Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 1 – Assent to Bills Passed in October 2024

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message Number 1 from His Honour the Administrator notifying assent to the Bills passed in the October meetings of the Assembly. The message is dated 12 November 2024.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS
Appointment of Clerk

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that the Chief Minister appointed Mr Russell Keith as Chief Executive Officer of the Department of the Legislative Assembly and therefore by convention as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I am pretty sure Mr Keith has been an employee of the DLA since 2010, the same year I came on board. I congratulate Russell on his appointment.

Members: Hear, hear!

Resignation of Clerk Assistant Chamber and Serjeant at Arms

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that Penny Hart has resigned as Clerk Assistant Chamber and Serjeant at Arms. Penny served in the Department of the Legislative Assembly for five years, commencing as Deputy Editor and then Editor of Debates. I thank Penny for her dedication to the department and the Assembly and wish her well in her new position.

Public Accounts Committee – Inquiry Referral

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee advising that the committee received an inquiry referral from the Treasurer regarding the Howard Springs accommodation centre costs associated with flood evacuation in March and April 2023.

VISITORS
Electorate Officers

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of electorate officers from across the Northern Territory as part of the Electorate Officer Forum taking place this week. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION
50th Anniversary of the Legislative Assembly

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

(a) notes that 20 November 2024 marked the 50th anniversary of the sitting of the First Legislative Assembly establishing a fully representative legislature in the Northern Territory

(b) acknowledges the significant achievements of the members of the First Assembly, particularly for the role they played in the reconstruction of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy, paving the way for responsible self-government and establishing a sound foundation for building a strong Territory

(c) celebrates 50 years of the Territory's laws being made by elected Territorians.

On Saturday the Legislative Assembly held a commemorative event to mark the 50th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. It was a lovely tribute to five decades of an Assembly elected by Territorians—not quite to that self-government capacity we achieved four years later, but still an incredibly important time and turning point in our history. It was marked by a ceremony in the Chamber, with members of the public invited.

I place on the record my thanks to Hon Vicki O'Halloran, the former Administrator, for emceeing the event. I thank our predecessors who spoke about their time as members of parliament and their contribution to

shaping the future of the Northern Territory: Hon Roger Steele OAM; Ms Dawn Lawrie AM, JP; Hon Stephen Hatton; Hon Daryl Manzie AM; Mr Mick Palmer; and Hon Clare Martin AO. I also thank you, Madam Speaker. I had the opportunity to speak as well.

It was broken up into a recount of the decades. We heard incredible stories during that remarkable commemorative event, acknowledging important milestones. It was an opportunity to look back 50 years later on our progress, to honour the sacrifices and the vision of the people who brought us here and to recommit and clearly see the path ahead for the Northern Territory.

Over the last five decades the Assembly has evolved into a strong and unique voice for Territorians, guiding us through significant historical events and times of profound change. It all started on 20 November, and just a month later Cyclone Tracy struck. You can imagine, at that time, we had just got our Legislative Assembly sorted and elected and then a month later they had to deal with something as catastrophic as Cyclone Tracy. Of course, this year we commemorate 50 years since that as well.

The Assembly was created at an important time because leadership at a community level was needed desperately. On Saturday we heard the stories about how the Legislative Assembly at that time had an emergency sitting and then, in effect, was disbanded to some extent as tens of thousands of people were evacuated from Darwin.

I think Roger Steele recounted that the Assembly members went interstate to towns where Territorians were seeking refuge and shelter so that they could maintain connection with Territorians who had been displaced due to the catastrophic event.

Dawn Lawrie told stories about how police from other jurisdictions came in and that the New South Wales police were wandering around carrying weapons. She was quick to put them in their place and tell them that the Territory needed support, not people wandering around bearing arms.

It was a definitive time in our history on that journey to self-government, but the Territory was forged by the fires and flames of disaster which has shaped our culture, way of thinking, resilience and the people we are today.

Four years later we achieved self-government, and there was much reflection during the contributions by our predecessors about the fact that we had not yet achieved statehood. In fact, statehood was supposed to come at the time when self-government came. It is 50 years later, and we still have not reached that point. It was interesting to hear the perspectives of those past members on the triggers that were supposed to happen in our history that have not.

What is most disappointing for me in the present day is the fact that statehood is not even a conversation with Territorians because such is the plight of the situation we are in—with the shocking state of our economy, law and order out of control and the range of other issues plaguing the Territory—that statehood could not be an aspiration further away from our community. It is incredibly sad that in 50 years we have gotten further away from our goal than we were 50 years ago. All of us need to be mindful, as we undertake our duties on behalf of Territorians and forge that way forward in the future, of what we are trying to achieve and what lessons we will learn from the past.

Not only was this Assembly tested in 1974 with the cyclone, but there have been many other times of hardship across the Territory. It is fair to say that while we heard on Saturday the stories of triumph, tall tales, recounts and challenges, the Territory will continue to face challenges. This Assembly will continue to be the place where we have to resolve those issues and find a way forward for Territorians through those good times and the hard times.

We know that crime is the number one issue facing Territorians and that our economy needs to be developed and stronger if we are to have a brighter future. Over the next four years, as we look towards the future, the mission of our government is to make sure that this Assembly is used to deliver on the aspirations of Territorians. They want to be safe, have a good job so that they can afford a roof over their head and put food on the table for their children, and know that the jobs of the future will be there for their kids. That is the work this Assembly will do.

This is the second sittings of our new government. Already in the last sittings we passed an enormous reducing-crime legislation package. In February we will introduce the Territory Coordinator legislation, which will be sent to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee ready for feedback and passage in March. The Territory Coordinator marks significant economic reform that will shape the Territory's future.

There are exciting times ahead for our Legislative Assembly in making this new pathway for the Territory. I could not help but pick up on the sense of excitement that there used to be in the Territory in days past. Everyone had a can-do spirit; nothing was impossible. People felt there was opportunity here, and if you wanted a go you would get a go. People could make something of themselves.

That spirit has been dampened. That is not the Territory I know and love, and that is why we are on the government benches. The status quo is not an option for the Territory. We must do something different if we expect a different outcome. Although other members in this House are happy to tread a well-trodden path of failure, we are not. We owe it to the people who came before us, who had so much vision, drive and determination to make something of the Territory, not to waste the precious opportunity we have as members of parliament, and to make a difference.

We are all in this parliament for a finite amount of time at the will of the people who elect us. Territorians put their faith and confidence in us to serve our community to the best of our ability in the best interests of the Northern Territory. Whilst we have the privilege of serving our communities, we must do good with that opportunity, using every minute of every day to make the Territory a better, safer and stronger place where we can enjoy our lifestyle and where our kids are free. Those are the fundamental characteristics of the Territory, which has been shaped over 50 years; we need to set those characteristics going forward.

There are many moments in this building that are pivotal. This building was constructed as a huge stimulus during tough economic times in the 1990s. That in and of itself was highly controversial, given the amount of money needed to be spent on it at the time, but it is what got Territorians through that difficult period.

There are many iconic parts of this building that we cherish. Whether it is the bust of Dr Harry Chan out the front or the Mount Bundy stone which adorns the floors, all of it has a meaningful contribution in telling the Territory story.

One element that is never lost on me coming into this beautifully crafted building is the Sturt desert rose in the front foyer. I note that every time a school group comes in, the Parliamentary Education team—who do an incredible job—gathers the children around that flower and explains what it means. In some ways it is the last vestige of statehood that is talked about in the Territory anymore.

Going right back to self-government in 1978 when our flag was first flown from the pole across the street on the Esplanade at the old Darwin oval, the Sturt desert rose deliberately had seven petals in it to recognise that one day the Territory would be the seventh state. Every time we walk into this building we cross over that flower, and it is a timely reminder of the work ahead of us. For us to have any chance to achieve the independence that our predecessors had envisaged for the Territory there is a lot of work to do, and that is the work of this Assembly in this term that must be done.

I thank all members of parliament who had the opportunity to serve in this building and in the Chan Building and the old demountables. It has been an incredible 50 years, which we can all be proud of.

It is fair to say that the Territory is not in the best shape that she could be in, but that is our job, that is the work ahead and that is why we have been elected to government. It is a responsibility that we take seriously.

We want the next 10-year celebration of this incredible milestone to reflect on a reignition of that Territory can-do spirit. We want our people to feel proud to be Territorian. We want them to know that the Territory is the best place in this country to live, that the opportunities are there for them and their kids, that they can live a safe, meaningful and wonderful life here and raise their children free and able to engage in our beautiful landscapes, our culture and everything that is iconic about being Territorian. From hardship often comes good. We have had our fair share of hardship in the Territory. Successive Legislative Assemblies have stared it down and come back stronger than ever before.

We are full of hope and optimism about the future because the Territory's best days are ahead of us. We look forward to having the opportunity as a government to shape the future for our kids and future generations of Territorians so that they can look back and be proud of what we have delivered with this finite opportunity we have to drive change for the betterment of all Territorians.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, this is an important motion to acknowledge 50 years since the First Legislative Assembly sat on the land of the Larrakia in Darwin. As we sit here, it is difficult to imagine how little pomp and ceremony was attached to those first sittings, just as I am sure that those sitting in the First Assembly would not comprehend the scale of the building we are in today or the things that the Territory has gone on to achieve.

To understand the importance of the first sittings, we need to look at what they replaced. Before those first sittings the Northern Territory was ruled by unelected bureaucrats beholden to various governments down south. The political reality meant that neglect and underinvestment occurred throughout the Territory's post-settlement history. It meant that few local voices in the decision-making process and no Aboriginal voices were heard.

The truth was that nobody wanted the Territory. We were a political orphan and a colonial outpost waiting for someone to do something. Aboriginal Territorians, the first inhabitants of these beautiful lands, knew that this was a falsehood. The local Aboriginal Larrakia people and the surrounding nations had been governing the lands of the Northern Territory for themselves for thousands of years. The ignorance of the southern colonisers was stark; for them the land was not worth setting up a government for.

It took the great Gough Whitlam and the winds of change he brought to bring a path to self-governance to the Territory. The changes he approved provided the opportunity for the first sittings to take place 50 years ago. It would take another three years for self-governance to finally arrive.

On 19 October 1974 residents of the Northern Territory dabbled in the world of parliamentary democracy when they elected the First Legislative Assembly, which comprised 19 members. On 20 November 1974 those 19 members met for the first sittings of a fully elected legislature in the Northern Territory. The parliament was hamstrung, having a legislative capacity but no executive function and no budget; nevertheless, it was there. Those members sat in a now long-demolished Commonwealth administration building in the CBD at the end of Mitchell Street, close to where the current Parliament House is located.

Goff Letts was the leader of the new CLP government, with the role of de facto opposition sitting with Independents Dawn Lawrie and Ron Withnall, both from urban Darwin seats. The MLAs were paid $7,000 per annum in 1974, well below the average wage and probably reflective of how the Commonwealth viewed the new Northern Territory parliamentarians.

Those first sittings were concerned with establishing the Assembly's procedures and addressing immediate local governance issues, but we know that every sitting following them was dominated by one thing—Cyclone Tracy. Cyclone Tracy's destructive force, which struck months after they were elected, became the most significant player in the Northern Territory's new parliament. Indeed, much of the work of the first sittings focused on rebuilding and recovering.

To put yourself in their shoes for a second, no sooner had those MLAs been elected to their positions than this unprecedented catastrophe changed everything. To quote former Speaker and MLA from the First Assembly, Mr Roger Steele:

> *We hadn't really had a chance to settle in when Cyclone Tracy struck … Our purpose was to restore Darwin, look after our constituents and work with the Darwin Reconstruction Commission.*

He and other MLAs from that time remember having to visit their constituents interstate or in Alice Springs because they had been evacuated.

The location of the Legislative Assembly itself was devastated. With sittings taking place throughout the recovery period MLAs from that time remember running around with lanterns, as the power was off during the initial sittings after Cyclone Tracy.

However, the disaster also brought the Chamber together. The Independent Member for Nightcliff, Ms Dawn Lawrie, spoke about it being a:

> *… much more civilised parliament back then and people pulled together because it was a time of absolute crises …*
>
> *In many ways there were no political divisions, and we all worked to ensure Territorians had a say in the future and it wasn't being driven by people down south.*

It was a time when we came together, united by a common goal of rebuilding and recovery.

There were a few peculiar parts to that first parliament. The first sittings adjourned at the civilised time of 3.40 pm. Many of our friends in the Chamber would probably enjoy that. There are also stories of MLAs sharing shelter during sittings, as much of the city was unliveable.

In remembering those first sittings it is important to remember and acknowledge the staff who ran the Chamber. Their tireless efforts were, and continue to be, integral to the functioning of the Legislative Assembly.

I acknowledge the efforts of the first Assembly officer, the late Ray Chin, who worked to ensure that those first sittings were a success and that all the sittings following Cyclone Tracy happened. His work to get the Chamber up and running after the disaster is the stuff of Territory legend. As Bernie Kilgariff, the first Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, remembered, Ray was integral to getting the Chamber back up and running during those first sittings following Cyclone Tracy. At the time, the roof was leaking torrents of water, but Ray paddled through pools of water on the Chamber floor, carrying a tape recorder to record all proceedings of the day so that we could have formal records.

Ray became the Deputy Clerk in 1978 and served as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly from 1982 until his retirement on 7 September 1983. He was the first Australian of Chinese descent to hold such an office. What a fantastic Territory story.

Last Saturday we had a special event at parliament to honour the occasion. It was a great privilege to attend and hear from those who were at that first sitting and from people like the former Chief Minister Clare Martin about the importance of the anniversary.

The event also included a Tiwi dance to honour the Territory's first elected Indigenous representative, Hyacinth Tungutalum MLA of Tiwi. As the only Aboriginal person sitting in that parliament, I can only imagine the difficulty our countryman had to be sitting there alone. In many ways, the Territory was still a divided place then for an Aboriginal man to take his place in the Assembly; it is pretty deadly to celebrate his achievement.

Remember, this was only seven years after Australians voted to change the Constitution so that all Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would be counted as part of the population and the Commonwealth could make laws for them. In fact, the electoral laws applied during the 1974 and 1977 elections provided for the voluntary enrolment of Aboriginal people rather than the mandatory enrolment of everyone else.

Although Hyacinth was welcome in parliament, there were many establishments around the Territory that he would not have been allowed in. There were places that were not safe for people who looked like him. One Aboriginal representative in a Chamber responsible for a jurisdiction with a 30% Aboriginal population does not seem right. Much has changed since then, but I feel his contribution, particularly in this Chamber, was powerful, important and long-lasting.

Much has changed over the last 50 years, and I am proud to see our parliament better reflect the Territory's diversity. There is still unfinished business when it comes to self-governance, and I look forward to the day the Territory becomes a state, whenever that is.

It is important to acknowledge that the Territory has a proud tradition, particularly the Legislative Assembly, of many firsts. The first Aboriginal woman elected to the Northern Territory parliament, Marion Scrymgour, then became the first woman to be a Deputy Chief Minister and the first woman in Australia to hold such a high position of any government. The Northern Territory Legislative Assembly saw the first election of an Aboriginal Chief Minister, Adam Giles. The Northern Territory paved the way for the first Aboriginal Speaker of an Australian parliament, me.

The Northern Territory Legislative Assembly was the first jurisdiction to bring in euthanasia laws; unfortunately those rights were taken from us, but we were the first. We were the first Australian jurisdiction to raise the age of criminal responsibility and also the first to lower it.

We saw the first female Chief Minister of the Northern Territory when the great Clare Martin, leader of the Labor Party, was elected.

There are so many important firsts to be celebrated in this parliament. It is incredible to stop, reflect and remember them.

The event on Saturday was great for the community to come together and hear about these challenges. We heard from the wonderful Dawn Lawrie, former Independent Member for Nightcliff, about the struggles even then for gender equality. After Cyclone Tracy there was no roof on the female bathroom, so people were strapping on tarps so that female politicians—being Dawn Lawrie—had a place to go to the restroom. We heard about the Assembly's struggle during Cyclone Tracy.

I will not lie; it was difficult sitting here on Saturday, listening to some CLP members' recollections of the Northern Territory and the language used about 'half-castes'. There was talk of how the glory days of the 1983 election were to protest the handing back of Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park.

There are many things to celebrate in this Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, and there are many things to reflect on. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary, let this be an opportunity to reflect on what we can do better in the future for all of us. This is in no way, shape or form targeting any individual or political party; this is a moment for us to reflect on the past and look to the future. I hope that the next 50 years of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly can be outshone by moments of profound happiness and opportunity to work together to build a better Territory for everyone.

I acknowledge, as the Chief Minister did, the contribution of all members who have played an important role in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly—our members present today; those who are still with us who have retired but who still follow up on what the Assembly is doing; and the Members of the Legislative Assembly who have since passed on. It was heartwarming to see a number of former members here on Saturday, catch up with them and share where they are and what they are doing now. It is important.

This is the people's House, and everything we do here should be reflective of the wider community. This is an exciting time to talk about this.

I was heartened to hear Clare Martin talk. I have always had a lot of respect for Clare. She spoke about changing the parliamentary processes. Until 2001 we did not have an Estimates process; Clare brought that in. We also heard from a number of members in the Chamber about the importance of those processes changing and adapting to reflect modern times and best practice.

Although I am on the opposite side, I also acknowledge that we have the Country Liberal Party's first female elected Chief Minister in Lia Finocchiaro. There are many firsts to be celebrated. It is important to continue to do that.

I will touch on something that is dear to my heart and I have long advocated for—even with my own team, I have not quite got there—and I will continue to advocate for the need to do it again. We saw the first regional sittings under a former Labor government under Clare Martin when we took parliament to Alice Springs. I represent the remote and beautiful electorate of Gwoja. I used to represent the electorate of Namatjira. It is a great honour and privilege to take parliament to the people. The regional sittings in Alice Springs enabled the good people of Braitling, Araluen, Namatjira, Gwoja and even Barkly to have a closer destination to access parliament.

I acknowledge that there have been reasons, including IT, infrastructure and security, it is not happening, but together as a parliament on the 50th anniversary they are things that we can overcome so that the regional and remote people—particularly the schools—have access to democracy in the southern region of the Northern Territory. I am happy to work with the parliament on that.

We also heard Hon Daryl Manzie, I think it was, talk about the remonstrance that the parliament came together on about statehood and how they went to Canberra to nail the remonstrance on the door, as you do, only to be met with the door being steel or aluminium. They could not nail a remonstrance to it. I apologise; I think it was Mick Palmer, the former Member for Karama. He gave a wonderful oration of his time in parliament. It was bold, and he had everyone laughing as he recollected his time in parliament—whether awake or having a quick 40 winks.

With this 50th anniversary there are many things to celebrate and many firsts on all sides of the political spectrum, but also many things to reflect on as we mark this anniversary.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, it is great to speak about the 50th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly and I will speak about the history of the Northern Territory to put things in context.

In 1974 when we achieved our First Legislative Assembly there were 39,027 electors across the Territory compared with 154,487 today. We can look back over those 50 years and see the significant changes that the Northern Territory has undergone in the period since Cyclone Tracy.

As the Member for Gwoja said, we were part of the Commonwealth and it seemed that nobody wanted the Territory back in the day. From 1825 to 1863 we were part of the colony of New South Wales. In 1863 South Australia accepted ownership of the Northern Territory. I remember going through historic leather-bound journals in my old job for Correctional Services. In one journal from 1905 or 1906 in which the

entries were in beautiful calligraphy—the writing was magnificent and a far cry from what we see today—it said ‘the Northern Territory of South Australia’. I went through the entries and all of a sudden ‘South’ had been crossed out; we had become the Northern Territory of Australia. That was in 1911 when we came back under the Commonwealth Government and it took back control of the Northern Territory.

Effectively, the residents of the Territory coming under direct control of the Commonwealth Minister for External Affairs lost any say in the day-to-day goings-on of the Northern Territory. We saw change in 1922 when the government allowed one representative from the Northern Territory into the House of Representatives. For 14 years this representative had no voting rights and was all but a non-member of parliament. Finally in 1936 the member was granted the right to speak in the limited area of motions to disallow Northern Territory ordinances of the national government and to vote on those.

In 1974 we saw the formation of our Legislative Assembly. When I look back at some original members, I will speak specifically about Central Australia in many respects.

As has been spoken about today and on the weekend, that new Legislative Assembly of 19 members was sworn in and then a few months later Cyclone Tracy struck. It would be hard for any of us in the Chamber to imagine the difficulties that those 19 members went through. However, it shows the resilience of the people of the Northern Territory, including the original members of the First Legislative Assembly and the lengths that they had to go to remain connected with the people of the Northern Territory when they were scattered far and wide over Australia.

Alice Springs played a large role post-Cyclone Tracy. At some of the memorials over the past weeks in Alice Springs there was talk of how the first people who flew out of Darwin and landed in Alice Springs were met by the people of Alice Springs and taken in. There were interesting stories to come out of that.

In 1978 we saw self-government. The aspirations of our Legislative Assembly in those days were to move towards statehood. In 1998 the referendum for statehood was not successful, but those feelings and aspirations have not gone away, as the Chief Minister said. It is something the Northern Territory should aspire to. We have come a long way since our initial Assembly in 1974, and it is timely that statehood comes back to become a serious discussion for all Territorians and Australians.

I will go back to Alice Springs and what our electorates looked like in Central Australia. Our first Speaker of the Legislative Assembly was Bernard Kilgariff—or Bernie, as I affectionately know him. I have known Bernie since I moved to Alice Springs. Bernie’s family is a huge part of the Northern Territory and of Central Australia. Fran Kilgariff is the Deputy of the Administrator of the Northern Territory.

Some other members in Central Australia were James Robertson, David Pollock and Roger Vale. They were iconic Territorians and Central Australians. In those days their electorates were: for Bernie, Alice Springs; James, Gillen; David, MacDonnell; and Roger, Stuart. When we look at the changes to those electorates over the years we see that Gillen has come and gone and different electorates have popped up and disappeared. We now have settled on larger electorates for Central Australia, being Araluen, Braitling and Namatjira, with the wider part of them being in regional and rural areas. Therefore it is a different mix from what it was.

I will speak about boundaries and redistributions. There are now electorates that represent the wide variety of people across the Northern Territory, which is 1.3 million square kilometres and one-sixth of the Australian landmass but has less than one per cent of the population. The challenge for members in this House is to represent the people who elected them from the coast in the Top End to the deserts in Central Australia, to the west and to the Queensland border. We represent vastly different electorates with different needs for the people. The great thing about this Assembly is that we can come here and bring forth those ideas and the needs and wants of the people we represent.

There has always been a can-do and get-it-done attitude in the Territory. That has slipped away over time, as the Chief Minister said, but we are bringing it back to the Territory. The resilience of the people of the Northern Territory that was seen during Cyclone Tracy is seen in Central Australia during droughts and throughout the Top End during the monsoon seasons and other cyclones that have come across our shores over the years. That resilience makes the Territory such a great place to live.

I am proud to represent the people of the Namatjira electorate. Every member in this Chamber is proud to represent the people of their electorate for their resilience and can-do and get-it-done attitude. When times are hard for Territorians, everyone bands together, gets things done and makes things happen. That is what makes the Territory a great place.

It is great to celebrate 50 years of the Legislative Assembly. I thank all those who came before us and took the reins to represent the people of the Northern Territory, including those who have passed and those who were in the Chamber on the weekend to speak about the last 50 years and where we have come to as a community over those years. These people have shaped the Northern Territory into what it is today. The people in this Legislative Assembly today are here to continue to shape it. I am proud to be part of a team which is making serious change to shape the Northern Territory, bring back that can-do attitude and work with our community on that resilience to bring the Territory back to the place it was.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, today we mark the 50th anniversary of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. It is a moment to celebrate our shared history and achievements, as others in the Chamber have noted. I recognise that we are meeting on unceded Larrakia country, and I acknowledge all Aboriginal peoples and thank them for their generosity and leadership.

This Chamber has been central to shaping the Territory's story, as we have heard, responding to Cyclone Tracy, championing the recognition of land rights and advancing our fight for self-determination. It has been a place of leadership during moments of profound change. We can be proud of the achievements that have defined this Assembly and the way it has evolved to better serve the people of the Territory. This is a legacy worth celebrating.

It is a time to reflect on how far we have come, and we have heard wonderful stories, as people shared at the celebration on Saturday. We also heard, as noted by the Member for Gwoja, reflections and language that should be deeply troubling to all of us that should have no place in this Chamber.

Milestones like this are not just about looking back; they are also about looking forward. As we stand at these crossroads, we must ask: what do we want the next 50 years to represent?

This is our opportunity to move into the future with renewed purpose and commitment. The foundations that we lay now in this Chamber will determine whether this Assembly continues to earn the trust and confidence of the people we represent. This demands integrity, accountability and a genuine connection to the lives of Territorians. This is the people's House, and the people look to it. What we do here matters in not only the law we make but also the way we work together to make those laws.

We must recommit to building an Assembly that reflects the Territory's diversity, a place where all voices—particularly those from First Nations communities, women and young leaders—are heard and respected. Our decisions must not only reflect our values but also the liberalities of the people we serve.

Accountability must remain at the heart of everything we do, including transparency in how we govern through open ministerial diaries, lobbyist registers and clear reporting. Honest communication strengthens trust. When Territorians see how decisions are made and resources are allocated, they see a government that is working for them.

We must work with courage and urgency to tackle the pressing challenges of our time: the housing crisis; domestic and family violence; community safety; and creating opportunities for the next generation. These issues demand bold action informed by working together and the insights of those most affected.

The next 50 years are ours to shape. I believe that we can and must work together in this Chamber as the people entrusted by our communities to make good law for 100% of the people we represent by working together, listening to each other and making wise decisions based on the best information we have. If we lead with integrity, act with accountability and stay grounded in the needs of all Territorians we can make sure that this Assembly is a place of progress, innovation, compassion, justice and hope. Let us honour this milestone by committing ourselves to the work ahead so that when we mark future anniversaries, we can do so with pride in what we have achieved together.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, in the spirit of the levity brought to this Chamber by Mick Palmer on the weekend, I begin by noting that I am a journeyman cricketer. My ambitions have always far exceeded my abilities on the cricketing field, much to my chagrin. I was primarily a wicketkeeper but also an attritional batsman, not one of these dashers of the modern day who can score 100s in Twenty20s, but somebody who had to grind out every run. Cobbling together a 50 in cricket is hard. Getting off the mark is tough enough, as the long litany of ducks that I have to my record will attest.

As most of you know, this weekend marked the start of the Australian summer of cricket. As I caught a bit of the Australia v India test match in the background—in which unfortunately Australia was humbled to a 295 defeat in Perth—it caught my attention that Virat Kohli, the former Indian captain, turned that game on

the tea session of the third afternoon by converting a 50 into 100. It is hard to do that. That is why statisticians and aficionados of cricket will look at conversion rates for how people can go the distance, not just get off the mark, not just survive but then build and turn it into something substantial and match-winning.

What then did cobbling together 50 for this jurisdiction look like? This past Saturday, as those on both sides of the House have noted, many of us were fortunate to attend an event in this Chamber commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly. We have reflected upon some of the contributions made by the guest speakers on that day. Without repeating any of them, it is worth noting a couple of additional reflections I jotted down.

We were lucky to have the former Administrator Hon Vicki O'Halloran remind us of the fact that the Northern Territory is the only Assembly to have had continuous Indigenous representation from the get-go.

She was followed by Hon Roger Steele, who made a lot of the reflections on the post-Tracy period that we have heard a little about today. The one that caught my ear was the sentiment regarding the threat and real fear of the possibility of the Commonwealth disbanding this legislature in the wake of Cyclone Tracy, such was the level of dysfunction and chaos here at the time. As was pointed out by the learned Member for Namatjira, resilience is what saw the Northern Territory through that period.

Dawn Lawrie, a former member of the inaugural Legislative Assembly, reflected on that Legislative Assembly and its predecessor, the Legislative Council, and the fact that there were five members from that Legislative Council who fought their case over many years to then earn a seat in the Legislative Assembly.

That First Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, much like the one we sit in, had 17 CLP members and two Independents. Dawn Lawrie reflected on the fact that it was a great aspiration of the people at the time to ensure that we remained masters of our own destiny. That phrase struck me because we are again having conversations about our capacity to exist—existential questions about how to be a self-governing polity, be responsible, have a future and convert 50s into 100s.

I particularly enjoyed Ms Lawrie's anecdote about Hon Bernie Kilgariff. It spoke volumes about the manner in which that first legislature was conducted. Ms Lawrie noted that although she represented an Independent voice, she was given ample opportunity to present her case in this Chamber, and her dissent or minority opinion was duly recorded.

It gives me great comfort to know that in the first few sittings and months of this government of which I am a part that we are also affording all members of the House the opportunity to prosecute their case, be heard and provide robust opposition and democracy.

Stephen Hatton spoke after Dawn Lawrie. Amongst the many things he said, the one that caught my ear was how much time and effort he and his colleagues put into being MLAs. He talked about coming in two hours early to sittings to sit in the reading rooms of the Parliamentary Library to read *Hansard* to get across his brief and know what it was to be a representative here, understand the history of the place and be able to make a meaningful contribution.

The depth of what he spoke about—not just him, but all the others—showed that the history of this place was long. Institutional memory existed as a function of people putting the time and effort into understanding the history of this place, not just at moments of celebration but as part of every day being a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Daryl Manzie, in his witty and loquacious way, reflected on the building of Parliament House and moving from one side to the other. He also weaved in noteworthy remarks regarding the foundations upon which our economic growth was predicated, including laying the preconditions for sustainable resource development and mining, that being in gas and coal, and providing the regulatory framework that has ensured that we have to date been blessed with being able to create economic growth using mining and resource extraction without compromising our lifestyle and environmental protections.

Mick Palmer, with all the levity in the world, noted that being in parliament was ostensibly a boring matter but went on to note—of all the things that I thought Mick Palmer would have pointed out in this House—the significance and the importance of the library. I was dumbfounded. Mick Palmer pointed out the great contribution of having the Parliamentary Library and the Territory Library in this place in what it has offered by providing everyone in this House and members of the public the ability to use the facilities and feel connected to the place where laws are made. As we know, the library will be moving shortly; questions remain as to what will replace it and how we will replace the services that it provides.

Hon Clare Martin spoke pointedly about how the change of government in 2001 marked an important maturing point in our democracy. Indeed, that is the case. A robust viable opposition is important in any democratic polity. She duly noted some of the achievements of that period in providing balance and maturity to our legislature, including freedom of information laws, a revised Estimates process and the FITA.

She reflected on her conversation with Malcolm Fraser in relation to statehood and the offer that was made in the first five years to the Legislative Assembly to realise aspirations for statehood and bemoaned the fact that opportunity was not realised at that point.

We heard you, Madam Speaker, speaking about the decade between 2010 and 2020. Might I say it was delicately put that it was a period of turmoil, which we did not dig into but we recognised was a period of great highs and great lows. I think implicit in that message was the hope that we would experience more stability in the years forward, dare I say it.

The Chief Minister spoke eloquently at the end to bring it all together and to lay an agenda for the future. She duly recognised all the speakers before her.

It was a great occasion to be part of and to get a sense of history for this place.

A notable feature across all the speakers and the political spectrum was statehood. I must confess that I did not expect it to be reflected on by everyone in that Chamber on that day in quite the vociferous terms that it was. I grew up here at a time when statehood was expected, not hoped for. It was a matter of when not if, and it was a great shock to me in 1998 when the referendum was lost. It is encouraging to see both sides of the House again recognising that an aspiration for statehood remains. I think we can build upon that shared aspiration.

The final question, coming back to where I started is: how do you convert 50 into 100? Let me freely say that I am a man who scored a lot of 50s and very few 100s of consequence, so I do not have a monopoly on the wisdom to articulate a vision for how to get a ton on the board. However, from the first day that I came into this place I have maintained that in order to provide longevity it remains incumbent on all of us in this House to protect, promote and advance the aspirations of self-governance, and that necessarily includes a commitment to fiscal responsibility.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that is demonstrating greater fiscal responsibility and laying the foundations to create opportunity for new generations ahead, specifically seeking to raise investor confidence, stimulate population growth, re-imagine revenue models, ensure energy security, target industry support, reduce government wastage, promote market competition and deliver efficient services for all Northern Territorians.

I acknowledge all the past members of this House, and I thank them for their contributions. They have provided the platform upon which all of us will seek to build using our finite time in this place. I highly doubt I will be around to see the Northern Territory reach its ton. The Member for Goyder, with youth on his side, stands the best possible chance. With youth on their side, I hope that the generations of tomorrow will live to see the Northern Territory reach its maiden century.

VISITORS
Dundee Beach School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from the Dundee Beach School, accompanied by their teacher. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I welcome the students and teachers from Dundee in the gallery.

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the motion on 50 years of the Legislative Assembly in the Northern Territory. This marks a special opportunity to celebrate the Territory's shared achievements. A lot has changed over the last 50 years. In the First Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, two of the 19 members

were female. Fast-forward to today when 10 of the 25 members are female. I think we can all agree that we have come a long way.

The Territory's aspiration for self-government started well before the establishment of the Legislative Assembly. At the time of Federation in 1901, the Northern Territory was a part of South Australia before it was surrendered to the Commonwealth.

Progress was made in 1947 when the Northern Territory was granted its own legislature, the Legislative Council. The 13-member Legislative Council consisted of six elected members and seven nominated by the federal government. The Legislative Council could make ordinances for the peace, order and good government of the Territory, but could be vetoed by the federal government and had no authority over monetary matters.

In 1974 the Northern Territory was granted self-government, but it was not until 1978 that the Territory was finally set free from Canberra and officially established self-governance.

Since the establishment of the Legislative Assembly, my electorate of Katherine, originally the electorate of Elsey, has been represented by seven people: two Members for Elsey and five Members for Katherine, being Les MacFarlane and Roger Steele as the Members for Elsey; and Mike Reed, Fay Miller, Willem Westra van Holthe, Sandra Nelson and me as the Members for Katherine. Held by the CLP for all but four years, the electorate has punched well above its weight, and we have had Speakers, ministers and Deputy Chief Ministers as our local representatives.

This proved to be helpful during the 1998 Katherine flood when the local member, Mike Reed, was the Deputy Chief Minister and the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. During the flood, Minister Reed expedited ready access to powerful politicians, bureaucrats and the counter-disaster capabilities of the Northern Territory and federal governments.

A day after the Australia Day floods, Minister Reed signed a state of emergency declaration. The following day, on 28 January, he had a senior public servant on the ground to coordinate damage assessment and related processes. Our community was grateful for his tireless work and commitment over this disaster that had most of Katherine underwater.

In this place on 17 February 1998 Minister Reed moved a condolence motion to place on record the Assembly's deepest sympathy to the families and relatives of those who died, and that the Assembly express its thanks to governments for their assistance and support of the community. One of those who passed away, sadly, was our neighbour, Dom Mammone, who with Robert Buzzo, went back to their property in a boat and struck the powerlines. It was terribly sad for our community.

The establishment of the Legislative Assembly and self-government meant the end of the Katherine Town Management Board and the start of Katherine Town Council. Katherine has achieved a lot since self-government, but we have always faced adversity, and in true Katherine spirit persevered.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy, while also feeling the effects of the cyclone, Katherine became a strategic point of coordination. The town's resources were quickly mobilised to help those affected in Darwin. Katherine's central location made it an ideal hub for distributing aid and supplies, as the rest of the Territory was cut off or facing significant transport difficulties. As Darwin's infrastructure crumbled, Katherine became a vital lifeline for thousands of evacuees, taking on the responsibility of hosting people who had lost everything and fled south along the Stuart Highway.

Despite being a small town, the resilience and generosity of the Katherine community makes us who we are today. We have the Katherine Community Projects Association that is funded through the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and delivers much-needed support for our community.

This came about after the community suffered through break-ins and businesses were left without access to enough support to secure their businesses. Trent from Rod and Rifle got together with some of his mates and offered a call-out service so that businesspeople could at least get their windows boarded up.

The Katherine Community Projects Association has grown and now has a committee and runs regular events. Whether it be a fundraiser for a Katherine family that raised more than $30,000 on a Saturday morning, our recent mini Laksa Festival or Twilight on the Tracks—a sequence of evening drinks and nibbles on our iconic railway bridge—it is things like this work of the Katherine Community Projects Association that fuel my passion for my centre of the universe and which makes Katherine so resilient in times of adversity.

Fifty years ago the First Legislative Assembly in 1974 had 19 members, and today there are 25 members. Like in the First Legislative Assembly, in the 15th Assembly there are 17 CLP members.

At the Northern Territory election in August the people of the Territory gave the CLP a mandate, and we are delivering on our commitments. We are committed to reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our unique Territory lifestyle.

I am truly grateful to serve as the fifth Member for Katherine, and I look forward to representing my community in this place for many years to come.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, in 2024 we celebrate a remarkable milestone—the 50th anniversary of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly's first sitting. This was on 19 November 1974.

I acknowledge the 19 founding members who had the vision and determination to lay the groundwork for a brighter future for the Northern Territory. Among them was Bernie Kilgariff, the Assembly's first Speaker, who later went on to represent the NT in the Australian Senate.

I reflect on the contribution of Goff Letts, the first Leader of the Country Liberal Party, who guided the Territory through its early steps towards self-government. Goff passed away last year after reaching an incredible 95 years of age. His legacy continues to inspire all of us.

I pay my respects to the late Hyacinth Tungutalum, who was the CLP's first Indigenous Territorian in the Legislative Assembly. On Saturday Hyacinth's sons Richard and Leslie and his friends were here to dance for us, performing in this Chamber. It was fabulous to see them and chat with them after the ceremony.

I highlight Paul Everingham, the Northern Territory's first Chief Minister, whose visionary leadership from 1978 to 1984 laid the foundation for critical infrastructure and development across the Territory.

When self-government became a reality in 1978 the NT finally took control of most state-like functions. It was a turning point, though some responsibilities like Aboriginal land, uranium mining and national parks remained with the Commonwealth.

One of our first ministers, Roger Steele, captured the spirit of the time perfectly when he said that people were so happy about self-government and no longer being chained to Canberra. His words reminded me of the immense pride and hope Territorians felt during that pivotal moment.

It gave us the ability to purchase freehold land. This opened doors to build institutions and facilities like our first university, our casinos and accommodation—opportunities the rest of Australia had long enjoyed. Paul Everingham's work with the Sheraton group was a game changer by bringing five-star hotels to Yulara, Alice Springs and Darwin. He not only boosted tourism but also made the Territory a more attractive place to live, visit and invest in.

As we celebrated the first steps of self-governance tragedy struck. Just 35 days after the Assembly's first sitting Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974. The cyclone claimed 71 lives, injured more than 650 people and destroyed more than 5,000 homes. The government's response in those dark days was swift and decisive. Relief centres were established, emergency services mobilised and collaboration with federal agencies ensured a coordinated effort.

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission set up in 1975 worked tirelessly to rebuild the city. In just three years Darwin was transformed, with new building codes and upgraded infrastructure ensuring we would be better prepared for the future.

The Territory's growth since those early days went from strength to strength. The Country Liberal Party remained in office from 1974 to 2001, providing the stability for progress and our economy to prosper. As a result, our population doubled to 202,000 people.

Culturally, we have seen significant milestones like the evolution of the original 1979 Bougainvillea Festival into today's Darwin Festival, a vibrant arts and culture celebration. We also witnessed the declaration of Kakadu National Park and Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park—both world-class treasures renowned for their significant cultural and natural values.

Closer to home, there was the establishment of Palmerston in 1980 for which the late Nick Dondas was the driving force. It is home to my electorate and those of my other colleagues who work tirelessly to connect with the 40,000-plus residents who enjoy living there.

A year after Palmerston was the opening of Fort Hill Wharf, the West Lane car park and the Bagot Road flyover in 1981. These developments that transformed our urban landscape remain integral to Darwin. Projects like the Channel Island Power Station, completed in 1986, replaced outdated infrastructure and ensured reliable energy for our growing communities.

This incredible building, Parliament House, opened in 1994. Two workers tragically died during construction, and the fountain in the Speaker's Green is dedicated to their memory.

Our Territory today would not have been possible without the leaders who shaped our Territory from Goff Letts to Paul Everingham, Ian Tuxworth and Marshall Perron. These pioneers, among many, guided us through key moments in our history.

I acknowledge the contributions of former Members for Brennan, particularly Denis Burke and Peter Chandler, for their dedicated service to our community.

I also mention the former ministers who are still fierce advocates for the Territory and remain living here, being Shane Stone, Barry Coulter, Daryl Manzie and Peter Styles, just to name a few.

As I reflect on the Assembly's journey over the past 50 years, I am struck by how far we have come. From the devastation of Cyclone Tracy to the achievement of self-government we have shown incredible resilience and determination, but there is still much more work to do. While we celebrate the 50th anniversary milestone, we must also confront the challenges we are experiencing.

Reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring the lifestyle we once enjoyed are our responsibilities that we owe to Territorians. We have an obligation to learn from the past so that we can build a brighter, more secure future, especially for our children and grandchildren. Looking ahead, I am filled with optimism that the strength and resilience of our people will guide us as a government. We are their elected members to tackle the challenges head-on and to build a better future.

This is an important opportunity to recognise the countless individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth functioning of this Assembly, from the security personnel to the cleaners, IT staff, gardeners, administrative teams and Parliamentary Counsel. Often their contributions go unnoticed, but they are vital. I thank them all. In Parliament House every role matters, and it is through their dedication that we can focus on serving the people of the Northern Territory.

As we mark this 50th anniversary we celebrate the Assembly's achievement and the resilience that has defined our journey. I am inspired by the courage, vision and hard work of those who came before us. The Northern Territory is often referred to as the final frontier, and that is true for all the members and staff of the Legislative Assembly have forged their way against many odds over the last 50 years.

On Saturday when we commemorated the 50 years with a special ceremony in the Chamber we were blessed to hear stories from former Chief Ministers and members of parliament, along with Madam Speaker, Hon Robyn Lambley, and our newest Chief Minister, Hon Lia Finocchiaro. The Chief Minister set out the near-future vision of the Legislative Assembly in which I am proud to serve as the Member for Brennan and as Attorney-General and the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality; Parks and Wildlife; Major Events; and Racing.

I commit to honouring the legacy of those who came before me by rebuilding a new and invigorated Territory so that when we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly, we will remember our history and be proud of what we have achieved.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank everyone in the Assembly who contributed to this motion recognising the 50th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly. We are all here with purpose on behalf of our communities. The future is in good hands. We look forward to making our mark and leaving our contribution for future generations.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Domestic and Family Violence in the Northern Territory

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Clerk has received a ministerial report from the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence. The report has been circulated by the Office of the Clerk, pursuant to Sessional Order 5.

Ms CAHILL (Prevention of Domestic Violence): Madam Speaker, I provide a report on domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory.

Although domestic and family violence is not a Territory-specific issue, with domestic violence rates three times higher than the national average it is without question an issue that impacts the Northern Territory more greatly than any other jurisdiction in Australia. More than one-third of offenders are before the courts for a domestic violence-related offence.

The domestic and family violence assault rate is increasing. In the past eight years reported domestic and family violence assaults have risen across the Territory by 82%. In some regional areas domestic violence assaults have more than doubled: in Tennant Creek by 101%; Katherine, 135%; and Palmerston, 180%.

The Northern Territory domestic violence homicide rate is seven times the national rate. Since 2000, 87 women have lost their lives to domestic violence in the Northern Territory and 93% of them were Aboriginal women. Since June this year, nine more have lost their lives in incidents of alleged domestic violence homicide.

The financial cost of domestic, family and sexual violence to our community is more than $606m per annum. Domestic, family and sexual violence is the main driver of homelessness in the Northern Territory. More often than not it is the trigger that results in a child being placed into care.

Yesterday the Northern Territory Coroner, Elisabeth Armitage, delivered her findings following the inquest into the domestic, family and sexual violence-related deaths of four Territory women—four vibrant Aboriginal women who were daughters, sisters, aunties, mums and grandmas. The Coroner declared the situation a ‘terrible, terrible carnage’.

In 2016 the then Northern Territory Coroner, Greg Cavanagh, when handing down his findings of an inquest into the death of two Aboriginal women in Alice Springs, said of domestic violence:

> *In the Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory it is literally out of control.*

A revisiting of his recommendations at that time find them eerily similar to those made by Coroner Armitage yesterday. The circumstances of his handing down those findings are similarly familiar.

Domestic, family and sexual violence is insidious and impacts thousands of Territorians directly and indirectly. Every day perpetrators terrorise their victims who most often are known to them. It tears families apart. Domestic violence does not discriminate; it does not respect or fear race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. It is driven by gender inequality. At heart it is about power and control.

External factors such as lived experience of violence, drug or alcohol abuse and mental health issues may be contributing factors, but they are not excuses. It can take the form of physical, sexual, emotional, social, verbal, spiritual and economic abuse. For victims it is relentless, and as we are seeing all too frequently in the Territory it is too often a death sentence.

The true tragedy, however, is that this is not some new reality we have stumbled into in the last few months. The heartbreaking reality is that domestic violence has become so entrenched in our community we are becoming numb to its impact. For our regional and remote communities the increase in domestic violence is so significant that it is a day-to-day battle for survival for our most vulnerable.

The only real change we have seen in past decades is that it is no longer a topic our community shies away from, but it remains one that our community seems at a loss as to how it can be resolved.

After the coronial findings were handed down in 2016, the then Gunner Labor government took the view that the solution was the creation of the NT’s Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework. Launched in 2018, the seemingly comprehensive framework spanned a decade from 2018 to 2028 and articulated a vision to make sure Territorians were safe, respected and free from violence wherever they chose to live, work and play.

Desired outcomes were listed as:

- domestic, family and sexual violence is prevented and not tolerated
- Territorians at risk of experiencing violence are identified early and provided with effective interventions
- people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence are protected and helped to recover and thrive
- perpetrators are held accountable and connected early to responses that change their behaviours and reduce violence
- legislation, policy and funding models enable a responsive, high-quality and accountable domestic, family and sexual violence service system.

It was a panacea that would reduce all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence, creating a future environment where women and children were safe and families supported.

It was broken down into three action plans:

- Action Plan 1: Changing Attitudes, Intervening Earlier and Responding Better 2018–2021
- Action Plan 2: Taking Stock, Evaluating and Reviewing, and Building on What Works 2022–2025
- Action Plan 3, 2026–28, sustaining effort and measuring change and success.

Damningly, however, at the time Action Plan 2 was put forward it was noted that no formal evaluations had been completed of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework as a whole, although an evaluation of Action Plan 1 was underway. A new focus on monitoring, evaluating and accountability was a priority in the implementation of Action Plan 2.

Although it would have seemed common sense that a focus on monitoring and evaluating the framework would have been a cornerstone of the framework from day one, even after acknowledging that this was lacking in the initial phase of the framework's implementation, the outputs and their indicators largely remained aspirational. In developing Action Plan 2 it was concerningly noted:

> *It is not feasible, cost effective or appropriate to formally evaluate all aspects of the DFSV Framework …*

With a small concession:

> *… but review is required, particularly of its key components.*

Having arrived at that conclusion at that juncture, it would have been prudent to take a step back and consider how the framework could possibly achieve its goals to reduce all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence, creating a future environment where women and children are safe and families supported, given it was acknowledged that the framework likely was unable to be evaluated.

On being appointed Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence a few short weeks ago, one of the first questions I asked was: what are we doing, and how do we know it works? On learning that six years after the framework was launched there was little, if anything, available by way of outcome reporting for the many programs being funded in this sector, the question then became: how can we expect the organisations we have tasked with working to achieve the outcomes outlined in the framework to succeed if we have not provided clear guidance on how those outcomes will be measured and advice on what success looks like?

Is success reporting on the number of victims of domestic violence who take shelter from their violent partners, who have been offered vital periods of respite but who ultimately find themselves doomed to return to their home with the perpetrator of the violence against them and their children still in residence? Is it reporting the number of perpetrators who have undertaken behaviour change programs, knowing that even after more than a decade of these programs being run across the Territory and Australia—as was found in Monash University's report, Engaging in Change: A Victorian Study of Perpetrator Program Attrition and Participant Engagement in Men's Behaviour Change Programs—evaluating the success or otherwise of such programs is problematic?

There is little in the way of evidence-based research to demonstrate that behaviours have actually changed. In the absence of a methodology, given the only true measure available is the number of domestic violence assaults reported—which has almost doubled across the Territory in the last decade—it was clear to me that what we are doing in this space is not working. A readjustment is needed. Our systems are not just broken; they are shattered.

In taking a step back we need to ensure there is clarity for service providers on the expectations for the programs they are delivering. Guidance on service gaps will inform the development of programs to be developed as part of our government's funding commitment to address the demands and stresses placed on our community as a result of domestic, family and sexual violence.

We need to work with communities, with our Indigenous elders and leaders, who are perfectly placed to guide our younger generations to understand that domestic, family and sexual violence needs to be stopped. We need to equip those tasked with keeping our community safe with the legislative framework that allows them to take action immediately, taking any and all necessary steps to protect victims from perpetrators.

Every Territorian has a role to play in ending this cycle of violence.

Our government will continue to fight for needs-based funding that recognises that our women, most especially Aboriginal women, are most at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence in our country and that they deserve to be supported in reaching the goal set out in the framework—to be safe, respected and free from violence wherever they choose to live, work and play.

Our government commits to investing in programs that are effective. The Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, working with the Department of Children and Families, is leading work to coordinate an investment plan for the $180m election commitment. Areas of investment will look to include:

- workforce and sector development
- education and prevention activities in schools and communities
- community-led prevention activities, including public awareness campaigns on safe, healthy and respectful relationships
- an evidence-based approach in developing programs targeted at changing perpetrator behaviour
- victim-centred responses to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence
- early intervention with young people starting to use domestic, family and sexual violence
- supporting tools for police to respond to domestic, family and sexual violence, including co-responder models with specialist services.

We will invest in our regions:

- Arnhem region—we will look to introduce programs for primary prevention and early intervention
- Barkly region—programs to support response, recovery and healing, including crisis accommodation to address violence impacts and reduce trauma
- Big Rivers region—early intervention, response, recovery and healing and behaviour change programs
- Central Australia, greater Darwin and the Top End regions—housing pathways, prevention, early intervention and specialist domestic and family violence services, including crisis accommodation.

We will look to the experience of other jurisdictions that have developed programs designed to remove perpetrators rather than victims from the home environment to minimise the disruption and trauma for victims. Most importantly, we will consult with communities and service providers on the ground to understand what is needed.

I have already visited the Barkly and Central Australia regions—I will travel to the Big Rivers and Top End regions before the end of the year—to speak to the workers on the ground; the services tasked with helping resolve the scourge of domestic, family and sexual violence; and the businesses to see what they feel they

can contribute in addressing this most horrendous of circumstances. We will listen to frontline workers on what works and what does not.

Much has been invested, and many people are willing to step up and take a stand against domestic and family violence. Every day for the next 16 days you will hear a message and have the opportunity to learn the story of someone working in this field through the 16 Days of Activism, hosted by the United Nations. It will culminate in a community gathering on 16 December, giving people the opportunity to discuss what we can do as a community to call out this behaviour and stop it before it continues to take from us more of our wonderful, amazing women.

Funding alone cannot fix this problem. At the end of the day, domestic violence is a behaviour, but behaviours can be changed. The only way for change to happen is for communities, every one of us, to accept the role to call out those who resort to domestic violence. Leaders in our most at-risk communities must accept that they are best placed to enable change. It will not be easy, but we as a government will do all in our power to support communities to end this cycle of violence.

I move that the Assembly take note of this report.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I stand alongside thousands of voices across the Northern Territory and the nation today, for the next 16 days and for the rest of time—as long as it takes—to overcome domestic, family and sexual violence. Uniting on this issue is incredibly important, as is demanding urgent action against the devastating epidemic that is domestic, family and sexual violence which ravages Australian communities.

It is important to acknowledge that the Northern Territory Coroner yesterday handed down her findings into four deaths of Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory—women who should be with their families and communities. The Coroner made 35 recommendations aimed at making women and children safe. I am proud to say that Territory Labor supports every one of those recommendations and will work to ensure that they are fully implemented, if not now then when a future Territory Labor government is returned.

Yesterday one of the most prominent and profound comments from the Northern Territory Coroner was, 'No further delay can be tolerated'. That is right; it is time for change and for us, particularly as men, to stand up and be counted for calling out violence against women and children because it has to stop. Territory men have an opportunity to be strong leaders and support Territory women. Now is the time to do it. We cannot just march and protest; we need to take action at every chance. We need to have hard conversations in clubhouses and at ceremonies, family gatherings and barbecues because the standard we walk past is the standard we accept. We cannot accept this behaviour.

Family violence is not just a statistic; they are people who are loved, have families, goals and aspirations and bright futures. Domestic and family violence is a plague that inflicts immeasurable damage, heartache and trauma, especially within Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. It is an affront to our humanity, shattering families and fracturing the fabric of our society. The burden of this violence disproportionately weighs upon women, children and family units.

I am alarmed the government said that it will do an audit. It is auditing an audit. The ICRO, as it is commonly known, did just that. It mapped the domestic and family violence sector and the desires of the sector. The Interagency Coordination and Reform Office came together with industry experts and victim–survivors—who shared their lived experience—to understand what needed to be done. We do not need to do the mapping exercise; it has been done. That is the role of the ICRO and the commitment of $180m, which was the start of the process of investing in the ICRO.

Yesterday I spoke to a number of people in the domestic and family violence sector who were overcome with emotion because they had closure for the four women who died, but they were also disappointed in the response they got. They said, 'We do not need more auditing and mapping. We did that work. We just need the goddamn money.' Money will not change everything, but it will make a huge difference in beginning the journey to overcome the horrific rates of domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory.

I make it clear that the Territory's organisations in the domestic, family and sexual violence space do an incredible job. Some people may be critical and say that they need an audit to check their KPIs and hold them to account, but we need to fund them appropriately. I acknowledge that every former government—ours included—needed to step up and fund them better because that is how we drive that change.

Auditing the framework is playing with politics; it is not helping vulnerable women and children. The ICRO did the audit and the service mapping exercise. We need to put the money into fully delivering and implementing the ICRO. I stand with the sector in saying that we do not need another audit; we need the investment.

Aboriginal people, like all Australians, deserve the right to live safely and with dignity. We are entitled to exist free from the shadow of family violence and abuse. This is not merely a cultural expectation; it is a fundamental human right, yet the alarming truth is that Aboriginal sisters and brothers are often denied the same public outrage, empathy and sense of justice that others receive when faced with similar horrors.

As an Aboriginal man I am immensely proud of my culture, connections and stories, but I am not proud of the narrative that depicts our First Nations people as victims of domestic and family violence. Why? Because the staggering levels of violence against Aboriginal women and children are nothing short of disgraceful. We are the custodians of ancient lands, the keepers of sacred songlines and stories and the guardians of rich cultural assets. I stand alongside the thousands of voices across the nation uniting to demand urgent action against the devastating epidemic of domestic and family violence that ravages our communities.

As an Aboriginal man I am proud of my culture, but I make it clear that domestic and family violence has no role in our culture. I acknowledge that to the untrained eye, elements of our cultural practices may be seen as harsh, such as processes in ceremonies, sorry business or other sacred obligations. Those practices are reverent and must be honoured; they are not violent practices out of spite, jealousy or self-gratification. Domestic and family violence is not a part of Aboriginal culture.

As we work to overcome this, government officials and community members must cast aside their fears and report suspected violence and abuse. We must dismantle the shameful code of silence that has allowed violence to persist.

The more we invest in domestic and family violence for the initial period, the higher the statistics will be. As we provide more funding, resourcing and reform, we will see in the interim period an increase in domestic and family violence. It cannot entirely be attributed to people becoming more violent or being violent. It can be attributed to vulnerable people—our women, children and communities—feeling comfortable and safe to come forward to report domestic, family and sexual violence. With increased funding we can expect the demand for crisis shelters to increase as people will feel supported and encouraged to leave violent and toxic relationships because the support systems are in place. We can expect people to talk more about domestic and family violence when there is an increase in funding and resources because people will feel empowered to take back carriage of their destiny from a perpetrator, freeing themselves from a life of violence.

We all have a role to play in this parliament to have tough conversations and not only share Facebook posts and go to protests and rallies—which is an important sign of support—but also call out the bad behaviour. We must work together to empower our community members to have the courage and be fearless to come forward to report domestic, family and sexual violence.

I was heartened during the federal election campaign when the now government talked about an increase in funding. The Territory does not want or need a one-off funding increase; the Territory needs needs-based funding now. The offer stands, as it did in the first sitting of this Assembly, to go to Canberra to advocate for that needs-based funding. It is through that important investment that we will overcome the horrific rates of domestic, family and sexual violence; it is how we will change lives.

I acknowledge the amazing work of the people and organisations who have been long-term advocates in this space. The women's shelters; the crisis accommodation centres; the women's legal services; the advocacy groups; the people in the former Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities; and the people running the sexual health services and the abuse reporting hotlines have all played an incredible role in shaping what the Territory needs to do through the ICRO.

The Coroner handed down 35 recommendations. Those recommendations, alongside the ICRO's work, are the pathway to overcoming domestic, family and sexual violence. This work has not been largely driven by politicians; it is has been driven by experts, victim–survivors and evidence-based approaches, which is the best way to overcome this.

People in this Chamber talked about important initiatives like the specialist domestic and family violence court in Alice Springs. We heard about wonderful programs like Girls Can Boys Can, normalising and educating people in schools about the roles that girls and boys can play in our community and that someone is not less of a person if they perform roles that would be stereotypically aligned to a particular gender. This important work needs to continue because that is how we change.

There is a number of safe houses across the Northern Territory, particularly in the remote regions. Last Friday at the Alice Springs Police Station the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group unveiled its mosaic. It is a beautiful artistic creation that serves as an important monument to memorialise, commemorate and honour the women who have lost their lives in the Northern Territory. It is a permanent installation that is a safe space for women and families to go to in difficult times. It is ironic that such a beautiful mosaic is in such a difficult space, being the judicial precinct where the Supreme Court, the Local Court and the police station are located. This is a beautiful reminder of the women whom we have lost too soon.

These statistics are horrendous. We have heard time and again how bad they are. We have lost eight beautiful people since June this year. We are not even through this half of the year. Families who had important times no longer have the love of that person. There are families who every day must live with the heartache of missing a loved one, and we continue to come in here and talk.

Talking is important—do not get me wrong; it is important to raise awareness about this—but talking alone will not bring back the women who have lost their lives this year. We are not even halfway through the second half of the year, and we have already lost eight Territorians. Aboriginal women have been killed on the Esplanade in front of a federal government minister and yet we still talk. The time for talk is over.

We owe it to every Territorian—man, woman and child—to work together, go to Canberra to advocate for needs-based funding and reform the laws in order to protect vulnerable people. We have started that work. Is it over? Definitely not. Will it ever be over? Definitely not, because we can always strive to do better. We started by contemporising the domestic, family and sexual violence legislation, featuring coercive control because we heard it is a major problem. We worked with the sector on the best way to target and overcome it.

Language matters. If we want to overcome this horrific epidemic we face, we need to be mindful of our own language. Every person in this parliament and everyone in a position of influence needs to set themselves a challenge to stop saying we are fighting, arguing or attacking and remove that type of language from the conversation because we are perpetuating and normalising the use of that language.

I extend my offer, as I did last sittings, to any member of this parliament who wants to come together to lobby Canberra for the additional resourcing and support that is needed.

I acknowledge the incredible resilience, strength and compassion of the amazing women who gave evidence at the inquest, including Shirleen Campbell from Alice Springs, Dr Chay Brown, Larissa Ellis and Maree Corbo and the representatives from Darwin, because it was not easy. Those amazing women relived their own trauma in giving evidence. Victim–survivors and organisations relived their trauma when they gave testimony to that inquest about just how awful that was. Thank you for having the courage and being fearless to attend the inquest. I stand with you, as I will stand with you every day, to work hard to make a difference.

The 25 of us in this Chamber, working together, can make a difference.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, domestic violence in the Territory is a national shame that demands our collective action. Yesterday's findings from the coronial inquest—over 17 months of hearing—into the tragic deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurrk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood made it clear that more needs to be done to prevent domestic and family violence in the Territory, and it needs to be done now.

Territory Labor has pledged to work with the Chief Minister and the CLP government to secure needs-based funding, recognising that this critical issue transcends any of our party politics. We must adopt a bipartisan approach to address the scourge of domestic and family violence across the Northern Territory.

The statistics are indeed alarming. Since 2000 close to 90 women in the Territory have lost their lives to domestic violence, including 11 women in the past few months alone. Countless more have been hospitalised and many have suffered in silence, their experiences often going unreported.

This is not just a social issue; it is a whole-of-community issue that affects people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Disproportionately, however, Aboriginal Territorian women and children bear the brunt of this violence which is often linked to poverty, disadvantage, overcrowding, substance abuse and other socioeconomic challenges across our community.

We must acknowledge the devastating impact of domestic violence on our communities and work together in this parliament to create safer and more supportive environments for all the Territorians we represent. This

requires a sustained commitment to addressing the root causes of violence, providing adequate support services and promoting a culture of respect and empathy across the Territory.

The numbers are stark; 90% of women who have lost their lives to domestic violence in the Territory are Aboriginal women. Almost half of the women in the Territory have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 years, with one in three women experiencing violence, emotional or economic abuse by a live-in partner. Putting these figures into a broader context, partner homicide in the Northern Territory is seven times the national average.

Endemic, a scourge and a crisis—many labels have been put on this tragic situation. Unfortunately, they are all fitting descriptions. It is, without a doubt, one of the most urgent issues facing the Northern Territory and one that I ask the parliament to unite on. I was alarmed to hear the Member for Port Darwin say that we need to take a step back. What for? We need to take a step forward together.

Yesterday the federal government responded to the Senate inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children, which was chaired by a federal Liberal member and delivered bipartisan recommendations. We need to ensure that the findings of any inquiry guide the government, federal or Territory, to a proactive response to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence across Australia. Indeed, the inaugural national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family safety plan will be launched in 2025. Parliament and the community are calling on the federal government to do more, and its members have decided to act quickly, decisively and together.

Before the election the former Territory Labor government committed to investing an additional $180m to address domestic and family violence. The CLP honoured this commitment, but not a single cent has been put into the domestic violence prevention sector, which is crying out for this additional support.

We call on the CLP government to stop delaying and urgently respond to the domestic and family violence crisis across the Northern Territory. We will support its efforts in getting additional money to our frontline services, which is where it will make a difference. We listened to the Chief Minister's response. Unfortunately, on this issue she has been more interested in playing politics than getting the money out the door to the service providers that so desperately need it. The Chief Minister and the Treasurer are happy to get the money out the door for the home owner grant scheme, but have not spent a cent in making sure …

Mr Maley: What did you do three months ago? Zero. Eight years of no action. An 82% increase. You should be embarrassed. Shame job!

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; I ask that the Deputy Chief Minister stop interjecting while the Opposition Leader is speaking.

Madam SPEAKER: I agree; please refrain. It is midday, so it is time to suspend for lunch.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 9.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall present a motion calling on the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly to:

- formally acknowledge the unacceptable rates of domestic, family and sexual violence within the Northern Territory

- endorse the formation of a bipartisan delegation to Canberra, comprising members of the CLP government, the Labor opposition and the crossbench, standing alongside victim–survivors, DFSV experts and frontline workers. The purpose of this delegation will be to advocate for significant federal investment in initiatives aimed at combating domestic, family and sexual violence, underscoring our collective commitment to addressing this critical issue.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that this Assembly:

1. recognises that all members of this Assembly have firmly committed to addressing family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) as a priority

2. acknowledges that domestic, family and sexual violence is our true crime and safety crisis, and that this crisis disproportionately impacts Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory

3. recognises the findings of the coronial inquests into the deaths of Kumarn Rubuntja, Kumanjayi Haywood, Miss Yunupingu and Ngeygo Ragurrk, which highlight urgent reforms needed to protect Aboriginal women and children from domestic, family and sexual violence, and ensure victims are seen and heard

4. commits to fully resourcing and implementing all recommendations of the Coroner arising from these inquests as a matter of urgency

5. further commits to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities and frontline services to ensure effective implementation of these reforms.

This Assembly stands united in addressing the domestic, family and sexual violence crime and safety crisis, and ensuring all women and children are safe, protected and supported.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the 35 recommendations of the coronial.

Leave granted.

QUESTION TIME

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence – Bipartisan Delegation to Canberra

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER referred to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Too many Territory women have lost their lives to domestic and family violence. Too many Territory women, young people and children are subjected to violence in their everyday lives. This issue is above politics. Territory Labor is proposing a bipartisan delegation to Canberra, comprising members of the CLP government, Territory Labor opposition and the crossbench, standing alongside victim–survivors, DFSV experts and frontline workers to collectively advocate for needs-based funding for the Northern Territory.

Will you agree to lead this delegation so that our frontline services across the Northern Territory have the resources that they need to combat family, domestic and sexual violence?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an important topic that we are debating extensively in parliament, given the Coroner's recommendations that were handed down yesterday.

The Opposition Leader talked about leadership. Within two weeks of being in government I was in Canberra with the Prime Minister and National Cabinet championing this issue for needs-based funding for the Territory. The percentage we are being allocated will not cut it; in fact, it will barely touch the sides. Having Senator McCarthy on TV this morning essentially saying that the Territory has to do its fair share is not fair because there has been a bipartisan commitment to the $180m to go into dealing with this issue.

We are committed to working with the opposition and, in fact, any members of the parliament who are looking to try to imprint upon the Commonwealth how important its role is in the Territory. So yes, Opposition Leader, I have no problem with anything you have proposed. We are happy to do that.

We are mindful as well that we have a federal Labor government and you have come out of being in government for the last eight years. If you have been unable to yield an outcome after eight years with your own Labor mates in the top job in Canberra, I can only imagine that our efforts will be in vain. However, we are willing to try everything. We are doing what we can in the short space of time we have had. Minister Cahill has been doing a power of work in this space to make sure that what we are spending money on is going towards making people safer.

I will hand my question to Minister Cahill. She made her ministerial report today, but as the portfolio minister she can speak more to our concerns about the coronial and what we are doing going forward, but I have no issue with what has been proposed.

Ms CAHILL: Madam Speaker, it is vital that we do not rush a response. The Coroner took 17 months to complete the work on this inquest and there are, as has been noted, 35 recommendations. To rush forward and not give those recommendations the consideration that they deserve would be irresponsible. To not go out and consult with the community, workers and service providers on the ground as to the best way forward would also be irresponsible.

I was heartened at a meeting I held in the lunchbreak with the national Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner who advised me that she felt our approach forward to take a moment to take a review and take a step back was a wise one, and that is what we will do.

Crime Reduction Legislation

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

Crime remains an ongoing issue in our community. On Monday at 2 am the Domino's pizza shop at Karama was broken into again. The perpetrators stole three EFTPOS machines and caused significant damage by ripping fire extinguishers off the wall and vandalising this small business premises. I spoke with the store manager who was naturally angry but not surprised, given this business has been broken into often over recent years. However, she and her father were pleased that the CLP government has introduced stronger legislation to help reduce crime.

Can you update the Assembly on the CLP government's new reducing-crime laws and how they are helping to keep Territorians safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know how passionate the Member for Karama is about reducing crime for Territorians. In his electorate are some of the hardest hit communities in the Northern Territory. People have had enough; they are sick and tired of it. Businesses are closing, people are leaving all our towns because of it, and it is not acceptable.

We are in government because we took a clear commitment to the election to reduce crime, empower our police and deal with these issues head on, and that is exactly what we have gotten to work on and done. In the first sittings of parliament, eight weeks into our government, we passed the reducing-crime package, a suite of laws—an unprecedented number of laws and police powers—on urgency so that we could get our police on the right footing and give them what they need.

On day one, the day after the election, I sat down with the Police Commissioner, looked him in the eye and said, 'We support your police. We will do whatever it takes to give you the support and the resources you need to make our community safe.' We followed through with the powers that they asked for. That work continues; this is just the beginning. Crime continues to be unacceptable and out of control.

Some of the data we have—it is early days; it has been not even a month since our laws have come into being—shows great results so far. Wanding operations have increased. There was a significant wanding operation in Katherine which saw 399 people scanned, with 20 positive results meaning that those people had weapons on them. From that there were five arrests, one notice to appear, six cautions and all sorts of items seized—scissors, screwdrivers, knives and even large machetes, if you can imagine people carrying that on their person while they are out and about in the community. In Palmerston 40 people were scanned. Scissors were seized during the scanning operation. At Casuarina 19 people were scanned. By giving police better powers, they can do that a lot more often.

With our ramraid legislation 17 charges have been laid for ramraiding. There have been five charges under the post-and-boast legislation. There have been 23 infringement notices from our new public drinking laws.

You can see already that in a short time we have been able to make an impact. Laws matter as a deterrent, in setting the standards that our community expects and in giving police the tools they need to keep us safe. The work continues, Member for Karama. Crime is still at unacceptably high levels, but we are committed to seeing this through to make the Territory a safer place.

Domestic and Family Violence – $180m Investment

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

On 5 November you told media that you would be campaigning for needs-based funding to tackle the Northern Territory's domestic and family violence crisis. You also said that you would honour the former Territory Labor government's additional $180m investment into addressing this national shame.

Yesterday, the Northern Territory Coroner handed down a report into the tragic deaths of four Territory women and called for urgent action on domestic and family violence. Frontline services are yet to see a single cent from your government for the needs they have called for.

You have been in government for 13 weeks, just over three months. What will you do, when you told Territorians you are serious about tackling domestic and family violence?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this was a commitment first made by the then Labor government and then the CLP. If money has not been spent, Opposition Leader, you need to find a mirror and take a good, hard look. The reality is that your government had eight years to do something about this, but instead increased domestic violence by 82%. If you made hollow promises, Opposition Leader, that is on you. You served as Attorney-General, Health minister and in a range of other portfolios, as has your team.

We are not doing what you did; we are clear about the status quo not being an option for our government. Minister Cahill has shown exceptional leadership on this issue. The critics can decry us all they want; at the end of the day, what matters to us is that Territorians are safe, our actions speak louder than our words and the finite resource of Territorians' taxpayer dollars is spent to go as far as humanly possible to achieve better outcomes for our people. That, at its core, is what we want to achieve.

We are not interested in the semantics of this issue and whatever hype and hyperbole you want to bring to it, Opposition Leader. The facts remain that in the last eight years domestic violence has gone through the roof.

We have already acted to strengthen the law. Come January, when our bail reform kicks in, that will be even more important because domestic violence perpetrators are often repeat offenders. Our prisons have plenty of DV offenders in them, and there are stronger actions for us to take in this space, coupled with the work of the Department of Children and Families, under the leadership of Minister Cahill, in dealing with the prudent expenditure of that money.

There is a ministerial report before the House on this topic. Minister Cahill has clearly explained that we will not rush to make judgement on the recommendations. We will take our time, as the Coroner took her time to deliberate. We will make sure the action plan that Labor prepared will deliver outcomes. I am not standing here because Territorians want me to deliver Labor's plan; I am standing here as Chief Minister because Territorians want me to deliver the CLP's plan with my team, and that is exactly what we are doing.

People can talk a lot about this issue, try to politicise it or even make themselves look more important than they are. I do not mind which of those categories you sit in, Opposition Leader, but we will not rush, waste Territorians' money and put women's lives at risk.

Territory Coordinator Bill

Mrs CARLSON to CHIEF MINISTER

Key to our government's plan to rebuild the economy is our new game-changing Territory Coordinator. I know many businesses in my electorate will benefit from quicker and more streamlined approval processes. Can you update the Assembly on how all businesses and Territorians can contribute to this exciting, much-needed new legislation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a fantastic question from the Member for Wanguri. We are excited about this economic reform. It is a game changer, and we are proud of it. It shows that we are drawing a line in the

sand and we recognise that a strong economy means a stronger Territory, stronger families and a stronger outcome for our people.

When the economy is strong, everyone does better. Governments can deliver more services, put more funding into supporting people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged and allocate more funding to important demands like those in the domestic and family violence sector. A strong economy is important because it is how we support our ambos and police, run hospitals and schools and build roads. That was lost on the former Labor government which for eight years did not understand the economy. Instead, it talked into the wind, never delivering. That is in stark contrast to the CLP.

We took the Territory Coordinator legislation and policy to the 2020 and 2024 election. We had an exposure discussion paper about the Bill and got some feedback. That helped inform the drafting of the exposure draft Bill that we then put out to the public. Consultation is open on that until 17 January. I encourage …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 34; the Chief Minister is misleading the Chamber. It was not out for consultation to the public.

Madam SPEAKER: If you are claiming that she misled parliament, you need to move a substantive motion to that effect.

Mr Young: It was not in public.

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, Chief Minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I will say it again in case the member did not hear: we circulated a discussion paper to get feedback and that helped inform the drafting of the Bill, which we have put out to public consultation. That will stay open until 17 January, and everyone is welcome to provide feedback.

In February we will introduce the legislation in parliament and refer it to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee that the CLP created to increase public consultation and scrutiny of legislation. The previous Labor government, of which the Opposition Leader was a member, scrapped that.

Not only will it have been through a discussion paper, a public draft and the scrutiny committee, it will then come to parliament for debate. This will be the most ventilated piece of legislation we have had in a long time.

We are proud of it because this will be a game changer for the Territory, as a strong economy means strong outcomes for our people. We are excited to be driving the change that Territorians gave us a mandate to deliver. The status quo will not cut it. We are not here to deliver more of the same; we are here to change things up and drive a better Territory for everyone.

Domestic and Family Violence – $180m Investment

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Coroner Elisabeth Armitage has called for immediate action to address domestic and family violence. The domestic and family violence sector has called on you to immediately roll out the $180m additional investment announced. Your response is that you are auditing the Northern Territory domestic violence framework which was created by experts, victim–survivors and the sector. Rather than listening to the sector and funding the implementation, you are auditing an audit.

Can you explain to frontline services why you are not providing desperately needed funding now to protect Territory women and children? Why are you auditing an audit that they were involved in?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the first thing I did in my role as Minister for Children and Families; Child Protection; and Prevention of Domestic Violence was talk to frontline workers and service providers to hear firsthand what is happening on the ground. I then posed the question to the department: how are we sure that these programs are working, when all I can see is a tragic increase in the incidence of domestic violence assaults in our community? How can we possibly say that what we are doing is working, when all we can see is damage and broken families? How can we say that what we are doing is working when we continue to lose valuable members of our community—mums, sisters, grandmas and aunties—and have lost eight more people since June this year?

It is unforgiveable to then step back and say that we will just keep doing what we have always done. It is shameful.

To do more you have to first know what you are doing works, where it is not working, why it is not working and where you can improve the outcomes. I asked how we were measuring, and the response was we do not. I did some research and found that the framework, which you tout as the answer to the prayer of the previous government, says:

> *It is not feasible, cost effective or appropriate to formally evaluate all aspects of the DFSV Framework, but review is required, particularly of its key components.*

That is written into the framework. That is shameful.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. There is an evaluation; it is being undertaken. You might want to find the facts and figures of your own department.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, take your seat. That is not a point of order.

Ms CAHILL: I cannot think of a single circumstance where it is okay to continue to operate programs that cannot be evaluated properly.

Mr Paech: You are wrong. There is an evaluation.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence.

Ms CAHILL: I cannot think of a single circumstance where it is okay to continue to progress things that are not working on the ground or to progress recommendations when you have not sat down with the people who may have to follow through on those and ask them for their input, support and advice.

Solar Rooftop Battery Scheme and Feed-in Tariff

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for RENEWABLES

The CLP committed to supporting Territorians by easing cost-of-living pressures. Can you advise how the solar rooftop battery scheme and feed-in tariff will support our power system and provide relief to households with electricity bills?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this supports Territorians and shows that the CLP is delivering its commitments.

We took this policy to the election, and the CLP had an astounding win. We have 17 seats because the CLP had a clear plan at the election to make the Territory safe, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. That is what we have done. This is another example of how we have lived up to those commitments.

The CLP is committed to easing the cost-of-living pressures, unlike Labor who reduced the battery bonus. Labor members came out with $6,000 and said how good they are, how they look after Territorians and how they support renewables, but they reduced the bonus. They made it harder for Territorians to get batteries to operate their virtual power plant at home because they reduced it. It was $6,000, and they brought it down to $5,000. The CLP has taken it up to $12,000.

Ms Uibo: How much will it cost the Territory?

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr MALEY: That means if you are at home and want to support renewables, you can have your solar system—there is about 20,000-odd people who have that—and a battery pack that will support your use during the night. It will ease the cost-of-living pressures because at night when you are at home cooking and using air conditioning and ceiling fans, you can run all that off the battery with the power that was stored during the day, which will reduce your power bill.

Labor failed Territorians. The crime rate is out of control, and there is a cost-of-living crisis because the Labor government failed us. Off the top of my head, there has been $11bn worth of debt in eight years. This shows that the former Labor government had no idea about the cost of living.

The CLP is delivering our commitment. The second part of that is we will increase the feed-in tariff rate to about 18c per kilowatt during peak time, which is from 3 pm to 9 pm. People who are managing their system at home who want to export power to reduce their power bill can do so in the afternoon.

We are about supporting Territorians by easing the cost of living. That is what this program will do. People will be able to buy a bigger battery and get a feed-in tariff to reduce their cost of living. This will make sure their bank balance is eased, so they can spend their money on their children's lunch or go to the shop and buy something. They will be spending money in the community.

It is unlike the Labor government which spent, spent, spent.

Alcohol – Minimum Floor Price

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In the inquest findings of the deaths of four Territory women, the Coroner identified alcohol as a contributing factor to the frequency and severity of domestic violence assaults and provided recommendation 5. Do you support your government's removal of the minimum floor price, a proven alcohol harm reduction strategy which has been found to reduce domestic violence assaults, which has been independently researched by the Menzies School of Health?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the wonderful thing about research, statistics and figures is you can pretty much make them say whatever you want …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CAHILL: The fact is that the questions asked about the volume of alcohol being consumed do not take into account the alcohol content of the alcohol being consumed. I can tell you from personal experience, having witnessed the changes that occurred after the floor price was introduced, that I went from dealing on a day-to-day basis with blown up pillows being left around the service that I used to have responsibility for to picking up smashed and broken bottles and dealing with broken people, injuries and damage.

So many things were introduced at the same time that it would be impossible to know which of all those things was the most effective. We know from experience that the introduction of police into bottle shops has been effective, and before that PALIs.

We also know that Labor deliberately avoided checking compliance with the minimum unit price. Forty-five grocery store liquor licences in the Northern Territory were never once checked by an inspector to ensure that the conditions imposed under the minimum unit price were being complied with.

Available data highlights that the increases in consumption of higher content alcohol …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was whether the minister supports her government's scrapping of the minimum floor price.

Madam SPEAKER: I believe she is answering it. I will let her continue.

Ms CAHILL: Available data highlights increases in consumption of high-alcohol content products, with a 17% increase in standard spirits and a 36% increase in mixed spirits since the minimum unit price was introduced.

There are no measurable benefits. There is no benefit to the minimum unit price in relation to the floor price for alcohol. Alcohol-related assaults increased by 38% in the past eight years under Labor. Clearly, the processes that were implemented are not helping. People are not drinking less; money is not the issue. They have changed what they drink. They have moved from soft boxes to hard spirits. They have moved to glass bottles, which are now weapons.

We need real change, a real impact and a real effect. The MUP was not it.

Bus Safety

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Casuarina residents want to feel safer when catching the bus. Can you update the Assembly on how the CLP government has taken immediate action to make our buses safer, when Labor sat on its hands and did nothing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is an important question. Our government is delivering where Labor failed. This issue of bus driver safety was raised with the Labor government in 2023. What did Labor do? It did not do much. Bus drivers across the Territory deserve to feel safe at work, and under our government they finally are.

When we took office we found a mess left by Labor; of the 79 buses working across the network in Darwin, only 17 had screens fitted. This was after it being raised in 2023 by the drivers and Transport Workers' Union. The drivers and union came to me not long after the horrible attack on Bimal, where vision was seen of the person climbing over the screen and kicking him in the head.

Labor stalled the progress on these bus screens for months, leaving drivers exposed to violent attacks and putting passengers at risk. It is not just passengers; imagine someone climbs over the screen and kicks a bus driver in the head as they are pulling up to a bus stop full of schoolkids waiting to go home. I cannot imagine and do not want to think about it.

We would not let that stand. We moved quickly to get the job done. I am proud to say that across the bus network in Darwin and Alice Springs those driver screens have been installed and upgraded on every bus. That was done two weeks ago. The department made the decision based on instructions from our government to help CDC get this done. The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure worked extremely constructively with the Transport Workers' Union and the bus service to ensure these issues were resolved. We committed to putting additional security guards on buses to protect drivers whilst those screens were being installed.

This is not just about installing screens; we also committed to tougher laws. Under the CLP government there is mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers. If you assault a bus driver, or any frontline worker for that matter, you will face real consequences. There are no more excuses or slaps on the wrist. The people of the Territory were clear in their message to us, which was to make the Territory safer, rebuild our economy and restore our iconic lifestyle. We are delivering that, while Labor failed to do so for years.

Domestic and Family Violence – NT Police

Mx McNAMARA to MINISTER for POLICE

Last week it was reported that an NT police officer was back on duty after charges relating to the death of his partner were dropped. Her death was caused by an untreated head injury that required some form of trauma, likely a hit to the head. Many disturbing elements of this case were reported, including that in the five years before her death 17 domestic violence complaints were made to the police. The victim had documented in her diary and emails the physical abuse he was committing; in her words, she felt there was no point reporting the abuse by her partner to the NT Police because he would be informed of the complaint and she would have to deal with the consequences.

The Coroner criticised the decision not to establish a crime scene after the woman's death, saying that the word of a fellow police officer weighed more heavily than it should. The Coroner also said that domestic violence perpetrated by serving police officers is considered to be a significant issue, and the police appear to struggle with investigating their own members.

Does NT Police have a problem with its attitude regarding men's violence towards women, and can women—particularly those whose partners are in the police force—feel safe to report DV to NT Police?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, speaking to the generic questions at the end, our police force is a strong and important institution to the Territory. I stand by police as they do their work in making our community safe.

The Member for Nightcliff raised a number of allegations and matters I do not have the detail on, but what I can say is that like any institution, there is a continuous journey of improvement and reform across a range of areas. We have seen many of those play out publicly for our police. If you are after something from me—some form of public condemnation—you will not get it. Could there be areas for improvement? I am sure there could be, just like anywhere else, but I do not have the detail you are seeking.

I stand by the members of our police force who work hard every day, doing an incredibly difficult job. They leave their families every day to protect ours, and for that they have my utmost respect. Their commitment to the Territory is profound, and the role they play now while crime is out of control is more important than ever. I commend our police for the good work they do.

I cannot speak on the issues you raised, but if you come into this parliament and make widespread allegations, you had better have your facts straight.

Community Pharmacy Scope of Practice

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for HEALTH

We know that under a long eight years of Labor our health system in the Territory has been unsupported and under pressure. Labor not only blew out the Health budget by $280m but also failed to take action to support Territory doctors, nurses and patients. What is the CLP government doing to alleviate this pressure on our hardworking health professionals, including through a pharmacy scope of practice expansion?

Mr Paech: Cut, cut, cut, aunty.

Ms Uibo: Close, close, close.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, only last month the Member for Fannie Bay and I were in Parap announcing this great election commitment. It seems that this is all we are doing at the moment, announcing election commitments.

This is an important issue because this election commitment will empower pharmacies to do more for patients. It includes additional services at community pharmacies to improve access to care such as treatments for up to 23 uncomplicated conditions, including acute nausea and vomiting, school sores, mild to moderate allergic skin conditions, simple wounds and ear infections, as well as increasing the range of vaccines available.

Community pharmacists are highly trained and regulated health professionals who have the skills, knowledge and competence to provide additional services to patients. Additional training for the program will leverage existing accredited training programs already in scope in Queensland under licence and MOU, and our Territory pharmacists will undertake this training via James Cook University. This will increase our national consistency and reduce costs to the Northern Territory.

Unlike members opposite, the CLP government recognises that we cannot spend taxpayers' money on pet projects and wasteful nice-to-haves. We are putting the money where it is needed most. Our government has committed $1m to support additional essential training for pharmacists in the Territory, as a leading Australian jurisdiction in the delivery of primary healthcare.

Under the enhanced scope of practice program for community pharmacists Territory families will get easier access to medicines and vaccines. This will save time and money for families and take pressure off the GP waiting times. These measures will alleviate pressure on primary care services and hospital emergency departments, and will be more convenient for patients, reducing time and costs.

These initiatives encourage pharmacists to play an active role in increasing patient access to care while reducing the burden on other health services for conditions that can be safely managed by pharmacists.

Unlike the former Labor government, we are serious about supporting and protecting our esteemed health professionals and all sectors of the health fraternity. We are addressing the inaction of the former Labor government's unprecedented and outrageous health overspend. The former minister, now the Opposition

Leader, overspent the budget by $280m in just one year. We are prioritising Territorians' health by empowering community pharmacists to do more with their patients.

Territory Coordinator Bill

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Under your proposed Territory Coordinator Bill—which you tried to sneak past Territorians, by the way—you plan to give yourself step-in powers to make statutory decisions in place of relevant ministers. Why do you need these unprecedented additional powers, and which of your ministers do you not trust to make decisions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am glad to have a question on the Territory Coordinator because it is such important reform. The part that Labor does not understand is that the status quo will deliver us more of nothing, which is what Labor delivered—more debt, no projects and no jobs.

This is a model that has taken the good bits from South Australia and Queensland. Other jurisdictions are forging ahead to make themselves more competitive.

The Territory Coordinator legislation allows a sequence of decision-making to escalate as the need arises. For example—I have used this example on radio and in other public forums—if you wanted to build a large-scale solar farm or any solar farm, you would need various types of permits and approvals. You would need to have a land-clearing permit and might need a water licence or a non-pastoral-use permit. All those processes and permits require different consultation, expenditure, time and energy, and one often has to precede the other, so you have blowouts in time and delays.

The Territory Coordinator can recognise that proponent A wants to build a solar farm and will look at what approvals the project needs. They would say, 'Three of them require public consultation, so we will allow one big piece of community consultation to take place instead of having three separate consultations'. That is smart, efficient and competitive. It allows us to move through processes properly and prudently and bring the community on those journeys and give people all their rights to have their say without the excessive delay, cost and duplication.

That is exactly what we have been elected to deliver. Reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle are three things we took to the election. This is the flagship of rebuilding our economy.

We will not apologise for going out for three months of exhaustive public consultation where everyone can have their say, including the people who stood out the front and protested this morning that the sky is falling down if we do things a bit differently in the Territory. They can have their say, and we will hear them out. After that the scrutiny committee, of which Labor and the crossbench are members, can have another go at it. This will be well ventilated, and I am proud of that.

We are committed to driving the economic reform the Territory needs. There needs to be an escalation of powers, but the point is to never have to use them. It is a carrot-and-stick model deliberately designed to put decision-making back in the hands of our public servants and making it easier for them to be more agile and responsive, but where we need to increase we will, because the Territory's future is too important to ignore.

Territory Coordinator Bill – Supplementary Question

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

The Territory Coordinator position, as you have outlined, will go through a set of processes. Can you assure Territorians that processes such as those in the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* will not be overlooked by the Territory Coordinator?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader must not have read my Guide to the Territory Coordinator Bill because it is clear that legislation has been exempted from consideration. An overarching primary principle of this legislation is about economic growth and the social and environmental impact. There is a number of tiers of things that the Territory Coordinator office can do, starting from prioritising something. It might just be that the Territory Coordinator directs there be prioritisation of a particular project because of its significance.

They might ask for a progress update on that decision-making process to give a nudge—'I am watching this, and you need to move faster. Please give me a progress update.' Then they might ask for a decision, so they might say, 'Okay, I have asked you to do this. You are not hurrying up, so can you please make the decision in a certain amount of time …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The supplementary question was specifically about the Sacred Sites Act and whether it would be overlooked by this position.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes. Please answer the question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, it is all exempt from the Territory Coordinator legislation. The bit we have out to consultation is whether people think heritage should be in.

Schools – Swimming Lessons

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

For 19 of the past 23 years Labor failed to save our children from drowning. It failed to ensure that our children learnt lifesaving water skills in primary school. As a child I nearly drowned at Wangi Falls. Fortunately, AUSTSWIM came to my school, Batchelor Area School, and gave free swimming lessons to the kids which taught me to be a confident swimmer. Can you update the Assembly on how the CLP has delivered on our election commitment to fund free swimming lessons in schools to help prevent children from drowning?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain is extremely passionate about swimming in schools after his near-drowning experience. He joined the Chief Minister in Palmerston last week to announce our $3m swimming in schools program to begin in Term 1 next year.

I note that the Opposition Leader is not listening to the answer.

The program is for all children in Years 1 to 6 to develop swimming and water safety skills for free. Government and non-government schools will receive funding to provide free swimming lessons as well as funding to cover transport costs if required, so no child will miss out.

For remote schools with limited access to pools, tailored programs will be developed utilising public and privately owned pools. I note that in the Opposition Leader's electorate Territory Manor has come to the party; it is allowing Mataranka School students and nearby students to use its pool.

Ms Uibo: Hear, hear! I love my electorate. What about the other 17 schools in the Arnhem electorate?

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, we know it is exciting, but hold your breath.

Mrs HERSEY: For example, last week I visited the Discovery Parks pool in Katherine which we will be partnering with to ensure that Katherine students have access to a pool while our community pool is out of action.

The department is working closely with Royal Life Saving NT and has already identified the remote schools that will need extra support and innovative solutions to develop the right programs for their school.

The Member for Blain spoke about visiting Wangi Falls as a child and getting into trouble because he lacked swimming skills. This is an all-too-true story in the Territory that could turn into a nightmare for some families.

We have an amazing outdoor lifestyle in the Territory. Whether it is visiting our beautiful waterfalls at Litchfield or the hot springs in Katherine, fishing or cooling down in our backyard pools, water is a part of the Territory lifestyle, yet less than 5% of our Year 6 students meet the national swimming and water safety benchmark, which is shameful. Even worse, the NT has the highest per capita drowning rate in Australia. It is more than three times higher than the national average, which is shocking.

For 20 years we have not had compulsory swimming lessons in the NT, despite swimming and water safety education being a part of the national curriculum. It is not good enough, and we must do better.

The Member for Blain also joined the Chief Minister at Woodroffe Primary School when the transition students completed their Learn to Swim classes at the Goldfishbowl in Palmerston. For transition students parents relinquished the $100 sport voucher and paid $20 on top to attend the swimming lessons. This means that these children will get swimming lessons for free.

Family Violence Program

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Can you confirm that the family violence program is no longer being offered to people in community? My understanding is this means a court can no longer order an offender to do this program as part of a supervised sentencing order. This program was designed to address family violence and gazetted under the *Sentencing Act*. Its aim was for participants to learn that family violence is a crime and not acceptable. Can you confirm whether this program has been ceased?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Labor left us with a Corrections crisis across the Northern Territory. For eight years it ignored the growing problems and did nothing. The prisons became overcrowded and overflowed into our watch houses, which is affecting the police's ability to keep the community safe.

The CLP government has been in office for about 13 weeks. We have a master plan, and we are taking steps to fix the Corrections crisis. Our first step is to immediately take action to reduce this overcrowding by creating additional beds and returning the watch houses to the police. We will expand the …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked you to confirm whether this program has been cut or is continuing.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, he has two minutes. We are all allowed a preamble in our answers at some point.

Mr MALEY: In my preamble I was talking about the crisis because the Labor government failed.

We have not cut any programs. We are trying to expand the long-term capacity so that this crisis does not happen again.

The Labor government failed to invest in infrastructure. For eight years it did nothing; our prisons became full and overflowed. Labor knew this was happening but did nothing.

There are 40 active providers of programs and activities for youth detention centres in the Northern Territory. We have not cut any programs, and these are the ones that are running: Arafura Driving School; Balanced Choice; Basketball NT; BuildUp Australia; the Catholic Church; Dream Impact Inspire; Elevate Hoops, which is hooping; First Step Development Enterprises; Good Dog AAI; High Calibre Sports; Hoops 4 Health; Inner Door Yoga; Monsterball; Nitro Table Tennis; One Percent; PAWS Darwin; Red Dust Strong Young Women's and Girls' Program; Rhythm Rhyme and Reason; SoundED; Territory Youth Empowerment (BoxFit NT); Top End Critters; Tropic Tunes; YMCA …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I believe that the Member for Johnston asked about adult Corrections programs. The minister is talking about youth justice Corrections programs. Can he answer her question?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has the call. You have answered the question, essentially, in saying there were no cuts. How you use the rest of your time is up to you, as long as it is about Corrections.

Mr MALEY: I am explaining how this crisis caused by the former Labor government has been rectified by this government. We have been in office for some 13 weeks and have a decisive plan. We are taking steps to do this.

This is not about just locking up people; it is about the wraparound services. We want to do what Labor failed to do—that is, break the cycle of offending. We want to give these prisoners an opportunity to come out of detention as a better person with skills to go back and add to the community, with valuable input. That is unlike the Labor government which locked them up and failed them by doing nothing.

Corrections Infrastructure Master Plan

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

The CLP government has taken decisive action to address the urgent need for increased Corrections capacity by releasing the Corrections Infrastructure Master Plan. Can you provide an update on the progress of the plan and outline how this is delivering on the CLP's commitment to reduce crime?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a great question because we could talk for hours about the CLP's plan to rehabilitate offenders to make them better people. We do not want to just rack them and stack them and have them go in and out like the Labor government did; we want to give adult and young offenders a better opportunity to make better choices as they move through their lives.

We are well underway in relation to our infrastructure plan. We have already moved the youth detainees from the old Don Dale to the new purpose-built Youth Detention Centre in Holtze, which is two years late with a $70m overspend because the former Labor government failed to manage it properly. Labor misspent $70m of taxpayers' money. Remember that governments do not make money; we spend money. Labor mishandled this badly.

We have put the young offenders into that facility, but, unfortunately, the work done by the previous government was not up to standard and this facility was damaged. In fact, it was damaged in 27 minutes. After all the experts in the former government said that this facility would be purpose built, it was damaged to the extent that we had to move the children out and fix it because it had become dangerous; live wires were exposed. It goes to show that the former Labor government failed Territorians.

I travelled across the Territory to visit these facilities firsthand. I went to the Alice Springs Correctional Centre; the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre; the Paperbark alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility; the new residential justice facility in the Barkly, with the Member for Barkly; the Barkly Work Camp; the Holtze detention centre; and the old Holtze correctional centre.

I will comment on how good the staff were. They go above and beyond to look after the people in there. The staff care about them; they want them to be better people. Unfortunately, the Labor government failed to support the staff as well. I give a big shout-out to the staff I met on my tours across the Northern Territory. They do an exceptional job. If you are listening, thank you for your support. I know the Labor government failed you, but we have your back and will support you just as we support the police. We want you to have the facilities you need to look after the prisoners and yourselves.

We want the prisoners to have wraparound services and the staff operating in a safe facility. Our long-term plan is to focus on rehabilitation. We want to create beds and new facilities to give these people opportunities.

Territory Coordinator Bill

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

You staked the CLP's economic credibility on giving yourself and an unelected bureaucrat unprecedented power to interfere in good governance in Northern Territory projects. You told the media you would give the Territory Coordinator a wink when you want him to step in on a project. Will you be up-front and tell Territorians which projects you intend to give the Territory Coordinator a wink on when you want him to bypass important legislative, statutory and regulatory safeguards?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it shows the lack of depth on the other side. Not only have those opposite not read the Bill or the exposure document we consulted on that they tabled in parliament, nor have they read the guide to the Bill that we wrote for those who do not want to digest the legislation—they could read the easy-to-read guide …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: She has been on her feet for only 24 seconds. What is your point of order?

Ms UIBO: I clarify that we tabled the consultation paper, not the Bill.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order; do not interrupt the minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That makes it even more embarrassing; you tabled it and did not read it. You still do not understand it because you asked me whether it would include sacred sites, which it does not. The discussion paper, the Bill and the guide say that it would not include sacred sites, yet you still asked me.

I suggest, as a matter of good governance—as you called it—that you do your homework. Read the documentation; it does not include sacred sites, heritage or Aboriginal land rights. We are asking people for their feedback on heritage …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, take your seat. Enough chitter chatter from over here. My left ear works incredibly well, unfortunately, so I can hear it all. Let us focus on the Chief Minister's answer.

Mr Edgington: Do you want a briefing or something?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Member for Barkly just offered a briefing; I do not think it will help. You either want to learn or you do not. The questions we received today speak volumes.

Like I said, we are proud of the Territory Coordinator. It will be the most consulted on, well-ventilated piece of economic reform we have seen in a decade. We are incredibly proud to be delivering a more competitive Territory. It is perfectly in line with our vision for the Territory.

We have made the Territory the most attractive jurisdiction in the country on payroll tax. From 1 January, 200 more small businesses will say goodbye to those bills, and we will lift that threshold, making the NT an attractive place to do business.

We have the most competitive home builder scheme in the country; this makes the Territory the most competitive place to build a home. This is the course we are charting for the Territory; it is the work we have been doing over the last 13 weeks.

The amount of work that has gone into the Territory Coordinator legislation is huge. I thank the Chief Minister's department, which led the charge on this. It has been engaging with all the other agencies—which are as excited about this as we are—and providing their feedback.

Territorians want change, which is why there has been a change of government. They are sick and tired of being told projects will happen but then never happen and that crime is a figment of their imagination. They want leadership and change, and that is what we are delivering. You can have your say, just like everyone else, but do us all a favour and read the guide to find out what you are talking about.

Illegal Dumping – Alice Springs

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Illegal dumping of waste such as broken fridges, washing machines, old tyres and household rubbish by lazy grubs is a significant issue across the Territory, especially in your home of Alice Springs. In your role as the Environment minister, what are you doing about illegal dumping of waste?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, illegal dumping is not okay, and it has been occurring across the Northern Territory for far too long. There is nothing I dislike more, when I am out on my mountain bike or with the Heart Foundation heart walk on a Saturday morning, than coming across an illegal dumping site. Unfortunately, this is the reality for far too many people across the Northern Territory. This government is doing something about this.

For far too long this has not been a priority of government, and we are working on it. We have drawn a line in the sand and said, 'Enough is enough'. Last week I was fortunate to be standing shoulder to shoulder with the Alice Springs Council rangers. Illegal dumping is an issue that they come across far too often. They are always working tirelessly to find out who is doing it and how they can ensure that we can bring these people to justice.

In my role as Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment my department and I often have to deal with these dumping sites on Crown land. The other day council rangers and I were at a site where fridges, chest freezers and two lawnmowers had been illegally dumped. This is happening on a commercial scale, and it needs to be stopped. The rangers went through the rubbish and pulled out identifying material which we will follow up; hopefully, it will enable a prosecution.

We need to send a message loud and clear that illegal dumping is not okay. Whilst at the site we spoke about the importance of that, and what our department is doing.

Since coming to government I have noticed that government departments love an acronym. DBAD (Don't Be a Dumper) is the latest one. We are raising awareness of this issue so that everyone knows it is not all right. The department has been putting cameras at known locations, and this is part of the work of the Don't Be a Dumper committee. It knows the hotspots, especially in Alice Springs, where people are illegally dumping. We are reminding people through additional signage that it is not all right. We will be catching and prosecuting people. This needs to be reinforced, and we will ensure that everyone knows that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

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

VISITORS
Member for Johnston's Family

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the Member for Johnston's mother and her partner.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Domestic and Family Violence in the Northern Territory

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the Labor opposition agrees with the CLP government that the federal government needs to do more to support the Northern Territory. Regardless of politics, whether it is a Liberal or Labor federal government, we need to be unified and work together to address domestic violence to ensure we have the best possible positive impact on the Northern Territory. Let us not be petty in politics and get in the way of releasing the much-needed funding that the domestic, family and sexual violence prevention sector has been calling for.

The Labor opposition wants to ensure that there is early prevention, intervention and rehabilitation measures that support the DV sector. The experts who work in the family, domestic and sexual violence sector are calling for this and have been for many years.

Unfortunately, from the stats—which the CLP said that it does not respect and can be used in any way you want—we know that half of the men in prison in the Northern Territory are there as a result of domestic violence offences. This is a distressing statistic in the domestic violence story across the Northern Territory, but we believe it is one that we can turn around if we work together.

Violence against women is preventable, but only if we work together. Our former Labor government laid the foundation for a strong and sustainable response to domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory and we will continue to support that prevention work even though we are now in opposition.

It will not be fixed in eight years. It will not be fixed in the next four years. It may not be fixed in the next 10 years, but we can agree to taking a bipartisan approach to follow the strong path—the blueprint—that has been laid out by the sector's experts in the field.

Our Labor opposition strongly urges the CLP government to fast-track the rollout of the $180m investment which was first committed to by Labor, but also taken up by the CLP, to ensure that these commitments are delivered. CLP members need to put their money where their mouth is, on behalf of Territorians, especially

those who are in the frontline services, at the coalface, dealing with the impact of the horrific trauma experienced daily by Territorians through family, domestic and sexual violence.

Labor opposition members put our hands on our hearts when we say that we will do everything we can to support the rollout that the CLP government has promised, but we urge it to do this quickly with the DV sector as the lead. We offer our bipartisan support. We know that this place is bigger than all of us as individuals. In the Legislative Assembly we have the honour and privilege to represent 25 electorates to ensure we have that full perspective across the Territory.

The former Labor government advocated for eight years for full needs-based funding for the DV sector, and we did not get it. We got it for remote housing and Territory education, but we did not get it for health and the DVS. We passed that baton to the CLP government. We will get the change and funding we need in the Territory only if we advocate and work together in this important, non-political space. We will continue to advocate and commit to supporting the CLP government with a bipartisan approach.

Members of our parliament must have the will to move forward together, not stand back to look and talk, talk, talk. We need to take the action that is demanded by our communities. We need to ensure there is a solid framework for all of us to work together to address family, domestic and sexual violence in the Northern Territory, that there is no further delay and that we get money out the door to where it is desperately needed.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I speak on Minister Cahill's report to the parliament on domestic violence, in the wake of the Coroner's recommendations handed down yesterday.

This is an incredibly important issue. Thirteen weeks into our government we are working through the programs that exist, what more needs to be done, how we can spend the funding commitments and all these types of things. We are looking at the Coroner's recommendations and whether they are fit for purpose for a better framework for the Territory. This is the work being undertaken.

This is off the back of an 82% increase in domestic violence over the last eight years of Labor. The hypocrisy coming out of the mouths of those opposite is astounding. There are pleas and pledges for urgency, working together and funding, yet they have just come out of being in office and are demanding something from us that they could not give. That is Labor's standard operating procedure, but to take that turn on this issue shows the calibre of the debate we are having. It is disappointing, given the severity of the situation. In any event Labor members can grandstand and talk about whatever pledges they like. The reality remains that until the federal government stumps up, communities step up and a range of things happen, we will continue to see high rates of violence.

In the first two weeks of parliament we made law changes that put the rights of people to be safe above the rights of criminals. Once those bail laws kick in it will inevitably capture a portion of domestic violence offenders, and deliberately so. We are proud of that.

Domestic violence rates in the Territory are three times higher than the national average, and DV homicide is seven times the national average. This did not happen overnight. Those opposite find themselves in a hypocritical malaise at the moment. The Member for Gwoja was grandstanding, yet it was he and the team he sits with who lifted Stronger Futures and let the rivers of grog—as the Member for Araluen would put it—flow. They did not heed the calls of many in the community and the experts—whom Labor members like to stand with when it suits them—demanding that this be changed. We were the ones saying, 'Bring back Stronger Futures'.

In her report the Coroner talks about a doctor who gave evidence that there was a 77% increase in the average monthly domestic violence assaults in Alice Springs at the end of Stronger Futures. DV has been a massive issue, yet through policy failure, ideology, inaction, inertia and failure, Labor allowed this to increase on its watch. Therefore, we will not be lectured by Labor members, who are struggling to find their feet post-election and seem to have nothing constructive to say on this and other issues.

The reality is that there is a lot of work to be done. We are not blind to that work; it is multi-faceted, and we will take a different approach forward.

It is important to understand that Minister Cahill has spoken with the federal Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner about the recommendations and our pathway forward. She has agreed that by taking a step back to assess that what we are doing is working is prudent and important. If we do not do that, we will be saying that we do not care about the outcome and only want to be seen to be doing something.

Labor is saying, 'Don't worry about whether what you are doing works, is effective or actually saves anyone's life or makes anyone's life better; just do something so that you can say you did it.' That is the Labor playbook; that is how Labor members do everything. That is why the Territory is in the situation it is on a range of fronts.

The CLP is now in government because Labor's approach was to govern by press release exclusively. That does not grow an economy, keep people safe and put food on the table, police on our streets and teachers in our classrooms; it does nothing other than serve a selfish, politically motivated and ideologically driven purpose, of which Territorians have had a gutful.

Opposition Leader and Member for Gwoja, we will not blindly follow whatever it was you announced or thought you were doing. Announcements are not actions. Actions speak louder than words. We have been clear that Territorians can judge our government on our actions. That is why we have been working through our election commitments and delivering the promises we took to the election on a range of issues.

Today we announced the doubling of the solar feed-in tariff, the battery bonus and the amount of money available in that scheme; the Territory Coordinator; payroll tax; the home builder scheme; meningococcal B vaccines; Harrison Dam; bag limits on magpie geese; expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists; MVR changes to support cost-of-living measures; and the list goes on. That is action. It is tangible and measurable, and people understand it. No-one in this community wants bluff, bluster and governing by press release, let alone on the issue of domestic violence.

I applaud the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence for the steps she is taking to work through this methodically and sensibly. In the absence of a giant cheque from the federal government we must be deliberate. Not all programs are born equal. Not all services are delivered equally. Our job is to ensure we are funding the ones that work.

Even for something like behaviour change programs there is mixed evidence about the way these programs should be run, what is effective, when they are effective and how they could be more effective. We are not throwing the baby out with the bathwater; we are trying to work through whether we can put better parameters around it, invest more in what is working and support a change in that space. Everything must be on the table if we are to truly move forward and be better.

Talk is cheap. Territorians are sick of it. It does nothing. We brought this report to the House because it is important to be open and transparent with Territorians. We said from day one that we would not rush through these recommendations; we will take our time, just as the Coroner took hers, because that is good, responsible government. That is the type of government we will continue to operate on behalf of the good people of the Northern Territory, who know they want change in this space and that their resources are finite.

I thank our police, because they have done a huge amount of work in the domestic and family violence space. It is an incredible use of their resources. Policing is one element of this. I cannot put a police officer in everyone's home, nor should I and nor would we want that. This is not on its own a policing issue. Police are there to respond when something bad happens; that is policing. We want the bad thing not to happen in the first place.

Despite that, we have police general orders in relation to intimate partner violence and the complicated systems our police work in when those reports come through. The co-responder pilot is happening in Alice Springs. The police risk screening tool is being developed. There is a dedicated domestic violence response senior sergeant position, a domestic and family violence audit team and a domestic and family violence training cell. There is the 'Prevent. Assist. Respond. Training' package. I have been to police stations where police are sitting at a PowerPoint presentation, receiving this training.

Police are doing the heavy lifting, but that is at the end of the line. We need to look carefully at what we can do to change men's behaviour so that women are no longer victims of domestic and family violence.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I am a survivor of men's violence. I prefer to use the term 'men's violence' or 'intimate partner violence' instead of 'domestic violence' because I believe that our society, whether deliberately or not, diminishes the seriousness of this violence when we put the word 'domestic' in front of it.

I spoke publicly for the first time this year about being a survivor. I was incredibly nervous to do so, and it still makes me a bit uncomfortable, but I do it because it is important that our voices are heard and our faces are seen. One in four women are survivors of physical or sexual violence. With that statistic, whether you know it or not, there are survivors in your life, which also means you most likely know a male perpetrator.

Victims and survivors in the Territory are overwhelmingly Aboriginal women. They face many more barriers than me in getting help and seeking justice. This violence is a scourge in our community. We are failing generations of Aboriginal women and children. Let us be real: this scourge of family violence goes hand in hand with poverty, homelessness, disadvantage, the effects of colonisation and racism.

As a survivor I know that victim–survivors are sick of the talkfest and politicking. I do not have much else to say because everything that has been said has already been said many times.

Just put the money where it is needed. Do it. The work has been done. The sector knows exactly what it needs. We just need to listen to the people in the sector and give them every dollar they need.

I was distressed to hear the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence call for more consultations. No more consultations or audits; we are not reinventing the wheel. The sector knows what it needs and has been telling government for decades.

Please, I beg this Assembly, can we rise above the party bickering and politicking. Let us move forward and get the $180m on the ground now. It should be said that if you can roll out money for first homebuyers before it is legislated there is no excuse not to start funding DV now. Let us go to Canberra and secure needs-based funding.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, comments have been passed to me by the Member for Mulka who is away due to a death in his family last night. Mr Guyula would like to make it clear that family violence is not part of Yolngu Aboriginal culture. The following is his statement, which I will read:

'Sometimes people say that Aboriginal culture is violent because they hear historical stories about spears in the leg or a history of fighting between clans. It is true that our traditional culture has had punishment that involves a spear in the thigh as part of a lawful response. Our traditional culture has had the death penalty for those who committed significant crimes. This has come through the lawful process of *Makarrata*, a form of restorative justice which still exists without spearing in the leg or killing. Today we use compensation and banishment to other communities and other means to make matters right.

'Western culture still has capital punishment in some countries and historically had barbaric forms of punishment. Our culture has had leaders who have acted unlawfully or people who may have been violent towards their kin, but this has not been lawful violence. This has been a crime. It is no different from powerful leaders of other cultures who have behaved badly. King Henry VIII of England was a leader who cut off his wives' heads.

'Traditionally we have had kin relationships to provide protection where needed. The *mari* relationship provides protection to the *gutharra*—that is the grandmother clan that provides protection—and the relationship that a child has with their mother's mother is a special one.

'Today when we see such violence around us, when we see women are being killed and harmed unlawfully, we know that something has gone terribly wrong, but I also know that our people have the solutions to these problems.

'The families involved in this coronial inquiry have suffered the loss of a loved family member, and some families have suffered knowing that their kin have taken a life and gone to prison. This cannot continue to happen. For these four women and many more, their communities must also be part of the inquiry. They must be asked what they need to ensure that this does not happen again. This is the Closing the Gap space.

'I welcome the Coroner's recommendations for community-led mediation and peacekeeping work. This is what I have been calling for over eight years. It needs to go further because we need to address the underlying issues. Our traditional ceremonies are about the teaching of *raypirri*; this is respect for country and kin. This is our Yolngu education system through which we teach young people about respectful relationships.

'Due to the colonisation and assimilation that has come with missionaries and governments we no longer have the space to provide these important cultural teachings. Assimilation has pushed much of our teachings out of the way. Our kids fall through the gaps because they are forced into Western education systems that do not always make sense or have meaning for them, and because of this they often do not attend. This push for Western education without a genuine commitment to two-way bilingual and bicultural education has meant that some of our cultural teachings and ceremonies have fallen away.

‘This is what is needed now to teach our young men about their responsibility not to cause harm and teach our young people about respectful relationships. Young people have relationships at a young age when they do not yet have the education and learning to act with leadership and responsibility. This is why we need our young men out on country with male elders learning to serve their families and our young women out on country with their female elders learning to serve their families too.

‘As a Yolngu leader, I have learnt my role is to serve; it is not to be served. I am responsible for looking after the people of my clan and associated clans. This is also the teaching that our young people need. It is the Yolngu values and culture that we are seeing disappear that is throwing people into chaos.

‘I appreciate the findings of the coronial inquiry, but I am aware that it is the jurisdiction of a balanda court. It is important that the leaders and elders of our community are given the same space and respect to tell you our recommendations so that we can work in partnership with the services and government departments that are working towards ending the tragedy of domestic and family violence that we see everywhere. It is time for this government to act in partnership with the services and people who have the knowledge and answers. Closing the Gap is about sharing decision-making with First Nations people, and this must happen if we want long-term change for the people in the Northern Territory.

‘I thank the minister for bringing her statement today, and I hope that we will see swift government action.’

These are the words of Mr Guyula. I now begin my contribution.

The minister said that it is vital that we do not rush a response and that there has been no evaluation of the work which has been done. This could not be further from the truth. Acting now to keep women and children safe is vital.

We heard numerous times that the domestic, family and sexual violence sector desperately needs the funding it was promised immediately. In the words of the Coroner:

> *Given the recent loss of life, and the extent of the horror, no further delay can be tolerated …*

The time for action on domestic, sexual and family violence was yesterday.

We do not need more audits and evaluations. Action Plan 1 has already been fully evaluated. That evaluation is available for anyone to see online, and I am hopeful that the minister and everyone in this Chamber has familiarised themselves with it.

Action Plan 2 is specifically tasked with monitoring, evaluation and accountability. It is already in place, and if people have not seen it I have a copy here. I think the minister cherrypicked from part 6 of this report when she said that evaluation was not taking place. There is a clear framework to measure and monitor outcomes and undertake evaluation.

I cannot overemphasise the level of work that has gone into evaluating the sector to improve the safety of women in the Territory. We do not need more review; we need action.

It is good to hear the minister express her support for funding frontline services for men’s behaviour change, early intervention and support programs, which are key components of the action plan and the framework—that is, the plan the minister is criticising. All this work was developed in consultation with the very frontline workers whom the minister says she wants to listen to, so why has the minister not listened to what they have said? The framework, which already exists and is the product of multiple reviews and years of work by experts, was described by the Coroner as sound and sensible. She supports it. We do not need to throw out this plan that was developed over years with frontline workers, experts and governments; we need to act on it.

I echo my fellow members in saying that removing the alcohol floor price will only exacerbate this crisis. There is a clear link between access to alcohol and women being harmed and killed.

The work has been done, minister. You have what you need to make a difference. I hear how passionately you are committed to making women and children safe. We have what we need, and we do not have time to do that all over again while women are dying. To quote the Coroner:

If the task seems too big or overwhelming and this all sounds impossible, if anyone is feelings defeated, there is some good news. With all this combined input we know what needs to be done and there is no reason for any further delay before action is taken.

I call on the CLP to urgently commit to the funding it has promised the sector so that we can walk out of this Chamber today having made women and children safer.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I add my voice to the ministerial statement and join my colleagues in saying enough is enough.

We face a crisis that has shattered too many lives and stolen the future from far too many families. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia. That is a stain on us all. We are in a domestic violence crisis. Like any crisis, it demands a response.

The statistics are damning. Since 2000 more than 90 women in the Northern Territory have been killed through domestic violence; that is 90 mothers, daughters, sisters and friends who will never come home. Eight of these women have lost their lives since June this year. Nearly every day we see news headlines with more stories about violence—another sister, daughter or mother gone.

As an Aboriginal man, it is sad to see what is happening in our families, especially in my community and families. Women and children in the Territory experience a high rate of domestic, family and sexual violence, with nine out of 10 victims being Aboriginal women. For me, that is my sisters, mothers and aunts. Too often it happens.

Women in remote and regional communities are more likely to be hospitalised through domestic violence and encounter greater barriers to reporting violence due to shame, stigma and a lack of services and support. The vast majority of these women are again Aboriginal.

This violence is perpetrated by close family members. Intimate partners inflict trauma that follows survivors through their lives. It impacts every part of their being and tragically also affects their kids.

The link between violence in homes and youth issues in our streets is undeniable. Children who grow up in fear carry that trauma in every part of their lives, and the cycle of violence continues. There is a straight line drawn between kids who are on the streets getting into trouble and this violence. The wellbeing and development of kids are not possible when they are not safe at home. Do you want to know a powerful way to stop young people from ending up in front of a judge? Stop the violence at home which then, in turn, gets them into the mischief they get into.

The devastating findings of Coroner Elisabeth Armitage expose the cracks in our system. The time for talk is over; we need a bipartisan approach, with leaders across this Chamber standing united to fight this crisis. Reducing domestic, family and sexual violence requires a united front and action from all parts of our society, particularly the Territory's leaders, like us.

I reiterate what my colleagues said: Labor stands with the government in calling for needs-based funding. We need more money for prevention, early intervention and a crisis response. We must ensure that remote communities do not fall through the cracks and miss out on the services they need to ensure that families, women and children can live in safe environments.

The Leader of the Opposition said that she will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Chief Minister to call on the Commonwealth for this funding. Territorians expect this from us.

The government needs to get on with allocating the $180m in funding. Those working in the sector are crying out for it. I join them in pleading with the government to fast-track and roll out this funding as soon as possible; it will save lives.

I thank the frontline workers and advocates operating in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector around the Territory in countless organisations, legal services and safe houses. They deserve our praise for doing so much positive work in the face of what seems to be an impossible crisis.

I acknowledge the strong Aboriginal women who are standing up to this every day, sometimes risking their own lives to help their sisters, aunts and mothers. I tell them that we are here to support them and will do everything in our power to ensure they receive the support that they need.

Colleagues, it is time for leadership. Every headline about another woman lost to violence should haunt us. These are not just statistics; they are human lives torn from their families and communities. Let us act with urgency and compassion and honour the courage of those who speak out and the memory of those whom we have lost. Together let us commit to building a Territory where no woman or child has to live in fear.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, it was only last month in this Assembly that we spoke about how domestic, family and sexual violence is a scourge which is continuing to have a terrible and ongoing impact on women, families and communities across the Northern Territory.

Yesterday the Coroner handed down her report into the deaths of four women. These women were all victims of extreme domestic violence by their intimate partners—a shocking and horrifying occurrence which we cannot stand a moment longer. This extensive report highlights the importance of having this conversation about the issues with the seriousness it deserves and that we do something about it.

The statistics continue to be incredibly distressing. Eighty-seven women have been killed by their domestic partners in the Northern Territory since 2000, at least 82 of whom were Aboriginal women. Each of these women is remembered by her family and loved ones, and the community continues to feel their loss. We have continued to hear horrific stories over recent weeks nationally and in the Northern Territory.

Yesterday the federal government tabled its response to the Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children. The findings and recommendations of this inquiry were horrific. Nationally, First Nations women are seven times more likely to be homicide victims than non-Indigenous women, and of those women 75% are killed by a current or former partner. First Nations women are 33 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family and domestic violence than non-Indigenous women.

However, domestic, family and sexual violence is not only about Aboriginal women. It is a serious, prevalent and life-threatening problem that crosses all ages and cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in this country. This is our national shame. We see on the faces of families the heartache which is felt when they lose their loved ones at the hands of someone they knew intimately. It must stop.

We are part of tight-knit communities in the Northern Territory, and we cannot go far without knowing someone who has or at least had a family member experience domestic violence. We must stand up and say, ‘Enough’. We, as men, must stand up and say that this is enough. It is a blight on our society and has no place in our cities, regional centres or remote communities. No women and children deserve to feel unsafe in their own home.

Addressing the appalling rates of family violence experienced by women and children requires a concerted effort involving all governments—Territory and federal. Our Aboriginal and community-controlled organisations, multicultural communities, sporting groups, faith-based communities and individuals all need to step up in this. Domestic, family and sexual violence should not and cannot be a discussion relegated to the sidelines; it should always be front and centre.

Domestic, family and sexual violence is claiming the lives of too many Northern Territory women. It is tearing apart our families and communities. I cannot say it enough; it must stop.

Although this problem is complex and challenging, we cannot shy away from it. Domestic, family and sexual violence is preventable and with a concerted collaborative effort we can give every Territorian the fundamental right of living a life where they are safe, respected and free from violence. That is why we cannot leave this effort to just the words that are spoken here in the Assembly; we need action.

We need the men’s behaviour change programs, which are effective. In order to prevent domestic, family and sexual violence we need to be able to stop it before it starts and make people understand that it is unacceptable. We need the government to fast-track and roll out its commitment of $180m to fully fund the second stage of the domestic violence action plan. We need to put money into prevention, early intervention and crisis response. We need to ensure remote communities do not fall through the cracks and miss out on the services they need to ensure that families, women and children can live in safe environments.

I acknowledge the frontline service workers and advocates operating in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector. I thank them for their magnificent work. A number of organisations, legal services and safe houses across the Territory deserve our praise because they do so much positive work in the face of what continues to look like an insurmountable crisis. We are here to support you and will do everything in our power as an Assembly to make sure you receive the support that is needed.

We will face this crisis head on and work for the women and children of our communities.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 6

Continued from 22 October 2024.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the Labor opposition understands the importance of home ownership and what it provides Territorians. Owning your own home can make a huge difference, with physical and emotional security and safety.

First home owner grants can boost home ownership, reducing the debt burden for first homebuyers, stimulating economic growth and making home ownership affordable for Territorians. The former Territory Labor government provided an election commitment for first home owners, which was more generous in targeting people already living in the Territory who are focused on building their first home.

We will support this Bill because we committed to working with the CLP government in the Territory's best interests, rather than opposing things for opposition's sake and being disruptive. We are supportive of Territory-based first home owners getting the option of either $50,000 for new builds or $10,000 for established homes. We hope that the Bill's new component will provide much-needed stimulus to our construction industry, particularly in the urban space.

Labor secured the $4bn remote housing deal for remote communities and homelands in the Northern Territory, and we are proud of that work we did. The federal government's work on social and affordable housing across Australia provides an opportunity for further housing construction in urban and regional areas, and we will support the work that those federal schemes offer the Northern Territory.

We support more options for Territorians to have their first home. The Territory Labor government proudly introduced the House and Land Package Exemption. This scheme, which is still active, allows buyers of a house-and-land package to receive a stamp duty exemption. In opposition we will focus on all facets of home ownership.

In government we were happy to contribute to more Territorians getting their own home, as a result of the Bringing Land to Market review held in 2021 in Labor's last term. The Labor government worked with the housing construction industry to focus on delivery, and we will extend that offer to the industry whilst we are in opposition.

First home owner grant schemes are meant to help even the playing field between first home owners and existing home owners who have lending advantages from owning property. Although we support this Bill, it is concerning that first home owners could be competing to get a grant against those buying their second, third, fourth or fifth home through the FreshStart New Home Grant process, which the CLP government introduced to provide existing home owners with $30,000 to buy or build a new home. The scheme will run for only another 10 months, as we understand—I am happy to be corrected if that is not the case—and there is a cap on how many grants can be paid in the scheme.

It is a simple but brutal reality that because of how the CLP designed this scheme, every time a non-first homebuyer receives public funds, a Territorian wanting to get their first home may miss out. We do not begrudge anyone who decides to access the scheme to develop a property portfolio, but if we are talking about first home ownership rather than a second, third or fourth home investment, we still believe that first home owners should be the priority, and we urge the CLP to focus on this in its scheme. If there are amendments after the 12-month expiry of the scheme, we would encourage the government to look at that as an option to focus on allowing Territorians to own their first home in the NT, which is what we all want.

It is disappointing that the CLP government is debating this legislation in the third sitting week. The CLP spoke about this being a key priority, and we know it has jammed down different legislation at different points, so this could have been debated in the first sittings, which a lot of people expected.

I give the CLP government the credit it deserves in producing good media releases about things that have not yet happened. It seems that the government has started paying out the grants scheme before the legislation has passed. That is baffling, given the other processes for the use of public funds. The CLP said that it would be open and accountable, so it could have been much clearer in its stepping out in this area.

Today we spoke a lot about domestic, family and sexual violence prevention funding and how the $180m for the domestic violence sector could be rolled out quickly. However, the CLP said that it would be irresponsible for the government to do that, so instead it will look, review, analyse—blah, blah, blah. On the other hand, it rolled out the home owner grant scheme. There is no correlation; why can it provide funding for one area of the community and not another? I would love to hear from the Treasurer about the thinking on that.

Given we are talking about the community safety aspects to supporting home ownership, such as the safety of being in your own home, you would think that this could be a good twofold process for the CLP government to undertake to show that it has great economic stimulus ideas, processes and schemes such as this and, by the same token, roll out the domestic, family and sexual violence prevention money to where it is most needed in the community. The CLP government has the ability to do that, and people are benefiting already from this scheme. Unfortunately, rolling out the domestic, family and sexual violence prevention money is not a priority for the government; it does not feel the same urgent need to get that money out the door. It would be good if the Treasurer explained this in his wrap-up speech.

We have not heard anything about the CLP government's efforts to ensure that recipients of these public funds will spend them as required. We believe that the vast majority of Territorians will do the right thing and satisfy the eligibility requirements of the grants, but there is no such thing as 100% compliance. The CLP promised to be diligent and accountable for every Territory dollar and cent, ensuring there is proper oversight of what is being spent.

Importantly, we want to ensure that the benefits of Territory money will not go to interstaters. Territory money is best spent for Territorians, not for anyone looking to access the scheme who does not intend to move here, which is one of the scheme's purposes, and is looking to build their property portfolio and take advantage of Territory money without enjoying the lifestyle like the rest of us.

By design, the CLP government is allowing interstate investors to tap into the scheme and access funding before they move to the Territory. That is great; we want incentives for more people to enjoy this beautiful Territory we all love, but it is a concern if people accessing the scheme are not Territorians and are competing for that benefit. We do not want to see that investment taking over the original intention of the scheme, which is to have more Territorians own their first home.

I want to hear more from the Treasurer on those processes because we do not want Territorians to be disadvantaged. It boils down to the fact that the Territory government is investing public money in this scheme, so we want to ensure the scheme's benefits go into Territorians' pockets. If no compliance process is undertaken, why not? If there is a process to check the eligibility criteria, can the Treasurer please explain that in his wrap-up?

Despite the problems with the scheme, we will support the Bill because we want to see more Territorians owning their first home. We also want the CLP government to ensure there are jobs linked to the first home ownership scheme, that public funds—which are Territorians' dollars—are spent properly and the fullest benefits are targeted at Territorians, not interstate people looking to build their personal property portfolio with no intention of staying in the Territory long term.

Access to affordable quality housing is central to many people's wellbeing. Owning a home ensures Territorians are more active in improving their local community; there is less transient movement across the Territory; people stay in the Territory long term; Territorians are more financially secure and better off to support their families and keep them in a safe and secure home; and Territorians are optimistic about the future because they can own their home.

A number of factors inhibit first homebuyers, including housing affordability, interest rates and difficulties in securing finance. First home owner grants are crucial; however, the CLP government's new scheme should not potentially limit the benefits for Territorians. There needs to be checks and balances or a review process so that Territory families and individuals can make it into the property market for the first time, not just people who already have equity in assets and are building their portfolio, as I mentioned.

As with other grand announcements from the CLP government, this is a one-off initiative that is aimed at headlines and grabbing votes. We want to make sure that the CLP government backs it with a broader strategy and plan to systematically address the challenges people face in looking to get into their first home and the property market in general to ensure they have safe, secure housing for their families.

There is much more that could be done in this space. I am keen to see what the CLP government will deliver for social and affordable housing. There has to be that balance across the industry. I am interested to see

what the plans are. I believe through the Treasurer's other portfolio of Housing Construction he may also be able to contribute that in wrapping up this Bill.

Although these grants may help some Territorians, there will be many who miss out. We want to ensure that the CLP can commit to Territorians that first homebuyers will benefit, first and foremost, and it will look at tackling the housing affordability challenges across the Territory and the nation.

We are seeing a political stoush in the federal parliament. We heard this week that the national Greens finally agreed to the federal Labor government's housing proposal. That is a good step forward. That has been 12 months wasted which Australians did not benefit from. It will be interesting to see—before the federal election, whenever that is; we do not know—whether there will be a benefit in that housing space nationally from what federal parliament has done, and I am keen to see the impact in the Territory.

There is a great story with remote housing. The Member for Barkly knows that the remote housing story is positive in the Territory. That will continue to be a game changer in the NT under the new government, thanks to the deal that was secured by Territory Labor and federal Labor. Social and affordable housing is a big area of need, particularly in places like where I live in Katherine and our regional centres. The Labor opposition team will be supportive of anything that can further benefit Territorians through social and affordable housing, as well as the industry.

Industry is invested in property and construction in the Northern Territory. I met with the Property Council early this week. It is the fastest developing and growing jurisdictional council in the country. That is a testament to the collaborative membership of the Property Council's work. Well done and congratulations to the Property Council. I look forward to seeing the other levers that can be pulled, particularly which federal schemes, legislation and regulations can benefit the Northern Territory.

The process of releasing land in our regional centres has created some delays. There are tensions when there are not more houses being built in regional centres like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. Obviously, places like Nhulunbuy and Jabiru are different because of changes to mining lease tenures and the Office of Township Leasing statutory processes that are involved in those mining towns.

I represent Groote Eylandt in the Arnhem electorate. What will a place like Alyangula present over the next couple of years with housing? It is still under the Office of Township Leasing, so what will the process be for the current stock? Will we be able to increase the stock in Alyangula?

Jabiru went through recent changes, and the mining town of Nhulunbuy is going through changes. There is a body of work and a pipeline of transitional processes for Nhulunbuy, which is East Arnhem's hub.

I am interested to see what will happen if someone wants to buy a house in Jabiru, Nhulunbuy or, in the future, Alyangula on Groot Eylandt. Could this work that the CLP government is focused on for the next 12 months lead, in the medium and long term, to a plan for social and affordable housing and housing investment, growth and construction across all of the Territory and not just the larger townships of Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I asked questions which I hope the Treasurer can respond to when he wraps up debate.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I support our home builder Bill.

I will set the record straight. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that Territorians would have expected the CLP government to pass this Bill in the first sittings. However, when we put through our record number of crime-reducing Bills in the first sittings we were slammed by the Opposition Leader and her colleagues—in fact, by everyone on the opposite side—for rushing through legislation. It appears that the Opposition Leader does not mind defending criminals to try to hold up the processes for community safety legislation, but at least I know she is happy to back Territorians to build their homes. I appreciated that commentary.

A lot of misinformation has been peddled by Labor in the lead-up to the election and now. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about how this plan allows for investors to build new houses in the Territory and make a monster of money and that Territorians will miss out. That could not be further from the truth under our plan. If she had listened to the introduction, she would have heard that a person must live in the property for 12 months after it is built, which is longer than the six months Labor required people to live in new homes. When you stay in the Territory for longer than six months you fall in love with the place and will more than

likely want to stay here for the long term. If people from across the country want to come to the Territory and build and stay for 12 months, we welcome them. That is exactly what we want.

I am proud of this Bill. Just eight-and-a-half weeks into our term of government we delivered this election commitment of our HomeGrown Territory home build scheme. This helps Territorians who are aspiring home owners to achieve their dream home and home ownership. If people can get a home they are more likely to stay and put down roots for the long haul.

The cost of this scheme is a small investment for Territory taxpayers, but it will leverage hundreds and thousands of dollars of spend by individuals which is a great return on investment. This investment will benefit all Territorians. More than $1.5m in grants have been paid or approved since 1 October 2024. Treasury estimates that the 12-month program will support people to build 650 new homes, which is incredible. That is stimulus. It will increase gross state product by about $197m.

The Territorians I speak to are excited about this program, which continues to go from strength to strength. Territorians who have long wanted a home of their own are now speaking with their mortgage brokers to find out whether they are eligible for the scheme. People are thrilled to move from renting to home ownership.

This program not only supports people to come to the Territory but also is critical to providing the construction stimulus that we need to ensure our tradies are busy and money flows through our economy. Local construction companies that build homes in the Territory employ Territorians and buy goods and services from many other small businesses.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy. When they have confidence they invest, which grows our economy. When our economy grows everyone is better off.

These small businesses are local construction companies like Andrew Harvey Building, Territory Homes, Killarney Homes, Captiv8 Homes, Tropical Lifestyle Homes, Beare Homes and Abode New Homes—just to name a few. They are the ones I see when I am out in Palmerston.

The manager of new home sales at Abode New Homes, Mr Jacob Gill, said:

> *… the industry had seen a marked increase in Territorians interested in building a home in the NT since the announcement of the HomeGrown Territory grants.*
>
> *We've had a really diverse range of inquiries, including first-time buyers looking to build their first home, as well as second and even third-time homeowners, which has been really good to see …*

The early success of the scheme is testament to the improved confidence in the economy and liveability of the Territory. Territorians resoundingly voted for us to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. We are getting on with the job, and we are laser focused on those three goals. These grants, which are the most generous in the country, will ensure that we can attract and retain key workers by supporting them to enter the housing market.

The HomeGrown Territory program includes $50,000 for first homebuyers to purchase or build a new home, or $10,000 to purchase an established home. It also includes the FreshStart New Home Grant of $30,000 for non-first homebuyers, who have already owned a property, to build a new home. This is an instrumental part of the program, as it will help people like divorcees starting over or interstaters looking to relocate.

The entire scheme is a lifeline for the construction industry and the Territory economy. The introduction of this program follows years of decline in the housing construction industry, with only a handful of approvals for new builds last year. The Territory is now the place to build.

We set aside $20m to deliver the 12-month scheme. This provides confidence to those looking to buy or build while providing surety to the local construction industry. This is an investment for Territorians, who will know their taxes are not being wasted.

The HomeGrown grants are particularly special to the people who live in my electorate of Brennan. Many families have already built in In Zuccoli, where land is available for people to build their dream home at places like Zuccoli Village and Zuccoli Aspire. When I doorknocked that area there was an overwhelming sense of love for living in Zuccoli in their newly established homes. Residents have nature on their doorsteps, with playgrounds too. They have proximity to childcare centres, primary schools, shops and cafes.

If people build homes and put down roots they are more likely to stay in the Territory for a long time. We said that we would rebuild the Territory's economy and to do that we must grow our population. We must ensure more people come and stay. For too long our population has been either declining or stagnant. After eight long years of Labor, which had its chance and failed, the CLP is doing things differently to change the Territory for the better.

Our HomeGrown Territory scheme is as much about enabling Territorians to build their dream homes as it is about a population growth strategy. Our FreshStart New Home scheme allows people who have owned a home before to access the $30,000 grant if they build and live in that home for 12 months. This opens up the scheme for interstaters wanting to relocate to the Territory.

We are proud of this scheme because it is for not only Australian citizens but also permanent residents. Migration is a critical part of our story; it was in the past, it is now and it will be in our future. The Territory needs a new generation of Territorians, to add to our already committed Territorians, to make the Territory home so that they can live, work and invest here.

The CLP talked about the five pillars of natural strength that we are focused on growing: mining; gas; tourism; Defence; and agriculture. In order to grow these industries will need workers, and workers need somewhere to live. Our HomeGrown Territory home builder scheme means that as new homes are being built by Territorians more housing stock will become available, as people move out of their old homes and into their newly built homes.

More housing stock means that when workers arrive they will have somewhere to live. If they are enjoying the lifestyle, earning money and taking on opportunities, they are more likely to stay for a long time.

The CLP government is committed to rebuilding our economy, which is why we also introduced game-changing reforms such as strengthening laws to reduce crime, which we did in our first sittings, and increasing the payroll tax threshold. Along with this HomeGrown home builder scheme and the Territory Coordinator—which will be introduced in the coming months—all these game-changing reforms will change the Territory.

The Territory we know and love has its best years ahead of it. After eight of Labor government, Territorians felt let down, but they are now optimistic about the changes they are witnessing because of our actions. We are not all talk; we take action. The Territory will return to its former glory as a place people come to live, work and invest, with our unique, unparalleled lifestyle.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, it is safe to say that when the CLP announced this Bill a collective groan from economists could be heard across the country. It is a tired idea that has been shown time and again to inflate property prices, making housing more unaffordable, further increasing the housing bubble.

This Bill benefits property developers, the construction industry and banks while doing nothing to ease cost-of-living pressures for people who are renting and nothing to address homelessness. The Bill benefits property developers and large construction firms because the largest grants are for purchasers or builders of new homes. The Bill benefits the banks because the scheme creates an incentive for people to enter into huge mortgages by lowering the cost of the deposit that would otherwise be payable on the purchase of a home. There is a real risk, as we have seen many times before with these grants, that house prices will rise by $50,000 as a result of this grant. We will simply be funnelling public money into the hands of banks and property developers.

Given this Bill puts no limit on house prices eligible for the grant, it does not target those seeking affordable housing; this is key. This does nothing to make housing more affordable for those who need it most and risks putting houses further out of reach for the majority of the community.

Meanwhile, we have an affordability crisis in the NT. Properties listed in the rental market are simply not affordable for people on disability support pensions, for single parents on parenting or JobSeeker payments, for older people on the Age Pension and for families barely earning the minimum wage. As one report noted, renters on low incomes are being left behind and forgotten in the private market. Renters are also being left behind and forgotten by the government. The wait times for public housing range from four to 10 years, depending on the type of property sought.

There is also a homelessness crisis. The NT has 12 times the national rate of homelessness, with 16.5% of all Territorians under the age of 18 experiencing homelessness, and 39% of people are being turned away from homelessness services due to a lack of resources.

This Bill offers nothing to those across the Territory who are already doing it hard as far as housing is concerned. Many who are renting cannot imagine accumulating the capital required to pay a deposit on the purchase of a house. Many who are homeless cannot imagine having the right amount of regular income to afford paying rent.

We want affordable housing for all Territorians and for our community and economy to sustainably grow, but first homebuyer grants are not the answer; they are a failed experiment. Australia's leading economists have consistently emphasised what works, and first homebuyer grants are not on that list.

For more than 40 years first homebuyer grants have been rolled out across Australia. They have faced considerable criticism from economic experts at universities and independent think tanks. Over the last decade Australia has thrown more than $20bn at these failed schemes, only to have affordability worsen.

These grants do not help people into homes; they inflate housing prices and funnel public money into the pockets of property sellers. This is because first homebuyer grants simply speed up the purchase and increase the price of purchase for those who are already about to buy, benefiting sellers and driving up prices. This has led economist Saul Eslake to suggest that they are more accurately described as second-home vendors' grants.

As noted by the Reserve Bank of Australia Head of Economic Analysis:

> *It is now widely accepted that policies that simply give people more money to spend on housing are likely to be capitalised into higher housing prices.*

Dr Chris Martin of UNSW City Futures Research Centre puts it bluntly, 'First home buyer assistance measures add to demand, inflate prices and cost taxpayers billions'.

The CLP government has a choice: double down on a tired ineffective strategy or take bold decisive action to improve housing accessibility and affordability in the Territory. One option is to end stamp duty and introduce a fair property tax. The Grattan Institute has shown that replacing stamp duties with a broad-based property tax could save Northern Territorians up to $85m every year. Unlike stamp duties, which discourage home purchases and lock people out of the market, property taxes are efficient, equitable and stable—exactly what our housing market needs.

The CLP government must abandon ineffective outdated policies and embrace evidence-based solutions. First homebuyer grants are an expensive mistake that fails Territorians; instead, focus on long-term structural changes that tackle affordability at its core. We need more truly affordable housing, not just giving money to those who can already afford it or to people who want to add to their property portfolios.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, first home owner grants have a long and complex history in Australia. It is useful to look at what has been done historically to give context to what this government is seeking to do and, indeed, what it is not seeking to do. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding of the scheme we are putting forward, as is evident from some of the contributions made by members on the other side. Indulge me while we work through what this scheme is about and what it is not about.

First home owner grants started in 1964 under the Menzies government, which offered home savings grants of up to $500 for married and engaged couples under the age of 36. It was a co-contribution scheme providing $1 for every $3 that had been saved in an approved form in the three years prior to purchasing a home, with a $14,000 cap on the home.

Whitlam abolished that scheme in 1973 in favour of a tax deduction for interest for anyone earning less than $14,000. The scheme was then reintroduced in 1976 by the Fraser government, without a price cap, age cap or marriage requirements, and it was expanded to $2,500.

That was again replaced, after a long stint, by the Hawke government, with the first home owners grant assistance scheme. It had a maximum of $7,000, but it was income tested. That reform was implemented by the then federal Treasurer Paul Keating, who in 1990 scrapped the scheme. It was abolished, and it stayed so for another decade.

A decade later the Howard government introduced the first home owner grant, which is perhaps no surprise because John Howard, when he was a young solicitor, was the person who advised the Fraser government and lobbied in the first instance for the introduction of stimulus in this space. There was no income test or cap on that scheme. It proved to be successful, relative to some of its peers, based on the yardstick used to measure it.

In 2008 the Rudd government continued the scheme but rebranded it as the First Home Owners Boost. It was the global financial crisis, so the government expanded the system to boost construction at a time when construction was depressed, as was consumer demand.

We went from having a $7,000 scheme that had been around for a long time to $7,000 plus $7,000 ($14,000) for existing homes. The new and novel part was the addition of another $7,000 if people were to build a new home, making it $21,000.

If you include all state and territory schemes, the Member for Nightcliff is in fact being generous in suggesting that all the schemes over time is $20bn; over history there has probably been closer to a $25bn outlay.

Why am I raising this history beyond the facts and figures? It is obvious that the systems have chopped and changed. There is no straightforward pattern where it is a Labor government program or a Liberal government program. I raise this history because different times and conditions warranted different economic responses. They also produced different results at different times. It is lazy—as has become the order of things in this House—to assume that everything we do is cookie cutter and to assume that all first home owner grant schemes have been the same or, indeed, will produce the same results.

What, then, is our NT situation? Why are we looking into this at the moment?

First of all, everyone agrees that there is a rental crisis across the country. Relative to other jurisdictions, though, there is more headroom in the rental market here than there is anywhere else in the country. A buoyant rental market might have 3% headroom. Some other states and territories have had less than 1% for a period, and it is seriously nigh on impossible to try to rent somewhere. Our market is smaller and fluctuates, but we have still been hovering above 1%.

We have people who are trapped in a cycle of being unable to own and so have been renting. We are trying in the first instance to help some of those people out of the rental cycle, knowing that people who buy are more likely to stay put.

The second part is the absence of supply. Even Saul Eslake—whom I am glad the Member for Nightcliff referenced—who is one of the most vociferous critics of first home owner grants, and has been for many years, will tell you that if you are to do something in this space do what you can to stimulate supply.

I read a submission by Saul Eslake—it is 10 years old, so it is slightly out of date—to a Senate Economic References Committee inquiry into affordable housing. He lambasted first home owner grants that had been targeted specifically to create affordable housing. That is not what we are seeking to do here. We appreciate there is an issue but read the details in the explanatory memorandum and the second reading speech.

Due credit to the Member for Nightcliff; at least she has done some homework. The Leader of the Opposition failed to do any, as far as I can tell, and is not even here to be lectured by me. The fact of the matter is …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Member for Fong Lim referred to a member being out of the Chamber. He cannot do that. I ask that he withdraws that comment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point taken.

Mr YOUNG: He needs to withdraw the comment, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Dr RAHMAN: I withdraw the statement.

The key is that my learned colleague the Treasurer clearly articulated the parameters of this scheme. We have had a month to process the details in the explanatory statement and the second reading speech.

There are no caps on the purchase or build price of a home or on the income of applicants. It is a time-limited scheme for 12 months. It provides the best possible chances of allowing people to capitalise on a stimulus project.

What is our NT situation? First, we have a rental market that is bad, but it is not as bad as it could be. We are trying to do something about it through this scheme by incentivising people to purchase their homes.

Second, there is an absence of supply. Even the most ardent critics of first home owner grant schemes will say that if you are to do something in this space, then do something to stimulate supply.

Third—I turn to the Rudd government's efforts at the time of the global financial crisis—the Northern Territory has a sluggish construction industry because consumer, retail, investor and unit confidence are all down. We are seeking to stimulate that sector by providing people the incentive to build and put skin in the game. It is a generous scheme, and we are a generous government in that regard. We are advisedly taking a calculated risk to generate stimulus, and that is why it is a generous scheme.

Perhaps the most important factor in understanding our NT situation is appreciating where our population is at. I have spoken ad nauseam in this House about how our population growth is at an all-time low; we are in a state of demographic decline. We have 250,000 people and population growth is declining in real terms because of the failure to provide the economic preconditions to allow people to succeed here over a long period. Much of what we discuss in this House is the downstream consequences of the poor economic choices that have been made by governments over a decade and perhaps longer.

We are trying to appreciate our specific situation—rentals, stimulating supply, sluggish construction and low population. In the context of all those factors, it makes a lot of sense to think about what we might do to mitigate our demographic decline and our faltering economy by utilising a mechanism that will have a material impact if we can keep some people from leaving.

Where might those people go? One of the places that is on the cards, which is extremely important to me, is Berrimah Northcrest. Berrimah Northcrest is a faltering development—not through any fault of the population there—because growth in that precinct has stagnated on the basis of a lack of economic policy stimulus. Berrimah Northcrest needs a bus service, shops, a postal service and to have schools on the horizon, but it will get none of that unless we build more houses there. That is why we are seeking to stimulate supply.

It will not happen overnight. The government is trying to be sensible and weighing its risks by making sure that this is not an infinite program; it is a time-limited program. Over 12 months we will try to stimulate the construction sector and supply. Is there the possibility of overheating the market? Of course there is. Any time you inject a new input into the system that is a possibility, but at the same time activity is being generated.

There is a large amount of interest in this scheme. All members will be aware of the number of people in their electorates who have been saying that they are interested in the uptake of this. We hope that this interest will translate into uptake, and the signs are promising.

There is a misunderstanding about who is eligible for our scheme and why they are eligible. Permanent residents as well as citizens are eligible for our scheme. That is a good thing, not a bad thing, contrary to what is being insinuated by those on the other side. We are not the first jurisdiction to allow permanent residents to access first home owner grants, but we offer the most generous grants. We are the first jurisdiction to be in such dire straits when it comes to population growth. By offering the opportunity to put down roots we open new significant possibilities for permanent residents.

Who are those permanent residents, statistically speaking, who might not yet have become citizens? They are the young and aspirational families. They are the people who came here to study and have tried to make a go of it in this place and perhaps are not doing as well in the labour market as they want to because conditions have been economically depressed. These are the people to whom we now say, 'Hang on, do not go to Sydney or Melbourne. Hold your horses. Here is a reason to stick around. If you can scratch together your end, we will offer you a generous grant to put down roots, build a house and make a real go of it.'

The fact that we are offering such generous grants to permanent residents is not cavalier or trotting out a system that has not worked elsewhere; it is a specific policy response to our conditions. To the point raised about assisting Territorians, here is a tip: those permanent residents are Territorians. They are the kind of Territorians we are trying to incentivise to stick around.

I addressed this Assembly on 24 October 2024 on the topic of demographic decline and spelt out some of the nuts and bolts of our situation. The fundamental reason I support this Bill is that unless we do something to mitigate negative net interstate migration we will not have a workforce or the population to support our aspirations in any industry. This Bill provides the preconditions and incentives to try to mitigate some of that net interstate migration.

We are talking about permanent residents who have transitioned from temporary visas to permanent visas, who are looking to put down roots and who have been struggling in this marketplace and might be thinking about going to a bigger one. This is an excellent idea to try to tempt them not to pack up. It is not just my opinion. I have a professional opinion in this area, but the fact is that the academic evidence is on our side in this regard. It suggests that there is a strong correlation between housing availability and population retention.

A couple of things I dug up are worth speaking about because they are produced by local researchers. They are not about random places and far-flung jurisdictions disconnected from our reality. There are a couple of recent papers produced by people based at the Northern Institute at Charles Darwin University who are studying our polity and providing us with the best information they can to help guide our decision-making.

One of those pieces of work is by Dyrting, Taylor and Shalley from 2020. It is a paper entitled 'A Life-stage approach for understanding population retention in sparsely populated areas' in the *Journal of Rural Studies*. That is specifically what we are—a sparsely populated area—which we are trying to turn around. I encourage you all to track down these resources because they are wildly instructive. In the abstract of the paper those authors make the observation that their results:

> *… highlight the importance of overseas born residents for their high retention rates across all life-stages, home ownership and having children resident in the Northern Territory.*

This is not research about Timbuktu; it is about the Northern Territory.

A second one worth looking at is Baggen et al from 2023. The paper is entitled 'The application of machine learning to rural population migration research'. It is a novel and interesting work. I point out that it was published in a serious journal that I have never managed to be published in and have been rejected by about 100 times—*Population, Space and Place*. This research points to the importance, using Spearman correlations, of the factors in people choosing to stick around or go. The researchers tested housing affordability and availability, alongside other factors like Darwin's unique lifestyle, opportunities, cost of living, infrastructure and so forth. The key point is that if you are having a crack at it, look at the research.

We are not just shooting from the hip and coming up with ideas on the basis of it having worked once before somewhere else or being something we could do; it is a specific, considered policy response to the situation we face in the Northern Territory.

If you do not have the stomach for academic research—I appreciate not everyone does—an excellent piece of work that everybody in this House should look at, produced by the Australian Housing Urban Research Institute, is entitled 'Financing first home ownership: opportunities and challenges'. As an independent think tank, AHURI advises governments across the country on all matters housing related. AHURI will be referred to by other academic entities. Page 31 of that AHURI final report notes:

> *Government-instigated supply-side measures to promote home ownership were instrumental in supporting postwar growth of owner-occupation, but have since become far less common. Some innovative schemes have been initiated, though in general they remain relatively small-scale and are generally targeted at specific groups with bespoke needs.*

Ours is a novel and generous scheme at a time when fewer of them exist, when it is worth taking a chance on economically, when we are in a state of terminal demographic decline and when we do not have the capacity to broker new migration arrangements with the Commonwealth Government, having demonstrated nothing but fiscal negligence for eight years.

On this side of the House we are doing what we can to demonstrate to the marketplace, media and public that grown-ups are in charge of the economy. We are spending money prudently to try to invigorate the economy in the right places.

What is the intention of our HomeGrown Territory Grant? It is clear. As I said, if members had referred to any of the explanatory materials, it would be clear to them as well. Our grants are designed to assist people to get out of the rental cycle and into home ownership, increase the supply of new dwellings, stimulate the residential construction industry and retain population by encouraging people to put down roots in the Territory.

I applaud the courage of this government in being bold on these matters. The truth is that there has been risk-averse policymaking in this place on a range of social and economic issues for a long time. The lack of imagination and courage, the failure to consult the data and the inability to treat this place with the reverence

it deserves—we are a place of lawmaking and decision-making for the citizenry of the Northern Territory—has gotten us to the point we are at.

I specifically applaud the courage of the Chief Minister in this regard, noting the contrast with her immediate predecessors and the former government's total unwillingness to face economic reality and/or demographic decline. I say that not just as theatrics, but from my personal learned and lived professional experience. My previous guise was as a public servant, trying to help the government of the day with population growth, migration and talent acquisition. I can attest to the former government's wilful blindness to our demographic decline and its inability to understand that you must stimulate residential construction, create houses and broker arrangements with the Commonwealth on migration if you do not want the Northern Territory to demographically and economically collapse.

On that basis, I am extremely grateful for the courage of the Chief Minister and this government in being willing to offer a generous scheme. Is risk attached to it? Of course it is, but have we considered that risk? Yes. That is why we are all united in pushing for this scheme.

It is early days, but there has been an encouraging amount of interest in all the categories of the HomeGrown scheme.

It has been documented but is worth reiterating that the HomeGrown Territory program provides first homebuyers with grants of $50,000 to build or purchase a new home or $10,000 to purchase an established home. This Bill makes legislative amendments to the 2000 Act to put those measures into effect. Additionally by administrative workaround, we have the FreshStart program that provides grants of $30,000 for non-first homebuyers, who have already owned property, to construct or purchase a new home.

The aspiration is to stimulate supply and growth. Our hope is that by 30 September next year the considerable interest we have seen in the scheme will translate to a commensurate uptake and the purchase and/or building of new dwellings. In the first instance, given that we have only just announced the scheme and are in the midst of debating the legislation, you would not expect for there to have been a massive uptake in the construction of new houses; you would expect most movement to be in transfers on existing properties. That is the case, but there is encouraging movement in that space for first homebuyers. We are creating headroom in the market and stimulating supply in modest but important ways.

My area of professional expertise is not as an economist but a migration and population specialist, so I am comfortable saying that it is my belief that a small improvement to our net negative interstate migration would have the capacity to have a disproportionately large and positive impact on an economy of our size. Therefore, this is a worthwhile bet.

If the numbers alluded to by previous speakers manifest and we create hundreds of new houses, there will be an enormous effect. However, even if the numbers are relatively modest this will not be a policy failure; this will be a policy success. It will have been a mitigation strategy to stop people who would otherwise leave from leaving. It will compel them to stay, put their kids in school here and reinvest in our economy. It will help consumer demand.

We need people in the Northern Territory. There are lots of ways to try to attract people to the Northern Territory, and this is just one of them. More will be on their way, but for present purposes I agree with my learned colleague the Treasurer when he suggests that enabling more people to enter the housing market increases the likelihood of them staying in the Territory.

On the basis of that assertion I am pleased to commend this Bill to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, although I understand the intent behind the First Home Owner Grant Amendment Bill and share the commitment to improving housing affordability, our economy and our population, this policy fails to address the real housing crisis in the Northern Territory—homelessness, lack of affordable rental options and limited social and public housing. This Assembly must prioritise sustainable and effective solutions over quick fixes. Although the first home owner grant seeks to provide relief, we must ask ourselves whether it will achieve its intended outcome or simply push home ownership further out of reach for the very people it aims to help.

We have heard a lot of information from the Member for Fong Lim about research and some research from the Member for Nightcliff. I agree with the Member for Fong Lim that we do not need cookie-cutter solutions; we need to do what will work for our economy and our community. However—in your own words—calculated risk and hope do not fill me with confidence. I applaud your commitment to research, but we heard in this

Chamber from one of the ministers that the wonderful thing about research, figures and statistics is that you can pretty much make them say whatever you want.

Dr RAHMAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 26: Personal Explanation. That is a misrepresentation and a conflation of two different sets of information.

Mr Paech: No, she is not. She did not say it was you.

Dr RAHMAN: It absolutely is.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not a point of order.

J DAVIS: The Northern Territory budget has limited funds, and this scheme is expected to cost Territorians more than $200m in the year that it runs. As we have noted, this is pretty much the same as the figure that we need to address domestic, family and sexual violence as a matter of urgency. There are far more effective ways to spend this money not only on that urgent issue but also to address our housing needs in the Northern Territory.

Decades of first homebuyer grants and similar incentives have shown that these measures often do more harm than good. Instead of making housing more affordable they inflate housing prices by enabling buyers to meet higher prices, rather than addressing the underlying causes of housing inequality. Today we heard about the lack of supply.

We have heard some of this information from more than one speaker, but between 1965 and 2021 Australian governments spent more than $38bn on cash grants for first homebuyers, yet during this time home ownership rates steadily declined. The stark reality is that supporting people to pay higher house prices without tackling the root causes of housing inequality only worsens affordability. Although giving a bigger grant to people buying and building new homes seems like a step towards addressing supply, it risks creating bottlenecks in the construction sector, driving up the cost of building new homes.

Australians saw this play out with the Morrison government's HomeBuilder program. That initiative created a sudden surge of demand for builders and building materials. When no more builders or materials were magically created to meet that demand overnight, builders' limited time and limited resources became more valuable, pushing up the cost of both. We have seen that in the Northern Territory when there has been a push for rapid development.

The way forward is not to double down on policies that history has shown are ineffective; instead, as the member said, we need targeted evidence-based solutions that directly address our issues in the Northern Territory, including housing supply and affordability.

Investing in social housing makes economic sense for our Territory. Every dollar spent on building new social and public housing stimulates our local economy. It creates jobs and reduces the long-term cost to our health and justice systems. By providing affordable stable housing we reduce pressure on emergency services, homelessness services and the health system. We make our Territory a more attractive place for people to come to and stay. The social return on this kind of investment is immense.

I understand the desire to assist first homebuyers and encourage home ownership, but we cannot ignore the broader picture. A $50,000 grant for new homebuyers may temporarily boost the property market, but it will do nothing to address the growing shortage of affordable houses for renters and those in need of social and public housing. It risks inflating housing prices even further, making it harder for others to get a foot on the ladder while offering little to those who have no roof over their head.

I encourage the government to prioritise long-term solutions to address the root causes of our housing crisis, not just quick fixes that benefit a select few. I believe that by shifting our focus towards creating more affordable rental properties and social and public housing to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our society, we can build a strong attractive economy in the Northern Territory and that all Territorians, regardless of their income or circumstances, will have access to a safe, secure and affordable place to live.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have great enthusiasm to discuss two significant developments that will help shape the future of home ownership in the Northern Territory: the CLP government's home owner grants and the First Home Owner Grant Amendment Bill 2024.

This government initiative reflects our commitment to supporting families, boosting our economy and enhancing the quality of life for all Territorians. It is designed to make home ownership more accessible and affordable for Territorians. We understand that owning a home is not just a dream; it is a cornerstone of stability and security for families.

With rising property prices and economic pressures, the path to home ownership can often feel daunting. That is why we are proud to introduce these grants, which will provide much-needed financial assistance to first homebuyers and those looking to invest in their future. These grants will empower families to take a crucial step towards home ownership by alleviating some of the financial burden associated with purchasing a home.

We are not only making it easier for individuals to secure their dream homes but also stimulating our local economy. When families invest in homes they invest in their communities, creating jobs, supporting local businesses and fostering vibrant neighbourhoods.

Moreover, this initiative aligns perfectly with our broader vision for sustainable development in the Northern Territory. We are committed to ensuring our communities thrive, while preserving the unique environment that makes the Territory so special.

This legislation is an essential step forward in refining our housing policies and ensuring they meet the evolving needs of our community. The Bill addresses key areas such as regulatory frameworks, compliance standards and support mechanisms for home owners. It aims to streamline processes that have historically posed significant challenges for prospective buyers and builders alike.

A critical aspect of this amendment Bill is its focus on enhancing transparency in the housing market. By implementing clearer guidelines and regulations we can empower consumers with the information they need to make informed decisions about their investments. This transparency will foster trust between buyers, sellers and builders, creating a healthier housing market for everybody involved.

Additionally, this Bill emphasises the importance of community engagement in housing development. We recognise that every neighbourhood has its unique character and needs. By incorporating feedback from residents into our planning processes we can ensure that new developments align with community values and aspirations.

As we move forward with these initiatives I emphasise that we are not just creating policies; we are building a legacy for future generations. Home ownership is about more than just property; it is about creating a sense of belonging and stability for families and giving our children a place to grow up, learn and thrive.

The residents of the Fannie Bay electorate stand to benefit significantly from the Northern Territory's new home owner grants. These will impact the community by providing financial assistance for first-time buyers and support for existing home owners.

The HomeGrown Territory Grant offers $50,000 to first homebuyers who build or purchase a new home in the Northern Territory or $10,000 to those buying an existing property. This substantial financial support can help reduce the costs associated with buying a home, making home ownership more accessible for residents of Fannie Bay.

The FreshStart New Home Grant provides $30,000 for existing home owners who wish to build or buy a new home in the Territory. This grant encourages current residents to invest in new properties, potentially leading to upgrades and expansions that enhance the local housing market.

These grants will boost the local economy. By incentivising home building and purchasing, these grants are expected to stimulate the local construction industry which has experienced a significant downturn. This will lead to job creation and economic growth, benefiting local businesses and service providers.

These grants encourage population growth. They are part of a broader strategy to address the Territory's net interstate migration deficit. By making it more attractive for people to settle in Fannie Bay, this program aims to increase the local population, fostering a more vibrant and dynamic community.

Overall, these home owner grants are designed to make home ownership more attainable and appealing, supporting individual aspirations and broader community development in Fannie Bay and across the Territory.

I urge all members of this Assembly to support the home owner grants and the amendment Bill. Together, we can have a meaningful impact on the lives of Territorians by fostering home ownership opportunities that lead to stronger families and communities. These changes ensure Territorians have the opportunity to own their home and contribute to a vibrant community.

Given these reasons, I commend this Bill to the House.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Mr Deputy Speaker, at the recent election the CLP government said that we would reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. This Bill is about boosting construction and home ownership, as we know that if people put down roots they are more than likely to stay for a long time. We have all heard the stories of Territorians who came here for a year or two and stayed for a lifetime.

We have delivered the most generous home builder program in the country with a number of incentives. Importantly, all have no cap on the build or purchase price. A first home owner who builds a new home—with the requirement to live in it for a year—will receive $50,000. Territorians who choose to purchase an existing home will still be supported with a $10,000 grant. With our FreshStart New Home program, anyone who chooses to build a home to live in and downsize, if they have previously owned or currently own a home, will receive a $30,000 grant. This is an Australian first for anyone who has previously owned a home.

These programs, along with our action plan on crime, will stop Territorians and skilled workers from leaving. This will get people out of the rental cycle and encourage them to put down foundations for a life here.

It was pleasing to speak to people at Downes Graderways in Katherine, who developed the now complete stage 3 of Casuarina estate and were excited to see blocks coming to market. Finance broker Mel Whelan has had a lot of inquiries about the first home owner grant, which was pleasing for her. I have had conversations with Alison Ross at Elders Real Estate and Tony Browne at Sunrise Estates that had an open day recently. All these people are excited about the prospect of new developments and stimulating the economy in regions like Katherine.

I also spoke to young teachers and other workers in town about the prospect of them being able to afford to purchase a block and build their home, which is a possibility that is in reach for more Territorians through this first home owner grant.

The CLP's HomeGrown Territory program will address the key barriers for people to get into home ownership. This simple scheme will increase housing stock, underpin population growth and address the cost of living.

Under the previous Labor government building approvals declined by 65% to an all-time record low of 580 last financial year. The Territory's home ownership rate is the lowest in the nation. This first home owner grant can boost that.

Last year at the Future NT conference, which I was fortunate to attend, demographer Simon Kuestenmacher said that the idea was exciting and tapped into the large millennial cohort that is now mostly employed and having children. He went on to say:

> *Giving sugar hits to potential new residents is a very smart idea because nobody's doing it in Australia. Nobody in this financial sense is proactively competing for residents. That would set the city apart.*
>
> *This isn't the worst of times to be doing this to the biggest generation, Millennials, who are making babies and will move from apartments into three or four bedroom homes.*
>
> *This could be the chance for them to do a lifestyle change. If everything is in transition anyway, why not (move to the Territory) now? Sitting at the kitchen table people could be saying 'This isn't too bad'.*

I too say: why not move to the Territory, enjoy our unique lifestyle, put down roots and stay for a lifetime?

We have heard from stakeholders, like the Property Council, who have said, 'We have previously called for incentives to support new builds and those looking to live in established homes in serviced suburbs and activity centres. We are particularly pleased to see the focus on streamlining the conversion of commercial properties to residential use. With the NT facing high commercial vacancy rates and low demand, this initiative is crucial.'

Unlike the former Labor government the CLP is delivering real solutions to fix this problem and get more Territorians into their own homes. With $20m allocated to the new HomeGrown Territory program, we have a goal to double the number of first homebuyers.

I look forward to seeing housing developments like Kilgariff in Alice Springs, which I drove around last week, continuing to develop; areas like Casuarina estate in Katherine filling up; and the hopes, dreams and aspirations of Territorians coming to fruition.

I thank the Treasurer for bringing legislation for yet another election commitment to the House.

As our government is focused on reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle, and this home owner grant will assist rebuilding our economy, I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr EDGINGTON (Housing, Local Government and Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the First Home Owner Grant Amendment Bill 2024 and am proud to speak about this initiative.

The Northern Territory Government's new HomeGrown Territory and FreshStart programs were established on 1 October 2024 and provide the most generous home ownership grants in the country. The HomeGrown Territory program provides first homebuyers with grants of $50,000 to build or purchase a new home or $10,000 to purchase an established home. The FreshStart program provides grants of $30,000 for non-first homebuyers, who have already owned property, to construct or purchase a new home.

These grants are designed to assist people to get out of the rental cycle and into home ownership, increase the supply of new dwellings, stimulate the residential construction industry and retain our population by encouraging people to put down roots in the Northern Territory.

The grants are open for contracts entered into between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025. They are available to Australian citizens and permanent residents. There is no cap on the purchase or build price of the home. There is no cap on the income of applicants. All successful applicants must live in their home for a minimum of 12 months. To provide greater certainty, there is no fixed number of grants; instead, the grants will run for a 12-month period commencing on 1 October 2024 and ending on 30 September 2025. Grants will apply to contracts signed during this timeframe to buy or build a home, or for owner–builders when they commence construction.

The take-up of the new grants so far has been extraordinarily strong. To date, in just under two months, more than 160 applications have been paid, approved, submitted or in draft since the program opened on 1 October. Most banks, mortgage brokers and other financial institutions are familiar with the eligibility criteria and process for the first home owner grants and can generally help complete and process applications.

Under the failed Labor government the Territory had the lowest rate of home ownership in the country, with almost half of Territorians stuck in the endless rent cycle. Unlike the former Labor government the CLP is delivering real solutions to fix this problem and get more Territorians into their own homes. The opposition was all talk and no action for eight years. It took the CLP less than 100 days to start fixing the problem by offering the most generous home ownership grants in the country. These grants are just the start of the CLP's mandate to rebuild the economy, which died under the Labor government of the last eight years. More new home owner grants means more houses are built, increasing housing supply and supporting our residential construction industry, which was an afterthought for Labor.

Labor clearly does not understand or acknowledge the need to attract people to the Territory, with a shortage of workers in health, education, police and trades. The non-government sector is also finding it difficult to attract people. The only action the Labor government took to attract people to the Northern Territory was through the Boundless Possible campaign. The last action taken was to advertise it on the back of a rocket at the cost of $40,000. That rocket was launched out of Queensland, and Boundless Possible was never seen again. Of course, that action taken to attract people to the Northern Territory failed.

The CLP is taking real action so that all Territorians, no matter where they live, have a chance to call a home their own. That is what the CLP is pursuing.

Land is available in Tennant Creek. I hope that this opportunity is used to attract more people to Tennant Creek and across the Barkly and more workers to the Territory.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the First Home Owner Grant Amendment Bill 2024 and the HomeGrown Territory Grant contained therein.

A lot has been said about the benefits of this grant, which is the most generous grant for first home builders in this country. There is another less talked about but equally important element of the HomeGrown Territory Grant that I am proud to support.

This grant also empowers families living in the rural area where land is not the problem, particularly those who are looking to build a second dwelling on their property. I represent the rural area where families often seek to build a second dwelling on their block to create space as their families grow and to keep extended family members close by. This scheme will help families build that second dwelling on their rural block, as many have already done throughout my electorate. This scheme will help families, migrants, sons and daughters in Virginia, Marrakai, Humpty Doo, Acacia Hills, Noonamah, Girraween and Howard Springs.

Rural families often face unique challenges in accessing affordable housing and building the types of homes that suit their needs. Whether it is a second dwelling for ageing parents, a space for adult children returning home or simply a means to keep the kids close by but not close enough to drive them crazy, the ability to build a second dwelling on their land can be a game changer. With the support of this grant we are helping rural families stay on their properties, build the homes they need and provide space for future generations. This grant not only supports individual families but also encourages the growth of our rural community.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, we are excited to bring this legislation to the Assembly. It, of course, delivers on our commitment, which has kicked off; it was one of the first things we delivered upon coming to government. Considering the election was in late August and this was out the door by 1 October, it is fantastic.

As a result of our dedication and commitment to making sure that the construction sector and the Territory's first home owners had certainty about their housing opportunities and economic stimulus going forward, we kicked this off on 1 October. Since then, in a short time, we have seen more than 160 applications come through. This represents millions of dollars of stimulus through the Territory economy. The impact cannot be underestimated.

I find it ironic—almost laughable—that some members have been quoting economists and talking about the economy when they were the people who would do everything possible to throw themselves in front of a strong economy. They are the activists, the people who do not want gas or the Territory Coordinator, but they are concerned that our humble first home owner grant for the Territory might not be what economists are looking for.

However, they need not be concerned because for a small taxpayer contribution we are seeing a huge amount of money spin through the economy. Builders could not build anything because no-one could afford a home as they could not save the deposit, and there was no confidence in the Territory, but this is now all turned around. After the scheme was announced we spoke to builders who confirmed that they had gone from having a few inquiries a week to dozens of inquiries.

There is a great optimism in the air; it has given people a spring in their step, and they are excited about the future. I have spoken to Territorians whose children moved interstate and are now seriously reconsidering moving back to the Territory and building their lives here, recognising this huge opportunity to have $50,000 go towards their deposit to build a new home.

There is something in this scheme for everyone, not just the first home builders, including people who need a second chance, who may have been divorced, owned a property interstate or are older and want to downsize. It supports growth across the Territory. Fred and Mary are a retired couple living in their big house in Wanguri, which is an area with big blocks and old elevated houses. Fred is probably sick of taking the palm fronds to the dump every weekend. Fred and Mary may want a nice three-bedroom place in Northcrest, where the Member for Fong Lim can look after them. That is okay; we will give them $30,000 to do that because their place in Wanguri will go to another family who needs that space because they have five kids. The kids can pick up the fronds instead of Fred. This gets things moving and is important to give people the opportunity to downsize or rightsize.

The scheme has created economic stimulus in the apartment space. Apartment buildings are coming to fruition, and there are opportunities on the horizon because that money can go towards underpinning the development that we badly need in the Territory.

It is narrow-minded and short-sighted to say that this does not help renters because when Fred and Mary move to Northcrest, their Wanguri house will be available to rent.

This is a way to seriously generate activity across a range of sectors. Think about the number of trades that go into building a home from concreters to the people who do the plasterboard, the people who install the kitchen cabinets, electricians, roofers and tilers—you name it. That is not to mention the people from the building company, the architects, the approvals people and the developers—everyone along the way. There will also be renewal because older homes will be back on the market.

There is a $10,000 grant to go towards existing homes, which supports people to get into home ownership, particularly at the more affordable end of the market. If people are willing to buy an older home they will get something for a more reasonable price.

The entire scheme has been deliberately designed to make sure it goes towards the deposit, helping with cost-of-living relief. This has been a successful scheme. We are trying to push it out across the country so that young people trapped in New South Wales and Victoria can recognise the opportunity to move to the Territory and have $50,000 towards their first home aspirations. This is enormous by any standard. It is the most competitive home build scheme in the country, and we are incredibly proud of it. We cannot wait for the results at the end of this period to see whether it hit the mark or whether improvements can be made.

I thank the Treasurer for bringing this Bill to parliament. I am pleased to see it happen, and by all accounts it has been a huge success so far. We are seeing builders finally building again. People are talking about their future opportunities, bedding down their life in the Northern Territory or thinking about moving back, which is a huge step in the right direction. It is not a population growth silver bullet but a piece of the story, and we have to start somewhere.

I am proud to be a part of the team who, as soon as we came into government, saw this was an urgent priority. We have delivered, and now it is a matter for Territorians and aspiring Territorians to look to this and see the opportunity it gives them. We hope at the end of this first period of the scheme that we can look back and be confident that what we have done has made a big difference in the Territory.

Mr YAN (Treasurer)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all the speakers who have participated in this debate. I hope to clear up some of the issues that were raised by members in various contributions.

I welcome the opposition's support of this scheme. I agree that these are crucial measures to boost home ownership in the Northern Territory which, sadly, has some of the lowest rates of home ownership in the country.

Opposition Leader, there are no caps on the number of grants awarded. The scheme is open for 12 months. All applications received before the end of the scheme on 30 September next year will be considered.

There are no limits on where people must live. That means Territorians everywhere, whether it be Jabiru or Palmerston, can apply for this grant. I have been working with people who live on homelands who have always struggled to become first homebuyers. As long as they have a sufficient length of time on their homeland lease, they can apply for this grant. This means there are people on homelands who, for the first time, can become home owners with this grant. I believe there are some applications, which is wonderful.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about existing property owners competing with first homebuyers, which will make it harder for first homebuyers. Existing property owners are eligible for only the FreshStart New Home Grant and are not subject to this legislation. In addition, the FreshStart New Home Grant is available for only the construction or purchase of new properties. Existing property owners will not be eligible for grants on existing properties.

There has been discussion about eligibility and compliance to make sure money does not go to interstaters. The Territory Revenue Office will implement an audit and compliance program, including random audits, targeted audits and compliance activities. There is a requirement for all grant recipients to live in the dwellings for a minimum of 12 months. This represents an increase of the previous six-month requirement. There is a range of powers available to the Territory Revenue Office under the *Taxation Administration Act 2007*, and noncompliance can result in repayment of grants, along with further penalties and interest.

The Members for Nightcliff and Johnston had similar concerns about the grant. I will try to address the issues they raised about grants going to property developers, banks and existing property owners. Grant recipients must own their property in their own name and must occupy the property for 12 months. As such, there is no scope for a developer or others to obtain multiple grants.

There was discussion that first home owner grants in this scheme will increase prices and make it harder for first homebuyers. That may be so in a hot market—I believe that happened previously with first home owner

grants nationally—but, unfortunately, there is not a hot property market in the Northern Territory. Sadly, it is a depressed property market, which is why we have introduced this grant scheme to try to increase construction of additional homes in the Territory.

The issue of social and affordable housing was raised, which is important for this government. We are committed to building better remote housing to provide that all-important housing for people out in the bush. There is also federal funding for affordable housing within our urban and regional areas. We are working closely with the federal government to bring that money on board to increase the delivery of social housing across the Northern Territory.

I hope that answers a few of the questions raised during debate.

I thank all the people who took the opportunity to have a briefing on this grant. It was made available to all members of the Chamber, and I believe the opposition and Independent members received a briefing on this Bill, which was great.

The Bill introduces legislation to give effect to the HomeGrown Territory Grant, which was announced by our government as part of the wider HomeGrown Territory program.

The grant officially commenced on 1 October 2024. It recognises that increasing access to the housing market improves the chance of residents remaining in the Territory. The grant also demonstrates the government's commitment to supporting first homebuyers in the Territory, encouraging population growth through home ownership, boosting local employment by invigorating the residential construction sector and increasing much-needed housing supply.

The Bill does this by increasing the first home owner grant from $10,000 to $50,000 for buying or building new homes and expands it to include $10,000 for buying established homes. It is available for contracts signed between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025.

The Bill also increases the eligibility criteria of the first home owner grant to ensure that it will go to buyers who are purchasing or building a home to live in rather than those buying a property for other reasons such as investment. With these grants homebuyers will need to live in the home that they buy for at least 12 months, including homes that they build, giving them time to put down roots in the Northern Territory and become a part of their local community.

The Bill makes it clear that the grant will run for a year. Already we have seen a quick uptake, with 19 HomeGrown Territory Grant applications by first homebuyers, in addition to 12 applications lodged for the FreshStart New Home Grant. I have up-to-date numbers. As of 25 November 2024, 165 grants have been received; 81 for new builds and purchases and 84 for established homes.

I thank all those involved in delivering the HomeGrown Territory program. I encourage everyone to come and make their home in the Northern Territory. I thank my team from Treasury for all the work they have done on this program.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1:

Ms UIBO: With regard to commencement and the timing, we understand that the grant scheme has already been rolled out and some grants have been paid. What is in this Bill to pay the grants prior to the legislation passing?

Mr YAN: My understanding is that the Bill has been backdated to 1 October, which Treasury can do to retrospectively pay those grants. The legislative change allows that to take place so that those grants can be paid.

Ms UIBO: Does that mean the 1 October date becomes the 12-month start date, as opposed to the calendar year?

Mr YAN: That is correct. The commencement date is 1 October 2024, and the completion date is 30 September 2025. Then the scheme will revert to the original home owner grant.

Ms UIBO: Does that mean there is an extension of the 12-month period, because you said it would revert?

Mr YAN: No. The legislation is written so that the changes to the first home owner grant for $10,000 and $50,000 are in place for that 12-month period. As at 30 September it will revert to the original legislation, which is $10,000 for the first home owner grant.

Ms UIBO: To clarify, was that the $50,000 and the $30,000, as well as the $10,000?

Mr YAN: The $30,000 grant is not in this legislation. It is only the $10,000 and the $50,000 grants. The commitment was that the three grants together would run from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025.

Ms UIBO: Where would you find the $30,000?

Mr YAN: The $30,000 grant is part of the $20m commitment that the CLP made during the election.

Ms UIBO: Does it commence from 1 October?

Mr YAN: The $30,000 commenced on 1 October this year and will cease on 30 September 2025. The dates are exactly the same as the changes to the first home owner grant.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Road Safety

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence from the Member for Arnhem as follows:

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

Fifty-seven people have lost their lives on Territory roads in 2024, which is set to become one of our worst road fatality years on record. It is critical that the government continues to invest in road safety initiatives and infrastructure to keep Territorians safe on our roads.

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

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! An MPI normally requires four people to support it before it can proceed in the Chamber.

Mr YOUNG: Madam Speaker, there are four of us here. We could just support it.

Madam SPEAKER: That was my omission. I should have picked up on that. I apologise to the government for not ensuring that the Leader of the Opposition had the support of the required number of members. Given that she has the support now, please continue.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I discuss a matter of great importance to our Territory community; that is, the devastating impact of accidents on Territory roads on families and individuals. This cannot be overstated.

This year alone to date 57 lives have been lost on our roads, a staggering average of one life lost per week in the Northern Territory. These numbers represent more than just statistics; they represent mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, friends, cousins, neighbours and colleagues who will never return home. The true figure is likely even higher as some unfortunate fatalities in the Territory this year, such as those on cattle roads and farms, may not be included in the official Territory road toll because they occurred on private property.

It is time we acknowledge that road accidents have a profound impact on our Territory community. Each week a family has been torn apart, colleagues devastated in the wake of a community shake-up and life has been lost due to what is unfortunately often avoidable accidents on our roads.

The Territory Labor opposition believes that as parliamentary leaders it is our responsibility to ask: what more can we all do to prevent these tragedies and the loss of life on Territory roads? What actions can we take to protect Territorians and create a safer road user culture across the NT? Although there is no single solution to this complex issue, we must be ambitious in our approach. Indeed, a life every week is worth preserving and fighting for.

Over the past decade, an average of 40 people in the Territory have died and approximately 470 have suffered serious injuries on Territory roads each year. The per capita road fatality rate in the Northern Territory is 3.2 times the national rate—the highest in Australia.

The former Labor government developed a number of road safety action plans to reduce road trauma in the Northern Territory. We developed these plans in consultation with key stakeholders, like the NT Police Force, local government councils and peak First Nations groups and advocates.

From our consultations, the Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2018–22 was established. This important work highlighted the facts and several simple changes that could make a difference in the long term for road safety in the Northern Territory. As part of this action plan Territory Labor introduced a blood alcohol concentration limit for supervising drivers. We increased maximum penalties for failure to undertake a breath or saliva test when asked by police. We increased police powers to give breath or saliva tests and started drug-testing drivers in 2020.

In 2021 ‘What if...? The Brandon Wilson story’ was released, detailing the tragic and avoidable loss of life through road trauma of a young man on a remote Territory road in August 2018. Presented by Karl Stefanovic, this powerful and highly emotive 30-minute documentary featured interviews with Brandon’s family, friends, teammates, workmates and first responders. It showed how his death affected everyone around him and how it possibly could have been avoided simply by taking two seconds to put on a life-saving seatbelt.

In 2019 the NT Motor Accidents (Compensation) Commission launched the Always Wear Your Seatbelt campaign. Over the last 10 years 33% of fatalities on Territory roads involved people not wearing a seatbelt. Seatbelts reduce the chance of injury or death in a vehicle collision by 10% to 80%, depending on the type of collision experienced. It is tragic that the deaths of Territorian drivers and passengers in road accidents are twice as likely to occur when people are not wearing a seatbelt, as other Australians tend to do.

Motorcyclists face a different challenge from those commuting in cars and larger vehicles like buses. In 2019 legislation was amended to require a learner motorbike rider to be licensed to ride a moped or scooter and lane-filtering regulations for motorcyclists were introduced. In 2022 the ‘Dress for the ride and the slide’ media campaign was released to promote the wearing of protective motorcycle clothing.

For cyclists, Territory Labor focused on building 11 kilometres of shared paths across the Territory, including the construction of shared paths on Herbert Heritage Drive to the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, Stott Terrace, Garramilla Boulevard, Undoolya Road, Chung Wah Terrace and Vanderlin Drive. About 160 school visit bike safety theory and practical sessions were delivered at the Newland Park Road Safety Centre in Alice Springs and the Parap Road Safety Centre in Darwin. In 2019 the one-metre rule for overtaking cyclists was introduced. The road rules were amended to permit cyclists to ride slowly across a pedestrian crossing without dismounting.

To some in this House these things could seem trivial, but if it helped to save one life or prevent one accident or severe injury from being experienced it was all worth it. Doing what we can to prevent another life lost on our roads is something everyone in this place should consider.

One of the most effective ways to prevent road accidents is by investing in our roads to make them safer. That is why we invested heavily in the Territory’s road infrastructure network as follows:

- a $203m road safety program, including shoulder widening, sealing and culvert extensions; installing guardrail barriers; audio-tactile edge line-marking; intersection upgrades; truck parking bays; variable message signage; and street lighting

- upgrades to sealed standard on various sections of the Tanami Road, Central Arnhem Highway, Port Keats Road, Maryvale Road, Litchfield Park Road, Gunn Point Road, Keep River Road, Tjukaruru Road and the Plenty, Roper and Buntine Highways

- upgrades to two-lane sealed standard on various sections of the Carpentaria, Tablelands, Buntine and Roper Highways

- construction of new bridges on Port Keats Road, Keep River Road, Litchfield Park Road, Arnhem Highway and the Roper Highway to improve flood immunity

- construction of the Tiger Brennan Drive and Berrimah Road intersection overpass to improve road safety and traffic flow

- construction of the Truck Central transport hub in Darwin to assist with the management of driver fatigue

- 28 variable message signs to display road safety and traffic messages across the Northern Territory.

The work undertaken contributed to the downward trend of road fatalities in the Territory, which is why the Labor government launched the Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024–2028. Territory Labor consulted far and wide on this updated action plan. That consultation identified strong support for actions targeting alcohol and drug use while driving and actions to encourage seatbelt and child restraint use. Actions related to speed and road safety cameras received less support. Increased enforcement targeting unregistered and unlicensed driving was highly supported, as was improving overtaking opportunities on the Stuart Highway. There was a high level of support for ongoing upgrades and the development of shared path networks across the Territory. I urge the new CLP government to maintain this strategy and the associated actions that will end up saving lives on our Territory roads.

It is important that the new government continues to invest in culturally appropriate education and awareness campaigns and programs such as ‘Who’s Your Sober Bob?’ and the ‘Enough’s Enough’ and ‘Sorry Business Stories’ drink-driving campaigns.

The new government should continue to work to address pedestrian fatalities. Unfortunately, a lot more of these have occurred, particularly this year. These incidents represent about 19% of the lives lost on our Territory roads. The majority of pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries occur in the urban areas of Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs. It is important that the CLP government continues to roll out infrastructure upgrades to improve pedestrian safety, including the use of innovative technology solutions such as alerting drivers to the presence of pedestrians and allowing increased time for pedestrians to cross the road at signalled intersections. This work also includes the installation of speed-check signs in school zones.

We urge the CLP government to consider upgrading road safety signage on regional and remote roads, targeting seatbelts, driving to conditions and other key road safety messages; providing funding to local governments to develop local area traffic management plans; reviewing and increasing the number of overtaking lanes on the Stuart Highway between Darwin and Katherine, as well as from Katherine to the Carpentaria Highway intersection; upgrading road network lighting infrastructure with smart light controller technology; and investing in technology-based solutions to increase compliance with speed limits at roadworks sites, ensuring that people adhere to dropped-speed zones. The aforementioned steps are relatively simple and, as I have outlined, are supported by the general community.

The loss of life on our roads is tragic. The loss of one life is horrific, traumatic and tragic; 57 is even more unbearable. However, having a discussion about road safety and the investment in infrastructure can be life saving.

Every year I feel like I am a broken record in this place. For the eight years I have been a member of parliament, at the final sittings for each year I have urged people to stay safe on our roads, particularly with the Wet Season.

Turning on headlights is an easy thing to do to increase visibility and create more safety for other road users. During the torrential monsoonal rains across the Top End and heavy rain in other parts of the Territory, the visibility of vehicles, motorbikes and cyclists is reduced; they can disappear. That is when a lot of road users who are not experienced or who are in a rush can be involved in devastating accidents, resulting in injuries and sometimes fatalities.

I was a first responder to an accident where a seven-year-old family member from Numbulwar died on the road 40 kilometres out from there. I was the first vehicle to come across that accident, and it has traumatised me for the last nine years. My advocacy for road safety will continue, now from opposition, to make sure every life that can be saved is saved and every accident that can be avoided is avoided.

We can come together in this Chamber to focus on encouraging safe, educated and unpressured road use in the Territory. People need to drive to the conditions and avoid blatantly stupid activity like drink-driving and drug-driving. These are messages I will continue for the next four years, and I hope they can make a small impact.

I express my deepest gratitude to our police and emergency service workers for their tireless efforts to keep our roads safe and saving the lives of Territorians and visitors. Their dedication and expertise have been instrumental in reducing the road toll over the past few decades, but we need to support them. We acknowledge the invaluable feedback they provide to government, opposition and Independent members, informing us about critical road safety strategies and how to shape the messages for people to be safer and more sensible on our roads.

We must also recognise the profound impact that repeated exposure to traumatic road accidents can have on our police, emergency and frontline service workers. The cumulative stress, anxiety and depression that can result from attending multiple fatalities and crashes can be debilitating for these workers, affecting their mental health and physical wellbeing.

It is essential that we provide our police and emergency service workers with access to counselling, peer support and mental health resources to mitigate the effects of the trauma and stress they experience every day, which many people may experience only once in a lifetime. By promoting a culture of safety, resilience and wellbeing within our emergency service organisations, we can better support our personnel and minimise the impact of traumatic events in the medium and long term on our frontline workers.

Ultimately, safety on our roads is a shared responsibility. As we approach the holiday season, I urge all road users—drivers, pedestrians and cyclists—to exercise caution, care and patience on Territory roads.

Let us ensure the work we do in this place means this Christmas and holiday season is filled with joy and not sorrow. We owe it to our loved ones and the communities we represent. Together, regardless of politics, we can make a difference and create a safer and more responsible road user culture for all Territorians.

This is an area of deep emotional concern for me. Our emergency responders work on our roads day-in and day-out. There are five weeks left of the calendar year, and we do not want that horrible number of 57 lives lost on Territory roads to increase. We are already horribly over the average number experienced in previous years. It is never good enough to have one road death, let alone one road death every week in the Territory. Think about the number of families, friends and constituents who have been impacted by this over 11 months this year. It is deeply traumatic for the communities that we represent to have deaths on our roads. If we can, in any way, shape or form, encourage small acts that can make a big difference for road safety, it is worth it.

From a bush member's perspective, we know that when road users take unnecessary risks like crossing flooded creeks, roads and rivers, that creates unsafe situations for the driver, the passengers and the rescue teams and emergency workers who unfortunately must put their lives at risk because people have made, quite frankly, stupid decisions to cross. Particularly during the Wet Season if it is flooded forget it; try to think about not only yourself but also your family and all the people whom it may impact when you make a split decision that is not in the best interests of safety.

Road safety is everyone's business, and it is pertinent to put it on the record as a matter of public importance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, road safety is important.

Tonight's matter of public importance highlights the fact that we have had a tragic year with 57 lives lost on our roads compared with 31 at the same time last year. That is an astonishing almost doubling of the number of fatalities. It is distressing that 72% of those fatalities involved alcohol or drugs. Those 57 lives represent 37 males and 20 females, and 15 of those lives were pedestrians.

Despite these high numbers, our police are taking enforcement action and being proactive on our roads to send the clear message that if you do the wrong thing on our roads, you will be caught. I thank our police who this year alone have conducted more than 100,000 breath tests, which is an incredible number. Of those tests, 7.6% returned a positive reading. Police have also been monitoring other traffic infringements, the

majority of which include speeding. Operation Angove targets that December–January period before people go back to school in the new year.

The numbers speak for themselves. There are three key areas that need to be looked at.

One is about personal responsibility. When we talk about distracted driving, drug and drink-driving and taking excessive risks—as the Opposition Leader spoke about people taking the chance to cross a river thinking that it will not happen to them—it all comes down to personal responsibility and making the right decisions on behalf of yourself, your family and people you do not know such as the other road users.

It also comes down to enforcement. Over many years police have been stretched to the limits of the policing they can do, let alone do proactive policing. During the COVID period there were a few years when seeing a breathalyser was nearly non-existent. A lot of work has been done this year, and I thank our police for that. It does not all rest with them, but it is a component because if people do not think they will be caught they are more likely to engage in risky behaviour. Enforcement is an important part.

Equally, education is important. We need to make sure our kids understand their responsibilities when they get behind the wheel, including their responsibilities to others, and that the danger one split second of distraction or lack of attention to what is going on around them or impairment because of the influence of other things is all it takes to end in catastrophic tragedy. Time and again we have seen too much of this; this year it is at an unprecedented level, particularly compared with last year.

The Opposition Leader is correct in acknowledging the trauma this has on the people left behind, and not just families and friends but also the emergency workers who time and again are cutting people out of cars, resuscitating people and doing everything they can to save lives. It takes an enormous toll on them and their team, and then they must get back up and do it again. In recent times we have had successive deaths close together—sometimes entire families—and you can only imagine the trauma associated with that.

Of course, safe roads are another component of it, but the data shows that alcohol and drugs are the main cause. We talk a lot about the fatal five—alcohol, drugs, speed, seatbelts, inattention and fatigue—that are the main causes of fatalities on our roads. They are the ones that police continue to target. We have seen police infringe hundreds of Territorians for distracted driving and nearly 1,000 for not wearing seatbelts.

It is incredible to think that in this day and age police have fined nearly 1,000 Territorians this year for not wearing a seatbelt. Imagine all the people who are not wearing a seatbelt whom the police do not get to catch. Growing up in an era when we have always had to wear seatbelts, it is hard for someone of my generation to understand that concept because it is ingrained in us. I turn on the car, the kids jump in the back and straightaway say, ‘Mum, my seatbelt’ before we move out of the garage. They are straight onto it; it is built into them, which is wonderful. Something as simple as using that restraint—it is in every car; there is no excuse for not doing that—comes back to personal responsibility and making sure that people are doing the right thing.

Nearly 50,000 people have been fined for speeding this year. Think of all the times people are speeding when the police are unable to catch them.

We will continue to do what we can. Operation Angove over the Christmas period is designed to have that hypervigilance and high-visibility policing. We hope people take stock of what it is they are risking and putting on the line. Every time you get in a car it can be a lethal weapon. It is a high-powered machine that can cause carnage if used in the wrong way, so it must be respected. The road rules and shared space need to be respected. People need to have patience and take their time with one another whilst using our roads.

It is of utmost importance that people continue to drive safely and to the conditions. We are coming into the Wet Season with increased rain and lower visibility. Roads could be slippery, particularly out bush. At least 70% of the Territory’s roads are dirt, so if you are travelling in our regions that risk increases exponentially. Wet dirt roads, flooded roads, muddy roads and boggy roads all have an additional risk element to them.

Do not take the risk. Be smart about what you are doing. Plan ahead and look after your mates. These are all messages that have been drummed into us almost since the day we were born, yet some people still do not heed that important warning.

Our police do an incredible job, and the toll is high. Our focus on wellbeing has been enhanced over time, but it is not lost on me that we need to continue to work on that. As that demand increases so too do the scars that our first responders, police, ambulance staff, nurses and doctors carry with them. I thank our police

in the lead-up to Operation Angove. Emergency workers continue to work over Christmas; they do not have the time off that others might get to enjoy with family and friends. They are on the road making sure our family and friends are safe, and we thank them wholeheartedly for their service.

It is a tragic outcome for this year, and I hope next year will be different. We must all continue to make sure that education is there for our young people and new drivers, that we reinforce the importance of personal responsibility and that our police are well supported to enforce the law to send a clear message that if you do the wrong thing, you will be caught.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing this to the Chamber. This year 57 lives have been lost on our roads, nearly double the number from the same time last year. An average of 500 people are seriously injured in road accidents in the Northern Territory every year. For many of us this is not just a statistic; it is deeply personal. These are our loved ones, families, friends and neighbours.

I am one of those people. I lost a treasured family member at just 16 with her whole life ahead of her killed in a road accident. Lucy was a beautiful, vibrant, amazing young woman, and her death was tragic and meaningless. Her life was over, and the impact of her death was far reaching throughout her friends and family. At that time and almost every day since I reflect on the incredible danger of our roads, and the death toll in the Northern Territory remains deeply shocking to me. Like everyone in the Territory I am committed to working to care for our community and to ensure that we are doing everything we can to keep people safe. Our road toll is horrific. There must be more that we can do.

The toll is on not just those who are hurt or killed or who lose family members but also the first responders who do an incredibly challenging job. I thank them all the people in our health and other services who care for those harmed on the road.

We know that the main causes of road death are speeding, alcohol and not wearing seatbelts. It is of great concern that although alcohol is a key factor in many road crashes, the government is proposing that we make alcohol more accessible by reducing the floor price. We must continue to address alcohol-related harm, including its devastating impact on our road toll.

Young people under 25 and people in communities in rural and remote areas are among the hardest hit. Tragically, First Nations Territorians are disproportionately affected, with 86% of fatal pedestrian crashes in the past 10 years involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander pedestrians.

It is well established that the Northern Territory has the highest per capita consumption of alcohol in Australia; the highest rate of risky alcohol consumption in Australia; the nation's highest rate of alcohol-related hospitalisations; and high rates of road trauma and mortality involving illegal blood alcohol concentration levels. I am quoting from some Menzies research. Further to that, in 2015 alcohol-related road crashes were estimated to have cost the Northern Territory economy more than $57m through permanent disability, workforce disruption, insurance and compensation schemes and loss of quality of life. Substantial societal gains can be made through the prevention of drink and drug-driving.

We need a clear and consistent approach. That means not only investing in safer roads, targeted education campaigns and stricter enforcement of road rules but also being honest about the decisions that we make in this Chamber in regard to other things that affect road deaths, including alcohol policy. If we know alcohol is contributing to these tragedies, we cannot turn a blind eye for the sake of convenience or politics. We cannot accept that losing lives on our roads is just part of life here; it is preventable. It is up to us to act. Let us make sure that whatever laws we make in this Chamber will make all of us safer and ensure that no more families have to endure this heartbreak.

The Member for Mulka asks that I share this statement. He says:

'I am not sure how many members in this Chamber have lost family members and loved ones on NT roads, but there are a great many people dying and being injured on our roads in the Northern Territory and many families and communities who are impacted. We hear little about these deaths. We do not hear an outcry from government about new policies or spending announcements to create safety. We do not see the same call to action it has for crime.

'My *wawa* (cousin-brother) was hit on the Stuart Highway by two cars—one that stopped and one that did not. He was in Darwin for a medical appointment. He was a treasured member of our family, a kind and quiet man. I had hoped to give him a lift home at the end of the parliament sitting, and felt I had failed him because I could not deliver him home safely.

‘These pedestrian deaths are concerning, and the government should be calling an inquiry to look for ways to limit deaths on our roads.

‘In the last term of parliament I asked the minister for the hit-and-run statistics. In the 2021–22 financial year there were 11 hit-and-runs that resulted in death and four that caused serious harm. In 2022–23 there were four hit-and-runs resulting in death and two that caused serious harm. In 2023–24 there were 11 hit-and-runs resulting in deaths and 10 that caused serious harm. These are not the total numbers of deaths on our roads; these are just the ones where the driver hit a pedestrian and did not stop.

‘This is a serious concern because it leaves people who have injuries and need immediate attention on our roads. My *wawa* was one of those people because the first driver did not stop. Is there a chance that if that first driver had stopped my *wawa* would still be alive today? Could the first driver have stopped the second car from hitting him?

‘In Brinkin on two occasions this year three people were struck by cars that did not stop. On each occasion two people passed away.

‘Why would a driver not assist the people they had hit? These questions lead you to ask whether it is intentional. This is a shocking crime, yet there is not a flurry of Bills on urgency passing through the Chamber. For some reason these deaths are acceptable, but to the families and communities and the people of my electorate these deaths are unacceptable. They require a response from government about how this has happened and how our communities can be made safer so that we do not continue to experience this loss.

‘I am grateful that the opposition raised this issue. I hope the government will call in experts and consult with communities to address the tragedy that we are seeing on our roads that deserves an urgent response.’

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I will talk briefly about a young man who sadly lost his life on our roads. On 8 June this year Thomas Venturin passed away after a fatal crash on the Arnhem Highway. Thomas was 20 years old and on his way to work that fateful morning. He died on the side of the road in the presence of friends who had stopped to assist and who comforted him while he took his last breath.

A memorial was erected at the site of this crash, which my partner and his fellow colleagues who loved him like a brother must drive past every day on the way to and from work.

Thomas was a keen fisherman, a hard worker and a wonderful human being. Thomas was a friend, partner, brother, grandson, nephew and cousin. Most importantly, Thomas had his whole life ahead of him. He had dreams, plans and plenty of fishing trips that he should have had many more years to undertake.

I attended his funeral earlier this year. If every driver in the Northern Territory could see the grief, heartbreak and effect his death had on his friends, family, colleagues and former schoolmates at St Joseph’s Nudgee College, they would take our road toll seriously.

Thomas is not just another statistic, nor are the other 56 men, women and children who have lost their lives on our roads.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing this matter of public importance to the Chamber. Road safety sits in one of my ministerial portfolios, and I take it seriously.

Over the last 10 years on average 40 people have lost their lives on Territory roads annually. One life lost on our roads is one too many. Tragically we have lost 57 lives on Territory roads this year, which is well above the decade average. At the same time last year, we had lost 31. It is hard to hear the stories of those close personal friends from the Members for Johnston and Goyder.

This is 57 people who did not make it home and whose families and friends have had their lives turned upside down. It is teenagers who do not make it home to their parents and parents who do not make it home to their children. The effect of each major accident extends well beyond the victim and their families and friends. It affects our first responders, those heroes in our community—our police, paramedics and firefighters—who are first to reach these confronting scenes, dealing with that personal tragedy. Every death and major injury on our roads is felt across our community.

These statistics are confronting, and the stories we are hearing from those on the ground are frightening. In September we lost two teenagers in less than 24 hours in separate incidents in Darwin and Katherine. The

NT holds the unfortunate record of the highest road toll per capita of anywhere in Australia, at more than three times the national rate.

Living in the Territory, doing a lot of bush work and having a remote electorate, I spend a lot of time on the roads. I drive all over the place, like many in this Chamber. I cannot begin to count the number of times that I have unfortunately come across vehicle accidents in the bush on our remote roads and our national highways. A few years back on New Year's Eve on my way to Yulara, I came across a single vehicle rollover. Thankfully it did not end in tragedy, but the two young men involved sustained serious injuries.

Some people are not used to our road conditions and the long distances. As the Chief Minister said, more than 70% of our roads is unsealed. In a recent road transport forum, other ministers from across the country spoke about the quality of their roads. They were talking about class 1 and class 2 roads; unfortunately, most of our roads do not even meet class 3 standards. That adds to the difficulties of driving in the Territory.

Road safety is multifaceted. The government knows that to reach our targets we must invest in education, law enforcement and strong road infrastructure.

I recently met with some proponents to look at how we are delivering our road safety message, particularly to people in our remote and regional areas. We have the Sober Bob and other road safety campaigns in town, but what we have not done well is get that message out to our remote communities and regional areas. Not everyone has television or radio and people do not get newspapers, so the difficulty is how we deliver those all-important road safety messages in remote and rural locations.

The people I spoke to run an Aboriginal media organisation and are looking at ways to deliver better messaging into the bush so that people are aware of the five key issues that are driving our road toll. First and foremost is alcohol and drugs; second is speed; and third is people not wearing seatbelts. I cannot believe in this day and age that people are not wearing seatbelts. Distraction is another key issue; it seems that mobile phones are playing a part in the road toll across the country. Of course, the issue of fatigue is pertinent to people utilising roads in the Northern Territory because we face that tyranny of distance.

We need to use the Territory-specific data we have gathered to identify target areas for improvement in dealing with our road toll. From that data it is clear that education initiatives are the biggest piece of the puzzle. The statistics show that the overwhelming majority of fatalities on our roads this year were the direct result of poor, reckless and/or illegal behaviour on our roads. The Chief Minister spoke about personal responsibility and good decisions. Sadly, that has not taken place in most incidents involving deaths on our roads.

As the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, I was provided the coronial investigations into three recent road deaths. Alcohol and speed were components in each of those three tragic accidents. In one that had multiple fatalities there was also a lack of wearing seatbelts.

How we get the message out to people is important. We need to start generating that knowledge within individuals, their families and their friends to not only make good decisions and take personal responsibility for their actions but also help people who are looking to make bad decisions when travelling on our roads. It is not just themselves that they may affect; it is other road users and the people who are travelling with them.

The number of people in the Territory who get behind the wheel while affected by alcohol and/or drugs is disgraceful. I thank the police for their tireless work and dedication to identifying and prosecuting offenders on our road network who are not obeying the rules. Alcohol and other drugs are by far the biggest cause of fatalities on our roads, responsible for 72% of this year's fatal crashes and 80% of the pedestrian fatalities. Speeding was a factor for 32%, and not wearing a seatbelt was a factor for 80%.

Research shows that wearing a seatbelt doubles your chance of survival in a serious crash. It is now standard practice to wear a seatbelt; gone are the days when you were in your old Holden and if you were lucky you had an old lap sash seatbelt. Way back in the day seatbelts were not compulsory. All modern vehicles have seatbelts fitted, yet Territorians are failing to wear them.

These behaviours are not done in isolation. The crash data shows a link between the failure to wear seatbelts and other dangerous behaviours, including speed, drugs and alcohol.

Many lives have been lost to this reckless behaviour on our roads, and it is not just the perpetrator who falls victim. Unsafe driving behaviours affect everyone on the roads, not just the person behind the wheel; it affects passengers, cyclists, pedestrians and other drivers.

Most concerningly, our road toll this year has 15 pedestrian deaths, which in most cases were possibly avoidable. After recent fatalities involving pedestrians, work is being done to implement specific lighting that can track movement, so in low-light areas where it is known that pedestrians utilise road crossings there can be a visual change to highlight to motorists that there may be people crossing the road. That is one of the things being discussed within the department.

We have applied to the federal government for assistance in dealing with our road network and road safety. We put in bids recently and hope to see the outcome of those in the near future. Being so small and having difficulty to fund this, we need federal government assistance to provide for those safety requirements across our road network.

Another solution is the investment in education and law enforcement to drive behaviour change. The Chief Minister spoke about the number of police roadside breath tests, which is great to see. It goes a long way to deterring drink-driving. It makes people aware that the police are out there, so if you do it you will be caught.

The Territory government is committed to investing in and delivering stronger road safety education programs. I have tasked the department with looking at alternative ways to better engage the community on road safety messaging, see whether previous messaging has been effective and determine whether we can develop specific messaging for different regions of the Northern Territory. Therefore, rather than trying to roll out one simple message across all communities, we will look at how we can put messaging into language for different parts of the Northern Territory to deliver more effective education about the fatal five, as they are called: alcohol and drugs; speeding; seatbelts; distraction; and fatigue. We will continue to deliver the current suite of education and awareness campaigns such as 'Who's Your Sober Bob?', 'Enough's Enough' and 'Sorry Business Stories'.

Christopher Brocklebank, a gentleman in Central Australia, has done a lot of work in this space through his business, italk Studios. He can develop messaging that is in language, easily understood and accessible to many people. Christopher's work has helped a number of communities. It is another way to deliver that all-important messaging to our communities.

Everyone deserves to be safe on our roads and make it home to their families.

I thank the opposition for bringing on this important matter of public importance. I am working hard with my department to do everything we can to improve road safety and our messaging to deliver better outcomes for the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter of public importance to the Assembly, particularly ahead of the festive season which will get Territorians out and about on roads across the Territory.

Every death on our roads is heartbreaking. This year alone 57 lives have been lost. This is the highest number of lives lost on our roads in over a decade and is nothing short of a tragedy. In the decade between 2012 and 2021, on average 40 people lost their lives to road accidents, with hundreds suffering serious injuries.

No matter how you cut it our statistics are worse than any other jurisdiction. The per capita road fatality rate in the Northern Territory is 3.2 times the national rate and the highest in Australia. Although our average number of road crash fatalities has trended downwards over the last four decades, the impact of road trauma continues to be felt by families, friends, workmates, sports teams, first responders and the wider community more often than we would like.

Being safe on our roads—urban, rural or remote—is paramount for us and our families. As a member of the Assembly representing a bush seat, driving across my vast electorate is a privilege, but it also makes me keenly aware of the seriousness of road safety. There are challenges with fatigue from driving vast distances, the flooding of tracks, the Wet Season storms disrupting visibility and, most importantly, navigating the unsealed roads leading into our remote communities.

This year my electorate of Daly has had multiple fatal vehicle accidents, with the most recent near Pine Creek two weeks ago. This is why I am so heavily focused on infrastructure, particularly our roads. Of the Territory's vast 36,000-kilometre road network, 75% is unsealed and often subject to extreme weather conditions. Seventy-three per cent of fatal car crashes in the Northern Territory occur on roads in rural and remote areas, with serious injuries sitting at 53%.

During the October sittings I called on the CLP government to commit to delivering the $60m worth of selected upgrades on the Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa. This is an important issue for Daly constituents. Minister Yan committed to delivering this project; however, I hear from my community that the CLP has scrapped the funding for this project. This is a disgrace. This is a project to improve year-round access, road safety and connectivity, which the community has been crying out for. You committed to that in this House but have secretly gone out and cut it—shame.

During the election campaign the CLP candidate also promised that the upgrades would continue. Budget 2023–24 included sealing the Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa. We asked the minister about it, but he could not answer; he was fluffing about, saying that the funding would be rejigged. Now we hear from people on the ground that the project has been cut.

The Chief Minister said that 70% of our roads are dirt roads. We need to upgrade those roads to make them safer for families in remote communities, our police when responding to certain issues and our service providers in the Daly electorate. It is a disgrace to hear that this project may be cut under the Country Liberal government.

Eighteen per cent of crashes are on unsealed roads in remote areas, and it is seen to be an increasing trend. Upgrading and sealing roads not only connects the Territory and provides economic growth but also, at the heart of that investment, increases road safety.

Daly residents deserve to be able to drive in and out of their local communities with safe and optimal road conditions. This is a right that the CLP has thrown to the wayside. Minister Yan should be up-front with residents of the West Daly region about why his government is abandoning them—all talk, flip-flop action.

The former Territory Labor government in partnership with the Australian Government saw the importance of delivering the Adelaide River–Wadeye corridor upgrade. The new bridge and raised sealed section of the Port Keats Road delivered by this partnership in 2021 helped reduce closures during the Wet and significantly boosted accessibility to our remote communities.

The CLP government is now responsible for delivering the road upgrades committed to by the former Territory Labor government, including: $340m for priority industry roads; $209m for Central Arnhem Road upgrades; $189.3m for upgrades to the Plenty Highway as part of the Outback Way corridor; $127.9m for the Northern Territory national network; $112.4m for the Buntine Highway upgrades; $80.3m for remote and regional roads; $80.1m for the Tanami Road; $77.7m for the Tiger Brennan Drive and Berrimah Road intersection; close to $67m for Kakadu National Park roads; and $51.8m for upgrades to Tiwi Island roads.

As we continue to hear about the CLP government's commitment to cut projects and the minister has no clear idea of where they might be, I worry that our roads—bush, rural and urban—will be the first to go. I call on the CLP government to commit to and be transparent with the Assembly that it will not cut the funding investment in any Territory roads.

Keeping Territorians safe was a key focus of the former Territory Labor government, particularly on our roads. This is why over eight years in office Territory Labor continued, alongside the Commonwealth, to make major investments into our road infrastructure. This included shoulder widening and sealing, guardrail upgrades, implementation of audio-tactile edge lines, intersection upgrades, new heavy vehicle parking and lighting improvements, all through the $203m road safety program.

We sealed and upgraded sections of key roads, including the Tanami, Central Arnhem, Port Keats, Maryvale, Litchfield Park, Gunn Point and Keep River Roads, just to name a few. We upgraded various sections of the Carpentaria and Tablelands Highways to sealed standard. We constructed new bridges on Keep River Road, Litchfield Park Road, Arnhem Highway and Roper Highway. We commenced the Tiger Brennan Drive and Berrimah Road overpass project to improve road safety outcomes for its users once it opens later this year. There is also $6m allocated in 2024–25 NT budget for future pedestrian road safety infrastructure upgrades where needed.

Although upgrades to road infrastructure are vital to reducing the risk of accidents on our roads, it is only one component of what we can do. The Territory Labor government also looked to the elements of policy, education and enforcement to help reduce the number of lives lost on the roads.

In 2018, after consultation with community members and stakeholders, we launched the Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2018–22. This plan put forward a vision of zero deaths or accidents on Territory roads

and outlined a strategy to get there. The action plan considered the factors that contribute to better road safety outcomes and put forward actions that could create change.

Through this action plan the Northern Territory Government successfully implemented a range of key road safety policy measures. We made the historic decision to abolish the open road speed limit and replace it with a 130-kilometre-an-hour default speed limit on the Stuart, Barkly, Victoria and Arnhem Highways.

In July this year the former Chief Minister announced the Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024–2028, which builds on the success of the 2018–22 plan. This plan sits alongside the National Road Safety Strategy and National Road Safety Action Plan. I thank the road safety roundtables in Darwin and Alice Springs and the community members who provided their input to this plan.

One thing is for sure: our road safety goals cannot be achieved by government alone. It will continue to take a substantial paradigm shift from everyone. Every Territorian must accept that they have a part to play in creating a safe road culture. Ahead of the festive season I ask Territorians to take note of the fatal five: alcohol and drugs; speed; inattention; fatigue; and not wearing seatbelts. We need to slow down, buckle up, drive to the conditions, drive without distractions and not drink and drive.

I thank our Territory police, fire and emergency service workers, nurses and healthcare workers; they are our first responders to motor vehicle accidents and are on the other end of the phone when you ring 000. I thank them for the invaluable work that they continue to do.

To all Territorians this Christmas, let us ensure our loved ones are not missing due to preventable accidents on our roads. The best Christmas gift we can give is to ensure that there are no more deaths, injuries and accidents on Territory roads.

I commend the matter of public importance to the House.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I briefly contribute to this matter of public importance. It is important to raise this issue in the House.

We heard from all the honourable members who contributed to the debate that 57 lives have been lost on Territory roads. That is 57 too many. It is important to acknowledge that number represents 57 Territorians—57 loved ones—who are not with us this year. I acknowledge their families.

I extend my sincere thanks to the police, fire and emergency service workers who attend those situations, often in regional and remote locations and often in complex, uncomfortable and horrific conditions. It is important to acknowledge the amazing work they do in responding to those situations.

Minister Burgoyne and I attended the 25th anniversary of the Yulara fire station with police, fire and emergency services. I acknowledge all the hardworking firies there who often have to attend incidents on the Lasseter Highway.

We talk about the reform work and the ongoing work, but it is important to acknowledge how far we have come in such a short period. Probably nearly every one of us, barring the Member for Goyder, is over 31 …

Madam SPEAKER: I do not know about that.

Mr PAECH: Who knows, Madam Speaker?

It was only 31 years ago in the Northern Territory that we were riding in the back of utes. I remember that because we grew up in a remote regional area and did not have a car that was big enough for all of us to fit in, so we used to ride in the back of the ute.

There was an increase in fatalities due to people riding in the back of utes without roll bars and appropriate restraints to hold them in; the statistics exploded. We needed to do something about it. As a nation, we came together and introduced a series of reforms that were harmonised across the country. That came into effect in the Northern Territory in 1993, whereby people were not allowed to ride in the back of utes anymore.

Fast-forward 30 years, and there has been a range of legislative reform at all levels of government to increase road safety.

Sometimes along the way we need to remind people of the important and powerful campaigns. We have heard from members in this Chamber about the role that alcohol plays in motor vehicle accidents. I remember a bold ad for its time was 'If you drink, then drive, you're a bloody idiot'. That ad resonated with so many people that we still hear them talking about it today.

We need to look at revisiting those promotional education campaigns to do more to raise awareness about Territory roads. We need to do that in Aboriginal first languages, so it is easy for people to understand and respond to. As other members said, we cannot rely on it just being advertisements on television because not many people living in remote locations have television. They might not have the vast telecommunications or the black box needed to access TV. We need to think outside the box and do these campaigns on social media—Facebook, TikTok and Instagram—to educate people. They are the portals with which people engage and get information from. Radio is also important, so we need to make sure that people have access to hearing that on the airwaves.

We have heard that road fatalities are driven by people drink-driving and, unfortunately, by the difficulty in maintaining the Territory's road network. There is something like 16,000 kilometres of roads in the Northern Territory that are not bituminised. They are dirt roads and gravel roads. These roads experience enormous changes in their condition due to weather—that could be severe rain, flooding, drought or a series of weather events—which plays a role in fatalities.

Members spoke about ongoing investment. I hope that the Country Liberal government continues the investment that has been embedded in the Northern Territory. Under the current arrangement 80% of that investment comes from the Commonwealth and 20% comes from the Northern Territory Government. It is an incredible investment, which not many other jurisdictions around the country have, in recognition that it is extremely difficult for the Territory to self-generate revenue, whereas other jurisdictions have a bigger population and ability to raise revenue.

The area that has not been touched on is that many remote people continue to live in abject poverty. We continue to advocate for reforms to the Community Development Program, social welfare and job creation. Many issues that we see in remote locations are because our families do not have good cars because they cannot afford them. They have cars that might not be built for bush roads.

Gwoja is the second-largest electorate in the Northern Territory, after Barkly. I have been out many times visiting my family and constituents in my electorate, driving in a flash LandCruiser that is supplied by NT Fleet—it is a strong, good car—when the next minute a 1988 Hyundai XL or Ford Laser will overtake me. You can look at it and be amazed by the resilience of our people to remain connected to community and to country, but when you unpack it you realise that little car will not last on those roads. The car could have mechanical problems whereby parts fall off at high speeds; wheels, CV joints, ball joints and differentials could break; or the car could simply conk out on the side of the road in extreme weather conditions, and the driver might not have access to drinking water, a mobile phone or any of that.

There is ongoing work and, as we have heard, overcoming our road fatalities requires a multifaceted approach. It is not one thing in isolation; a group of things need to happen together. We can all agree that education campaigns need to be rolled out and continued investment in Territory roads is needed to improve the conditions.

Territorians need to be reminded to tell someone when they are jumping in the car to visit someone or go to a homeland, to an outstation or into town, and to make sure they have a spare tyre and plenty of water.

If you are at a party, family cook-up, barbecue or grand final, do not jump in the car with someone who has been drinking. If you know that someone has been drinking and you know they drove there—I know it is a hard job—try to ask them for the keys. Do everything that you can to stop them from leaving that place after having a few beers. It might seem at the time that things will be all right, but it is about not only yourself but also the possible influence you could have on other people.

The Member for Johnston spoke about losing a loved one, and I think most of us have lost a loved one due to motor vehicle accidents in the Territory. I acknowledge the Member for Johnston reading the Member for Mulka's contribution as well, because it is important.

A number of motor vehicle accidents—hit-and-runs—happen in places in our communities where there are insufficient streetlights and dark spots. We can all work with our local councils to improve that by ensuring there are good streetlights in our community. Streetlights not only are a deterrent to antisocial behaviour to provide a level of comfort to people in our community but also enable drivers to see their surrounds.

It also goes back to making sure our cars are in good condition.

Driver education programs in remote communities are important to teach people how to drive a car properly. When I was the Corrections minister—I hope the current Corrections minister is passionate about keeping this going—we worked with CDU on rolling out a driver education program for people in prison. People who were sentenced for a driving-related offence, for not having a driver's licence or for drink-driving had the opportunity while incarcerated to undergo training to get their driver's licence. When released from the correctional centre they would be an authorised, legally recognised driver. CDU embarked on this as part of the training MOU.

In remote communities years ago, you could go to the police station, talk to the coppers and they would do your driving test. That is an important program. I need to check this with the Member for Fannie Bay. There used to be a centre where you rode around on your pushbike …

Mrs Zio: It is still there.

Mr PAECH: It is still there; thank you, Member for Fannie Bay.

Member for Araluen, I think you have the training centre in Alice Springs.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, we do—Newland.

Mr PAECH: There are great initiatives run by the local community and the department to get our kids on pushbikes and teach them the road rules. There is good work happening across the Territory, and we have all come together to recognise that.

We are heading into the festive season, so I remind people to be alert, check their cars and not drink and drive.

I encourage us to have communication campaigns with First Nations media so that they are in local languages. We can continue to work together. There is critical investment in the Outback Way, which goes through the Gwoja and Namatjira electorates. There is rolling investment in the Tanami with new bitumen for where it is gravel. Widening that road is important. There is significant investment in the Buntine, Buchanan and Victoria Highways. We need to be mindful of pedestrian crossings and the movement of people in our local communities.

This is an important topic. I thank all honourable members for their contributions and the respectful debate and dialogue on this matter. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it forward to enable us to have this conversation.

I am confident that the Education department will continue to work in schools to raise road safety awareness, because it is a critical issue in the Northern Territory.

My thoughts and prayers go to all the loved ones of the 57 people who have lost their lives on Territory roads this year. To everyone else, please be mindful and be safe on Territory roads, particularly in the Wet Season. If you are in the great part of the Territory, Central Australia—home to Barkly, Gwoja and Namatjira—where it gets pretty warm make sure you pack a spare tyre and plenty of water in case you get stuck on the road. Call ahead to your destination and tell someone you are leaving community so that we know if we need to send out our hardworking emergency services. I shout out to all our emergency services personnel who will be doing an incredible job over Christmas.

MOTION
Amend Sessional Orders

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the sessional orders adopted on 15 October 2024 be amended by:

(a) deleting from Sessional Order 1 '3. Ministerial Reports' wherever occurring and renumbering the items accordingly

(b) deleting from Sessional Order 5(1) 'On each Assembly meeting day after Prayers' and inserting instead 'During Government Business when there is no question before the Assembly'

(c) inserting at the end of Sessional Order 5(6) 'If debate is adjourned or interrupted, the remaining time becomes an order of the day for a later hour or a future day'

(d) deleting the words in Sessional Order 5(8) and replacing with 'Notified topics for ministerial reports will be listed on the Notice Paper until they have been delivered by the Minister'

(e) deleting from Sessional Order 13.3(1) the words between 'Explanatory Statement' and 'unless'.

The government is further amending the sessional orders to allow for the efficient use of Assembly time and to ensure the efficient use of Territory resources, including the resources of the Northern Territory Public Sector.

We are allowing for greater flexibility and opportunity for a discussion on ministerial reports moved by a minister so that the reports can potentially be subject to the full two hours of debate provided in the standing orders; and for the report debate to continue after a break, to recommence at a later hour, on a later day or to be utilised on another day from the day of notification as part of the Routine of Business and to ensure the efficient operation of the Assembly.

Lengthy statements opining about the compliance of Territory legislation with detailed Commonwealth Acts serve only to require the agencies and divisions of government to prepare costly, complex and often lengthy legal tomes that serve little by way of practical value. Although these statements were established in parallel with the scrutiny committee in the 13th parliament, they were then abandoned by the former Labor government in the 14th parliament, governments of which both the Members for Arnhem and Gwoja were a part. They must have recognised how little meaningful value was created in the lengthy legal dissertations that had to be tabled with the legislation.

This Assembly and its members should ultimately determine the manner and mechanisms we consider appropriate for ensuring that the legislative agenda of the Assembly is in order and compliant with human rights through the process of Bill debate and passage, legislative scrutiny committees, exposure drafts and any other form of advice or investigations a member may wish. These mechanisms remain available and enlivened for all members of the Legislative Assembly.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the words have been circulated by the Leader of Government Business about the amendments and changes to the sessional orders for the 15th Legislative Assembly.

My only concern in what the Leader of Government Business has presented on behalf of the CLP government is the removal of the section in part (e)—that is, deleting in Sessional Order 13.3(1) the words between 'Explanatory Statement' and 'unless'. For those who are interested, the part of the sessional orders that the Leader of Government Business and the CLP government propose to remove is from 13.3, First Reading of a Bill, which states:

(1) On presenting a bill the Member will table a signed Explanatory Statement …

This is the bit that will be removed:

… and a statement on whether the bill is compatible with Human Rights, as defined in section 3 of the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011 *(Cth) …*

Then it continues:

… unless the Bill is an annual appropriation bill.

We are comfortable with that because it is the budget Bill.

This amendment rings alarm bells because although we are under the Westminster system and a democratic process is afoot in the Chamber, we know that governments of the day will have the numbers to push things through regardless. We are entering dangerous ground if we remove from the 15th Assembly the requirement for a Bill to have a mandated compatibility with human rights. Why do need to remove this for Northern Territory legislation? Does the CLP government plan to bring in legislation that discriminates against human rights in the Northern Territory? I am concerned and disturbed about this.

The Leader of Government Business is being flippant and saying, 'It is just legal jargon that we need to step through', but this is not a small thing. It is not a token to lightheartedly cut out of the democratic process when we are looking at protecting human rights in the Northern Territory and to be compatible with Commonwealth legislation, making sure the Northern Territory is not falling behind in best practice and with contemporary legislation requirements. The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel does a phenomenal job with the Northern Territory's legislative processes and drafting, but the Territory has an added layer of protection with the requirement for human rights compatibility. This make sures that legislation proposed in the Northern Territory parliament does not adversely affect or remove, essentially, human rights protections under Commonwealth law.

I assure Territorians that when I was the Attorney-General for two years in the 14th Legislative Assembly the human rights compatibility statement was a requirement for every piece of legislation that I dealt with. It was the same for my colleague, the Member for Gwoja, when he took on the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice portfolio. This was a firm process required through the legislative path that we undertook in the previous term. Maybe it was not in the sessional orders, as the Leader of Government Business alluded to, but it was definitely a part of every piece of legislation that went through the Northern Territory parliament from 2020 to 2024. We had to read all the Cabinet papers, so I can wholeheartedly assure Territorians that the compatibility statement on human rights was part of the legislative process of the 14th Assembly.

Not having that extra layer of protection—that process which the Leader of Government Business has been dismissive of—is alarming. I disagree with part (e) of the sessional orders amendment motion proposed by the CLP government. The alarm bells are starting to ring loudly; it is almost deafening. We will all be in here for the next four years representing our communities in our electorates. What legislative processes of the 15th Assembly will not require a human rights compatibility statement to be included? It is alarming.

Given our former roles, the Member for Gwoja and I will be concerned if this becomes non-best practice, essentially, of the parliament. What could possibly be presented in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly that the government does not want to go through a formal process to protect the human rights of fellow Territorians in new or amending laws? I am concerned that I do not hear anyone defending this or giving examples of why you would need to remove that section.

I am concerned that this will go through. I will work with my Labor colleagues to see whether there is a process to amend the sessional orders amendment motion moved by the Member for Barkly. I am not sure how this works with the Table Office, as I have not been put on the spot before. I will seek guidance from the Clerk's office and the Table Office about how I can move an amendment to the amendment of the sessional orders, which would be to remove part (e).

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I share the Leader of the Opposition's concerns about removing the requirement for the statement about whether the Bill is compatible with human rights.

Given that this motion has just been presented to us and we have not had a chance to properly understand it, I do not know what is available to me. Could we adjourn this so that we have time to understand the implications and amend the motion, if that is what people are of a mind to do? I propose that we adjourn this in order to allow members to properly understand the implications of the motion.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, I will not be adjourning the House. If you want to move a motion to adjourn, that is up to you. You can do that, but at the moment we are just debating the motion before the House. If you would like some advice on how to adjourn, the Clerk can provide you with that.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I support this motion.

I find it astounding that the Leader of the Opposition is acting like she is shocked that the sessional orders will change, given that the Labor government changed the original sessional orders that preceded the 14th Assembly. She can pretend that she is shocked and that she and the Member for Gwoja, both former Attorneys-General, would go through Cabinet and have a perfect process, but the former Labor government scrapped those clauses from the sessional orders.

We brought new sessional orders into this Legislative Assembly, and we are making minor adjustments to them. The process of having Cabinet and a thorough legislative process is transparent with the new government. We have an extra scrutiny committee now, which is one that Labor scrapped when it was in government. You say that we are trying to stop human rights when we are talking about legislation; it is beyond me that you think that is a possibility.

I support this change to the sessional orders and support the Leader of Government Business's motion. It is beyond me that the Leader of the Opposition is running around trying to get advice as to how she can change this. The sessional orders were changed under the Labor government when the Opposition Leader was the Attorney-General. Stop trying to fool Territorians, like you finally care about what they think.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, what a load of crap coming out of the Attorney-General's mouth. You walk in here at five past seven and you bring in a motion with no notice.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I find that offensive. Under Standing Order 31, I ask him to withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: For the sake of the debate, withdraw the word 'crap'.

Mr PAECH: I will withdraw the word 'crap' and I will replace it with, 'You come in here telling porky pies and claiming to be an open and transparent government'. At five past seven on Tuesday you walked in here with a motion, which you gave no notice of, to change the sessional orders. That is what you are doing. There was no notice until five minutes ago that you are changing the sessional orders of the parliament.

You say that you are making a little tweak—taking out a few things here and there and changing a few things. This motion is cheeky. Part (e) states:

> *deleting from Sessional Order 13.3(1) the words between 'Explanatory Statement' and 'unless'.*

Do you know what the words between 'Explanatory Statement' and 'unless' are? They are:

> *… and a statement on whether the bill is compatible with Human Rights, as defined in section 3 of the* Human Rights Parliamentary Scrutiny Act 2011 *(Cth) …*

That is what you are doing; it is not just two little words.

Hand on heart, every time the Member for Arnhem or I brought in legislation we tabled a copy of the explanatory statement and its compatibility with human rights. If the CLP can give a commitment that every time it will come into this Chamber and table an explanatory statement and its compatibility with human rights, we can have a discussion about this process being introduced. That is what it needs to do. If the CLP removes this provision it will need to give Territorians the reassurance that legislation will at all times be compatible with human rights.

The Attorney-General, as the Northern Territory's first law officer, has a duty of care to all Territorians. She should be alarmed that the Leader of Government Business wants to remove this provision. The CLP brought it in and suddenly has realised that it does not want to state that compatibility with human rights.

Every time we brought legislation to this House it had gone through a Cabinet process and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice had gone through it to make sure it was compatible with human rights. We are alarmed, and we will amend the motion to delete part (e).

We are comfortable with the rest of the motion put forward by the Leader of Government Business. The government has been unable to give us a guarantee that it will not ignore compatibility with human rights in the future.

The Member for Johnston also spoke about this. We were told at five past seven that the CLP is bringing in a motion and wants us to say yes, without giving us time to think about it. That is appalling. We will move an amendment now.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! In accordance with Standing Order 44, I move that the motion be put.

Mr PAECH: Unfortunately, that cannot occur because we have moved an amendment to the motion. I just said that we would be moving it, and the Clerk is here to pick it up.

Mr Maley: Where is it?

Mr PAECH: Do you want to block more of the democratic process, Member for Nelson?

Madam SPEAKER: Has your amendment been circulated?

Mr PAECH: I have just moved the amendment. The parliamentary officers are here to pick up the amendment, and we are putting it forward—or the CLP will block the democratic process of this Assembly.

Madam SPEAKER: Members, I have sought advice. The first part of this process is that the question be put.

Motion agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The second part is that the opposition amendment be agreed to. Have people seen the amendment? Has it been circulated?

Members: No.

Mr EDGINGTON: Madam Speaker, we are happy to look at the amendment.

Madam SPEAKER: The amendment has been described by the member.

Mr EDGINGTON: I believe the Member for Gwoja has now handed over the amendment. We will have a look at it.

Madam SPEAKER: Do you want to see the amendment before it is voted on?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes.

Mr PAECH: The amendment will be circulated. Leader of Government Business, it is simply removing part (e) of your motion.

Madam SPEAKER: We will pause until the amendment is circulated and all members have had time to read it.

Have you had enough time to read the amendment?

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes, thank you. We do not accept the amendment.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mx McNamara	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Edgington
Mr Young	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mx McNamara
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Edgington	Ms Uibo
Mrs Finocchiaro	Mr Young
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS TABLED

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the following documents: Authorisation to Administer Oaths and Affirmations; Auditor-General's Report to the Legislative Assembly November 2024; Matters referred to the Auditor-General Pursuant to Section 6 of the *Public Information Act 2010*; and Independent Commissioner Against Corruption General Report – Section 48 *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017*.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I will talk about some amazing people in the electorate of Spillett.

Earlier this year at one of my Pizza in the Park events, my constituent Nathan Carroll came to visit. I asked whether he had been dancing much with Total Recreation at that time. He told me he had not, but I knew he loved to dance so I told him that one year I would dance with him at the Total Recreation Dancing with the Celebrities Ball. Nathan took that seriously and took that 'one year' to mean signing us up immediately. Even though it was a short time out from the election, it was locked in that we were doing this year's Dancing with the Celebrities Ball. There was no way I would let him down.

The contestants started their dancing lessons before the rest of us, so by the time I joined him after the election, Nathan was already a pro and ready to lead the way and lead us on the dance floor. I thank him so much for his patience with me over the six weeks of lessons. I am no dancer, and if it was not for Nathan we would have been in a lot of trouble on the dance floor.

This year was the 18th Total Recreation Dancing with the Celebrities Ball, and it had a masquerade theme. It was a special night because Robyn Cahill, the Member for Port Darwin, has been on the board for a decade, and she was awarded her life membership of Total Recreation. That was a special time for her, and for all of us to witness.

The event was a great success. I thank all the sponsors for making it possible: Somerville; Airnorth; Bluegum Ability Services; Mix 104.9; AccessAble Living Solutions; Territory Care & Support Services; Mindil Beach Casino Resort; Zip Print; Paspaley; Territory Events Hire; and Social Playground. Without all their support the event would not be possible.

I also thank everyone who attended and dug deep. Anyone who has been to the ball knows that bribery is part of the ball. There are moneyboxes with the contestants' names on them which people can put money in to bribe the judges to help their favourite dancers.

There was a successful outcome from the competition. It was a terrific evening. Nathan and I were thrilled to come out on top on the night as Airnorth's Tango Champions. I am not sure how that happened, but thank goodness for Nathan is all I can say! He led us the entire way.

I congratulate Clint Logan and Tree Gillam for taking out the top honour of being crowned the Somerville Strictly Ballroom Grand Champions; Alec McIness and Lauren Davidson for taking out the Mix 104.9 Runner Up award; James Morrison and Radha Hampole for being crowned the TCASS Best Couple; Richard Knuth, whom I danced with at Dancing with Celebrities the first time I did it about a decade ago, and Andrea Kittel for winning the Bluegum People's Choice award; Kate O'Connell and Praveen Hampole for being crowned the AccessAble Living Solutions Charmaine Champion; and Molly Byrnes for winning the Paspaley Gypsy Tap Champion.

Well done to all the participants and their celebrity partners and especially the team at Total Recreation; Ramona and her team do an amazing job. The other participants were: Fara Djawas and our own Clinton Howe, who had his first time around; Margaret McGregor and Taane Aratema; Rebecca Mackrow and John Chapman; Christos Karagiogos and Krystal Gordon; Warren Corby and Kate Hamilton; Kym Duggan and Damien Loller; Gabrielle Hambour and Simon Gillam; Brendon Brittain and Wendy Henderson; Matthew Lucas and Rell Werner; Igen Mason; Molly Kroes; Kelli S; Maria Melas; and Rebecca Dixon.

I look forward to participating again sometime in the future. Nathan, thank you so much for being the best, most amazing dance partner I could ever have.

Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Football Club is a fantastic family-friendly club located in Palmerston. This season Rodney Greenwood stepped down as president after five years at the helm. Rod has been an asset to the club, working tirelessly to provide support and leadership to the committee, volunteers, coaches, managers and players. With much success over the years through all the grades, I thank and congratulate Rod for his time as president and wish him all the best for the future. It is a tough gig being president of any community or sporting club, particularly busy organisations that rely solely on volunteers.

I congratulate and welcome the new committee for the 2025 season: president, Craig Jones; vice president, Josh Parker; secretary, Bessie Roach; treasurer, Tanya Hazel; sponsorship manager, Dallas Smith; commercial manager, Cassidy Norris; junior coordinator, Kaitlyn Anderson; senior men's coordinator, Alex Johnson; senior women's manager and social media, Marie Greenwood; public officer and grounds manager, Rodney Greenwood; and general committee members, Nicole Stokes, Michaela Harvey, Keeta O'Sullivan, Chris O'Sullivan and Will Lauenstein.

Good luck for the 2025 season ahead. I look forward to continuing our sponsorship and support of the club and our Palmerston team for the next season.

Hot100 recently hosted its annual Apple for the Teacher 2024 event sponsored by Harvey Norman. This year there were, once again, many teachers nominated from my electorate. I congratulate all the nominees:

- Durack School—Anne-Marie Fullarton; Dannielle Gerschwitz; Peta Pollock; and Khye Sibenaler

- MacKillop Catholic College—Chloe Syme

- Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School—Eloise Grace; Molly Kalchbauer; Karlee Thackeray; Kat Fisher; Emma-Lee Sant; Darcy Haintz; Melanie Waite; Ellie Monaghan; Georgia Herold; Sarah Foyster; Navy Sea; Veronica Niland; Eloise Murray; Emma Gazelle; Sally Otto; and Hup Lye

- Zuccoli Primary School—Clarissa Johnson; Kym Thompson; Trevor Koch; Amy Malan; Karen Tagumasi; Shannon Gorman; Maria Kouros; Aris Banaga; Joanne Boyle; Diana Nowland; Koey Li; Aftab Bhimani; Brittany Owens; and Paige Stephens.

A big congratulations to the winner for 2024, Sarah Foyster from Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School. This shows how appreciated, important and special Ms Foyster is, but all the nominees are to their students, the parents and the wider school community, who backed them with plenty of votes.

Thank you to Hot100 for the Apple for the Teacher initiative. It is a lot of fun and recognises the hard work that all our teachers do across the Territory in educating our kids and giving them the best start to life.

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and thank some people in the rural area.

This is the final sittings of this year. It has been a big year; there has been an election, and Territorians have spoken. I am privileged to have been re-elected to parliament and subsequently appointed as Deputy Chief Minister, as well as the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries; Mining and Energy; Corrections; Renewables; and Recreational Fishing.

In the last couple of months we have met many groups of people from across the Northern Territory. I look forward over the next four years to meeting with groups, companies, businesses, small traders and mums and dads to listen to what they have to say to try to make the Territory a better place.

I have said many times that the Territory is worth fighting for. That is one of the reasons I got into politics. I have a young family, and the Territory is a great place. Unfortunately, over the last 10 or so years, especially in the last eight years, the Territory has gone downhill. The Territory is worth fighting for, so I am here to fight for it.

There have been great initiatives over the last few months whilst we have been in government. My favourite one so far is the opening of the Harrison Dam access wall, which will allow hunters and rangers to go into the rest of Harrison Dam to hunt waterfowl and undertake weed control and land management in an area of the reserve that was not previously available. Field & Game have been helpful; Bart Irwin comes and goes. He is knowledgeable about what he thinks needs to happen with waterfowl hunting and conservation. From my involvement with people from Field & Game and hunters I know that it is about not only going hunting but also land care and management.

Thank you to my family. My wife, Sharon, and my children do not see me as much as they used to, and they are very understanding. Sharon, thank you for your time and effort and for looking after the house and family whilst I am not there; I really appreciate it. I will do my best to be around over the next four years, but we have to get that balance right. To Sharon, I love you and thank you.

There is a range of people across the community of Nelson. There are all sorts of hardworking community groups based in the rural area, especially at Freds Pass. Freds Pass is the sporting mecca of the rural area; it is a mini Marrara. People from everywhere in the rural area go there; if you do not go there yourself you know friends who do. There is a range of user groups from the Litchfield Bears to Swampdogs Rugby Union; the football, soccer and netball clubs; polocrosse; horses; and dogs. It is an essential hub that is bustling on the weekend, particularly in the Dry Season. I often go there for a walk. You would be surprised how many people you bump into.

I thank my brother and his wife, Peter and Bethany, and their children. They help a lot. We often have family events which I am a bit late to or must leave early, and they are understanding. My mum lives next door. It is no secret that she still washes my clothes; thank you, mum, for that. I appreciate it. I do the mowing, so we have a trade-off; we help each other, and mum comes over and washes my clothes. She is good at that. She irons them as well; I appreciate you mum. She basically lives in the family home that I moved out to after Cyclone Tracy; I have lived within 80 metres my whole life, so I am a home boy. Thank you, mum.

When we talk about Cyclone Tracy I will make a contribution. I tried reading through it and already choked up, so I am not sure how I will go when I speak about it because it is pretty emotional.

I appreciate my dog, horses and chickens—thank you to you all. I often walk around my farm—I call it my farm—and my dog and horses come with me. It is always good to put your feet back on the ground and tend to them. My dog runs and comes back.

Thank you to the schools in my electorate: Howard Springs Primary School; Girraween Primary School; and Good Shepherd Lutheran College. All the children are amazing; they are our future. I take my hat off to the educators who deal with the children, helping to foster them and grow into what they can be. I was not the best student when I was at Taminmin. I still remember the teachers wrapping around and supporting me, pushing me through.

I make special mention of Mrs Skinner, Ms Leah, Bu McCubben and Ms Simpkins from Girraween Primary School who were all nominated for the Apple for the Teacher competition. Congratulations to them.

Thank you to the Chief Minister, my ministerial colleagues and all the backbench. It has been a pleasure working with you. We have all come together with relative ease from lots of different backgrounds. We are still getting to know each other. I might make a few mistakes, say a few wrong things here and there and talk

about red corners, but that is what happens in life. It is who I am and it will not change. Thank you to all my colleagues. I will help you. If you ever need advice from me, come over and I will show you how to shoot a goose or a pig. It is something I am good at.

I thank my office staff in Howard Springs, Jessie and Sam.

I thank the people who helped me get elected: Tory Mencshelyi; Melissa Cabot; and Andrew and his wife, Melissa. She was helpful. Kris Civitarese was unfortunate, but he is a true mate. He is a boy's boy and is always there. He is literally the person who will give you the shirt off his back to help you out. Thank you, Kris; I value you as a friend.

To the people upstairs on the fifth floor—Abigail, Kyrrie, Sam, Olivia; there is a range of people—thank you. I could not do this without you and I really appreciate your support. You are always there, fixing my mistakes and helping me get through the day, so thank you for that.

I thank all the CLP members across the Northern Territory and the Wishart Branch, of which I am a member. To Bob Shewring and the executive there, thank you. I thank Suzanne Cavanagh who is always helpful; I can ring her and get advice.

Thank you to the campaign team who got all of us elected, especially Alyson who was doing the hard yards. Shane Stone and Brett went over and above, and Will. There is a whole team who were supportive and worked and worked. Their knowledge was amazing. They kept us all on track, which is always difficult because we all come from different backgrounds and think we know a lot; sometimes we do, and sometimes we do not. It is always good to have people keeping your feet on the ground.

There is a range of people I should thank, but I only have a limited time.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I raise the extremely important work that St Vincent de Paul is doing in addressing the needs of homeless people in Darwin.

Last week I had the incredible opportunity to visit Ozanam House, a homelessness service run by Vinnies, on the edge of my electorate. I arrived at 7.30 am and was greeted by Rob and Damien, who showed me around the premises. I strongly encourage all members to take the opportunity to see their work. I found a place buzzing with activity, full of volunteers and workers who are dedicated to making a difference to the lives of others. I saw an incredible team servicing some of the most vulnerable people living in Darwin and Palmerston.

Breakfast was being served, with people sitting at tables or on the grass under the mango tree in the yard. People were taking showers in the big shower blocks, getting their clothes washed, charging their phones and accessing services like Centrelink while they got breakfast. I was observing a space where people could maintain their dignity, feel safe and seek assistance. This is what we so desperately need in the Territory to address the social issues that we see on our streets.

Many of us may simply see Vinnies as the second-hand clothes stores where we can find great bargains, like this dress I am wearing, but it is so much more than this. Vinnies runs the Ozanam House homelessness service, the largest homelessness service in town, which provides breakfast; lunch; and laundry, showering and referral facilities for Darwin's homeless population. Vinnies provides emergency relief services in Malak, Palmerston and Alice Springs; financial support or material aid to people in financial crisis situations; community housing for people experiencing homelessness; and aged-care services. Vinnies also provides garden maintenance and transport services to seniors; visitation services for people who are in need of connection in their home or in hospital or prison; and a mobile service delivering meals to homeless people around Darwin.

To see some of this work in action was truly inspiring. The team was organised, welcoming, hardworking, professional and compassionate. I am so proud that this service is in my community.

I received a letter from residents who live near Ozanam House in Coconut Grove. I will read out part of that letter:

> *As residents of Coconut Grove who live across the road from the new Ozanam House Homelessness Support Service, we're impressed by the extent of the services provided to people experiencing homelessness or living rough in our community. It's reassuring that hot showers should be provided along with hygiene, sanitary, and personal care products and equipment, laundry services, hot meals*

and advocacy, legal, health and social or specialist support services made available to our community's most needy.

We wish to extend our appreciation and gratitude to the staff and volunteers at Ozanam House who are showing such care, compassion and kindness to others.

We feel well placed to be able to speak of the impact that this service is having on the people who use it as we and our 3 children now spend our mornings at the local bus stop alongside the people being supported by Ozanam House. To us, the impact is obvious.

Each week we now spend time speaking with scores of people who have been collectively and observably either calm, respectful, engaging, polite, good-natured, upbeat, cheerful or a combination of all of these. We are entirely comfortable and confident placing our children on a bus to go to school that they may share it with others who've had such a good breakfast and pleasant start to the day.

Never, in the whole time it's been open, have we or our children witnessed or experienced any aggression, hostility or violence. To us, the impact of being treated with care, compassion, respect and dignity is self-evident. As parents this stands to reason. Our children are happier, healthier, calmer and more at peace after a good meal, when they're in clean clothes or when they've been treated with the respect they deserve simply for being human.

We wish more of our community and law-makers could see what we see and with this letter, we urge the law-makers of the Northern Territory to use this service as an example of what works in achieving outcomes that benefit communities, care, compassion, respect and dignity.

Thus ends the letter.

Vinnies, you are doing incredible work. I thank the Vinnies workers, volunteers, donors and the team at Ozanam House for your commitment to making our community better, more cohesive, safer and more compassionate for everyone. I encourage all members to visit Vinnies and see for themselves the excellent work it is doing.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, as a prelude to my speech I seek leave to table a question that I put to the Lord Mayor of the City of Darwin in the public session of council on 25 June 2024 regarding the commemoration of Cyclone Tracy.

Leave granted.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: I will read from this almost verbatim, to set the context. This was given to the Lord Mayor on 25 June 2024. I said:

… last week I was listening to your interview with Katie Woolf regarding the proposed structure at Bundilla Beach.

And during that interview you said at least three times that the structure was to be Public Art and Not a Monument. This was consistent with your previous statements to Councillors in recent briefings.

However, I was thoroughly confused when I read the Official Council Press Release of 7 June—which I must say was a very detailed and professional Release (which I can only assume was fully endorsed by you and the CEO prior to release):

It was entitled: CYCLONE TRACY COMMEMORATION MONUMENT DESIGN UNVEILED!

In that Press Release—you are quoted as saying:

… the MONUMENT was a fitting tribute to recognising one of the most significant events in Darwin's History …

You also went on to say:

It will be a symbol of resilience and perseverance amidst adversity, honouring the memories of those lost, validating the experiences of SURVIVORS, and reflecting the Spirit of the DARWIN COMMUNITY.

In light of the recent and very widespread COMMUNITY BACKLASH, including from the …

Then:

… Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, but particularly from many current Cyclone Tracy Survivors (who are sadly saying they will boycott any Council event around this commemoration)

My question Lord Mayor is?

Can Council give consideration tonight to deescalating this furore and regain some community unity for this important 50th Commemoration by, as a minimum,—passing a motion tonight to defer any construction of the Bundilla Public Art Structure till the New Year—rather than creating a Lightning Rod of Dissent in the lead up to the Commemoration later this year?

Regrettably, my constructive plea to council fell on deaf ears. The lightning rod of dissent has formed, and the council is threatening to prosecute those Cyclone Tracy survivors who may wish to protest against a so-called VIP council-organised event regarding the unveiling of the so-called public art structure at Bundilla Beach this Friday.

The Member for Namatjira described this as a dog's breakfast. I believe that is an understatement, as I describe this decision as the height of arrogance and a cluster fire truck, or should I say stuff-up. I am being careful because children might be listening.

I turn to a second issue about local government procurement, drawing on some quotes from my maiden speech:

… I had the pleasure of working as the Deputy CEO of the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce for five years … It was here that I worked hard to support our small to medium businesses, which I publicly described as the heart and soul of our economy.

One of our highlights was getting the NT Government to focus on local procurement, including the introduction of local content weightings. These recognise that the net benefit of local businesses employing local people and reinvesting locally far outweighs a contract going to an interstate company that may be able to offer a slightly cheaper price.

Hence, I was astonished and publicly stood against the City of Darwin's decision to reduce its local content weighting from 30% to 20%, noting that the NT Government still maintains a 30% weighting. Surely, if there is one level of government that should be fully supportive of local business, it should be local government. I will continue to advocate for the City of Darwin to reverse this decision.

The recent decision by council to award its recycling trash and treasure operation at Shoal Bay to an interstate operator rather than our local HPA (Helping People Achieve) organisation, which has been operating this facility for the last six years with widespread community support, highlights again that there is a growing trend for the City of Darwin to stop listening to our local community on a range of important issues, and this needs to stop.

When on council we had an internal joke—I did, anyway—what do you call an arrogant mayor coming down the stairs? 'Kon-descending'. My worry is that this may now be closer to the truth rather than just a joke.

Territorians spoke loudly at the last Territory election about being ignored when they resoundingly voted in a new CLP government. I warn all councillors not to take our community for granted, as ratepayers will have a similar opportunity to voice their displeasure at the next council elections in August 2025.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, November has been a busy month.

On 14 November I had the privilege of announcing the winners of the Study NT International Student Awards at a ceremony held at Parliament House to celebrate our international students and alumni, as well as the local businesses that employ and mentor them. The awards were a fantastic opportunity to recognise the impressive accomplishments and contributions international students and the businesses that employ them make to the Territory.

A total of four awards were presented, and I personally congratulate the recipients: Cong Do Le, Study NT International Student of the Year; Hari Sharma, Study NT International Student Alumni of the Year;

Billy Nafoyo Chepkemoi, Study NT International Student Volunteer of the Year; and NTEX, Study NT International Student Employer of the Year.

November was the launch of my school citizenship awards. The first recipient was Hugo Larkings from Larrakeyah Primary School. Hugo received the November 2024 Early Childhood Citizenship Award for consistently demonstrating all school values for the year. It was presented on my behalf by my electorate officer Helen. Thank you, Helen, for your support and assistance.

The next recipient was Neve Ross, who attends Larrakeyah Primary School. I was delighted to present her with the November 2024 Middle/Upper Primary Citizenship Award for consistently demonstrating the school values this year and being an outstanding member of the school community.

Most recently, I had the pleasure of attending St Mary's Catholic Primary School to present its November 2024 Citizenship Awards. I congratulate St Mary's students Hayden Grotherr, who received his award for Growth in Reading, and Mary Lou Dayoan, who received her award for Growth in Literacy and Numeracy.

Thank you to everyone who supported McHappy Day on Saturday 16 November 2024. I had the opportunity to help at the Darwin CBD McDonalds. Thank you to Peter for hosting me. It was fantastic to see the enthusiasm for purchasing Big Macs on the day, with McDonalds donating $2 for every Big Mac sold.

I wish all my colleagues a merry Christmas. So I can put it on the record, I will not thank my dog or my husband—sorry, Len. Thank you all for your support during this challenging time. I look forward to seeing what 2025 brings us.

Mr YAN (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, looking back on the year that has been I cannot believe it has been 12 months since I gave my adjournment speech for the last parliament last year. Time has flown. It has been a huge year.

I always get excited about delivering my adjournment at the last parliament, and not for the reasons that everyone thinks. It is not because it is the last parliament of the year but because it is that time of the year when I can get out bush and be a bit of a bush Santa and visit all the remote schools in my electorate.

Since coming into government I made a commitment to all the bush schools in my electorate that the kids who get the best attendance get a prize from me—pushbikes; skateboards for Ltyentye Apurte these days, with the new skate track; or the pretty flash push scooters. I tell the kids at every school I go out to that if every kid gets the best attendance, they will probably send me broke because I will have to buy a lot of pushbikes, scooters and skateboards. I look forward over the next few weeks to getting out to Bonya, Atitjere, Engawala, Amoonguna, Ltyentye Apurte, Titjikala and Apatula and visiting the kids at those schools. It is a great time of the year to get out and bring a bit of joy, and enjoy their end-of-year celebrations.

There is a number of people I need to thank who have helped me throughout the year. It has been a trying year, and it is not quite over yet. A big thanks to the people in my electorate office: David Koch; Shane Franey; and Ashley Ogden. Without these guys I would struggle to do what I need to do. They have been a rock for me over the last few months, keeping the office going with all that travel.

My staff has increased, and I have a great team in Darwin that I work with: Julian Robertson; Emma Baillie; Emma Toole; and Rowland Richardson. There is a great bunch of people who do so much for me and help me out on a day-to-day basis. It is not just those staff; when we kicked off coming into government a number of department liaison officers came across to help get things moving. Two people came in from DLI, Paula and Chelsea, who have been exceptional in the work they have done. Brion came over from Treasury.

In that big changeover in moving from opposition into government there are a couple of key people who deserve recognition, Bonnie Hageman and Jan Wilschefski, who worked above and beyond to get things happening. It is hard to explain the work they did. Lisa Andrews was in there as well, making all those things happen.

I cannot finish up without thanking my daughter. She keeps me grounded. When you have kids, sometimes you cannot get rid of them; they stay with you forever. My daughter seems to be one of those. Having three or four horses, two broken dogs and a crappy car does not lend itself well to paying rent, so she lives with her dad. It is great because I am away so much and she is there looking after the house. It is great to have her around to keep me young, remind me of who I am and make sure I do not get too big for my boots.

Merry Christmas to everybody in the Chamber. I hope everyone has a wonderful Christmas, and I look forward to seeing everybody back here for parliament in February 2025.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm that I celebrate the remarkable achievements of our middle and senior years' scientists at the 2024 Territory Young Scientists Awards, which was held last night at Darwin Middle School. This event is a testament to the incredible talent and potential that resides within the youths of the Northern Territory. It is an honour to recognise and applaud these bright minds who are not only the future of science but also the architects of innovation and progress in our community.

The Territory Young Scientists Awards highlight the creativity, dedication and passion of our young people in various scientific fields. These awards are designed to inspire and nurture a love for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in our youths, encouraging them to explore new ideas and push the boundaries of what is possible. I acknowledge the outstanding middle and senior years' winners who excelled in their respective categories:

- Innovation and Invention, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Arjumand Khan from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Model, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Arjumand Khan from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Model, Year 7 to 9 Group—Zoe Aberasturi, Phoebe Lam Pakstun, Penny Parry and Trinh Robinson from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Model, Year 10 to 12 Individual—Eva Kay from Casuarina Senior College
- Scientific Communication Poster, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Subhneet Kaur from Good Shepherd Lutheran College
- Scientific Communication Poster, Year 7 to 9 Group—Caitlin Boulton, Indiana Grimes, Vlassios Pizanias and Jake Peterson from Dripstone Middle School
- Scientific Communication Poster, Year 10 to 12 Individual—Samuel Ricketts from The Essington School
- Scientific Communication Poster, Year 10 to 12 Group—Dylan Finteln, Karthik Kurup, Joshua Mani and James Mason from Casuarina Senior College
- Scientific Communication Scientific Writing, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Lachlan Kwong from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Scientific Writing, Year 7 to 9 Group—Amelia Fong and Naomi Raico from Dripstone Middle School
- Scientific Communication Scientific Writing, Year 10 to 12 Individual—Shanum Khan from The Essington School, and Shanum also won the second prize
- Scientific Communication Video, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Arjumand Khan from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Video, Year 7 to 9 Group—Anmar Al-Ibrahim, Yu Heng Aw and Awab Muzaffar from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Video, Year 10 to 12 Group—Micah Buchanan, Zafeera Jahana and Amy Zhao from Darwin High School
- Scientific Communication Multimedia, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Subhneet Kaur from Good Shepherd Lutheran College
- Scientific Communication Multimedia, Year 7 to 9 Group—Grayson de Groot, Aayana Ghimire, Zaeem Jahan and Nam Phong Nguyen from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Communication Multimedia, Year 10 to 12 Individual—Molly Cridland from Good Shepherd Lutheran College
- Scientific Communication Multimedia, Year 10 to 12 Group—Alice Cotter, Anh Huynh Ho, Jethro Llewellyn and Onadee Rajapaksha from Darwin High School

- Scientific Inquiry, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Olivia Fong from Good Shepherd Lutheran College
- Scientific Inquiry, Year 7 to 9 Group—George McGregor-Shaw, Dylan Underhill and Jack Wrigley from Good Shepherd Lutheran College
- Scientific Inquiry, Year 10 to 12 Individual—Methuli Kulasekara from The Essington School, and Methuli also won the second prize
- STEM in the NT Investigation, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Subhneet Kaur from Good Shepherd Lutheran College
- STEM in the NT Investigation, Year 7 to 9 Group—Tye Beer, Khadim Noor Costino and Kian Guerreiro from Dripstone Middle School
- STEM in the NT Investigation, Year 10 to 12 Individual—Toby Afidchao from Casuarina Senior College
- Scientific Games, Year 7 to 9 Individual—Jethro Llewellyn from Darwin Middle School
- Scientific Games, Year 7 to 9 Group—Pak Chan, Patrick Chen and Yejoon Choi from Darwin Middle School
- First Nations Australians Connections to Science, Year 7 to 9 Group—Amy Devlin-Aylott, Alishba Farhan, Laluno Fernandes and Meredith Mottram from Darwin Middle School.

Winners of the major awards were: Rowe Scientific Middle Years Student Award, Subhneet Kaur; Middle Years School Award, Darwin Middle School; Middle Years School Award (Rural), Good Shepherd Lutheran College; Rowe Scientific Rural Student of the Year Award, Subhneet Kaur; Rowe Scientific Senior Years Student Award, Zafeera Jahana, Shanum Khan and Methuli Kulasekara; and the Seniors Years School Award, The Essington School.

These young scientists represent the best of what our Territory has to offer. Their achievements remind us that curiosity, perseverance and hard work can all lead to extraordinary discoveries and advancements. They are role models for their peers and an inspiration to all of us who believe in the transformative power of education and innovation.

As we celebrate these achievements I also recognise the invaluable role that educators, mentors and families play in nurturing that young talent. Their support and encouragement provide the foundation upon which these young scientists build their success. We owe them our gratitude for fostering an environment where students' curiosity is encouraged and dreams are pursued.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the winners and participants of the 2024 Territory Young Scientists Awards. Their passion for science and commitment to excellence are truly commendable. As they continue their journey, they will have the support of this Assembly and their community.

I will say some quick thankyous. It has been a tough year for many people. This time last year I did not think that this is where I would be standing today. I thank all my colleagues in this Chamber. Everybody has been a good help, providing a lot of support for us newbies over the last couple of months. Thank you very much for all your help and support.

I thank my family. I have not been home to clean for about a year, so they are picking up the slack. I appreciate the help they are providing. They are not whingeing at all, so that has been amazing.

I thank everyone who has been supportive. I thank Luke and Joe in my electorate office who have been amazing in supporting the work there. I thank all the constituents who have come to see me since we were elected. It has been amazing, and the words of support we have received are phenomenal. I thank the community members who use my community room. They are friendly, loving and bring me gifts and food, and I often need it.

Merry Christmas.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you look spectacular in that coat.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, thank you. I would hate to be around a match, because this coat is polyester.

I wish every Territorian, whether in towns, the bush or regional communities, a merry Christmas, happy holidays, happy Hanukkah or Feliz Navidad. I want to make sure that this festive season everyone has the opportunity to pause, reflect and, importantly, connect with family and friends. Take a much-needed break; it is incredibly important.

What has become the annual Christmas adjournment session gives us a great opportunity to reflect on the year that has been, to look to the future and thank all the people who have helped us along the way.

This year has been significant for many people, and it is important that we recognise their outstanding achievements and work throughout the year. I acknowledge the hardworking people in organisations and community groups who have shown resilience, determination and compassion throughout the year.

A special thanks goes to all the Territory schools for their dedication to providing quality education. I am incredibly grateful for the outstanding schools throughout the Gwoja electorate. The teachers, principals, Families as First Teachers providers, assistant teachers, cooks, cleaners, bus drivers, tutors and community educators have all done an amazing job.

I appreciate the outstanding work of people in our health services throughout the Northern Territory and in the Gwoja electorate. Whether government or community-controlled, I thank our health services and wish them all the best for the festive season. I thank you for continuing to work so hard over the years to keep our community clinics open, supporting our community to reopen remote clinics and delivering quality healthcare to remote people in Gwoja.

Central Australia has been a significant contributor to tourism and the economy this year, with successful events such as the Red CentreNATS, Desert Mob, the Beanie Festival, Finke Desert Race, the Central Australian Show and the Desert Song Festival.

I give a big shout-out to Morris Stuart, as I understand it was his last Desert Song Festival. Thank you, Morris, on behalf of me and the Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir. We are so grateful for all you have done for us in Central Australia.

I thank everyone who has come together to support what I and the Members for Daly, Arafura, Arnhem and Barkly all love—that is, remote sports carnivals. We respect and thank community mob for coming together, standing strong and hosting those events, as well as Remote Central Australia Football and the teams in the Barkly region for coming together and running quality sport. We have seen Olympic-style games of footy and athletes rolling out across the Territory during those footy carnivals and sports weekends.

Although Central Australia faces social challenges, our passion and love for our community will always shine through. I extend my gratitude and thanks to the people of Central Australia for all the hard work that their organisations, community members and businesses have done and their dedication to servicing our community.

I thank my family across the bush—my grandmothers, grandfathers, mums, dads, brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, kids and grandchildren—and wish them all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

I thank the staff in my electorate office, Katharine and Jo, for the incredible work they do every day to support and work with our constituency. I also thank my former ministerial staff—Brionee Noonan, Clare Parsons, Maggie Coggan-Gartlan, Matt Shaw and Jasmin Afianos—and recognise them for all their hard work over our time in government, driving positive and progressive reform. I wish them all the best for the new endeavours they are embarking on. We achieved great things together, and we will achieve great things again.

I thank the Legislative Assembly staff, particularly the security and the cleaning teams. They greet us every morning with a smile. Often when we are leaving here at night they are coming through and working hard, and they bid us farewell with a smile. I wish them all a merry Christmas, happy holidays and thank them for their hard work.

From my time as Northern Territory Deputy Chief Minister and Attorney-General, I thank the hardworking team in Parliamentary Counsel.

I recognise the public service and thank the chief executive officers and all the fantastic public servants who work hard every day for the Northern Territory.

As we celebrate this festive season I encourage everyone to consider giving to those in need. Even a small gift can make a huge difference. It is important, as this year there will be so many Territory families who will

be going without and not celebrating Christmas because they do not have the resources, funds or support. A small gift, some support or donating goods to a women's shelter, St Vincent de Paul or Salvos will go a long way.

I look forward to coming back to the Legislative Assembly next year to debate legislation and advocate for the people of Central Australia and my beloved remote communities. It is important that we continue to support our rural and remote communities.

I acknowledge all our frontline workers who will be working over Christmas. The sacrifice they make each day is enormous. We thank them, particularly over the festive season when they sacrifice time with their families to serve, protect and care for Territorians. I give a shout-out to all our emergency service workers and amazing healthcare providers who will be keeping our hospitals running and sharing Christmas and the new year with people who are away from their families and seeking medical treatment.

It has been a big, important year. From the bottom of my heart, I wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas. Please be careful on Territory roads.

Honourable members, I hope I am not the only one at midnight mass this year. It is late, but it is worth it. It is incredibly important, and I am a Catholic. I acknowledge all religious institutions across the Northern Territory and in my electorate. I recognise that a number of outstanding people in the community will be bringing people together at these important times to reflect the true meaning of Christmas, supporting and caring for one another and showing what the Territory spirit is—one of love, care, unity and remembrance.

Thank you for opportunity to talk in the annual Christmas adjournment; maybe next year I will try to spruce things up with a different jacket. Merry Christmas and happy holidays to all honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, recently two Katherine juniors played in the TeeMates Top End Series golf event in Palmerston. These two juniors have played in tournaments before. They are quite young. Wade Bryant and John Rice did a fantastic job and shone in their golfing actions. Wade was the champion of the nine-hole boys' gross comp and John was the champion of the nine-hole boys' nett comp. It was an awesome effort by both these boys. I look forward to seeing these young, aspiring golfers' names in lights one day in the future.

With the CE of Education and Training, Susan Bowden, I attended the Katherine High School graduation ceremony. It was a spectacular night. All the students dressed up in their finest and received awards for their achievements. I thank Acting Principal Ruth Miller, Anna Benson and the senior team for a great evening.

Academic awards went to: Lola Jakob; Aaron Cochrane; Nelly Thomas; Balian Watton; Cadence Courtney; Rachel Brandon; Amara Samuel; and Eugene Bolton. The dux of the school was Lola Jakob.

The Australian Defence Force Long Tan Award went to Aaron Cochrane, who is bubbly and bright. He did a school-based apprenticeship and is now at CSA Contracting. He has a bright future ahead of him.

Other award winners were: ADF Future Leaders Award, Lola Jakob; Sue Shea Art Award, Milly Lovering; Sportswoman of the Year, Nelly Thomas; Sportsman of the Year, Brian Ross; Senior VET Student Award, Maddi Mazzaracca; and Stars Award, Kelis Fejo.

The prestigious Kaylom Johnson Award went to Jamahl Cameron Thorpe. Kaylom Johnson was a young boy who went to the high school and who succumbed to suicide.

The Principal's Good Citizen Award went to Liarna Rosas.

The NT Board of Studies Award for Top Personal Learner went to Aaron Cochrane. The NT Board of Studies Award for Top Indigenous Student went to Rachel Brandon.

Well done to all the students. I look forward to following their journey no matter what they do. Well done to all the children who finished Year 12. Their future is bright. Some students will stay in Katherine, some will go on to uni or have a gap year and some are travelling. It was great to catch up with them at the ceremony.

On 16 November I joined Rhys and the team at Katherine McDonald's for McHappy Day. It was a great event and well supported by our community. I note the Member for Arnhem also attended. It was great because instead of being back of house this year I was out the front doing the drinks. I take my hat off to those people

for keeping up with their orders; it was a bit high pressure sometimes. It was fantastic that when you asked someone whether they would like to make a donation to Ronald McDonald House for McHappy Day just about everyone said yes.

It gives me great pleasure to put my Christmas thanks on the record. I will thank a few people who helped get me here. I could not be prouder to be in government and working with my colleagues towards reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our great lifestyle.

To my ministerial staff who make the office run smoothly—Amanda, Mandy, Chrissy, Zac, Sevi and Megan—I cannot thank you all enough for everything you do to make things run smoothly. Sevi gets the finishing touches just right, even down to touching up your makeup and hair. She has done that for a couple of staff, as her background is beauty which is always handy to have in the back pocket.

Thank you to the CE of Education and Training, Susan Bowden, who is a calm and fair person. Working with her has been fantastic. She is hardworking, as is her executive team. We are constantly finding little gems left by the previous Labor government, and I am sure it will take quite a while to clean up that mess.

In my short time of being the Education minister, I have met many great principals and teachers at the schools I have visited. Whether they are in my electorate, Alice Springs, Darwin, Nhulunbuy or Galiwinku, it has been a privilege getting to know them better and seeing the great work they do each day.

Thank you to Nicole Hurwood and the team in OCPE. It has been a pleasure to work with Nicole and learn more about OCPE. I met the team and walked through the department to see the people doing great work.

The staff in Parliament House working in security make sure we are all safe in our workplace and coming and going from the building. They are always friendly and pleasant, and I thank them very much. They always greet you with a smile. The cleaners do a great job around parliament, whether it is in the offices or when you see them out and about. To the drivers who get me to places in style and on time, thank you. To all the Hansard team who work tirelessly to get our speeches and adjournments on the record to be re-read in years to come, thank you. I farewell Penny Hart who was always ever so helpful. I wish Penny all the best in her new job.

To Lisa and Justin from the Chief Minister's office, who worked tirelessly to cover my ministerial office whilst I was recruiting, your time and attention were appreciated. I thank you both. To Jan Wilschefski, thanks for your chats and for answering my constant questions when I did not know where I should find something.

Derek and Leonie attend events, and should there be somebody from Katherine or somebody else I know they are always happy to send the photo and pass on information from the many functions that they attend. I thank them very much.

Congratulations to Tori, who returns next week from her wedding. I hope she had a well-earned break. Congratulations to Tori and Nathan. I thank Daniela, Bonnie and Tori for making our mobile offices seamless from the set up to the pack up. The Member for Namatjira also mentioned the tireless effort that these girls put into the running of the Chief Minister's office upstairs. They do a really good job, so I thank them especially.

I thank the staff in my electorate office. The electorate officers have been here for training. Jen is a calm influence, with a bit of yin and yang. That is absolutely not me, but she is fantastic and never fazed by anything. Jenny has just joined the team. We are Jenny, Jo and Jen, so it is a bit of a mouthful. We even had a Jacquie. I am sure we will find someone who does not have a J name. Jenny is a great support for Jen.

Next week, or the week after, we will farewell my daughter, Hannah, who has been working in the office on her day off from her full-time job. I wish her all the best because next year she is opening her own business, a hairdressing salon, in Katherine. That is fantastic. Congratulations to her. We need more hairdressers and young people going into business, so I 100% applaud her for that.

To all the volunteers in my electorate who support us—whether it be at the markets, letterboxing the newsletter, at the recent election or helping in other ways—I say a big thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Merry Christmas to my colleagues, the opposition and Independents. I hope that you get a short break. Madam Speaker, merry Christmas to you. I hope that you have settled into your new role. As you said today, we are all learning.

I look forward to Christmas with my family, and coming back and doing this all again next year. I thank my husband, who spends a lot of time bouncing around our large house by himself. He has lots of friends, so I am sure he does not spend that much time at home. He does not like his own company much, but I love it.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas. To my family and colleagues, thank you. I look forward to Christmas; I love it.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I place on the public record my thanks and appreciation to all the organisations in the Daly electorate which have worked hard to keep us safe, connected and entertained throughout the year.

Thank you to the volunteer bushfire brigades and Bushfires NT. Volunteer bushfire brigades provide frontline fire prevention and advisory services to our community. In the Daly there are nine volunteer brigades: Batchelor Adelaide River Tortilla; Berry Springs; Cox Peninsula; Daly River; Darwin River; Douglas Daly; Dundee; Labasheeda; and Livingstone. Thank you for your time, expertise and dedication. It is appreciated by our community.

I acknowledge the seniors groups in the Daly electorate. There is COTA NT in Berry Springs and Coomalie. One of the highlights of my job is attending COTA events. Last week I was at an event saying to the COTA members that I remember the first event I turned up to. It was their Christmas party at the Berry Springs Tavern just after I had first been elected in 2021. I told the group about how nervous I was walking in there because I know my old people can be strict to make sure you are keeping in line, and that is no different from the seniors in this group. They are always giving me advice on making sure I do not work too hard and go home to rest and recover. I appreciate all the members of the Berry Springs and Coomalie COTA groups who it feels like have become family now and close friends. I look forward to catching up with them over the Christmas period.

I also acknowledge the seniors groups around the Vic Daly Council region, including Pine Creek, and Wagait Beach shire council. They are putting on a seniors' Christmas event soon. I look forward to attending that in my home town at Wagait Beach.

There are proactive social clubs in my electorate. To the Dundee Social and Recreation Club, thank you for all your support. It has been wonderful supporting you with your fishing competition. Thank you to the Berry Springs Recreation Reserve; Southport Progress Association; Livingstone Recreation Reserve; Adelaide River Markets Association; Pine Creek Heritage and Tourism Association; Lake Bennett Progress Association; and, of course, in Wagait Beach, the Cox Country Club at which I am a regular. Congratulations to all the new committee members at the Cox Country Club. One of my cousins has become a member and is now the treasurer. It is wonderful to have family out there too. These organisations' work in the community keeps us connected, provides colourful and fun events and markets, as well as a great opportunity for me to connect with my constituents.

Thank you to all the councils in the electorate. Their work in the community such as waste collection, maintaining public spaces, road maintenance, event management and local representation never goes unnoticed.

Thank you to all the staff and elected members of the West Daly Regional Council. Unfortunately, we lost the Mayor of West Daly Regional Council to kidney disease. We arranged for him to have accommodation in town through St Vincent's, and I thank St Vincent's for its support and giving the mayor some comfort to go to his dialysis appointments every second or third day.

It has been a tough year for people in the West Daly Region to lose their mayor. He was not only the mayor but also a senior traditional owner of the Kardu Diminin people, the traditional owners of Wadeye.

I am thinking of his wife, Amy, and his kids, because I know he played a huge part not only in Wadeye but also in Palumpa where his wife, Amy, is from. My thoughts are with you as well, Amy. I know it has been a very tough year for you, also losing your granddaughter with the crocodile attack in Palumpa. My thoughts and prayers are with you, but I know how strong you are, how resilient you are and how much you have kept the community together. Every time I pop past to check in, you always have family there. My thoughts are with your son who lost his daughter. The role you play, to ensure he feels secure at such a tough time, does not go unnoticed.

To the Victoria Daly Regional Council, Wagait Shire Council, Belyuen Council, Litchfield Council and the Coomalie Community Government Council, thank you for all the work you do in the region.

I acknowledge the volunteer playgroups and community services that help parents, from the creche in the West Daly region to the FaFT groups in Pine Creek and Belyuen to the newly formed playgroup in Southport. I know often you are a small group of dedicated people who go above and beyond to ensure parents of newborn babies have access to health professionals and a friendly welcoming space to visit. I thoroughly enjoy visiting and listening to the FaFT groups and the playgroups in the region, so thank you for always making me feel welcome. I wish you all a merry Christmas.

Thank you to all the staff, parents and councils of the 12 schools in the Daly electorate. I will not name them all tonight. They know who they are, and I visit them on a regular basis. I will visit them over the coming weeks leading into Christmas to thank the staff, principals and groundskeepers of the schools who do all the hard work. Thank you, and I look forward to seeing you in the next couple of weeks.

I acknowledge all the Aboriginal corporations and the hardworking ranger groups in the Daly region. A lot of work goes into protecting country and managing our environment, be it on the land or in the water. Thank you for all the work you do. I and the three other bush members on this side and the Members for Barkly and Namatjira appreciate the work that rangers do in our electorates. We know how hard and tough it can be out there, especially at this time of year with the Build-Up when it can be hot and sticky.

To all the businesses, community stores, art galleries, cafes, restaurants and tourism operators, thank you for your service to our communities and the many tourists who visit our beautiful region.

To our frontline workers—the police, firies, emergency service workers and remote clinic staff—thank you for all your work over the past year and in the upcoming holiday season. Many of you give up time with your families and loved ones to serve the community. Let us hope for an incident-free Christmas holiday period.

To my family, my partner, friends, electorate staff, the Leader of the Opposition and her staff and my colleagues in the Chamber, I wish you all a merry Christmas, a safe holiday period and a happy new year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and merry Christmas to you. The role can be difficult, getting your head around all the standing orders, but you have done a wonderful job over the last two sittings. I will see you tomorrow, but merry Christmas.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to some musical institutions of the Northern Territory and the people who contribute to them. These people are often unrecognised; they are largely volunteers who operate in the background. They are all the people who spend so much time at the events we take for granted, making them possible, with tireless hours of rehearsals, work and practice.

I have relatively few schools in my electorate of Fong Lim, but I am fortunate that one of them is Haileybury Rendall School. I had the good fortune to attend its production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the Willy Wonka production. I went along to it for a bit of a laugh and because I thought I should show my face, but I have to be honest with you; it was amazing. I sat there thinking that things have changed a lot since I was at school. It was a high-quality, high-calibre production.

Hats off to everyone who was involved. Specifically, I note the production team was: Ilona Martin; Felicity Pearson; Weike Li; Emma McDonald; Rebecca Thomas; Chloe Warthold; Elissa Unwin; Tineale Browne; Rebecca Adams; John Robbins; Robert Barker; Rhett Jennings; Marianne Foster; Anne McMaster; Karen Archibald; Christian Kundig; Nick Eddy; Matt McKenna; Lisa Cadd; Eva Susanto; Arabella Free; and Vicki Tilbrook.

A lot of people were involved in this production, and I would not dare try to name everybody in the cast, company and backstage crew. To the young man who played Grandpa Joe, just quietly, you stole the show. It was fantastic.

Nine young student musicians played in the pit orchestra with a bunch of professional musicians. That is seriously heavy lifting. It was quality stuff. To the nine young members of the pit orchestra, I thought you were superb and I enjoyed the music.

On a larger scale I had the opportunity to attend the BEAT Festival in September. I have a weak spot for these things; I was involved in about 10 of them when I was a kid. I would name all the schools that were involved but for the fact that I would be naming every public school in the Northern Territory—all the schools that all of you will name on this fine evening.

So much work goes into school productions. I make note of the production team: Bill Grose; Wanita McNeill; Jillian Sommerville; Angelina Tam; Jade Tiedeman; Natalie Chin; Matthew Sutton; Lyndsay Sealey; Megan Atfield; Elspeth Carnegie; Todd Williams; Bryn Wackett; Josh Grant; Rod Balaam; Samuel Gulliver; Helene Sweatman; Ben Salandan; Keefir Lewis; Brian Cullen; Dan Davies; Josh Batten; Iona Francis; Tomm Lydiard; Peter Colautti; Brian West; Niko Wajont; Neil Macknight; Tiffany Jansen; Julianne Osbourne; Nicholas Yates; Jack Tinapple; David Stephens; Sue Auld; Alisha Chen; and Jessie Aguilando.

There are so many people involved in these productions. There were four amazing hosts and a great number of phenomenal soloists. Simply shouting out to the choreography teams would take up most of my time, to say nothing of naming every school.

It is worth reflecting that the BEAT Festival has run for 45 years, and now is running also in Alice Springs and Katherine. That is amazing, and it is worth supporting, acknowledging and recognising.

The choral teachers who teach the kids all that music never get a shout-out, and they spend a billion hours getting everybody up to speed. Thank you to those choral teachers: Jennifer Putland; Peta Bartley; Martha Tozer; Sharna Crocket; Kayti Denham; Alex Bowers; Kylie Flanders; Rebecca Clarke; Nicolle Gadd; Darroch Robinson; Natalie Jacobs; Amelia Barling; Sarah Mckeiver; Leila Beale; Jordana Jack; Kris Wahlqvist; Catherine Gray; Laren Hofmeyer; Francesca Massey; Alisa Guo; Bridget Donnell; Petrina Doyle; Cecily Gregory; Sian Edeson; Leta Smith; Liz Latimer; Rachel Birkin; Matthew Lotherington; Andrew King; Michelle Allnut; Jonathan Graham; Judy Morgan; Caoimhe Dorrian; Sarah Behan; Xanthe Fowler; Kylie Worthy; Roula Thomas; Fiona Wulf; Rhiannon Horne; Yvette Aralar; Trisha Gilbert; Penthea Carmichael; Nicole Robson; and Megan Atfield.

That is just the teachers. Think about how many kids were taught to sing those songs. I am grateful to all the people who put on the BEAT production and continue to give it all the time in the day. The original choral teacher for all of them was Nora Lewis AM, whom I mention because she is such a dear mentor to me.

I thank all the people in the Darwin Chorale without whom we would have no national anthems on Remembrance Day and no carols at Carols by Candlelight at the end of this week. These are the people in the background who do a lot of the heavy lifting. To Angelina Aquino, Debbie Barnett, Kate Bedard, Trish Chin, Kelly Carne, Andrew Edwards, Pam Hibberd, David Hibbert, Michelle Jarrett, Vivienne Kleeman, Nora Lewis AM, Robin McGillivray, Chris Obst, Michael Quyn, Kathy Stoll, Caroline Thompson and Kill Williams, thank you for making that possible for us on Remembrance Day.

I will duly run out of time trying to cover all of what I wanted to cover tonight, but I point out that the Darwin Symphony Orchestra worked with the Darwin Chorale in the not-too-recent past on the Heroes concert, doing a whole lot of film score music. They are taking the music to the people. Imagine what our Northern Territory would be without the orchestra. Next year it will be on the road touring throughout—Darwin, Alice, Katherine and Tennant—as it did for years in the past. I would love to shout out to the entire orchestra, but I will not get the opportunity today and stay within time.

I point out that Jethro Llewellyn, who is an example of a young man in the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, is still at school but recently made it into the Australian Youth Orchestra. That is a real achievement; it does not happen often. The Darwin Symphony Orchestra gives people the opportunity to cut their teeth at a high level when they are young. Those opportunities are invaluable.

Another person from the Darwin Symphony Orchestra in the past and who now runs the Arafura Music Collective is Claire Kilgariff, who recently took what is ostensibly real art music to the people, playing in the Gray Community Hall and the NT Supreme Court.

It is amazing that we have these musicians who are willing to put in their time to provide the backdrop to all the events we attend.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Martin Jarvis, Darwin's original maestro who set up the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and under whose auspices I played a long time ago. I congratulate him on his screening of *Mozart's Sister*, the documentary built on his research regarding the work of Mozart's sister.

I had the good fortune of being on the Territory Muster Tour with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra back in 1994 when Martin Jarvis was conducting. One of the other people on that tour was a guy called Mark Smith who is a phenomenal percussionist and drummer whom you see around town. He was my roommate on that tour, and all these years later he is the head of Music NT.

I mention that because no speech of mine goes without mentioning something economic. I encourage you all to look at the work Music NT commissioned through the University of Tasmania which looks at the economic and cultural value of live music in the Northern Territory. It is phenomenal. We get an enormous amount of economic return on our investment for having live music to support all our festivals and programs.

The Northern Territory Music School, under the auspices of Bill Grose, does phenomenal work. From the fledgling days of the Darwin Combined Schools Concert Band, it now runs multiple orchestras. Last week I had the good fortune to watch the end-of-year concerts for the Da Capo, Con Moto and Apogee ensembles. I cannot overstate the value of public music education to create not just musicians but also people who perform better academically. It was one of the real jewels in the crown of the Northern Territory education system. I hope with time that we can polish that jewel to be what it should be.

I will probably have the highlight of my week tomorrow when at lunchtime I get to join in the Stuart Park Primary School Band and do what I can in the trombone section under the baton of Natalie Chin and Genevieve Meehan and under the auspices of Sylvia Siskamanis and Principal Leisha Crompton, who bizarrely enough I also went to a music camp with about a billion years ago.

There are so many musical institutions that I would love to shout out to if I could that provide life and vitality to our city year-round. The Hot and Cold Big Band plays every week at the Darwin Railway Club with all the dancers.

I could pick from a million quotes, but in the words of Plato:

> *Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the Universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything.*

I thank all the hardworking musicians and musical institutions of the Northern Territory that provide life, colour, gaiety and the backdrop to all the events that we can participate in.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I have wonderful news of a Northern Territory award winner from the Arnhem electorate; the 2025 Northern Territory Australian of the Year, Grant Ngulmiya Nundhirribala. I was proud to see Grant win that award just a few weeks ago. I spoke about him in the October sittings, and I must fully declare that Grant is my cousin.

I am proud that Grant will go to Canberra on 25 January to be part of the national Australian of the Year Awards as the Northern Territory's Australian of the Year candidate, with three other amazing Territorians who will represent the Northern Territory at those prestigious awards.

I am proud of the work that Grant has done, doing amazing tours of his solo album and in his career as a musician, but he also gives so much of his personal time to be one of our cultural songmen and leaders not just in the Numbulwar south-east Arnhem pocket but also across East Arnhem. It is a huge commitment to have a musical career and be touring from a very remote part of Australia, going Territory-wide, Australia-wide and international. He has been to amazing countries recently, touring and working with international orchestras and producing amazing and unique sounds that a lot of Australians and international audiences are captivated by when they hear Grant's music.

We were fortunate to hear Grant sing here when he and other family members from the Nundhirribala Red Flag Clan, my mum's clan of Numbulwar, sung me into the Chamber for this seat here at the opening of parliament for the 15th Legislative Assembly.

Congratulations, Grant, on being the category winner. All the best for January, but I am sure I will see you before then. I place that on the formal record not just on behalf of the electorate as a proud local member but also as a proud family member.

There are many people to thank towards the end of this year. I was fortunate in the redistribution of electorate boundaries to pick up new areas, which I am learning about and look forward to being a dedicated and present local member for. I am learning about their needs and concerns and getting ideas of how to make the different areas I now represent in the Arnhem electorate even better. I retained some amazing parts of the Territory that I am fortunate and honoured to represent in this place.

I give a big shout-out to the whole of the Arnhem electorate, which has expanded: Manyallaluk community; Barunga; Wugularr; Bulman; Weemol; Gapuwiyak; Tindal RAAF base; Mataranka; Mulgan town camp; Jilkminggan; Minyerri; Urapunga; Ngukurr; Numbulwar; Milyakburra on Bickerton Island; the Groote Eylandt

communities of Alyangula, Angurugu and Umbakumba; homelands that I held prior to the NT election, which I have retained, being Donydji, Mirrngatja, Balma, Bunhanura, Burrum, Yalukun and Raymangirr; and the new homelands. I visited some of them before these sittings, and I look forward to getting out and about after this week of parliament to the new homelands to meet the residents of Gan Gan, Baniyala, Rurrangala, Wandawuy, Dhuruputjpi, Barraratjpi and Bukudal. I am excited to be the local member for the new homelands in that list.

It has been a huge year for everybody, particularly those of us who have returned to this Assembly. It may look different, but I have an optimistic view that we are not doing this job for ourselves. We are all here for the betterment of the Territory, to make sure we are leaving the Territory in a better place than when we inherited it as a local member. I firmly believe that binds us all here. Obviously we may have different ways of going about that, but at the end of the day this has to be a place of constructive, productive and respectful working relationships. I look forward to the new parliamentary year as well as finalising this one by the end of the week.

A big thankyou goes to those in the public service who worked closely with me in my former ministerial portfolios: the former ministerial staff who supported me through thick and thin; the fifth floor staff of the Labor government; and the amazing department liaison officers who, regardless of what was going on in the Chamber, kept the correspondence between the public service and the ministerial office running smoothly.

To parliamentary colleagues, past and present, I wish everyone a safe and happy new year. Please get time with your families, because we know this place becomes consuming. We are all away from our family, friends and loved ones for quite some time during sittings weeks. Some people get to go home to their families, but they may not see much of them. People like the other bush members and I are usually away for six nights of a sittings week, so we miss out on sleeping in our own beds and being with our families. That is part of the sacrifice we make because we love this job and the Northern Territory and want to make things better for our families, communities and the people we represent in our electorates.

A big thankyou goes to the people who make this place happen, which is the parliamentary staff: in particular the cool, calm, collected security guards who always have a smile on their face; the amazing cleaners, some of whom I know by name because they always see me here late; the cool and relaxed white car drivers; the cool gardeners; the Parliamentary Library team for all their amazing work and the research they support us with; and the Department of the Legislative Assembly staff, in particular those in the Table Office and the Parliamentary Education team.

A big shout-out goes to the Hansard crew. I do not think it is an easy job to listen to 25 people in the Chamber with our different nuances and make us look good in black and white in the final transcript. Thank you so much to the Hansard team.

Thank you to the Speaker's Corner Cafe staff, especially Flo Jo. We love you, Flo Jo; thank you for always giving us little extra special treats.

Thank you to the current Labor team, the amazing opposition crew who support me, my deputy leader, Dheran Young, the Member for Daly; the Member for Gwoja, Chansey Paech; and the Member for Arafura, Manuel Brown. We are on a different journey now in opposition, but I try to look at things in a positive way. It is a learning curve, so we are looking at the benefits of learning strategy, and being in opposition allows a lot of that to happen.

To all the Labor Party members, thank you for being such an amazing family. It was a tough time with the Northern Territory election result for many who gave their heart and soul and blood, sweat and tears. We will continue to rebuild. As the Labor Party leader I promise that we will continue to bring our party up.

To all the many volunteers who do not necessarily belong to the Labor Party but support Labor values and principles, thank you for your belief and faith and continuing to support us in opposition.

A big thanks to everyone who donated or volunteered for the Arnhem electorate campaign to support me to retain the seat and continue the work that I love and am honoured and privileged to do in representing the Arnhem electorate in the Legislative Assembly.

To the amazing electorate staff, particularly my electorate officer Melina Davidson, I have no words to describe you other than you are simply amazing. Thank you to my new teammate Kathy Glass who has joined the team. I hope you are enjoying all the learning as well, Kathy.

A big thankyou goes to my family who support me to do the work here.

The new Opposition Leader's office staff—you guys rock, and we have a lot of fun. Thank you all for bringing your energy in such a different role that all of us are journeying into.

Thank you to my dad, Mick Uibo, who always supports me and watches me everyday in parliament on the video link. He is one of the six people who always watches.

Thank you to my sister, Jocelyn—going through tough times—I love you, and I know I am the bossy little sister. Thank you to my nieces, Zelda, Chanel and Lorena; my nephew, Keanu; and my two great-nephews, Dwayne and baby Kairo, who is seven weeks old.

Thank you to my in-laws, John and Wendy Charleson; Sarah and Richard McElwee, my sister-in-law and brother-in-law; and the kids, Harrison, Sienna and Kobe.

To my amazing husband, Corey, I love you. To beautiful Rae Rae and Phoenix, thank you for all the support; mummy misses you, and I love you.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, my adjournment speech is on the year that has been and to acknowledge what has been achieved and what is still to come. This year for my family, like many in this Chamber, brought with it much change.

As a young man who is now part of the Finocchiaro government I find I have to pinch myself. The reality of government has been huge, and the challenges ahead of us might seem to many as being simply insurmountable, but they are not. I would not be standing here if I believed we could not turn this ship around, and members of our government have their shoulder to the wheel, ensuring we are all working together to turn this Territory around to a place we all recognise, know and love. The place I and many of us here grew up in had less crime and less worry.

Throughout this year there were those who went above and beyond to help the good people of the Braitling electorate.

Kym-Marie has been my electorate officer since I began as a member for parliament. Thank you, Kym-Marie, for everything you have done to not only support me in my role but also help the people who come through our doors every day. It has been continual work over many years, and many in the community are better off as a result of the work we have done together. Rowie Schulz, your energy for the role of electorate officer and your unwavering support does not go unnoticed. Everything that we do and have achieved over the years—teddy bears' picnics, seniors' lunches, Easter and Christmas baskets, as well as biscuits that have raised thousands of dollars for charity and been enjoyed by many who walk through our doors—comes together to ensure we deliver a service that helps those who seek assistance and means their lives in some small way are enriched or made easier through the work that you both do. Thank you for everything.

I thank Michelle Bell, who has come on board to support Rowie in her role and has a passion for volunteering. As I have said previously, Michelle, I am glad you like a good barbecue, as there will be plenty of opportunities to bang a bunga on the barbecue and support a good cause in years to come.

Jen Waterhouse deserves a special mention. Jen has been an incredibly hard worker helping over the years. She has not only a huge workload herself but also a huge family to support and look after. Thank you for taking the time to support our office to help and assist others in the community.

To my wife, Lisa-Marie, this year has been difficult for our little family as changes have meant I am away more than before. It is through your strength that I can do what I do. I see that strength in our little girls. As we always say, we are proud to be raising headstrong independent young girls; we just wish at times they would listen. As they are three and one-year-olds, I am sure we will have many more years to impart knowledge and skills as they grow.

There is a number of people who have assisted me who are now on the fifth floor whom I will thank this evening. Jan and Bonnie always work diligently and are always happy to help with any and everything that I can think up, including helping me tape my finger back together after a slip with a kitchen knife recently. Luckily I still have all five digits. Lisa Andrews guided me through the set-up of the office. Phil, Racheal, Camille, Kia, Jodi and Ali, all your assistance has been greatly appreciated and has made this whole experience of coming to government extremely rewarding. The work you do ensures we can assist many through the actions of the departments I represent as minister.

To Jo Townsend, Leah, Steph and the whole DLPE team, thank you.

To Catherine Weber, Lisa, Greg, Bruno and the whole DCDD team, thank you.

The electorate has seen parks opened, roads destroyed and hopefully soon to be fixed, along with an oval saved that was due to be destroyed. This is what I am proud of. As I walk around the community and electorate delivering *Bugle*s or birthday cards, I often speak with people who tell me exactly what they believe should be occurring. I am glad I could listen to the majority of people in the electorate to ensure our community space was saved, whilst delivering something for the business community that has been hurting so badly due to poor governance for a number of years.

To my parliamentary colleagues, take the time to realise where you are. Every day I walk into this place in awe that I get to come in here to represent my community and work to make the Territory a better place. The most wonderful thing about this place is you never know how long you have here, so make the most of every day, as all our time here will one day come to an end.

I will continue to work every day to deliver on our government's promises to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our Territory lifestyle that we all know and love.

This year has been rewarding beyond measure. Although those challenges I spoke of earlier remain, this government I am so proud to be part of will continue to work to improve the lives of everyone who lives in our electorates and across this great Territory.

Merry Christmas. I hope everyone has time with their family over the summer period and comes back refreshed.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to a fantastic local group in Palmerston, Auntys Free Feeds. Sally, Romaine and all the volunteers, you guys are amazing. Every week in Palmerston Sally runs around like a busy bee gathering donations from all and sundry and bringing it all to the car park at SWELL in my electorate of Blain in Moulden and putting on an amazing feast for anyone who has an empty tummy. It is generally well attended. The smallest number I have seen attend is about 60 people up to about 120 in the peak of the season. They do amazing work that is appreciated by the community. Thank you, Reanna, for your work in starting up Auntys. We appreciate everything that you guys do.

The Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association is a fantastic group in Palmerston and the rural area that provides activities and community for our seniors. I will give a little of its history.

The morning tea, Seniors Week and other events commenced in Palmerston in various forms as far back as 1997. Circa 2011 to late 2014 activities were auspiced through the City of Palmerston, including event arrangements and insurance. Due to changes regarding grants and governance the organisation became an incorporated association on 24 November 2014. The initial incorporated name was Palmerston and Rural Seniors Committee Incorporated. Since then it has grown and gone from strength to strength.

The association's morning teas continue to attract many participants, with the Humpty Doo morning tea averaging about 50 members each month and the Cazalys morning tea—which Clinton, Marie-Clare, Lia and I attend, as do the Members for Nelson and Goyder from time to time—gets close to 100 members each time. If you have been to Cazalys when a PLSA morning tea is being held, you will know there is no room to swing a cat; that room is full of people. It is a testament to the hard work and excellent organisation of the committee.

The latest committee has just been voted in. I thank the president, Marg Lee, and the vice president and public officer, Neville Driver. A special thankyou goes to Neville for being so efficient at fundraising; he lobbies our offices so much to support the raffles and various things that the PLSA provides. I thank the treasurer, Sheryl Sephton, and the general committee members: Janette Ashby; Glenda Bradbury; Geraldine Crowhurst; Helen Lemcke, Diane Spicer and Maryke Lawton from the Litchfield region; Jennifer Segav; Gillian Marnell; Chris Murray; and Glenda Reid. I also thank the association patron, Natalie La Pira.

We appreciate the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association and all the work it does for our community.

Mr EDGINGTON (Barkly): Madam Speaker, as we approach the festive season I extend my best wishes to all Territorians, especially my constituents in the Barkly electorate. I thank all the constituents in the Barkly for allowing me to continue representing them by putting their faith in me and returning me to this parliament for a second term.

I feel especially honoured that everyone is willing to engage with me to ensure that I am representing their interests here above the Berrimah Line. Often out bush people speak to me about a range of things that they ask me to raise in parliament. I thank them for sharing their experiences and knowledge with me, and raising with me the matters that mean the most to them which I can raise on their behalf.

The Barkly is the biggest electorate in the Northern Territory, with 442,868 square kilometres. The people and the area I cover are incredibly diverse. My constituents live as far south as the outstation of Alyuen next door to Aileron, which is only 130 kilometres from Alice Springs up the Stuart Highway. They live in Ti Tree, Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, Elliott, Larrimah, across the Carpentaria in Borroloola, Robinson River and over near the Queensland border at Alpurrurulam. Down the Sandover Highway, I cover communities in Ampilatwatja, the Utopia homelands and, southeast of Tennant Creek, the communities of Ali Curung, Epenarra, Canteen Creek and Murray Downs. There are many homelands and outstations, as well as several cattle stations.

I thank everyone for making me feel welcome this year. I thank those constituents who raised the issues that are most important to them. I thank all our pastoralists, the roadhouse operators and their staff across the region for their important work. This year Cyclone Megan made landfall near Borroloola on 18 March and there were more fires throughout the electorate, but I continued to see the people of the Barkly rising to face these challenges head on.

Over the next few weeks schools throughout the Barkly will be wrapping up and celebrating their achievements for the year. I am fortunate to have many remote and urban schools throughout my electorate, and I thank all the principals, teachers and staff for the incredible work they do with the students every day.

I thank the government and non-government agencies and the many Aboriginal corporations in my electorate for their work during the year. It is important that we all continue to work together to improve our communities and the lives of the people we represent.

Most electorates are covered by one council, but I am fortunate to have three in my electorate: Barkly Regional Council; Central Desert Regional Council; and Roper Gulf Regional Council. All three councils work incredibly hard, and I thank the staff, elected councillors and mayors for their work during 2024.

I thank all the local businesspeople and small business owners in my electorate, as they are the backbone of the Barkly, providing services on the street corner, ranging from tyre services to contractors delivering a range of services to shops and cafes. We know who they are, and I thank them for their work and keeping their doors open this year to provide an amazing service to the people in Tennant Creek and across the Barkly region. It is tough running a small business, so thank you for the work that you do.

I thank all the Legislative Assembly staff, as the Assembly would not function without their behind-the-scenes work. I pass on my sincere thanks to you all for the support given to committees and the work done by the Department of the Legislative Assembly, including Hansard, the library, cleaners, security staff and all the staff in our own Speaker's cafe. I hope I have not missed anyone, but I thank everyone involved in running the Legislative Assembly for their incredible work to keep parliament ticking over.

In my Tennant Creek electorate office, I thank Aimee for the work that she does, not only keeping the doors open but also engaging with the constituents, attending to their inquiries and providing timely responses to their issues. We have all been working closely to ensure we are serving the Barkly electorate. That means responding to inquiries and dealing with those issues in a timely manner. We continue to get busier and busier, and the workload and demand on my electorate staff has only increased with my new additional role as minister.

This year I am grateful to be the Minister for Health; Mental Health; Alcohol Policy; Aboriginal Affairs; Housing, Local Government and Community Development; and Essential Services. I put on the record the work of the CEOs in those organisations. Coming into government has been an opportunity to build relationships with the CEOs and all the staff from their departments who have contributed to the work of government. Thank you to all the public servants for the work that you are doing.

I thank my ministerial staff—David and Sarah as my advisers and Denise, my executive assistant—and the department liaison officers, Amanda, Jay and Haley, for the work that they have done. It has made the office run smoothly, thank you.

I thank all the members in the Chamber. I look forward to continuing our robust debates as the 15th Legislative Assembly progresses. I wish every one of you and your families a merry Christmas and a safe and happy new year.

To all my colleagues, the elected members who sit on this side of the Chamber with me, we have grown in numbers this year with nine new members joining us. I thank all of you and wish you all a safe and merry Christmas. Enjoy a break and time with your family until we return to parliament in February next year.

I thank my family for giving me the support that is needed to do my job throughout the year. Thank you for all the things you have done to assist me to get by every day of the week; it has made my job easier.

I thank all our first responders—police, fire and emergency services workers, incredible health staff and St John Ambulance staff—who are at the front line every day of the week. All our frontline services will be working 24 hours a day every day over the Christmas period. Thank you for the work you have done this year. You will be putting in a lot of hard work over the Christmas period while others may be at home. Thank you for putting in the work you do every day of the week.

I thank everybody in my electorate. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a safe and happy new year. Please enjoy the holiday period.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, the Casuarina electorate has experienced a series of tragic and concerning incidents recently, highlighting challenges for the community.

On 13 November a 14-year-old boy was allegedly arrested in connection with the aggravated assault of a 55-year-old man, bringing attention to youth crime in the area.

In a separate heartbreaking incident Reverend Dr Michelle Cook, a beloved Uniting Church minister, passed away after a tragic accident near her Nakara home. As she stepped onto the footpath Dr Cook was struck by a 12-year-old boy riding a pushbike. She sustained critical head injuries and died in hospital on Saturday, 11 November. At just 49 years old, her final act of generosity was giving the gift of life to others through organ donation.

On Thursday 7 November a hit-and-run incident on Trower Road in Brinkin claimed the lives of two women, aged 62 and 47, and left a third woman hospitalised. Police reports suggest the incident was not deliberate, as the victims were believed to have been sleeping on the road when struck.

These events reflect the unpredictability of life and the ongoing need for vigilance, compassion and community action to address crime and safety concerns.

I acknowledge Jack Parker, his family and the Henbury School community. As the Henbury School celebrates its graduating students this Thursday, our hearts also turn to Jack, who would have been in this year's graduating class. Jack's life was tragically cut short three years ago, but his memory continues to live on in the hearts of those who knew and loved him. He was a beloved member of the Henbury School community, and his absence is deeply felt, especially on an occasion like this when we celebrate milestones and achievements.

To Jack's family, please know that our thoughts are with you during this time. As we honour the accomplishments of this year's graduates, we also honour Jack's spirit and the joy he brought to those around him. Jack Parker lives on in a lot of people's hearts.

I acknowledge Dr Yuejen Zhao, a distinguished constituent of the Casuarina electorate, who serves as the Principal Health Economist in the Health Statistics and Informatics Branch of the Public Health Division of NT Health. In recognition of his exceptional contributions Dr Zhao was honoured with the Chief Minister's Public Service Medal.

For over 30 years, Dr Zhao has demonstrated remarkable expertise in epidemiology, health economics, demography, biostatistics and predictive modelling. Throughout his career Dr Zhao authored numerous articles in prestigious journals, including the Medical Journal of Australia and the British Medical Journal. He has played a pivotal role in mentoring early-career researchers, fostering their professional growth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic Dr Zhao's proficiency in biostatistical modelling proved invaluable. He developed prediction models that accurately estimated the influx of hospital admissions in the Northern Territory, enabling better preparedness and resource allocation. Widely regarded as a trailblazer, Dr Zhao's

work has profoundly impacted public health policymaking, equipping decision-makers with the tools to make informed and effective choices.

I highlight the wonderful achievements of young people in our community who have participated in the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award.

The Duke of Edinburgh's program is a global initiative that helps young people to build skills, stay active and give back to the community through volunteering. It has three levels—bronze, silver and gold—and encourages participants to challenge themselves and grow. Students work on four key areas: physical recreation; skills; volunteering; and an adventurous journey. To achieve their award, students commit time and effort to each area, including planning and completing a two-day, one-night expedition.

I am proud to recognise the following students from Dripstone Middle School who have earned their silver awards: Benita Benny; Freya Borondia; Sabhina Abag; Caitlin Boulton; Graciella Caloyon; Harper Christensen; Sky Daly; Clancy Daun; Romy Dixon; Zara Cox; Evelyn Down; Maddalyn Fong; Melanie Freeland; Jarell Galucho; Indiana Grimes; Charlotte Harn; Cohen Higgins; Jiya Jeejo; Ann Mariya Joseph; Monirah Kalile; Lyrah Knights; Denzel Lay; Auriel Lloyd; Abby Marcus; Charlotte Moore; Alivia Mu; Sofia Santiago; Venice Suva; Nadya Todorovski; Finbar Tran Mangan; Tristian Tremaine Hill; Lia Parkes; Magdalena Reyneke; Kate Robinson; Rajonya Roy; Andrew Saengthong; Angeline Salas; Arasya Turner; and Lucie Wadley.

Their dedication to this journey reflects the spirit of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award—resilience, determination and a commitment to growth. These students have not only challenged themselves but also set an example for their peers. Well done on this remarkable accomplishment.

I have heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for Vicki Lettice and her incredible team for their outstanding efforts in making McHappy Day a tremendous success. Utilising my MLA people skills and working during peak hour was great fun. I enjoyed making lots of Big Macs with the back area crew.

Vicki employs more than 900 staff across the Territory and plays a vital role in running a successful business and nurturing and empowering our young generation. Her commitment to providing opportunities for young people to gain valuable work experience, develop essential skills and build their futures is commendable.

The McHappy Day celebration was a shining example of Vicki's leadership and the dedication of her entire staff. It was more than just a fundraiser; it was a day of community spirit, joy and support for an important cause—helping sick children and their families through Ronald McDonald House Charities.

I extend my sincere thanks to every staff member who worked tirelessly to make the day memorable and impactful. Your efforts remind us all of the power of coming together as a community to make a difference. I give a special thanks to Vicki and her team for their unwavering commitment to our community and inspiring us all with their hard work and generosity.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, it is with profound sadness I inform the Chamber of the passing of Adi Dave, a beloved young member of the Northern Territory community. Adi, a gifted cricketer and a shining light in all aspects of his life, passed away on Monday evening at the age of 23. His untimely death has left a void in the hearts of all who knew him.

Adi's cricketing talent was evident from a young age. He captained both the under-17s and under-19s representative sides and was known for his skill and sportsmanship at the Nightcliff Cricket Club. He was a rising star with the potential to reach the highest levels of the sport.

Beyond cricket, Adi was a remarkable individual with a passion for knowledge and a deep commitment to his community. He hosted the Adi Dave Podcast on YouTube where he interviewed prominent Territorians, sharing their stories and insights. He was in his second year of a law degree at Deakin University and had previously served as an associate to Honourable Justice Judith Kelly in the Northern Territory Supreme Court.

Adi's kindness, humility and respect for others were evident in everything he did. He was a true friend, a supportive teammate and an inspiration to all who knew him. His memory will forever be cherished by the countless lives he touched.

Our heartfelt condolences go to Adi's family and loved ones during this difficult time. May they find solace in the outpouring of love and support from the community. Adi's legacy of kindness, passion and achievement will continue to inspire us all.

The funeral service to celebrate Adi's life will be held on 30 November at Harmony Hall, 44 Patterson Street, Malak, from 11 am to 1 pm.

I will add to the record the many events I hosted and was invited to attend in my electorate and the wider Darwin community.

It was a privilege to host Mr Sanjeev Gorkhali, President of the Non-Resident Nepali Association NT, along with the Nepalese Association of Northern Territory team and community members in the Main Hall for the celebration of Dashain and Tihar. Dashain and Tihar are among the most significant festivals in the Nepalese calendar, embodying the spirit of unity, family and renewal. The evening was enriched by remarkable cultural performances and traditional attire, offering an authentic and vibrant display of Nepalese heritage and traditions.

OXI, the Greek Orthodox Community of Northern Australia commemoration, was on 27 October 2024. This event highlights how swiftly a nation can be drawn into the horrors of war. Despite the gravity of the situation it remains a time of immense national pride. Men, women and children alike made every conceivable effort to support their fighting forces, demonstrating a unity and resolve that defied all odds. Undoubtedly, it was the inner determination—a strength born only from a proud and united nation—that ensured their eventual triumph, and triumph against all expectations they did. The date 28 October marks a national holiday commemorating Greece's entry into World War II in 1940.

I was kindly invited to the Indian Cultural Society of the Northern Territory's annual Diwali function held on Sunday 27 October 2024. Deepavali (Diwali) is a major festival celebrated all over the world by people from all walks of life. Diwali means row of lights or lamps to outshine darkness and enlighten the spirits with knowledge. The Diwali festival is also associated with the triumph of good over evil. The Members for Casuarina and Wanguri and I were delighted to attend and partake in these festivities. The night was joyous, and I look forward to next year's event.

The Administrator, the Honourable Professor Hugh Heggie OAM, hosted the Occupational Therapy Australia 80 years celebration on 28 October 2024 at the Administrator's House. Forty-two occupational therapists from the Northern Territory attended this wonderful evening event. Occupational Therapy Australia board member, Adam Lo OAM, was at the event, having travelled from Queensland to attend.

I had the pleasure of hosting Monsi Thomas, President of the Darwin Malayalee Association; Thejus Sankar, President of the Darwin Malayalee Forum; and Malayalee community members to celebrate Onam in the Main Hall of Parliament House on Wednesday 30 October 2024. The Members for Fannie Bay, Karama and Wanguri joined me for this celebration. The evening was a wonderful event, including performances by Ms Charulakshmi Jishnu and team to provide a dance called Thiruvathira; Dr Eva Ignatious and team performing Ganesha Sthuthi; and Mr Paul Parokkaran and team doing a traditional Onam song, *Onappoove*, from one of the old movies from India.

On Saturday 2 November 2024 I had the privilege of attending a celebration of Bunka no Hi at the Paspaley Centre in Smith Street, Darwin. This was hosted by President Janet Truong and the committee of the Australian Japanese Association of the Northern Territory. The morning's festivities provided a vibrant showcase of Japanese culture, featuring arts and crafts, face painting, Taiko drum performances, calligraphy demonstrations and origami.

I express my sincere gratitude to Shu Qin Li, President of the Australia China Friendship Society NT, for her outstanding leadership and dedication in organising and hosting the multicultural dancing and food festival. The evening was a remarkable celebration of community and culture, made possible by the hard work of the volunteers whose efforts are a credit to the society. The cultural performances from various groups highlighted the rich diversity and unity that define Darwin and the Northern Territory.

I had the privilege to receive an invitation from Mr Anand Panchal to celebrate Annakut with the BAPS organisation in Darwin. The day following Diwali, known as Kartak Sud 1, signifies the commencement of the new year in the Hindu calendar. This auspicious occasion is marked by the offering of an Annakut, a symbolic mountain of food, presented to Bhagwan as an expression of gratitude and devotion. Devotees lovingly prepare a wide variety of vegetarian delicacies and offer them while singing *Thal*, a devotional hymn. I was further privileged to partake in the dinner alongside Mr Panchal and Mr Ketan Patel, an experience that was both enjoyable and enriching.

It was a tremendous honour and joy to welcome many Territorians to the Diwali celebration at Parliament House. As host, I felt privileged to celebrate the Festival of Lights. Diwali holds a special place in the hearts of many, transcending generations and geography, reminding us of the universal values of hope, light and

renewal. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Bharanidharan Shanmugam, President of the Hindu Society of the Northern Territory, and Krishnapradeep Vijayaraghavan, Secretary of the Hindu Society of the Northern Territory, and everyone who has been pivotal in coordinating with the team.

I express my warm appreciation to President Hiranch Patel of the Gujarati Cultural Association of Darwin and acknowledge the wonderful leadership and sense of community he has fostered. It was truly a pleasure to join in celebrating the Festival of Lights with the Gujarati Cultural Association of Darwin. Thank you for your warm hospitality. I look forward to another wonderful event next year.

I sincerely thank the President of the Sri Lankan Australian Friendship Association, Ranjana Weerasinghe, and her fellow committee members for hosting the first Christmas celebration of 2024 at the Hilton DoubleTree on 9 November 2024.

I acknowledge several community members who were recognised for their achievements through the year. Congratulations to the deserving recipient of the NT Young Australian of the Year 2025, Mr Nilesh Dilushan. I wish you all the best in Canberra on 25 January. I congratulate Nipun Weerakkodige for completing his CPA qualifications and obtaining CPA status and on his appointment, commencing 1 January 2025 for a three-year term, to the CPA Divisional Council of the Northern Territory. Sadeepa Sandaruwan was nominated for the Chief Minister's Community Volunteer Organisation Team of the Year Award. Congratulations, and keep up your wonderful work with your dance academy.

The Darwin Festival held its end-of-year program for partners and donors at Flora's Temper. This was a great opportunity to hear about the successes through the year.

I was at the McDonald's in Ludmilla with Laurie Zio, the Member for Fannie Bay, and at Casuarina with Oly Carlson and Khoda Patel on McHappy Day. It was a great experience. Thanks to all the McDonald's staff who worked tirelessly on that day to raise money for a good cause.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, it is good to be back.

Madam SPEAKER: It is good to have you back.

Mr HOWE: I wish to discuss gratitude, something my mother is big on. She told me this week that I do not contact her enough these days. In honour of my mother I will give my adjournment speech about gratitude.

My first point of gratitude is to the people of Drysdale for this role, allowing me to serve them in this Chamber as their local member.

I was speaking to a fellow vet and a lifelong great friend, Will Carr, whom I had the pleasure of going to boarding school with. Will was a Queensland boy, and we were the only two northerners in our year. Will joined the Royal Marines and did two tours of Afghanistan. He is back in Australia, and we were talking only two nights ago. He asked how this job is, and I was pleased to tell him how much I sincerely love this role. He is probably one of the few people who understands what it means for a veteran to find service again, so he knew what I meant when I said that through this role I feel like I can once again serve and be fulfilled once more.

In that same vein I know there is a lot of work still to do for the people of Drysdale. Last week I was out at night multiple times because of the crime incidents that are still ongoing in the electorate. Our government is taking that on. We are fighting, and we will keep fighting for our measures as well. To the people of Drysdale, know that even through this Christmas break, though this parliament will adjourn, my service to you will not.

I turn to the electorate staff. Thank you to Melina, the electorate officer. She is incredible and a godsend. Anyone who has worked with me will know that I need someone who is highly organised to make sure I know where to be, and Melina delivers that in spades. She is an asset; she works hard and regularly does overtime. I met her on the campaign trail. She is a mum in the electorate whom I met her by knocking on her door. I could see how much she cared about the community and how much she wanted to change it, so asking her to join the office upon winning the election was a special moment.

Thank you to Sally. She has been a joy, and she fills the office with joy. She is sociable and loves going out and speaking to people. I do not get to keep Sally; she has just been in the office temporarily and will soon say goodbye. I thank Sally for her time, and she knows how to find a bargain anywhere.

To my first volunteers, Bruce and Murray, I send a special thank you for their constant and ongoing support through their offers of letterboxing and all those good things.

I give my personal support to my local GP, Brad. I am a big believer in the need to grow the number of GPs and their services. Brad has been a constant support for me since leaving the Army. Quite simply, I would not be here without his ongoing support. Brad has different political views, and we disagree on the Gouldian finch, but he still treats me with the utmost service every time I see him. Thank you, Brad.

Thank you to Mark. For many years Mark has been a massive support to me. He is a guide, mentor and friend. I would not be in this Chamber without Mark's support.

Thank you to all the parliamentary staff, especially our Legies staff who have made me feel incredibly welcome and have given all the support. I did not even know you guys existed prior to this role. All the new members are incredibly thankful for what you have offered us. To the security staff, cleaners and Hansard staff, thank you all for the work you do, serving the people of the Northern Territory.

I thank our fine police officers throughout the Territory, especially those who will work over the Christmas period. As crime continues and our government pushes forward in this realm, I thank the officers who will give up their family time to protect and serve the community. I know what it is like to serve over the Christmas period; the fact is that no-one is usually jumping for joy, but someone must do it. As the assistant Police minister, I give my sincere thanks to all of them. Know that because they are working this Christmas, I will as well. To the Palmerston police officers, you can expect me, as you did in the campaign, to be on your door with a panettone. I will be there because they are working.

I will also enjoy visiting the firies who are working, the good staff at the Palmerston hospital and the paramedics who will be working Christmas Day. Know that the Howe family will be coming to say thank you throughout Palmerston for the work you are doing.

I thank all the staff at Gray Primary, Driver Primary, Palmerston College and the Good Shepherd Palmerston campus for all the work they have done throughout the year. An incredible part of this job is to attend their graduations. Seeing the Clontarf boys graduating primary school and the Clontarf lads who finished high school was a special moment. It is a great program. I take my hat off to all the male mentors who work for Clontarf and the incredible work they are doing. I salute you.

Thank you to the council staff who follow up on all my requests to fix driveways, rubbish and whatever else I am writing about. To the mayor and her staff, thank you.

Thank you to my wife, Alice. She has done the hard yards, and I thank her for everything she has done for our family. Thank you to my daughters. Ines, it is a privilege having you stay with us. You bring a new light to my daughters, and we thank you. Mum and dad, thank you. I thank Sean, Marcus and Penny for all the support I have had over this year.

I acknowledge that Christmas is above all a religious holiday. I wish a merry Christmas to all the Christians throughout the Northern Territory as we move into this special time of year when they celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. With Christmas the gift of giving ties back to the holy holiday that we are approaching. To everyone and all the Christians throughout the Northern Territory, I wish you all a merry Christmas and hope that the spirit of giving flows through our community.

To my colleagues, thank you for the year. It has been one of the most remarkable journeys of my life so far. Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to be here with you, and I thank you for your work. To the opposition and the crossbench members, I wish you a merry Christmas. May you enjoy time with your families and loved ones and enjoy the children in our lives as Santa comes to see them.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.