# Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



# Parliamentary Record
# Debates and Questions



Thursday 28 November 2024

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
## Members' Satisfaction Survey

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, please remember to complete your satisfaction surveys distributed yesterday by the Legislative Assembly. Your feedback will help shape how the department delivers it services.

## MOTION
## 50th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- notes that 25 December 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, which devastated Darwin and surrounding areas on Christmas 1974, leading to the loss of 66 lives as well as countless homes and businesses

- acknowledges the significant response provided by so many of the Northern Territory community, including healthcare workers, emergency services personnel, Darwin residents and the people of the other towns and cities in the Northern Territory who worked tirelessly to assist those directly impacted

- notes the contribution of members of the First Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory for the role they played in the reconstruction of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy

- celebrates the vibrant, diverse and resilient community Darwin has become over the last 50 years.

Today we remember a defining moment in the history of the Northern Territory. This is a story of devastation, survival, heartbreak and, most importantly, resilience.

It has been 50 years since Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin in the early hours of Christmas Day in 1974. Cyclone Tracy was unlike anything Australians had seen before. Wind gusts over 217 kilometres per hour were recorded before the instruments failed. There was torrential rain and storm surges. It tore through Darwin, leaving our city unrecognisable.

While we acknowledge the profound impact of that day—66 lives were tragically lost and our city left in ruins—we also reflect on the determination of the people of Darwin and the incredible efforts that transformed devastation into renewal.

Today is a time to honour what was lost and what was rebuilt. Christmas is meant to be a time of joy spent with families and loved ones, but Christmas Eve in 1974 in Darwin was different. The winds were building, the sky was darkening and the thick sense of unease was settling in across the city. By the early hours of Christmas Day when Santa should have been visiting, the category 4 cyclone struck our city.

For those who lived through it, the memories are vivid. Many described the roar of the wind as sounding like a freight train passing through their living rooms. Others have spoken of walls shattering, roofs flying and water surging into their homes. Survivors huddled in bathtubs, under tables and in cupboards clinging to one another as their world collapsed around them.

Tragically, 66 lives were lost—mothers, fathers, children, friends, family and neighbours. Thousands were injured, and tens of thousands were left homeless. The cyclone destroyed more than 70% of Darwin's buildings and essential infrastructure, leaving the city without power, water or sanitation.

In the hours that followed, the full scale of destruction became clear. Homes were reduced to rubble; cars and trees had been tossed like unwanted toys; and in every face there was shock—a collective grief—for what had been lost and uncertainty about what lies ahead.

Despite the devastation, the spirit of Darwin was unbroken. Neighbours became each other's lifeline, sharing what little food and shelter remained. Volunteers and emergency workers arrived, bringing supplies, expertise and compassion.

The scale of the evacuation that followed was unprecedented in Australia's history. More than 36,000 people were airlifted to safety, many with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Cities across the nation

opened their doors to the people of Darwin, providing shelter, food and comfort. The national response was extraordinary. Australians generously donated money, clothes and even homes to house families. Red Cross teams worked tirelessly. The military set up temporary medical facilities and shelters. As news of the disaster spread, the phrase, 'We are all Territorians' resonated across the country.

In the wake of the destruction, it would have been easy to walk away and declare Darwin lost, but that is not who we are. Instead, those who stayed chose to rebuild not just to restore what was lost but to create something even better.

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission established by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in early 1975 undertook an enormous challenge with a mandate to rebuild the city within five years. They accomplished it in just over three. This was no simple reconstruction; roads, schools and hospitals were rebuilt from the ground up. New homes were designed to withstand future cyclones with roofs tied to foundations and walls reinforced to protect against flying debris. The city's port and airport were modernised, ensuring Darwin could once again serve as a vital hub for trade and transportation.

With the enormous rebuild came an influx of new Territorians, those who came to help and never left. In 1978 Darwin's population had returned to pre-Tracy levels, but more than that Darwin had been transformed into a city designed for the future, a symbol of resilience and determination.

Cyclone Tracy taught us many lessons, and its legacy continues to shape our lives today. The building codes introduced after 1974 became a national standard, ensuring homes and businesses across Australia are better prepared to withstand natural disasters. When Cyclones Larry and Yasi, both stronger than Tracy, struck Queensland in the 2000s these codes saved countless lives. This is a direct legacy of the work done in Darwin, a gift of resilience to our entire nation.

Tracy also taught us the importance of preparedness, community spirit and the need to look out for one another in times of crisis. These lessons remain at the heart of Darwin's identity.

Today Darwin is a city transformed from a population of about 45,000 before the cyclone to more than 140,000 people. Our city has become a vibrant, diverse and innovative hub; a gateway to Asia; a leader in tourism and industry; and a place that welcomes all who come here. Our skyline is dotted with modern buildings that stand as a testament to our resilience. Our cultural festivals, art galleries and thriving markets showcase a rich heritage shaped by many cultures.

While we remember the devastation of Tracy, we also celebrate how far we have come. Darwin is no longer defined by Cyclone Tracy; it is defined by its people, spirit and vision for the future.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, let us take a moment to reflect. We honour those we lost. We pay tribute to those who rebuilt, including the First Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory and members who, just one month into their term, had to deal with a town in devastation and its people dispersed across the country. We celebrate the spirit of a city that refused to be defeated.

Darwin is not just a place; it is a story of resilience, courage and community. Darwin is also a feeling of belonging.

Fifty years ago Cyclone Tracy tested us in ways we could never have imagined, and we proved that together we are stronger than any cyclone or disaster. Let us carry that spirit forward, ensuring that Darwin remains a city of opportunity that is resilient and has hope for future generations to come.

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this important motion to the House.

We understand the great significance and weight of this discussion. It is especially heavy for the survivors of Cyclone Tracy and their families who have lived experience of this traumatic event. It shook the foundations of not only their lives, families, homes and community, but also the broader Northern Territory and Australia.

This year, 25 December marks the 50th anniversary of an event that changed the face of Darwin and our beloved Northern Territory forever. In the early hours of Christmas morning 1974, Darwin was struck by one of the most powerful cyclones in Australian history. Cyclone Tracy tore through our city with winds that exceeded 217 kilometres per hour and left destruction in its wake. Sixty-six lives were lost, thousands were injured and more than 36,000 people were left homeless in a city of just over 47,000.

Darwin and the surrounding area was unrecognisable and forever changed since that day 50 years ago. Cyclone Tracy swept through the city with unprecedented force, bringing destruction that was as swift as it was overwhelming, with 80% of the city devastated. At the time of Cyclone Tracy, the residents of Darwin—whether it was the original residents, the Larrakia people or the multitude of new multicultural Territorians who found themselves living in and around Darwin for different reasons—were affected by the same event.

For the 47,000 residents of Darwin, this was a catastrophic event unlike anything anyone had experienced. Cyclone Tracy did not discriminate. Its winds flattened homes, uprooted trees and turned lives upside down. For many Larrakia residents whose families had lived on this land for countless generations, the loss went beyond homes and belongings; it also disrupted cultural practices, songlines, access to sacred sites and community connections that had endured for millennia.

Darwin streets were filled with debris, homes were flattened and lives were shattered. There was no running water, sanitation and electricity; little shelter; and a high risk of disease outbreaks. The physical devastation was staggering, but the emotional toll ran even deeper.

However, amid the chaos, stories of courage, compassion and community emerged. We know some of those stories well today, and that spirit lives on. Neighbours became lifelines, strangers became friends and the spirit of humanity shone brightly in those dark days. Families shared shelter, food and comfort. The selflessness of many ensured that even in the face of overwhelming loss there was hope.

The response from across the country was extraordinary. Supplies, medical aid and volunteers poured into Darwin. Communities rallied, and the nation stood with the Northern Territory in solidarity. It was a powerful reminder that in times of crisis we are stronger when we are together.

The years that followed Cyclone Tracy were a testament to the resilience of the Darwin people and the broader Northern Territory community. Rebuilding a city is not an easy task, and from near-total destruction it was not taken lightly. Homes, schools and businesses all had to be reconstructed and start fresh. New safety measures and building codes, as the Chief Minister outlined, were introduced to ensure that such devastation would never happen again, not just in the Territory but across Australia.

Today our beautiful capital city of Darwin stands as a vibrant and modern city that we can be proud of. It is because of this determination and ingenuity of the people 50 years ago that we can enjoy this wonderful city.

Cyclone Tracy reshaped Darwin not just physically but emotionally, culturally and spiritually, leaving behind a legacy of resilience and renewal and a fresh sense of hope for the future of the Territory. As we commemorate this important 50th anniversary, we also honour those who were lost. Their memories live on in the hearts of families, friends, neighbours and colleagues with the stories that our Territory survivors continue to share across the community. This anniversary is not just about remembering a disaster; it is about celebrating community spirit, a Territory that refused to be defined by tragedy and crisis. It is about learning from the past, honouring those who came before us and carrying that strength into our future. Cyclone Tracy taught us many lessons about the power of nature, the importance of preparedness and the strength of the Northern Territory's community spirit.

As we face new challenges in an era of changing climate these lessons remain as relevant as ever. They remind us to respect the environment, to plan for resilience and to cherish the bonds that unite us all, especially in times of natural disasters. Today as we reflect on nearly the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, let us honour that past, embrace our present and look forward to a better future defined by unity. Let us remember that even in our darkest moments Territorians are always capable of extraordinary resilience. Darwin has a strong history and, as the Labor opposition believes, a strong future.

For time immemorial the Larrakia people have lived on this beautiful country. Darwin took the brunt of the attacks on Australia during World War II; each year we commemorate the Bombing of Darwin on 19 February. The most infamous period that shaped Darwin and the Territory we live in today is also considered to be Cyclone Tracy. We can look at the city and the surrounding area as a testament to the power of community coming together to rebuild what was lost. May we continue to honour the legacy of Cyclone Tracy, those who were lost, those who survived and the hard lessons that it taught the Territory for many years to come.

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, on Christmas Day 1974 Darwin and the Northern Territory changed forever. A song released in 1975 by Bill & Boyd described it best, and I remember being in primary school singing this song at our Christmas concert. My fellow students and I were not yet born during Cyclone Tracy, but as we sang, we watched an audience of parents who wept as they listened.

I remember that concert vividly as in the audience were my parents who lived through that awful night. With your indulgence I will read the words of that song for the record.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Would you sing it for us?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** No, thank you; I will leave the singing to the Member for Port Darwin.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Sorry to interrupt; please continue.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It goes:

*On Christmas Eve of '74 the warning sounded out*
*For all the broadcast stations, a great storm was near about*
*The boys and girls asleep in bed, tomorrow was the day*
*Their mums and dads all prayed the mighty storm would turn away*

*Christmas morning was a nightmare as Cyclone Tracy struck*
*It ripped apart the buildings like an atom bomb had struck*
*It twisted iron girders and it flattened all the trees*
*The might of such a cyclone must be seen to be believed*

*Many boats put out to sea, very few returned*
*Most were foundered on the rocks or in deep seas overturned*

*Australia was shocked and saddened as the news came through*
*The devastated city must be built anew*
*That suffering and heartbreak could happen in this way*
*A natural disaster could come on Christmas day*

*Santa never made it into Darwin*
*Disaster struck at dawn on Christmas day*
*Santa never made it into Darwin*
*A big wind came and blew the town away*

The population of Darwin was 47,000 in 1974. With 71 lives lost, 650 injured and more than 5,000 homes destroyed, it is no wonder so many Territorians are now sharing their stories as part of this 50th anniversary to remember Cyclone Tracy. When my mum heard that the Museum and Art Gallery in Darwin was pulling together cyclone survivor stories, she went in and was interviewed by Jared Archibald. I asked her to help me share her story for the parliament.

My mum and dad lived at the Bindaree Caravan Park in Berrimah. Dad was from north Queensland, so he knew that while in Darwin tropical storms and cyclones meant they should be sure their caravan was held down with ropes and star pickets well before the Wet Season. It turns out that was a wise move.

On 3 December 1974 there was a warning that Cyclone Selma was on the way, so many workers came home early that day to prepare their properties. Mum explained that there was a bit of rain, but the main winds did not affect Darwin, much to their relief. Then, on 24 December, there was a new warning of the approaching Cyclone Tracy. My dad was working on the other side of Darwin Harbour, and he ventured back to the caravan park again to prepare. He travelled on rough seas back to Darwin that afternoon.

When he got home, mum and dad packed away their Christmas tree and stowed everything they had loose around the place in the back of their car. After dinner, they went to sleep thinking that Tracy would be similar to Selma. They were prepared, nonetheless.

As the winds got stronger, they woke up and went around to all the other people in the caravan park, waking them up and getting everybody to go to the safety of the ablution block. Mum was sitting in a shower cubicle with others, including a 10-month-old baby boy. At midnight, it was definitely not safe to go outside. Some people were holding the main door closed to stop the wind blowing into the concrete block.

At about 3 am, the wind stopped. They took a peek outside and were alarmed at the mess the trees made, and all the clothes on the clotheslines were mangled. The silence was eerie. The sky was bright, even though it was the dead of the night.

Not long after they heard what they recount as sounding like a train coming. They quickly realised it was the sound of wind, so they rushed back to the ablution block. The short break in the wind was, of course, the eye of the cyclone. Much to the credit of those at the caravan park, they knew this and had braced themselves for the next onslaught of wind and rain.

Many in that ablution block were praying that the roof would not come off, but alas, it did. It came off with a frightening rip and a bang, and it went into the same direction as all the caravans. Everyone in the block was soaking wet, wearing just sleeping attire. Some of them had a raincoat on; I know my mum did. The little baby was still in his mother's arms and was wrapped in a big blanket.

There were men standing under the huge beam that was threatening to come down on top of them as it jiggled from one wall to another. By 6 am, the wind had subsided enough for everyone to venture outside. To their shock and amazement, they could see miles away over to the Coonawarra naval base because all the trees and infrastructure were gone.

There was no way of communicating with others, but some people used their cars to venture out to see their friends. They came back to the caravan park with horror stories of the destruction. My mum's boss at the time from Darwin foundries came by to check on her and said that there were many babies without formula. He was collecting any kind of milk products, and my parents offered evaporated milk to feed the babies.

The next visit they had was from the Army, saying that one person from each family could be taken to town to make one phone call. A bus collected people to go to town to get inoculations for typhoid and tetanus. They were also given fuel vouchers so they could drive out of town if possible—I believe they were encouraged to. My mum and dad drove out of town, and it took them weeks to drive to Innisfail which is where they were from. They stayed there for a few months before returning to Darwin. Darwin was home for them by then, and dad wanted to help rebuild Darwin after the cyclone; he had been a carpenter for decades.

Territorians rebuilt Darwin after Cyclone Tracy to be stronger and better equipped to deal with cyclones. The Territory spirit of community lives on after that terrible night. It is one of the reasons so many people returned to Darwin post-cyclone.

We had many cyclones since 1974, but I am genuinely appreciative of the lessons learned during Tracy. I pay tribute to those who did not make it but also to those who survived. We will never forget what Darwin went through on Christmas 1974. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, and we will never forget them.

**Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to put on the record some thoughts from a friend of mine. I will read out comments of my girlfriend. I told my her we were doing this motion for Cyclone Tracy, being 50 years ago this Christmas. I knew that she lived in Darwin. Lisa has willingly given me the story about her mother and father and the four kids stowing away throughout that storm.

This is Lil Politis' story in her words as she wrote them:

'We were moving house and had been cleaning before we took possession. The house looked lovely and fresh, and we moved in the night of Cyclone Tracy, Christmas Eve.

'I went shopping for Christmas and first heard about Cyclone Tracy—my daughter had the same name. Two women were speaking in the shops, and I overhead them. When I got home I asked my daughter if there was any news about the cyclone. She said, "Yes; it is all over the news on the TV."

'We unpacked the groceries; the freezer was full—well frozen—and the turkey was left in the oven to defrost. The ham was in the fridge.

'After dinner my husband, Bob, went to the Nightcliff Hotel and met up with friends. I thought I should take precautions. I wrapped the radio inside two pillows and lots of plastic and got all the candles and the torches out. They were ready from a previous cyclone warning that did not eventuate.

'Bob came home from the pub at 10 pm.'

I am not sure whether the Opposition Leader knows Lisa Dawes' parents, Bob from being around Katherine. Bob loved to have a drink. When I read through this I could not help thinking that this was typical of Bob to

be at the pub when Lil was there on Christmas Eve. Probably everyone was at the pub on Christmas Eve back then. I continue:

'He was saying that the pub crowd said the cyclone would not hit. I did not believe him. He went off to bed as he had one too many beers in celebrating Christmas.

'The weather was building up, so I filled up the bathtub with water and got the children to get dressed and put their shoes on. I stowed away as much as I could in the cupboards as I thought that would be the safest place.

'It was quite scary as we had four children to worry about and were not sure what to expect.'

Knowing the Member for Nelson's story and reading my friend's story, it is one of those triggers in life that you remember.

'The reports were more frequent in telling us what to do. We were in an elevated house in Rapid Creek with lots of trees. The wind was strong, and the house felt like it was swaying.

'At midnight Bob woke up and was sure we would be hit by the cyclone. We decided the safest place in the house was the passageway and pulled together two mattresses to give us more support. The laundry tubs and washing machine were full of water, so we had plenty.

'With a large rumble and flash of lightning the power went out. That is when it got really scary. We bunkered down and sat it out with one mattress on the ground and the other on top of us all. The first thing to come through one of the bedrooms was a big tree branch. We could hear the louvres breaking, and the wind was terrifying. To this day the sound of jets taking off reminds me of that night.

'The room at the Museum and Art Gallery has a replication of that noise, and I could never go into it because it made me cry. We could see out the windows as we huddled and saw a caravan rolling by. There was so much lightning that we could see all goings-on outside like daylight. We prayed. We sang. My husband and I argued, as I wanted to be down south for Christmas.'

The thing which makes it worse is I know my girlfriend's parents, who have both passed away, and it is typical of them.

'It was lovely to get to the eye of the storm when we all got up, went to the bathroom and had a drink. I decided we needed to move further up the passageway for greater protection. All was okay downstairs, but the car got a bit of damage. The eye passed, and the ferocity of the cyclone was again with us. Prayer was a comfort.'

My girlfriend says that she remembers her mum—I will pull myself together; sorry. I can remember Lisa telling me this story, and I can imagine, as a mother, hugging your children not knowing what was next.

'I was hugging them all so tight and singing loudly and praying.

'After a while it was nice to see daylight and know we had survived. We got up and went outside as other neighbours were out there. It looked like a bomb had hit Darwin. There was some guy going from home to home to see if there were any casualties.

'On Christmas Day the children helped me build a fire. We had tea, lamingtons and mince pies. I then got the kids to work. We built another fire to start drying things out. I washed all the clothes we found lying around and the sheets. I found the children's presents, and we had turkey cooked on the open fire and tried to make Christmas as reasonable as we could, considering.'

Those were the words of Lil, my girlfriend's mother. I can imagine being in that storm, as a mother, hugging your children, singing, praying and hoping you all come out alive.

I have been in MAGNT where they have the replica of that, and the sound is horrifying. As kids we lived in Rapid Creek, where the Member for Nelson used to live and where my girlfriend's family lived, and we had moved down south the year before, thank God, because there was not much left of our house.

Memories like this bring back so many thoughts, a bit like the flood does for me as well.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Health):** Madam Speaker, I reflect on the significant impact Cyclone Tracy had, influencing the fighting spirit and resilience that Territorians are made of.

The moment Tracy struck Darwin with such fury and force marked the beginning of a Territory-wide emergency response all along the track, including across my electorate of Barkly. The Northern Territory Archives Service holds incredible oral history pieces that tell many tales of bravery, resilience and compassion. One such story I want to share is the firsthand account of Tennant Creek local, Les Liddell, recounting the strength of community spirit that unfolded in Tennant Creek during a time of great need.

In the wake of Tracy's fury, the service clubs of Tennant Creek—the Lions Club and APEX—were called together to coordinate a relief effort. On Boxing Day at 9 am, Les and fellow service club members gathered at the CWA Hall to quickly identify roles, determine what was needed and figure out how to get food and supplies to Darwin. At that point, communication was almost non-existent, making it incredibly difficult to coordinate or commit to any actions with certainty.

Les and the good people of Tennant Creek did not let that stop them. They took matters into their own hands, mounted a loudspeaker in the back of a ute and drove through the streets of Tennant Creek letting everyone know about the meeting and urging them to contribute what they could. The community of Tennant Creek came through.

A registration division was set up to record evacuee details of who they were, where they came from, where they were headed and even their registration numbers. The registration desk became the first port of call to help evacuees process what happened to them, sharing their stories. Records indicate that the registration team ensured each person was given adequate time and empathy so that they could tell their stories to the person at the registration desk.

Once registered, people were directed to the CWA Hall in Tennant Creek, where a hot meal was waiting for them. They shared their experiences with the cooks or volunteers serving the meal. It was another opportunity for them to begin processing what they had been through. The third step was setting up a clothing distribution point at the Uniting Church and, finally, a billet allocation.

Les and his mates—through the loudspeaker in the back of the ute—toured the town asking for volunteers to open their homes to those in need. Again, the community of Tennant Creek came through. Community members volunteering to billet would collect their guests at the Uniting Church hall, take them home, feed them and provide a place to sleep for the night. The next morning the evacuees were ready to continue their journey south or east, thanks to the generosity of the community.

Les Liddell goes on to tell a story about a man who arrived in Tennant Creek clad only in his pyjamas. He told Les that he was in such shock in Darwin that he just jumped in his car and drove. Katherine was too close to Darwin, so he kept going until he reached Tennant Creek, where he could finally pull over and feel safe again. The townsfolk of Tennant Creek made him feel safe.

As the evacuees continued to arrive in Tennant Creek, the community was faced with the immense challenge of continuing to provide food, shelter and support. The situation was critical, and resources were stretched thin. Food was scarce; the Wet Season had already cut supplies from Mount Isa and Darwin.

In the midst of this chaos, something truly remarkable took place. The people of Warrabri, which we now know as Ali Curung, stepped forward in a way that left an indelible mark on the Tennant Creek community. Without being asked and without any outside direction, the Warrabri people went to their fields, harvested watermelon and rockmelon and delivered a truckload of fresh fruit to Tennant Creek. This was no small gesture; it was a powerful act of kindness. They brought a truckload of fresh food with a simple yet profound message: 'There you are. You need food for the people; here it is.' This act of kindness deserves to be remembered. It may not have been widely recorded in our history, but the generosity of the people of Warrabri (Ali Curung) helping their fellow Territorians in a time of need speaks volumes.

I am proud to share Les' story, as it embodies the spirit of the Barkly and Territory more broadly. Les' story speaks to the true meaning of community and compassion and what it means to stand together in time of crisis. As we continue to reflect on these difficult days, let us not forget the quiet heroes who rose to the occasion in their own way, ensuring no-one went without in the face of disaster.

On the weekend I was speaking to local Tennant Creek resident, Roddy Calvert, who is a life member of the CWA in the Northern Territory. She presented me with a book put together by the CWA which records a number of stories by Tennant Creek residents who were either in Darwin during the cyclone or who helped

during that time of need. I thank Roddy and Helen Kempe for their incredible work to put this book together. I seek leave to table this book so that it is on the *Parliamentary Record*.

Leave granted.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** Cyclone Tracy may have torn down the town, but she was possibly the catalyst for the growth of the heart, spirit and resilience that Territorians are made of. Thank you to Roddy and Helen and all the people of Tennant Creek for the incredible support they provided at a time of need.

**Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment):** Madam Speaker, I was not born when Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin, but the stories of survival and resilience we have heard this morning fill me with immense pride in the way Territorians came together in a time of need. I believe it is what being Territorian or Territory tough is all about.

Recently a group of people in Alice Springs recounted their tales of what they saw when the first Cyclone Tracy survivors arrived after making their way south. Former Mayor Damien Ryan spoke of seeing people in bathers and pyjamas as they stood in the opening of the first plane that made its way from Darwin. Many of them had only the clothes on their back, and some still had glass in their feet that needed to be seen to.

Former Connair Airlines pilot David Fredriksen—Freddo—and his colleague at the time, John Myers, recounted how they flew a DC-3 airplane from Darwin to Alice Springs. The two pilots reminisced about how the Alice Springs Airport was packed when they landed. Dozens had turned up early in the morning to try to help those who were on board. Ms Franca Fredriksen spoke about how the Alice Springs community rallied together and raised money for those affected in the Top End. From a population of 20,000 at the time, the town raised some $250,000 in cash and in-kind support. Ms Fredriksen recounted, 'Not bad for a little town'.

This again shows what is still true to this day. When those in our community are in need, our community rallies around to support them. I pay tribute to all those who assisted supporting those who found themselves without a home after Cyclone Tracy and came together to rebuild the Northern Territory. The strength of a community is not measured on how we react when everything is going along fine; it is how they react when the chips are down and the community is tested.

The Northern Territory has faced our share of tests over the years, but we are still here and will continue to support our community through the challenges we face into the future.

**Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri):** Madam Speaker, I recognise that on 25 December this year it will be the 50th anniversary of the devastation of Cyclone Tracy in Darwin.

My parents, Amos and Chatarina Helwend, with my older siblings and other family members went through this cyclone. They were extremely lucky to survive. They lived in a housing commission home at 9 Vaughton Place, Rapid Creek, and at the time my mother was four months pregnant with me. Commemorating this devastation has been controversial for many survivors, but I want that true Territory spirit and resilience to come through and take a moment to reflect on what happened that night.

Darwin had been through major cyclones before in January 1897 and March 1937. Darwin had also seen the devastation of the Bombing of Darwin in 1942, however, rebuilt.

The eve of Christmas that year was also the eve of the 23rd birthday of my older brother Simon Williams. I spoke to him recently, and he recalls that night being one that he will never forget. He told me that our dad and mum were preparing for the cyclone to arrive as they went to the shops on Christmas Eve and bought biscuits, rice and other food items. These were not our normal Christmas food goods, but food that could sustain the family if the cyclone crossed. My brother went on to tell me that all the reports were saying that the cyclone was moving away, but our dad had an instinct and left work early to get all his children to return home.

My parents had no phone at home, and there were no mobile phones then. Dad drove to each of his adult children's workplace or house to tell them all to come to our Rapid Creek home. My older sisters ignored the request, but my brothers took up the offer. My brother remembers that dad had just bought a new Holden Kingswood station wagon and that our other brother, Trevor, had also bought a new car. Our dad's beloved new car was wrecked during the cyclone, but the insurance paid out and, luckily enough, he got a new one. My brother recalls that the neighbour's roof blew off and only scratched his old bomb of a car; he was quite disappointed.

As the cyclone backtracked and hit land my parents and siblings huddled in their tiny bathroom and survived. The rain and wind outside was scary. Reports say that Tracy's centre crossed the coast near Fannie Bay, with the highest wind gusts of 217 kilometres per hour recorded at about 3.05 am at Darwin Airport. Apparently, the wind speed instrument failed at around 3.10 am, with the wind vane destroyed after the cyclone eye passed over.

My brother recalls losing his beloved guitar as it got smashed. For those who know him, guitars and singing are his life to this day. He said that the neighbour's house was decimated but ours was okay. My brothers could not return to their own homes as they were decimated, so they came back to live with my parents. He says fondly that our dad was smart, as he had prepared for the worst. That afternoon he had filled 44-gallon drums with water and bought a lot of dry goods.

In my maiden speech, I spoke of my father's previous ordeals of surviving the Bombing of Darwin in 1942 and drifting in the Indian Ocean after a torpedo sunk his navy ship in 1944. These two previous incidents made my dad resilient to disasters. He learned never to become complacent and that preparation was always the key to survival.

On Christmas Day my brother said that he woke up to his 23rd birthday which he would never forget. The family went to check on my sisters who were staying at Humpty Doo. One of my brothers-in-law, who was a chain smoker, had tried to prepare for the cyclone by buying as many cartons of smokes as he possibly could, but he forgot to buy matches or a lighter. They found him sitting on all the smokes—and I mean literally sitting on them, as he tried to protect them during the cyclone.

We had family at Berry Springs—the Gardner family—who housed everyone there for months, including their own large family and the Majid family. Because of that, we were not evacuated; however, many others had been.

My brother's boss wanted him to be closer to work, so he bought a caravan for him to live in onsite. He moved into that for some time. He worked for Lawrence & Hanson, which was extremely busy after the cyclone fulfilling government and private business wholesale electrical part sales.

During Cyclone Tracy, 66 people lost their lives. It destroyed about 80% of Darwin, and 94% of the housing was uninhabitable. My father was working at Darwin City Council at the time, and his boss asked him whether he knew anyone who wanted to work and help with the cleanup. He had a number of mates looking for work and got them work at the council. At that time, my mother was working for the Syrimis at the Inghams chicken farm. They would drive out every day and drop food supplies to illegal immigrants working at Berno Brothers who were hiding in the humes pipes. There were a number of Indonesians in those pipes, so they became friends, and that is how my dad got them work on the council. They all became Australian citizens.

It was a huge job to clean up after the cyclone. The cyclone also brought many government workers to Darwin to help with the rebuild, and many remained and are still here today. Many of those workers live in my electorate. As we all know, the northern suburbs was growing after the cyclone.

The devastation that came with the cyclone on 25 December 1974 must be noted as upsetting, as was the loss of lives that night, and we should recognise that. The cyclone also taught us that we, as Territorians, will back each other and band together to rebuild. This is why I am proud to call myself a true Territorian and part of the post-Cyclone Tracy era.

Thank you to the other members for commemorating a time in history that placed Darwin on the map.

**Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries):** Madam Speaker, there are moments in time and events that define who we are and what we stand for. Sometimes these events are tragic, bringing loss of life and possessions. Yet, from such tragedies a profound sense of community emerges, bringing out the best in all of us. In Darwin, 24 December 1974 was one such defining event.

Cyclone Tracy, expected to travel harmlessly down the coast, took an abrupt turn on Christmas Eve and made direct landfall over Darwin. Wind gusts reached 217 kilometres per hour before the anemometer was destroyed. The gale-force winds extended 40 kilometres from the cyclone's centre, leaving no part of Darwin or its rural areas untouched.

My family, like every other family in Darwin, has a personal story of survival. My father, a police sergeant in the Northern Territory Police, and my mother, who balanced part-time work with raising my brother, Peter,

and me, lived at Berry Place in Rapid Creek. I was four years old, and my brother was just 15 months older. We also had a weekender at Howard Springs—a place my family loved.

A few weeks before Christmas Eve another cyclone passed without incident. When Cyclone Tracy was announced, the people of Darwin did not take it seriously. Communication was poor at that time. My father told me that most locals did not bother taking shelter. Instead, they were at Christmas Eve parties at pubs and clubs in typical Darwin fashion.

At that time, Darwin was a public service town—a melting pot of nationalities where people often relied on each other for support, especially since many families lacked extended networks of grandparents, uncles or aunts. We were fortunate to have my Uncle Kevin, Aunty Joyce and two cousins—Fiona and Steven—living in Darwin at this time.

My parents decided at about 9 pm that we should leave the house in Rapid Creek and go to our house at Howard Springs—a decision that saved our lives. My father told me my main concern was, 'Where is Santa Claus, and how will he find us at the new house?' My dad said, 'It is okay, son; I will phone him.' I was too young to fully understand what was happening, and my memories are a mix of personal memories and family stories.

That night the storm began with heavy rain and howling wind. Our house in Howard Springs was a simple structure; it was a donga built by my father and his friends well before building codes and cyclone standards were around. As the storm intensified my father moved us into one room. Rainwater began splashing our faces as the roof lifted up and down. It eventually gave way completely, flying upside down and landing in the paddock beside us.

My father quickly moved us under the kitchen table, shielding me, my mother and brother with a mattress as bricks and debris came flying around. I remember sitting under the table with the bricks falling on top of it when the brick wall collapsed.

When the worst of the winds and storm passed, we crawled to our G60 four-wheel drive, and that became our shelter for the night. Lightning illuminated the destruction around us. The house was rubble; bricks and tin were strewn everywhere. Despite the devastation, my father joked about how a few more screws on the roof might have made a difference.

During the eye of the cyclone there was an eerie silence. My father retrieved some of our belongings, including a few Christmas presents. My brother and I played in the back of the car when the second half of the cyclone hit. Our horses escaped their paddocks. They were standing in the middle of the field with their noses to the ground and their backs to the wind. It was a remarkable display of instinct and survival.

As the storm subsided at dawn we drove back to our house. The devastation along the way was shocking. The trees were stripped of every leaf. Most houses in Darwin were destroyed or severely damaged. Our house in Berry Place was reduced to floorboards. Only part of the toilet was still intact. Had we stayed there it is likely we would not have survived.

My Uncle Kevin and cousin Fiona were not so lucky. When their house collapsed, Uncle Kevin shielded Fiona and debris struck him, cutting him severely and nearly cutting off Fiona's leg. They were evacuated to Sydney in a critical condition. Thankfully, Uncle Kevin survived and Fiona's leg was saved.

In the aftermath the sense of community in Darwin was extraordinary. People helped strangers without hesitation. My father spent the days assisting others while my mother searched through the debris looking for treasures like wedding photos. We could not find any. There are no photos of my brother and I when we were young.

Eventually, my brother, my mother and I were evacuated to Sydney with nothing but the clothes on our backs. The generosity of people in Sydney and across Australia was overwhelming. We were taken to Red Cross shelters for clothing and welcomed into school where classmates re-created Christmas for my brother and me because we had missed out that year.

After six months we returned to the Northern Territory, settling in Katherine, where we reunited with my father. Darwin had changed forever. Building codes were introduced, and new homes were designed to withstand future cyclones.

Cyclone Tracy was not the last challenge faced by my mother. Decades later, on 17 March 2018, Cyclone Marcus struck and, for a second time, my mother lost her house. Her resilience through both events stands as a testament to the strength of Territorians, who rebuild and endure no matter the adversity.

The bonds formed during Cyclone Tracy remain unbroken. Those who have endured cyclones share a unique connection forged by Mother Nature's fury. Cyclone Tracy taught us many lessons and showed us how fragile life was, how quickly possessions can be lost and how vital community and loved ones are in times of crisis. It revealed the best of humanity and the willingness to help rebuild and endure.

I am told that even prisoners from Fannie Bay Gaol were released to help with the cleanup, a testament to the inherent goodness that can serve us in the most trying of circumstances.

To those who lived through Cyclone Tracy, your stories are part of Darwin's legacy. We honour the lives lost and the resilience of survivors in their efforts to rebuild the city to the thriving place it is today. Darwin, razed to the ground, now stands as a testament to the strength and spirit of those people and as a beacon of hope, humanity, determination and democracy on the doorstep of Asia.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay):** Madam Speaker, Cyclone Tracy was a defining moment in our nation's history which struck Darwin on Christmas Day 1974, forever changing the landscape of our northern capital and the lives of its residents.

Before Tracy, Darwin was a growing city of about 47,000 people filled with the promise of the future. It was a place where families gathered to celebrate Christmas, unaware of the devastation that was about to unfold. Despite warnings, many were unprepared, perhaps due to the recent false alarm of Cyclone Selma or simply being caught up in the festive spirit.

In the early hours of 25 December, Cyclone Tracy made landfall. Fannie Bay was significantly impacted by Cyclone Tracy, as it was near the area where the cyclone made landfall. Cyclone Tracy crossed the coast near Fannie Bay at around 3.30 on Christmas morning. The cyclone brought devastating winds and storm surge to the area.

Wind gusts reached up to 217 kilometres per hour before the measuring instruments were destroyed. There was a storm surge of 1.6 metres in Darwin Harbour, with an estimated four meters at Casuarina Beach. As Fannie Bay is a coastal suburb of Darwin, it experienced severe damage, similar to the rest of the city, and approximately 70% of houses suffered serious structural failure. The proximity to the cyclone's landfall point suggests that Fannie Bay may have been one of the first areas to feel the full force of the storm.

Fannie Bay's role in the Cyclone Tracy event makes it an important site for remembering the cyclone's impact and studying its effects on Darwin's coastal areas. Tracy unleashed its fury on the unsuspecting city. The destruction was catastrophic. Over 70% of Darwin's buildings were destroyed or severely damaged, including 80% of homes. The city's infrastructure was obliterated; power, water, sanitation and communications were all severed.

The human toll was devastating. Sixty-six lives were lost: 53 on land and 13 at sea. Many more were injured, with more than 145 people seriously hurt and more than 500 suffering minor injuries. The sound of the cyclone was described as a roar, like a freight train, as it tore through the city, leaving nothing but 'Darwin dancefloors'—elevated floors with no walls or roofs.

In the aftermath, Darwin faced an unprecedented crisis. With essential services destroyed and the risk of disease outbreaks looming, a mass evacuation was deemed necessary; more than 36,000 were evacuated, reducing Darwin's population to just over 10,000. The Australian Government led by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam declared a state of emergency and initiated one of the largest airlifts in Australia's history.

In the Fannie Bay electorate, we are lucky to be home to a number of important locations that tell the story of Cyclone Tracy: the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, home to the Cyclone Tracy exhibition for many years; the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, which has a current Cyclone Tracy exhibition by Dr Andrew Belletty; Fannie Bay; Vesteys Beach; and East Point Reserve, where a land-based memorial will be located.

From this destruction arose a story of resilience and renewal. On 28 February 1975 the Darwin Reconstruction Commission was established, and by mid-1978 Darwin's population returned to pre-cyclone levels.

Importantly, we have learnt much from what Cyclone Tracy has taught us. We have improved building codes, and Tracy led to the introduction of more stringent building standards across Australia resulting in structures that are better equipped to withstand extreme weather events. These changes have made buildings more resilient, potentially reducing damage by up to 85% in the event of a similar cyclone.

We have enhanced disaster management. The cyclone highlighted the need for improved emergency management processes, leading to increased public awareness and preparedness measures. This resulted in better warning systems, response strategies and recovery efforts.

Our engineering standards have improved. Cyclone Tracy demonstrated that buildings with engineering input into the design and construction performed considerably better. This led to the incorporation of engineering principles in housing design and construction, improving overall resilience. There is ongoing research and analysis.

The disaster sparked continuous research into wind engineering and building performance during extreme events. Regular reanalysis of design and wind speeds in cyclone-prone regions using up-to-date information and techniques continues to improve our understanding and preparedness.

The experience of Cyclone Tracy has changed how Australians handle disasters together, fostering a stronger sense of community support and unity in the face of natural disasters. These lessons from Cyclone Tracy have saved lives in subsequent cyclones and continue to shape Australia's approach to disaster preparedness and response.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of this catastrophic event, we remember not only the devastation but also the indomitable spirit of Territorians and all Australians who came together to rebuild. Cyclone Tracy remains a powerful reminder of our vulnerability to nature's forces and our capacity for resilience in the face of adversity. Today Darwin stands as a modern city, its buildings designed to endure the harsh climate of northern Australia. It is a living testament to human perseverance and ingenuity.

As we move forward let us carry the lessons of Cyclone Tracy with us, ensuring we remain prepared, resilient and united in the face of future challenges.

**Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, I thank everyone in the House for their heartfelt reflections on Cyclone Tracy.

My reflection is a personal one. My family originally came to Australia in 1968 and emigrated permanently in 1971. This was my maternal grandparents, mum, aunt and Uncle Nazmul—N-A-Z-M-U-L. I spell my uncle's name because I will tell his story, and he recounted to me the other day, 'If you say anything, get my name spelt right, because on every memorial it is spelt Maznul'. I said, 'All right; I will see what I can do.'

For the first time since coming here after escaping war, my family decided to make a return journey to Bangladesh to visit other family members. Fortuitously, my maternal grandparents, my mum and my aunt went to Bangladesh for Christmas 1974, leaving behind my Uncle Nazmul to hold the fort—a 17-year-old kid to mow the lawn and look after the house, who was told it would probably be fairly uneventful and all would be well.

He continued to go from their place in Nakara to work at Bunnings. He said that he had no plans for Christmas Eve, so a mate of his, Alan Morris, said to him, 'There's a birthday party on. Let's go there tonight.' Because they were young, cavalier and did not know what cyclone warnings were about, they thought that sounded like a reasonably good idea.

They headed off to what was then the Berrimah Tavern, now the Hidden Valley Tavern, for a birthday do. All through the night cyclone warnings kept coming through, and they continued not to take them seriously until events wrapped up around midnight and the wind was starting to howl. He recalls the story of them both being in a car, driving towards the house in Nakara and suddenly realising the car was moving sideways and not forward. The winds were so strong even at that time that they were being dragged onto the median strip. That is when they got a sense that something serious was happening.

From 1 am through 2 am the wind howled, and people started to worry in a serious way. The family of six, the Morris family, kindly took in my uncle that night. They all huddled together, initially in the bathroom until that blew apart, at which point they all shifted. I remember him saying that they thought they were safe and secure in the bathroom with everything set up and then the roof blew off, so they were sitting there literally watching the sky fall in from around the four walls. They had to evacuate from the bathroom.

All seven of them ended up in a single toilet holding the walls together all night with their backs to the wall—a la Star Wars—trying to keep them from caving in. He said it was a long and surreal night. The presiding memory he has in terms of audio landscape was of car horns going crazy because houses and other things were falling on the cars. There were alarms and sirens going off all night long.

Finally, at about 5 am, my uncle recalls walking out with his hosts onto the streets. He said it was like an episode of one of those television shows where they walk out after an apocalypse wondering whether they are the last people left on Earth. Everyone started slowly creeping out at 5 am, and it was still muggy and spitting with rain. Suddenly, they heard small pockets of people coming out saying, 'Now what?'

They were proximate to the area of Jingili, Nakara and the Airport Hotel, so they decided, en masse, to wander to the Airport Hotel because that was the best bet they had. A bit like those episodes where you find other survivors of some apocalyptic fate, there were people standing at the door ready to welcome them with open arms, saying, 'Come in. There's food and shelter.' The Salvation Army was doing its bit.

They ended up staying there for three days and two nights. In amongst it all, people forget that when disasters like this happen there is all manner of knock-on effects. There was a mass outbreak of food poisoning at the time, which people forget. When there is not a lot of sanitation, that is a real challenge.

Other than trips to the old Darwin hospital at Myilly Point, there was not much movement happening while people tried to find their feet again. Eventually they made their way from the Airport Hotel to the actual airport, because by this stage the dictate was out that able-bodied men should stick around to help rebuild and younger people under 18, as well as women and children, should evacuate and get on planes to wherever they could go.

My family had arrived only a few years earlier; they did not know anyone anywhere else. My 17-year-old uncle did not know anyone in the rest of the country, so he arbitrarily picked Brisbane. Before he knew it, he was on a plane to Brisbane, having vaguely heard in the past from my grandfather that we knew somebody in Brisbane. Before he had gotten on the plane he wandered back to the house in Nakara. The house was long gone, but he could identify it from the curtains. Somehow some curtains had survived and from those curtains he could piece together a few bits of clothes. With $50 in his pocket, some mismatched clothing and a curtain, he made his way to Brisbane.

Communication was not what it is now, so for a good period of time my grandparents did not know whether he was dead or alive because they were on the other side of the planet. My uncle was able to connect with the local refugee centre in Brisbane and then with the local mosque. It was a reminder for me that there are so many people around Australia who contributed to helping Territorians in the wake of the disaster, and we should be grateful for their contribution.

My grandparents, mum and aunt eventually worked out that my uncle was alive and in Brisbane, so when they returned from Bangladesh they immediately went there. They then wanted to come straight back to Darwin but unfortunately had nothing to come back to, so they had to detour via Canberra, which is why I have to keep confessing to being born in Canberra, rather than in Darwin which was probably how it should have been.

They eventually returned to Darwin for opportunity, not least because this was a place willing to offer them a housing commission home, work and an opportunity to rebuild and make a contribution enduringly and permanently. That is why my family came back and stayed for the long haul.

It is wonderful to hear all the stories, and it is difficult to hear a lot of the stories of hardship at that time. I know it is still a triggering and traumatising event for a lot of people still 50 years later. I would say this as a glimmer of hope: my uncle's presiding recollection of the whole thing was of the strength, courage and good humour of a lot of Territorians who, having survived that night, all banded together and said, 'Well, that probably will not happen again, will it?'

It is important to know the laconic wit, humour and Territorian character shone through at a time of crisis. I hope that we will be prepared in future and resilient in the face of adversity. I am grateful for the fact that

we have a legislature that is also 50 years old to ensure we have the resilient community and structures in place to look after the Northern Territory should anything of that scale ever befall us again.

Thank you for the opportunity to share that small anecdote, and thank you to everyone who has contributed with anecdotes of their own in relation to Cyclone Tracy.

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge 50 years since Cyclone Tracy and acknowledge the survivors.

In 1974 I was coming home from a boarding school in Nhulunbuy, Dhupuma College. I remember being out in the bush with my family on country at Mirrngatja on the edge of the eastern end of the Arafura Swamp. I had flown home for the holidays, and we were living in a paperbark hut. Every season we would move around country from higher hills where we have a bark hut and towards the swamp, an area where we created paperbark huts. In some areas during the Wet Season we would go back to higher hills and find shelters that we could live around, and that is how we survived—by preparing. Our elders and leaders knew what to expect during those times.

At Mirrngatja on Christmas Eve the sky was clear, and the weather had been sucked into Darwin towards the west. It was beautiful dry weather, and it was a surprise to hear that a cyclone had hit Darwin. On Christmas Day we were working on the airstrip, and I turned on the radio. There were no phones and no communications, but we had a radio to listen to music while I was working, helping to clear the airstrip for a missionary to come over to bring in rations. During that time people were hunting crocodiles and we were trading.

I turned on the radio to listen to music. The ABC news came on to announce that Darwin had been flattened by a cyclone. I turned around to my father and said, 'Dad, Darwin has been flattened'. He and a lot of people used to walk from Milingimbi and Galiwinku towards Darwin and back again, so they knew where the places were. They lived in Bagot community and used to walk back and forth, so he knew. It was surprising to hear what had happened. It was a shock for them, and they were worried for all the people in Darwin. At that time, I vaguely remember turning on the radio again and hearing there were 45 lives lost. It was serious, and we started to worry about people from our communities, especially in Bagot and other areas.

Later we heard there was family living in Darwin, which was another worry; would there be bad news from Darwin for our community? As there was no communication, we had to wait to hear what had happened. Later we heard lots of people had stayed in Bagot. People told stories afterwards about how frightening it was. Sometime later I heard the story of a fridge being found on the Winnellie water tank, which told us how powerful it was. When I drove past Winnellie and saw the height of the water tower, which is still there, they said that is where a big fridge from a house had been blown to. That was a serious matter.

My wife said her family was in Darwin at the hospital at Myilly Point. There were many women brought to Darwin to deliver babies when the cyclone hit. They were frightened and did not know what was happening.

When people lived in the bush most cyclones and heavy storms that came through were not seen as a threat because often they brought good hunting and places where we could gather food. We knew there was shelter close by in the caves. There are gaps between houses. The trees and hills are not as bulky, big and dangerous like we saw with iron and bits of timber flying around here, which was life-threatening. Even cars can be flying around as debris.

People used to know where we could go to shelter in strong weather. There was not much debris that could fly around. People gathered wild honey from cracks of fallen tree branches. There were berries and other stuff that we lived on. As I said, it was not as hazardous as the cars and other heavy material. Before housing we could find shelters in the rocks and stuff on Earth.

Today we need to make sure that we have safe shelters when this happens. We need to be prepared, as the ancestors were, and look after our community. In remote communities we need proper permanent shelters. Preparation steps include our community leaders being ready for storm surges and cyclones. In places like Nhulunbuy we need the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) to have manned weather stations so we can be prepared.

The experience of those who survived Tracy has informed the protections we now have. It caused great devastation and tragedy, so it is important that we learn from that experience so that our communities are protected and made safe into the future.

It is also important that the spirit of compassion and looking after neighbours and our community continue as part of the Northern Territory story. The spirit of compassion and kindness that followed Cyclone Tracy should always be remembered and define who we are as tropical Territorians.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge all the members for whom this is a personal story. I thank them for sharing those stories.

I was far away from Darwin on Christmas Eve in 1974, at home in Sydney, but our house was filled with the stories of a disaster we could not fathom. My dad, then chief of staff at Channel Nine News, was called into work in the middle of the night and came home sharing terrible stories that have stayed with me ever since.

Over my three decades in Darwin, I have bunkered down through many cyclone warnings. I vividly remember the damage caused by Marcus, but I cannot imagine what it would have been like to live through those events and their aftermath. My heart goes out to everyone impacted Cyclone Tracy, including those in the Chamber.

We have heard about destruction, heartbreak and loss and about resilience, strength and an extraordinary community spirit. We all honour the memories of those who were lost and the courage of those who survived, rebuilt and shaped the Territory into what it is today.

I will share some reflections from Dana, a survivor and dear friend of mine, whose family story is currently told at an exhibition of photographs in our NT Library in Parliament House. Her grandparents were visiting for Christmas and her grandfather captured some amazing images before and after the cyclone, which we are lucky enough to see in this exhibition.

Looking at the picture of Dana's formidable mum, Joan, with a baby on her hip in the midst of total destruction and just getting on with it captures so much of who she is and what Darwin is.

Dana told me, 'I grew up with the stories and images of Cyclone Tracy and had a connection with it that brought me back to the Territory. There are so many stories of the loss to the Territory because of the cyclone, those who moved away and never came back. I reflect on the people who did not move back or have the means and what that might have meant for the Territory as to where we were going and what paths we were taking.'

Dana's words remind us that Cyclone Tracy did not just reshape the physical landscape; it also transformed the social and cultural fabric of our community. Many who left could not return, whether by choice or circumstance, and with their departure the Territory also lost passionate advocates, leaders and community builders. The loss of their voice has also shaped the paths the Territory would take in the years that followed.

Dana reflects on the experience of her parents, strong environmentalists who rebuilt their lives elsewhere. She said, 'My mum and dad would have been demonstrating on the steps of Parliament House if they were in Darwin on Tuesday 26 November. The NT's loss has been Queensland's gain in conserving the natural environment for future generations.'

The cyclone's impact reached beyond those living in Darwin. We heard about that from the Member for Mulka. Dana also speaks of First Nations people whose stories remain largely untold: 'There must be thousands of untold stories of First Nations people who were in Darwin, many at the hospital, women having babies and then being flown to places like Adelaide, far from home, while their homelands remained unscathed.'

Dana's words remind us that the history of Cyclone Tracy is not a single story; it is a tapestry of experiences woven together by those who stayed, those who left and those whose voices remain unheard. As we mark the 50th anniversary of this defining moment, let us honour the resilience of those who endured and rebuilt. Let us also reflect on the opportunities lost by those whom we lost and those who could not return and the untold stories that remain.

This anniversary calls on us to remember to listen and to ensure that every voice, story and path taken or untaken continues to shape our decisions in the Territory's future with the same courage and community spirit that defines our past.

**Mr HOWE (Drysdale):** Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions, especially the Member for Nelson for his moving speech.

I was born after Cyclone Tracy. My stepmother, Kelly Howe, lived through Cyclone Tracy, and it is on her behalf—as she is no longer with us—that I wish to speak briefly today. I noticed when we were young the anxiety that would come around the Wet Season, especially with storms. I knew she lived through Cyclone Tracy, but as a boy it was hard to understand the gravity of what that meant.

It is excellent that in schools in the Northern Territory we learn about and remember the event. When the museum exhibition was put up it made it a bit more real for us. I remember going to the museum with my stepmum, and she could not go into that exhibit because it was too raw for her. Storms would come every year; when lightning built up and especially when the wind picked up, you could see that kind of come back for her.

I cannot imagine what that day would have been like. As a father and listening to the Member for Nelson, it brings home how personal these natural disasters are. When I hear about children and their presents on Christmas Day, I find it quite moving.

My stepmother left with her mum, my *yiayia*, for Melbourne, where they spent a year. My *pappous* stayed back to help clean up and rebuild Darwin. His story is incredible as well. He served in World War II; he was conscripted at the age of 14 with the Greek Army. Having fled Europe he then came to Darwin where he was ravaged by Cyclone Tracy. I wish he was around today so I could learn about those events, speak to him as a man and understand what it was like.

It speaks to the enduring spirit that exists in all human beings and the spirit of strength and resilience that we all share in times of trouble. At its core, humanity can come together when we need each other. In a Chamber like this, which can be divided on political grounds and matters of the mind, it is quite a beautiful thing to remember that when we need each other all those things go by the wayside and we can be there for each other as fellow human beings.

On this 50th anniversary my message to all the young people is to speak to survivors and learn for yourself, in their words, the human side to these stories. I wish I had done more when I was younger to learn about the events of the older people in my life, so my message is that younger ones should take a moment to understand the human impact and the good humanity displayed in those moments.

**Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion to the House and thank members for their contributions, particularly those who lived through Cyclone Tracy. I recognise their and their family's strength and resilience and give my heartfelt condolences to those who passed away.

It is particularly the stories of mothers and pregnant mothers and how they must have felt trying to protect their children in such a terrifying situation that gets me straight in my guts. I stand in awe of all the parents who held their children tight that night, and I am devastated for the families who lost loved ones.

The suburbs in my electorate—Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Coconut Grove—were hit hard. I acknowledge the survivors who live in those suburbs, those who still live there as well as the ones who had to leave and never returned.

When I moved to Nightcliff, the first friend I made was a man named Bernie who lived in a unit in our block. From the moment we moved in, Bernie showed us the open, friendly and helpful nature that is characteristic of old-school Territorians. It was not long before we were calling him Uncle Bernie to our one-year-old. Bernie was also the first Tracy survivor I met. His recollections of that night have always stuck with me.

He was 13 years old in a family of 10—two adults and eight kids. They were living in Jingili at the time, and he remembered huddling with his family as their entire upstairs blew away. They ran to their neighbour's house, which also soon blew away. He describes his whole family, plus the second family whose house they had run to, standing behind the two brick walls of the supports under the elevated house, which was all that was left. They stood with their backs to it for protection from midnight until dawn. He described how dark it was, and they could only see in the flashes of the lightning; in one flash they could see the house next door, and in the next flash it was gone.

He told me the way the community came together. The next day he and his siblings went to a local supermarket and the grocer told them to take what they need. Many others in this House have spoken about the way that the community came together, the camaraderie, looking out for each other, the acts of selflessness and bravery and, of course, rebuilding. As the proverb goes, 'Fall down seven times, stand up eight'. That is what the Territory does.

I acknowledge the pain in the stories from members in this House and thank everyone for sharing. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture):** Madam Speaker, as the minister for museums, arts and libraries, I have had the honour of attending exhibitions such as One Family's Story and heard directly from the Fitzsimmons family as they shared their recollection and images of Cyclone Tracy. An artistic interpretation of the event in Parap had me taking an interesting journey into our migrant experience during the cyclone with the Noctambulation display. There will be many events over the next few weeks that will provide opportunities for all to be reminded of the resilience and unity that binds the Territory, not just through major natural disasters and which shaped our unique community spirit.

A question came up as to why I was not present during a motion on Tuesday. I attended the official launch of Tracy's Echo 50 Years of Resilience with permission from the Chief Minister. Emotional seniors and elders shared their powerful stories of survival, resilience and strength of culture throughout Cyclone Tracy, depicted in the works of art. Attending these thoughtful exhibitions makes me reflect as a husband and father on how devastating the loss would have been and how I would have protected my loved ones and community.

As a health professional, I also contemplate what those in the community—such as the police, paramedics, nurses and doctors—would have been doing selflessly to save as many people as possible and assist those in need with no power, unrecognisable roads, cars destroyed and the landscape spread with nothing but mountains of iron and building rubble.

I pay tribute to the bravery and dedication of the firefighters, police officers and volunteers; to those who operated the ice works; to the workers who restored essential services such as power, water and telephones; to the staff who kept hotels open as emergency billets; and to the medical personnel who provided critical care during those challenging times. The impact of the event would have been horrendous enough, but the recovery is a story of remarkable strength and resilience noteworthy of commemorating today.

I place on record the impact of Cyclone Tracy upon the suburbs that now form the Sanderson electorate. The development of the Wagaman area predominantly occurred during the 1970s, with much of the suburb established prior to the devastation caused by Cyclone Tracy in 1974. The cyclone inflicted severe damage on the area.

At the time Cyclone Tracy struck, the suburb of Anula was still under construction. A few houses had come under construction with only a handful completed. Following the cyclone, reconstruction efforts involved clearing the blocks that contained remnants of incomplete construction, relocating power infrastructure underground and restarting construction activities. Before the cyclone the majority of houses were designed in the elevated style. However, post-cyclone reconstruction predominantly featured single-storey concrete dwellings.

Wulagi, located in Darwin's northern suburbs east of Lee Point Road, was developed after Cyclone Tracy, reflecting the construction and urban expansion efforts following the disaster.

On Christmas Day 1974 Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin, causing widespread damage and loss of life. The cyclone, with winds measured at 217 kilometres per hour before instruments failed, likely reached speeds of 300 kilometres per hour. At least 66 people lost their lives and 650 were injured in Darwin, with more injuries treated interstate. The low casualty figures were attributed to the cyclone striking in the middle of the night. The impact of the cyclone was severe, with 70% of houses and buildings wrecked, damaged or destroyed.

Firsthand accounts of individuals' experiences before, during and after Cyclone Tracy are deeply personal. To fully comprehend the profound impact the cyclone had on the residents of Darwin on 25 December 1974, it is essential to value and reflect upon these individual narratives. Such accounts, whether they involve factual details or personal recollections, collectively illuminate the unprecedented challenges encountered during this moment in history. They also highlight the extraordinary resilience demonstrated by Territorians in the face of such adversity. Through these personal perspectives we can construct a vivid and meaningful portrayal of the event and its aftermath.

I reflect on a small sample of some accounts. Dave Duffield, a policeman at the time, reported that Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin at about 1 am with peak gusts at 217 kilometres per hour recorded at Darwin Airport before monitoring equipment failed. There was a 35-minute calm as the eye passed overhead at about 4 am and a renewed fury until winds abated at about 6 am. About 90% of Darwin's houses were wrecked, 49 people were killed and another 16 were reported missing at sea. Hundreds were wounded.

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission calculated that there were approximately 8,200 houses, 3,000 flats and 1,700 caravans and temporary dwellings in use in Darwin at the time of the cyclone. Essential services such as water, sewerage and power were contaminated and severed. The environment and food chains were disrupted, trees and gardens were decimated and there was widespread damage to animal habitats.

A little-known disaster management process was initiated to salvage water-damaged documents from the Northern Territory. Soggy boxes were transported by RAAF cargo planes to RAAF Base Amberley near Brisbane. From there, the records were taken to a dedicated building in Brisbane where Australian Archives staff sorted them. Queensland State Archives provided specialist resources, fumigating, drying and returning the documents to Australian Archives. This operation continued for months, potentially involving treatment in Canberra as well.

For many years the people of Darwin have extended their gratitude to the rest of Australia for the assistance provided in the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy. Despite this, the true unsung heroes of this tragedy were the residents of Darwin. The immediate national response to the disaster was critical in the rebuilding efforts.

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission was promptly established, although it was somewhat inactive for the first eight months. Major General Stretton efficiently coordinated emergency services, with medical teams performing competently under pressure in primitive conditions.

All three armed services played a vital role in the cleanup, with RAAF and naval resources along with Navy and Army manpower working tirelessly in the first month. The military, port authority, wharfies and essential services teams also contributed significantly to restoring the waterfront and utilities. The rebuilding of Darwin was a complex and challenging process, with significant contributions from various groups.

The initial focus on planning by the city's commission and the Department of Urban and Regional Development's aims to limit Darwin's growth was met with resistance from local residents. The DRC's earlier reports advocating for alternative locations for commercial and residential areas, large-scale acquisition and rebuilding, and controls on private development were seen as impractical and insensitive to the needs of the community.

The appointment of Clem Jones as DRC Chairman in 1975 marked a shift in priorities, moving away from planning towards practical reconstruction. Jones focused on improving infrastructure, making existing structures safe and enhancing amenities. Under Jones' leadership, the DRC oversaw the implementation of over 500 contracts with expenditure of $300m for replacement housing, public buildings, schools, health clinics, roads and infrastructure services. The DRC also introduced cyclone-resistant materials and altered new national construction codes. The rebuilding of Darwin was a testament to the resilience and determination of the local community, the generosity of the Australian people and the effective leadership of individuals like Clem Jones.

The experience of Cyclone Tracy and the subsequent reconstruction highlighted the importance of balancing planning with practical needs of the community and the need for timely and decisive action in the face of disaster.

Key dates in the rebuilding process include the following:

- In March 1975 the city's commission released the controversial Planning Options for Future Darwin reports.
- In August 1975 Grant Tambling was appointed to the Darwin Reconstruction Commission.
- In November 1975 Clem Jones was appointed as the DRC Chairman.
- In December 1977 the Darwin Reconstruction Commission concluded its work, leaving behind a new town plan.
- In July 1978 the Northern Territory achieved self-government.

Cyclone Tracy's impact extended beyond the physical rebuilding of Darwin. The disaster also held significant, social and political consequences, shaping the future of the Northern Territory and influencing the development of building codes and disaster preparedness strategies across Australia.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**Mr PATEL (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, I reflect on the devastating impact of Cyclone Tracy on our community, particularly the areas of Casuarina and Lee Point. I was not here at that time—I was not yet born—but the stories shared by survivors, including those from my electorate and those shared in the Chamber, vividly recount the horrors of that day. Through their words I can feel the fear, loss and incredible resilience of those who faced this unimaginable tragedy.

The devastation was unimaginable in what is now the Casuarina electorate. Families huddled together as their homes were torn apart. One 13-year-old survivor recalls holding bedframes as their elevated house collapsed around them. With only prayers and each other, they endured the storm through freezing rain and relentless winds, eventually merging into a dawn of complete devastation.

We must not forget the tragedy that this storm inflicted on us. In Nakara the Knox family faced unimaginable loss. Michael and Elva Knox, along with their two young children, Stefan and Catherine, perished when their home was destroyed. Their story reminds us of the human cost of natural disasters and the importance of preparedness.

On the harbour Linda and John, young deckhands aboard a prawn trawler, fought to stay alive as the waves crashed over their vessel flooding their engine room and trapping their colleagues below deck. Against all odds, they survived and later found their boat washed ashore at Shoal Bay.

In Casuarina elevated homes were ripped apart, leaving families clinging to floorboards. One resident described huddling with their children under a makeshift shelter as their roof was torn away. The morning revealed a wasteland where their vibrant street once stood. All the house stilts marked what had been their community.

At Lee Point the scene was no less devastating; the once lush canopies of tropical trees were stripped bare, the roots exposed lying like broken matchsticks. Birds that once filled the area had vanished, with their nests destroyed. A fisherman recalled walking along the beach at dawn and finding debris scattered as far as the eye could see. Even the mangroves which had stood for centuries as a natural shield were battered and broken.

Nature has the incredible ability to heal, and so does our community. Over the decades Lee Point has seen the slow but steady return of life. Trees have regrown and birds have come back to the nest. Families in Casuarina rebuilt their homes, and the streets once again echo with the laughter of children.

Although I was not there to witness the devastation firsthand, the stories of the survivors and their extraordinary resilience have left an undeniable mark on me. The experiences remind us of the incredible strength of Territorians and their determination to rebuild, protect their community and never lose hope.

As we commemorate 50 years since that fateful day, let us respect and honour the memory of those we lost and celebrate the resilience of those who survived. Let us continue to learn from their experiences and build a future that is safer, stronger and united. I thank all Territorians who came back and rebuilt.

Thank you to all members who shared their personal stories with us.

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I know some people find it hard to understand why Cyclone Tracy is such an important part of the people of the Northern Territory's collective psyche. I have been told by many that this was the first event that they remember—their earliest memory—due to the chaos and trauma it inflicted.

This may not come as a surprise to some in this Chamber, but I was not in Darwin on that fateful Christmas Eve 50 years ago. My parents were not here either as they had not yet been fortunate enough to move to the Territory and did not get to grow up in the best place in the world.

However, I have learned about the tragedy of Cyclone Tracy through my friends and their experiences, especially their parents and teachers at school, my colleagues and those who have shared their experiences with the world.

I find it useful on matters such as these to listen and look at those who went through these ordeals and remind myself that the people who survived this and those who lost their lives were human beings with their own dreams, thoughts and ambitions. These people who survived one of the worst storms in history were often unaware of the dangers looming. In dealing with the losses and destruction of the storm, they picked themselves up and rebuilt the city that we stand in today.

I know this topic is difficult for many survivors, but it is important to remember this significant part of our shared history and the history of Darwin and the Territory.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

## NOTICE

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that the Legislative Assembly:

- recognises the harm caused by all forms of racism across the Northern Territory

- in line with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the recently announced National Anti-Racism Framework, urges this government to adopt and resource all actions and recommendations of these documents that will work to eradicate racism in the Northern Territory.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No 5 – Repeal Amendments Introduced by the Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Legislation Amendment Act 2021

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 2,067 petitioners praying that the Northern Territory repeals the amendments introduced by the Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Legislation Amendment Act 2021. 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:

*We, the undersigned, are opposed to full term abortion.*

*Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that: the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory repeals the amendments introduced by the Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Legislation Amendment Act 2021.*

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

### Petition No 6 – Return of Lee Point and Casuarina Coast Reserve to Larrakia People

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 1,054 petitioners praying for the return of Lee Point and Casuarina Coastal Reserve to the care, ownership and protection of Larrakia people. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

*Praying for an immediate moratorium on land clearing at Lee Point; a commitment to working with Larrakia family groups; and the transfer of ownership of Casuarina Coastal Reserve and Lee Point to a newly created Larrakia-owned entity.*

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Johnston, you have a plant on your desk. We do not have plants on desks in the Chamber; I am sorry. Can you remove that, please?

### Petition No 7 – Improve Humpty Doo Primary School Crossing

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 165 petitioners praying for the upgrade of road infrastructure on Freds Pass Road. 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:

> *Praying for a commitment to review and upgrade the road infrastructure along Freds Pass Road directly outside the Humpty Doo Primary School within a six-month timeframe.*

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

## ABSENCE OF TREASURER

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I advise of the absence of the Treasurer today and ask that any questions directed to the Treasurer, Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure and Minister for Housing Construction be directed to the Chief Minister.

## QUESTION TIME

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, we are heading into the last Question Time for 2024. I am sure it will be a great afternoon.

### Electricity Prices

**Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER on behalf of TREASURER**

Budget 2024 included $164.2m to keep power costs down for households and businesses across the Northern Territory. On behalf of the CLP government will you commit to keeping power price increases below CPI over the next four years?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, we understand how difficult it is for Territorians now, particularly with those critical types of bills like power, water and rates that come far too often and are ever increasing. We take the government's community service obligation seriously. There is no intention to increase power prices for Territorians. This year they received an increase; every year it continues to go up, but the community service obligation keeps it as low as possible. We are determined to make sure that any increases are as low as possible with the community service obligation covering the gap.

This reinforces how important growing our economy is. It is why the Territory Coordinator legislation is critical reform that must be done and is why we are reducing payroll tax for small businesses come 1 January. It is why we must have the Approvals Fast Track Taskforce to make it easier for small business to do business.

As we heard yesterday, members opposite want to know about undergrounding powerlines across the northern suburbs and other initiatives for their communities. We hear that because we also represent communities that have genuine needs, including the petition we just heard about upgrades for Freds Pass Road. However, the reality is that governments cannot fund these important initiatives for our communities if the economy is not strong.

Our economy has not been strong for a long time. For five-and-a-half years we have had the worst-performing economy in the nation courtesy of a Labor government that was ineffective, incompetent and not interested in making sure Territorians could put food on the table. To the people watching this from home or in the gallery, the only way to ensure that power prices remain low and we continue to deliver police, nurses, teachers, hospitals, schools, roads and every other service that Territorians deserve is to grow the economy.

With an $11bn debt we have no time to waste. Thanks to Labor raising our debt from $2bn to $11bn in eight years, we spend $400m a year on interest alone. I ask each of you to think about this question: what could you do for your community with $1m a day? That is the money we are squandering thanks to a Labor

government that failed to deliver the basics for Territorians in making sure we have a strong economy so that people can live the life they deserve.

**Crime – Update**

**Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER**

The people of Drysdale demanded and voted for change and action on crime. Now that we are 100 days into government, can you update the Assembly on how our government has acted on crime for the people of Drysdale and all the Northern Territory?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, come Tuesday next week we will have had the privilege of governing the Northern Territory for 100 days. I am proud to stand as the Chief Minister. As a former Member for Drysdale, I know the member's community incredibly well, having grown up and gone to school there. I understand acutely how important community safety is to the people of Drysdale and all Territorians.

That is why on day one of our government I sat down on that Sunday with the Police Commissioner, looked him in the eyes and told him that we would do whatever it takes to support our police and make the community safe.

That is our number one commitment to Territorians. In 13 weeks, just shy of 100 days, we have already passed our reducing-crime reform, and Operation Ludlow is happening to keep the people of Alice Springs safe. We backed police and listened to them. We look forward to huge reform next year in this space. There is so much work to be done on crime, and our journey has only just begun.

Our reducing-crime package was significant. It included Declan's law; lowering the age; ramraid legislation; posting-and-boasting legislation; nuisance public drinking laws; and better protections for workers. That was the start, but it is not the end. Our work is cut out for us as this is a big ship to turn around after years of Labor watering down the laws and failing to back police and make sure there were consequences for offending. We are well and truly on that path, and we have delivered on the promises we took to the election to our people. We have more uniformed police on the street—I think it is an additional 60—and we will continue to make sure police have everything they need to keep us safe.

We have also done a lot to grow our economy. Growing our economy means we can have more police, better services, bigger prisons and the infrastructure requirements to make our community safe. We have put out an exposure draft of the Territory Coordinator legislation. We invite everyone to give their feedback on this iconic piece of economic reform which is designed to secure significant investments in the Territory, support our bottom line and grow our economy. That means we can spend more money on doing what matters, which includes providing more police.

Stuart Knowles, the interim Territory Coordinator, has already started. Our HomeGrown Territory package is already making a big impact on construction stimulus, with 165 applications through the door. Payroll tax reform starts on 1 January, which means small businesses can spend more time hiring kids and giving them opportunities—paying tax. We are proud of these 100 days.

**Solar Feed-in Tariff**

**Ms UIBO to MINISTER for RENEWABLES**

You went to the election promising Territorians that you would double the solar feed-in tariff during peak times. Instead, you have done the dodgy on Territorians and announced that your extra feed-in tariff will only be between the hours of 3 pm and 9 pm when most Territorians are at home and using power, not exporting to the grid. Early this week, one Territorian took to the airwaves and said:

'I have been coward punched by the CLP. I confirmed twice and in a text message to the CLP that the feed-in tariff times would be peak times of 6 am to 6 pm. I even confirmed with Gerard Maley and Jinson Charls in the Mall at their CLP booth a month ago. Now they are telling me it is Power and Water to blame. What a bunch of liars and cowards they are on this. I was promised 6 am to 6 pm. I voted for them on that promise.'

What do you have to say to Territorians after your CLP government has lied to them and done the dodgy on the solar feed-in tariff prices?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I wish to talk about our great Home and Business Battery Scheme. The previous government reduced the battery bonus from $6,000 to $5,000 because it does not support renewables. It did not support the cost of living. Our economy over the last five years ranked last in Australia. Those opposite failed Territorians.

The CLP went to the election with a commitment to increase the battery up to $12,000 and our feed-in tariff during peak times to just over 18 c per kilowatt hour. That was our promise, and we have done that. Not only a double—there is a triple-header to this. We are increasing the pool of money from $3m to $6m so that there is more money available for Territorians. These are the mums and dads who work during the day, come home, do the kiddie stuff, go to bed and then do it again. They know how badly the Labor government let them down on renewables and the cost of living.

The cost of living is affecting everyone across the Northern Territory, no matter where they live—north, south, east or west. The cost of living is a crisis caused by the Labor government, which we will fix.

Within 100 days, we have done many things; we increased the safety of Territorians and fixed renewables. A range of things will happen.

The previous Labor government cut the feed-in tariff. It told Territorians who had already spent the money on solar panels that the government would grandfather this and it would be fine. What did the former government do? It cut, cut, cut. When those opposite talk about lying and being dishonest to Territorians maybe they should have a mirror because they need to have a good hard look at themselves. They cut it …

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Cease the interjections.

**Mr MALEY:** Labor broke its promises, unlike the CLP government which respects Territorians and families.

We will cut the cost of living with this plan. We have doubled the battery bonus to $12,000. This means that homes and businesses can have solar panels and buy batteries. The plan is people can go off the grid and manage their bills so that they can spend the money at the local shopping centre or go to the fish and chip shop. They will be able to spend money in the economy.

**Solar Feed-in Tariff – Supplementary Question**

**Ms UIBO to MINISTER for RENEWABLES**

Can you confirm that the CLP commitment was from the hours of 6 am to 6 pm? That is what it promised Territorians.

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I can confirm we promised to double the feed-in tariff during peak hours, which is from 3 pm to 9 pm.

**Mining and Energy – Update**

**Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY**

On 24 August Territorians voted for our CLP plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. In my electorate of Goyder and across the Territory people voted for change and action. Can you advise the Assembly how you are delivering our CLP plan through your portfolios of Corrections; Mining and Energy; Renewables; Agriculture and Fisheries; and Recreational Fishing?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I know that the Member for Goyder is passionate about this because he is a rural boy who spends time in the bush on his motorbike and doing the things that rural boys do. I applaud that.

The CLP makes no apology for vigorously pursuing mining, gas, Defence, tourism and agriculture opportunities. We will continue to do that. We have been in office for just under 100 days, and we have already certified for many people in the Northern Territory that we are here to support them.

Gas is an important industry in the Northern Territory. It brings more than $1bn to our estimates as we move forward. We will give the gas industry and its investors certainty. The Chief Minister told the protesters that they were wasting their time and should go home. This CLP government supports the gas, mining, Defence, tourism and agriculture industries because we need to grow our economy.

Unlike the Labor government which wanted to tax, tax, tax and spend, spend, spend, the CLP has a plan to grow the economy so that we can have more money flowing from the top to the bottom.

People in this House have made money out of the gas industry. We know the Member for Nightcliff's rent or mortgage is being paid by the gas industry. We want more of that. We want people to work across industries, and that is what the CLP is doing. I have been to over 40 different organisations in the mining industry telling them how much we support their industry and how much we want them to grow the economy.

I just spoke about renewables. We will double the battery bonus, even though the Labor government cut the battery bonus and feed-in tariff. The CLP cares about Territorians and the cost of living. This is what we are doing.

Another topic dear to my heart is hunting, fishing and recreational fishing. I spoke yesterday about Harrison Dam, where we are increasing the area for hunting. We are looking at access to Howard Swamp and Shoal Bay. We have grants available for groups to do conservation in those areas, like NT Field and Game—a great organisation which I am part of. They do spraying or collect rubbish, because that is what Territorians do; we look after the Territory.

Corrections is another area the Labor government failed to plan. It knew the prisoner numbers were growing, and the overflow goes into watch houses. The CLP has a master plan and is moving forward because we want to protect Territorians.

**Domestic Violence Services**

**J DAVIS to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

I have been asked to raise this question by people from my community, including survivors of violence, those currently experiencing violence and those working on the front line to support them. They are desperate to know when action will be taken. I understand the need to carefully evaluate what we are doing. I understand that we should not invest in things unless we are clear they are evidence based and will work. I understand that we need to listen to the experts, the sector and frontline workers. I agree with all of this.

Can you outline the process and timeframes for the government's plan to implement the coronial recommendations and the $180m you committed to, including who you will consult and at what date you will communicate the outcome of that process and act on this issue?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, as I have repeatedly said in this House, we will not rush this response. We will carefully consider the recommendations. That process has already commenced. When I say we will not rush the response, I am not saying we will leave it until the year after next or the year after that; I am saying we will look at what is happening on the ground. We will continue to consult with service providers, discuss the needs and demands on the system with the non-government sector and, most importantly, consult with survivors. We will make sure what we are doing is effective.

I appreciate there is a framework in place that has focused strongly on developing policy, offices and concepts—which are important, because everything needs a foundation—but we have reached the point where we need to make sure the services in place are hitting the mark and we can measure what those marks are.

We know for certain that over the past eight years we have seen an increase in domestic violence assaults, so clearly something is not working in this sector. We cannot continue funding services that are not showing a real and responsive result on the ground for victims of domestic violence. We cannot continue with a system

that sees an increasing number of children being placed in care because they are living in circumstances fuelled by violence and alcohol.

We must ensure the money that is in play, which is already being deployed where it is needed—there are already programs being funded and works being done. I have consulted with our advisory groups and people on the ground. We will deliver what is needed to achieve real results. We will not continue to fuel a system that is not delivering real results.

The only result we need to see is a reduction—not an 82% increase—in domestic violence assaults and, most importantly, a reduction in the number of children being placed in care. They should be front and centre in everything we do.

**Casuarina Community Safety Hub**

**Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER**

The former Territory Labor government established the Community Safety Hub at Casuarina shopping centre. Centre management, businesses and customers hailed it as a success in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour at the biggest shopping centre in the Northern Territory. Why are you scrapping the Community Safety Hub? Did you consult businesses and customers at the shopping centre before you scrapped it? Did you consult your own Member for Casuarina before making this decision? Why are you removing this important community safety aspect for the busiest retail time of the year at Christmas?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader is right about one thing: we take community safety seriously. That does not involve leasing premises that cannot achieve safer outcomes for Territorians.

We know that in the dying days of the Labor government it was desperate for any headlines and tried to trick people into thinking it was doing something about crime. Territorians cannot be fooled as easily as Labor members thought. That is why they now sit on the opposition benches and we are now the government.

Our plan we have been talking about all afternoon was for action, deliverables for our people and tangible outcomes in reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. We have done that work.

That is why there are more than 60 police in uniform back on the streets. That, Opposition Leader, is real. That is why we have supported our police with better laws that are delivering outcomes, like the dozens of weapons that are not on our streets. Hundreds of people have been wanded by police because of their powers, and dozens have been charged for ram raids, posting and boasting and nuisance public drinking. That is real action …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question is specifically about the Community Safety Hub and why the government is scrapping it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, you have the call.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** It is difficult for Labor to understand that we take real action on crime. We will not do things that pretend to take action on crime. While we are a government of deliverables and actions, we are not governing by media release for the sake of going through the motions.

Police have clear operational discretion to make the decisions they need. Police have made the decision that paying rent to Casuarina shopping centre is not as good as having cops on the streets. I will back them every day of the week.

You have a choice to make, Opposition Leader. Do you want a shop in Casuarina shopping centre with some yellow branding and lovely hardworking people sitting in there unable, with their hands tied, to deliver a safer community because they are stuck inside a shopping centre behind a glass safety frame, or do you want them in our community engaging with people, doing their jobs and driving real change?

That is a choice for you. I know where I stand on this issue. This is a matter for you, Opposition Leader …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question also contained whether you consulted businesses, customers and your own Member for Casuarina before scrapping this.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The Chief Minister has time to answer that section.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** It is an operational decision. I am not there micromanaging every element of the police, as I am sure Brent Potter, the previous fearless Police minister who used to go around thinking he was a cop, would do. For God's sake, what an embarrassment he was and continues to be. That is why he is not here anymore. I remind you of that.

No, we are not interested in Labor's cookie-cutter approach to faking it until you make it; we are interested in real policing, support for police and spending money where it counts. With an $11bn debt, money counts on the front line, not inside a shopping centre.

## Asian Relations – Update

**Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS**

Our CLP team went to the election with a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. This plan will benefit all Territorians, whether they live in my electorate of Fong Lim or elsewhere. It is just under 100 days since the CLP election win. Could you please advise the Assembly of the excellent work being done to rebuild our vital relationships with our Asian neighbours to deliver our CLP plan for Territorians?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it is an incredibly exciting time for the Territory. Just a few days short of 100 days in government, we have delivered our commitments to re-engage with our Asian neighbours and build opportunities for business in the Territory in spades.

In the last two months I have met with delegations from China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Japan. I have led a delegation to Timor-Leste, our dear and close neighbours, who will be instrumental as we work towards rebuilding our economy and putting the Territory and Darwin where it firmly belongs as the gateway to Asia.

We delivered our commitment to engage with businesses in the Territory. I have been to the Barkly region and heard on the ground what is needed. I consulted with businesses in Alice Springs and Darwin. I am delighted to say that before the end of the year I will be consulting with businesses in the Katherine region as well as the Top End around Nhulunbuy. The wonderful thing is that every person I have spoken with and every business I consulted was so excited about the opportunities being presented by our new CLP government.

We attended the Australia Indonesia Business Council National Conference in Sydney two weeks ago, where we signed an MOU with Indonesia on critical minerals and strategic supply chains. We are working on delegations to visit Indonesia in the early new year so we can implement what was put in place under the MOU. I am delighted to work with my colleague Minister Maley as we progress in that vital area of developing the economy for the Northern Territory.

In Timor-Leste I had the privilege of meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Secretary-General and a group of businesspeople; I think I spoke to 80 people in the span of two hours one evening, which was wonderful. I met students who completed their training and degrees through Charles Darwin University. We discussed the opportunities for skilled migration and building our resilience across the sector.

I am proud to say that the department I am working with works hard to deliver our commitment in this area.

## Barge Landings – North-east Arnhem Land

**Mr GUYULA to CHIEF MINISTER on behalf of MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE**

Barge landings in north-east Arnhem Land have had money sitting in the budget papers for eight years, but no work has happened. Will this work continue to be revoted, or will it get done in this financial year?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I am not the Logistics and Infrastructure minister, so I will do my best; anything I cannot answer, we will get the member a response on.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure maintains 14 barge landings. You are right; money was allocated by the previous Labor government that was not spent. I know $2m was allocated in 2023–24, and that was for the Galiwinku and Ramingining barge landings and the goods handling facilities.

On 22 April this year, under the previous government, a contract for the detailed design for Galiwinku and Ramingining was awarded to Jacobs Group for just over $400,000. It is working through the detailed design, which is expected to be completed in quarter 1 next year. We will hold it accountable for that.

Spending happened in Wadeye, which I know was not part of the question. A further $2m was allocated to Gapuwiyak and Wurrumiyanga, as well as the Melville Bay pontoons. They are all at slightly different stages of work.

In 2017 DoI did extensive consultation with traditional owners and the land council, which I assume is how we got to this point of having money allocated to some barges.

Member for Mulka, if you have specific barges you are interested in, we can let you know the dates and times. It is not a transparency issue; I am happy to report that to the parliament, but I do not have much detail beyond what I could describe this afternoon.

**Education – Update**

**Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING**

The CLP team went to the election with a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. This is the plan that the good people of Wanguri voted for. As we approach the 100-day mark of our new government, can you update the Assembly on how we are delivering the CLP's plan for education and your other portfolios?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it has been almost 100 days and we have delivered on several election commitments. We took our plan to the election, and an overwhelming majority of Territorians voted for that change.

We said that we would bring back truancy officers; boost literacy and numeracy; expand school-based policing; have school counsellors on school premises; and hold parents accountable. The bringing together of Education and Training means we can focus on programs at the start of a child's life—such as FaFT—and in further education with CDU and VET programs.

I visited 14 schools across the Territory and I look forward to visiting more next year.

I visited Karama which, through the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, has employed an attendance officer. I saw the explicit learning technique the school uses for boosting literacy and numeracy. I visited Manunda Terrace. Last week I visited Gillen Primary School in Alice Springs and was shown around by the student leaders.

Centralian Senior College has a fantastic VROOM program, supported heavily by Repco, which delivers VET programs. At Nhulunbuy High School I spoke with the principal and the enthusiastic VET teacher, Mr Friedmann.

I visited Nhulunbuy Primary School. At Galiwinku I went to the celebration of 50 years of bilingual education. It goes without saying that I have attended all schools in my electorate.

We are focused on education and delivering on our plan. Without this, we are denying children to an all-important education.

We delivered our election commitment to bring back truancy officers, known as attendance officers, and I have been out with them at Casuarina and Palmerston. I have spoken to the attendance officers in Alice Springs. No parent has the right to deprive their child of an education. It is a legal requirement for all children to go to school. After speaking to the attendance officers in Alice Springs, I had feedback that they have been talking to kids in the Alice Plaza. The attendance officers are out in the community every day. This is a major part of the reform for getting kids back to school for an education. Under the previous Labor government attendance rates fell, as well as literacy and numeracy.

## Environment – Update

**Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT**

The CLP team went to the election with a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. This is the plan the residents of Blain voted for. They did not vote for more of the same; they voted for change. As we approach the 100-day mark of our new government, can you update the Assembly on how you are delivering the CLP's plan in your portfolios?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the assistant minister for DCDD and I look forward to hopefully passing laws in regard to that today. Thank you to the Member for Blain.

In the first 100 days of CLP government, we have delivered a number of election commitments. This government is committed to action in the interest of Territorians, and we have demonstrated that in our first 100 days.

I love talking about Alice Springs. Recently our government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Alice Springs Town Council to deliver critical infrastructure projects in Alice Springs. This includes $27m of spending. This is alongside contributions from the Alice Springs Town Council and the Australian Government. It includes things like $1.8m for a new regional skate and play precinct at Newland Park and $450,000 for free pool access this summer. We are saving Anzac Oval; we are not tearing it down. We will deliver it within the allocated budget. There is $14.96m on top of the Alice Springs Town Council's $5m contribution to construct a new town library, which everyone can enjoy. There is $5m for a multicultural centre, which the multicultural community is excited about. There is $4.8m towards the new Tourism Central Australia headquarters.

Teague Park—my good friend, the Member for Namatjira, is over the moon about this—will go to the Alice Springs Town Council so a new playground can be erected. The old Tourist Information Centre, a blight in the centre of Alice Springs—which the previous Labor government watched deteriorate for eight years and sat on its hands—will be transferring ownership so that the Alice Springs Town Council can develop that site. Many of the projects will involve my department, and we will work through these planning processes to get things off the ground as soon as we can.

Another commitment was defunding the EDO. We took this to the election. As per my speech regarding environmental protections yesterday, this government is about sustainable economic development. We recognise that we have sound environmental laws combined with responsible economic development. Today a decision was made by the court that the EDO pay 100% of Santos' legal costs. This decision calls out environmental lawfare where environmental groups seek to stall and stop proponents from continuing developments. This decision backs the Northern Territory and sustainable development. This decision says that NT and Commonwealth environment laws withstand strong scrutiny through this court system.

## Cyclones – Emergency Management

**Mr BROWN to MINISTER for FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES**

As we head into the cyclone season, we are likely to see many Territory communities impacted by severe weather and flooding. The former Labor government committed $24m in 2024 for cyclone shelters, with design work underway for shelters in Maningrida, Milingimbi, Milikapiti, Nhulunbuy, Ngukurr and Wadeye. As the weather events become more extreme, will you commit to these projects to increase community resilience?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I genuinely appreciate this question because it is an important time for our community to prepare. This morning we spoke on a motion recognising the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy. Preparedness is a range of things, which includes cyclone shelters, particularly in remote communities. We are committed to those and other projects. Today and yesterday all of our emergency services, NGO sector workers and volunteers came together for the second Emergency Services Symposium, and I had the privilege of opening it yesterday. It even had collaboration from the federal government. Being the Emergency Services minister, I met with all my federal colleagues about all the plans in place if things go wrong.

Whilst we pray that this year we do not have floods, cyclones or fires in Central Australia, we must be ready in case we do. That preparedness has never been better. I commend our Emergency Services, the Territory Controller with all the recovery work that comes with it, the Emergency Services CEO and all the people involved, because it is an enormous number of people to be ready at a moment's notice for the worst. Whilst we know we have better buildings and systems and stronger roads, we have many vulnerabilities; one of those is big gaps in emergency centres in the bush.

Member for Arafura, if you think about your electorate, you must be disappointed in your government's inability to deliver those commitments because they have been on the books for a number of years. When we were last out in Maningrida for your by-election everyone was asking when it would be built.

We are a government of action. We recognise that the previous Labor government did not do what it was supposed to do, and we have this huge backlog that we somehow have to get on top of and push forward even though we have an overlay of debt. We are not whingeing about it; we are getting on with the job. It is imperfect, as is just about everything we have inherited, but emergency service preparedness is important. People should, during emergencies, be able to stay in their homes as the best-case scenario or in their community. That is a commitment from us going forward. There are no easy solutions to that, and there is no magic wand.

It is important work that must be done because we know how vulnerable Territorians are to extreme events across the Territory.

**Territory Lifestyle – Art, Sport and Culture**

**Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for PEOPLE, SPORT and CULTURE**

Restoring our lifestyle in the Northern Territory is one of the important election commitments that our CLP team made to Territorians. Our lifestyle is the reason we continue to live here, and the continued breakdown of that lifestyle under a Labor government is the reason so many residents have left the NT.

Residents in Fannie Bay love their sport, art and culture. Can you update the Assembly on how the CLP government is delivering on our election commitment to restore the lifestyle of Territorians through art, sport and culture?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I know how passionate the Member for Fannie Bay is about sport, arts and culture and her long-term connections with the sporting community in Fannie Bay.

I reiterate that our team campaigned on a clear commitment to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Our government is committed to prioritising substantive outcomes over mere repetition of words. Through the provision of funding to community programs as it relates to sport, arts and multicultural organisations, we are delivering tangible results that reflect our dedication to serving and uplifting the people of the Northern Territory. As the Minister for People, Sport and Culture I am acutely aware of the profound benefits of promoting a healthy lifestyle. My department is clearly addressing these lifestyle priorities in a professional and responsive manner.

Turning to my portfolios, I am pleased to report that numerous grants have been issued to support efforts aimed at restoring and enhancing the bright and rich lifestyle of Territorians.

Since Territorians gave us the mandate to deliver change, allow me to inform the Assembly of recent announcements delivering on restoring our lifestyle. Hockey NT has been provided $150,000 to enter the Malaysia Hockey League in 2025 after it failed to get a place in the Hockey One League in Australia. This provides an opportunity for Territorians to participate in one of the best leagues of the Southeast Asian region and a further potential partner for juniors. Hockey has always been an outstanding performer in the development of Territory talent. It is now time to showcase Territory talent on the international stage.

The new Veterans Community Health and Wellbeing Grant provided up to $10,000 to eligible organisations supporting the Northern Territory's veteran community through activities delivered between 1 December 2024 and 30 May 2025. Projects were determined on the ability to enhance veterans' physical or emotional

wellbeing, foster social connection and ensure broad accessibility. The veteran community in Fannie Bay will have access to this grant.

I now turn my mind to the development of the CLP's multicultural policy for how we best achieve social cohesion and embrace our diversity to continue our ongoing efforts to restore and enhance our Territory lifestyle. I will announce this policy in early 2025.

I remain committed to advancing efforts to restore and enhance the lifestyle enjoyed in the Northern Territory. My department is steadfastly focused and diligently working to seize opportunities across its respective portfolios to achieve this objective.

**Port Keats Road Upgrades**

**Mr YOUNG to CHIEF MINISTER on behalf of MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Territory Labor government committed to sealing the Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa. I note that the CLP candidate at the time also committed to this project, which is a critical access and safety priority for these communities.

During the October sittings I asked whether your government would honour this project. Minister Yan assured me that it was being worked on; however, community members are now telling me that funding for this project has been pulled by your government. Can you confirm whether your government will fully deliver this important project to seal the road between Wadeye and Palumpa?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I apologise to the Member for Daly that I do not have that information, but I think someone will have something to me before the end of Question Time. Is that okay with you? I can get you an answer on the public record.

**Mr Young:** Yes, that is fine with me.

**Sessional Orders – Human Rights Compatibility Statements**

**J DAVIS to LEADER of GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

On Tuesday night this government removed the requirement that Bills be compatible with human rights. Can you advise the Northern Territory community how this government will ensure we are protecting human rights in our lawmaking?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, two nights ago we amended the sessional orders. What we changed goes back to a range of issues that have been ongoing since 2016. In August 2017 the former Labor government introduced a clause into the sessional orders that upon presenting a Bill, the member tabling it would provide an explanatory statement and a statement on whether the Bill was compatible with human rights, as defined in section 3 of the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*.

In October 2020 the Labor government scrapped this. It no longer appeared in the sessional orders. Labor not only scrapped it but also took away scrutiny committees. During the 14th Assembly there was no provision for tabling a human rights compatibility statement and no provision for scrutiny of legislation. That was under three Chief Ministers.

I am sure Labor members clearly remember the chaos and dysfunction in their government, having three Chief Ministers. We have taken out that provision. It is compliant with the previous provisions of the 13th Assembly.

A range of processes are in place to ensure all legislation is compliant with human rights. Like anyone else, the government is obliged to comply with a range of different processes, and that includes the *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*.

The change implemented in parliament simply aligns with what Labor had in place for the 14th Assembly. It has nothing to do with legislation complying with human rights, which is a federal requirement for all local legislation; it is about removing duplication and red tape.

The question was asked yesterday. There is a range of Cabinet processes. Labor was unwilling to describe what it was doing. I can assure the member that there is a range of processes in place to ensure that all legislation complies with human rights.

**Attorney-General – Update**

**Mr PATEL to ATTORNEY-GENERAL**

Our CLP team went to the election with a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. As it will soon be 100 days since the CLP election win, can you advise the Assembly what you have achieved in your various portfolios to deliver on this plan for Territorians?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, during the election campaign when I was doorknocking with the Member for Casuarina, all those people who are now his constituents wanted change. That is exactly what we have been elected to do. Our government has a clear mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Territorians can judge us on our actions. As we promised during the October sittings, which was the first sittings, we passed critical amendments to Acts such as the *Criminal Code Act*, *Bail Act* and *Sentencing Act* to enhance community safety, including Declan's law, named after Declan Laverty, who was killed at a bottle shop. This was to ensure that repeat and violent offenders start with a presumption against bail. Other legislation introduced was specifically for ramraiding offences. The posting-and-boasting laws target individuals inciting criminal behaviour online.

Since their commencement on 30 October, these measures have already shown results …

**Ms Uibo** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader, cease your interjections.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Four individuals, all aged 13, have been charged with ramraid offences. Three others have been charged under the posting-and-boasting provisions.

There was also mandatory sentencing for assaults on our workers. This is important to the Member for Casuarina, given that Casuarina Square is in his electorate. The staff at that centre repeatedly told me and the Member for Casuarina about assaults on workers. That legislation, which was passed in the first sittings, will give them some comfort that they will be safe when they go to work, and if something happens those offenders will be dealt with.

Additionally, in those first sittings we lowered the age of criminal responsibility to 10. We are ensuring there is greater accountability for young offenders.

As at 24 November one individual under 12 has been arrested in Alice Springs …

**Ms Uibo:** Locked up in a prison cell.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader, cease your interjections.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** This week we will also introduce legislation to repeal the ineffective minimum unit price on alcohol which will help ease the cost-of-living pressures and, more importantly, stop punishing the majority for the actions of a few. All Territorians have been forced to pay higher prices at the bottle shops while seeing no evidence of reduced alcohol-related harm in their community.

We have moved through significant machinery-of-government changes, putting Tourism and Hospitality; Major Events; Racing; and Parks and Wildlife together, which will see immense change and focus in that space.

**Alcohol – Minimum Floor Price**

**Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY**

Central Australian Aboriginal Congress released a study showing that the minimum unit price was responsible for a 21% fall in alcohol-related domestic assaults in Alice Springs. The Menzies School of Health Research also found a 21% reduction in alcohol-related domestic assaults and a 14% reduction in alcohol-related assaults in the NT. In her landmark report on domestic and family violence this week, the Coroner called for more alcohol supply reduction measures. Why are you ignoring the evidence and scrapping the floor price for alcohol?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this change reflects our commitment we took to the election to reduce the cost of living, support our community and rebuild our economy.

The minimum floor price punishes every Territorian who likes to have a drink. It does not do anything to resolve the alcohol-related harm that happens …

**Ms Uibo:** Are you saying that Congress is lying?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader, cease your interjections. We are on the home run. We have a few minutes until the end of Question Time.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Consumption of standard spirits increased by 17% after the minimum floor price was introduced. Cask wine consumption decreased, which means that people moved from drinking cask wine, which was served in boxes and plastic pillows, to hard spirits served in glass bottles. Those glass bottles can become weapons and get smashed on the ground; walk around anyone's community to see that there is smashed glass all over the place. There are people drinking hard spirits in public.

Member for Daly, in your own community …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question is clear: why are you ignoring the evidence from Aboriginal Congress?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, you have the call and plenty of time to answer.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The evidence is that there was a 17% rise in standard spirits consumption and a 36% rise in mixed spirits since the introduction of the MUP—that is harder spirits than cask wine, which only went down a fraction. Total alcohol sales went up.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister and Leader of the Opposition, direct your comments through me.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The increase in hard spirits is evident. That is exactly what happened. The increase in alcohol-related harm is also evident; there was a 38% increase in alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory over the last eight years under the Labor government.

In the Member for Daly's own electorate in Wadeye…

**Mr Paech:** Why are you making grog cheaper?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Gwoja, cease your interjections. We are almost there. Continue in silence.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Price is not the issue for people who want to get their hands on alcohol. In Wadeye it costs $500 for a bottle of rum; that is the going rate. In peak times it is $1,200, which means that people in Wadeye are spending most of their wages on bottles of grog. That is horrific.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Labor Party likes to go down this ideological path of saying, 'Let us try to reduce the supply of alcohol to people', but prohibition does not work. We need to focus on the supply of alcohol. We

have been talking about scrapping the minimum unit price since 2020. This is an election commitment. We are delivering our promises and making the Territory safe.

**Health – Update**

**Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for HEALTH**

Our CLP team went to the election with a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. Apart from being essential reading for any credible opposition, this plan will benefit all Territorians whether they live in my electorate of Karama or in the Barkly. It is just under 100 days since the CLP election win. Can you advise the Assembly what you have achieved for your portfolios to deliver our plan for Territorians?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama is also the assistant minister for Health. All our members know the tireless work he does representing the constituents in Karama. Well done to the Member for Karama.

On 24 August this year the people of the Northern Territory sent an overwhelmingly message that people have had enough of crime, of Labor's gross mismanagement of the economy and the erosion of our lifestyle. Member for Karama, that is what the plan is all about. It is about reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our iconic Territory lifestyle; that is what we are delivering.

Territorians gave us a mandate to deliver change, and in just under 100 days the CLP team has been moving forward with hope and optimism for the future. We promised to deliver to many Territorians who put their faith in us, and we are delivering.

From 1 January 2025 the meningococcal B vaccination will be free for all infants under the age of two years and adolescents aged 14 to 19. We are honouring the memory of baby Skylar Lawrence who tragically died from the disease in 2017. I thank her parents, Sally and Ash, who have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of this invasive disease.

We have expanded the health services that community pharmacists can provide to all Territorians by commencing uncomplicated urinary tract infection diagnosis and treatment. Territorians will soon be able to access a number of treatments for up to 23 uncomplicated conditions at community pharmacies, including acute nausea and vomiting; school sores; mild to moderate allergic skin conditions; simple wounds; and ear infections. These services will alleviate pressure on primary care services and hospital emergency departments while providing convenience for patients and reducing time and costs.

We are delivering our commitment to Territorians to reduce crime by giving police the powers they need to make the community safer. We recognise that Labor's crime crisis needs a crisis response. As the Minister for Alcohol Policy, I ensured we introduced stronger laws to deal with nuisance public drinking and problem drunks by giving the police stronger powers to fine, charge and arrest people in public places where alcohol is prohibited, as well as issue those same people with a banned drinker order. This will help combat antisocial behaviour and alcohol-fuelled crime.

Regarding the Groote Eylandt Archipelago election, we are working with them and hope to have news shortly.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I advise the Member for Daly that we will take his question on notice, and we will contact the Member for Mulka to provide him with answers.

I ask that further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.

**MOTION**
**50th Anniversary of Cyclone Tracy**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I was recently fortunate to meet Shelley, a lovely member of my community. She is a Cyclone Tracy survivor, and we spoke about her experiences surviving the storm. She told me about a letter that her mother, Ms Joan Ellen Thomas, wrote many years ago recounting her and her family's ordeal. To my understanding, Ms Thomas is no longer with us, but her words live on through her letters thanks to her trusty typewriter and her surviving children and family.

I will read a few excerpts from this letter, which can be found on Territory Stories under the title 'The terror of Cyclone Tracy'. The letter begins by highlighting an example of just how unaware many were of the seriousness of the storm:

> *We'd been getting the warnings from mid-day on Xmas Eve every half hour, along with instructions on what to do when and if the cyclone struck. We were a little blaise about the whole bit, as we'd had so many come close and veer away as they reached the coast; in fact, cyclone 'Selma' came close a fortnight before. I'd been to work until 2 p.m. and on my way home, I remember thinking I'd get home and close the door and not go out again, there was an ominous look about the sky, and it was blowing and raining quite a bit then. I waited at home preparing for the big day on the morrow, we were expecting 17 for Xmas dinner, which we were to have as usual spread out on the floor with the lounge cushions around it. As each one came home, I breathed a sign of relief as the reports were getting more serious by the hour. Pete …*

I believe Pete was her son. I continue:

> *… decided to go out to his mate's place after dinner, as after all, it was Xmas Eve, I didn't like that one bit, however he's his own man. About 8 p.m. Ron suggested I cook the poultry as the lights are the first things to go in any weather in Darwin, so I set about and did my Xmas cooking. I finished mopping the floors about 10, and everything was perfection for the 'big day'—meanwhile 'Tracy' was steadily marching down the coast and the warnings were getting more alarming.*

The letter continues and explains that the family tidied up the house, took down the wall ornaments and anything they thought could become a flying missile, and her husband lashed down furniture, put away anything he could and moved his car to a safer spot. At around 11 pm the lights went out. Ms Thomas continues her story:

> *I suggested to Shell that she and I try to get a bit of sleep. We made up the night 'n' day divan and tried to settle down. Ron tried to read at the table with the pressure lamp, but the wind was getting so strong that with every gust the room shook and we all startled up. We were terribly worried about Pete and wished he were home.*
>
> *About 11.30, we heard his car come in and we settled down listening to the news reports. Pete said, 'Well, there's only one thing to do now, and that's get stuck into the brandy.' I wasn't too keen on that idea; I reckoned we needed to keep our wits about us; however, with the next gust of wind, I was the first to reach for a glass.*

The letter continues with the storm continuing to belt down:

> *The water was beating in under the locked louvres and already spreading across the floors, so I called the men and we moved all the beds and furniture back. Pete got the broom and swept the water into the bathroom drain. It was soon obvious that it wasn't going to be quick enough, so he elected to go downstairs for a brace and a bit to drill a hole in the floor of the hall. He couldn't get the front door open against the wind, so he had to go out the back way. I was frantic until he got back.*
>
> *Ron was worried about drilling a hole in the government house and removed the door stop so he could put it back later. Little did he know that we wouldn't have a house left to worry about! The water, by this time, was ankle deep. Pete shone the torch into his room; the rain was coming in so fast it was as though it was raining inside, so we decided to abandon the effort and retired to the brandy bottle.*
>
> *It was well after midnight by this time, so we decided to open our Xmas presents. We had great fun for half an hour. Pete had bought me a clothes dryer; I never even got to plug it in.*
>
> *The news came through that the cyclone was almost upon us, and the house was shuddering from each blow of the wind. Then the radio stations went off the air. We knew it was almost upon us and that we were really in for it.*

The letter details that the family moved to the bathroom as the storm raged on. It continues:

> *The whole house was moving, and the wind was tearing the trees to shreds outside. The noise was terrible. Ron wanted to grab a few valuables, but I said, 'Come on, it doesn't matter. It's only things; it's only money. As long as we're all right, I don't give a … about anything.'*

*It was fairly crowded in there. Standing room only, so Pete got a chair and sat outside in the hallway. Next minute, the whole wall full of louvres opposite us exploded inwards and Pete was showered with glass. There is no sound in all the world like smashing louvres. It's like a hundred iron pipes dropped onto concrete from a height.*

*I said to Pete, 'Get in here and lock that door,' but he realised what it was going to be like later and decided we would all need a pair of shoes, so he found us a pair each out of his wardrobe (very glamorous, Shell and I looked).*

*By now the wind was a roaring, screaming shriek, and we could not speak without yelling to be heard. The men had to lean their combined weight against the door to keep it closed—and they are both built like Sherman tanks—until they remembered the slide bolt. After that, we could take turns sitting on the edge of the bath. About half an hour later, Ron said, 'There it goes,' and with a tearing, wrenching shudder the roof parted company with the walls.*

*The bathroom rocked like a small boat on the giant sea, and we realised that the rest of the house was being torn apart piece by piece, interspersed with the crash of breaking glass and the banging and thumping of falling timber.*

*It kept up for hours. We didn't think it could get any worse, but it did. The wind changed direction and came from the back. We felt the force of it against the exposed bathroom wall. We heard the hall wall go, and the toilet roof next to us peeled back like a banana skin and hammered way over our heads.*

*We had to take the light out of the hand basin because Shelley was sea-sick, and the water in the bath kept rising up and wetting our backsides. The water was by now totally unfit to use, as the dirt pouring down the walls made it black. The water was pouring under the door like a river, and Shell was getting soaked as it poured down through the light fitting …*

*It got to about 4 in the morning, and we were waiting for the 'eye' so that we could get to safety.*

However, the eye never passed over them. The family remained in the bathroom while they were waiting for the break that never came. It continues:

*Ron said 'There's nothing between us and that but this flimsy wall; I think we'll have to ride it to the ground'. The wall was heaving with each gust like a giant breathing. I looked at Pete and he raised his eyebrows. He was absolutely like the Rock of Gibraltar; I don't know what we would have done without him. It was about then that my prayer changed from 'Keep my family safe' to 'Please God, keep us together' over and over again. I thought of nothing else.*

*About 5, we realised that we weren't going to get a break, and I said to Ron 'We've GOT to get out. If only we could get into the cars, I reckon we'd be alright.' Ron said 'No way, we'd be killed by flying debris …*

*Pete said 'Look, I think the wind is lessening. Let's wait for between the gusts, and I'll make a break for it.' I was very much against it, but he was determined, and so they waited. He took a torch and dashed out, we slammed the door behind him …*

They waited for 15 minutes. It continues:

*I could feel myself starting to crack, it seemed like hours until we heard him hammer on the floor with a broom handle. We thought it was the signal to go, and in the next lull, Ron picked up the lamp, and we dashed out, hanging onto one another to keep from being blown apart. Shell said later, 'Mum, you had five arms that night'.*

*We bent low and fought our way along the floor to the back steps. We almost blew over the edge when the wind caught us full force, but there at the bottom of the steps was Pete, showing us the way with his torch. We had to clamber over the top rail and drop down into the garden, as the iron and debris covered half the staircase.*

*We crept alongside the boat and fell shivering and gasping into Pete's car, where he had already found dry blankets and towels from goodness knows where, and fell into exhausted sleep for half an hour.*

After huddling in Pete's car, the family had made it through the night. The letter continues with the next morning:

> *We woke at daybreak to our neighbour's tapping on the window. We opened our eyes to complete and utter destruction. We could not believe our eyes. It was still raining and very cold, and we were all starving. Ron managed to clamber back into the house and got our chickens out of the fridge and with that and a carton of cold milk, we sat in the car and ate our Xmas breakfast.*
>
> *The brick flats opposite hadn't fared too badly, and the people called us over for hot coffee. We made raincoats out of garbage bags and went back to survey the wreckage. From our 'flat deck' we could see for miles where once we couldn't see past the trees. Everywhere, as the far as the eye could see, looked the same. Total disaster. Even looking at it we still could not believe it was possible. There should have been thousands killed, and who knows how many are still buried under the rubble. Where our bedrooms had been, the floor was swept clean, not a stick remained.*

Later in this letter, Ms Thomas explains that amongst all the chaos there were some lighter moments:

> *There were a few lighter moments though amongst the nightmare, like Shelley's pet mouse that spent the entire night in her shirt pocket (I'd have had a fit had I known) and the budgie, shaken but unhurt, chirping loudly behind a kitchen cupboard. When we put him out on the lawn to dry out, he called all the escaped coloured birds for miles around. It was lovely to see them unhurt, and they came down and fed out of our hands.*

The family then moved into the tax office with two other families and two men. Although it was extensively damaged, for a few nights it gave them a dry place to sleep. They had a camping gas cooker and plenty of food, as luckily everyone had stocked up for the Wet. The family then headed south on the 29th, and Shelley and her mother would later return on 10 February 1975. In Ms Thomas' words, the first thought she had when they were leaving Darwin was, 'Yes, we will be back'. She said:

> *Ron had already applied for and got a job with the Northern Territory Department. We didn't know what would happen, but all were sure that we'd return and build again. Darwin does that to you.*

I pay tribute to Ms Joan Ellen Thomas, her family and especially Shelley for bringing this letter and the story to my attention.

I thank all those in the Chamber who have contributed to this important milestone and pay my respects to the survivors in and out of this Chamber and the families of the 66 people who tragically lost their lives that Christmas Eve. I commend those who helped rebuild the Territory after the devastation of Tracy.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations):** Madam Speaker, although I did not live in the Territory at the time, Cyclone Tracy had quite an impact on me and my family.

My cousin Annie and her family were living in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy struck. As a young kid I was on Christmas holidays with my parents, sisters, grandparents and aunty, who was Annie's mum. I remember waking up on Christmas to everybody looking so concerned, devastated and worried. It was confusing as a young child to understand what was happening because this was Christmas and everything was supposed to be positive, wonderful and happy. I then learned from my aunty what had happened in Darwin and that nobody knew what happened to Annie. It was some 48 hours before we received advice that Annie and her family had survived in the concrete structure, the laundry at the bottom of their old Territory-style house, and that structure was all that remained of the property.

When I moved to Darwin some 30 years ago and met a lot of the people who had been around when Cyclone Tracy hit, I was struck by the resilient nature of these people and how, even though they had gone through such devastation, their total passion and commitment to the Territory remained strong.

My first job in the Territory was working as the Executive Director of the Australian Medical Association of the Northern Territory. During that time I came to know and love a number of the clinicians who worked in the old Darwin hospital and who rallied to support the community in the devastation that followed Cyclone Tracy. I thought it would be worth mentioning some of those people who had such a profound impact on those left standing after the cyclone destroyed their home town.

Dr Ella Stack was a GP who continued to work tirelessly after the cyclone, looking after patients. She went on to become the Mayor of Darwin, a place she described as a pile of rubble she inherited but that she was thrilled to be part of rebuilding.

I had the privilege of knowing and working with people such as Dr Alan Bromwich who had moved to Darwin in the 1950s and led the surgical team at Darwin hospital; after the cyclone hit he led the surgical response. He was joined by clinicians, Mr Arun Mahajani, also a surgeon, and his wife Dr Sadhana Mahajani, who was a GP who worked and set up a clinic in the grounds of the old Berrimah Primary School, providing care to people post-cyclone.

Dr Doug Mounsey and Dr Alan Walker are names well known to Territorians but people who, perhaps, were not well known for the response that they undertook post-Cyclone Tracy. Another well-known Territorian is John Hardy; many people may not know he came to the Territory as a radiographer, and post-Cyclone Tracy he was one of the many allied health service professionals who stayed on and supported the population.

I make special mention of somebody who is most often not remembered in the health response, probably because for many people his job was too confronting. Dr Jurgen Rode was the only pathologist living and working in Darwin during that time, and he was tasked with caring for those we lost during the cyclone. He refused to create a mass grave, even after he was instructed to do that. He fought for those people and made sure that when their loved ones returned to Darwin, they would know where they were buried and that they could mourn them appropriately. Every person we lost but recovered received a funeral and an independent grave so that when their families returned to Darwin, they knew that they had been cared for.

He was quoted as saying, ‘Everyone gets a marked grave, and everyone gets a funeral’. In that environment where people were concerned about post-cyclone disease and trauma, for a man to stand up for those we love is remarkable.

To all the healthcare professionals who were here during Cyclone Tracy, many of whom are still with us, thank you for standing by, fighting and being there.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I commemorate 50 years since Darwin was put through the forging disaster that was Cyclone Tracy. Darwin is a tough place with tough people. We have been through at least two rounds on the anvil—the first when we were bombed during World War II and the second when Darwin was largely decimated by Cyclone Tracy.

I thank the Member for Nelson for his heartfelt contribution this morning. We were all deeply moved by the personal impact of Tracy on his family. Unfortunately, the City of Palmerston and the seat of Blain did not exist when Tracy struck on Christmas Eve 1974 as development started on Palmerston in 1980. As a born-and-bred Territorian, which I am proud of, there are many things I can bring to this House.

I went to Casuarina Senior College in the northern suburbs. There is a monument out the front which I walked past every school day for two years until it became part of the air that we breathe. It is a memorial constructed with twisted girders from the home of Sergeant Kevin Malley, which was destroyed in the cyclone in 1974, and it commemorates those who died in Cyclone Tracy.

At the height of the cyclone, the Malley home totally disintegrated, blowing Sergeant Malley and his two children who were in his arms 15 metres to the ground. His wife, Joyce, fell beside him. He threw himself over his children to protect them, receiving severe injuries, which required over 200 stitches from flying debris. Joyce had a broken spine, and Fiona had severe leg injuries which required 23 operations to correct. Only their son, Stephen, escaped unscathed.

The family was first evacuated by aircraft to Sydney. The girders were bent by front-end loaders during the cleanup operations. A teacher from Casuarina High School took the initiative to use the twisted girders as a monument. The girders were set in concrete, and the memorial was unveiled by the Administrator in June 1984.

That is a monument to Cyclone Tracy—huge steel girders twisted and bent by the power of the cyclone—and the subsequent cleanup. I recommend the Mayor of Darwin visit that monument and take inspiration from it.

In my main contribution, I wish to tell a story of two different perspectives on the same traumatic event. I was not born, as I am a 1981 baby. One is from my mother who was with my father, my brother and my sister at

the farm outside Batchelor when Tracy hit; the other is from a dear friend of mine, Tania. She gave me permission to share her story.

Mum and dad were on the farm on Christmas Eve 1974. My brother Errol was six, and my sister Marjorie was four. It was a usual Christmas Eve. We had a pine forest of cypress pines, and my dad had found a small tree, cut it down, brought it to the house, set it in a basin of water and had their presents under there. They knew the cyclone was in the area, but it was not forecast to hit Darwin, so they were not particularly concerned as they were about 70 kilometres from the coast.

My mum said she was woken up at about five o'clock the next morning when the louvres were rattling, which was odd. She went back to bed, got up a bit later and went to turn on the radio, but there was no radio which was odd. They had some chickens. I will come to the link between my story and the Member for Wanguri's story in a moment.

That morning the family all got into the car and went to Batchelor to do the regular egg run. When they went to Batchelor, the people they met told them the horrific news that Darwin had been blown away by Cyclone Tracy. Dad had lots of friends in Darwin, so straightaway they turned the car around and headed to Darwin so that he could check on his friends.

Mum told me that as they headed into town she clearly remembers all the leaves had been stripped off the trees. I am not sure whether this is true or not, but my mum told me so I will relay it here. She remembers going to Syrimi's chook farm at Inghams. They had a lot of chickens in cages at the time. My mum told me that all their feathers were blown off. There was a large number of naked chickens sitting in the cages after the cyclone.

She said there was a big wreck everywhere, and all the powerlines were on the ground. They did what they could and headed back to Batchelor. Luckily, being at the farm they did not have to evacuate. The farm ran on its own diesel generator, and Batchelor was powered by the power station at the Rum Jungle mine at the time; it was not part of the NT grid.

Mum remembers going to Darwin to get groceries—or rations, as they were at the time—for free. People did not have to pay; they just lined up and were issued with canned food and powdered milk. They had little fresh fruit and veggies, but being on the farm there were lots of chickens and eggs and they could go into the bush and get a killer—which is feral cattle, buffaloes or horses—so they had plenty of meat to live on.

The story on the farm at Batchelor was not one of hardship, unlike Tania's story. I worked with my friend Tania in the IT industry; if you are watching, Tania, thank you for letting me share your story.

Tania was 10 years old on Christmas Eve 1974. The family knew it was coming, but at the time it was expected to track down the coast. No-one expected Tracy to take that sharp turn towards Darwin. They lived in an elevated house in Nightcliff at the time, which will become relevant later.

On that fateful Christmas Eve, Tania remembers her mum getting ready for dinner. In the evening they saw the storm as it was rolling in. Her dad was concerned, and he had a plan. Her parents attended the Mormon church. Their plan A if the cyclone kept its track and missed Darwin was to stay at home and ride it out in their house. Plan B was to go to the Mormon church which was built with besser blocks and was likely to weather the cyclone.

Tracy turned and came on a direct course for Darwin. As it intensified through the evening, they heard sheets of tin tearing off the roof. The rain started to pour through the louvres. As the evening progressed and they took shelter in the bathroom, the back wall collapsed on their elevated house. At some point in the night, as it became clear that things were bad and getting worse, her dad got the family together and got them to open their presents during the storm because he was not sure they would get a chance to open them the next day.

Tania remembers that her parents were scared, which must have been upsetting for a young child when dad is usually the rock of the family. She told me that the eye came over, so it went from the most intense part of the storm to deathly silence. The power was out, but they could still see from all the lightning. Everything went quiet, and her dad went for a walk. He tried to get the car out so they could go to the Mormon church, but it was blocked by rubble, so plan B was out.

The family went next door to the Frasers, as their house looked like it was in better condition and a better place to shelter during the remainder of the storm. After the wall came down they hid in the bathroom of their

neighbour's house with the other family, and the walls started to cave in. Tania told me that they had their hands on the walls trying to hold them so they did not cave in on them; that is truly terrifying.

The roar of the cyclone was so loud, like a freight train that just went on and on, never stopping. As the wind howled Tania remembers her mum lying in the bath with Tania's brother underneath her in the bottom of the bath trying to protect him with her body. Tania was hiding in the shower cabinet. The parents were putting their bodies on the line to protect their children.

As the wind howled the whole house was shaking, the walls were moving and her mum was hit by a bathroom cabinet as it fell off the wall. When her dad came back, the most horrifying thing happened: the ceiling was sucked off the house. The sheets of iron had been coming off, and finally the structure gave out and the entire roof, including the ceiling, was blown away. After that, the entire house on top of the stilts blew away.

The two families were blown off the platform. Luckily, they did not break any bones. We do not know how far they blew in the wind until they hit the ground and stopped rolling. Four adults, two sets of parents, made a human chain and grabbed the five children. They got everyone together into the Ford sedan that was under the house. That is where they sheltered. They had to keep their heads down below window height in case something came flying and smashed through the windows of the car. They stayed there for at least three hours. Tania said that was the longest night of her life.

Tania had landed on roofing nails; her brother landed on corrugated iron and sliced his leg. That wound went septic and was the reason they were airlifted out three days later. The next day, as the rubble cleared, her dad found the Christmas presents and put them in the storeroom under the house. Unfortunately they were stolen by looters.

That reminded me that on the weekend when we had the 50th anniversary event in this Chamber, the previous Member for Nightcliff, Dawn Lawrie, told her story of New South Wales police walking around with guns in the aftermath of Tracy. At the time I thought, 'Why would they be doing that? That is so bizarre.' This is the reason; in the aftermath of Tracy there was a lot of looting.

Thank God Tania's family and her neighbours survived Tracy with their lives intact, with only scratches and bruises from being blown off the house and landing on nails and broken glass.

Thank you, Chief Minister, for bringing this motion. Thank you to all the survivors of Tracy who are still alive today to share their stories. Thank you, Tania, for sharing your story with me.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister)(in reply):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members who spoke, either sharing their stories; the stories of their community or loved ones; or just reflecting on the significant, indelible impact that Cyclone Tracy had on the Northern Territory and our culture as a people.

We heard clearly the rawness of the stories. That rawness will never disappear or dissipate. Fifty years on, it is still like it was yesterday for some. It is important as we move into 50th anniversary commemorations to note that not all survivors want to commemorate or participate. It means different things to everyone. There is enough space in the Territory for everyone's anniversary of this gut-wrenching, tragic event to be what they need it to be. While others are looking forward to some of the services, memorials and monuments that are taking place, others are not.

Today we heard the breadth of experience people have suffered and continue to suffer. We also heard great stories of survival and triumph and stories of people who helped profoundly, whether it was the people of Warrabri near Tennant Creek or the people in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine who supported travellers as they were evacuating, literally with only the clothes on their back, down the highway to try to find a friend or a family member interstate who they could live with for the foreseeable future. You cannot imagine putting yourself in that situation.

There were 36,000 Territorians who left Darwin in a matter of days. Even when we try to picture doing that today in the modern world it seems unachievable, yet it was done at that time. There were no mobile phones, so you can only imagine the torture of the lack of connectivity for loved ones who did not know whether their family member or friend was safe or injured, whether they had been killed, whether they had been evacuated or where they went. Remember, we had planes travelling all over the country and people driving out of the Territory left, right and centre.

It is hard to try to put yourself in those shoes if you were not there at the time. I think all of us have the images of Cyclone Tracy in our minds that we have seen over our lifetime. For me it is particularly the photos of the women and children. There is one photo of women and children who were lined up on the tarmac as they were boarding a plane, and there is a young child carrying a teddy bear by the arm. It continues to shape who we are as a people and our future.

The testament is in the people who returned. The Member for Brennan talked about how her family returned within a matter of months. There are also those who stayed. There was the determination to see Darwin rebuilt, when I am sure that plenty of people thought it was done and would move on to the next thing. The spirit was strong, and people saw a future for the Territory and for Darwin. We get to be the beneficiaries of that vision, strength, courage and determination today.

The speed in which Darwin was rebuilt is an incredible story. I talked about it being hard to imagine evacuating 36,000 people. It is hard to imagine rebuilding the Territory in three short years, as was done 50 years ago. It is an incredible story and triumph. It is an unprecedented story of resilience.

I have said this before and will say it again: the Territory and Territorians have been forged in the fire of disaster. That is what the Territory can-do spirit is, and that is where it was born. It can never be extinguished.

Motion agreed to.

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

**Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill 2024, Serial 10. I move that the Bill be read a first time.

The minimum unit price was introduced in 2018 by the former government as part of the recommendations from the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review. The review, conducted by the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Trevor Riley KC, made 220 recommendations to reduce alcohol-related harm in the Territory, and it is generally referred to as the Riley review.

The purpose of this Bill is to repeal Part 5 of the *Liquor Act 2019* and amend the Liquor Regulations 2019, removing provisions that deal with the MUP. This Bill removes the definition of 'minimum sale price' and 'sale price' from section 4 of the Act. The definition of 'standard drink' is also amended to update the cross-reference from section 117 to section 5A.

The Bill repeals section 104 of the Act from Part 4, Division 3, which operationalises the minimum unit price and amends numerous provisions under the Liquor Regulations 2019, including Schedule 6 to remove the penalty provision relating to offences in the minimum unit price.

We are introducing this Bill to remove the minimum unit price; help reduce the cost of living, support communities and rebuild the economy; address the MUP's failure as a blunt, ineffective tool to tackle the complexity of alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory; and align with evidence-based community-driven solutions rather than ideological, untested policies implemented by the former Labor government.

The minimum unit price, also known as the minimum floor price, sets a minimum price of $1.30 per standard drink for low-cost alcohol products. It was aimed at increasing the cost of low-price liquor, ensuring that alcohol was not sold below a certain price. It was intended to target heavy drinkers while sparing moderate drinkers, a goal it completely failed to achieve.

The 2022 evaluation into the effectiveness of the minimum unit price found that the sale of cask wines was lower than before the introduction of the minimum unit price, leading to a small reduction in total alcohol consumption. However, wholesale data found that drinkers had shifted to other products, finding a 17% rise in standard spirits consumption and a 36% rise in mixed spirits consumption.

While the MUP may have reduced the sales of lower alcohol content products, the data shows that drinkers have simply moved to higher alcohol content spirits. The MUP has delivered no measurable benefits. Alcohol-related assaults have increased by 38% over the past eight years under Labor. Alcohol-related emergency presentations have increased over the past five years.

The MUP punishes the majority for the actions of a few. All Territorians have been forced to pay higher prices at the bottle shops, without seeing any reduction in alcohol-related harm in their communities.

The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia using a minimum unit price as an alcohol reduction strategy. It simply does not work. Internationally, its effectiveness remains questionable. Scotland, one of the few places trialling the policy, has just recorded the most alcohol-related deaths in 15 years. There seems little appetite in Canada, with only a few regions using the strategy.

Price is not a barrier for those determined to access alcohol. In Wadeye, the black market price for Bundaberg Rum has soared to $500 a bottle. It reached a high of $1,200. This contrasts against the area's median weekly household income of $1,096, as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

For a long time, the CLP has said that if elected, we would scrap the minimum floor price. Territorians are right; the floor price on alcohol only aims to punish responsible Territorians who do the right thing. Most Territorians can and should be able to have a beer at the pub with their mates or share a bottle of wine over dinner for special occasions. That is part of the Territory lifestyle, and governments should not get in the way and say this is wrong.

The focus should be, and is under our new government, on the demand for alcohol. The previous government spent too long only focusing on supply. Scrapping the minimum floor price is a direct action to shift the focus.

This change in legislation is the line in the sand which demonstrates that we will not settle for the status quo, and we will not keep doing the same thing that has been done over the last eight years. We are changing things. We are delivering our promise to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

**TAKE TWO BILLS TOGETHER**
**Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Amendment (Validation) Bill**
**and**
**Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Legislation Amendment Bill**

**Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development):** Madam Speaker, I seek leave for debate on the second reading of the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Amendment (Validation) Bill 2024, Serial 8, and the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 9, to be taken cognately.

Leave granted.

**FINES AND PENALTIES (RECOVERY) AMENDMENT (VALIDATION) BILL**
**Serial 8**
**and**
**FINES AND PENALTIES (RECOVERY) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 9**

Continued from 24 October 2024 and 27 November 2024.

**Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 9, be now read a second time.

**Mr BROWN (Arafura):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this legislation before the Assembly. It is important legislation because it provides a fix to issues identified in the *Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Act 2001* during the middle of this year.

For context, the former Territory Labor government was made aware of the administrative issues following a court case in June this year. It was understood that the process failures could go back as far as 2002 when the Fines Recovery Unit was established.

The original fines, such as speeding and parking fines, are still legally valid and need to be paid; however, any subsequent enforcement action for fines not paid, such as having a driver's licence suspended, may not have been actioned appropriately.

This is a longstanding historical issue that requires an urgent fix to ensure the Fines Recovery Unit can clear its backlog and continue operating. These process issues did not come to the attention of either Territory Labor or the CLP during their terms in office.

Let me be clear: if you do the wrong thing you should pay the fine, particularly when the aim is to deter people from doing the wrong thing on our roads. When this was brought to the attention of the former Territory Labor government we acted quickly to address it. Labor established a taskforce in the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice to review the impacts of these historical process issues, come up with a way to fix the issues and ensure that fines recovery could continue. Labor was already taking steps prior to the election to amend the legislation on advice from the taskforce, as well as planning to establish a new enforcement entity.

No-one likes getting a fine, but they are a necessary part of our enforcement regime when it comes to issues like road safety or public amenity. We spoke yesterday evening about the horrific road toll. Governments of all persuasions do not and should not make apologies for enforcing road safety rules through measures like fines for doing the wrong thing, which is why Territory Labor will support this Bill in its current form.

We acknowledged at the time of discovery that this was an oversight. We do not sugarcoat this issue; we know it needs to be fixed. Territorians deserve to have confidence in government systems and processes. This problem needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

There is no doubt the CLP will try to score political points out of this, but it should be seen that this is nonsense. This issue was around under the last CLP government; it is longstanding. It should have been picked up but was not. Now it needs to be fixed without any unnecessary song and dance. Any Territorian with an outstanding fine, such as a speeding or parking fine, still needs to pay.

We understand that the CLP will support the Fines Recovery Unit to continue operating in its current form without the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. The CLP needs to reassure Territorians that, as well as these legislative amendments, it will ensure the systems and processes are functioning as intended and that this will be carefully monitored to ensure something like this does not happen again.

On top of that, the systems the CLP implements moving forward need to encompass important aspects of cultural awareness and processes. Some Territorians, particularly Aboriginal people in remote settings, may go by various names. We also know that some Aboriginal Territorians do not have a fixed address. Therefore, I call on the government and the hardworking people of the Fines Recovery Unit to ensure that any future system takes this into account. A member of a remote community cannot be put into a situation where they have lost their licence and face further consequences from the matter because they were not aware of the enforcement processes. I hope that the minister will address these concerns and ensure that a fair system will be implemented for all Territorians.

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I support the fines and penalties Bills.

It was just days before the former Labor government entered caretaker mode ahead of the 2024 general election when we learned about this decade-long debacle. It was identified that the recovery of fines, such as speeding and parking fines, had problems. Although those fines were still payable by law, the enforcement of the fines recovery was put on hold while processing issues were resolved.

The CLP government is now fixing these issues with these legislative amendments to address issues relating to the enforcement orders for unpaid fines and penalties. The Minister for Corporate and Digital Development said that we are taking decisive action and cleaning up this long-term issue created by administrative oversights that potentially go back as far as 2002. All fines and penalties are still valid and have always been payable. The amendment relates to enforcement orders and enforcement sanctions implemented when fines and penalties were not paid by the due date.

As at 30 June 2024 there were 201,541 outstanding fines and infringements worth a total of $119.6m. Of this, about $102.3m is owed to the Territory government. In the NT annually between 50,000 and 60,000 fines and infringements are issued.

When the Bill is passed historical enforcement actions will be retrospectively validated. We back the actions of the Fines Recovery Unit which will continue to operate. It is strongly supported. Recent machinery-of-government changes saw the Fines Recovery Unit and management of the *Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Act 2001* move from the Attorney-General's Department to the Department of Corporate and Digital Development.

It is important that a fines recovery system is watertight so that those who do the wrong thing know there is a consequence; equally, when it comes to enforcing collection of these fines it is important that the process is swift and irrefutable.

This legislation ensures the recovery of money payable to the Territory arising from penalties imposed by infringement notices and fines imposed by the court as a penalty during court proceedings. The infringements or fines are issued by various enforcement agencies, including NT Police for speeding offences and other offences when an infringement may be issued; councils for parking offences and other infringement offences; and agencies such as the Department of Health, which may undertake regulatory enforcement actions through the issue of an infringement notice.

The Fines Recovery Unit is responsible for making sure that fines and penalties are paid. If someone does not pay a fine from an infringement notice or a court within the set time, that fine becomes a debt owed to the Territory. The Fines Recovery Unit can then take action to collect this debt unless the person has decided to take the matter to court or has requested a re-hearing or appeal.

To collect unpaid fines the Fines Recovery Unit can issue enforcement orders. This allows it to take further action like suspending drivers' licences or publicly naming people who have unpaid fines to encourage payment. These measures are commonly used across Australia to ensure fines are paid and to maintain a strong system for dealing with penalties.

In June 2024 problems were found with how the Fines Recovery Unit was enforcing these unpaid fines. As a result, it temporarily stopped its enforcement actions while working on fixing these issues. This Bill is the first step in helping the Fines Recovery Unit get back to enforcing and collecting unpaid fines.

Fines, infringements and the recovery of such play a crucial role in accountability in the Northern Territory. Fines and infringements can act as a strong deterrent, serving as a warning to individuals that certain behaviours are unacceptable. The potential for fines encourages people to follow laws and regulations that help prevent misconduct.

Enforcing infringements ensures that individuals are held responsible for their actions. Personal responsibility is paramount. Many infringements such as traffic violations are designed to protect public safety. By enforcing these rules our police and authorities help reduce accidents and promote safer environments for everyone.

The collection of fines can also contribute additional public funds that can be used for community services, infrastructure and other essential programs, which are all needed in the Northern Territory.

Although the hope is that people do the right thing and fines are not issued, sadly, people are imperfect. Issuing a fine acts as a deterrent, and knowing it will go back into the community means its collection can be put to good use. The enforcement of infringements can encourage individuals to change their behaviour. Knowing there are consequences for certain actions can lead to more responsible choices.

Infringements also help establish and uphold community standards and norms, and by enforcing rules the Territory can maintain its values and expectations. Overall, the effective utilisation and enforcement of infringements are vital so that we can have a safe, fair and orderly Northern Territory.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, a system of fines and penalties works okay for people who are not in poverty or crisis because they can manage their affairs. They have money to pay when they make mistakes, and a fine serves as a reminder of what is expected and a penalty. For someone who is struggling and their life is in crisis, a fine will increase the crisis, and they may not be able to challenge a fine if it was made in error.

Sadly, in the NT a lot of people are struggling due to poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, mental illness, physical health issues and substance abuse issues. We also need to remember that for many people there can be a significant language barrier. For these people, fining them does not help. A fine is not a reminder of what is expected; it is another problem on top of all the issues that already exist. We require a government with a human face, not just a computer system that is harassing our poorest and most vulnerable people.

There are people in our communities who need help and understanding. They need someone who can talk with them and provide assistance. This is the same for the fines that were introduced last sittings for public

nuisance. Who are the people in the park that the CLP are talking about, and what does a public nuisance look like? The people I see in Darwin long-grassing cannot change their lives because someone gives them a fine. They need a welfare response, and they need someone who can understand why they are in Darwin. Are they here for medical issues? Are they visiting family? Can they afford to go home? Do they have overcrowded housing at home?

I have lived in overcrowding for most of my time in parliament. I have lived outside of the house in a tent with my wife. We have lived in a caravan, and now we live in a container outside the house. Sometimes there are 20 people sharing a bathroom and a kitchen. This is the life for most remote people in the NT. We have tent cities which pop up around houses in every community, which is why I know that most people who are long-grassing in Darwin may have family they can stay with but are actually homeless.

When we know we have all these issues, it does not seem right for our government to add to the problems these people have with fines and further interactions with the punitive judicial system. This is the same way I feel about truancy fines. Ask people what the problems are and help them to deal with them.

Take responsibility for the problems governments are creating. Aboriginal families and children may not be going to school because it is not a safe place. In town we know there is racism in schools because of the Children's Commissioner's report. It is up to everyone to call it out. Let us ask about their experience.

One young child says, 'I was called a monkey because I am Aboriginal'. Another child says, 'When people call me something that sounds racist, it makes me feel like I am not a part of anything and that I have no culture, and I feel sad. I feel unsafe.'

I seek leave to table this report.

Leave granted.

**Mr GUYULA:** I tabled this report because it is important for the members of the Assembly to read the experiences of our children and know how they feel about racism. I am not blaming anyone; this is the experience of many people in the NT, and we must work together to fix it. We must have a conversation together to better understand all the people of the Northern Territory. A gap exists, and we must close it through better understanding and appreciation of the diversity of our cultures.

In talking about fines, I want to mention that in remote schools there may be many reasons that kids are not attending. In remote communities, many different clans in one space may not feel safe for a child. Having a balanda principal with no links to the community may not feel safe for a family. When a school does not have a good relationship with the community, it may not feel safe for the whole community.

Children may not be going to school in bigger towns because they do not feel safe when they are not on their own clan's country. This is why homelands are important. When children are living in homelands, they are safe on their country. Their school is safe. A fine of $370 cannot fix this issue, but talking with the people in the community can.

Many people in my remote communities are living in poverty. Instead of fining parents, come and ask us what is needed. The elders of Maningrida are right when they say that they need proper consultation on these issues. These fines will target Aboriginal families. There are other ways we can solve these problems.

This Bill corrects an error that has existed for more than 20 years. The Fines Recovery Unit has been acting illegally. It is a big mistake. Maybe it is a bigger mistake than forgetting to pay for parking or being a public nuisance. In this case, there is no penalty for the government because the government can make this retrospective legislation and say that these mistakes never happened.

If this government passes this Bill, it is also an opportunity to wipe the debts of anyone with a low income. It is a chance for the government to say, 'We are wiping the slate clean for us; therefore, we will wipe the slate clean for you.' I call on this government to create a space for anyone on a low income to have their debts cleared.

I also call on the government to create a position within the Fines Recovery Unit that is human and is specifically designed to provide a helpful response, work with people in crisis and refer people to services that can help them.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Madam Speaker, as the assistant minister for DCDD I will get some comments on the record about this Bill.

The Fines Recovery Unit was established in 2002 within the year after the Clare Martin Labor government took power after the CLP had been in government for many years. The FRU is currently a registry of the Local Court under the Act. Fines are monetary penalties issued by a court. Penalties are monetary penalties issued through an infringement notice—for example, a speeding or a parking fine.

Most infringements are issued by the NT Police but also by local councils and various government agencies. The FRU receives payments from those who pay their court fines and infringement penalties by the due date and takes enforcement action against those who do not pay by the due date. This is in line with community expectations. We all want to be safe on the roads and expect there to be speed limits and various road rules with penalties for those who do not comply. If there is a penalty there must be an enforcement mechanism. This is a longstanding principle in our jurisdiction.

The most common enforcement sanction processed by the FRU is a driver's licence suspension followed by a cessation of business with the MVR, meaning that someone is unable to drive for a period if they have failed to do the right thing on the road, were caught and issued an infringement and then failed to pay it.

The FRU also offers community work orders to people who have no capacity to pay but can work off their debt by community work. We can all agree that we need more community work around town; there is always lots of rubbish, weeds and land to clean up. I could do with a lot more community work in my electorate. Minister for Corrections, I will be sending you letters for some of your wonderful workers. I saw some today on the way to this House. There were some open-security inmates working busily on Sibbald Crescent in Woodroffe, and I appreciate that.

In June 2024 process issues with the enforcement of fines and penalties by the FRU were identified and determined to be noncompliant with the provisions of the Act. This has been identified to go back to the original 2002 issuing of the Act—another thing this government is here to fix.

Let it be clear that none of the process issues affects the validity of the underlying fines or penalties. Those fines and penalties remain payable; that is the community expectation, and that is what we will deliver. The issue affects only people who had an outstanding fine or penalty which required enforcement action. Anyone who paid their fines on time is unaffected.

We are here to fix this problem we inherited. The proposed amendments were separated into two Bills. The first part was introduced in the second week of the October sittings—the validation Bill to signal our intent to validate previous enforcement actions—and the second part introduced in these sittings will join the first Bill and be debated together. Taken together, these will validate any past enforcement action taken by the FRU and will ensure that enforcements going forward will be beyond reproach.

The new process will reduce complexity by providing a similar set of criteria for the FRU to use to determine when an unpaid infringement can be enforced at the earliest available time. This will reduce administrative work and enable quicker and more consistent enforcement of unpaid infringement notices. These amendments do not diminish a person's ability to challenge the underlying infringement notice.

I have not had any tickets for a long time, but I remember getting a ticket when I was a hothead teenager with a bit of a lead foot. On the back of it there was a little form you could fill out to take to court and try your luck with a judge, hoping you did not come away worse off. That process still exists for people who receive an infringement notice.

The second Bill supports and makes clear our ability to use computer programs and systems to streamline this process. As a former software developer—correct me if I am wrong, but the only software developer in the history of this House—I know that the more we can automate business processes, the better.

I commend the Bills to the Assembly.

**Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development)(in reply):** Madam Speaker, I thank members for their contributions. I will read a short statement before addressing some concerns raised.

I thank the staff of the Department of Corporate and Digital Development for their hard work and efficiency in amending the fines and penalty legislation in such a short timeframe. I thank their colleagues from the Attorney-General's Department who are here this evening.

These changes are extremely important to not only rectify a decades-long oversight in legislation compliance but also ensure the government can continue to enforce and recover funds owed.

As I mentioned this week there are 206,000 outstanding fines and infringements in the Territory, worth a total of $121.5m. Of this amount, over $104m is owed to the Territory government. That is a significant amount of money, and the remainder is owed to local government and corporations that we provide the fines recovery service to.

When these issues were identified by the Fines Recovery Unit earlier this year, the former Labor government promised Territorians an independent review to identify the scope of the problem. We know what the problem is. Everyone here has been briefed and provided with plenty of information on the problem, and we have provided a solution.

On 21 October 2024 there was a process to draft two Bills to amend the *Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Act* and remedy the historical noncompliance issues. The first Bill was introduced in the October 2024 sittings to validate the past enforcement action taken by the Fines Recovery Unit under the Act since its inception in 2002. The second Bill was introduced to the Assembly this week and contains amendments to streamline the process of taking enforcement action and to ensure legislation matches the processes used by the Fines Recovery Unit.

There is urgency in passing these amendments in order to validate past enforcement actions and avoid any possible litigation which poses a significant financial risk to the Northern Territory Government and to recommence enforcement actions for unpaid infringements. Since the noncompliance issue was first discovered in June 2024, the Fines Recovery Unit ceased all enforcement action, meaning many fines and infringements are not being recovered in a timely manner.

Since the suspension of enforcement processes approximately 9,000 enforcement actions have not been addressed. That is 9,000 people potentially doing the wrong thing who currently face no consequences. The estimated uncollected revenue is approximately $525,000 per month. If we do not pass this on urgency today it will wait until 2025 and enforcements will continue to backlog. This will place additional pressures on the Fines Recovery Unit, which will be tasked with processing a backlog of enforcement actions once this legislation eventually passes.

On Monday 24 November the opposition and crossbenchers were briefed. I will now address some of the issues that were raised this evening.

I thank the Members for Arafura and Mulka who spoke for the crossbench and opposition. The Member for Arafura raised concerns about people not being able to pay back their fines and the safeguards in place for vulnerable people. There are existing safeguards in the Act relating to the exercise of powers and functions of the Fines Recovery Unit. Nothing in the Bills affects the operation of those safeguards, which are retained in full.

The Fines Recovery Unit has discretion to withdraw an enforcement order at any time of its own volition or if requested to do so. The wording has been slightly changed in clause 14 of the second Bill to align terminology with the amendment to section 37, but otherwise the ability to withdraw an order remains.

From time to time, people contact the Fines Recovery Unit to provide evidence that they had not been aware of their enforcement order. This can happen for a range of reasons, such as moving house and not updating an address; being out of the country or interstate; travelling from community to community; or they might be FIFO workers. The Fines Recovery Unit can then decide whether to withdraw the enforcement order if the person pays the fines or enters a time-to-pay agreement.

No further action is taken if the person is unable to pay. They are warned that action may be taken in the future, including further enforcement orders. These robust statutory safeguards allow the Fines Recovery Unit to determine whether it is appropriate to continue to apply additional costs to a person who may be vulnerable; however, it does not affect the need for the underlying fine or penalty to be addressed.

The Member for Mulka also addressed options regarding people not being able to pay fines and asked why this government is always seeking to fine people. Under section 77 of the Act a community work order is another option for people who are unable to pay their fines. People unable to pay may be eligible for that. With this order they can undertake an approved work program under the supervision of the Corrections Commissioner. This option allows a person to work off their debt. It is a flexible alternative that

lets people satisfy a debt in a non-monetary way. It may be completed in full or partially, but all hours worked will be credited against their total balance owing to the Fines Recovery Unit.

The Member for Mulka raised issues regarding people being concerned that we are rewarding the Fines Recovery Unit for not doing the right thing. The Fines Recovery Unit enforcement agencies acted with the intention of carrying out their key statutory function of the Fines Recovery Unit to recover outstanding fines and penalties. There is nothing to indicate that these functions were undertaken in anything other than good faith. The government supports the actions of public servants taken in good faith and with the intention of upholding the requirements of the Act. Any persons affected by this issue had outstanding fines or penalties at the time they received enforcement notices and sanctions.

I thank everyone for their contributions.

**Madam SPEAKER:** We have now concluded the cognate debate. From here we deal with the Bills separately.

**FINES AND PENALTIES (RECOVERY) AMENDMENT (VALIDATION) BILL**
**Serial 8**

**Madam SPEAKER:** The question is that the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Amendment (Validation) Bill 2024, Serial 8, be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

**Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development)(by leave):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

**FINES AND PENALTIES (RECOVERY) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 9**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The question is that the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 9, be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

**Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development)(by leave):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

**PAPER TABLED**
**Report and Determination No 3 of 2024 – Salaries and Other Entitlements of Assembly Members**

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I table the Report and Determination No 3 of 2024 – Salaries and Other Entitlements of Assembly Members from the Remuneration Tribunal of the Northern Territory of Australia, dated 30 October 2024. I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

As members know, the Remuneration Tribunal is an independent statutory body established under the *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act 2006*. The tribunal sets the entitlements for Local Court judges, local government councils, local authorities and Assembly members.

In its most recent determination for Local Court judges, dated 11 June 2024, the tribunal determined an increase of 4%, backdated to 1 July 2023, noting a similar increase occurred for judges of the Supreme Court. This follows increases in previous years.

On 3 May 2024 the tribunal commenced its inquiry. In addition to seeking feedback from Assembly members, the Clerk, the Commissioner for Public Employment and the Under Treasurer, the tribunal advertised publicly for submissions in May 2024.

The report outlines the tribunal's independent decision-making in setting the new determination, which includes, amongst other things, an increase to the base salary. The independent tribunal's view, as detailed in the report, is that the Territory's remuneration for Assembly members should be within the average of other state and territory jurisdictions, which was the longstanding situation prior to 2019.

The tribunal has distributed a copy of its report and determination to all electorate offices. I have spoken to the Leader of the Opposition, and we share the view that the independence of the tribunal should be respected, as is the case with the independence of remuneration tribunals in other jurisdictions, so that it is not politicians deciding their pay.

This is for all Assembly members, not just party-affiliated members or for those able to form government, to consider. At the end of the day, if people in the community feel that their member of parliament is not earning their pay, they should boot them out at the next election. We all have a responsibility to work hard and respond to the concerns of Territorians.

I thank the tribunal members for the work they have undertaken in making this report and determination, including Chairperson Michael Martin OAM, Syd Stirling AM and Gary Higgins. I must update the Assembly that after 10 years of honourable service to the tribunal, Michael Martin OAM is retiring from his service, and so is Syd Stirling after six years' service. I thank both of them for their service and contribution during their time on the remuneration tribunal, for their experience in public service and for their deep understanding of these matters, which has been important to ensure fairness and equity for Territorians.

I am pleased to say that this morning the Administrator, Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO, PSM, appointed Gary Higgins as chairperson of the tribunal effective from 17 December, in light of Mr Martin's end of tenure. I welcome the appointment of the former Mother of the House, Ms Kezia Purick, to the tribunal in place of Syd Stirling.

I will be recommending to His Honour the Administrator of the Northern Territory that Mrs Lynne Walker be considered for appointment as the third tribunal member.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

## MOTION
## Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill – Make Order of the Day

**Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 59, I move that the second reading of the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill 2024, Serial 10, be made an order of the day for the first Assembly meeting after 28 days have lapsed.

Motion agreed to.

## MINISTERIAL REPORT
## Progress on the CLP Plan to Reduce Crime

Continued from 27 November 2024.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Madam Speaker, I will share something with the Assembly. During the inaugural sittings, we suspended standing orders to pass several Bills on urgency that were considered critical by the people of the Territory. These Bills were so critical that Territorians delivered us a thumping majority of 17 seats and a great rebuke by throwing out every sitting Labor member in the Darwin and Palmerston area, including a sitting Chief Minister.

I congratulate the Member for Drysdale on his great accomplishment of winning the support of the people of his electorate with his unwavering and unflinching efforts of walking the streets of Drysdale day and night, putting his life at risk, and picking up unending amounts of rubbish.

During those sittings there was a lot of debate about the need to suspend standing orders to pass those Bills on urgency, including Declan's law, the posting-and-boasting Bill and other Bills we brought to the House. It was our considered opinion on this side of the House that those Bills were extremely urgent and were needed to address the crime crisis engulfing the Territory which led Territorians to such an unprecedented election result.

There was suggestion that we should let the Bills sit on the Notice Paper for a month and come back to debate them during these sittings, but that is not what we heard from Territorians. We heard that Territorians were crying out for action on knife crime and on posting and boasting on social media by criminals.

Those Bills were so urgent that we needed to get them passed. We did not have time to wait because, as members of this House will know, once we pass a Bill in this House it is not automatically law. First, the Administrator must assent to it, which takes some time. Then, if there are technical aspects—for example, if we need to buy a bunch of electronic monitoring bracelets—then that must happen.

None of that can happen until it passes this House. This Assembly meets only one week a month or so; sometimes we have two weeks in a row, but we cannot call this Assembly together whenever we like. It was urgent and critical that we passed the Bills in those two weeks of sittings so that the process of restoring safety to Territorians could commence.

I want to share a story that shines a light on the importance of why these Bills were so urgent.

When we brought in the posting-and-boasting Bill, those on the crossbench opposed it by calling division after division as we tried to return safety to Territorians. We wanted to return safety and get behind police. Labor and the crossbench opposed clause after clause by calling division after division.

On the day the Administrator assented to the Bill I was at a local sports club engaging with some junior teams; I think I was handing out pizza. When that finished, I started getting messages on my phone saying that there were a lot of police at a particular address in my electorate. I finished at the sportsground and went to the address to check on my constituents to make sure they were okay.

When I arrived I saw a police paddy wagon and an area roped off with police tape. I saw a car and detectives taking statements from one of the households, and there was a large patch of blood on the driveway of the house. I will not go into many of the details because no doubt this will come before the courts, but there is one part of this story which is salient to this House.

On the day the Administrator assented to the posting-and-boasting Bill a constituent in my electorate was viciously assaulted with an edged weapon, leaving a large amount of blood on a driveway on the side of a suburban street. Luckily, he survived.

Not only did the alleged offender commit this act; while I was there comforting victims, the victim's daughter came up to me and held up her phone. She said, 'Oh my God; I cannot believe it. Look at this.' She showed me something; the image is still seared into my mind. It was an image of the alleged offender without a shirt, taking a selfie with the alleged weapon, posted onto his social media. One of her friends saw it, screenshot it and sent it to her. This retraumatised the victim's family.

Not only had someone's father been brutally assaulted, leaving his blood all over the street, but the alleged offender was also posting this on social media and bragging about what he had just done. The blood was still on the weapon.

This family has now left my electorate. They have a house, but they are too scared to go home. Those on the crossbench talk about climate refugees, but what about the crime refugees? They are now taking refuge with family of theirs in the northern suburbs because they are too scared to go home where this assault happened.

If we had not had the courage to stand up for Territorians, draw a line in the sand, suspend standing orders, pass those bills on urgency and take such bold action—thanks to our leader, Lia Finocchiaro—the Administrator would not have assented to it and there would have been no consequence for this alleged offender's posting and boasting.

To those who are listening, please consider that we do not bring things here for no reason. We do not bring things here because it suits an ideological agenda; we do so because it must be done for the safety and the wellbeing of Territorians. That is why I stood as a candidate for Blain. That is why the people of Blain put their confidence in me and why Territorians put their confidence in the members on this side of the House and gave us the resounding mandate to keep them safe, restore the economy and bring back our lifestyle.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Madam Speaker, it is that time, the last day of the sittings for the year. I wish everyone in the Assembly and their families a safe and merry Christmas. I hope you get some downtime over the festive period to spend with loved ones and take a bit of a break. I will be working through Christmas, as Territorians would expect of a newly elected government, but I genuinely wish everyone the best. I look forward to the contest of ideas and debate as we go into 2025.

It is with great pride I stand as the new Chief Minister and Member for Spillett elected by my community. I cherish the opportunity to serve, so I thank the good people of Spillett for that opportunity.

I was first elected in 2012 as the Member for Drysdale. The seat has changed over the years, and I have been the Member for Spillett for a number of terms. I thank them for their continued support and will continue to work hard for the members of that community. The trust they have placed in me is not lost on me. I will ensure the views of the people of Spillett continue to be front of mind as I undertake my bigger duties and responsibilities as the Chief Minister.

I enjoy being a local member and will continue in the new year to hold my barbecues, pizza in the parks, coffee catch-ups, Palmerston Market stalls and all the other activities we do as a community. Listening to people is the most important thing that I can do to make a difference. It gives me great comfort walking in here knowing the heartbeat of the people of Spillett and what they expect going forward. It is my pledge to them to continue to work hard to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique lifestyle.

I thank the many volunteers who support me to be a member of parliament and a good local member. People from the community come to my office and ask how they can help and be involved. I thank all the people who fold newsletters, letterbox drop and put birthday cards in envelopes—everyone's contribution helps so much—such is that strong community spirit in the electorate.

I thank the following people: Lyndell and Michael Nichols and their children, Grace, Alyssa and Marcus; Pat and Chris Murray; Sally Westerlaken and Michael St Clair and their children, Ella and Isaac; Damion and Joanne King and their children, Ben and Mitchell; Jeannette, David and Tahlia Carroll; Sue and David MacLean; Graham and Kay Butterworth; Richard and Narelle Cooke; Traci and Dwayne Clifton; Sean Parnell; Geoff and Lorraine Boyton; Megan Horner; Tara Atkins; Tony Chalker; Jan and Neil MacAulay; Jane Gordon; Josh and Tahlia Butler; Gary Ninnerman; Suzanne Cavenagh; and Jessica and Shane Bradley. Thank you all so much. We could not keep the wheels spinning without you.

I also acknowledge the schools that used to be in my electorate that no longer are due to the redistribution. Principal Luke Willsmore and the staff and students at Palmerston Christian College, thank you for supporting me to be part of your school community. To Principal Michelle Garbutt and the team at Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School, thank you so much. It has been wonderful to be your local member over a number of years.

I give a big shout-out to Principal Carolyn Edwards, who is leaving Zuccoli Primary School. She has led the development of that brand-new school that I fought hard to have delivered. We wish her all the best and are sad to see her go. She is the President of the Northern Territory Principals' Association, a well-deserved role that she will do extremely well at. To that extent, I welcome Liz Andrade to the acting principal role, with the Member for Brennan being the local member for that electorate.

Thank you for allowing me to present the awards, support the Year 6s, get involved in the fundraisers, be slimed and run during sports day. It has been a blast, and I have tremendous respect for you all.

I also thank the principals and the schools that have remained in my electorate. Durack Primary School has stayed in my electorate from day one 12 years ago. Durack Primary School has been a constant in my service to the community. Thank you to Principal Cindy McLaren and all the staff there, as well as Principal Lucas Hurley at MacKillop Catholic College. I look forward to continuing to work with both schools over the next four years, building strong partnerships and opportunities to support our kids to succeed in their dreams and aspirations for the future.

I thank the team at the City of Palmerston. We have a great working relationship to get outcomes for our communities. Mayor Athina Pascoe-Bell; Deputy Mayor Mark Fraser; and Councillors Danielle Eveleigh,

Amber Garden, Ben Giesecke, Damian Hale, Sarah Henderson and Lucy Morrison, thank you for your collaboration. We look forward to delivering good outcomes for the people of Palmerston.

To CEO Luccio Cercarelli, who is now the CEO of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development, I look forward to working with you in that new role. Amelia Vellar and the team at City of Palmerston will continue to do great things for our beautiful city. I am excited about the Zuccoli Community Hub project and I hope, come this federal election, there will be more cash on the table from the feds—both sides—for that project. That is my call.

We have incredible seniors in Palmerston; they are amazing. People are doing great things, supporting our community. Mary Oliffe, Gerry Crowhurst, Jannette Ashby, Ann Brown and all of the team at 50+ Club Seniors, thank you for allowing us to be part of your world and for what you do for the broader Palmerston community.

To the President of Palmerston Probus, Chris Edwards, and her husband, Rod; Marilyn Roberts; Jim Wright; Carmen Simonato; and all the others at Palmerston Probus Club, I am so proud to be your patron. It has been 12 years, and what a success it has been to start Palmerston Probus. I could not be prouder of you all.

To Marg Lee, Neville Driver, Sheryl Sephton and Sally Howarth, congratulations on growing the success and strength of Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors. Thank you to Sue and Chris Hornick, who volunteer their time for Operation Christmas Child, something we get behind every year, supporting vulnerable children overseas.

The sporting clubs in my community I am proud to be a sponsor of are Palmerston Rovers Football Club, of which I am patron; Palmerston Cricket Club, which again I am a patron of; Palmerston Magpies Football Club; Palmerston Raiders Football Club; Palmerston Crocs Rugby Union Club; Palmerston Game Fishing Club; Greater Palmerston United Football Club; Palmerston Polocrosse; Mash Netball Club; Palmerston Netball Association; Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association; and Satellite City BMX. Thank you for working so fantastically and for delivering outcomes for sport. We look forward to continuing to support all of you into the new year.

To my amazing electorate staff, thank you so much. Jess, where would I be without you? You are such an incredible person, and I know the electorate is in safe hands with you there, given my extremely busy workload. Thank you to Kelly, who has now moved to the Member for Blain's office—take care of her, Member for Blain, otherwise I will have her back. Thank you to Tara, who is brand-new and doing a great job. I look forward to growing that relationship. You have settled in well, and we are proud to have you.

A big thanks to Terri, who started with me in opposition and continued in the transition to government. It has been an amazing time together. To Lisa, Derek, Leonie, Russel, Daniela, Bonnie, Tori and Jan, it has been an incredible journey from the fourth floor to the fifth floor. Thank you for sharing in all that with me and for doing what we set out to achieve—to make sure the Territory is a better place and that every day we work hard to make sure we are delivering for the betterment of the people of the Northern Territory.

To all the new staff in my office—Alex, Dani, Nadia, Justin, Stuart, Neil, Leanne, Matt, Elle, Gail, Jack, Julianne, Belinda, Kym-Marie, Lisa, Emma, Jess, Kellie, Pui, Kirra and Leilani and all of the ministerial staff—thank you for embarking on this journey with us as we reform the Northern Territory to deliver change.

Thank you to all of the Legislative Assembly staff; you are amazing. From the committee staff to education services, security, protocol, Hansard, the library and the cleaners—you are wonderful. I love having a chat with you late at night. This place is a massive operation to run, and I thank each of you for your dedication and support to keep it moving.

To CLP President Shane Stone, Alyson Hannam, the management committee and all our volunteers on the ground, thank you so much. What a power of work everyone has done to get us into government this year. We will do our best to serve the people of the Northern Territory under a CLP government.

To my colleagues, you are amazing. I could not do it without you. Thank you for everything. You have all worked so hard, and each of you deserve to be here serving your community proudly. I look forward to what we can achieve together.

Lastly, thank you to my amazing family—my mum and dad, my sister and brother-in-law, my in-laws, my children and my husband. They sacrifice a lot for me to serve at this level, and I thank them every day. They keep it real. I am not the Chief Minister at home; I have been told that, and that is exactly the way I like it.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama):** Madam Speaker, I was impressed by other members, including the Chief Minister, when they thanked a significant number of their constituents in their Christmas adjournment speeches today and on Tuesday evening. For example, the Member for Blain named many constituents involved in clubs and organisations in his electorate, and the Member for Fong Lim referred to many people involved in the music industry.

This inspired me to think about how I could build on these efforts. The only way I can thank the wonderful residents of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon without leaving out anyone is to read the entire electoral roll of the Karama electorate. This would require me to read and thank almost 6,000 names in alphabetical order.

I start by thanking Anna and Andrew Aardvark in Karama, Ken and Kristy King in Knuckey Lagoon and Zephyr and Zoe Zapata in Malak. Seriously, though, I thanked a lot of people in my maiden speech, and I do not intend to repeat that tonight. Suffice to say that I thank all the residents of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon; it is a privilege to be your representative in the 15th Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

I am committed to being visible and accessible and serving our community. Naturally, I thank again my wonderful family for all their love and support—namely, my darling wife, Marylou; my son, Fergus; my daughter, Nadia; and all my extended family.

I also thank my fantastic electorate officer, Jessi Allen-Shaw, who has come on board to team with me and serve our electorate.

The Christmas and new year season can be one of joy but also hardship. Like other members have mentioned, I ask that we all look to how we can join in the spirit of giving to help those less fortunate. When I can, I will continue to join my friend Tejinder Singh in the Sikh Family Food Van in distributing food to vulnerable residents in Karama and Malak.

Like other members, I pay tribute to all our frontline service personnel, including police, fire and emergency officers who continue to provide 24-hour services over this period. On that note, I again thank my son, Fergus, who as a paramedic will be working during this Christmas and new year period. I extend my thanks to all Territory workers who will be working over this period, including health, counselling, hospitality and retail workers.

We had an important discussion this week about the tragedy of our road toll, so I urge all Territorians to stay safe and avoid further tragedy by committing not to drink and drive, by wearing seatbelts and by avoiding fatigue. The best Christmas present we can give each other is to stay safe to enjoy each other's company.

As MLAs, I recommend that we do everything we can to stay engaged with our communities during this festive season. For my Karama electorate, I am working on two initiatives.

On Saturday 14 December I will be partnering with the owners of the Karama shopping plaza, the La Pira family, and our Waters Ward councillors, Sylvia Klonaris and Kim Farrar, to deliver the Karama family fun fair. This two-hour fun-filled event on Saturday afternoon attracts some 200 to 300 residents, particularly children, with lots of activities, including face painting, Hyper the Clown, the Darwin City Brass Band, the Holy Family Parish Choir, the Dukes Darwin Ukulele Kollective, dance performances, free lucky dips, raffles, prizes and Santa.

On Wednesday 18 December I am partnering with my colleague the Member for Sanderson to deliver a joint electorate seniors' Christmas party at the Darwin Golf Club. We expect to host some 100 to 150 seniors for an enjoyable afternoon. As part of this I am looking to organise transport for seniors to attend who otherwise could not.

I am finalising my first quarterly electorate newsletter to be delivered prior to Christmas. In doing so, I will personally deliver this newsletter to at least a quarter of the electorate so that I can stay engaged with my community, with volunteers delivering the rest.

Over the course of 2025 this strategy will allow me to visit every residence within my electorate again. I hope this demonstrates that I am committed to being visible and accessible and to serving our community.

I feel privileged to be a part of this 15th Legislative Assembly and our new and united 17-strong government team. I am optimistic about the future of our wonderful Territory.

As I mentioned in my maiden speech, I was born on Christmas Day. Therefore, it is fitting that I close my speech with some inspiring words of optimism from someone else born on this day:

*If life seems jolly rotten*
*There's something you've forgotten*
*And that's to laugh and smile and dance and sing*
*When you're feeling in the dumps*
*Don't be silly chumps*
*Just purse your lips and whistle, that's the thing*
*And*
*Always look on the bright side of life*

I wish all members and staff of the Legislative Assembly a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

**Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, what a fantastic segue to come from the Member for Karama's reflection of always looking on the bright side of life because I will speak to you about looking on the bright side of our financial fortunes.

Today a couple of pieces of important financial reporting came out. While many of my hardworking colleagues were being accessible to people in the mall at lunchtime, I am pleased to note that members of our government also made time to hear the Auditor-General's report to the Legislative Assembly explained in detail.

The 2024–25 Mid-Year Report reinforces and reiterates a lot of what was foreshadowed in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report in October. I am sorry to say that there is not particularly good news in it for any of us. Over the Christmas break if you are looking for light reading, I encourage you to take a bit of time to work through this because it will give you a good picture of where things are at.

One figure I draw out of this new information is that our population growth in the year ending June this year has become even worse. Of all the facts and figures that I have given you, I hate to report that it is still getting worse. It is now a 0.7% year-on-year change at a time when we have been spruiking that we will have 1.1% population growth. In fact, we need 2.5% year-on-year population growth to support any of our economic aspirations.

It is a serious issue. What is even more serious is that this document, the 2024–25 Mid-Year Report, will confirm that net interstate migration is this year at a historic low; it is the worst it has ever been at this point.

**Mrs Carlson:** Why is that?

**Dr RAHMAN:** Why is that? I take the interjection from the Member from Wanguri.

In truth, it may correlate with the economic policy choices of the last government—the last remnants of the last government period are covered in this data. It is time for us to draw a line in the sand, move forward and do what we can on this side to improve those figures. I will not speak any further about that report today; I will let you look at it in your own time.

I want to spend a bit more time on the Auditor-General's Report to the Legislative Assembly November 2024. This is important because it is an independent assessment of what our public service does. This independent assessment goes above and beyond, is not politicised and makes important observations that I think are worth looking at for everyone.

This report has the results of audits, key findings and financial performance of various entities for the year ending 30 June 2024 and entities, mainly in the education sector, for the preceding calendar year. The scope of the efforts in this report are confined to what we can do under auspices of the *Audit Act*, and that may be something worth reviewing in the future, noting that there is significant disparity between what the NT Auditor-General can do and what Auditors-General can do in just about every other state and territory.

Audit coverage of general government sector revenue covers only 34% of what we do in revenue; it is only $2.6bn of $7.7bn that the Auditor-General looks at in terms of whether it has been well allocated and well earnt. Likewise, coverage of general government expenditure is only 32%—$2.7bn of $8.3bn.

What then of our operating performance? What is the assessment by the Auditor-General? The first thing to note is that our net operating balance in 2022–23 was a modest surplus, but again it was attributable to GST recalculations—basically a rising national pool and the Northern Territory share improving.

In 2023–24 there was a $638m deficit, and that is about employee expenses, back payments in enterprise agreements and specifically the cost of agency and medical staff and overtime costs—things that I have drawn attention to before that are bankrupting our system. It is stuff we cannot ignore for much longer; that is the brutal truth of it.

In revenue and expenditure there is a growing gap. The important thing to understand is that the linear extrapolations of the lines between revenue and expenditure are getting wider and have been since 2016, which probably speaks for itself. Revenue year on year is at 4%, whereas expenditure grows at 5% annually. We must bring those lines closer together. There was a point where they intersected, and that was a long time ago.

Public sector staffing has grown by 12% over the last decade, which is not commensurate with population growth, even remotely. Our population growth has been less than 4%, and our public sector growth has been in excess of 12%. Employee expenditure went up by 50% from 2014 to 2024. Of greatest concern to me—I believe it should be of great concern to all of you—is the consistent gaps in that period between the budgeted and the actual and the one, two and three-year forward estimates.

Every year we say that we will fix it next year, the year after or the year after that. Then we come back and say, 'We blew the ceiling off it again'. Something is not right there, and the Auditor-General is asking us to take that seriously and look at it.

Our total cash deficit is $771m, and our liabilities are a staggering $9bn in borrowings in the general government sector, but the real travesty is that interest on loans and advances is now $328m. That is up from $290m last year; that is a lot of interest. Honestly, unless we tackle it headfirst, we will be in real trouble soon.

I will not say more about these facts and figures; I simply implore all of you to please take the time to look at these documents, which take a lot of time, effort and energy to produce and to communicate. They are frequently not looked at with any real effort.

One of the reasons we have such a large amount of interest payable is that over time we have focused on spending on infrastructure, some of which clearly has not manifested and has not been necessary. It is the source of a lot of our financial woes. The pursuit of ventures of vanity rather than essential and critical infrastructure in some places is why we are having conversations about where we will find the money to underground powerlines or rebuild suburban infrastructure.

In addition to essential and critical infrastructure it is important to think about enabling infrastructure, which is the stuff we need to get a leg up to the next level. In the interests of it being the last sitting day, I will not cite literature. However, the urban planning literature will tell you that if you want a strong head on a body, you need a strong neck. The metaphor is one in relation to Darwin CBD, Darwin itself and what leads into it. Fortuitously, I am the member for the neck; Fong Lim and the Stuart Highway corridor leading into the city, even on the Tiger Brennan side, is an area that has fallen apart in terms of investment in enabling infrastructure over a long period. I commit to you that I will be fighting for that in the year coming. Unless we stabilise and strengthen the neck, we will not be able to prop up the head or the body of the Northern Territory.

I look forward to us working collectively in the year ahead towards rebuilding the economy over the coming years. I see glimmers of hope in this place about the capacity to collaborate. I am heartened by the manner in which proceedings have been conducted under the auspices of an Independent Speaker. Everybody has been given ample opportunity to express themselves in this space. I implore all of us to make the best use of the time we have.

I promise at this time next year I will wear one of my many Santa suits and not speak about the economy at this time. I hope that when I do so I will be spreading jovial joyful news about how the economic prospects of the Northern Territory have improved and that there is hope on the horizon.

I wish all of you a merry Christmas and happy new year. I hope you and all your families will be safe and have a prosperous new year and a relaxing break ahead of you.

There are numerous people to thank. I simply say to all the people of Fong Lim, thank you for entrusting me with the opportunity to represent you. I shall do my best for you in the coming year.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it is nice to be on the floor of the Chamber; I have missed it. It has been a big year. The election brought big changes, and it is great to have so many new members in the Chamber. I have enjoyed meeting you all, getting to know you and hearing your different perspectives. I have thoroughly enjoyed that over the last two sittings. It is great to have familiar faces here, too. The people who have been returned to parliament are now seasoned performers, and most of them are ministers. It is wonderful to see people develop in their roles.

I miss some of my former colleagues who did not make it. It is a strange and weird experience to work in this place. The new members will be getting a feel for that. You form peculiar relationships; some of them turn out to be enduring and enriching, and others are not.

It is the silly season, the festive season, and a time to celebrate everything that is positive in our communities and electorates. Like a few others have said already, I do not intend to list many people's names. It has always been my privilege to be the Member for Araluen, the Independent voice in Alice Springs. I feel like I represent all people in Alice Springs, not just the people of Araluen. It continues to be an incredible honour.

I thank the people of this Chamber for electing me as their new Speaker. I am enjoying it; it is a thrill. It is so different and a more positive role than I ever imagined. People are nice and polite to you, not that I have had much of the opposite. It is a thrill, so I thank you for voting me in.

I lost Jo and David from my electorate office straight after the election. David worked for me for five years, and Jo had been there for donkey's years—probably close to 10 or at least eight. They both left town straight after the election.

I have two new wonderful staff members in the Araluen electorate office, Holly and Ashleigh. We are getting to know each other and are settling in. David has become my executive assistant in the Office of the Speaker, so that is lovely. We are like two peas in a pod; he knows what I am thinking and what I need, and I think I know what he is thinking and needs.

That is what happens when you work with staff so closely in your electorate offices and other parts of your duties as a member of parliament. You must have people you trust, like and know. You come to love them. They are an implicit part of how you function, who you are and how to represent yourself in the community. I have been fortunate to have great people around me, as other people have also expressed.

To the DLA staff, who I am getting to know well in my new role, thank you.

It is standard to thank the lovely people who work in Hansard, who are almost faceless as we do not see them, but their job is incredible. They listen to every cough, stutter and fabulous speech we give, and I thank them.

To the cleaners who empty our bins and make everything nice in our suites, thank you so much. They slip in and out and help us in incredible ways.

The DLA staff we do see in the Chamber, working in committees and throughout parliament are incredibly competent and smart people. I thank them again.

It has been a great week in parliament. Sitting here this week has been incredible. I mention the contributions made by you all in the 50th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly motion, the motion this morning on the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, the condolence for Nick Dondas, the condolence the Member for Mulka initiated for Ms Yanthalawuy—what a week. It has been terrific. It has been full of emotion and people being honest, frank, lovely, caring and empathetic. That is what we are about in this Chamber.

At the end of the day, we are a group of people, half of us not ever expecting to end up in a position like this. We are in such a fortunate position to acknowledge, help and do positive things. This week has been incredible. I thank you for the honour and dignity that we have shown towards our fellow Territorians.

We all need a break at this time of year. It is a difficult job. A lot of it is thankless and unseen. A lot of assumptions are made about who we are and how we use our time, but it is 24/7. Listening to the Member for Karama telling us what he is doing over the next couple of weeks exemplifies what we do and how we go above and beyond almost daily.

It is time to have a break and to turn off if you can. Over the last 14 years I do not think I have had one single holiday without feeling guilty or without turning my phone off. I turned it off for a week once, and that did not go down too well. I never turn my phone off. We might be on holidays, lying on the beach in Bali having a Bintang, but the phone is still sitting there waiting for the call from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or wherever the people we are representing are.

You need to turn off the guilt switch, probably turn off the phone and try to relax not just for yourself but for your family, because we tend to neglect our families. It was interesting hearing the Chief Minister say, 'They keep me real'. They are incredibly important to us, and they keep us real. We need to turn off the phone and have a break for them too, so they have our undivided attention—whatever that is. I am sure we have all had conversations with our partners or our kids where we are looking at them and speaking to them but thinking about something else that we must do. That is how you end up operating.

Alice Springs struggles. There is no secret about that, and we have been overwhelmed by our crime crisis for a long time. As we step into this summer season, which clicks over on 1 December this weekend, a lot of us feel a sense of dread about what is ahead. The crime crisis is still bad; it has not changed at all. The initiatives of the new government will hopefully take effect soon.

We still are looking down the barrel of a difficult, long, hot summer ahead. I have no words to say to people about that apart from the obvious that you must keep safe, keep your family and possessions safe and look out for your neighbours. It is about being vigilant about safety and security. My heart goes out to all of you; we are all in the same boat, and hopefully the year ahead brings us some relief.

Finally, I thank my family. Thank you, Alice and Craig, and thank you to my other friends and family who have been there for me for a long time. Happy Christmas, everyone.

**Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri):** Madam Speaker, I begin my adjournment speech by sending my condolences to the family of Mr Ram Pal Bali, better known to many as Sharm Bali, who passed away on 21 November 2024, and his funeral was held this morning.

Sharm lived in my electorate. Many in the community across the Territory will know him as the founder and director of Territory Care & Support Services (TCASS) and will be shocked to hear of his passing. Sharm became unwell in August and passed in hospital on 21 November 2024.

Sharm would want those to remember him as someone who lived life to the fullest and a generous man who served the community over four decades. He also developed a keenness for politics and was part of the Young Congress in his late teens in Delhi and went on to study politics in university.

Sharm met his wife, Kumi, while studying at Burma Polytechnic; however, Kumi wanted to be closer to her family and came to Darwin to live with her parents and gave Sharm an ultimatum to get married. Kumi and Sharm got married in New Delhi in December 1981. That brought Sharm to Darwin in 1982, and the couple were reunited.

The next chapter was the start of Sharm's life as a business owner. With friends, he formed a partnership opening the first Indian restaurant, Maharaja, on Smith Street. Sharm was also involved with the Maharani restaurant and Cafe Kashmir in Darwin.

In 1999 Sharm formed TCASS, providing one of the largest disability support providers in the NT. TCASS started with a small office located under Kumi and Sharm's elevated house in Wulagi, with one participant. It now supports over 100 participants.

Sharm has always been a proud supporter of the community. He has been involved in volunteering; sport coaching; sponsoring; multicultural societies such as the Hindu Society, Indian Cultural Society, the Sri Lankan Australian society; and various cricket and sporting clubs.

Sharm is survived by his wife, Kumi; daughter, Keshini; son, Shyam; and his beloved grandchildren. I send my condolences to all his family, staff and the participants at TCASS.

On a brighter note, earlier this week I was privileged to attend the St John NT Excellence Awards 2024 hosted by Minister Edgington in parliament's Main Hall. At that event was a roomful of important people in our community who serve to deliver care and compassion when people need it the most, working and volunteering with St John.

I am delighted to report that chaplain Darryl Shaw, a constituent in my electorate, was nominated as a finalist in the Essence of St John Award and was awarded winner. The award has been introduced to recognise those who live and breathe the St John spirit, demonstrating exceptional compassion, leadership and selflessness in all aspects of their work. Those who work alongside Darryl know that he truly personifies the essence of St John, showing support for his colleagues in all areas of the organisation, as well as family and friends in their times of need. I have met Darryl a number of times, and he is truly a worthy winner of this award. He continues to support those in need and is a great model for the future generations coming through St John.

Darryl works with his wife, Jenni, who is also a chaplain. They support their team's wellbeing and offer chaplaincy services 24/7. Darryl used traumatic experience during his time as a paramedic to highlight the lack of support for frontline workers at that time. Recognising this gap, Darryl pursued qualifications in chaplaincy and can now offer round-the-clock support for his team and their families. Thank you, Darryl.

I update the Assembly on an event held by the Australia China Friendship Society NT Branch on Sunday 3 November, which was a multicultural dance and food festival. This event was held at the association's hall in Leanyer and was standing room only. The event had a jam-packed program with different cultures showcasing their musical and dance performances. We saw song and dance from countries such as Indonesia, China, Sri Lanka, India and Ireland and tai chi demonstrations. The food was from many different countries, and everyone in the multicultural communities came together for the evening.

I thank the schools in my electorate: Leanyer Primary School; Wanguri Primary School; the Mimik-Ga Centre; and Good Shepherd Lutheran College Leanyer Campus. They are welcoming on each visit. Thank you to the principals, educators and staff who provide quality education and to the school boards for advocating for the schools' and students' needs. I wish them a safe and happy holiday in the coming weeks as school finishes for 2024.

I attended the Good Shepherd Lutheran College awards on 21 November with the Member for Nelson. I congratulate the Leanyer Campus award recipients as follows.

The College Values Award recipients were: Transition, Rani Renilson; Year 1, Olive Apps; Year 2, Keren Bensam; Year 3, Matilda McFarland; Year 4, Lachlan Jose; and Year 5, Jansen Valer.

The Academic Excellence Award recipients were: Transition, Indi Winch; Year 1, Joy Carne; Year 2, Cormac Nowak; Year 3, Scarlett Griggs; Year 4, Madeleine Commons-Fidge; and Year 5, Siyona Jangid.

I acknowledge constituent Sam Weston who is doing great work in the community through his business, Mad Snake Cafe. As a veteran, Sam is always advocating in the returned service person space. Sam is organising a group of volunteers who will be feeding the less fortunate on Christmas. Last year the team gave away approximately 350 meals. I know many of my colleagues will be spending some special time with their own families, but if you happen to be a Christmas orphan, I am pretty sure Sam would welcome a lending hand.

Lastly, I thank those who have helped me settle into my new role as the new Member for Wanguri. Thank you to the schools, community groups and all the constituents in my electorate who provide feedback on a day-to-day basis on how our community in Wanguri can continue to improve.

Thank you to all the DLA staff for helping with the transition to Parliament House and in the electorate office at Hibiscus. Thank you to the volunteers who helped letter drop and at all the community events, especially my electorate officer, Jade O'Neill. I have stolen her from the Member for Brennan's office, so thank you for letting me have her. Jade has transitioned into a full-time role and has hit the ground running. Our office is busy every day.

I also welcome Addison Perris on board temporarily. Addison has just finished her Year 12 studies and will be heading off to ANU in the new year. With an interest in politics, she is helping as we transition to look for a permanent part-time staff member.

Thank you to all my family for their support, including my siblings, and most of all my kid brother who has returned home to help with our elderly mum. Thank you to my son, who keeps me grounded and reminds me I am still a mum, because I still do his washing and cook his meals.

Last of all, thank you to my husband, Aaron, who supports the work I do. I know you work hard yourself and at times I forget you are catching up on your sleep from your shiftwork, but I will endeavour to learn the shift patterns soon.

To all my colleagues here and to the crossbench and opposition, thank you so much for welcoming me in this House. I wish you all a merry Christmas and safe and happy holidays. I look forward to working with you all next year.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, on the last day of parliament I am being cheeky; I do not have a tie on, but it is Ausmusic T-Shirt Day. I know everyone in this Chamber likes to support music, and I know the Member for Barkly has an outstanding band in his electorate, Mulga Bore Hard Rock, who have played alongside KISS.

I will talk about Australian music and, importantly, acknowledge all of the amazing Territory musicians, artists, bands, support acts and crews who put up the stages and do all the audio and other incredible work.

I acknowledge the Warumpi Band, whose shirt I wear with pride. They come from my family's community of Warumpi, Papunya, 260 kilometres west of Alice Springs. The Warumpi Band is named after the Honey Ant Dreaming. The band has performed all around this country and internationally and recently had a stage musical, *Big Name, No Blankets*. I encourage everyone to jump on board and have a look at that.

I acknowledge King Stingray, Yothu Yindi, Sally Balfour, Docker River Band, Mutitjulu Band, Areyonga Band, the Lajamanu Teenage Band, Mulga Bore, Sneaky Train and Kirra Voller. They are amazing Northern Territory musicians and artists.

I acknowledge that the support for our Territory artists is so welcomed, and it happens because of the amazing support of organisations like MusicNT. I give a huge shout-out to Mark Smith and the team at MusicNT, who support our music industry every day. They do an incredible job. Whether it is putting together and supporting bush bands at Mparntwe (Alice Springs), pulling together amazing musical showcases or running conferences across the Territory to support our musicians, the work they do is incredibly important.

This year the Northern Territory hosted the regional music festival, where regional people came together to talk about some of the challenges the music industry faces.

The NT continues to host the National Indigenous Music Awards, a celebration of the amazing contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people bring to the music industry. We can be incredibly proud that it continues to be in the Northern Territory.

The All Good Project is about making sure our music venues are safe spaces for community members and for women to feel safe, supported and free from violence, harassment or intimidation. I shout out to the project and all the establishments across the Territory that jumped on board—the cafes and restaurants—and have shown their support to get behind Territory music.

On Ausmusic T-shirt Day let us recognise and celebrate the amazing contributions of our Territory artists. Remember, Christmas is around the corner, so if you have not found that perfect gift yet, get behind a Territory musician, artist or band and buy some of their music so that your families, friends and community can have a slice of the Territory's musical talent—our greatest talent.

The Territory might be small in population, but we are big in creativity, and that shines through in our music. I am happy to talk about it. If you have not heard of the Warumpi Band, jump on board. You will know some of their songs—*Blackfella/Whitefella*; *Waru*, meaning 'fire'; *Jailanguru Pakarnu*, meaning 'just got out of prison'; and *Kintorelakutu*, meaning 'towards Kintore'. Their song *My Island Home* was well famous before Christine Anu. It was written by the Warumpi Band, and they know how to nail it.

I recognise former members of the Warumpi Band and pay my respects to them. A big shout-out goes to my uncle, Sammy Butcher, who is one of the lead singers of the band still going strong and doing an amazing job supporting music. He was recently inducted into the Northern Territory NIMA Hall of Fame.

Madam Speaker, thank you for not kicking me out, without my tie on.

Support Territory musicians. We have so much to be proud of. I am sure every one of us in this Chamber has a great musician or artists in our local community doing an amazing job.

Merry Christmas, happy new year and happy holidays to everyone in the Chamber. May you spend your holidays rocking out to some of the sounds of the Territory's musical talent.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, as the year draws to a close it is a good time to celebrate the richness of our diverse religious and cultural traditions and reflect on the values that unite us—love, kindness, compassion and gratitude—while honouring the unique practices that bring meaning and joy to our lives.

For those who observe Christmas, may this season of peace and goodwill fill your hearts with hope and joy.

My own tradition at this time of year is to celebrate the eight days of Hanukkah, the festival of lights. May the lights of the Hanukkah shine brightly to symbolise the freedom to practise one's faith in whatever form.

To our Muslim friends observing the sacred days of the year, may your faith and prayers bring you peace and blessings.

To our Buddhist friends, may the path of wisdom, compassion and mindfulness lead you towards inner peace and enlightenment.

To our Sikh friends, may the spirit of seva (selfless service) humility and the teachings of the gurus guide you towards a year filled with love, unity and compassion for all.

To all the many belief systems in our Northern Territory communities and to those who, like me, take a more humanist approach, may the holiday season be calm and a time for well-earned rest. In this season of togetherness, let us cherish our differences and find strength in our shared humanity. Here is to a new year filled with understanding, compassion and unity across all cultures and beliefs.

I was elected on a platform of doing politics differently, of bringing community to our democracy and of working to make this truly into the people's House. I will share some of how we have been doing that in Johnston.

A month ago I stood in this Chamber for the first time and felt the great privilege and responsibility of what I was embarking on. My community, like so much of the Northern Territory, wanted change, and together we ran a campaign marked by hope, inclusion, positive values, respect, care and openness. We saw and heard the community's desire for not just change but also connection and being heard. The outcome was that I was elected as the first Independent for Johnston, and since then it has been my honour and pleasure to continue to be in the community; to visit people in their homes, organisations, businesses and schools; and have people come to our office for meetings, using our community meeting space, or just a cup of tea.

I have been setting up outside local shops in the suburbs in my electorate, which is a great opportunity to talk with people who cannot get into an office during office hours or just want to chat and to continue my quest to find the best hot chips in Johnston. Spoiler alert: Alawa Fish & Chips is the current winner. On my favourite day of the week, Sunday, I am at the wonderful Rapid Creek Markets so I can be where my constituents are, and they know they can come to me. I am also committed to finding ways to bring people together to connect and create the community they want. For me, part of our job as leaders is to create spaces where people can work together for change, and we can support them in doing it.

As part of this, last week in Johnston we held our first town hall meeting. People came from across the electorate and spoke to me and each other about their concerns for their community, which included their disappointment with no underground power; their fears for this next cyclone season; the lack of funding for public schools; and the fact that there is no indoor community space for people in my electorate to come together.

They also talked about the strengths of and their love for our community and its resources. The inspiring Jingili Water Gardens are still wild, and the beautiful Gurambai (Rapid Creek) that runs through the middle of our electorate is flowing clear and fast after the last few rains. There is amazing fresh food from the markets, our community gardens and school gardens.

Almost everyone said they came because they felt disillusioned with politics. They felt disheartened by the lack of consultation with community; by what they saw as the abuse of power in the NT; by the glaring risks of corruption posed by the Territory Coordinator; and by human rights abuses allowed by the CLP in lowering the age of criminal responsibility. They came because they felt hopeful that there could be change and that we can find ways to do things better. People said that means doing things better in the community so we can feel safe, connected and able to build the futures we want. They also said it means our leaders doing things better, including in this Chamber.

As a newly elected member, I have come into this Chamber full of commitment and hope. It was great to be in parliament school six weeks ago with all the other new members and talk about the resetting of the culture of parliament, and it was great at the start of our 15th Assembly to hear the words and prayers of hope and encouragement for working together. It was wonderful to hear everyone's first speeches talking about this commitment to working together for the whole NT and to hear people tonight say that they feel we are doing that well. I am not so convinced. We are not enemies in the Chamber; we are colleagues with a job to do.

The rules and culture of this House are new to me. I am learning them gradually, but if this was my house or my workplace, which it is, I would be strongly objecting to some of the behaviour I see in this Chamber. The election is over, but I have been keeping track of the number of times Labor and the CLP pay each other out and put each other down. I have been watching the personal attacks and snide comments, which I believe have no place in this room. We have such limited time in parliament to do our important work. If even an hour of this limited time is spent paying each other out, how much is that costing the Northern Territory? What else could we be doing with that time?

The people of the Northern Territory do not need to hear the CLP saying over and again that this is Labor's fault. You have no election to win. They do not need to hear people attacking others personally and calling out slurs. We have a job to do. Come on; let us do it better. Different views enrich us and strengthen our democracy. It is about how we work together with those differences.

We saw yesterday a coming together of people across the Chamber to change a motion and support it together to affect the terrible issue of domestic violence, so we know we can do it. We have so many shared issues across our electorates. In all of our electorates people experience domestic violence and poverty; are worried about safety; are concerned about the health of our environment and water; and experience racism and discrimination. The Territory depends on us to work well together.

We need to do this to address the serious systemic issues our communities face. This is what our community wants. We have shown we can work together on issues, and I look forward to continuing to do this and perhaps getting better at it in 2025.

I come briefly to my wonderful electorate. We have amazing people, groups, organisations and schools; I want to celebrate all of them. I will not read out the whole electoral roll, like the Member for Karama, and I also promise not to sing. I want to celebrate every one of them, from baby Evie who was just born, and I got to meet at the weekend, to 96-year-old Elsie who rings me regularly just to see how I am.

I love attending school events and assemblies, from the crazy hair day at Nemarluk School; therapeutic weeding at the amazing Alawa Primary School farm; the Jingili jiggle; Millner Primary School's parent literacy program; Moil's assembly where we were wished good morning in at least 15 different languages; to Casuarina Senior College's beautiful graduation ceremony. Most recently I was privileged to present graduating students at Jingili Primary School with their graduation certificates. It was especially meaningful to watch these future leaders take their steps into the future, as my own children did from Jingili some years ago. I am always inspired by the teachers and young people and the way they prepare for the future.

There are amazing groups in our community, and I pay a particular thanks to the people who look after the beautiful place we live in as volunteers and community members: the Rapid Creek Landcare Group; community members like Ted who painted a mural on the walls of Jingili shops just to make it look nicer—he said, 'We do not need to wait for other people to fix things for us'; Christine and Noel from Hey Dhal who feed people when they are hungry even when they have no money; Stan, Bill and John at the Greek men's club who provide a place for lonely people to come together, welcomed me many months ago and continue to fuel me with great Greek coffee and a lot of advice about what they think needs to happen; and Pam, who runs the seniors' painting group every Tuesday. It is lovely to hear the laughter and see the art from this group each week.

I also thank the many wonderful volunteers. I would have liked to say all their names—I timed it, and it would take me more than five minutes, so I will not—but they know who they are. To the incredible staff in this House, you are incredible, patient and wise. To my colleagues in this Chamber, thank you all for your commitment to a better Northern Territory.

I make special mention of Yingiya Guyula, the Member for Mulka, for his mentorship and leadership inside and outside this Chamber. *Mari*, I am honoured to sit behind you in this Chamber. To my fellow new crossbench member, the Member for Nightcliff, thank you for your courage and commitment to your community.

Madam Speaker, thank you. You have a difficult job and bring great fortitude and steadiness to the role. I, for one, was sorry to lose you from the crossbench but like everyone else in this Chamber, I am grateful you are in the Speaker role. You are modelling independence; thank you.

I have so much more to say, but I have run out of time. To my family, my staff and everyone who allows me to be here and supports me in doing this, thank you.

One last thing—to Johnny, who thought I would never mention him in a speech, hello.

**Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan):** Madam Speaker, Leonie Commons has been at Bakewell Primary School as a business manager for the last 26 years and is finally set to retire. Leonie hails from New Zealand, moving to the Northern Territory with her family over 46 years ago. She started her time in education at Moulden Park School, where she was the business manager for nine years.

She was chosen as a founding business manager at Bakewell Primary School in 1998, when it first opened, assisting with the setup of the school and all of the tasks that come with that. Bakewell Primary School fondly says that Leonie is Bakewell's best friend, as her dedication and passion for our community has been vital to building the success of the school.

She has seen Bakewell Primary School grow from a small school to the largest primary school in the Northern Territory at its peak, with over 900 students. Due to Bakewell's size people say it is like a machine, and Leonie has responsibility for much of its moving parts.

More importantly, she represents the heart and soul of the school, and school members have told me that they are so grateful to have had Leonie for all of that time. The students, teachers and staff will miss her deeply. Since becoming an elected member working with the team at Bakewell Primary School, going to many assemblies as well spending time with the students—even through Parliamentary Education—Leonie has been there through thick and thin. She helps me with letters to students, contacts me when I need to go and see the school and has been a force. I know she will be deeply missed.

Congratulations to Mrs Sarah Foyster of Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School in Zuccoli for winning first place in the 2024 Hot100 Apple for the Teacher. Mrs Foyster received a whopping 538 votes to win, receiving an Apple Mac computer and goodie bags for her class. Our teachers work so hard and are the backbones of our school communities. I thank Mrs Foyster for being an amazing teacher.

I will mention the runners-up of the teaching awards for the Hot100 Apple for the Teacher in 2024. In second place was Sarah Stenhouse of Larrakeyah Primary School with 467 votes; third place was Ellie Lothian from Holy Family Catholic Primary School with 455 votes; fourth place was George Mamouzellos from Larrakeyah Primary School with 423 votes; and fifth place was Candace Loane from Darwin Middle School with 195 votes.

Several Zuccoli Primary School staff recently received special commendations from Charles Darwin University for excellence in mentoring. This recognition honours their dedication to supporting teachers, fostering professional growth and guiding the next generation of educators. I make special mention of these teachers and thank them for their commitment to learning, teaching and mentoring. To Ms Melanie Johnstone, Mr Aris Banaga, Mrs Paige Stephens, Mrs Noelee Mitchell and Mrs Kylie Sideras, thank you so much for all of your hard work, and congratulations on being recognised.

The Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Football Club is a fantastic football club near my electorate in Palmerston. Recently we saw the president of five years retire. To Rodney Greenwood—or Greenie, as we all call him—a special thank you for your dedicated service through that time. He has assured us he is not leaving the club altogether; he is just stepping down as president. That is fantastic because he is a machine when it comes to getting things done around the club. I believe he will be the public officer, so he will still be responsible for the goings-on at the club and will be there to help support the new committee.

I thank the following dedicated community members who have stepped up for 2025 in the Raiders committee: new president Craig Jones; vice president Josh Parker; secretary Bessie Roach; treasurer Tanya Hazel; sponsorship manager Dallas Smith; commercial manager Cassidy Morris; junior coordinator Kaitlyn Anderson; senior men's manager Alex Johnson; senior women's manager and social media manager Marie Greenwood; public officer Rodney Greenwood; and general committee members Nicole Stokes, Michaela Harvey, Keeta O'Sullivan, Chris O'Sullivan and Will Lauenstein.

There are quite a few names there that are familiar to me; they have been around a long time. A special thank you to the Member for Blain, who I believe stood down from that committee.

**Mr Kerle:** I am still there.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Oh, you are still there. They took you out and did not tell me about you—no offence. Well done to the Member for Blain, Matthew Kerle, who is also on that committee.

Palmerston Probus Club celebrated its 12th anniversary on Thursday 17 October at Cazalys. Probus welcomes seniors to enjoy and participate in this friendly, interesting and varied club for those who are retired and willing to enjoy external activities or just socialise at their regular monthly meetings. The Members for Spillett, Blain, Drysdale and I were more than happy to donate the celebratory cake for the anniversary celebration. I did not get to go along; I am disappointed because I saw photos of the cake, and it was ginormous and looked amazing. The Chief Minister is patron of Palmerston Probus, and we get there as much as we can. We wish it could be more because they are a fabulous group of people. A big shout-out goes to them, and congratulations on 12 years. It is pretty impressive.

The Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club meets every Tuesday. Basically it is a little club that gets together to have a good time. Members play cards, make cards and play board games. On 24 September they confirmed the committee members for the coming year. They do a power of work to ensure our seniors in Palmerston have an opportunity to come together. It can be lonely as a senior. I know, because I speak to many of them. They have such a good time when they are together. It means they can enjoy their life in Palmerston and look out for one another, which is special.

The coordinator is Mary Oliffe; the deputy coordinator is Geraldine Crowhurst, or Geri, as we call her; the secretary and public officer is Janette Ashby; the treasurer is Janette Sanders; and the committee members are Glenda Bradbury, Barbara Christina Murray—Chris Murray, I call her—Annette Brown and Jenny Horn. I congratulate all returning and new members. They have been the Tuesday fun for us Palmerston local members for a long time. We always have a giggle when we are there, and they make all of the local members and our staff feel welcome.

It is an honour and privilege to be the Member for Brennan. I thank all of the constituents who have come to me to seek some support, guidance or ask questions over the years I have been their local member. I pay tribute to them because Brennan constituents are the types of people who do not necessarily come forward wanting to make a big song and dance about something. They do not want to be seen to be actively in the limelight.

They wanted a local member they can speak to whom they trust and where they could be in a cone of silence, so to speak, to be able to share their views but know they would never be mentioned. The only times I ever mention people in parliament is when I ask permission. That goes for volunteers as well.

Through my constituency and being out and about in the community so much over many years, I have met many of my volunteers. I will not mention all their names, but I do want to say a big thank you to them. They are amazing.

Thank you to Hollie and Tahlia in my office and to Jade, who I lost to the Member for Wanguri, but I know she will be fantastic with her. I thank all the staff in my ministerial office and of course the staff in the Office of the Chief Minister as well, who were helping us set up before we had our own team. My departments of the Attorney-General and Tourism and Hospitality and all the staff there have done a power of work since we came to government; they continue to do that, so I thank them. I thank everyone at the Legislative Assembly—Hansard, the security, drivers, cleaners and Kaye in the library.

I also thank my boys, Jonty and Kobe. They have always been my number one supporters. Jonty does a lot of the cooking at home. Member for Wanguri, I am pretty happy about that; I think I have taught him well. They have been my biggest fans, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, I thank my electorate and community of Mulka for the continued work they do in my communities and support they give me in this role. I am honoured to have been elected again this year, and I will continue to work for change that brings better outcomes for the people of the Northern Territory.

At the end of another year I thank the people of the Mulka electorate who work hard to look after our people. I thank the teachers, health workers, rangers and police—Yolngu and balanda; thank you for your work—

teachers and students. Some schools have already graduated and had award presentations this week. I send my apologies to Nhulunbuy High School and Nhulunbuy Christian College. I also send a big congratulations to all the schools, teachers and students who are celebrating all the achievements this week and next week.

I thank the ranger groups and the volunteers who are looking after our country, waterways and sea.

I thank the shops and businesses that provide goods in our remote communities; pilots and airline staff; and all those who work in service delivery looking after the elderly, disabled and the sick. I thank all the elders and leaders who are still standing strong caring for kin and country.

Even though it can feel lonely in this job, I know that I am not alone and that there are other elders and leaders also fighting for Yolngu *rom* rights, for country and to be recognised as the sovereign leaders of our land. I also know that my ancestors who have given me strength are still guiding me—no matter how hard it gets—with their wisdom, knowledge and kindness. They have handed down the law, and we will continue to walk the pathway they have laid out. We will continue to be who we are, Yolngu.

I wish everyone in the Chamber a safe and happy Christmas. In the new year I invite all the members of the Chamber, especially the new members, to come to Yolngu country and I will take you on a journey to show what Yolngu law is all about and how we can try to close the gap so we know each other and where we stand.

I have come a long way in coming to understand balanda culture. I believe I give myself 80% in my satisfaction survey, and I invite everyone to come and learn about Yolngu culture too.

I thank my staff—Beth Harris, Max and Jack—who have worked with me for a while to get this job done. I have lots of good people supporting my office.

I thank my wife, Wangurru Marie. At this time we go through sorrow. This week has been a harsh week of sadness as father passed away. I thank her for standing with me all the time. To those in the Chamber and others who have sent their condolences, I thank you from all my family. As a strong elder for Milingimbi my wife helps me greatly to do this job. She is always on the road with me, and we never stop until we retire together.

Merry Christmas and a safe and peaceful new year. May we all work together next year in 2025.

I will finish with a story of one of the students—my nephew or son left school after graduating from Year 12, but he wanted to go further. He went to Perth to study and get further education with higher standards. He was learning music and did well—Terry, my Guyula son. He started to put music together, Yolngu and balanda, through contemporary music so that we can understand each other and to educate children about how to live a life that is worth living, to grow up to be who they are and to take up leadership to fuel the next generation for our *djamarrkuli*.

Merry Christmas, and God bless us all.

**Mrs HERSEY (Katherine):** Madam Speaker, we have a couple of events; one is coming up at O'Keeffe House, which I am on the committee of. A big shout-out goes to the volunteers and board members. This Saturday will be the opening of the O'Keeffe House Christmas lights. It is a fantastic event for a small committee looking after the National Trust O'Keeffe House. A lot of hard work has been put in by Caroline DeMarco and Jacquie Christie. A big thank you goes to them for their dedication to O'Keeffe and the Christmas lights which they do a ton of work for. The Christmas lights are at an old Sidney Williams hut, and there is not much fresh air in there at this time of the year. It is extremely warm. The display is always a fantastic event in conjunction with other Christmas lights in the community.

Other members of the committee are Bess Hart; Merriel Lawrie; Stephanie Hill, who is the president; and Katrina Anlezark, who I give a big shout-out to, who has moved away from Katherine but monitors the CCTV cameras, which is a great help for us all. If there are any break-ins or anything to go up on social media Katrina looks after that, which is a huge help. Thank you to the other supporters who volunteer their time—whether it is when O'Keeffe is open on a Saturday morning throughout the Dry Season—including Lorraine, Barb Hagger, Jenni Groves, Bernadette Burke and Jo Revill.

Often in this Chamber I talk about how amazing our Katherine community is. On 26 October the Katherine Community Projects Association put on a fundraiser for a longstanding family, the Bernards, in Katherine.

Andrea and Adrian have had their world turned upside down this year, with Adrian having stage 4 colon cancer. As our community does, we all rallied together, and everyone put their hands in their pockets and supported this fantastic event on the Saturday morning at Rod & Rifle TackleWorld, raising $34,422.94. I give a shout-out to all of the businesses that put their hand in their pocket. Whether they donated for the raffle or printed flyers like my office did, everyone pulled together and did a fantastic job.

They include Town & Country Butchers; my office in the electorate of Katherine; Rod & Rifle TackleWorld Katherine; Lendlease; Intersport Katherine; Reedy and Co; St Joseph's Catholic College; Cancer Council NT; Bowel Cancer Australia; Paspaley Pearling Company; The Top Saddlery & Bush Boutique; Katherine's Steel Sparking; Pop Rocket Cafe; Selena Uibo, Member for Arnhem; Coffee Club Katherine; Uniquely Bloom'n Florist; Airborne Solutions; Astral Contracting; Drybar Darwin; SafeStyle; Niceforo Farms; Katherine Funeral Services; Catherine Noble; Patow towing; Renfree Pastoral Co; Solar Living Homes; Dragonfly Catering and Events; Advance Plumbing; Katherine Game and Fishing Club; Brumby's Bakery Katherine; Macs Hire Service, Laser Clinic Katherine; Katherine Community Projects Association; Katherine Vehicle Enthusiasts Club; Danielle Grieves; TD's Smokehouse; Katie Streader; Laura Boyer; Katherine Ice Supplies; Maiden's Lane; the Black Russian Caravan Bar; Florina Driving & Licensing; and All Regions Electrical.

I feel I have just about named all the businesses in Katherine, but there are a lot more businesses than that. I want to express the amazing resilience of our community in the way we all come together through adversity—and this happens time and again throughout the year. Again, thank you to everyone in Katherine who continually puts their hand in their pocket and rallies around someone in the community when the chips are down.

Another event I went to was the Science Teachers Association of the Northern Territory Young Scientists Awards. I attended that earlier in the week with the Member for Fannie Bay.

The Early Childhood and Primary Awards winners were Isobelle Alexander; Ilan Verncombe Tibbits; and Matilda Parr.

The Innovations and Inventions for Year 4 to 6 Individual winner was Baxter Hill from MacFarlane Primary School, and the Innovations and Inventions Year 4 to 6 Group winner was Class Palakal from MacFarlane Primary School.

Recycle Bugs Year T to 3 Individual winners were Brendon Saunders from Tipperary Station School; Lexie Lewis from Douglas Daly School; and Stephanie Martin from Nhulunbuy Primary School. Recycle Bugs Year T to 3 Group winners were 1NW Winarko, Good Shepherd Lutheran College and Class Transition Tarrant from Howard Springs Primary School.

The Recycle Bugs Year 4 to 6 Individual winners were, first, Lenni Clough, Tipperary Station School; second, Miles Allen, Good Shepherd Lutheran School; and third, Mila McBean, Douglas Daly School. In the Recycle Bugs Year 4 to 6 Group, first was Olivia Ostojic and Clarey Yesberg; Joel Byers and Jack Helios; and Alice Muller and Mia Spinks, all from Good Shepherd Lutheran College.

The Scientific Communication Model Year T to 3 Individual winners, Sofia Mavros; Cohen West; and Sophia Tsirbas, all from Marrara Christian College. The Scientific Communication Model Year T to 3 Group winners were Ella-Grace Harragon, Amber Luta and Asher McArthur, all from Marrara Christian College.

Scientific Communication Model Year 4 to 6 Individual winners were Samuel Palackel, Casuarina Street Primary School; Sanya Senarantne, Marrara Christian College; and Mya Dobie, Palmerston Christian College. The Scientific Communication Model Year 4 to 6 Group winners were, first, Ellie Malon and Wynter Mummery, Good Shepherd Lutheran College; second, Lachlan Chan and Zen Denson, Larrakeyah Primary School; and third, Max Kwok and Daniel Rees, Larrakeyah Primary School.

Scientific Communication Poster Year T to 3 Individual winners were, first, Sophia Tsirbas; second, Bonnisha Winetou; third, Ayden De Silva. Scientific Communication Poster Year T to 3 Group winner was Transition/ Year 1 Andrew, Berry Springs Primary School.

Scientific Communication Poster Year 4 to 6 Individual winners were Sidrah Azmul Khan, Australian Islamic College; Sahansa Lihinikaduwage, Stuart Park Primary School; and Tayla Fenwick, Good Shepherd Lutheran College.

Scientific Communication Poster Year 4 to 6 Group winners were, first, Bree Burgemeister, Abby Duck, Mary Johnston, Samantha McLinden and Lauren Pedersen from Good Shepherd Lutheran College; second,

Benjamin McMartin and Ollie Smith from Good Shepherd Lutheran College; and third, Judah Boland and Zac Milford from Anula Primary School.

Scientific Communication Scientific Writing Year T to 3 Individual winners were, first, Brooklyn Stanley, Holy Family Catholic Primary School; second, Amara Culas, Holy Family Catholic Primary School; and third, Cohen West, Marrara Christian College.

Scientific Communication Scientific Writing Year 4 to 6 Individual winners were, first, Sanya Senaratne, Marrara Christian College; second, Alex Lemke, Stuart Park Primary School; and third, Florence Ball, Nhulunbuy Primary School.

Scientific Inquiry Year 4 to 6 Group winners were, first, Class Palakal, MacFarlane Primary School—I add that the class and Jestin Palakal, their teacher, from MacFarlane Primary School do an amazing effort in their scientific awards. They also won the STEM award in the NT Year 4 to 6 group, and second was Class Extension Group from Larrakeyah Primary School.

In the major category for the Primary Years School Award (Remote), Douglas Daly School and MacFarlane Primary School won, with Jestin Palakal the teacher as well.

The Remote Student of the Year Award went to Mila McBean; the Early Years Student Award went to Sophia Tsirbas; the Early Years School Award went to Marrara Christian College; the Early Years School Award (Remote) went to Nhulunbuy Primary School; the Primary Years School Student Award went to Mila McBean; and the Primary Years School Award went to Good Shepherd Lutheran College.

With my time running out, I wish everyone again a merry Christmas. I hope everyone has a little break over the festive season.

**Mr PATEL (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, tonight is the last sitting of the year. Although I have only been an elected member for only a short period, it is important to thank those who have helped me so far.

I thank the people of my electorate, Casuarina. I thank all residents for their kind and generous support. I value the conversations I had with them, listening to their ideas, concerns, views and how they see their community. I thank the wonderful people of Casuarina for their support and belief in me to deliver on our commitments.

I thank the schools and principals in my electorate for welcoming me into their school community. They do a fantastic job teaching our students. I look forward to working with them over the next four years. They are Nakara Primary School, led by principal Liza Parr and all staff; Dripstone Middle School, led by principal Nektaria Pikoulos and all staff; Henbury School, led by principal Sarah Corry and all staff; and Holy Spirit Catholic Primary, led by Paula Sellers and all her staff.

A special thank you goes to all my volunteers and supporters. I especially thank Leonie Melder for helping me a lot; Derek Mayger; Penny LaSette; Christina Boothby; Rick and Angela Setter; Kash Sagar; Fiona Darcy; Vikrant Sharma and his family; my sister, Ramila Patel; Neel Patel; Malay Patel; my daughter, Anika Patel; my son, Krishna Patel; my brother-in-law, Mukesh Patel; Tony Schelling; Tony Bacus; and Alyson Hannam and her team. I thank them for their support.

I thank my electorate staff. Sara Battye is my electorate officer. Sara's previous experience managing the party headquarters enabled us to hit the ground running, set up the electorate office and quickly get down to business focusing on the community. I thank her for representing me when I am unable to attend events and my meetings.

I thank Maria Kalitsis, our assistant electorate officer, for her willingness to learn and develop new skills, for accompanying me to events and for her watchful eye on the electorate.

I thank all the Country Liberal Party members, the campaign team and Trower Branch for their unwavering support this year. Without them I would not be here proudly representing the community of Casuarina. I thank the Darwin City Council for their ongoing service to the Darwin community. I look forward to working together for the Casuarina electorate over the coming years.

I acknowledge my family, first and foremost, including my wife, Nilam. She is a woman of strength, beauty and integrity. She is my rock, and I cannot simply put into words what she means to me. I thank her for her

support throughout the campaign and the transition into my appointment as the Member for Casuarina. For all the extra hours and responsibilities that have fallen upon Nilam, she has taken it all in her stride.

My children bring me so much joy and love and inspire me daily to be a part of making a small part of the world a better place. I thank my sister and brother-in-law, who travelled from India to support Nilam, my children, Anika and Krishna, and me throughout the election campaign and my appointment as the Member for Casuarina.

I acknowledge all my Country Liberal Party colleagues. Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro encourages me to stand up and fight for my lifestyle. I thank her for her dedication and hard work every day. She leads the team with grace and inspires those around her to strive for the best for the Northern Territory.

I also thank Deputy Chief Minister Gerard Maley for guidance in the assistant minister's role. I value the opportunity to learn all that I can from you. Thank you for taking time to answer all my questions.

I thank Attorney-General Marie-Clare Boothby for her guidance and the support she has given throughout my journey.

Finally, the northern suburbs team—Mr Jinson Charls, Member for Sanderson, and Mrs Oly Carlson, Member for Wanguri—thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. Your commitment to our shared goals and the community we serve means so much. Together, we are making a real difference, and I am truly grateful to have your backing every step of the way. Thank you once again for everything you do.

I thank Mr Brian O'Gallagher, the Member for Karama. It has been a pleasure working together, supporting one another as a team representing the northern suburbs.

I thank all CLP members, all MLAs and their families, especially those who come from bush areas. Thank you for your contributions this year. I thank all the DLA staff and others who work in this building. Thank you for your kind contribution to running this parliament smoothly.

I wish all Territorians a merry Christmas and a blessed and happy new year. See you all next year. Have a great Christmas, everyone.

**Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, for Ausmusic T-shirt Day, I have on an Alice Cotton shirt; Alice lives in my electorate and is a local muso from Darwin. It says, 'All I think about is food'. I missed the jump yesterday, so I have two adjournment speeches to squish into one.

First, I will speak about how I was visited recently by a group, called Friends of Kahlin, some of whom are my constituents. They wished to tell me about their group and what they are advocating for. I take this opportunity to share this remarkable piece of history with you all.

From 1912 to 1938 Aboriginal people living in Darwin were forcibly segregated and moved into the Kahlin Aboriginal Compound at Myilly point, just a five-minute drive from where we are standing. In the early 1900s the government designated that all Aboriginal people who were not employed in the town or local Larrakia people were contained, controlled and segregated into the compound. The conditions were appalling—a timber and barbed wire fence surrounding hot, overcrowded and leaking huts with limited facilities.

So-called half-caste children were kept separate and eventually moved across the road into a half-caste home, a residence designed for a single family which held up to 76 people. In this home there was insufficient bedding, linen and clothing; limited toilet and shower facilities; poor schooling; and limited training or recreational facilities for the occupants. Remarkably, despite these extreme challenges, there are many stories of hope, love and community that surround the compound, testament to the resilience of the Aboriginal people who lived there.

There are also stories of a significant role of the Larrakia people who cared for the Kahlin children, often feeding them through the fence and supporting the mothers who came to visit their children. It is important to recognise and commemorate this site to acknowledge the terrible failings of the past and to build a monument to truth-telling. Only when telling the good and bad stories, with owning our past mistakes and recognising the strength needed by Indigenous people to survive them, can we build a shared future founded on mutual respect and trust.

The Friends of Kahlin is a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends who have been advocating for recognition of the Kahlin site for over a decade. I was visited at my office by Di, Joan, Sybil, Barbara and

Charlie. It was incredibly moving to hear their stories as descendants of children of Kahlin. There are many people in the Darwin community today who are descendants of these Kahlin residents. As Aunty Barb told me, this is part of truth-telling. It is so important for the survivors and descendants to have a place to bring their children and grandchildren to reflect, talk, share and gather strength.

The Friends of Kahlin have outlined clear steps to honour this site, and I urge the government to continue to implement these plans. This includes the finalisation of the memorial space, maintaining the $3m funding commitment and ensuring it reflects the input of those most affected, the Friends of Kahlin and the Larrakia people. This is a moment for the government to demonstrate that it respects and values the voices of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians alike. It is not just a symbolic gesture but a necessary step towards truth-telling and reconciliation.

Thank you to the Friends of Kahlin for visiting me and telling me your stories. Your stories and your families' history is important; it is Darwin's history. We all benefit from recognising and respecting that history.

I have a few shout-outs to other people in my electorate. I look forward to the graduation ceremonies of the schools in my electorate. To all the Year 6 students graduating primary school and the Year 9 students graduating middle school, your families and community are so proud of everything you have achieved. I know change is scary, but you all have the strength inside you to tackle anything that comes your way.

To the Clontarf boys from Nightcliff Middle School whose graduation I attended last week, congratulations. The program is brilliant, and the bond between you and your mentors was evident and beautiful to see.

I send a big congratulations to the nominees for the leadership award at Nightcliff Middle School: for Year 7, Kade Berto and Lilly Hodson; Year 8, Avaneesh Nirmal and Zara Green; and Year 9, Oliver Archbold and Evangelina Ronayne. Well done; what an achievement. Young leaders are our future.

I look forward to the seniors Christmas lunch that we are putting on at the Nightcliff Sports Club. Many seniors told us they would love to continue the tradition, so we are more than happy to organise it. We are having a three-course meal at Sporties and enjoying entertainment from the Nightcliff Primary School choir and the Nightcliff Middle School dance group.

Greens volunteers will also help set up at the Coconut Grove seniors Christmas lunch. We have donated lovely door prizes for the lucky winners.

I am excited about the rest of the footy season over the Christmas break. We are providing vouchers for the best on field for the under-16s and under-18s every week bought from local restaurant Patty Shack, the best burgers in town.

I am also proud to be sponsoring Hannah Turnbull from the Nightcliff Tigers AFL women's—go Tigs!

I send a shout-out to Alex and his family at Bruce's Charcoal Chicken in Nightcliff. It is confusing, I know—his name is not Bruce; it is Alex. Christmas morning when everyone is opening presents, they are there cooking the delicious chicken for people's Christmas lunches. If you are no good at a roast, you know where to go.

Thank you to my electorate staff, Suki and Harry, who have been incredible. What a momentous task it has been to start our electorate office from scratch. From the moment we got the keys we had people knocking on the door, and you have worked so hard for me to serve every person who has come through that door. I could not do any of this without you.

To my crossbench colleagues, I know I may technically be part of a party, but for all intents and purposes I feel like an Independent alongside you. It is a tough slog doing it all alone without an army of people behind us, but it feels good to work alongside you.

My heartfelt thanks to the DLA staff, the security staff, the cleaners and all the staff at Parliament House. Your friendly faces and lovely conversations are a welcome balm in this place. Have a lovely Christmas.

Lastly, happy birthday to my one-year-old, Rufus. He turned one on Saturday. He was four months old when I started campaigning at the start of this year. All year my poor baby has been dragged from doorknocking to events and to Parliament House; we have not had a break. I am sorry I am not as present as I want to be. I hope when you grow up you will not resent me for it but instead be proud of me for always standing with conviction and fighting for a better future for you and all the other one-year-olds out there.

Have a nice break, everyone.

**Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling):** Madam Speaker, I will talk this evening about several events that have been occurring throughout the amazing Braitling electorate.

Recently I attended the Alice Springs McDonald's to assist in the raising of funds for Ronald McDonald House. For the last number of years I have gone along with the Member for Namatjira and supported the local Maccas to raise much-needed funds to support families who, in their hours of need, may need accommodation interstate when their children require cancer treatment.

Last year the Alice Springs McDonald's was the leading fundraising store throughout the country. To Chloe and Matt, the managers of the local restaurant, I give you my personal thanks for your continued support and work in our town.

Recently Football in Central Australia (FICA) awarded long-term local and legend Allison Huhs with life membership of Football Northern Territory. I have been fortunate to know Allison for several years through my former association with the local Verdi soccer club and played soccer with her partner, Matt. Allison has worked tirelessly over a long period to ensure the soccer competition in Alice Springs has run seamlessly for years, and this recognition through life membership is truly well deserved. Congratulations, Allison, and I hope to see you on the sidelines of the soccer fields for many years to come.

Recently the 2024 St John NT Excellence Awards took place in Parliament House. I recognise Alice Springs local, Tarja Dick—better known as Taz—for taking out the top gong at the awards. Taz has been a paramedic in Alice Springs for as long as I can remember and is a leader at the local Alice Springs station. I know the long hours and sometimes challenging work can take its toll on paramedics, and I thank Taz and recognise the years of work to make our community a better place through providing help to those in need. Well done, Taz, on an award you so rightly deserve.

I recognise a man who has recently passed away, Sharm Bali. Sharm started Territory Care and Support Services 25 years ago with just one participant and a handful of staff. Under Sharm's leadership the company has grown to care for over 100 participants through its branches in Darwin, Alice Springs and Cairns. I pass on my sincere condolences to Sharm's family. I note that his funeral was held today.

Over the years I have attended just about all their Christmas parties, and every time I go the sense of family between the carers and people who are cared for is real. Sharm and the entire TCASS family have always welcomed me and my family with open arms. I have this beautiful picture of Sharm cutting the TCASS 25 years of service cake recently, with my daughter also holding the knife as she wanted to be involved.

It speaks to the friendly approach Sharm had in ensuring everyone was included and felt part of whatever he and his organisation did. I will miss you, Sharm, and this year's TCASS Christmas party just will not be the same without you. Rest easy, my friend.

Vale, Sharm Bali.

I finish by thanking all the Department of the Legislative Assembly staff, including the cleaners, security, Kaye in the library and the Speakers Corner Cafe staff. I am appreciative for all the support I have received over my years of service in this Chamber, and I look forward to 2025.

Merry Christmas, and thank you for another good year.

**Mr CHARLS (Sanderson):** Madam Speaker, I will continue my adjournment speech from Tuesday. I attended the AFLW Essendon versus Richmond game on 26 October 2024, along with the Members for Brennan and Fannie Bay. This was held at TIO Stadium in Marrara and hosted by AFLNT Chair Sean Bowden. I congratulate him for being awarded in the corporate leader category and crowned the inaugural NT News Leader of the Year last week.

The contest between Essendon and Richmond was an excellent display of the game. It was AFLW at its best. The Territory always brings out the best in sports, and I look forward to the game at this weekend's AFLW grand final.

It was my privilege to present the Austin Asche Award for junior tennis and Club of the Year at the 2024 Tennis NT Awards. Congratulations to all the award recipients and to Tennis NT on a successful year.

I was hosted at the Darwin Sikh Gurudwara temple by the president, Jashandeep, and secretary, Harpal Singh, for the 555th birth anniversary celebration of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, a significant event on the Sikh calendar. It was pleasing to see such a large group of followers pay their respects and worship this memorable day.

I was honoured to be invited by Mr Reinis Dancis, President of the Latvian Association of Darwin Incorporated, for the 106th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia. I attended this event along with the Member for Fannie Bay.

I show my appreciation to Mr Anand Panchal and Mr Ketan Patel for being instrumental in coordinating the holding of Annakut in Parliament House for the first time. Thanks to Anand and Ketan for working together with Protocol for that.

The official memorial for Alexander Gorden McKenzie was erected in the Northern Territory Garden of Remembrance on 22 November 2024. I paid my respects and was present for the unveiling. To all veterans past and present, I extend my deepest respect and gratitude. You have served us with honour, and it is our honour to remember you.

Suzi Spedding, my electorate officer, was joined by Northern Territory Legacy widows, who whipped up 21 bags for the Share the Dignity 'It's in the Bag' campaign. These ladies also kindly donated bags and items. Thanks to Northern Territory Legacy for coming forward and doing this great job.

I recently attended the Clontarf and Stars Foundation awards night at Sanderson Middle School, celebrating the achievements of young Indigenous boys and girls supported by the Clontarf and Stars Foundation in their journey to becoming confident and capable young men and women. A big congratulations goes to the Year 9 graduates.

Today I attended the funeral service of Sharm Bali. I represented the NTG and my colleagues there. He is remembered as a remarkable individual who dedicated his life to supporting others. Sharm was a long-term advocate for migrants, helping many to settle into the Northern Territory and providing them with the opportunity to build their futures. Rest in peace, Sharm Bali.

The close of another year is upon us. I reflect on 2024 and recognise that shortly we will be gathering to celebrate the joy of Christmas. I extend my heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes to you all. First and foremost, I express my gratitude to the incredible campaign team and supporters who stood by me during the recent election. Your dedication, energy and belief in our shared vision made all the difference, and I am deeply grateful for your efforts.

To the electorate of Sanderson, I am honoured by the trust you have placed in me. Representing you is both a privilege and a responsibility I take to heart, and I am committed to serving our community with integrity and determination.

To the hardworking and extremely dedicated nurses, doctors and other clinical support staff whom I was fortunate to have worked with at Royal Darwin Hospital and Top End Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services, your commitment to the wellbeing of patients and focus on delivering the best possible care for Territorians will always be remembered.

As the former president of the Darwin Malayalee Association, I sincerely thank the past committee for its unwavering support in developing the association into the strong community-focused organisation with superior level of support to its members, first and foremost.

I thank CLP President Shane Stone and his executive team, the campaign team led by Alyson Hannam, the CLP and North Darwin Branch members for their support throughout this year during the campaign. I also acknowledge my fellow CLP members. Your guidance, camaraderie and shared commitment to advancing the values we hold dear have been truly inspiring. My parliamentary colleagues, staff of the Legislative Assembly, drivers, security staff and cleaners, I thank you for your endeavours in making this parliament run smoothly.

To the hardworking staff in my electorate office and on the fifth floor—Suzi Spedding, Maria Kalitsis, Heidi Williamson, Derek Mayger, Olivia Sherlock, Mona Rivera, Leonie Melder and DLOs Courtney Johnson and Sarah Burchett—thank you for your unwavering dedication and tireless efforts. Your support ensures we can deliver the promises we made and address the needs of our constituents effectively.

Lastly, to my family—Anu, my better half, and two daughters, Aimie and Anna—whose slow and steadfast support provide me with strength and perspective every day, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I also thank my parents, Charls Antony and Daisy Charls, for being with me for three months earlier this year to support me throughout the campaign.

I also send my Christmas wishes to the Catholic parish that I belong to and wish all the members a merry Christmas. May this Christmas bring peace, joy and renewal to us all. Let us carry the spirit of the season into the new year as we walk together for a brighter Territory future.

**Mr HOWE (Drysdale):** [By leave, the member spoke in Tetum and self-interpreted in English.]

Madam Speaker, I have been given the greatest honour by the most Honourable Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro, leader of the people of the Northern Territory, and the Hon Robyn Cahill OAM, Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, to speak on their behalf to our most noble friend and neighbour, Timor-Leste.

On behalf of the Northern Territory Government, we wish all people of Timor-Leste a merry Christmas filled with food, family, love and celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

Our government also wishes you a happy new year and is excited to enter the new year with our growing friendship. We look forward to the opportunities that the friendship between the people of Timor-Leste and the Northern Territory presents in growing our respective economies. Together, we are strong. Let's start a new era of trade and growth for the benefit of both our peoples based on strong economic partnerships, respect and friendships to one another. Many thanks.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Madam Speaker, congratulations to the graduating class of Palmerston College and the students who received academic awards this year. The Members for Drysdale, Brennan, Spillett and I attended, and we were most impressed by the quality of the students.

Congratulations to Olivia Palazzi for receiving the Academic Excellence Award Top Aboriginal Achiever, Year 12; Kristy Jorrock, Top Personal Learning Achiever, Year 12; and Jack Morton, Academic Excellence Award Top Achiever and Dux of Palmerston College, Year 12.

Congratulations to the following students who received awards that were presented by Miranda Watt, Education's Senior Director, Top End Region, and former Principal of Woodroffe Primary School. Thank you, Miranda; it was lovely to see you again.

The award recipients were Adlantis Kavea-Davis, Merit Sport Studies; Aira Mae Rizaldo, Excellence Visual Arts and Aboriginal Studies; Alliah Jasminez, Excellence General Maths; Angelica Skipper, Excellence English Literacy Studies and Merit Maths Methods; Annie Mae Rizaldo, Merit Psychology; Ashleigh Barnett, Merit General Maths; Chelsea Woodberry, Merit Visual Arts; Chloe Birch, Merit Physics; Con Tri Tran, Excellence General Maths; Daisy De Souza, Merit Business Innovation and Excellence General Maths; Darko Parcon, Excellence EALD; Darlyn Angcon, Merit Community Connections Essential English; Elvis Nguyen, Merit Drama; Emily Elliot, Excellence Essential English; Ethan Cater, Merit Practical Connections; Ethan Lyall, Merit Chemistry; Gabriel Forteza, Excellence Japanese and Music Solo; Hannah Gray, Merit Essential English; Isaac Voysey, Merit Community Connections and Sports Studies; Jack Morton, Excellence Chemistry, Biology and Physics—well done, Jack. We will hear his name a few times in this adjournment.

I continue: Laiza Laoc, Merit EALD; Leonard Barozzo, Excellence EALD; Liam Jones, Merit Essential Maths; Lockyer Smith, Excellence General Maths, English, Japanese, Digital Technologies and Earth and Enviro Science; Madelaine Miller, Merit English; Marq Maga, Excellence Japanese and Digital Technologies; Marquie Cabahug, Excellence Maths Methods—congratulations, Marquie. I worked with your mother, Daisy, when I was at Charles Darwin University.

I continue: Nakia Stewart, Merit Aboriginal Studies; Nanise Tuva, Excellence Psychology and Merit Biology; Noah Baptisa, Excellence Community Studies; Nomikos Tambouras, Excellence Modern History and Legal Studies; Rhizia Vasquez, Merit Japanese; Tynan Hobbs, Excellence Digital Technologies; and Ysabella Desamito, Excellence General Maths and Business Innovation.

Well done, students, and congratulations.

I congratulate the Palmerston Game Fishing Club, which had its annual general meeting recently and re-elected president Darryl Smart, vice president Adam White, secretary Rosa Lines and treasurer Peta

Smart. The Palmerston Game Fishing Club is a fantastic local club, and has a great patron in the Member for Spillett. I love going there for pub night and enjoying my dinners, although I have been advised that my membership has run out and needs renewal so I will get on to that.

There are many people to thank. I thank the people of Bellamack, Moulden and Woodroffe who put their trust in me. I will keep fighting for you. I cannot fix everything all at once, but I will be working on everything I can to deliver a safe and welcome community for you. To the schools of Blain—Woodroffe Primary School and Principal Kristy West; Moulden Primary School with Principal Sylvia Gregory; Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School with Principal Stephen Versteegh; and Forrest Parade School with Principal Annie Keighran—thank you for your warm welcome and for inviting me into your schools to participate and contribute.

There are too many sports clubs to name them all, so I will not. You guys are amazing, and I look forward to many sausage sizzles and games—hopefully with more wins than losses, but we will see.

Thank you so much to my amazing electorate staff. Kelly has come on board and is whipping everything into shape. Kelly, thank you for your long hours and tireless dedication. I appreciate it and the hard work you are putting in. Sally has also come on board. Thank you for everything you are doing; I appreciate it. I look forward to the new year and all we will achieve. Thank you, Angie, who is helping out, and Sharia, who will be helping us over the Christmas break.

Thank you to the Legies staff. It has been a pleasure getting to know them all. As a former IT specialist, I thank Lance Dolan, our IT legend who has provided gold-class service. We have thrown a few curveballs at him when we needed to get things done in a hurry. He has always delivered.

Farewell to former Manager of Parliamentary Security, Chantelle Medley. I discovered that I know Chantelle through the gymnastics community. It was lovely to meet her again. I am sorry she has moved on, but I am sure she has moved on to another role which will be challenging and rewarding.

Thank you, Penny Hart. I did not get to know you as well as I would like. She was the Clerk Assistant Chamber and Serjeant at Arms. All the best; I am sure I will be running into you at your new vocation which I believe is in the vicinity of Palmerston. I am sure I will be seeing you there.

Congratulations to the Clerk, Russell Keith, on confirmation of your role. It has been a pleasure to meet you. I am always impressed by the wealth of knowledge you have and share. I appreciate it. I look forward to getting to know you much better over the years to come.

Thank you to the Member for Araluen, and congratulations on your ascension to the Chair. It has been a pleasure having you there, whipping me into line from time to time as I overstep the bounds, which I probably will continue to do. Please hold me accountable.

Thank you to the Labor opposition members for their humbleness, modesty and above all, willingness to accept responsibility for the results of the election. I hope you enjoy the function you are having upstairs later tonight. I wandered through the dining room and saw the amazing layout you have there with all the party lights, spread and music. You will have a wonderful time celebrating.

Thank you to the Country Liberal Party, particularly the Palmerston Branch members who put their faith in me to win the seat of Blain. Thank you to Suzanne Cavanagh, Kay Stevens, Michael Delosa and all the others who do not want to be in the spotlight. You know who you are. Thank you for all your tireless hours of effort and for believing in me. I appreciated it.

Thank you to all my volunteers, the people who risked life and limb walking around the streets of Palmerston for me delivering to letterboxes during Labor's crime crisis. Luckily we got through the election campaign without any injuries, although we had a few close shaves, and I had to rescue one of the volunteers of another candidate from someone who was having a mental episode and throwing pieces of concrete around the streets. I thank my volunteers. I appreciate you and hope we can continue working together as we make Blain a wonderful place to live and raise families.

Thank you to the crossbench members, Yingiya Guyula, Justine Davis and Kat McNamara. I do not have much time left, so I will just say thank you. I would add more, but I am running out of time.

I thank my colleagues in the Country Liberal Party. It has been a real education, and I look forward to all the work we will get done together.

In the final moments, thank you to my family, Olia, Jason, Jacob, Joshua; I am coming home.

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, let us find out how fast I can speak today. What a year it has been. I wish everyone a safe and merry Christmas.

As this is the last sitting of the year and everyone else has spoken before me, I thank the people of the Northern Territory and specifically the constituents of the Goyder electorate for their support and encouragement over what, for me, has been a period of personal and professional growth. Their support gives me great pride and reaffirms my focus on delivering positive outcomes to the electorate over my first term in government.

I thank every member of the community who stopped at one of my roadsides. It can be quite lonely on the side of the road, so it is always great when someone comes and says hello. Thank you to those who come to my electorate office, who I enjoy being able to help or even those who follow me on Facebook, have given me a ring or sent me an email—even if it is just to say hello or abuse me. It is this communication and feedback that I can use in parliament to advocate on their behalf for a better Northern Territory or fire me up so I can do better.

I thank my wonderful partner, Mel, who is currently at her work Christmas party that I am missing, for being so understanding and patient. When she reads this in *Hansard* tomorrow, I hope she knows that I love her and appreciate her.

I thank the Member for Nelson and his family for the help and support over the past year. I must thank Sharon, Sharia, Daniel, Lara, Lily, Pete and Bethany for sharing the Member for Nelson and thank them for all they have done for me and for the Member for Nelson.

I thank Nicole and Kris Civitarese for their continuing guidance, friendship and support over the past year. Merry Christmas to them and their family.

Likewise, to my staff Sharia and Megan, thank you for keeping me in line and on time. I thank them and wish them also a merry Christmas.

Lastly thank you to Tory, Melissa, and Joel whose efforts helped me get here in this Assembly.

I thank the Chief Minister for her continued support and leadership; without her this government would not be here. Her continued energy and resilience is and was essential in delivering us the Country Liberal Party government and bettering the Northern Territory.

I have a list of about a thousand clubs and sporting groups in my electorate which I will not be naming, but these clubs provide great opportunities for people to develop friendships, become part of a team and develop a strong sense of belonging and purpose. Vital to the success of these clubs are the many volunteers—who unfortunately I will not be naming—who run the committee, host the events, do the fundraising and are the foundation of community spirit.

Thank you to everyone across the Territory and especially in my electorate who gives whatever little spare time they have for the betterment of the community.

Volunteering can often be a thankless task, and for that reason I highlight the recent honour awarded to a rural resident and wildlife carer and advocate, Mignon McHendrie, who was announced as the 2025 Local Hero for the Northern Territory at the most recent Australian of the Year Awards ceremony. For over 30 years Mignon—and I apologise for butchering her name—has brought compassion and education to her community, rescuing and caring for the Northern Territory's unique wildlife.

As president of the community organisation Wildcare Inc, Mignon is at the helm of a team of volunteers who rescue wildlife. Wildlife Inc is a not-for-profit organisation which provides a support network for carers of sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. The primary objective is to rescue, rehabilitate and release these animals back into their natural habitat and to raise community awareness concerning the care and conservation of native animals.

Mignon also donates her time to working with remote communities, including organising for animals to be flown into Darwin for specialised care. Mignon is expanding the work of Wildcare Inc by training the community on how to care for orphaned baby animals and licenses the taking of animals with carers into

local schools. She is a true advocate for Australia's treasured wildlife. She is 57 years old, and her kindness and compassion are contagious. Congratulations, Mignon.

I thank our first responders and emergency services and acknowledge the pivotal role the volunteer bushfire brigades and Bushfires NT play in keeping the rural area safe during our fire season. The much-welcomed Wet Season rains not only provide us relief from the heat; they also deliver a well-earned rest for many of these volunteers who hit pause on their lives whenever the call comes in.

Not only do they fight fires; they provide advice and support for rural residents, and many spread cheer and joy with their annual Santa runs. To the Koolpinyah, Humpty Doo, Virginia, Bees Creek, Marrakai, Acacia Hills, Elizabeth Valley, Lambells Lagoon, Manton and Point Stuart Volunteer Bushfire Brigades, thank you and merry Christmas.

To Litchfield Council and my former elected council colleagues, I look forward to maintaining a relationship and working closely to deliver positive outcomes to Goyder and the wider Litchfield local government area.

Thank you again to my staff, my parliamentary team and family. I could not do what I do without you. I look forward to a day off over Christmas to share the cheer with my partner Mel, family and friends. My staff advise me that 4 January looks like a good day off.

In summary, the current Finocchiaro government will see a return to the days when the rural areas were heard, understood and appreciated. I reiterate my commitments to Goyder made during my campaign to light up Norbuilt Oval at Freds Pass Sport and Recreation Reserve; to upgrade the Arnhem Highway and Freds Pass Road intersection; and to install a playground at the Humpty Doo Golf Club. I am proud to announce that our commitment to expand access at Harrison Dam has already been completed.

With that, I wish you a very Goyder Christmas.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.