduating that night. It was a wonderful event. A special mention goes to Corben for his killer maroon jacket. That guy knows how to dress; he was best dressed on the night. Thank you to NTIBN for the deadly music, warm hospitality and the delicious buffet, which I destroyed.

The following day we were privileged to celebrate health workers at the NT Mental Health Week Awards held at Parliament House. The Minister for Health; the assistant minister for Health, Mr Deputy Speaker; the Member for Fannie Bay; the new Lord Mayor; and, most importantly, advocates and practitioners for good mental health were there. It was wonderful to collectively recognise our shared commitment to good mental health.

I give a shout-out to Geoff Radford, head of the Mental Health Coalition, for his stewardship and advocacy in this space. Geoff is a constituent of mine in Woolner. From the first time that I met him on my doorstep, he has always been banging down my door to prosecute the case for better mental health, providing data, literature and information. I greatly appreciate his indefatigable commitment to mental health.

It would be remiss of me not to mention my colleagues, the Members for Fannie Bay and Port Darwin, who did the lion's share of the work in organising our Darwin community movie night. Everybody enjoyed watching *Garfield* in the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens and we raised a tidy sum of money for the Starlight Foundation. There was great attendance, great family fun and some footy; I managed to kick a football and not stack it, which was encouraging. The Waratahs people were nice to me about that. I was delighted to be a part of it, so thanks to my colleagues in that regard.

Over the last year my community has very much become Dinah Beach. That is where the good people who I spend my time with increasingly are, particularly on a Wednesday night for chicken wings, as you all know. I was honoured to be there on 5 October to be re-elected the patron of Dinah Beach for another year. We used the opportunity and the rent-a-crowd that we got post AGM to put on—in the spirit of old-time Darwin—a bit of sunset jazz. It was fun to do a gig out there again.

As many of you may recall, Fong Lim has lots of Defence and Defence-adjunct precincts such as Eaton, Coonawarra, Winnellie, Berrimah and Wishart. It is nice to have a connection with Defence. Throughout the year I have been working with the Royal Australian Navy, which has been setting up a band and a new ensemble, and it has been wonderful to gig with them. When they are not in white uniforms they are called the Noteheads. It was the patron and the Noteheads doing sunset jazz which was tonnes of fun. I look forward to doing several more performances with them in the lead-up to Christmas at Dinah Beach and beyond for anybody who wants to hear my best impersonation of Michael Buble.

Speaking of great things at Dinah Beach, it would be remiss not to mention duck laksa. This year I took a photo of duck laksa and put it on social media. It smashed all my engagement records, which is testament to the fact that food is a great binding force for all of us. I encourage all parliamentarians—for those of you who somehow have not already had a laksa—to get out there and get some laksa into you this October. Check out darwinlaksafestival.com.au if you have not already because it has a lot of fascinating information—as well as the league tables—and it is great to learn about all the bits and pieces of the laksa lifestyle. The Territory lifestyle is laksa lifestyle; it is synonymous with laksa, and we all know that.

If you read the site you would note that laksa itself is a lovechild of a dish. It represents fusion and the melting pot; it is an expression of multiculturalism for us. We do a lot of things in here, and I just hope that we can all invest in diversity, multiculturalism and the community here—food and beyond. All the best things are done when you break bread together, I find. I encourage all parliamentarians to snap up a laksa while you still can.

On Friday night I was slightly in the wrong place—in the sense that I happened to miss all my colleagues at the Chief Minister's Awards—but I was somewhere worthwhile. I was at the Palmerston Recreation Centre, where the Darwin Symphony Orchestra has been doing a concert—last year and this year—with a view to bringing music to the people. That is important. There was a great crowd and beautiful music, and the markets were on in the background.

We were lucky that night to have the first conducting performance by the new Artistic Director of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, Richard Mills AO. For anyone who does not know who he is, he is a big dog. He is a serious heavyweight in Australian music; he was the head of Opera Australia for a period, and it is a real coup for the Northern Territory that he came up here and is conducting the orchestra. It was a great privilege to see him conduct the orchestra, communicate with everyone and teach everybody about what they were doing. There was tonnes to learn.

The orchestra did wonderful bits of Bizet. It was a great program featuring, I might add, Aya Smith who did great solo work. It is extremely rousing to hear the *Superman* theme—John Williams' music—played live for you. If you ever get the opportunity, try to check it out because it is fantastic. As I have said before, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra is not some elitist bourgeois nonsense. Sometimes it plays arty music, but it is a community orchestra and it plays music for the people. I encourage all of you to get out there, grab yourself a laksa and get to the next Darwin Symphony Orchestra concert when you can.

With that, I look forward to Christmas events forthcoming.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, on 3 October the Northern Territory lost one of its true tourism pioneers, Werner Sarny. His funeral and celebration of life were today. Many of us who would have liked to be in Katherine for the funeral could not make it due to the Assembly sitting, so I will talk about him this evening.

Werner built a remarkable life here after arriving from Austria in the late 1950s. He made Katherine his home and through hard work, vision and determination helped put the town on the map.

From his early days running tours at Nitmiluk Gorge to building Travel North, the Paraway Motel, Springvale Homestead and the BP service station Werner turned his love for the Territory into a lifetime of contribution. For more than 50 years he welcomed visitors, created jobs and showcased the heart of the Top End. Even after floods and setbacks he never gave up on Katherine.

His dedication to service and community earned him the Tourism Minister's Award for Excellence, the Qantas Award for Outstanding Contribution and in 2000 the Order of Australia.

His daughter Jackie said that he was proud of what he built, grateful to be embraced as a Territorian and deeply committed to his family. That sentiment says it all—Werner Sarny embodied the Territory spirit.

On behalf of the Finocchiaro CLP government I extend condolences to his daughters, Monica, Natalie and Jackie, and to all who knew and loved him. His legacy lives on in the town he helped shape and in the industry that still benefits from his hard work.

On Saturday 18 October I attended the NT Breast Cancer Voice Pink Morning Tea fundraising event. There was a huge crowd at Cazalys Palmerston. I make special mention of Rachel from Cazalys who did a great job gathering everyone and putting on an amazing display of high tea delicacies. The tables were long and so were the trays of food.

NT Breast Cancer Voice does a wonderful job of raising funds for services for women going through a breast cancer journey as well as awareness. Breast cancer can be treated early, so if you check your breasts regularly—you know what to look for because you have learned—you can get on to treatment quickly.

Judy Smith is a stalwart of NT Breast Cancer Voice. She has been on the committee for a long time. Her vision is to bring new members onto the committee so that she can pass on her legacy to younger people. I can tell you that she is doing that, with people involved in the event like Sarah and Sheridan, who are breast cancer survivors who spoke emotionally about their journey. We laughed and cried with them and our hearts were warmed with their stories. Those two young ladies have taken up roles on the committee as volunteers and are dedicated, so they will continue Judy's legacy. Well done to Judy, Sarah and Sheridan.

Thank you to Cassie Valastro, the master of ceremonies who shared stories at the event at Cazalys Palmerston.

Another person to step in was the wonderful Marina Mossman, a local legend and chaplain at Royal Darwin Hospital. She helped with the auction which had a number of items, donations, hampers and gift vouchers.

Two special items auctioned were the Member for Blain, Matthew Kerle, and the Member for Drysdale, Clinton Howe. The boys loved the event more than the people attending because they got to showcase their talents. I say to my colleagues—who are probably cringing at the thought of those two auctioning themselves—it was tasteful. There was nothing unruly; it was wonderful and everybody at the event loved it. Matthew even proposed turning his offer to have lunch with a couple of friends into doing duties around the house, such as lawnmowing or cleaning. I thought, 'I am almost half keen. I will could the lawns mowed.' I did not manage to be successful. Penni LaSette successfully bid to have lunch with Matthew. Thevi Chellah from Palmerston Senior College outbid everybody else to win the Member for Drysdale. My understanding is that they are having morning tea. Is that right?

Mr Howe: Another event—another fundraiser.

Ms BOOTHBY: Another fundraiser—of course; Thevi is all about the fundraiser so that is fantastic.

Well done to everybody who came along to that and all the organisers. It was a special event.

On the theme of breast cancer, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. There are other fundraisers coming up in Palmerston, including Go Pink for a Cure hosted by Sarah Passalick from Mix 104.9. That will be a high tea to raise money for the National Breast Cancer Foundation on 8 November at the Palmerston Game Fishing Club. The Palmerston Magpies Football Club will host a Pink Ribbon morning tea fundraising event at Cazalys which is also on 8 November. Everyone at Palmerston will have to go to lots of functions on the eighth. All funds go towards the National Breast Cancer Foundation. Both events will do a fantastic job of fundraising. Breast cancer touches many people, not just women but also their families and friends. I congratulate all the people involved in those events.

Last weekend I attended the Durga Puja and Cultural Night at Malak Harmony Hall. It was a fabulous event put on by the Puja and Cultural Association of NT (PACANT). I thank the organisers, committee and participants for that special experience. The Member for Sanderson—who is also the Minister for Multicultural Affairs—and the Member for Casuarina came along. We thoroughly enjoyed this night.

The committee does a fabulous job and put on extraordinary acts. There were performances, dances and interpretive dances to explain the gods of the Durga Puja. It was entertaining. Khoda Patel sat next to me helping explain all the different gods. Apparently he is named after a god, which I find fascinating. Every time I go to an event I learn something new, which I enjoy.

I give a big thank you to President Dr Swadhin Paul; Vice President Pritom Paul; General Secretary Debabroto Roy; Treasurer Tapu Saha; Cultural Coordinator Dr Madhury Roy; choreographers Sarbani Chowdhury and Arpita Kundu, well done to you two because it was amazing; Liton Das did all the decorations and it was a beautifully decorated hall; and Sourav Nandi for IT support. Wow! They did a good job because there was a lot of music and singing. It was amazing. Thank you to all the people at PACANT.

The Members for Blain and Drysdale and I attended Navratri 2025 at the Palmerston Recreation Centre a couple of Saturday nights ago. It was amazing. There were hundreds of people from all over Palmerston and, I am sure, Darwin. They were all in the recreation centre, which is a massive building, dressed up to the nines and looking beautiful in traditional Gujarati outfits. They danced for hours and hours, in sync and in line. It was fantastic. There were similar moves that changed every few songs, maybe 10 songs. It was

intense. We all had a little dance. The Member for Drysdale had his family there, and we got to take the girls up for a dance. We loved the evening.

A big thank you goes to Hiranch Patel and his committee and the GCAD family. That is what they like to be known as because it is not just committee members; it is the whole community from the Gujarati Cultural Association of Darwin Inc. They do an amazing job. This is not the only event they have, but this one is special. The Navratri is well known worldwide. In India when it is celebrated there are hundreds of thousands of people dancing all night for nine days. It is phenomenal. Well done to all the GCAD family.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, as assistant minister for the Department of Corporate and Digital Development, I congratulate the Workforce Services HR service centre.

Last Friday night I attended the Chief Minister's Awards with my government colleagues. It was a fantastic night celebrating the hard work of the Northern Territory Public Sector. There was a lot of competition for some of those awards, and well-deserved awards they were.

I will speak about the award that went to the Department of Corporate and Digital Development, which was the Spirit of the Territory Award. The panel judge, Ms Samantha Livesley, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of People, Sport and Culture, announced the winner, which was the Workforce Services HR service centre in the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. It did a fantastic job. I was there with Minister Burgoyne, and together we stood on stage with the team as they accepted the award for their hard work. Well done, team.

I congratulate the new principal of the soon-to-be Rosebery High School, Kristi Beynon. Kristi has been Head of Campus (Years 7 to 9) of the Rosebery campus of Palmerston College and has held this position since July 2024. Prior to this she had several senior roles in the Department of Education and Training, including Director of School Improvement, Acting Senior Director of Education for East Arnhem Region and Assistant Principal at Dripstone Middle School and Centralian Middle School. Congratulations, Kristi.

I have met Kristi several times attending assemblies at the Rosebery campus of Palmerston College, and I have been impressed by her professionalism and work ethic. I look forward to working with her as the principal of the new Rosebery High School. Thank you, Kristi.

I recently attended the annual general meeting of Neighbourhood Watch NT with the Member for Drysdale. We witnessed the board members being voted into their positions. Thank you, CEO Veronica Larson and—she has a few titles, but I call her the jack of all trades—Ally Slack, the executive officer who helps out and does many amazing things. They are the staff members and do a fantastic job.

Congratulations to incoming Chair Ruth Palmer; Deputy Chair Fletcher Austin; Treasurer Lincoln Van Der Zwaag; Secretary Bayden Corney; Katherine Regional Coordinator Jenny Duggan; LGANT (Local Government Association of the Northern Territory) representative Dan Shane; and NT Police representative Kylie Anderson; and general board members Jade Uzkuraitis, Shellie Lay, Ceah Evans and Melissa Beasley.

Neighbourhood Watch is a fantastic association that works hard alongside the Northern Territory Government to help keep Territorians safe, and we thank it for the work it is doing in rolling out the training program for the government's OC spray trial. We greatly appreciate all the work that it does.

The Member for Fong Lim mentioned this, but recently I attended, along with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the minister for Education and the Member for Fong Lim, the reception for the First Circles program celebrating the accomplishments of the participants. Opposition Leader Selena Uibo was also there. It was a fantastic event where we celebrated the accomplishments of many emerging leaders from remote communities all around the Territory.

I will call out a few: Stacey Davis and Veronica Peters from Santa Teresa; Terrence Wilson from Yuelamu; Selma Smiler from Kalkarindji; Casey Smiler and Simone Baker from Jilkminggan; Zelda Dhamarrandji from Elcho Island; Patricia Puruntatameri from Pirlangimpi; Lateesha Coombes from Wurrumiyanga; Kevin Dumoo from Wadeye; and Corben Mudjandi from Jabiru. I give a special shout-out to Corben who was wearing an epic burgundy suit that night and has a lot more flair for fashion than I do.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I have exciting news. The Arnhem electorate eco warrior competition for Arnhem students is now open. I remind all our schools that you can nominate one of your fantastic students for a project, an act or being aware of the environment—reduce, reuse and recycle. The prize money is $50 cash. I have been doing this for the last nine years as the local member, and nominations close on

15 November. All the schools have that information. If you know of an eco warrior in an Arnhem school, please nominate them so that we can do some judging. Some years it has been a hard competition, but it is great to recognise environmentally aware students in the Arnhem electorate.

Speaking of schools, I place on the record my appreciation of the many fantastic teachers and support staff across the Northern Territory in the upcoming World Teachers' Day NT Awards and the finalists who have been entered for their regions. I place my congratulations on the record for those who deliver amazing quality education and support for students in the Arnhem electorate. We had a lot of nominations from the Arnhem electorate, so I congratulate the following finalists.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year there is Aaron Mardi for Jilkminggan School; David Wapit Mununggurr from Gapuwiyak School; Hilda Ngalmi from Numbulwar School; and Roshania Lalara from Angurugu School.

For Early Childhood Educator of the Year there is Amanda Avila from Alyangula Area School; Madison Gadd from Angurugu School; and Philippa Stansell from Ngukurr School.

For Inclusion Educator of the Year there is Allison Wagstaff from Alyangula Area School; and Madison Gadd from Angurugu School. Madison is a finalist in two categories, which is exciting. Well done, Madison, for your achievement.

For Primary Educator of the Year there is Casey Taylor from Laynhapuy Homelands School, who is teaching at Gan Gan; and Roxine Smith from Gapuwiyak School. Awesome job, Roxine.

For the Leader in Education of the Year category there is Emmy McRae from Gapuwiyak School. There are quite a few nominations from Gapuwiyak School. Well done, Emmy.

For Principal of the Year there is Adam Cox from Bulman School—Adam has now moved on, but was nominated and had been at Bulman for quite a few years; it is good to see Adam recognised for his role there—and Genievieve Wild from Alyarrmandumanja Umbakumba School on Groote Eylandt. Well done to those nominees.

For the category of School Based Support Person of the Year there is Tracey Camfoo from Barunga School.

For Secondary Educator of the Year there is Chris Hudson—or Huddo as everyone calls him—from Gapuwiyak School.

For Corporate Based Support Person of the Year there is Di Scannell and Lyndie Watson from the Big Rivers office; and Rochelle Hunt, Tamika Chin and Tegan Aldridge from the East Arnhem office.

Congratulations to all the finalists, particularly those people who deliver services in and around the Arnhem electorate. There is a lot of excitement for each of those nominations. People who work in schools do not do it for any of the recognition, but it is fantastic that we have an opportunity to recognise those hardworking educators and staff who support the future of tomorrow—our Territory kids.

I also place on the record information for the Member for Brennan, the Attorney-General. I noticed that in an answer to a question from the Member for Mulka today she was unaware of some of the key areas of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

I want to make sure that the Attorney-General knows of her duty in the bipartisan agreement signed between the CLP and the former Labor government. The Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement runs from 2021 to 2027, so there are a couple of years left to hopefully get the CLP across this. The Member for Barkly, who was the shadow Attorney-General at the time, signed the agreement. I am sure he is aware, but unfortunately it does not sound as though the Member for Brennan knows what is in the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. You would think that would be a key part of her role, considering 90% of men and 80% of women in our prisons are Aboriginal Territorians. The Chief Minister signed that bipartisan agreement when she was the Opposition Leader; therefore, it should have the same weight of importance with the CLP government; which is already just over a year into its role.

I will enlighten the Attorney-General on some of the duties and responsibilities to implement and support the Aboriginal Justice Agreement with a bipartisan approach. Its aims are:

1. Reduce offending and imprisonment of Aboriginal Territorians.

2. Engage and support Aboriginal leadership.

3. Improve justice responses and services for Aboriginal Territorians.

This is probably where the Attorney-General will benefit the most, because on page 22 of 28, outlined under Aim Three, are some of the responsibilities, commitments and actions that are included in the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. I will go through some of them and do a bit of homework on behalf of the Attorney-General so that she knows what some of her responsibilities are. Under 'Commitments' it has:

> *Identify and eliminate systemic racism in government agencies and contracted service providers that directly or indirectly discriminate against Aboriginal Territorians engaged in the justice system.*

That is where the Member for Mulka's question came from earlier; I have not heard a more horrible response to an important question in this Assembly than I did today from the Attorney-General.

Under 'Actions' in bold print on page 22 it has:

> *Identify and eliminate systemic racism in government agencies and contracted service providers that directly or indirectly discriminate against Aboriginal Territorians engaged in the justice system.*
>
> - *Review Northern Territory Government agencies and their contracted service providers to identify systemic racism and options for reform.*
>
> - *Develop and implement a Northern Territory-wide campaign against racism that impacts on Aboriginal people engaged in the justice system.*

It was alarming that the Attorney-General, in her response to the Member for Mulka's question during Question Time, was not aware of Aim Three of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which specifically focuses on systemic racism as a key aim and deliverable.

The actions set out in the AJA were developed over a lengthy time. Many people know that it is one of the most, if not the best, consulted document in Northern Territory Government history. There were more than 150 consultations across the Northern Territory. There was input from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians, service providers, government, not-for-profit organisations, community members and, dare I say, experts in the field of justice. That work culminated in the important Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

I would like to think it is naivety on the part of the Attorney-General, but having been in her role for 14 months it gives me grave concern that this is not a priority. Her not knowing one of the key aims and responsibilities of the AJA gives me deep concern about the lack of attention, care, responsibility and accountability. It concerns me that the Attorney-General will not be doing the job tasked to her on behalf of Territorians, particularly the work that was agreed to be bipartisan in approach when the CLP was in opposition. The fact that the Attorney-General is not aware of that important reform that sits in her responsibility under her department is concerning. I hope that she gets a briefing to understand what those aims, commitments, outcomes and actions are focused on achieving.
The blueprint has been done. If we are to see any type of reform to improve justice in the Northern Territory the CLP only has to go through and follow what is there, making sure that it pays care and attention to that detail and be genuine in its response to justice reform. The CLP must make sure that the Northern Territory is a leader in the justice space rather than what we see now—failing under the Closing the Gap targets.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.