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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

EDUCATION STANDARDS AND REGISTRATION BOARD BILL
Serial 69

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Education Standards and Registration Board Bill 2026, Serial 69, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The NT Government is taking action to rebuild the economy, including implementing regulatory reforms to reduce red tape, with an emphasis on integrity. In line with this commitment, the Department of Education and Training undertook the review of the Northern Territory Board of Studies and Teacher Registration Board to consider the operation and governance of these boards and, potentially, efficiency in combining their functions.

The review incorporated targeted consultation through facilitated workshops with members of the NT Board of Studies and Teacher Registration Board. The review identified opportunities to modernise governance arrangements, remove duplication and strengthen accountability across the education system.

The review recommends reform to establish a new independent statutory board to replace and amalgamate the NT Board of Studies and the Teacher Registration Board. The Education Standards and Registration Board Bill proposes amendments to implement the recommendations of the review.

While this Bill will deliver increased efficiency and greater accountability, at its core this is a reform agenda seeking to improve outcomes for students and ensure high-quality teaching across all schools in the Territory.

The Bill establishes a new principal Act, the Education Standards and Registration Board Act 2026. The Act creates the Education Standards and Registration Board as a single statutory board, bringing together the functions and powers currently exercised by the NT Board of Studies and the TRB. In doing so, it delivers an integrated framework for curriculum, student assessment and certification and the regulation of the teaching profession.

The Bill sets a clear statutory objective to support a system-wide approach to quality education and teaching standards in the Territory. It provides for the appointment of a merit-based skills-focused board with the expertise necessary to deliver on this objective, supported by cross-sector representation and contemporary governance and administrative arrangements. It also builds upon the first tranche of reforms to the *Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Act 2004* that provided streamlining provisions and clarified governance arrangements.

This reform aligns with approaches adopted in other jurisdictions, including New South Wales and Tasmania, where curriculum and teacher regulation functions are combined. It is also consistent with national reform efforts to consolidate bodies responsible for curriculum, assessment, teaching standards and education research into a single teaching and learning commission.

By combining the functions of curriculum policy and teacher registration into one statutory board, this Bill will strengthen coordination and efficiency across the NT education system, ensuring a more cohesive and effective regulatory framework.

The Bill clearly articulates the role and purpose of the Education Standards and Registration Board through its objective to ensure that school curriculum assessment frameworks, teaching standards and regulatory standards are developed, implemented and monitored in a manner that promotes improved student learning outcomes while maintaining flexibility across the school, education and teaching sector.

The Bill also modernises and consolidates the existing statutory functions, establishing a clear and coherent remit for the board.

This Bill ensures the new Education Standards and Registration Board will have independence and regulatory integrity.

In December 2025 amendments were made to the *Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Act 2004* to clarify the relationship between the Teacher Registration Board, the department and the minister. The Bill maintains these provisions, which include:

- the department's responsibility to ensure the board is appropriately staffed
- the minister's responsibility to set policy, performance and accountability expectations
- provisions that prevent ministerial and departmental interference with respect to the board's power to regulate the teaching profession in accordance with the *Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Act*.

The Bill strengthens the governance arrangements associated with registering and regulating the teaching profession across the Territory.

A key recommendation of the review is the need to clearly delineate the board's strategic oversight functions from its operational responsibilities in order to improve regulatory efficiency and governance focus. Under the current legislative framework, the Teacher Registration Board is required to exercise a broad range of functions directly, which can constrain its ability to operate efficiently and limits its capacity to focus on higher-order strategic objectives. This concentration of decision-making at the board level has, in practice, reduced flexibility and delays the timeliness of routine regulatory decision-making.

This Bill addresses these limitations by expressing enabling the Education Standards and Registration Board to delegate its functions and powers to members of the board, committees of the board, the director and staff of the office of the board.

By establishing a clear and effective delegation framework, this Bill supports more timely and efficient regulatory decision-making, while allowing the board to focus on strategic leadership, policy direction and system oversight, consistent with contemporary best-practice governance arrangements.

It is key to the success of this reform that the composition of the new board has the right mix of skills and expertise required to carry out its objectives.

Therefore, the Bill provides for a skills-based board with a minimum of seven members appointed by the minister based on their skills and expertise in areas including:

- education system, school and student performance
- best-practice teaching and learning
- workforce development
- law or regulatory practice
- corporate governance.

The Bill also allows for these skill sets to be expanded by the minister as required to achieve the board's objectives, without the need for legislative reform.

In addition to the skills-based appointments, the Bill provides for the Education Standards and Registration Board to access expertise through the establishment of committees, which may also be delegated functions. Industry advisers may also be appointed to the board where additional specialist expertise is required.

Further to this, the government recognises that the Northern Territory education system consists of a range of key education providers and stakeholders, including government and non-government education sectors, initial teacher education providers, the vocational education and training sector, the early childhood sector, peak bodies and unions. For this reason, the Bill requires that the Education Standards and Registration Board will cooperate and consult with such bodies to ensure a system-wide approach is applied to achieving its objectives.

This Bill provides for a structured transition from the existing boards to the new Education Standards and Registration Board.

Interim provisions will allow for the extension of current board appointments to ensure continuity of operations during the transition period. This acknowledges the lead time required to establish the new board and seeks to minimise disruptions to teachers and schools with peak teacher registration renewals occurring between September and January.

This approach ensures that high-volume processing is managed within established systems and processes, thereby reducing the likelihood of any adverse impacts on workforce availability at the commencement of the 2027 school year.

The Bill also makes a number of consequential amendments to:

- repeal provisions establishing the Northern Territory Board of Studies and the Teacher Registration Board, transferring their functions to the new board

- recognise the Education Standards and Registration Board as the responsible authority for curriculum, certification and teacher regulation across relevant education legislation.

This Bill represents a significant step forward in strengthening the governance, quality and performance of education in the Northern Territory. It establishes a modern, integrated and robust framework to support both student achievement and teacher excellence.

I commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 20 August 2026.

Motion agreed to.

YOUTH JUSTICE AND CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 66

Continued from 13 May 2026.

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

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, every Territorian should expect that their child, parent, cousin or sibling will be safe when they come into contact with the police or the justice system. That expectation should apply regardless of their background, where they live and their age. It should apply to victims of crime, police officers, Corrections workers and frontline staff. It must also apply to children and young people who are arrested, interviewed, detained or otherwise brought into contact with the justice system.

A justice system proves its strength not only through how it responds to wrongdoing but whether it acts lawfully, fairly and safely, particularly when dealing with vulnerable people. Territorians need confidence that their government takes these responsibilities seriously. They need to know that decisions affecting the rights, safety and dignity of children are based on evidence, proper consultation and in the clear interests of community safety.

Unfortunately, that is not what we see in this Bill. Instead of investing in programs, services and therapeutic supports that can prevent offending and change behaviour, the CLP continues to reach for the same narrow responses of more police powers, more use of force, longer periods in unsuitable police watch houses, fewer safeguards for children during police interviews and broad powers to search children in custody.

These amendments do not address the underlying causes of offending. They do not improve rehabilitation. They do not provide police or Corrections officers with the properly resourced services they need to manage children safely, and they do not give the community confidence that these powers will be used consistently, proportionately or with appropriate oversight.

I served as a Northern Territory Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. I understand that the government has a responsibility to keep the community safety and that difficult and dangerous work is often undertaken by police officers, Corrections workers and frontline staff. I also understand that good justice policy cannot be reduced to those who sound the toughest in a media conference. Justice policy must be lawful and evidence based and must protect the community, support the workforce and reduce the likelihood of further reoffending.

This parliament has seen many Bills. When we were in government we worked to expand Community Courts, strengthen Aboriginal law and justice groups and establish alternatives to custody, as well as improve bail

support accommodation. We recognise that there must be consequences for offending, but that the consequences alone will not change one person's behaviour.

We need to understand that if governments want to reduce crime, they must also address the conditions that contribute to offending, including homelessness, disengagement from education, family violence, trauma, disability, alcohol and other drug dependency, poor mental health, a lack of employment and training opportunities and disconnection from family and community. That is not making excuses; it is understanding what works.

A justice system that only processes people through police stations, courtrooms and detention centres without addressing those issues will continue to see the same people revolving through its doors. That is why I have consistently said that jailing is failing when imprisonment is not accompanied with genuine rehabilitation, education, treatment and support. The same principles apply to youth justice. A child who enters the justice system should leave it with a better chance of living safely and positively, not with more trauma, disconnection or an increased likelihood of reoffending.

One of the most concerning elements of this Bill is the expansion of police powers to conduct interviews with children without a trusted adult or support person present. The contradiction between the government's position in yesterday's debate and its position today could not be clearer. Yesterday the government spoke about the importance of children having supportive adults around them when they are experiencing difficult circumstances. Today this government is legislating to remove that support during one of the most stressful and legally significant experiences a child will ever face—an interview with police. It is becoming difficult to understand which children the government believes deserves support and which children it believes do not.

Children are not simply smaller adults; they have different levels of development, comprehension and emotional regulation. Some children who come into contact with the justice system have cognitive disabilities, hearing difficulties, language barriers, mental health concerns or neurological development conditions. Many have experienced significant trauma, and some cannot understand why they are being interviewed. Some may not understand the consequences of what they are saying, and others may want to agree with an adult in authority simply because they are frightened and want the interview to end. Others may struggle to communicate clearly or follow complex legal information.

These vulnerabilities become even more serious during a police interview when stress is heightened, trust may be low and the child may be uncertain about what is happening. A supportive person is not merely an observer; they help the child understand the process, support communication, provide reassurance, ask questions and assist the child to understand the legal advice and choices available to them. Most importantly, their presence gives the child confidence that someone is in their corner.

These safeguards exist because children are more vulnerable than adults when dealing with police and legal procedures. NAAJA has rightly raised concerns about the lack of clarity on what constitutes a serious or urgent public safety matter. The proposed power is extremely broad. It may apply when a police officer believes a child has knowledge of an offence, even if that child has not committed an offence or is not accused of committing one. This creates a risk that children could be exposed to unnecessary and harmful interactions with police and police stations.

It also risks increasing surveillance of vulnerable children and deepening mistrust between communities and authorities. Children in the justice system already struggle to have adequate access to lawyers and timely provisions of supports like healthcare. It is unclear why the government is not addressing these real and pressing concerns instead.

Territory Labor does not support denying a child access to a trusted adult during an urgent interview with police. Urgency should not be an excuse for removing fundamental safeguards. The more serious and urgent the circumstance the more important it is that the interview is conducted properly and that the information obtained is reliable. Removing safeguards may ultimately undermine an investigation rather than strengthen it. The government has not demonstrated why the existing protections are preventing police from performing their duties. It has not been demonstrated that less harmful alternatives were properly considered, and it has not been adequately defined the circumstance in which this extraordinary power should be used. For those reasons we oppose these provisions.

We also oppose the provision allowing children to be held in police watch house cells for up to 48 hours. Police watch house cells are not youth detention centres or therapeutic facilities. They are not designed for the developmental needs of children, and they are not suitable environments for children to spend extended periods of time. Children who enter custody frequently have complex backgrounds and needs. Many have

experienced adverse childhood experiences, including violence, neglect, homelessness, family disruption and exposure to alcohol and other drugs.

Placing those children in an environment that is not child friendly, age appropriate or therapeutic, risks causing further harm and re-traumatisation. Children are best managed in environments that help them regulate their behaviour. They need access to properly trained staff, education, healthcare, legal assistance, family contact and culturally appropriate support. They need an environment that is safe, structured and focused on rehabilitation. A police watch house cell cannot provide the full range of supports expected within a youth detention setting.

This is not a criticism of police. Our police officers undertake an incredibly difficult job and remain deeply committed to community safety. Police should not be expected to operate makeshift youth detention facilities because the government has failed to provide stable and suitable infrastructure, staffing and services.

This Bill shifts responsibilities to police without demonstrating the watch house facilities, staffing models, training or independent oversight necessary to safely accommodate children for longer periods before the government permits children to be held in police watch house cells for up to 48 hours.

Territorians should reasonably expect minimum standards to be developed. What health assessments will occur? What mental health and disability screening will be available? What access will children have to lawyers, family members and support people? How will cultural and language barriers be addressed? What happens if a child is at risk of self-harm? What complaint mechanisms will be available? How will those mechanisms be explained to a child in an age-appropriate way? What independent body will inspect and monitor these facilities, and how will records be kept and publicly recorded? What proactive work has the government undertaken to identify risks before a child suffers serious harm?

These are not administrative details; they are fundamental safety questions. Yet again, the CLP is pushing through legislative change before undertaking the work required to ensure it can be implemented safely, appropriately and fairly. Territory Labor believes that the government can and must do better than placing children in police watch house cells for extended periods.

This Bill also expands the ability for Corrections staff to use force against a child to prevent risk of escape. The use of force against a child must always be a measure of last resort. There may be circumstances where staff are required to act immediately to protect a child, another detainee, a staff member or the community. We acknowledge that reality; however, the use of force must be necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the actual risk. It must be accompanied by strict reporting requirements, proper oversight and independent scrutiny. Staff should receive ongoing training in trauma-informed practice, deescalation, community and age-appropriate behaviour management. The explanatory material indicates that it is the intention to allow staff to use force where necessary to prevent an escape outside of a youth detention centre.

If that is the purpose, why does the legislation not clearly restrict the power to those circumstances? Why are the necessary limitations not included in the Bill? Why is the government relying on broad language rather than clear safeguards? The CLP expanded the use of force powers under the *Youth Justice Act* last year. The government still has not transparently reported on how those powers have been used. We do not have clear information about the frequency of incidents, the circumstances surrounding them or what injuries may have occurred. It remains unclear what additional training staff received when those powers were expanded, and it remains unclear what training will accompany these amendments.

The government is asking parliament to broaden powers without providing adequate evidence about those existing powers and how they are operating. That is not good legislative practice. It is not transparent, and it does not build public confidence.

The amendments concerning searches of children in detention are also deeply concerning. The Bill expands a circumstance in which the child can be searched or patted down inside and outside a youth detention centre. The government proposes to rely on broad grounds to instigate a search, such as a belief that a child possesses a prohibited item. However, the Bill lacks sufficient clarity about what constitutes a reliable belief that any item may pose a threat.

Vague legislative language creates a risk for inconsistent application. It also makes effective oversight and accountability more difficult. Any search of a child must be lawful, reasonable and proportionate to the risk. It must be conducted in the least intrusive manner, and it must respect the inherit dignity of the child. The proposed definition would allow Corrections staff to feel clothing from the outside and lift and feel both sides

of the child's waist band. This may include contact around the child's underwear. We are talking about children who may be as young as 10. Is this what you want or would expect to happen to your child?

We are talking about children in an environment where there is an enormous power imbalance. We are talking about children who may have previously experienced physical or sexual abuse. Those circumstances demand the strongest safeguards, not weaker ones. The government has not demonstrated an evidence base for these amendments. How many clothes searches have been conducted on children in detention centres during the past year? How many were supported by documented risk assessment? How many resulted in contraband being located, and were complaints ever made? What was the review? Has the review been taken around these existing search practices?

What consultation occurred with children, families, legal services, Aboriginal organisations and health professionals as well as youth justice experts? What consideration was given to less intrusive alternatives, including modern body scanning technology? The government should provide that evidence before asking this parliament to approve a significant expansion of search powers. I believe the existing legislation is sufficient. We will not support amendments that weaken protections for vulnerable children without evidence that the change is necessary, proportionate and properly safeguarded.

I want to be clear about the opposition's position. We value our police officers, Corrections officers, youth justice workers and every frontline employee who turns up each day to work in difficult and demanding environments. They deserve to be safe at work. They deserve high-quality training, proper staffing levels, safe infrastructure, access to specialist supports and laws that are clear, workable and based on evidence.

The safety of workers and the rights of children should not be treated as opposing objectives. A properly designed youth justice system should protect both. Well-trained staff working in suitable facilities with access to therapeutic professionals will be safer than workers left to manage complex children in unsuitable environments. Clear procedures, effective de-escalation training, appropriate staffing, education, rehabilitation and behavioural change programs reduce risk. Access to mental health, disability and alcohol and other drug services reduces risk. Strong partnerships with families, communities and Aboriginal organisations reduce risk. The government cannot continue to substitute expanded coercive powers for investment in the system itself.

Youth justice must ultimately be about preventing further harm to victims. That means holding young people accountable while also changing the behaviour that led to the offending. It means intervening early; getting children back into education; supporting families before they reach crisis point; therapeutic programs; life skills programs; cultural programs; properly supervised alternatives to detention; working with Aboriginal organisations, law and justice groups, elders and communities; having safe bail accommodation and genuine rehabilitation pathways; and ensuring that children leave detention having somewhere safe to live, something meaningful to do and people around them who will support them to succeed. Releasing a young person from detention without stable housing, education, training, treatment or ongoing support is not a plan for community safety; it is a plan for that child to return to the justice system.

We should measure success by whether offending falls, fewer people become victims and young people successfully integrate back into their communities. We should not measure success simply by the number of laws passed, the number of children detained or the number of powers given to authorities.

The CLP has presented these amendments as though weakening protections will automatically make the community unsafe. Holding children in a watch house for a longer period does not mean that the child will not reoffend. Interviewing a vulnerable child without a trusted adult does not create trust in the justice system. Broadening the use-of-force powers without transparency does not improve accountability. Allowing more intrusive searches without clear evidence or safeguards does not deliver rehabilitation.

We support a justice system that is firm, fair and focused on outcomes; police and Corrections workers creating safety in their workplaces; consequences for offending; protection for victims; and keeping the community safe. However, we will not support poorly designed legislation that removes safeguards from children, expands coercive powers without a proper evidence base and fails to address the underlying weaknesses in the youth justice system.

The government should withdraw these provisions and undertake genuine consultation with people who understand this system. That includes police and Corrections officers; legal services; Aboriginal organisations; health, disability and youth specialists; children, families and communities; and, importantly, the children and young people with lived experience of the justice system.

Good governance requires more than announcing tough laws; it requires listening, evidence, transparency and accountability and, above all, the courage to invest in approaches that prevent crime rather than merely respond after the damage has already been done.

Every Territorian deserves to be safe; every worker deserves to be safe; every victim deserves justice and support; and every child who enters the justice system should be given a genuine opportunity to take responsibility, change direction and live a better life. That is what an effective justice system should achieve. This Bill does not achieve it.

For those reasons, Territory Labor will not support the Bill.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for his nice and thoughtful, if not misguided, speech.

The Territory has seen the Member for Gwoja's vision for the youth justice system. The Territory has seen what the Labor vision for it is, and Territorians know that they cannot trust Labor.

When the Member for Gwoja talked about urgent protected interviews he left out one salient fact: no information gathered from anything that the alleged offender has said in a protected interview or an urgent protected interview can be used against them in criminal or civil proceedings. The purpose of these interviews is to give the police the power to ask, 'Hey, you had a machete before; where is the machete?' It is not a detailed and thorough interview about what happened in the crime, which is when they will have a support person and a lawyer; it is about making sure that the police on the ground can do their jobs to keep the community safe. Any information garnered in that voluntary protected interview—voluntary—cannot be used later in court. It is not about taking away the rights of the children and the rights of the offenders; it is about ensuring that the police have the powers to do their job.

The Member for Gwoja talked about the need to do more consultation, but we consulted. We talked to the police, the Police Association and the commissioner. We asked them what they need. This was one of their top items. They need the ability to intervene early at the scene of the crime—as soon as possible—to ensure that no further damage can be done.

There are still strong safeguards for those young people, with the youth having to be told of their right to silence and that any information given in those interviews cannot be used against them. They must be informed of and supported to access legal advice and representation. A protected interview cannot proceed without a support person present, and neither type of interview can proceed if the young person chooses to remain silent. It is entirely voluntary.

The Member for Gwoja talked about increased use of force. He may not have the confidence in our hardworking Corrections officers and police officers to do the right thing, but I do. Section 154 clarifies that reasonable force can be used to prevent escapes or attempted escapes, to arrest a detainee and to escort or transfer detainees between locations. It confirms that these powers apply when they are outside of a detention centre, including when they are on medical transport between appointments, when escorted out in the community and when being returned to custody after an absence.

This is not about illegal beatings or an unnecessary use of force; this is about a reasonable attempt to say, 'Hey, you cannot walk out the door. You have to get down from that fence.' It is not saying willy-nilly, 'Go out there and commit brutality', which is still illegal under the legislation; it is about ensuring that the Corrections officers have the powers they need to keep Territorians safe.

In regard to the search powers, I thought it was interesting that the Member for Gwoja brought up mental health and the risk to the youths, but a lot of the time when Corrections officers conduct searches it is to prevent self-harm and ensure that weapons, knives and other sharp objects are not taken back to the cells where the biggest risk is to the youth themselves. It is to prevent self-harm and attacks on other inmates and Corrections staff. It is not an unnecessary form of punishment. It is about making sure that if there are reasonable grounds to suggest that the offenders—or the incarcerated—might have an object on them and there is a reasonable suspicion, they can intervene, do a pat down and take away anything that could threaten the safety of the detention centre, detainees, staff, other inmates or, indeed, the offender.

We heard the Member for Gwoja talk about police watch houses and the intake and transfer facilities that will be established. The intent of the intake and transfer facility is as a short-term facility to hold youths for the shortest time reasonably necessary before they can be transferred to a youth detention centre. It is not a replacement for youth detention centres; it is a practical temporary custody option. Unfortunately, not all

offending takes place on Monday at 8 am. The courts might not be open, the prisoner cannot be transported, there might not be a flight or it could be in the middle of a cyclone. Not everyone times their offending to be the best time for immediate transfer to a youth detention centre. This gives a sensible legal framework to make sure that we have a mechanism for where we can hold youths.

The Member for Gwoja talked about the immunity protections for police officers. All this Bill does is clarify that police officers are covered by the same good-faith immunity protections that already apply to our Corrections staff under the *Youth Justice Act*. It is about consistency and certainty in how the Act operates. It is not about expanding police powers; it is about making sure police officers performing similar functions under the *Youth Justice Act* are covered.

Corrections staff are already covered under these same good-faith limits on immunity. Immunity applies only when officers are acting honestly, exercising powers lawfully, acting for a proper purpose and during their official *Youth Justice Act* duties. It does not protect conduct that is dishonest, malicious, abusive or outside a police officer's lawful authority. It is not creating or expanding police powers under the *Youth Justice Act*. It does not weaken, remove or bypass existing oversight. It does not prevent investigation or prosecution of alleged misconduct. All existing accountability and integrity mechanisms remain fully in place.

It aligns Corrections staff and police to make sure that under the same Act they have the same protected powers to make sure that when they are doing their job in good faith, they are protected under law as everyone would expect. If they step out of that, the same consequences apply.

We heard the Member for Gwoja talk about the need for investment, preventive action and rehabilitation. There is fantastic news, Member for Gwoja: we are actually doing all of that. The reform in the Bill is not mutually exclusive, with the government taking other actions. We are investing in our prisons and rehabilitation programs. The Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, amongst other portfolios, has been working hard. The Circuit Breaker Program is early intervention that is producing tremendous results with a low failure rate. The minister for Education is ensuring that children go to school, which is an important step in maintaining social cohesion.

It is a fundamental difference between those on this side of the Chamber and those opposite that they believe the number one priority should always be the youth offender and not community safety. They get up and say the same magic words, 'We want everyone to be safe', but every time they have the chance to do something about it, they throw up their hands and oppose it.

They opposed the classification of Corrections workers as frontline workers. Those opposite do not believe those workers should be safe doing their jobs. They do not believe there should be repercussions for hitting a prison officer in the head; on this side, we do.

When they talk about the need for community safety and say that this Bill will not make the community safe, I ask: is it just because the CLP introduced it? If the Member for Gwoja had introduced this Bill four or five years ago, would you have opposed it then? Probably not. Instead, because it has been brought in by the Finocchiaro CLP government, it must be evil and bad. However, there is nothing in this Bill that does not pass the pub test. There is nothing in this Bill that weakens protections for youth offenders or expands police powers to what they do not need to do their job. Nothing in this Bill is excessive, rushed or fundamentally so abhorrent that the Labor opposition should be opposing it.

This Bill makes sense, and if it was not introduced by the CLP Finocchiaro government I believe every member of the Labor Caucus, if they had not been told to oppose everything, would be voting for this Bill. Labor is meant to be the party of the unions and of protecting workers, ensuring that our Corrections staff and police are safe. Instead, they are likely to oppose this. They will drag it out for a little bit this afternoon. They will go home and think, 'We did a great job. We held the CLP government to account.' That will be the line on Friday on The Week That Was. In reality, all they do is pat themselves on the back and do nothing to keep the Territory safe. We all know, and Territorians know, that you cannot trust Labor.

Mr MALEY (Corrections)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I will close on this because we know the Member for Goyder …

Ms UIBO: Excuse me, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Could you pause, minister? You missed the call, Opposition Leader.

Ms UIBO: I thought the Member for Drysdale was standing.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

Mr MALEY: The Member for Goyder did a great job responding, because he was saying that Labor has no plan or idea.

Ms Uibo: So now we are being gagged and cannot actually debate.

Madam SPEAKER: Please pause, minister. In this Chamber, when you want to speak, you stand. There was plenty of time for you to stand, Opposition Leader.

Ms Uibo: It was a few seconds, and you gave leniency this morning to other people because we had a late night last night.

Madam SPEAKER: I gave the call to the minister. I said, 'Minister, in closing'.

Ms Uibo: It is important legislation to debate.

Madam SPEAKER: And you should have stood to speak. Now take your seat, and the minister will continue.

Ms Uibo: It looked like someone else was standing.

EXCLUSION OF MEMBER
Member for Arnhem

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Arnhem, please leave the Chamber. You are being argumentative. You were given an opportunity to stand and speak, and you did not. Then I gave the minister the call.

Ms Uibo: You usually give other people leniency to do that.

Madam SPEAKER: To be honest, a message to all members in this Chamber: you do not stand to speak generally in a reasonable timeframe—there is always a delay.

Ms Uibo: It was three seconds; I did not realise that was not reasonable.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not acceptable.

Ms Uibo: Maybe you should have a timeframe in the standing orders for when we are allowed to stand.

Madam SPEAKER: Do you want me to name you, Opposition Leader? I asked you to leave, in silence, for one hour.

Mr MALEY: Madam Speaker, maybe we should move a motion that she named. She is arguing against you. She has not left silently. She is clearly speaking against the rules.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, please take your seat. The Opposition Leader is leaving the Chamber. She has been argumentative. I will not name her at this point.

Mr MALEY: I was going to talk about what the Member for Gwoja spoke about, but the Member for Goyder did a great job. It highlights that the previous Labor government had no plan or idea to keep the community safe.

The CLP was elected in August 2024 with a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. This legislation helps us keep the community safe. It rebuilds the economy and restores our lifestyle.

The Member for Gwoja spoke about a range of things that could and should be done to help youth justice and these young offenders. He forgot to say that he had eight years to do all that. Those opposite chose not to do it. They made a decision not to. We have been in office for just under two years, and we are making the tough decisions. Labor cannot be trusted to keep the economy going, restore our lifestyle and reduce crime.

The Member for Gwoja made a lot of motherhood statements about health and wellbeing, and they are all good points. He told us today that he was the Attorney-General, but he forgot to tell the Assembly that he

chose to sit there and put prisoners in watch houses for months. He just gave a lecture on how bad and nasty it is, yet he forgot to say that he, as Attorney-General, and his government did that. When we came to office in August we turned it around and got prisoners out of watch houses. It is hypocritical of the previous Labor government members to lecture us, as they did it. We are talking about 48 hours, and the Member for Gwoja did it for months. Labor cannot be trusted on this matter.

The Member for Gwoja asked how success can be measured. The 10,000 less victims is a measure of success. They are no longer victims of crime because of the actions of this CLP government, and it shows that the crime stats, which we deal with on a monthly basis, are back to the 2017 level. The Labor government came to office in 2016, and the stats increased through the roof. For eight years we had chaos, carnage on the streets, prisoners in watch houses and lack of investment across the prison estate. As I mentioned yesterday, $35m was spent on Back on Track for approximately 35 young offenders. The Labor government had no plan and cannot be trusted.

This Bill makes targeted and practical amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 2005* and the Criminal Code to strengthen the operation of the youth justice system, enhance community safety and provide clearer statutory authority for frontline police and youth justice staff while maintaining appropriate safeguards for children. These amendments respond to operational experiences across the youth justice system and are intended to improve clarity, consistency and effectiveness in areas where existing legislative arrangements have proven to be insufficient or uncertain.

The Bill has four key objectives. The first introduces a protective interview framework for young people, including an urgent protected interview mechanism where there is a serious or urgent public safety concern. The Member for Gwoja spoke about that, but this is a voluntary process. It is not taking away those safeguards but making sure that we can stop crime on the streets.

If there is a firearm in a car that has been stolen and someone knows, the police can get that information and secure the firearm before it becomes dangerous as a weapon or someone gets injured. It also helps if a car has been left somewhere, as the police can recover the vehicle before it becomes a lethal weapon. We have had experiences where young people have been in a vehicle rollover and been hurt or killed. Police can now get that vehicle immediately and then continue their investigation to charge people. People cannot break into a house and steal a car or threaten someone at a service station with a knife and take a car. The police can stop that. This legislation allows police to be more proactive and respond quickly.

There may be a serious and urgent public safety concern with, for example, a Toyota HiLux or LandCruiser being driven dangerously, loaded with young people with no seatbelts, driving on the wrong side of the road. We do not know whether these people can drive, have a licence or are affected by alcohol or drugs. I challenge the Member for Gwoja to imagine if it is one of his friends or family members driving on the right side of the road, doing the right thing, and a stolen motor vehicle runs into them and hurts them. That vehicle could be intercepted earlier if the police have the information.

We read in the media about when a vehicle gets stolen and young offenders run; the police might be lucky to catch one offender, and they may want to participate in a protected interview to help the police stop the offending, stop people getting hurt and stop the young people hurting themselves or their friends. That is what this legislation is about.

The second objective establishes a clear statutory basis for intake and transfer facilities to support the safe and lawful reception and movement of detained young people.

Third, it clarifies and strengthens provisions relating to detention, escort, transfer and search powers under the *Youth Justice Act*.

Finally, it amends the Criminal Code to ensure that Corrections staff who work within the prison or detention centre and are directly responsible for the safety and security of prisoners and detainees are appropriately protected under the assault offence provisions. These people have the right to go to work and come home safely to their family and friends.

We on this side of the House support that. Clearly, Labor does not support strengthening the safety of people going to work, and that is because Labor cannot be trusted.

I have spoken about the protected interviews and the urgent protected interviews and the reason behind them. Like the Member for Goyder said, this is a voluntary process. It cannot be used against them as

evidence in court. I am the first person, based on my previous experience, who would be up in arms about the right to remain silent. This gives them that.

We must balance that with the right to protect people from themselves and to protect others from dangerous situations—for example, the stolen vehicle I spoke about. Imagine if someone ran into you and killed or put in hospital your son, daughter, brother, sister or mother. Think about how upset you would be if you knew that the police had an opportunity to stop that. Labor members are trying to stop the police from getting an opportunity to save someone. To anyone listening: Labor does not support rules and legislation that will help the police do their job to protect Territorians.

Regarding police interviews and temporary detention, this Bill makes amendments to section 18 to ensure that there are clear rules. This Bill says that young offenders can be held in a police station or a watch house for up to 48 hours when it is not reasonable or practical to transfer that detainee to another facility. The Member for Goyder did a great job explaining this. If there is a cyclone, for example, or these crimes are not committed at 8 am when someone can take them to a detention centre or those areas are not nearby—the Territory is a huge place; Barkly is a massive electorate. These crimes can occur at all hours of the day or night in all locations across the Northern Territory.

This is about keeping young offenders and the community safe. I am surprised that the Member for Gwoja does not want to keep young people safe. I am surprised that he does not want keep Territorians safe by supporting this legislation. He simply cannot be trusted.

This Bill strengthens intake and transfer facilities. These facilities are intended to provide a place where detainees can be temporarily held while awaiting transfer to a detention centre or between facilities. The Bill provides for ministerial approval of intake and transfer facilities, the appointment and powers of superintendents, detainee welfare responsibilities and applications. This framework ensures that young people held in intake and transfer facilities continue to benefit from established safeguards and standards.

The Member for Gwoja spoke about their rights and visitation; this allows that to continue to happen. For example, in Alice Springs, we want the young offenders to come to Holtze because that is where they get the wraparound services and the intervention they need. This government supports that, whereas the opposition does not support those wraparound services for some reason. It does not support young people getting the help they need.

This allows young detainees to stay in Alice Springs overnight; otherwise, they must transfer all the way up and back because we have to make sure they are available to attend court and have access to the rehabilitation and treatment programs. It is a balancing act, and we support getting the balance right because we want young offenders to have wraparound services, be safe and not harm the community, unlike Labor which does not support keeping these young people and the community safe.

The Member for Gwoja gave big motherhood statements about how Labor supports and wants to make sure that we have safeguards against assaults on Corrections workers. This is an opportunity for those opposite to put their words into action. If they believe that, they will support this legislation because that is what it does. It will be interesting to see when we vote later whether it is just motherhood statements and more untrustworthy words and actions from those opposite. Will they support workers in the Northern Territory? When we vote on this it will be a test whether the motherhood statements made by those opposite are only words or whether they will vote to protect Territory workers.

The Member for Gwoja, in his previous life, worked in Corrections. The Treasurer has worked in Corrections facilities. He knows how important and dangerous that work is. We want to support Corrections workers. It will be interesting to see how the Member for Gwoja votes and whether he supports Territory workers. His words are words, but the action he takes will be looked at and held to account by Territorians.

This is an important part of keeping the community and workers safe. The CLP was elected to keep the community safe, reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. The Bills that we introduce in this House do that. We are laser focused on making sure that the Territory is a better place to live, work and come home safely, invest, raise a family and drive down the street and not have to touch wood and cross my fingers that a ute load of young offenders will not crash into me and hurt me or my family. This is what this legislation does.

Territorians will be watching those opposite and asking: do you support community safety, Territorians and families? Or will you throw all that to the side, not listen to your community and not support Territorians and the place where you live?

and on heart, I can say that I was born here, live here and intend to stay and raise my family here. I want to make sure that the Territory is the best place to raise a family. I support this legislation because that is what it does.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr PAECH: Can you confirm when the legislation is expected to commence or be gazetted?

Mr MALEY: In September this year.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr PAECH: Can you provide us with an example of what is meant by 'has knowledge in relation to an offence' as set out in section 17A(1)(c)?

Mr MALEY: That will be case by case, based on the police investigation and the circumstances surrounding the particular event that police are investigating of a crime that may have occurred.

Mr PAECH: What type of information will be relied on as evidence? Is it physical evidence or speculation on social media?

Mr MALEY: It will be case by case and whatever the police do to form a view. They have to form a reasonable set of circumstances—a reasonable view. That is what police do to investigate any crime. They need reasonable grounds for it.

Mr PAECH: How will police record what evidence they are relying on in relation to section 17A(1)(c)?

Mr MALEY: Bodycam and written notes.

Mr PAECH: What provisions are in place to ensure that officers adequately comply with section 17A(4) given the young people who interact with the justice system often have developmental, cognitive and behavioural challenges, including unmet disability and health needs?

Mr MALEY: The police undergo a difficult training program. They are experienced police officers. If there is a fresh police officer, from my experience, they always have a senior police officer. The answer is that they rely on their experience as police officers.

Mr PAECH: I understand that you are not the Police minister. Do you have a list of available resources that are available to police which support effective age-appropriate and trauma-informed communication regarding what happens during a protected interview?

Mr MALEY: That is an operational matter. The police deal with criminals every day. They do a great job. I clearly support the police, and I do not think you do.

Mr PAECH: What training will be provided to officers on the appropriate use of section 17B, which is the urgency threshold? What training will be provided on gaining informed consent from a child in these circumstances?

Mr MALEY: The same training they get now to become a police officer.

Mr PAECH: Is there no additional training? Are you saying that it is already happening?

Mr MALEY: This is operational. The police will change their operations to make sure they comply with the legislation, as they do with all pieces of legislation as they get changed.

Mr PAECH: What evidence supports the inclusion of section 17A(6)?

Mr MALEY: It came from a review from New South Wales. The research indicates that protected interviews protect young people from statements being used against them, hereby removing systemic barriers for diversion programs. It is about the diversion pathways.

Mr PAECH: I understand the policy intent behind section 17A is to enable referrals to diversion where appropriate. Can you explain how this will work if section 17A protects children from having the information they provide used against them and the diversion programs typically requiring an admission or a finding of guilt?

Mr MALEY: The diversion program legislation has been changed. Clearly, you are not across it. You do not need a finding of guilt; it is about going through to try to divert and stop further offending.

Mr PAECH: Can you confirm that section 17B means it will be possible for any child to be questioned by police without their parent's knowledge?

Mr MALEY: Correct.

Mr PAECH: Why was a provision like section 17A(6) not included in section 17B?

Mr MALEY: This is in the moment. As I said in my wrapping up, this is about trying to give police information they need to stop that weapon or vehicle being used. This helps young offenders not to hurt themselves. The police may find someone on the side of the road and conduct the interview; it will be recorded by the body cam and in notes. They will say, 'Yes, that HiLux is around the corner two blocks down'. The police can go there, stop that offending and nip it in the bud to make sure that the community is safe and the young offenders do not hurt themselves as they move forward.

Mr PAECH: What evidence informed the drafting of section 17B?

Mr MALEY: There was research done in New South Wales and Queensland.

Mr PAECH: How will these amendments be communicated, especially to people in remote areas?

Mr MALEY: That will be part of the communications strategy undertaken by Police and Corrections and the government in general, because this is about trying to keep the community safe. There will be a range of work done, but it will be based on that.

J DAVIS: You said that the police would be wearing body cams when interviewing young people. Will legal representatives for the young person be provided with a transcript or recording of that interview?

Mr MALEY: If they request it. Remember, it cannot be admissible in court.

J DAVIS: I understand that.

I am not sure whether the Member for Gwoja asked this question. In terms of a serious and urgent matter concerning public safety—a broad threshold—how is public safety specifically defined in this context?

Mr MALEY: It will be done by the police operationally and case by case.

J DAVIS: There is no requirement for a legal representative to be present during an urgent protected interview. An urgent protected interview is done whether there is an undefined serious and urgent matter. Is that correct?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: The police have discretion to decide that?

Mr MALEY: Yes. It has to happen on the spot. As I mentioned, this section is designed to stop the commission of an offence and to stop young offenders from hurting themselves or their friends and other members of the community.

J DAVIS: Under section 17B, why is a young person not provided with a written notice after the urgent interview?

Mr MALEY: Because the interview cannot be used against them in court.

J DAVIS: So, they are not provided with a notice because it is not admissible to court?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: What records will be required to be kept from those interviews?

Mr MALEY: All their body cam footage and notes.

Mr GUYULA: I am also concerned about the sections of this Bill that allow children to be interviewed by police without an adult. There should always be adults present, and in many cases there should also be an interpreter present if police want to talk to a child. Police should have an in-house interpreter employed within their teams to ensure that children know their rights and can communicate clearly with police.

Mr MALEY: We are talking about 17B regarding urgent protected interviews. This occurs when there is a serious and urgent matter concerning public safety. There is a threshold, and the officer may invite the youth to participate in the urgent protected interview to obtain information about the offence. Any statement, confession and admission given in this urgent protected interview is not admissible in court. The officer must inform the youth of their right to silence.

When you talk about the right to silence—I think section 149 talks about doing an interview—the police officer must make sure the youth understands that. You do not have to talk when you are arrested as an adult, but if you have to give a statement—this can be anyone—the police must make sure they understand what they mean. It must be an informed interview. That youth has the right to remain silent, and even during the interview the youth can say, 'I've had enough. I don't want to talk', and the interview stops immediately.

It is up to the police training. They do it day-in, day-out. If they interview someone to take a statement, there is always a paragraph at the start to say, 'This is your own free will. It is by consent. You don't have to give a statement, but if you choose to, we will take that for you.' For the adults it is, 'This information can be used against you in court'. This information cannot be. This is about allowing the youth the opportunity, if they want to, because they do it voluntarily, and the police must explain it to them so they believe the young person understands what they have been told. They can use all sorts of methods to do that.

I have seen many police statements. The whole page at the beginning of the statement is reaffirming that you understand that you have the right to remain silent. I have seen statements where the police officers asked them to paraphrase it back. They can have a support person if they want to.

A lot of work is done. The police do this day-in, day-out as part of their everyday job. Every time they interview someone, they have to give them the, 'You have the right to remain silent' speech. They then make sure, based on their training, that person understands that. Otherwise, the whole statement is thrown out in court. I have argued that myself in court, and I was lucky enough to get it thrown out sometimes, and sometimes they get put in.

I praise the police officers; they do a great job in making sure, through their training, that the person understands their rights because they know someone like me would be in court saying, 'Hey, you didn't do that. My client didn't understand, so the rest of the information is not admissible.' They do a great job in that.

I hope that answers your question. This is about the police doing a job they do day-in, day-out. It can only be used for a serious and urgent matter concerning public safety.

J DAVIS: I understand from your answer earlier that parliament is giving police extra powers without clearly defining when those powers apply; it is left up to police discretion. This removes safeguards for children. I have heard your rationale, but safeguards for children exist for a reason; they were not created to make policing more difficult but because children are different.

Every parent understands why children need an adult beside them when they are questioned by the police. Every teacher and psychologist knows that. Children are more likely to tell adults what they think they want adults to hear even if it is made up. They are less likely to understand the consequences of what they say, especially when adults do not explain things properly. They are more likely to become frightened or confused in unfamiliar environments. That is why the law traditionally recognises that children should have the support of a parent, guardian or other responsible adult when dealing with police. It is not just about protecting legal

rights; it is about protecting children from making decisions that they do not fully understand and ensuring that any information obtained is reliable. It is about fairness.

I ask people to imagine that your 12-year-old receives a knock on the door from the police. Imagine that they are taken away for questioning and are interviewed alone because police have determined the matter is serious and urgent. Imagine that you do not know where your child is and that your child is frightened and does not understand what is happening. I suspect every parent in the Northern Territory would find that deeply worrying.

The question before us is not whether police should investigate serious crime—of course they should. The question is not whether young people should face consequences for their behaviour—of course they should. The question is whether removing safeguards for children will cause harm to vulnerable children and put them at risk. It is clear to me that removing the need for a guardian or lawyer to be present when children are questioned by police, as this Bill does, will cause harm.

You said that nothing said in these interviews will be admissible, but it does not mean that the information gathered as part of that interview will not potentially be used against other people or will not potentially be harmful to a child. Legal representatives have raised issues with me about how this information might be used in ways that are harmful to the child when they may not be aware of what the impact will be.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 8:

Mr PAECH: Under the existing legislation, children can be held in custody for up to 24 hours. What evidence supports the need to increase that limit to 48 hours when children are held in watch houses?

Mr MALEY: The need is that the Territory is a big place; there are unforeseen circumstances like storms and cyclones, and crimes are committed in different locations at different hours. This is about making sure that the police can keep young offenders and the community safe and transfer young offenders within 48 hours. They do not have to hold them for 48 hours; if they can get them there quicker, they will. This is about doing that on an urgent basis to make sure the young offender is safe and the community is safe. For example, during the recent floods in Katherine crimes were still committed, the roads were shut and the airport was flooded. This allows for those circumstances.

Again, I stress that if you are locked up you could be there for 48 hours, but, no matter what, the police—who do an amazing job—will get you to the correct location as soon as possible. This allows for weather events and distances we have in the Northern Territory.

Mr PAECH: How many instances in the 2025–26 financial year did children exceed the 24-hour limit in police watch house cells?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

Mr PAECH: I think it is. I am asking you to provide a basis for why you are extending to 48 hours. You have just given me excuses of external factors.

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

Mr PAECH: You refuse to answer.

What safeguards are in place to prevent section 25A(2), the 48-hour period, from becoming routine practice rather than a maximum limit only to be met in cases where other options cannot be considered to transfer a child?

Mr MALEY: The power is limited by statutory conditions, time constraints and is intended only for situations where immediate transfer is not reasonably practicable.

Mr PAECH: It is widely accepted that holding children in police watch houses for extended periods increases the risk of harm or re-traumatisation. What provisions will police implement to ensure children are kept safe while in custody, essentially in circumstances where children are held in close proximity to adults?

Mr MALEY: There will be a custody nurse assessment done. Again, it is 48 hours, but clear to the intake—they will be moving out as quickly as possible. All the police safeguards they have in relation to watch houses will now apply. I know your government put people in there for extended periods. I agree with what you are saying; if people are there for months and months—which is what Labor did—it is not good.

We are ensuring we can get these young offenders to a watch house safely or to an intake or detention centre as soon as possible based on the Territory's distance, weather events and those sorts of things.

Mr PAECH: What I am asking is what provisions will be put in place when, for instance, it is a weekend, there is a lot of heightened activity and the watch house is in a state of overwhelming capacity? What provisions will be put in place to keep the child away from adults?

Mr MALEY: That will be an operational issue to do with the police. The police do a great job.

Mr PAECH: No-one is disputing that; of course police do a good job.

I am also interested in what additional support services are given when young people are in over a weekend who normally would not be entering the watch house?

Mr MALEY: That is a question for the police. It is an operational matter.

Mr GUYULA: Again, I feel deeply disappointed that we are seeing legislation introduced that had no consultation with the community and no referral to the scrutiny committee. This Bill does many things, but the sections that I am most concerned by relate to the ability to hold children in watch houses, which should never happen. No child should be held in a watch house. They should not be kept with adults who are unknown to them or held in solitary confinement. Both of these situations are unsafe for children.

Yesterday, the government wanted to talk about child safety, but it does not seem to understand what is safe for children. A watch house is not safe for children. I visited watch houses, and what I saw was horrifying for grown adults. We should never subject anyone, especially our children, to that environment for any amount of time.

Mr MALEY: The government is not just picking up children and putting them in watch houses. These children commit a crime. The police investigate it, and the children get charged. It is a balancing act, and I fully accept that. The bottom line is that this is not just random kids getting put in watch houses; these kids are committing a crime. They are hurting themselves and other people and keeping the community unsafe.

It is the government's role to keep the community safe. We make no apologies. That is our role. We went to the election on that. Keeping the community safe is our number one priority.

J DAVIS: Will specific standard operating procedures be developed for this temporary detention? Will there be protocol for notifying an Aboriginal organisation when an Aboriginal child is held in these circumstances?

Mr MALEY: On the first part of your question, that is an operational matter. On the second part, that already happens.

J DAVIS: Under this new—that will continue?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: This is not argument against consequences of crime and keeping the community safe, but watch houses are not youth detention centres; they are not appropriate for young people. We have heard what is happening in watch houses. We have heard from the Northern Territory Ombudsman, who did not mince words when she concluded that no prisoner, regardless of the offence they are alleged to have committed, should be held in the conditions that we were seeing in watch houses earlier.

If those conditions are unacceptable for adults, how can they possibly be acceptable for children for an extended period?

Mr MALEY: Talk to your Labor friends about that. They held them in watch houses for months.

J DAVIS: I am here to talk about what we are doing in the future, not what has happened in the past.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can we let the Member for Johnston continue her commentary?

J DAVIS: I am here because I am committed to community safety, despite what other people in this parliament might say. I note the scoffing from the member. I do not believe we build community safety by locking up more children. We build it by stopping children offending in the first place. That is what this government would be doing if it cared about community safety and not just headlines.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr PAECH: Currently section 154 provides Corrections staff with the power to use force when preventing a risk of escape. The proposed amendment seeks to amend powers to include the use of force when preventing a risk of an attempted escape. Can you provide examples of what the difference is?

Mr MALEY: Attempting to escape is when they are still inside but may be running to the fence to jump over it.

Mr PAECH: I want to understand how Corrections staff will measure the risk? You have given me the example of someone running towards a fence. How do you make the determination? Is it behaviour that you then think poses a risk?

Mr MALEY: It will be case by case.

Mr PAECH: Case by case for assessing the attempted risk?

Mr MALEY: It will also be behavioural and intelligence gathered by the staff in that facility.

Mr PAECH: There is not a framework or threshold on what would then constitute …

Mr MALEY: No. It is case by case, depending on if someone is trying to escape. That will be assessed by the officers who are trained to do their job.

Mr PAECH: To confirm, the inclusion of preventing risk of an attempted escape will allow staff to use force on a child if they suspect the child might attempt to escape. Could this behaviour include going to the bathroom multiple times, displaying …

Mr MALEY: The word ‘might’—you are putting words into legislation …

Mr PAECH: I have not finished yet. Excuse me; I am still going, and you need to stop while I am speaking …

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Let the Member for Gwoja restate his question.

Mr PAECH: I want to confirm that the inclusion of preventing risk of an attempted escape will now allow staff to use force on a child if they suspect the child might attempt to escape. Could this behaviour include going to the bathroom multiple times, displaying anxiety or discussing topics which could reference ‘getting out’?

Mr MALEY: The answer is no.

Mr PAECH: Why were there no limits or safeguards included to restrict this amendment expanding the use of force in an attempted escape to places outside the detention centre environment?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case basis.

Mr PAECH: What mechanisms are the department implementing to adequately report on the use of force in circumstances where they may prevent an attempt to escape?

Mr MALEY: They will use existing procedures.

Mr PAECH: To confirm, will existing procedures be captured in their use of force register?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Mr PAECH: Will it be monitored and evaluated as it currently is?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause, but yes.

Mr PAECH: What additional training will staff receive on the use of force relevant to this amendment?

Mr MALEY: They already use that.

Mr PAECH: Existing?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr PAECH: What evidence gave rise to these amendments?

Mr MALEY: There are numerous examples of young offenders returning to the detention centre after going on family visits bringing back contraband.

Mr PAECH: Do you have a number of instances that you have filed to capture how many pat-down searches occurred during this time that found contraband?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Mr PAECH: Who was consulted on these amendments?

Mr MALEY: Correctional officers and youth justice staff.

Mr PAECH: What safeguards will be put in place to ensure that searches of the young person, or child, are only conducted when reasonable, necessary and proportionate?

Mr MALEY: The current procedures that are in place.

Mr PAECH: The current procedures remain.

What mechanisms are in place to report searches for independent oversight. Is there a search register?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Mr PAECH: We are talking about searches. I am asking if there is a search register for oversight to make sure that they are not just searching everyone. Is there an accurate record?

Mr MALEY: I have answered your question.

Mr PAECH: How will the information be recorded and shared for monitoring and evaluation purposes?

Mr MALEY: In our client management system.

Mr PAECH: Is there any particular training that staff will be required to undergo in relation to these proposed amendments on how to carry out a search of this type and search safety?

Mr MALEY: They already train, but there will be an update to the training program they use.

J DAVIS: Will searches be carried out by a Corrections officer of the same gender as the child?

Mr MALEY: Where possible, yes.

J DAVIS: It may be that a male officer will be searching a female child?

Mr MALEY: No. The preference will be to return them to the centre.

J DAVIS: Does that mean a male officer will never perform these new pat-down searches on a child?

Mr MALEY: You can never say never in this world, but that is not how the procedure is.

J DAVIS: Does that include for a trans child? Will they be searched by someone who is the gender that they identify with?

Mr MALEY: Where possible.

J DAVIS: Can you clarify which ordinary items could be captured under the definition of 'prohibited thing'? Could it be a spoon? Could it be playdough?

Mr MALEY: It could be scissors, makeshift weapons and sharp objects—those types of things.

J DAVIS: Could a spoon be included?

Mr MALEY: No.

J DAVIS: People have raised concerns with me about blurring the distinction between a pat-down search and a more intrusive personal search, expanding what can occur during a pat-down, a search that I now understand allows an officer to search over and under a child's waistband. It is no longer what most people would understand as a routine pat-down. Is that correct? Does this search enable people to search over and under a child's waistband and into their underpants?

Mr MALEY: No.

J DAVIS: What are the boundaries of the search?

Mr MALEY: The top of the waistband.

J DAVIS: The top—so not under the waistband. Thank you for clarifying.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 12:

J DAVIS: New section 168C states that these new facilities are to temporarily hold detainees. How is 'temporarily' defined?

Mr MALEY: As soon as we can remove. It is the ordinary meaning of 'temporary'.

J DAVIS: What is the ordinary meaning of 'temporary'? Is it an hour, a day or a week?

Mr MALEY: It is case by case, but the court will look at how they view it, if someone wants to take it to court. The court will use the construction, and they sometimes refer to the dictionary.

J DAVIS: Is there a strict statutory limit on the amount of time a young person can be held in an intake and transfer facility?

Mr MALEY: No.

J DAVIS: Is there a requirement to notify the young person's family, legal representative or support person before a transfer occurs?

Mr MALEY: Where possible.

J DAVIS: Can you expand on what 'where possible' means?

Mr MALEY: Where the parents are available. If the parents or a support person is not available, it will not happen. All steps will be taken by the department to contact them, but if they are not contactable, they are not contactable. We have to weigh up whether that person stays there temporarily because you are trying to

find someone, or whether you put them in a facility where they can have wraparound services. Again, it is a balance.

J DAVIS: New section 168D outlines the responsibilities of the superintendent of an intake and transfer facility but omits the duty which applies to detention centre superintendents to encourage the social development and improvement of the welfare of detainees. Why was this left off?

Mr MALEY: Because it is only a temporary facility.

J DAVIS: But with a timeframe where you cannot tell how long 'temporary' may run for.

Which provisions of the Act apply to these facilities in terms of official visitors? Are official visitor provisions applied to intake and transfer facilities?

Mr MALEY: No.

J DAVIS: What independent oversight is there of these locations?

Mr MALEY: The Children's Commissioner.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clause 13:

Mr PAECH: What evidence has formed the basis for the inclusion of this amendment?

Mr MALEY: It is an administration process.

Mr PAECH: Can you provide the circumstances when a police officer would be in the detention centre? Are they called to fill in when Corrections staff levels are not met?

Mr MALEY: If there is an emergency event, such as a riot, police would enter.

Mr PAECH: How many instances have police been called to operate within the Holtze Youth Detention Centre in the last financial year?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant, but I will answer it: zero.

Mr PAECH: How is the department ensuring that there is cultural safety in having police operate as pseudo-Corrections officers who will interact with vulnerable children?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Mr PAECH: What safeguards and limits on police will be in place to reduce unintended conflation of powers?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Clause 14 to 17, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 18:

Mr GUYULA: I am also concerned about the sections of this Bill that create significant jail time for young people regarding assaulting a Corrections officer. Corrections officers have the right to be safe in their workplace, and children have the right to be safe too. This is one of the clear reasons we do not want our kids in detention; we want them on country in the care of elders.

Young people are still developing their knowledge and skills. They are not always making good, thoughtful decisions. Sometimes they have intellectual disabilities and, in some cases, they suffer from FASD. If they lash out when they feel upset, it may not be thought through. They can be impulsive. If this happens when they are detained, if they are upset and angry and lash out, they could face many more years in detention.

This Bill creates a maximum of 16 extra years in detention. In this detention environment they are not being cared for by their family and are in an institution where strangers are their carers who do not have love for these children and may not care if the child is hurt or angry. They may not care if the child needs love, care and kind words. Corrections workers do not know the child the way their kin and country know them. They cannot care for the child the way their kin and country can care for them.

If the children are with elders and they lash out, we can weather the storm. We know and love the children. We can reach them, love them and give them what they need to become better people. This Bill creates problems for these children if they lose their temper and lash out when they are frightened or upset. They may be undisciplined and still need to be taught self-discipline. This is why we need to fund programs on country and take kids onto country where they can learn discipline, respect and pride in who they are.

I have called for the community-led programs. We want *raypirri* camps, peacekeepers, and law and justice groups to be funded on country. As I said yesterday, come and work in partnership with us. Again, today we get no support for our communities. Instead, we get new laws that are punitive and damaging for our children.

I will say this clearly: stop demonising Aboriginal people, and come and work with us. That requires funding on country, not more funding for jails and more punitive laws.

Clause 18 agreed to.

Clause 19, by leave, agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS
OCPE Foundations of Public Sector Governance Program

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of participants from OCPE's Foundations of Public Sector Governance program accompanied by their educator. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill 2026, Serial 70.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Liquor Amendment Bill 2026, Serial 71.

PETITION
Petition No 24 – Improve Housing Quality for the Residents of Mulggan Town Camp

Ms UIBO (Arnhem)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 137 petitioners praying for immediate action to improve the housing quality for the residents of Mulggan Town Camp near Mataranka.

I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

> *A petition calling for immediate action to improve the housing quality for the residents of Mulggan Town Camp near Mataranka.*

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION TIME

Enterprise Bargaining – Nurses and Midwives

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

You are offering pay increases that are well below inflation to many of our critical frontline workers, including our amazing nurses and midwives who are struggling with burnout, unimaginable workloads, unsafe workplaces and ongoing retention crisis. At the same time, you have slapped them and every other Territorian with a 5.4% increase to their power, water and sewerage bills. Why are you forcing nurses and midwives to work more for less under your unacceptable wages policy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, when we came to government almost two years ago we inherited an eye-watering debt. It is shameful that the Opposition Leader asks me what we are doing. We did not put the pay freeze on public servants like the previous Labor government did. Shame on you, Opposition Leader, that you are asking me that question when you have taken Territorians to such record levels of debt.

Our CLP government is being fiscally responsible and negotiating in good faith regarding the eight enterprise bargaining agreements.

We know that you cannot trust Labor. Even its union mates do not want anything to do with Labor at the moment. That should be embarrassing for those opposite.

I note that we are negotiating all these enterprise bargaining agreements. I met with the nurses recently. There is a 3% pay rise across all the bargaining that is occurring. We continue to negotiate in good faith. A number have been finalised so far; the others we are continuing.

We, on this side of the Chamber, value our public servants. We have the OCPE group in the gallery. Welcome to Question Time.

There are plenty of things that can be negotiated through the parameters of those negotiations. For example, there is a 3% increase in pay, which is standard practice across governments where you can offset and create efficiencies by giving some things back. For example, the three-day Christmas closedown can be negotiated as 1%, so it could be a 3% increase, but you would not receive the Christmas closedown. There are lots of things that can happen across all the negotiations. We are making sure that we negotiate ongoing in good faith and have the best interests of the public service at heart.

Job Opportunities – Beetaloo Digital Development Project

Mr PATEL to CHIEF MINISTER

Can you update the Assembly on the government's decision to bring the Territory's three transformational economic projects closer to the heart of the government and outline how projects such as the proposed Beetaloo Digital development demonstrate the wider investment and job opportunities that these projects can unlock for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the people in the Member for Casuarina's electorate want to know that we are rebuilding our economy so that their future is secure. People in the electorate of Casuarina can have good jobs and afford to send their kids to school, go on family holidays, enjoy our unique Territory lifestyle and do it safely. That is what we are delivering to the people of Casuarina and the Northern Territory.

The Territory has never been in better shape; the future is bright. There are four nation-building projects happening now. These are not fictitious projects that you saw under Labor that may happen in the future. This

is the real deal. They are not just important to the Territory; they will change the shape of this country. If there is one thing we know it is that the Northern Territory has everything this country needs to be successful.

We have the answers to this nation's greatest challenges. They sit in the Northern Territory, which is why we continue to push the federal government and our state and territory counterparts to understand the value proposition that is the Northern Territory.

To that end, what does that look like? It looks like unlocking the gas in the Beetaloo. Gas will flow to the Territory and will power homes and businesses in September. It is close—about 40 days away from Beetaloo gas doing that.

Arafura Rare Earths has made its final investment decision. It will break ground in September also. That is a $1.6bn project, 135 kilometres out of Alice Springs. We made that a significant project under our Territory Coordinator legislation to deliver optimal results for Territorians, which means local jobs and employment and using local businesses.

There is the Northern Marine Complex where the Northern Territory is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in the ship lift facility. We allocated 246 hectares of waterfront land to the Northern Marine Complex to ensure we can develop a maritime industry in the Northern Territory, secure our strategic defence position and create opportunities for local businesses and jobs as a critical service hub in the Indo-Pacific.

Then there is the Territory Energy Link, a 647-kilometre corridor or superhighway between Elliott and Darwin for water and gas pipeline data.

On data, today we announced a 'do not deal' with Beetaloo Digital for 185 hectares. It shows the strength of our economy and the additional opportunities that things like the Beetaloo will deliver for the benefit of Territorians as we work hard to rebuild our economy.

Corrections Officers – Wages Negotiations

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

More than 90% of Corrections officers have rejected your latest wage offer even after you bombarded them with propaganda and tried to force them to sign your poor pay deal. Will you admit that your process is a failure and explain why you are disrespecting our hardworking Corrections officers with a subpar wage offer?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, on the other side they have short memories because, as I said in my answer to the Opposition Leader's question earlier, we inherited an eye-watering debt. We were on a trajectory to almost $15bn of debt because of the eight years of the previous Labor government. What do we have? Zero.

You cannot trust Labor. That is what we know on this side of the Chamber. We will not do a pay freeze, unlike the previous Labor government. I have already been through and explained where bargaining and bankable offsets can happen.

We continue to negotiate in good faith with Corrections officers and make sure that we value them. We need them to reduce crime. If you do the wrong thing we will find a bed for you. We need those Corrections officers across the Territory.

I do not know how I can explain to the opposition any further. We continue to negotiate in good faith. We have a few enterprise bargaining negotiations happening at the same time. The commissioner negotiates with them. We will continue to do that work, back our public servants and provide the best wages to them.

Beetaloo Sub-basin Gas

Dr RAHMAN for MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

For the first time in the Territory's history, gas produced from the Beetaloo Sub-basin is about to flow to the Territory's gas network to power our homes and businesses. Delivering on our CLP's government commitment to rebuild the economy, this is closely tied to the development of affordable and abundant energy. For years, investment in new Territory gas supply and infrastructure was halted and delayed by those

opposite and their inconsistent signals to market as our existing supply declined and as the Territory was left relying on expensive emergency gas to keep the power system just running.

Can you update the Assembly on how Beetaloo gas will soon be powering Territory homes and how our government is working hard to bring down power prices?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, with his education, the Member for Fong Lim knows probably more than anyone here how important it is that we keep the power on and keep the costs down. He has a keen interest in this because he is a Territorian. He understands how important this is.

For the first time, gas will be flowing into our system to power our nation and the Territory. That means, in plain English, if you turn on the lights, it will be powered by Beetaloo gas. This will happen within weeks. I have been speaking to the operators of the main players in the Beetaloo, and they are excited about this. They know how important it is to rebuild the economy in the Territory.

Under the chaotic previous Labor government our economy was spiralling out of control. We were the worst in the nation. There were people fleeing not only because of the crime crisis Labor caused, but because the economy was so far down the toilet that it was embarrassing. That is why this gas is so important. It will flow in the Northern Territory to keep our costs down and to make it so that people can turn on the lights and aircon and do what they want to enjoy our Territory lifestyle.

We were elected to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. Territorians were sick of the chaos and the distrust they had in the previous Labor government. That is why there are 17 people on this side of the House and why Labor was a failed government.

The previous government knew that the gas was declining at Blacktip. What did it do about it? Labor put a moratorium on it and stopped the gas blowing out of the Beetaloo for two years. We have a whole lot of questions regarding lifestyle and costs. Imagine if there was gas two years ago flowing to our system and how much lower the costs would be. We cannot measure that because we do not know. The chaos and dysfunction of the previous Labor government stopped it.

We are excited about getting the gas flowing here. What would the Territory look like if we were two years down the path of rebuilding the economy? We spoke about the Beetaloo today. There is a range of jobs for Territorians coming from Beetaloo gas. The previous Labor government stopped it for two years. What did Labor put in place? Nothing. Those opposite did not do anything.

We are delivering cheaper power for Territorians. This will drive down the cost. Instead of having to buy gas at emergency spot prices, which is what the previous government wanted to do, we will have a reliable and cheap source of Territory gas flowing into Territory generators for the benefit of Territorians.

Enterprise Bargaining – Corrections

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

It has been 12 months since bargaining began with Corrections officers, with two offers overwhelmingly rejected from your CLP-led bargaining. Can you confirm how much you have spent negotiating these agreements? How much have you shelled out on lawyers' fees and legal advice in an attempt to avoid paying our hardworking Corrections officers instead of paying them properly?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am loving the theme today. If it is not attendance, it is about the pay offers.

The Opposition Leader needs to get the point that we on this side of the Chamber are being fiscally responsible. Those opposite got us into eye-watering debt by not being responsible and having nothing to show for it. That is exactly why they are on that side of the Chamber. We will not freeze wages.

We are going through many enterprise bargaining agreements, and Corrections is one of them. There have been many meetings so far. The commissioner negotiates back and forth in good faith with Corrections officers. We have an agile and great public service; we value the people who are on the ground doing the hard work every day.

Because of the fiscal irresponsibility of the previous Labor government, we are making sure that we are being responsible. There is not a never-ending bucket of cash because of the previous Labor government, so we are making sure that we provide responsible bargaining in good faith with the Corrections officers.

There is the 3% wages policy. They can negotiate things in and out of that, which continues to happen with the commissioner. We continue to negotiate in good faith through that process.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The minister has not addressed the specifics of the second part of the question: how much have you spent on the negotiations so far, particularly legal fees?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have time to answer that part of the question.

Mrs HERSEY: We have amazing public servants across the Territory. We have given a pay increase to almost 16,000 public servants already in the bargaining we have done. On this side of the Chamber we are a disciplined diverse team, unlike those opposite who are divided and leaking. They are worse than a sieve. They are worse than a leaking bucket.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; conciseness of answers. I want that specific part of the question answered about how much the government is paying for legal fees and lawyers as opposed to paying our workers correctly.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have not answered that part of the question, but how you answer it is up to you.

Mrs HERSEY: We continue to negotiate in good faith, unlike those opposite, who got us into eye-watering debt. That is why we have a wages policy of 3%.

Economy – Debt Management

Mr MACKAY to TREASURER

This government inherited a budgetary mess. While the Labor opposition is busy playing a mix of musical chairs and snakes and backstabbers, it is apparent that the previous Labor government was busy racking up the credit card bill and pouring money down the drain. There were successive credit downgrades, ballooning debt, unfunded commitments and an economy stuck in neutral at best. That is why Territorians elected the Finocchiaro CLP government to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique Territory lifestyle.

Can you outline how this government is tackling Labor's budget mess and, in particular, how the trajectory of the Northern Territory's debt has changed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we know the importance of good economic management; it is something that the previous Labor government did not get. That is why we have changed that direction from what the previous government did, as we cannot trust Labor with our economy. In eight short years Labor racked up more than $11bn in debt. Our debt-to-revenue ratio went from 35% to a staggering 116%. That is a shocking economic legacy and one which we inherited.

We are taking a different approach. We have delivered an operating surplus of $95m for 2025–26, which is the first since 2022–23. This means that for the first time in many years we are not borrowing money to pay wages.

The debt trajectory has also changed. Under Labor, debt was increasing by 20% per annum, which is a staggering number. The CLP government has cut that debt trajectory and growth to 4% per annum, which is a 16% improvement. Debt is forecast to stabilise at approximately $13.2bn by 2027–28 and 2028–29. It will then start to reduce the figures we inherited when we came to government.

The Territory Labor government was going to hit its own debt ceiling under its numbers. Those opposite were doing their best to hide that fact. That is where we found that $1.2bn funding cliff of programs and services which Labor was not funding into the outer years so that it did not have to show it was going to hit that debt ceiling.

We reduced that debt growth while growing the frontline workforce, which Labor members never managed to achieve. They just maxed out the credit card with no plan to pay it back. Their only theory was to keep borrowing and racking debt up, which Territorians would be burdened with for many years. They set their own credit limit with a debt cap and then blew it and tried to hide it from Territorians. We have stabilised Labor's debt, which means greater budgetary resilience against unexpected shocks—something that those opposite never achieved.

Labor members never had a clue about responsible or honest budgets during their disastrous term of government. The remaining few opposite are even worse, if that is possible. I would hate to see where our budget would be should they still be in power.

Enterprise Bargaining – Firefighters

Mr SMELT to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

NT firefighters overwhelmingly rejected your recent wage offer in a near unanimous vote. When delivering fair wages and decent conditions for our firefighters, why do you offer less and expect more? Do you simply not care about our firefighters beyond photo opportunities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I have said numerous times, we came to government with an eye-watering debt. We are being fiscally responsible on this side of Chamber. We have given a pay increase to almost 16,000 public servants with the bargaining that has gone on. There have been negotiations, with 18 bargaining meetings and four offers. We will continue to negotiate with the Fair Work Commission and the commissioner. We have a good fire service, and great pay negotiations are already in store for them. We will continue to negotiate in good faith with them through the commissioner and the Fair Work process.

I am not sure what the Member for Nightcliff means about photo opportunities, but on this side of the Chamber we are a diverse team that sticks together, making sure that we are doing the work we have been elected to do. We are getting on with the job of governing in good faith for Territorians and delivering a bargaining process which is fair for all Territorians.

NT Investment Summit

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Rebuilding the Territory economy was a big part of our campaign for the 2024 election; we campaigned heavily for it. I believe that that is what we have been doing since coming to government. The recent Investment Summit brought together investors, industry leaders and government representatives to showcase the Territory's competitive advantages and investment opportunities across a range of strategic sectors. This is important, and it will help local businesses, tourism operators, hospitality venues and the Defence sector in electorates like Fannie Bay.

Can you update the Assembly on the outcomes of the Investment Summit held in Darwin this month, how it is helping communities like Fannie Bay to rebuild and how the Finocchiaro CLP government is working to rebuild the Territory as a globally connected investment destination?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I could probably use an hour to answer this question properly. Nothing is more important for the Northern Territory than getting the message out to Australia, and to our region more broadly, about the opportunities in the NT. The Investment Summit did exactly that.

On the back of extensive work done by the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations and the work done in taking business delegations and our opportunities to the region, more than 160 delegates attended that event from 12 countries to whom we have extended the hand of friendship and trade to over the past two years. We reopened the door to our Asian neighbours when it was so unceremoniously slammed in the face of those people a few years back by the previous Gunner Labor government.

We have said to them we want to do business, and together we can rebuild the Northern Territory economy. We can guarantee energy security for Australia and build opportunities in the Southeast Asian and

Indo-Pacific region that will ensure stability for our region in geopolitically difficult times. People talked to us about a range of opportunities.

We started in beautiful Alice Springs. We took a group across and showed them exactly what the Territory has to offer and where the opportunities are. We showed them the Nolans project. My colleague, the Minister for Mining and Energy, showed a group exactly what that opportunity is: 600 jobs during construction and 350 jobs ongoing. That is real opportunity for the Alice Springs region.

We took them over the land of opportunity and visited the Beetaloo Sub-basin. We went to Shenandoah South and saw where, in a few short weeks, the first gas will come out of the ground and turn the lights on in Territory homes. Then we brought them to our beautiful city of Darwin to the wharf precinct and harbour. We showed them what was on offer because the most important thing is to convince people that this is where they need to be and what they have the opportunity to do here. We talked to those people with the Chief Minister.

We have 12 projects for data centres. We have opportunities in energy. For the first time, we have real opportunities in advanced manufacturing. We have the marine precinct project. We are the talk of the town in Australia and the region, and the view from here is looking good.

Beetaloo Digital Agreement

J DAVIS to CHIEF MINISTER referred to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Your government announced support for the proposed $40bn AI data centre and gas-fired power project at Weddell and granted the proponent exclusive rights over 185 hectares of public land. What evidence, independent advice and public interest assessment informed the decision to grant one company exclusive access to 185 hectares of Territory land, and will you make that advice public?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have done a ‘do not deal’ with Beetaloo Digital over 185 hectares of land at Weddell, because the Beetaloo gas basin will be powering the Territory and the nation’s future and unlocking many other incredible opportunities for Territorians and our economy.

The Beetaloo Sub-basin is a resource so big that it is difficult for people to wrap their minds around. We are talking about enough gas to power this nation for up to 200 years. It is an incredible resource; it is the largest uncontracted gas field in the world.

Data centre operators and investors are banging on the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations’ door because they understand that there will be a safe, reliable and affordable pipeline of energy in the Northern Territory for way longer than any of us will be alive. That is unlocking an incredible opportunity for us.

I will pass on to the Lands minister who can answer the finer points of the member’s question.

Make no mistake: this is just the beginning of the interest in the Northern Territory off the back of the fact that we have created unqualified certainty regarding Beetaloo gas development. Beetaloo gas is delivering for Territorians and for our nation, allies and the region.

Mr BURGOYNE: Madam Speaker, people want to know how they can get their hands on land because, as Minister Cahill has said, the Territory is the place to do business. People are lining up and wanting to know how they can invest in the Northern Territory. They want to know how they can work with the Northern Territory Government to take advantage of all the amazing resources we have here.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question explicitly was: what evidence, independent advice and public interest assessment informed the decision to grant one company exclusive access to 185 hectares of Territory land, and will you make that public?

Mr BURGOYNE: I need to clear the air for those who are listening. It is important that when people come to the Northern Territory Government and they are after land, we say to them loud and clear that the ‘do not deal’ for the 185 hectares gives them one year. We say that they have exclusive rights over this land for one year. We are not giving anything away. We understand how important land is in the Northern Territory.

In that time we are expecting that proponent to do all the necessary studies and gets its investors on board because if they do not get a wriggle on, we know that—thanks to the hard work of Minister Cahill—other investors are lining up keen to take that on.

We will continue to work with anyone who comes to the Territory wanting to do business. The message could not be clearer from our government: the Territory is open for business.

Business Confidence

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY

While those opposite are busy building their own political agenda, the Finocchiaro CLP government is building confidence, investment and jobs across the Territory. We know businesses only invest where they see confidence, certainty and opportunity, and restoring that confidence has been a key priority for this government. Can you update Territorians on how we are driving business confidence, supporting private investment to deliver on the Visitor Economy Strategy and strengthening the Territory's future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have heard the Member for Drysdale telling his constituents that a strong economy benefits everybody. That is important for business confidence.

I will give Labor a lesson: confidence is not something that you announce; it is something you earn. That is exactly why we are doing the work that we are doing. Territorians will remember that under Labor we had a huge financial black hole; we were in crisis mode, and people were leaving the Territory. That does not send signs of confidence to any business investor.

I am proud to talk about the fact that things are turning around. We just heard the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations talk about the Investment Summit. I too was part of that Investment Summit, hosting some of our best tourism operators and investors who came to that session and are incredibly interested in finding out a lot more about the Territory. They had a taste, and now they are asking for more information about what they can do to further invest.

Some at that summit are already investing in the Northern Territory, like Delaware North, which just opened its new section of the Mindil Beach Casino Resort. There are new rooms; they are lovely. I was there with the Member for Fannie Bay recently. Most of our team just a couple of weeks ago attended the IHG Hotel voco Darwin Suites on Mitchell Street, which spent a fortune renovating that old office building, turning it into a brand-new beautiful hotel. It is exquisite and is open now. That is investment.

Journey Beyond was also represented at the summit and has recently acquired Voyages, SeaLink and the Crocodile Hotel in Kakadu, which has not been invested in for a long time by private investors. Journey Beyond is doing that.

There is also the Leea resort—the Mirambeena. Remember the old Mirambeena on Cavenagh Street? It is now called the Leea. They are spending millions of dollars transforming that resort into something amazing.

There are also local businesspeople like Jenny Um, who is transforming the former Deck Bar across the road from Parliament House into the Pearler Restaurant. I think that is fantastic.

That is what confidence looks like when you have businesses prepared to invest their hard-earned money into growing their businesses, which of course grows the economy. That is good for everybody because a strong economy benefits all Territorians. That is why I am so proud that I was part of the summit with all those investors wanting to know more, having a taste. A lot are already investing here and feeling that confidence.

Aeromedical Retrieval Service – North-east Arnhem Land

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HEALTH

The Royal Flying Doctor Service has taken over the tender of the aeromedical support in the Top End. I have continually raised with you and the former minister the need for the local medical aviation support based in north-east Arnhem Land.

Will there be a single-engine plane, helicopter or base on our region? What is being done to address the needs of our many remote homeland communities when they need emergency patient retrieval?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the previous discussions we had about access to the homelands as part of those medical retrievals is one of the points that we have been discussing as part of the changeover process in moving towards a new contract. We have announced that the Royal Flying Doctor Service is the preferred provider of aeromedical retrievals in the Top End.

The transition process from CareFlight to the Royal Flying Doctor Service is underway, but I assure the Member for Mulka that the conversations we had in regard to accessing some remote areas—we have included that in the scope of works as we move through the transition process.

It is important that we also talk about the cost of retrieval services because the NT Government is footing the bill for aeromedical retrieval services in the Top End. These are generally funded by the federal government in all parts of Australia except for the Top End. When we talk about health funding it is important that we also talk about the severe underfunding that we are facing from the federal government.

The Leader of the Opposition was the last Health minister before Labor lost the 2024 election. We are facing, out of our Northern Territory Government Health budget, costs of anywhere between $50m and $60m. Imagine where that $50m or $60m could be used across the board in the health system. We are also $95m short when it comes to remote primary healthcare. At the moment we have 60 to 80 elderly patients in hospitals who are fit to leave the hospital, but the federal government has refused to provide adequate aged-care facilities. We are about $200m short in the health budget.

These are important issues the Member for Mulka raised. When we talk about medical retrieval services, we need to talk about it in context, with the failure of the federal government to fund the Northern Territory health services adequately. We will continue to fight for that money. We recently received $10m for maternity, but we need another $200m.

Container Deposit Scheme – Expansion

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

While Territory Day went off with a bang, it was not the only exciting event to kick off July. The people of Blain were happy to hear that on 1 July the Container Deposit Scheme expanded to take in a range of other containers. Can you update the Assembly on the expansion of the Container Deposit Scheme, which commenced on 1 July, and how it is delivering stronger environmental outcomes and greater economic benefits for Territorians and the people of Blain?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain is a passionate member who is ensuring that we leave this Northern Territory a better place for our future generations. That is something he is passionate about. It is exactly what this new Container Deposit Scheme delivers.

During our year of growth, certainty and security we are delivering more ways to ensure that people can recycle their used containers because we are sick of seeing them in our parks and public spaces. We want to put a price on every one.

From 1 July that scheme has been expanded. It is one of the first places in the country where you can now recycle two and three-litre milk containers. Any drink container three litres and under should be recycled. That is important for people to understand. If they take it to their recycling place, they will get their 10c.

There has been a bit of confusion, and I want to clear it up for members. Go out and tell your constituents that there is a two-year transitional period from 1 July which will apply to wine and spirit labels. You will not necessarily see the 10-cent label on those. That is because—for those who love drinking wine—quite often you will have it wherever you store your wine for more than a year. We are giving them a long transitional period to get those labels right. If people take those containers in they can still collect the 10c. I make that clear for the public.

There is a one-year transitional period which will apply for all other beverage containers.

Every container returned is one less item ending up on our roadsides, parks, waterways and in the environment. One thing that always frustrated me when I go out with the Clontarf Academy on Clean Up Australia Day is the number of Jim Beam and Bundy Rum bottles I used to find littering the Todd River bed in Alice Springs.

I can report, as I have been getting around on my little electric moped, we are starting to see things turning around. People realise that they can now get 10c for these containers and have started picking them up. I have my milk crate on the back. I have been picking them up and putting them away for a rainy day. As of 1 July, we can now take them to our Envirobank centres and recycle them.

I recently met with the Keep Top End Coasts Healthy team. They showed me that one of their members had been collecting all the plastics they have been receiving or finding on the beach. A lot of those were single-use plastic containers.

Our government is protecting the environment. We are looking out for our future generations. For Territorians who love collecting a container and getting that 10c back in their pocket, they can now do more of that.

Enterprise Bargaining – Firefighters

Mr SMELT to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

More than 98% of firefighters rejected your most recent wage offer. Since bargaining began how much has your government spent negotiating this agreement? How much has been spent on lawyers' fees and legal advice in your attempt to avoid paying fire and rescue officers properly?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I feel like we are on a bit of a theme. I answered that question before.

The Member for Nightcliff has not been here for long, so I will cut him a bit of slack.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Ask your previous member what was on the fire trucks!

Mrs HERSEY: Thank you, Chief Minister. I am grateful to let the Member for Nightcliff know that the previous Labor member's name was written all over the fire trucks, like, 'Natasha Fyles does not give a truck'. That was about your party because it did not value the public service. It froze their wages and did not support them at all.

We are continuing to negotiate in good faith. The question that the member asked is dealt with by departments. It is not something that happens with negotiations. We will continue to negotiate in good faith and value our public service. We remain focused on delivering and maintaining strong frontline services.

I condemn the previous Labor government for its mishandling of the public service through those bargaining negotiations. We saw things like the writing on the fire trucks. In opposition, we met with them in the park out the front here.

I am not quite sure what I can continue to let the opposition know about the wage increases. We are fiscally responsible on this side of the Chamber. We continue to negotiate in good faith. We have given a pay increase to almost 16,000 public servants already.

We will not take lectures from a divided Labor government in opposition. They still cannot get their shadow …

Mr SMELT: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; we are asking about how much has been spent on lawyers and legal advice.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister can answer that.

Mrs HERSEY: He clearly was not listening because I have already answered that part of the question. I will not be taking lectures from a divided Labor opposition. There have been seven reshuffles, and there will probably be another one before the end of the year. I am not quite sure who on that frontbench will be the Opposition Leader.

Workforce – Skills Training

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Our government was elected with a clear mandate to rebuild the Territory and restore our beautiful lifestyle. After years of neglect by Labor, rebuilding our economy starts with rebuilding our workforce. That means giving Territorians the skills they need to secure jobs, fill critical workforce shortages and help deliver the housing and infrastructure and services our communities need. We are focused on backing apprentices, trainees, students and employers to ensure that Territorians are first in line for the opportunities created in the Territory.

Can you update the Assembly on how the government's reforms in skills training are building a stronger workforce, supporting local jobs and helping rebuild our Territory?

Mr Kerle interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Can everyone pause? Member for Blain, you cannot take a phone call anywhere in the Chamber.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am happy to be taking a real question from the Member for Wanguri, who is passionate about this area. As a previous tradie before I had the privilege of being the Member for Katherine, I love talking about skills.

Previous governments dropped the ball on this. We have a tradie deficit across the country. Whilst nationally apprenticeship commencements are down by 9.5% and completions are down by 4.8%, in the Territory with the work this government and the department is doing, we are bucking the trend; NT-funded apprenticeships are up by 3.8%. I think that deserves a clap, a cheer and a high-five because we will not rebuild the economy if we do not get people into a trade and people who can build or wire your house. Those tradies will have a job for life.

In our year of growth, certainty and security I am pleased to say that in National Skills Week we will deliver our skills plan for skills at work and training that delivers. I look forward to talking a lot more about that when we announce that in National Skills Week.

We are making sure that when children start Year 8 they are getting some of those soft skills; potentially they can work towards a white card or what they need to get their driver's licence later. All those kinds of things can work with the career and VET counsellors—who we are working at getting in schools—to make sure they are engaging with people and businesses in the community to know what jobs are out there. We are working across different sections of the Territory so that we have children going down a VET pathway or a school-based apprenticeship, making sure that we are rebuilding the economy.

In 2026–27 we have committed $30.2m to apprenticeships and traineeships alone. We are aligning our skills plan to our priorities and rebuilding our economy. We are strengthening our skill set and upskilling our tradies to be trainers as well. I look forward to talking more about that when we announce the plan in August.

Flights – Central Australia

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY referred to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Coming from Central Australia I know how crucial airlines are to the Red Centre. With the recent cancellation by Qantas of flights between Alice Springs and Melbourne, can you confirm the total reduction in the number of airline seats for Central Australia as a result of this decision?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I think we all agree that aviation connects much more than just tourism, although it is critical for tourism. It supports rebuilding our economy as well. We have amazing things happening across the Northern Territory. There are huge projects of significance that the Chief Minister just talked about. We need to ensure that people can get in and out of the Northern Territory for many reasons.

The question is specifically about Alice Springs and tourism. As the Tourism minister, I need to ensure that we have as many people coming to the Northern Territory as possible. That is why there is the Visitor Economy Strategy to 2032. It has a $3bn target to make sure that we attract as many people as possible to do all the things that we know and love about the Territory. Aviation forms part of that.

My colleague the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations does a mountain of work with the aviation sector. She is continually advocating for flights to come in.

It is difficult from a government's perspective. We have to put all the things we can possibly do on the table all at the same time all of the time. We are dealing with commercial entities, so it is a volume demand business. Therefore, we have to keep watching the demand coming in and out for business, leisure and all the things that aviation is. As a government we will continue to work with airlines to make sure we can get as many bums on seats as possible.

The Tourism department has all these different partnerships with our airlines to make sure that we can get people into the Territory …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate and am interested in what the Tourism minister has to say, but my question was: can the minister confirm the total reduction of airline seats as a result of the decision?

Madam SPEAKER: It was specific.

Ms BOOTHBY: I will hand over to the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, who has the aviation portfolio, to answer the rest of that question.

Ms CAHILL: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that route has been stopped. It is still possible to get to Melbourne from Alice Springs via Sydney or Brisbane, and the reality is that we have more available seats coming out of the Northern Territory than before COVID hit. We are well serviced. It is a challenge for our Central Australian residents, but compared with other regional areas, they are incredibly well serviced.

We understand the importance …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I appreciate the government responses and passion in this area. It was a direct question: can you confirm the total reduction in airline seats as a result of the Qantas Melbourne–Alice Springs flight decision? I am happy if the government wants to take it on notice.

Ms CAHILL: I was getting to that. That route provided 548 seats per week, and they have increased a flight to Sydney, so we lost approximately 300 seats. People need to use the seats if they want to keep them.

Seniors Month Program

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for YOUTH, SENIORS and EQUALITY

As you know, we host the joint Sanderson and Karama Seniors Christmas Party every year because older Territorians make an enormous contribution to our communities, and our government is committed to ensuring they remain active, connected and supported.

Could you update the Assembly on this year's NT Seniors Month program and explain how the Finocchiaro CLP government is not only celebrating our seniors throughout August but also providing practical support to help with the cost of living and ensure they continue enjoying the Territory lifestyle?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama works well with our seniors, with activities in the electorate and the greater Darwin region. Recently I saw a video of him dancing with Filipino seniors. Well done; I am sure the seniors community love your work. The member constantly reminds us on this side of the Chamber and raises our CLP plan from prior to the election about reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring the Territory lifestyle.

In this year of growth, certainty and security we are proud of what we are doing to support the seniors. By the end of next week it will be August, which is Seniors Month. Last week I had the pleasure of launching the

NT Seniors Month 2026 calendar, produced by the Council on the Ageing Northern Territory, along with the CEO, Sue Shearer. Today most in the Chamber might have received this calendar sent to your electorate or it is on its way.

There are 31 days in August, with nearly 250 events happening across the Territory. Approximately 8,000 calendars were printed by the Council on the Ageing Northern Territory, and there are digital grants available on top of that. There will be activities in the greater Darwin region, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and in regional communities. We are encouraging the seniors to stay active, connected and engaged.

The government supports seniors every day, not just during Seniors Month. Through the Seniors Recognition Scheme we are continuing to provide the $550 card to all eligible seniors. As at today we have 17,855 Seniors Recognition Scheme cards dispatched, and they would have been received or will be in the next few days. That means we are investing about $7.7m in Territory seniors and local businesses.

Not only that, but the Treasurer has also informed that through the community service obligation the CLP is supporting each household with approximately $2,000 to reduce the cost of electricity and other pressures. Seniors and other concession holders will have nearly another $2,000 in savings. That is to make sure that we support our seniors and people with the concession.

We are focused on real practical solutions, but we cannot support everything we want because of the debt that was incurred by the previous Labor government.

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

MOTION
5.3% Price Hike

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Finocchiaro CLP government to reverse its 5.3% hike to power, water and sewerage charges and give Territorians cost-of-living relief.

It is clear that the CLP government has made a deliberate choice. From 1 July this year Territorians have been slapped with a massive 5.3% power, water and sewerage price hike.

That increase is above the CLP's much-celebrated 3% wages policy. It is above wages growth, which is not helping Territorians in the long run. Being above that rate means that household incomes are growing, but more income is being used to address the cost of living for families across the Northern Territory. This is at a time of enormous pressure for families, individuals and those who run small and medium businesses across the Northern Territory.

This did not happen accidentally; it was a deliberate decision and act to implement the CLP's disrespect for Territorians in the cost-of-living crisis. It was a choice not to support Territorians when CPI is at 3.9%. The government is clearly out of whack. The government must have ignored its own focus and policy regarding the community service obligation and decided that Territorians need to foot the bill for power prices.

We have heard wishy-washy responses from the Treasurer. I will unpack for Territorians how the government's deliberate decision is made regarding the community service obligation. The two responsible ministers are the Treasurer as the shareholding minister and the Essential Services minister as the operational minister. In the game we are playing today it is Bill Yan as the Treasurer and Steve Edgington as the Minister for Essential Services.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Members should be referred to by their title.

Madam SPEAKER: Standing Order 34; you cannot refer to members by the name, and you just did. Can you withdraw and refrain from doing that?

Ms UIBO: The Member for Barkly is the Minister for Essential Services, and the Member for Namatjira is the Treasurer. They are the two ministers responsible in the CLP government in today's game.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I noted that you asked the Opposition Leader to withdraw, but she never said the magic words, 'I withdraw'.

Madam SPEAKER: Correct. Would you withdraw?

Ms UIBO: Withdraw? It was not offensive.

Madam SPEAKER: The standard is that we do not ask you to withdraw; we ask you not to do it in future. That is my correction.

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, that is why I have corrected, under your guidance. Obviously, the Member for Goyder needs to reread the standing orders and brush up as the government Whip. Let us hope he does; he is getting a good pay packet for that job.

The Member for Namatjira is the Treasurer and the Member for Barkly is the Essential Services minister, so let's go back to the game we are playing today now that we have everyone's names and titles right and we have taught the Member for Goyder how to read his standing orders properly.

The shareholding minister is the money person, the Essential Services minister is the operational person, and they take what they hear from the government-owned corporations. There are three: Power and Water Corporation; Jacana Energy; and Territory Generation. Those three government-owned corporations operate almost like a business model. They report to a board and have CEOs but, ultimately, they are owned by the government.

Thankfully, the CLP did not get to sell it all off and privatise those three when it was carving it up between 2012 and 2016, so they are still government-owned corporations. That means that the massive price hikes of up to 18% experienced in our southern and eastern states, with large populations, have been largely due to the privatisation of energy in Australia. We do not have that in the Territory, thankfully.

That is what the CLP government was previously planning when in power from 2012 and 2016. The Member for Barkly likes his history lessons, so hopefully he will follow along with that one today. He is looking studious. That is what the government was intending to do; that is why it had the corporation split into three. It was planning to sell off a couple and make a quick buck, like it did for the Territory Insurance Office, which was sold off and cannot be bought back. It is costing a lot of money, but it is now privatised because the former CLP government did that work and did not realise that the quick buck it made at the time would impact Territorians for the worse later on down the track.

We have seen the huge impact of those past decisions on Territorians recently after this year's severe weather, with the floods and cyclones. Sadly, in July—we are nearly up to August—some still cannot access or be granted insurance that they need because of that severe weather impact.

Previously, the idea of the Territory Insurance Office was to make sure that type of process in the Territory—I acknowledge the uniqueness of the NT and where we live, which we love, but we are prone to those severe weather events. The idea of having an insurance office that could recognise that and ensure that Territorians had affordable insurance to protect them in severe weather is something we no longer have access to.

The impact of how those power, water and sewerage assets are paid for is that it comes through the government budget. There is that community service obligation, which we have heard the Treasurer talk about. Anyone would think the Treasurer invented it. No, it has been around for a long time and is important because it provides financial pressure alleviation for Territorians with their bills.

What we have seen from 1 July is not just the bang of firecrackers and the 10c deposit scheme increasing, like the Member for Blain was celebrating earlier in Question Time, but we have also now seen a 5.3% price increase for Territorians' power, water and sewage bills. Let's hope all the CLP members are doing their job in their electorates and their constituents can talk to them, because if people are receiving a quarterly bill, come September people will notice a different bill with a 5.3% utilities bill increase.

When the Treasurer steps back from his role and says, 'There was nothing we could do. This is just what happened and is an accident that it happened to Territorians', that is not correct. This is a deliberate decision by the CLP government to pass the buck to Territorians to make those payments. This is a direct decision. Every Cabinet minister in the CLP government led by the Chief Minister has endorsed this decision because it is a Cabinet and government decision. Every CLP member is responsible for those processes. They said, 'We could not do anything more. This has accidentally happened. Too bad—Territorians will just have to foot the bill.' No, this was and still is a deliberate decision by the CLP government.

We asked questions yesterday about the average household and got a dismissive response. I think it was the Deputy Chief Minister who yelled out a flippant comment in response across the Chamber, 'Do the calculation. They will have to do 5.3% of their own bill.' Yes, but there is modelling done.

Believe you me, I know what Treasury is like. It makes sure that it knows every dollar and cent is accountable. Modelling is done to lead to different options and decisions for any government—whether it is a CLP government or, hopefully, a future Labor government. That modelling is done. For the CLP members not to answer the question our Labor opposition asked yesterday with a single dollar amount tells me that they either do not know, do not care or do not want to do the work. Perhaps it is all three.

This matters to Territorians because in the October parliamentary sittings—guess what?—everyone will have had their first quarterly bill. There will be big discussions about these power price hikes to understand the impact across the Territory. I assume that many of the CLP members' constituents will go to electorate offices, but they will not say, 'I am glad that my bill is 5.3% higher than normal. It is great for me and my family. It is great for a pensioner or a young couple who might be trying to have a family. We think this is a great decision. Thanks, CLP government, for hiking up our bills and making us pay more when the cost of living is already putting pressure on us, our families and individuals, particularly our dear seniors.' These price increases are just on a page now, but they will unfortunately become a reality for many Territorians come the end of September and beginning of October.

The government quietly spoke about this when asked during Estimates in June. I asked the question—I think twice—of the Treasurer to clarify on the record that 5.3% was the increase and that we were correct in our understanding of the budget books. The CLP has full control; it cannot blame Labor anymore because this was a full CLP budget. Since August 2024 it has had full control of the budget, so its decision not to keep in line with CPI of 3.9% is deliberate. Do not let any Territorians be fooled that this was an accident in any way, shape or form.

I will talk about the indifference we are seeing about the CLP's decision. The Treasurer may see the percentages as just numbers on a spreadsheet. I guess the Treasurer is looking at a lot of numbers. I hope so; otherwise, he is out fishing, so who knows where he is making his decisions.

Cost-of-living pressures are not always reflected in the Territory budget and the numbers seen. Treasury does modelling on this. People in this Chamber and those outside who are listening may have heard talk about the average cost of a grocery basket. There is modelling on that, and it happens across the country; it is not new or just for the Territory.

Some of these extra costs could mean less money for school expenses or supporting children and young people with their education. It could mean less money to keep their cars going, if they are lucky enough to have a car or two in their family. It may mean that they have to seriously think about how they will pay for fuel if their car is not an EV. How will they pay for that, or will they need to change to a different energy source?

There is less money to support our local businesses. If people are feeling the pinch at home, they are less likely to go out for a coffee every day or go to the corner store and buy local bakery goods, so our local businesses are not immune. They will have to make hard decisions with their own budget.

A 2.6% pay rise for some Territorians does not even come close to covering the 5.3% increase in the three essential services of power, water and sewage. I think the government is deliberately making Territorians poorer in real terms when it comes to these decisions, and it impacts everyday lifestyle in the NT.

It does not stop at households. Cafes, businesses and restaurants in our hospitality sector will feel the pinch. Retailers, tradies, accommodation providers and community organisations will begin to feel the pinch. Businesses in the hospitality sector require light, refrigeration, air conditioning and water; businesses cannot absorb the cost forever. Eventually those costs will be passed on to the consumer through higher prices or perhaps fewer staff to do the work. If you cannot pay your staff the minimum wage and ensure they are looked after, there may be tough decisions to let staff go or to trade for less hours. We do not want to see businesses closing altogether.

When the government makes these big decisions, like increases to power, water and sewage charges, the cost of almost everything increases. Unfortunately, since the CLP has been in government, it has ridden on the tailwinds of the former Labor government with the $1bn of extra school funding for our public schools. It is a great agreement; thank goodness they could not get out of it.

We have already seen how the CLP treats our schools; it moved government schools to commercial cost-reflective utility pricing. That is outrageous. We saw in the Member for Barkly's electorate alone that Tennant Creek Primary School started to receive the average electricity bill reportedly from $5,000 a month in their overhead costs to $17,000 a month. He is the Minister for Essential Services, and in his own electorate one of his schools is seeing that significant increase because the CLP government made the deliberate decision to pass the buck to our families, businesses and schools.

It took seven years for the former Labor government to get that extra money—the windfall—out of the feds. It started under a Liberal federal government and ended with a Labor federal government. It took seven years of work to get the extra $1bn of education funding for our public schools in the Northern Territory.

The CLP has passed that important baton—the education and the future of our kids in the Territory. What did it do instead of running with the baton? It looked at how shiny it is and tried to sell it off at the corner store. It is now our schools that are at risk due to spending the extra money that is supposed to be resourced for Territory kids to make sure that they can thrive in any setting, no matter which school or educational setting they are engaged with across the Northern Territory. Schools are now being asked to foot the extra bill and use thousands of dollars meant for child resources on the overhead costs because the CLP government made a deliberate decision to increase power costs and to pass it to Territory schools, kids, teachers and principals.

We have more than 150 public schools and approximately 40 private education institutions across the Territory The figures that we looked at within the last 12 months from only 12 schools across the Territory suggested an annual impact combined of almost $1m on just paying bills rather than paying for resources for classrooms and kids and more teaching and support staff in schools.

That money should always be spent on Territory kids in schools, classroom supports, learning materials and support for education and engagement. Rather than using it as a proactive measure, the CLP government has made another horrible, deliberate decision regarding punitive measures for education, attendance and engagement. We have not seen the fruits of that horrible labour across the Territory.

I am a proud product of public education. I was proud to be teaching in the public system before this life as a politician. Public schools are not a factory, a commercial enterprise or a money-making decision ...

Mr Maley: Taminmin High School.

Ms UIBO: Yes, Taminmin. I am a Sanderson and CSC kid.

Mr Edgington: Stop lecturing us.

Ms UIBO: That is probably the best part of being a former teacher. I get to lecture the CLP government. It is fortuitous. It is unfortunate for you, Member for Barkly, but great for me.

Every dollar matters when it comes to Territory kids. Everyone in this Chamber who goes out to their community, represents their electorate and experiences the joy of being a local member at the grassroots level—at schools, homeland schools, big high schools or if they are lucky enough to have tertiary institutions in their electorates—knows that every dollar for classrooms, whatever they look like, counts.

We asked questions yesterday in Question Time regarding local government, which also happens to be the Member for Barkly's portfolio. We saw the same approach. Local governments came out fiercely and asked for exemptions because of the impact on their budgets after the deliberate decision by the CLP government to hike up our power and utility prices by up to 30%.

Councils do not have unlimited money. Proudly, the Member for Barkly spoke about members' connections to local government—former councillors et cetera—which is great. He missed our two—the Members for Nightcliff and Gwoja. I put that on the record, Member for Barkly, so that you do not dismiss our crew from local government backgrounds as well.

Councils do not have unlimited money. Higher bills mean less funding for local roads and parks for individuals, families and people who visit the Northern Territory; less funding for pools, libraries, community facilities; and higher rates for residents, which is probably the big stickler when you are talking out on the doors. Perhaps the CLP will be out on the doors thinking about and listening to some of those complaints and comparisons.

What frightened councils was a 120% increase. It was expected to try to reduce the damage to that 30%. That is not relief; it is still a massive hit.

We have seen the failed track record. Here is the lecture for the Member for Barkly today, who likes history lessons: the one common denominator from when the CLP was last in government is the Chief Minister, the Member for Spillett. The Chief Minister is the only common factor linking to that time of turmoil in the Territory between 2012 and 2016. She was a part of that chaotic government at the time.

The decisions by the CLP government then included electricity prices going up by 30%, water going up by 40% and sewerage going up by 25%. The Member for Spillett, the current Chief Minister, was a part of that government. Maybe she is borrowing ideas from the past and starting to slowly implement them in her own team. They are following like blind sheep, not asking questions like, 'How will this impact my constituents? How will this make it better for Territory families who are facing the high cost of living?'

We do not have any of those responses from the CLP government other than what we need to judge it on—that is, its deliberate action and decision to increase utility costs for Territorians. From three weeks ago since the 5.3% increase, CLP members said that they could do nothing about it. They are in control. They should stop talking as if they have gone back to the opposition suddenly two years later in this desperate attempt to come together with some type of narrative about how terrible Labor is. They have been in for nearly two years. They have the control panels at their fingertips. Every decision now impacting Territorians is their decision; their budgets, deliberate decisions and anything they do will impact Territorians. It is their responsibility.

The price shock sits in the CLP's DNA. We will start to see more people realise the impact of those deliberate decisions by the CLP, particularly in the next two months.

The CLP government broke a key election promise that it spruiked pretty much the whole of 2024 to return the premium feed-in tariff (FiT) to Territorians, which meant that they would get the highest rate possible if they had solar and battery between the hours of 6 am and 6 pm, when the sun shines the best.

When CLP members came to government they back-pedalled on that decision. Maybe they did modelling and calculations and said, 'Oh, this is a little too difficult; let us start to penny-pinch. Who can we make responsible for any of those decreases? Territorians. Let's make them responsible. We will give you time. Let's pick between 6 pm and 9 pm.'

In the Wet Season and in the summertime we get light a bit longer, but I do not know that there is much sun shining at 9 pm across any parts of the Territory, even in the late summertime. It was a deliberate decision to break an open and public commitment to Territorians that if the CLP came to government in August 2024 it would deliver a premium feed-in tariff to Territorians between 6 am and 6 pm. It was a broken election commitment by the CLP.

Those opposite are making these deliberate decisions and have been doing it since they first came to government in August 2024, telling Territorians one story and acting in a different way.

The reason we brought this important General Business day topic to the forefront is because Territorians deserve to know why the CLP government does not support them with the cost-of-living crisis and why it made a deliberate decision to hit Territorians where it hurts most—in the hip pocket—and increase our power, water and sewerage prices by 5.3%.

I look forward to hearing contributions from the CLP members—they have until 7 pm tonight—on why they made these decisions to hurt Territorians.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion to the Chamber, but I cannot support it. I move that the motion be amended by omitting all the words after, 'that the Legislative Assembly' and inserting:

1. commends the Finocchiaro CLP government for delivering practical cost-of-living relief through subsidised power and water; household concessions; family vouchers; support for seniors; and reducing the everyday cost of education, training, sport and recreation

2. condemns the former Labor government for putting the Territory on a trajectory of $15bn debt, leaving future generations to pay the price.

I will start my contribution by being transparent with Territorians. That is what they deserve and what they got precious little of from the previous Labor government, the divided remnants of which are moving this motion today.

We acknowledge that a 5.3% adjustment to utility prices is real money out of household budgets at a time when Territorians are doing it tougher. I know it, and the government knows it. We did not make this call lightly. I reiterate the point, however, that the 5.3% increase is 0.1% higher than what CPI is forecast to be in the budget over the year.

I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition was doing in her contribution—either trying to mislead this Assembly or the public—but she stated that CPI was 3.9%, when on page six of the Budget and Regional Overview—which was circulated to all members—it states that the consumer price index for 2025–26 is 5.2%. I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition was never the Treasurer; imagine the position we would be in now. The Leader of the Opposition cannot even get the numbers correct.

Governing means making hard decisions and standing up to explain them, which is what I am doing today and what the CLP will do. This motion is typical of Labor members. They say, 'Just reverse the increase', with no mention of the costings or thought given to reality. There is no alternative proposal and not a single word about where the money would come from.

The reality is that the cost of generating electricity in the Territory has gone up by between 15% and 20% this year alone, driven by higher gas and diesel costs. They are big numbers. Those opposite should understand this. They were in government for eight years and knew about the impending gas supply issues, and their answer was just a moratorium on new gas supply. They preferred ideology to upgrades of our energy system.

This government is standing between Territorians and the true cost of generation through that community service obligation. This year the CSO has increased by $58m and will total more than $225m. If we took that shield away tomorrow, power prices would jump by approximately 75%, and that would be more than $2,000 per household. That is the size of the subsidy that every Territory household is receiving already. That is a massive cost-of-living measure undertaken by this government and a fact conveniently ignored by the Territory Labor opposition.

The choice in front of the government was never prices up or prices flat. The choice was: do we pass through a small part of the real cost increase and absorb the rest; or do we hide the whole thing and borrow to cover it?

This is what fiscal responsibility looks like and what responsible decisions are. We knew which option Labor would have taken. Labor does not care about how it pays for things; that is the truth of the matter. That is why we are in the financial position we are in today.

We heard the newly minted Deputy Opposition Leader on the radio a few weeks ago say, 'Why not just increase the CSO?' When asked how he would pay for it, guess what? Silence—crickets—because there is no answer. There never is with that mob on the other side of the Chamber. They promise the money, dodge the bill by raising the debt and let somebody else clean up the mess. We are cleaning up that mess now. It must be nice to live in a world so divorced from reality.

Thankfully, the CLP lives in the real world. We understand that every dollar the government spends, including on the CSO, must be paid for by debt or taxes. Territorians pay one way or another. Deferring the cost, borrowing more and putting it on the credit card is the Labor way. We know that, and we are dealing with that legacy. You would think those opposite had learned something by now, but apparently it seems they have not.

The approach the opposition is sneering at today is the same approach that is turning around this economy. There are more Territorians in a job than at any point in our history, and we have the best jobs growth in the nation. Building approvals are higher than at any point under the previous Labor governments, and the Territory's labour participation rate is the highest in the nation.

Household spending is up by 10.1% in a year—nearly double the national figure—because Territorians are backing themselves again. None of that happened by accident. It happened because business and families can finally see a government that is prioritising the basics: rebuilding the economy; restoring the lifestyle; and reducing crime. We are cleaning up Labor's mess.

Members opposite will tell us how the prices rose less on their watch, and you know what? They are right. Electricity prices rose less under Labor, but here is why: they were not paying for the power; they were borrowing for it on the never-never. Any government can hold prices down with someone else's money—that is for sure—but that is not economic management. That is a payday loan with the Territory's name on it.

For eight years Labor members sat on the tariff and the CSO, maxed out the credit card and did nothing about the one thing that could drive down power prices: the cost of generation. They did not take one serious step on that front. They just kept signing the loan documents and smiling for the cameras—smile away, boys—borrowing $110,000 per hour every day of their term of government.

While they were at it, they sat on one of the largest onshore gas resources in the world, the Beetaloo. They delayed it and dithered over it. They put a moratorium on it, reviewed it over and over, and then ran scared of their own left flank. It is the single biggest lever available to bring down the cost of generating electricity in this Territory, and Labor left it in the ground.

Every time a Territorian flicks on a light switch today, they are paying the price of that delay. Here is the detail that tells you that Labor has learned nothing: in every budget reply speech given by those opposite, not one of them could bring themselves to say 'Beetaloo'. They could not even say 'gas'. I can spell it out for them if they need help. I am not too bad with my words. I did my three Rs—reading, writing and 'rithmetic—at school. It is G-A-S, and you do not have to be afraid to say it. We on this side of the Chamber want Beetaloo gas flowing because cheaper gas means cheaper power in the long term for households and industry.

Let us be clear about what Labor's record on prices was—an illusion. The proof is in the numbers that it left behind. Net debt to revenue bloomed from 35% to 116% on Labor's watch. Our credit rating was downgraded, and private sector confidence was smashed. If Labor's rate of debt growth was converted into car speeds, it would have been tearing down the Stuart Highway at 224 kilometres an hour. That is fast enough to lose your licence on the spot. The Leader of the Opposition was not watching from the cheap seats. She sat around the Cabinet table from 2018 as Health minister, Attorney-General, Education minister and Housing minister. She was a senior decision-maker in the government through all those years. It is clear that she learned nothing.

I will apply context to this debate. Territory households will still pay below average prices for their utilities. Power, at 34.3c per kilowatt hour, is the fourth cheapest in our nation, with the average annual bill of $2,921 being below the national average of $3,021. Water, at $3.43 a kilolitre, is the third cheapest in the nation, with an average bill more than $200 below the national average. The total average household utilities bill of power, water and sewerage together is below the national average and is the fourth cheapest of all the jurisdictions.

For perspective on this year's adjustment, New South Wales households are copping water and sewerage increases of 8.9%; South Australians are staring down the barrel of an 8.1% hike on water; and households in the National Electricity Market ride a rollercoaster of volatile default market offers year to year.

Territory prices are regulated; they are steady and predictable. They are pegged this year to inflation, as with previous years. None of that makes a bill increase welcome. I know and understand that. Over the past five years utility prices in the Territory have risen by a cumulative 19%. Every increase hurts; I get that, and this one is no different. However, that 19% is the third-lowest cumulative increase of any jurisdiction in the country. At a time when households everywhere in Australia have been paying more, Territorians have been better shielded than almost anyone, and this government intends to keep it that way.

This motion also demands that the government gives Territorians cost-of-living relief as though the budget does not contain over $290m of exactly that—a record amount. If those opposite bothered to read the budget—clearly, they still have not—before writing motions about it, they would probably have noticed the BRO (Budget and Regional Overview). If they like I will give them a signed copy. If those opposite had a close look at page 10—I have marked the cost-of-living measures for them to look at; there is plenty there—they would have seen that it starts with a record $225m in power and water concessions and subsidies that I have already described. That is the single biggest cost-of-living measure in the budget and one that this motion pretends does not exist.

It does not stop there; this budget delivers a $19.7m cut to the fuel excise by 5.7c per litre. That is real money saved at the bowser every week going back in people's pockets. There are free swimming lessons for students; free TAFE courses and vocational training for eligible Territorians; early childhood education subsidies worth more than $1,500 per child; and $1,000 for apprentices to buy their workwear and tools of trade.

For our seniors, the Territorians who feel price pressures the hardest, there is the $550 Seniors Recognition Scheme card; up to $1,200 a year off electricity; $800 off water; $486 off sewage; $200 off council rates; and a concession on registration, garbage and spectacles. The pension has risen by $51.90 a fortnight for singles over the past year. This year the average annual power bill for a pensioner household in the Territory is just $751.88, about a quarter of the standard bill, because this government stands behind them.

When you add it up, a family with a school-age child and a little one can access up to $4,338 in support; an eligible senior Territorian, up to $5,326; and a couple building their first home, up to $52,027.

We are also helping households cut their bills. We have doubled the solar feed-in tariff to 18.66c per kilowatt hour for regulated customers exporting power between 3 pm and 9 pm, rewarding Territorians for putting power back into the grid exactly when it is needed. Another government charge, vehicle rego, will rise by no more than $8 this year because we froze the MAC levy after freezing rego completely last year. With mandatory inspections abolished, the real cost of owning a car in the Territory has gone down.

This motion puts a choice before the Assembly. This government has made hard honest decisions; passed through a fraction of a genuine cost increase, absorbing the overwhelming bulk of it through a $225m shield; delivered more than $290m in targeted cost-of-living relief; and went after the actual cause of high generation costs by getting Territory gas out of the ground. The opposition offers the same alternatives the way that it always does—hide the costs, borrow the money and hand the bill to whoever comes along next. There is never an attempt by those opposite to fix the underlying problems. They ran the Territory's finances that way for eight long years, and they are eight years that Territorians will not forget.

This government will keep doing the responsible thing, safeguarding households from the worst of cost shocks, delivering real and targeted relief, repairing the budget Labor wrecked and getting Territory gas flowing so that power becomes cheaper for good.

I oppose this motion. I commend the government's responsible approach and the amendment to the motion.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will speak against the amendment proposed by the CLP government. I support the original motion calling on the Finocchiaro CLP government to reverse its 5.3% hike in power, water and sewerage charges and to give Territorians cost-of-living relief.

Cost of living is a primary concern for all Territorians. At street stalls at the markets and at kids sport I hear time and again the challenges people have in making ends meet. Despite this, when calls are made and requests are conveyed the answer from CLP members is to close their ears and ignore it. We see this again with the latest increase in costs for essential services like power and water. That is another kick in the teeth because there are many Territorians doing it tough.

This 5.3% increase results in an extra cost to the average household of more than $300 per year. At a time when the price of everything is going up much faster than wages, everyday Territorians are facing a future where their living standards are going backwards.

Budgets are about values and choices. This is an active representation of what and who is important and who is not. This CLP government has actively chosen not to support Territorians or care about their concerns regarding electricity and water bills. The Treasurer may say that these costs must be passed on; that is simply untrue. There are hundreds of line items in every budget that can be adjusted, reprioritised or promoted. We know this because the CLP government decided to spend $23m not to build the future national centre of Aboriginal art in Alice Springs. That $23m could have provided a big help in reducing the increased cost of power and water services to all Territorians.

Rather than finding savings or efficiencies or invest in cheaper forms of energy, the Treasurer decided to simply pass on this increase to everyone. When he could have made harder choices about how much increased costs to be absorbed, he actively chose to pass on the pain to all Territorians.

The impact of these rises will be felt across the length and breadth of the Territory. No household or business will be able to avoid paying more for their power and water under this government. In my electorate of Nightcliff many people have contacted my office and spoken to me about the impact these price rises will have on them. Just the other day, George, an aged pensioner, came to see me about his power bill. It had increased significantly since the previous month, and he could not understand why. Then he took the opportunity to pay the bill and received a quick follow-up from the retailer checking in to find out why he had not paid and threatening to cut off his power. It is unacceptable that we should have aged pensioners in our

community being stressed out about ongoing price hikes and being threatened with losing access to power in their homes.

This issue has also been raised by many small businesses in my community. Margins are already tight, from making coffees and sandwiches to supplying trades and services. Another 5.3% increase in their power and water bills makes that much tougher to keep the doors open and support our community. Retailers are faced with an unenviable choice of raising prices, reducing hours or putting off workers. There is only so much that businesses can do to absorb these costs before it starts to impact on their livelihoods and their workers.

These changes also have a major impact on our community clubs and not-for-profit sector. These price increases will be passed on to every community room booking, lighting costs at sporting ovals and renting out communal workspaces. There is only so much that can be delivered off the smell of an oily rag, and another 5.3% increase makes that just a bit harder to support our local sporting clubs, charities and service providers.

Another part of our community taking a hit with the increase costs of power and water is our schools. There are five schools in my electorate, and they all work incredibly hard to employ great teachers, build a positive learning environment and prepare our kids for a bright future, but with the CLP moving government schools to commercial cost-reflective utility pricing, this will help the principals, staff and parent community educate and support our next generation. This change to cost-reflective pricing will add millions of dollars to school operating budgets across the NT.

While the minister for Education says that the increased costs will be covered by the department, we still have no idea how this will be managed. Does it simply mean the cost we manage through reducing the number of staff in the department? Does it mean offloading admin work to our schools and hardworking principals? Does it mean less support from the department for HR, finance and IT for our schools? Every dollar taken out of a school budget or the Education department to pay a power bill is a dollar not spent in the classroom. No matter which way you square it up, hiking costs for schools will be picked up somewhere, and it will be kids' education that suffers.

Applying cost-reflective pricing to our local councils has been a complete shemozzle. In June last year, the CLP government put out a quiet media release about changes to electricity pricing for local government. For some councils this could have led to a power increase of more than 120%. However, it did not do the work to explain to councils and formally advise them of the changes or invite any opportunity for feedback. The sector found out about it by reading it in the media. They were expected to absorb these costs without any context or opportunity for consultation.

Again, a trademark of this CLP government is to announce changes without engaging with people or organisations affected. It was only with pushback from the local government sector and the Territory Labor opposition that the CLP came to the table to listen and negotiate. This was after the sector called out the lack of consultation, the difficulty of absorbing this major price hike and the impact on residents and ratepayers.

The Lord Mayor of the City of Darwin commented in April that the price increases:

> *'… could have a huge impact on the services we provide to the community'.*
>
> *'You look at the costs of electricity in relation to running our libraries, running our pools, the lighting of ovals at night for sporting events, things like that' …*
>
> *'All of these services may have to be reduced, the times that lights are on may have to be reduced, so we meet our budget.'*
>
> *'We are unable to go into deficit, so we will have to cut services to meet our budget.'*

Again, that is the key message that came back from councils time and again*:* they will have to cut services to meet budgets.

The City of Darwin estimated that the increased power costs alone could be up to $0.5m and would need to be covered by a 0.5% rate increase. *It is* yet another cost-of-living impact to our hardworking Territorians after they pay high prices for their own household bills.

The saga continued as side deals and carve-outs were made by the Treasurer without any transparency for the sector or the community. The Treasurer had to be dragged to change his position again to a 30% increase

above previous commercial rates. This change was finally welcomed by the Local Government Association of the NT as a significant improvement on the original proposal*; h*owever, the hike is still a substantial increase.

As quoted in the *NT News*:

> *'A 30 per cent increase is well above inflation and represents a significant, unbudgeted cost for local government' …*
>
> *'Every extra dollar spent on electricity is a dollar that can't be invested in local roads, community facilities and the services Territorians rely on.'*

The reality is that this price increase is a massive impost on local government and will result in a reduction of services. At the end of the day it is every Territorian who will foot the bill for this massive price hike on local government.

While the CLP is hard at work raising our power and water prices, it is asleep at the wheel when it comes to bringing online the cheapest form of energy in the NT—solar. It scrapped the Territory's renewable energy target. It abandoned its commitment to reduce emissions by 43% by 2030. While businesses are repeatedly calling for consistency and stability in government policy settings, this CLP government scraps and changes policy on a whim.

These changes in policy only serve to hurt Territorians who will end up carrying the cost. Tearing up long-term targets without replacing them with a credible plan is an economic failure. Renewable energy backed by storage is the cheapest form of energy available and is central to energy security by reducing our exposure to volatile gas and diesel prices.

With the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, having security over our energy supplies is more important than ever.

Chopping and changing policy simply creates more uncertainty and makes the transition more expensive. That results in higher power costs for our community.

In addition, during the campaign I talked a lot about community batteries for our energy network as part of the transition and reducing costs for all Territorians. Unfortunately, we heard in Estimates that the 16 proposed community batteries for the NT have been put on hold. Federal government funding from ARENA is sitting there waiting to be used.

In good news, the CEO and the Chair of the Power and Water Corporation board mentioned that there will be a pilot program for three community batteries in the greater Darwin region. I look forward to hearing about the location of these and how community batteries will bring down prices for all Territorians. I have written to the CEO of the Power and Water Corporation to suggest that they talk to people in Nightcliff about this project. I hope to hear from Power and Water soon.

It does not seem to matter whether it is housing, infrastructure or city planning; it is unclear what the long-term plan is for our publicly owned utilities. These changes to apply commercial rates to schools and councils and to charge increased prices, higher than the increase in wages, to households are treating our public assets as delivering a profit-making outcome, not a community outcome.

Furthermore, at Estimates we discovered that the Chairs of all three government-owned utilities were completing their term of office. This should raise concerns for all Territorians. It is looking less like a government managing public utilities for Territorians and more like a government trying to improve the balance sheet for a future sale. The Chief Minister should guarantee that there will be no sale, lease or privatisation of Power and Water, Jacana Energy or Territory Generation. These essential public services belong to Territorians.

What should the government do? The Treasurer should immediately stop the excessive power and water price increases for our schools, councils and households. The government needs to prepare a long-term plan for future power generation and accelerate the renewable energy projects planned and started under the previous Labor government. This includes the renewable energy zone as planned in Weddell. Future savings from our renewable energy future and any cheaper gas supplies must be passed on to all customers and consumers. Finally, it needs to guarantee that our publicly owned utilities will remain in public hands for the benefit of all Territorians.

Territorians are doing it tough. The choices made by the CLP government only make it tougher. Power, water and sewerage services are essential; they are not optional extras. They service the basic needs of everyone. It is our air conditioning, fans, fridges and lights; it is everything that is essential for daily life.

The choice to raise power prices higher than inflation will impact our schools, councils and every household in the NT. This government is out of touch with everyday Territorians and not listening to the people who are struggling. These price hikes must be reversed, and the hard work to plan and deliver our energy future must be prioritised.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, great—this is another episode of 'magical money tree economics' by the financially illiterate excuse for the opposition. This is hilarious.

I do not know how many times we will have these ridiculous discussions. Honestly, call for help from the mothership. Between the lot of you nothing sensible gets strung together to interrogate what we are doing with the economy. I cannot believe that this is your best bet for how to spend your precious time on General Business day. It is a fantastic, coordinated campaign. I love the corflutes in Palmerston—5.3%. The scare campaign is coming. It is unbelievable.

Perhaps the Member for Nightcliff can call upon his luminaries like Mark Dreyfus and we can bring in the big guns, or maybe the Member for Gwoja—who is currently busy doing the McKinnon Advanced Political Leadership program in preparation for taking over this whole operation, no doubt—can find economic assistance from his newfound colleagues. I mean, this is ridiculous.

The Leader of the Opposition has to stop winging it. We have one extreme to the other here. We have Mr Ed—sorry, the Member for Nightcliff—who cannot deviate from his speech, however irrelevant it is to the order of the amendment, then on the other side of the equation we have the Leader of the Opposition, who just needs a speechwriter at this point. We are stringing together loose threads of anything that might happen to be adjunct to the word 'economy'.

It is astounding that we are doing this now. I spoke at length in May four times for almost an hour-and-a-half, I think it was, and I promised at budget time that I would not, after this, forensically deconstruct your economic mismanagement for the 10,000th time. The sad reality of it is—and I apologise to my colleagues who have heard, internalised, understood and processed it and are acting on it—it turns out whoever is left of the opposition, whoever is here to hear the message, still has not understood why power prices have gone up and why the economy is cactus.

It is because you tanked it over a decade; that is what happened. We went through eight Labor budgets, and we explained last time exactly where things went wrong. I admitted that I did not think it was the most dynamic budget that the Treasurer could have passed, but it was a fiscally responsible one. You know what he is doing again? He is making the fiscally responsible choice to raise utility prices at a time when you also need to make money to keep pace with costs.

This is where we are kind of going wrong. Member for Nightcliff, respectfully, you are saying that we are not making the hard choices. We are making extremely hard choices at a time when I pointed out budget after budget of just kicking the can down the road, paying for your wages bill on credit and doing nothing on structural reform for the economy or to actually stimulate growth. Your entire plan was an episode of *Utopia*. It was hilarious—people are still laughing about it—but the joke is wearing thin.

The reality is that we have pressures on public health, housing, education and infrastructure. That is the consequence of Labor's deleterious economic mismanagement of the economy. That is why we have these price hikes. The Treasurer said that it is not fun to put up prices; nobody wants to have to do it. But again, a modicum of reality and perspective about this: we do not have the worst power or water prices in the country. We are within the median band of what is being charged across the country.

The hyperbole to make it seem like we are gutting the everyday person on the cost of living …

Mr Smelt: You are.

Dr RAHMAN: It is so ridiculous. You will have to do better than that. You cannot peddle nonsense economics with me, Member for Nightcliff. I am sorry, but I will catch you out. If you want to play that game, it will not work well for us.

Your pitch was that had we not pulled the plug on the sinking ship of the Alice Springs art gallery, that might have somehow prevented any of this. That is a seriously long bow. I am a fan of the arts; I think everyone knows it. I would have loved to see that gallery up and running, and I would have loved to have seen Labor not wreck the prospects for that project over a long period, but the fact is that would not make us money in the short term. It would make us money in the long term had it not been driven into the ground in the manner that it had been.

Last time I spoke for 70 minutes I said that the sum total of new ideas coming from that side was water pricing. Coming from a hydrology background and the Member for Nightcliff an engineer, my friend, you would appreciate that water is a precious resource and there is an argument to be made for the pricing of water. That is seriously the only new argument I have heard about anything to do with economics on that side.

I am telling you, call the mothership. Do it. Get reinforcements. It is crazy.

Advocacy for council is great. It is important that there is a linkage between levels of government, and it is important that we have expertise in this room in former councillors. It is also important that we can build that bridge, but the fact is councils are not paying above the odds, and these price drops are not coming completely out of the blue. They are happening because we have been deferring all these costs for such a long period.

I will not go through the entirety of my hour-and-a-half worth of speeches on 6 May but, please, read just some of it—get the headlines. My colleagues are across it because my colleagues hear it from me and are seeing action from the Treasurer who is making prudent choices to do what is required to try to provide cost-of-living relief in small and targeted but meaningful ways at the same time as delivering fiscal discipline. That is what is happening over here.

Mrs Zio: You might need to give a definition.

Dr RAHMAN: Definition—you are probably right. I cannot redo the entire speech over again, Member for Fannie Bay; I take the interjection. Mr Ed, you are a likeable fellow, and that was a glorious litany of clean-cut wisdom, but the bottom line is it will not cut it when making tough economic choices, and that is what the Treasurer is doing now. I am supporting him to do that.

Our side is keen on making the tough choices. As I said, I promised not to go through it, chapter and verse, but you just have not processed the message of why our economy is in the state it is in or seemingly even read the budget papers properly. There is a wanton disregard for the actual content at budget time, and we cherrypick selectively. The Treasurer pointed out in Budget Regional Overview on pages 10 and 11 a whole lot of cost-of-living relief measures.

I will not waste my precious time re-reading all of that, but it is a bit rich when the Leader of the Opposition points out that there is an incorrect statistic on your website. Go and read the other 4,000 pages of correct statistics that are on hard-copy paper, and that is what we are pivoting our discussion on today. You may not have got the message, but Territorians got the message.

Mr Howe: Hear, hear!

Dr RAHMAN: Thank you, Member for Drysdale.

I know because I have conversations every day with Territorians about the economy. I talk to Territorians frankly about two things almost daily in my job. The first one, serendipitously, is about VAD, and I am delighted to be part of the government that is finally sorting that mess out as well when Labor failed to do anything about it for decades. The second one is the economy because day-in, day-out, whether it is business owners, everyday consumers, schools or public institutions, people have concerns about the economy, but people understand at their core that Labor wrecked the economy, and we are trying to fix it.

The way we are trying to fix it may not be to everyone's liking or choosing. I freely declare that I would make different choices than the Treasurer, but we are across the totality of this argument being fiscally disciplined, responsible and making choices to try to create more opportunity for everyday Territorians. We are doing that by generating more labour, capital and ideas because you can only keep recycling the same stuff over again so many times hoping to produce anything more from it.

We need new inputs into the system. First, you must stabilise the ship, and to do that you stop the wanton spending on a credit card in perpetuity, which was Labor's solution. Member for Nightcliff, Deputy Leader of

the Opposition, I appreciate that you are not responsible for the poor choices that were made by your predecessors. Now show leadership, take ownership of those poor choices and move forward constructively.

I will give you this: I agree that we have an abundance of gas and sun, and I think we should make best possible use of both of those things. I have been saying that long before I was a political candidate. Could we do more to harness the power of the sun in a more meaningful way? Potentially, we could. Talk to us about that on General Business day rather than this pure nonsense.

I love that the Leader of the Opposition saw fit to unpack the deliberate choices that we made. That is right; they are deliberate choices to raise power prices in a small way to try to mitigate rising costs, inflation and volatility in energy markets and supply of things like diesel, for reasons that we all understand. There is nothing wrong with doing that, but again let me unpack for you how you egregiously mismanaged our economy for almost a decade with delusions. I went through it chapter and verse previously. The bottom line is you have to have strategies for not just how to spend money. Budgeting is about more than just spending money; it is about how to save money institutionally, how to stop the wastage of money institutionally and how to make money institutionally. We are powering ahead on all those things. Little by little we are making progress on all those things.

How do we know we are making progress on them? Because the economic metrics are starting to prove that we are performing better in all those regards. I will not go through all metrics yet, because it is worth getting a reality check for a second on the motion at play. We are essentially being asked, in the original motion—which is somehow still being supported by the opposition—that we should reverse our price hikes because they do not like it and because it is tough. Well, it is tough across the country and everywhere.

We are trying to make sure we are tough but fair in that regard. What does tough but fair look like? It looks like a power increase which puts us as the fourth cheapest nationally still, at 34.36c per kilowatt hour. Our water increase puts us as being the third cheapest nationally, at $3.43 per kilolitre. The NT still has the third-lowest utility bill increase over the past five years.

It is not like we suddenly slammed the place; we have done what we can do to keep pace with cost pressures. The Treasurer is right; power and utility prices have increased by 0.1% above what we estimated 2025–26 CPI to be in the budget. Go and look; it is 5.2% to 5.3%. That is because the cost of generation for electricity has increased between 15% and 20% due to increased gas and diesel cost. We are doing what we can to shield Territorians from those increases.

We have increased the community service obligation by $58m to a total of $225m. If we took that away, power prices would go crazy. Remember, the community service obligation is not magical money either; it has to be paid for.

It is easy but lazy for the Deputy Opposition Leader to get on the radio and say that we should increase that, and Bob's your uncle. That still has to be paid for from somewhere. It is a lazy argument and, frankly speaking, we should not be having it.

We want Beetaloo gas to come online and supply the Territory with cheaper gas over a period because it will mean lower prices for Territorians over the long haul. However, it will take time and in the short run other things will have to be done to structurally reform the economy. Yes, gas will come online, but we still need to do the hard work of saving better, spending more wisely and stopping wastage. These are the things that have to be done by responsible government to be fiscally responsible.

It is true; Labor members do not even want to say the word 'Beetaloo' anymore. We have reached the point where they literally will not even talk about the Beetaloo. It was not mentioned in any of the budget reply speeches.

The fact is Labor did nothing during its term to lower the cost of generation; it kept putting power bills on the credit card, and now we have to pay it all off. The debt legacy means we have limited flexibility. It is cherrypicking on the solar feed-in tariff. We doubled the feed-in tariff to 18.66c per kilowatt hour for regulated customers who export electricity between 3 pm and 9 pm. We are trying to find compromise positions to move the argument forward sensibly.

The Treasurer spoke at length about all the small but meaningful things we are doing to improve costs for vehicle ownership in the Territory. We have done things on registration and trailers, and all of those have a material impact on cost of living.

The 2026–27 budget delivered more than $290m in concessions and subsidies. That was the first thing I pointed out when I spoke at budget time. It was raised over and again. It should not be necessary to itemise all those line items again, but there is $225m in power and water concessions and subsidies, free swimming lessons, free TAFE courses, early childhood subsidies, sport vouchers and $1,000 for apprentices to purchase workwear. I could go on and on.

The point is it is just not reasonable to say that we are providing no cost-of-living relief or that we are negligent in raising power prices. There is a range of measures for seniors which, again, I could go through at length, but I imagine my colleague, the Member for Sanderson, will speak to in his capacity as the relevant minister.

It is unfortunate that the opposition members were so irresponsible with their finances in their last term of government. We would love to be in a more financially flexible position, but we have to operate within the bounds of the situation that we have inherited. Our predecessors left us somewhat constrained in what we can do, and the worst thing we could do now would be not to keep pace with CPI at a minimum, because we need to make progress economically by making prudent choices fiscally.

It is frustrating that in the budget time, I thought we had put this behind us. I think I said at the time, prima facie, the reality of it is that we are providing cost-of-living relief, as there is $290m or something in there. It is all there to read about, if you care to take a look.

The trouble is that we do not treat economic argument seriously. We cherrypick data, then throw tantrums, and there is still a massive gap between budgetary rhetoric and reality.

I forensically pointed out those gaps in my last speech in relation to the structural deficit paradox; net debt per capita; over-reliance on GST windfalls; failure to achieve meaningful and substantial population growth; infrastructure mismanagement; massive cost blowouts tying us to projects that we simply cannot get out of; stagnant private investment despite all the *Utopia*-esque announcements; projects being revoted without being thought through; and cost of living and the utility price squeeze.

Darwin is an expensive place to live, work and do business. The only way you can change that over the longer run is by bringing more inputs in the system—more capital and labour.

Housing supply and homelessness—we spoke last time about the fact it is necessary for us to generate supply in the housing market because the strongest periods of economic growth in the NT correlate with when net interstate migration is also positive. Those periods correlate with when we build surplus to housing requirements. They correlate with periods like post-Cyclone Tracy, when we built Palmerston and Karama and when we built Cullen Bay and created headroom and supply in the market.

We are trying to start that process; you have to start somewhere with it. We started by providing stimulus to first homeowners to build houses in new build areas. Do you know where more of those houses are built than anywhere else in the Territory? In Northcrest and Fong Lim. I know what I am talking about on this, and the reality is that we have to create supply.

The public service bracket creep was another point I mentioned last time. The bottom line was that the Territory Labor period of governance economically over the last decade was basically defined by a transition of aspirational planning through to crisis management. We were not the only ones who pointed it out; Labor's own 2018 Langoulant report made it super clear in that scathing reality check that there was a wages bill that was blowing out, population that was stagnant and a whole lot of wasted money on a whole lot of wasted ventures which were nothing more than marketing and smoke and mirrors.

Mr CHARLS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time for the Member for Fong Lim.

Motion agreed to.

Dr RAHMAN: It is probably prudent for us to reflect on the positives as well. We can do all of this difficult stuff where we have to point out that basically the opposition cannot count, but we also need to move forward and understand that there are positive signs economically at the moment.

Those signs are not total vindication of the economic strategy of the government, but they at least provide indication of signs of hope. Some things are moving in the right direction. Let us have a little think about some of those, because I would like to see us continue to improve on those. Again, I make clear that there are many choices I would make economically that I have robust discussions with the Treasurer about. I would

like us to do things differently, but the strategies that we are following—and I am a member of this team backing them—are providing positive dividends.

First of all, regarding employment and participation, a record number of people are employed in the Northern Territory. We have more Territorians in a job than ever before, and that is a positive thing. Employment in the Territory has increased from 3.3% in trend terms and 3.7% in seasonally adjusted terms. It does not matter which way you want to cut it; more people are in jobs. That is a positive thing. We also have the prospect of things on the horizon that will create more opportunities and jobs.

We all talk about Arafura Nolans, Core Lithium and the Beetaloo coming online, and they will provide a pathway for employment growth across the Territory. The participation rate is up as well, which is a positive thing for people who otherwise would choose not to engage in the economy. The participation rate is up by about 1.2% for the year ending May 2026. That is above the national average, which is a positive sign. On employment and participation, we are starting to see a bit of positive movement.

Household spending is up; that is positive as well. If you break down household spending, you can see that it is not just 10.1% in the year ending May 2026 in seasonally adjusted terms; the growth categories are in miscellaneous goods and services and in recreation and culture. Essentially, these are proxies for restoring the Territory lifestyle. People are spending money in the Territory; consumer spending is up. That is a positive sign. It is above the national average again. Household spending patterns indicate that Territorians have more confidence in the local economy and in spending locally.

I get cautious when talking about trade surplus figures, because the fact is that you can demonstrate huge growth in trade surpluses that does not necessarily materially impact the everyday Territorian. However, they are still a sign of overall activity and growth in the economy. In that regard, our trade surplus has increased by 3.3% to $8.5bn over the 12 months to May 2026, which is an increase from $8.2bn in the 12 months to April 2026.

That is an increase in the value of goods that we are exporting and a decline in the value of goods we are importing. These things are not necessarily good or bad in isolation. They show signs of growth and movement in the economy.

You have to be able to spin multiple plates. These things are happening, and at the same time you have to bring adjustments to the system—for example, reflecting the rising cost of power. That is what these power and water charges are about.

Job vacancies can mean different things to different people. We have growing job vacancies, even though we have rising population and record high levels of employment. What does that mean? It means there is sustained demand for workers, which again means there is solid economic activity.

I maintain, putting my economist hat on, that we need a massive injection in labour supply to grow sustainably going forward. This is not new to anyone in this House. I have been banging on about it the whole time I have been here. If you take the metrics in isolation, you see that in the system at the moment jobs are being filled, people are participating in the economy, there is demand for workers and there are high rates of vacancies. That is something you can work with to create more economic growth. You can offset having to demand more from people in wages, subsidies, taxes and so on and so forth.

Population is the single best salve to all that. Our population is starting to stabilise. I have gone through this forensically so many times that I just cannot do it over and again. There is still wide misunderstanding about what is happening population-wise. The fact of the matter is by the last quarter of data in the period when Labor was in charge, we were down to 0.7% in year-on-year population growth. Our population was starting to demographically haemorrhage. It has started to stabilise in every quarter of data since we have come into office. There has been a turnaround on that. Now we are up to 1.6% or 1.7%—I forget—off the top of my head, year-on-year growth. That is a positive thing. Some of that is international students, no doubt about it. Some of that is short-term movements, but some of that is also Territorians choosing not to leave—certainly not at the rate they were leaving at before.

I love it when people just discover these numbers for the first time, and they say, ‘Hang on! Net interstate migration means people are leaving the Territory.’ I say, ‘Yes, they have always been leaving; that is our resting state. They have only not been leaving in three periods in our history, frankly.’

We need to grow our population by getting the right overseas people here who we can invest in to keep for the long haul to build for the future. We need to maintain a stable natural increase, which we have been

reasonably good at. Ultimately, we also need to mitigate net interstate migration that is negative and—as the numbers would suggest—that is exactly what we are doing. Is it enough to suddenly turn around the entire economy and cause a massive boom? No. It is stabilising the ship that Labor was tanking for more than a decade. That is the reality and, demographically, that is what has happened.

Local prices are also stable. When we are talking about the cost of living, have a look at what is happening on CPI. You will see that whilst Darwin's CPI has increased by 3.9%, that is the second-lowest result of the capital cities; national CPI has increased by 4%. We have the average basket of goods here still being relatively affordable without changing wildly in a crazy, volatile manner; local prices are reasonably stable.

Engineering construction continues to increase by 18% to $347m in the year end March quarter. That is a positive sign; there are still signs of people trying to build stuff. For the most part, it is people who have already invested in the Territory who are now doubling down on reinvesting here and are building more. We need to attract new private investment from outside, and our ministers are doing all the hard work to do as much as they can with that.

It was a pleasure to see everybody at the 2026 NT Investment Summit the other day. I know the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations works tirelessly trying to find new sources, lines of credit and investors for us, and we will have to determine which of those are the right mix for the Northern Territory economy.

Engineering construction is up as well as building approvals. Residential building approvals are up by 55% in trend terms—across the year—which is the second-best result across the country. The fact is that residential approvals have increased by 14.5% across May to 95. This was the best result in the country and was higher than any point under the former Labor government. We are stimulating signs of growth.

This motion is about the cost of living, and the fact of the matter is that affordability here is still relatively good on many metrics—one of them is on the purchase of a home. The Northern Territory is rated the second most affordable place to purchase a home under the Real Estate Institute of Australia's Housing Affordability Report. We are still creating supply, but I would like us to generate more supply, more aggressively, and I would love it to be in Fong Lim. We are generating supply that is creating headroom in the markets as well as signs of economic activity and building approvals. It is resulting in engineering construction and is stopping the total haemorrhage of tradies and contractors who might otherwise be going elsewhere to more stable markets where there is more work guaranteed.

I do not enjoy talking about these things in perpetuity, and I hope the opposition will start to bring more sensible things for us to discuss on General Business day. Simply throwing a tantrum and saying, 'Undo your price rises to Power and Water' is not constructive; it is silly. We are doing the hard work of trying to be fiscally responsible, and we are making the hard choices to move the Territory economy forward slowly.

Rebuilding an economy takes time. We are putting together the fundamental building blocks, and the reason we must do it is because, sadly, it is true that you cannot trust Labor with the economy. I hope that there will come a time when I can say, 'You can trust them; they just have a different set of ideas.' Currently, you cannot trust Labor on the economy, and for that reason I am happy to support the amended motion moved by my learned colleague, the Treasurer.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I refuse the amendment that the government has put forward. Every time I come here I relate it to my remote communities and conditions, because whatever happens in Darwin also has a huge effect in our communities; it bumps up prices everywhere.

The government has made a deliberate choice from 1 July. Territorians are now paying 5.3% more for power, water and sewerage. That increase is above wage growth and is also above the rate that household incomes are growing.

Utility hikes often have a greater impact on people living in remote and regional areas. Remote and regional areas already face higher living costs due to transportation expenses, limited competition amongst suppliers and the high cost of delivering goods and services.

The power system in a remote community normally comes from a power station that is run by diesel generators. That cost then flows on to how much people can use and afford.

People in remote communities do not have choices in regard to housing; therefore, they pay more for fan usage and air conditioning for cooling. The larger properties will consume more energy. They have a greater

reliance on electric pumps. As a result, utility prices will generally be significantly higher in remote and regional areas.

I listened to the Treasurer and the Member for Fong Lim, but there was no mention of remote areas. That is because when you talk about CPI, remote areas are not included. Which remote community has job growth? None—name one.

I will mention the Beetaloo gas. Hopefully there will be a KPI for recruiting and employing Indigenous people at the Beetaloo. This would be a positive. Let us get Aboriginal people there to work. Get them qualified. That will help Indigenous communities, especially around the Beetaloo area.

One of the biggest areas where prices bump up is freight services. There are four islands in my electorate; not everything can be transported by truck because of the roads. Freight services are by barge, and there are truck services that go to Maningrida and Oenpelli.

The prices for freight services rely heavily on the prices from Darwin for materials, steel and the fuel to get those materials to remote communities. That is the problem. I will give you some numbers. In Maningrida, Ramingining and Milingimbi, the price of unleaded fuel is $3 and diesel is $3.28. On Goulburn Island, unleaded is $3 and diesel is $3.67. In Ramingining, in the Member for Mulka's electorate, where I have fuelled up a few times, fuel is $3.64. Minjilang is the highest at $4.32 for diesel. There are limited jobs for people in these communities, and there is no competition for fuel prices. Fuel comes straight from the barge, and there is usually only one fuel pump in the communities. That is the biggest cry: subsidise freight services. Talk to the barge services. Help our fellow Territorians. Remote people are Territorians too.

A basic basket of food in town with only milk, cheese, beef mince and apples costs $44. Guess how much it is in remote communities? It is $99.

Mr Edgington: Tell Labor to reduce the excise.

Mr BROWN: Guess what federal Labor is doing?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Both sides, direct comments through the Chair, please.

Mr BROWN: When you talk about the Territory, include everybody. At the moment the Territory is Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Even Gove is missing out. The federal government has a national strategy for food security. It has put a whole bunch of food in that basket that you can select. Come on, government; champion that and help out.

The Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program has 6,000 real jobs within communities. I was excited to see job growth in the paper, but which communities had job growth in remote areas? We are not included; we are swept under the rug. The government has pulled so many services out of our communities that we are struggling with. There is no government representative in Gunbalanya.

I looked up CPI; which communities does it include? It includes only Darwin and the major hubs. Let us tell the truth and talk about the whole picture; people are struggling out there. I hear the fiscal discipline quote—which the Treasurer, the Member for Fong Lim and nearly everyone who has spoken quoted—but here is my question: does delivering fiscal disciple mean neglecting our remote communities? That is the real question. What is happening with our remote communities? Are we backing remote communities?

The councils run the services in the community, and the price hike goes to the people. The Member for Barkly was on the Barkly council, so he would know that it reflects the cost of how the power goes. All the meter boxes in the communities—the only batteries I have seen there are at remote outstations. On the Tiwi Islands we have a diesel power station, and the cost of getting diesel to the island increases and goes to the consumer. One practical way the government can help there is to subsidise our freight service, especially with the barge, which will go to the consumer because not everyone has jobs there.

Please think about remote communities when we are talking.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is worth noting that when this matter was first brought forward, the opposition's motion simply called on the government to reverse the 5.3% increase in power, water and sewage services.

The original motion ignored the broader context, the real cause for generating electricity and the hundreds of millions of dollars this government already invests to shield Territory households from those costs. It ignored the difficult decision every responsible government must make. The amendment before the Assembly better reflects that reality and recognises that Territorians are facing genuine cost-of-living pressures, that this government is delivering practical cost-of-living relief across the Territory and the importance of managing the Territory's finances responsibly after inheriting a trajectory towards $15bn of debt.

Those are important additions because every member of this Assembly understands the pressures facing Territory families. Families are budgeting more carefully, seniors are watching every dollar, and small businesses are managing higher operation costs. Nobody on this side dismisses those pressures. In fact, our budget has been built around recognising those pressures and responding responsibly. However, there remains a significant difference between acknowledging the challenge and pretending there is a simple solution. That was the flaw in the original motion, and it is why the broader context recognised in the amendment matters.

Let us deal with the facts: the cost of generating electricity in the Northern Territory has increased dramatically. The cost of gas and diesel has increased. Generation costs have risen by between 15% and 20%. These are not costs created by the Northern Territory Government. They are real costs faced by every isolated electricity network across the Northern Territory. The question before government was never whether these costs existed. The question was: who should bear them? Would every Territory household receive the full increase, or would government absorb most of that cost on behalf of Territorians? Our government chose to protect Territory families. That is why the community service obligation, the subsidy that keeps electricity affordable, has increased by another $58m this year.

This year alone the Northern Territory Government will spend more than $225m subsidising electricity. Think about that for a moment. That is taxpayers' money which could otherwise be spent on schools, hospitals, police, roads and community infrastructure. Instead, this government is using it to shield Territorians from a much larger electricity price increase. Without that subsidy, electricity prices would increase by about 75%. For many households that would mean paying well over $2,000 more every year. That is the real figure. That is what government is preventing, yet the opposition pretends that this support somehow does not exist. It does. It is one of the largest cost-of-living subsidies provided anywhere in Australia.

The community service obligation is not magic money. The government cannot simply write a larger cheque every year without consequences. Every additional dollar has to come from somewhere—through higher taxes, higher debt or by reducing services elsewhere. That is the reality of governing.

Labor's contribution today is simply to say, 'Spend more, increase the subsidy and reverse the increase', but those opposite never answer the obvious question: how? How would they pay for it? Would they borrow another $100m? Would they increase taxes? Would they cut hospital funding? Would they cut police funding? Would they cut funding for community programs? We never hear an answer because under Labor the answer was always the same: put it on the credit card, and leave the bill for somebody else. That is exactly the financial mess this government inherited.

Responsible governments do not ignore rising costs; they manage them. Responsible governments absorb what they can. They make difficult decisions to protect households while also facing the Territory's long-term financial future. That is precisely what this government has done.

Despite what those opposite would have Territorians believe, electricity prices in the Northern Territory remain among the lowest in Australia. Power prices are the fourth cheapest nationally. Water prices are the third cheapest nationally. Overall household utility bills remain below the national average. Over the past five years the Northern Territory has experienced the third lowest cumulative increase in utility prices in Australia. They are not opposition talking points; they are the facts.

There is another point that deserves attention. Those opposite like talking about electricity prices, but they never want to talk about the cost of generating electricity because that would require acknowledging the single biggest long-term opportunity available to the Northern Territory: the Beetaloo. Those opposite are still getting used to bringing themselves to say the words, yet affordable domestic gas is one of the most important long-term opportunities to reduce electricity generation costs. Cheaper gas means cheaper generation. Cheaper generation means lower pressure on electricity prices. Lower electricity prices mean less reliance on taxpayer subsidies. That is a long-term solution, not pretending costs disappear, not borrowing more money, but actually reducing the cost of producing electricity.

Instead, Labor spent years delaying economic development while simply increasing subsidies funded through debt. It never addressed the underlying problem; it simply passed the bill to future Territorians.

Cost-of-living relief is about far more than one utility bill. This government understands that our response has never been limited to simply one utility bill. This budget delivers almost $290m in targeted cost-of-living relief. Whether it is electricity subsidies; concessions for seniors; back-to-school, sports and Learn to Swim vouchers; or support for first home buyers, apprentices or Territory businesses, this government is helping Territorians across the entire household budget, not just one line item. That is practical cost-of-living relief in action.

It is why the Northern Territory Concession Scheme continues to provide assistance with electricity, water, sewerage, council rates, motor vehicle registration, drivers' licence and other essential household costs. It is why the Seniors Recognition Scheme continues to acknowledge the enormous contribution older Territorians make to our community. It is why we continue supporting families through initiatives such as sports vouchers that help reduce the cost of children participating in organised sport. Cost of living is about keeping families active, communities connected and helping Territorians participate. That is restoring the Territory lifestyle.

We have also looked at everyday household costs. Last year we froze motor vehicle registrations. This year we have limited increases by freezing the Motor Accidents Compensation levy. For most Territorians, that means registration increases by no more than $8. At the same time, we abolished mandatory vehicle inspections. Taken together, many Territory motorists are paying less to own and register a vehicle than they otherwise would have. That is practical cost-of-living relief, not announcements or headlines—actual savings.

We have also doubled the solar feed-in tariff during afternoon and evening peak periods. That rewards Territory households investing in renewable energy while helping strengthen the electricity network during periods of highest demand. Again, these are practical measures, not slogans.

One thing this government will never do is pretend that difficult decisions do not exist. We inherited significant debt. Indeed, the amendment rightly recognises the financial position inherited by this government. We inherited a Territory on a trajectory towards $15bn of debt. Responsible governments do not pretend that debt does not matter. Every additional dollar borrowed today is paid back by future Territorians through interest that could otherwise be invested in hospitals, schools, police, roads and community services.

We inherited structural financial challenges and years when borrowing became the default response to every problem. We are determined not to repeat those mistakes because every dollar borrowed today becomes a bill paid by Territory families tomorrow. Every dollar added to debt attracts interest, and every additional interest payment means less money available for hospitals, schools, policing and community services.

Financial responsibility is itself a cost-of-living measure. Strong public finances keep taxes lower, protect essential services and give governments capacity to respond when genuine emergencies occur. That is what responsible government looks like.

I also reject the implication behind the opposition's motion that this government somehow does not understand the pressures facing ordinary Territorians. Every member on this side speaks with fellow Territorians every day. We speak with pensioners, small businesses, sporting clubs, community organisations, volunteers, young people and people with disabilities. We hear exactly the same concerns. That is why our response has not focused on one headline; it has focused on the whole household budget with electricity subsidies, concessions, vehicle costs, community participation, sports vouchers, swimming vouchers, support for seniors and families and responsible economic management. That is genuine cost-of-living policy.

Governing is about balancing today's pressures with tomorrow's responsibilities. It is easy to promise bigger subsidies; it is much harder to explain how you will pay for them. This government is prepared to have that honest conversation. We will continue protecting Territory households through one of the most generous electricity subsidy schemes in the nation and through investing hundreds of millions of dollars in practical cost-of-living support. We will continue rebuilding the economy so that wages grow and businesses invest. We will continue supporting projects like the Beetaloo that address the underlying cost of electricity generation. We will continue managing the Territory's finances responsibly so that future generations are not left paying for today's political shortcuts.

The Labor opposition's motion asked us to ignore economic reality and to spend more without a funding source. It asked us to repeat exactly the mistakes that created so many of the financial challenges we are now facing. The Finocchiaro CLP government will not do that. We will continue supporting Territorians,

protecting households from the full cost of rising electricity generation, delivering practical cost-of-living relief and making responsible decisions that protect today's and tomorrow's Territorians.

Whether we look at the original motion or the amendment, one thing is clear: this government understands the cost-of-living pressures faced by Territorians. That is why we are spending more than $225m subsidising electricity. That is why this budget delivers almost $290m in broader cost-of-living relief. That is why we continue to support seniors, families, apprentices, first home buyers, businesses and vulnerable Territorians. That is why we remain committed to rebuilding the Territory's finances after inheriting a trajectory towards $15bn of debt.

The amendment acknowledges those realities. It recognises that genuine cost-of-living relief must go hand in hand with responsible financial management. The approach of the Finocchiaro CLP government is to protect Territory households today, while ensuring we can continue investing in essential services tomorrow. For those reasons, I support the amendment to the motion.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge all the contributions made in the Chamber, whether I agree with them or not.

This is an issue that affects every person living in the Territory. We all require energy. Whether it is produced from solar or the gas that will be coming from the Beetaloo, the sources of energy and where they come from are important things that we need to discuss. In Alice Springs the solar initiatives have been so successful that at times Alice Springs produces too much energy, and that has prompted the conversations about more long-term batteries for Central Australia.

From 1 July the CLP government increased household electricity prices by 5.3%. We heard in this Chamber that members of the government think that is not a significant number. It might not sound like much of a number on a government spreadsheet, but it means something different around the kitchen table for many families in the Northern Territory. It means that another bill is going up when families across the Territory are already paying more for their groceries, rent, insurance, fuel and almost every other basic necessity.

For an average Territory household this increase could add up to about $200 a year extra. That might sound like only a few dollars each week to the government, but when a family is already counting every dollar every day, there is no such thing as just a few dollars. That money could have bought bread, milk or fruit for the kids. It could have helped fill up the car so that someone could get to work and, of course, it could have paid for school lunches, medication and essential services for the household. Territory families do not experience price increases one at a time; they experience them all at one time—a little more for power, a little more for food, a little more for fuel and a little more for rent. Eventually, there is no more room left for the family.

The government's own figures show that the average Territory household uses about 23 to 26 kilowatts of electricity each day. From 1 July the standard residential use charge increased to 31.7c per kilowatt hour along with the increased daily supply charge.

Power is not a luxury in the Northern Territory. In our climate, whether it is the Top End or the desert, electricity means being able to turn on a fan or an air conditioner when the temperature increases to more than 40 degrees. It means keeping our food cool, storing our medications safely and bringing up our children in a home where they can sleep each night and arrive at school ready to learn. For our older Territorians, babies and people with chronic health conditions, being kept safe during extreme heat is important.

The Treasurer talks about subsidies, rankings and comparisons with other jurisdictions, as did the Member for Fong Lim, but Territorians do not pay their bill with a national ranking. They pay their bills with money they earned. When the bill goes up, families have to find that money from somewhere else. The government has said that it is increasing its electricity subsidy and limiting the price increase to 5.3%, but a subsidy does not make an increase disappear. The amount coming out of the family's bank account is still higher, the amount a pensioner has to put aside is still higher, and the amount a remote household has to load onto its prepaid meter is still going up.

Beyond Darwin in regional and remote communities, households are already dealing with higher food prices, limited services, unreliable telecommunications and some of the harshest temperatures in this country. Families also live in overcrowded homes. One meter may effectively be providing electricity for a household with several generations and multiple families living under one roof.

Many homes are poorly insulated and have significant ageing and insufficient air conditioners. That is doors, windows and screens that may need repairing. These homes require more electricity to keep people safe

and comfortable. Not because families are being wasteful but because the household itself has not been designed to be energy efficient.

The government's own electricity reforms acknowledge that shared meters, multiple households and rural properties usually have higher electricity use.

I am not sure whether people in this Chamber would know, but many people in remote communities already pay a higher price for energy because they use a smart meter, which is not considered an ordinary meter. People in the bush are already paying more for power than people in the urban centres because of the meter arrangements.

In Alice Springs, the Barkly and remote Central Australia, keeping a home cool throughout summer is not optional; it is a matter of health and safety. Recent reporting from Central Australia described a grandmother putting about $70 a week onto her prepaid electricity account. During extreme heat that credit was lasting her household less than three days. Every three days she was spending $70 during summer to cool her house for her extended family, to run her fridge to keep her medication cool and to cook meals for her entire family. That cost $70 every three days. When the credit ran out the electricity stopped, taking with it the lights, air conditioning and refrigeration. She was left asking whether she could pay for electricity or buy food. No Territory family should ever be forced to make that choice.

When governments have price hikes, even if it is 5.3%, the choice is hard for people in the bush. People in the bush already live below the poverty line. We heard that it costs $70 every three days to run just one household in the bush. That is not sustainable or reasonable, and that is before you consider the 5.3% increase being passed on to everyday Territorians.

For people receiving quarterly bills, the increase may not be as obvious until the bill arrives. For people in the bush who use prepaid electricity, the impact is immediate. They put the same $50 on, but the power runs out earlier. The meter does not care that payday is tomorrow, the shop is closed and that the children in the house, the food in the fridge or the elderly person trying to keep cool need access to reliable power. When the credit is gone, the power can simply go off.

Research into prepaid electricity has found that many remote customers rely heavily on in-store topics because of poor mobile phone access, unreliable applications and difficulties navigating digital systems. It has also identified regular disconnections and barriers preventing eligible households from accessing concessions and hardship assistance. That brings me to the transition to new smart prepaid meters.

There may be many benefits from modern technology. A smart meter may allow credit to be transferred remotely, may reduce the need for someone to physically insert a card into a meter and may provide better information about energy use in peak times, but technology is only an improvement when people can understand how to use it and how they can access it.

Power and Water's own information says that the newer e-token meters do not use a traditional power card; instead, credit is sent to the meter using a mobile phone network. Customers may be required to top up online, by phone or through a participating retailer. After payment is made, it can take time for credit to reach the meter, depending on the mobile network. That might sound simple from an office in Darwin, but not in the bush, where there is often faulty mobile phone reception. What happens when the Telstra service is down? What happens when a person does not have internet banking, a credit card, mobile data or a working phone? What happens when English is not someone's first language? What happens when an elderly person who has used power cards for many years suddenly discovers the process has changed? What happens when a family has paid for power, but a communications problem means that the credit has not reached the meter? These are not imaginary scenarios. They are every day realities in remote Australia.

I recently attended a local authority meeting in Kintore community, where members raised serious concerns about the transition to new meters. People said that they did not understand what was changing and no-one from the government had spoken to them. They were concerned that the old power card arrangements were being removed without a proper transition plan. People had difficulty topping up, and some were left without power. I spoke to one senior leader in Kintore who had no power in her home for three months because no-one had bothered to talk to her about how she could top up her power because she has no mobile phone. People did not know where to go, who to call or know how to fix the problem.

The local authority requested that Power and Water come to the community and hold a proper meeting. Why did the community have to chase the government for basic information? Why was there not a community meeting before these meters and changes to power were introduced? Did anyone from the government head

out to this remote community to tell people that power prices were going up by 5.3% and that smart meters were being rolled out? Why were local authority members, community stores, housing organisations and Aboriginal organisations not properly engaged from the beginning? Why were local people not trained and employed to help households through the transition? This is not consultation.

Also alarming is that the government has indicated it will put up power prices by 30% for local government. Across the Northern Territory there are many local government councils which already run on finite resources to deliver important community and council services.

What does a 30% power price increase mean for local government? It means that somewhere in the local government area there will have to be a reduction in service. Whether it is the lights going off earlier at a football field and community members being unable to play a game of quality footy in summer or council assets and infrastructure being unable to run the air conditioning for longer periods during summer in the bush, these are questions that local governments will have to work through with their communities as to how they can respond to this this increase. In our larger urban centres will councils have to consider eventually passing on that 30% power price increase to their ratepayers?

What we are seeing is the CLP government putting up power prices by 5.3% for residents and by 30% for local governments.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Kon Vatskalis

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge the former Lord Mayor of Darwin and former Member of the Legislative Assembly, Hon Kon Vatskalis.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr PAECH: It is good to have the former Member for Casuarina and former Lord Mayor with us this afternoon.

As I said, this might sound just like numbers, but they have a real impact on people in the Territory. A 30% increase in power costs for a local government is a lot because it is not just a 30% increase for one building in one council area; it is a 30% increase across the entire operation. It is a 30% increase in running costs in Papunya, Kintore, Alpurrurulam, Timber Creek and all 76 remote Aboriginal communities and our urban centres. That will come at the cost of local government services in our communities because they do not have an endless pool of money. Remember that local governments in the bush do not have the rate base that Darwin, Palmerston or Alice Springs has. They do not have the ability to self-generate revenue as other councils do across the country.

Local governments across the bush are already running on the smell of an oily rag, and the CLP is asking them to do more with less. There is no increase in their overall budgets, but there is an expectation that they need to wear a 30% increase in power costs. We are talking about the most marginalised people in the Territory, the people in the bush, and we are slogging their local governments with a 30% power price increase. People in the bush already go without services that everyone else in urban areas take for granted every day. This increase will have a significant impact on those people.

If we want local governments to do more, we need to give them more—not power price increases—resources. They do a fantastic job with the resources they have now.

The Member for Karama is a former councillor, as is the former Mayor of Barkly. I had the privilege of serving in local government in Alice Springs. We know firsthand how hard it is to look at those services. It is not a healthy exercise to pass on that 30% increase, particularly in the bush where local governments are already doing it tough.

Rolling this out is important; I acknowledge the need to do this. There has been a lot of criticism, with people saying, ‘You are not doing this or that’. I come to this Chamber with options. I said that we need to put a price on water. If the Beetaloo is to go ahead, this parliament should consider royalties for regions whereby we quarantine royalties for each region of the Territory so that it is not dependent on election cycles because there will be a regular royalty stream to invest in critical infrastructure for those communities.

I am interested to talk about the economics of it. Is it an area that I have had much involvement in before? I will be honest and say that, no, it is not, but it is an area I am eager to learn about. I have been talking to everyday Territorians about what we do and what it looks like.

The transition to cheap, clean, green energy is incredibly important. Alice Springs has long been a leader in energy production. There are gas turbines in Alice Springs—no-one denies that—but there have also been amazing investments in solar energy in Central Australia. At one point Alice Springs was labelled one of Australia's Solar Cities. We have had significant investments. We rolled out rooftop solar.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: As I was saying, Alice Springs has been a leader in renewable energy and will continue to be. At times Alice Springs has produced so much solar energy that there have been difficulties in keeping the grid stabilised because of the huge influx of power coming into the grid.

I welcome conversations about this. I would love the government to move to a position of encouraging more Territorians to take up solar and have batteries for storing energy, so that they can use it at peak times when they need to.

When it was elected, the CLP increased, and honoured a commitment to, the solar peak feed-in tariffs, which is interesting. The opposition told the government that we are after a full and transparent explanation of where it got the 5.3% increase from and what the impact will be on households. I know there is the community service obligation. Ultimately, face-to-face engagement in every remote community that is transitioning to smart meters and will see the 5.3% power price increase is important.

We need to consider concessions for areas of the Territory where people are doing it incredibly hard. That increase will be immediate for people in the bush. No-one from the government told them that the 5.3% power price increase would happen immediately on 1 July. They were topping up their power cards, thinking that X amount would get them so far.

People's power bills differ, depending on where they live. In the Top End I assume the bills are quite high because everyone runs refrigerated air conditioners in the Build-Up and Wet Season. Travelling recently across the bush, I heard firsthand the accounts and experiences of families who are churning through more than $170 a week in power cards—or top-up, as they call it—for their household smart meter to keep the air conditioner running, to have the lights on so that their space is safe and they can see people coming in and out of the home and to cook their family's food. This is incredibly important because it is about not only the number but also the impact on people in the bush.

There is a bigger piece of work, and I do not deny that. Work has been undertaken with the Territory government and the Commonwealth Government to have new homes built to particular energy ratings as a way to try to relieve the demand pressures in our remote communities to keep homes cool in summer and warm in the winter.

Whenever you increase power prices, whether it is for a school, clinic, local government, community store or everyday Territorian, it has a direct impact; it means a little less for somewhere else—may be a little less food or fuel for a family or less rent that can be paid on time. It lifts things up, and every dollar in the bush is counted. Every dollar in the bush can deliver important services. Often we get caught up in the discussions—people said this and people said that, and I guess that is politics to some degree, unfortunately—but we need to have a look at it. I understand that there are multiple plans in place to transition to cheaper, cleaner, greener energy, and people will have different points of view about what that looks like and how it works. We need to do everything we can to keep power prices affordable and our tariffs at a reasonable rate so that we do not leave families behind in already vulnerable areas.

I represent the Territory's largest electorate by 20 square kilometres; the second largest is Barkly. I represent a district where lots of people are doing it tough. They are living below the poverty line and do not have an abundance of jobs to take up. There is not a lot of economic opportunity in the regions, and we all need to work to change that. We need to create more jobs and economic participation in the workforce, whether that is working with communities to look at solar farms or looking to develop agricultural practices in partnership with organisations.

We need to look at how we can lift people out of poverty because it is a real struggle in the bush every day for families trying to survive. Some of my colleagues would probably experience this as well. It is not uncommon to be out bush visiting communities and families, knocking on a door to talk to someone who is not there and has not been there for a little while because they had no money to top up their power meter, so they are staying with another family member or have come into Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Palmerston or Darwin to seek support from family who have their power turned on. It is a real issue.

Out bush there is confusion because the meters let you go into a portion of debt—I think it is $20 or $30—and the minute you top up it clears that, but people are starting in arrears.

It would be great if the government could commit to the recommendations that came out of Original Power's report about transitioning to renewable energy and investing in cheaper energy. It is a fantastic report. If members have not read it, jump on to the Original Power website. It has done a huge amount of work.

Recently, Original Power was involved in an amazing project with Wilya Janta. I had the privilege to visit that with the Member for Barkly, the Housing minister. It has installed a solar system on a new house in Tennant Creek that is achieving fantastic results. It is cutting edge. That house is fully run by the sun; it has backup batteries and solar panels. This is what remote community housing should look like in the future, with great solar projects that offset the costs for everyday Territorians.

Some of the challenge for us is working with the communities to look at how we can have more investment in community solar and community batteries to reduce the overall costs for households, organisations and services in smaller communities. We need to look at it as an opportunity because remote communities have closed grids; they are not tied to the network or the main grid. A large number of these communities work and operate on isolated grids, so if you can increase the renewable infrastructure and solar panels, you can use that to drive down usage in the entire community. That in turn could help offset operational costs and pass on the incentive or subsidy to everyday users in that local community so that they have cheaper power and can stay in their communities, keep their air conditioner running and know that they will not run out of power or be uncomfortable.

During summer it is bloody hot in the bush. Antisocial behaviour is often driven in the middle of summer by overcrowding in incredibly hot homes. When the power runs out, there is no air conditioning, no food in the fridge because it has no power and the stove cannot be used for cooking because it is electric. It shuts off a whole house from use which, in turn, displaces everyone.

The government says that it is looking at energy alternatives, and I am interested to learn about them and have conversations in parliament about growing the economy in Darwin and Central Australia. How can we grow the economy—the pie—so that we have more money to invest in critical infrastructure and provide people with more cost-of-living relief initiatives?

I will not slam the CLP. The cost-of-living relief initiatives it has done—for trailer registrations and licences—are good moves, and I am not afraid to acknowledge that. If I had thought of it when I was in government I would have done them too. I do not think the power price increase was a good move, but there have been good ones.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, wow! Thank you, Member for Gwoja. It is such a rare thing for him to give us credit. I am shocked.

Mrs Hersey: Maybe he is the Opposition Leader.

Mr Edgington: He is trying to be the new Opposition Leader.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr KERLE: I find it incredible that the Labor opposition has brought this motion and seemed to have finally discovered—somewhere at the back of the cupboard—some economic nous after eight long years of one bad decision after another, running up the credit card and borrowing money on the bond market to pay public servants. That is crazy. It is amazing that Labor members have finally discovered economics and that someone does not have a magical mystical money tree they can go up to and pluck money off as much as they like. Labor has discovered that local councils do not have a money tree; they have a fixed budget, and when costs go up they have to either cut services or raise rates. Hello—we are in the same bucket.

We have the dubious honour that we can borrow money, but at the end of the day the levy on the Northern Territory taxpayer is based on the government's spending, not on what they see in their bills. The government has no income, except from the taxpayers—the people of the Northern Territory. That is all. They can either pay for it up-front in taxes they see on their bills or we can run up the credit card and our children will have to pay that debt. We are staring down $11bn-plus of debt that we inherited from the last government. When Labor came in debt was down to $1bn, and now it is up to $11bn. That is $10bn in eight years, which is crazy.

The adviser who came up with the idea for this General Business motion needs to sharpen their pencil or clean out their ears. They need to get out and talk to Territorians. I was hoping after the election in 2024 that Labor members would change their ways, get back to their working-class roots and reject this ideological madness that they seem to have become infected with, but they are still not listening.

I guess this is what happens when their top performer, the Member for Daly, has been rolled and sent to the backbench. Obviously, the faceless powerbrokers who run the Labor Party said, 'Sorry, mate, but your time's up. Get this Indigenous guy out of the way. We've got a whitefella. We'll put him into that job.' I do not always agree with the Member for Daly, but he is doing a great job. The result is that he has to make way for the Member for Nightcliff. How long until the Opposition Leader faces the same tap on the shoulder? How long until the faceless powerbrokers of the Labor Party say, 'Sorry, Selena. Get out of the way. Make way for the Member for Nightcliff. We want him to be the face of the party'? Unfortunately, this is what you get with Labor. Territorians cannot trust Labor. You do not know who is running it.

I know who is running things on our side. It is the Chief Minister, who has been here through thick and thin, and grew up in the Territory; the girl from Gray. Some people may not like her or what we are doing to keep Territorians safe and to do the things we were elected to do, but you know where you stand and who is making the decisions. With the Labor Party, you never know. Which union is calling the shots? Which super fund? Did Albo ring up? I do not know how Labor's internal structures work. Which federal secretariat rang up and said, 'No, sorry, but this is what you have to do'? It is a shame.

This is an own goal because the previous Labor government, for eight years, did everything to cause power prices to go up. What did it do? It hid behind the community service obligation. In the current budget we have to pay $252m in CSO. That number has exploded since Labor came to power in 2016.

To the Territorians who are listening: be aware that the NT Government gives money directly to Power and Water to hold down the price that you see on your bill. Even though you may not see the full cost of power production in your bill, you are still paying for it. You may not see a line item, but you will see reduced services because that money has to come from somewhere.

How many times did Labor miss opportunities? We all remember the blackouts during Labor's time in power. I think it ran out of gas at one point. Why? A failure to plan is planning to fail. Labor knew that the Blacktip gas was running low, so it had to go on the spot market to buy gas from INPEX instead of having gas from the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

Let me talk about the moratorium for a second. At the election in 2016 there were well-advanced plans to get gas production in the Beetaloo going. I know people in Palmerston who had businesses running valves—these things are enormous. People love to run around and scaremonger, throwing fear, uncertainty and doubt about the gas industry, fracking and water, but they have never been there.

They have no idea about the wall thickness of the pipes that go into the ground and the distances that have to be covered. The gas in the Beetaloo is more than three kilometres underground. The surface aquifer is something like 150 metres. There is almost three kilometres of rock between the aquifer and the gas-bearing rock. That is a long way in anyone's book. You try getting through three kilometres of solid rock. Good luck!

That market was well advanced. Businesses in Palmerston were running, trucking out valves, rods, joining fixtures—all these huge steel items. They employed subcontractors, truckers and people who have families and mortgages. They were all going out to Beetaloo, trying to get this business going. What did Labor members do when they came in? They knocked the whole thing on the head, saying, 'There is a moratorium; stop everything.'

If people come from a union background where they are not concerned about delivering services to anyone and are interested in maximising what you can get, what happens? They say, 'All right, we will just turn it off and go through a review and muck around. Then when we are happy, we will just turn it back on again.' They do not understand what is involved in these projects.

It is just like in 2011 when the Julia Gillard government brought in the live export ban. All right; you may not like the industry, but there is due process to go through. Instead, the Gillard government shut down the live export trade without any consideration of the entire logistics train that reached from that port outside here all the way back through Katherine, Batchelor, the Barkly, Alice Springs, Kununurra and Mount Isa—the whole northern half of Australia—and all the agriculture stores and cattle stations and the contractors, stockies and truckers who serve them. That entire industry ground to a halt. I hate to think how many farmers took their own lives because their business relied on the live export trade.

This is the complete disregard that the Labor Party has for the private sector and the things that make society work. You cannot trust Labor. Its members do not understand. They might make you a promise and believe it in their hearts. When they are not lying, they might believe that they are saying the right thing, but they do not understand what it takes to build and deliver things. In the private sector cost and time matter. Time is money in the private sector. Every day that something runs late, that is costing you money. You have machinery sitting around that you have to pay for that is doing nothing.

In 2016 the Gunner Labor government came in with a moratorium on the onshore gas industry. Guess what? It killed that entire industry stone dead. The businesses in Palmerston servicing that industry and the businesses that were getting started in Daly Waters and Tennant Creek were all knocked stone dead.

I remember talking to that manager and the deep sorrow that the whole business had to be wound down. He had to see all his truckers and say, 'Sorry, guys. I do not have any more work for you.' When they told him they had mortgages, he said, 'The government has put us out of business; that is it.' That is the worst thing. I never ever want to hear someone say that the government put them out of business. If there is a competitive process and someone else can do the same job at a better price for taxpayers or provide better service, that is fair enough, but if the government says, 'Sorry, your business is illegal, too bad', that is an abrogation of your fiduciary duties as an elected official.

Labor killed the Beetaloo, but eventually it realised we actually need the Beetaloo gas. It is the biggest game in town; it is a 900-pound gorilla. Australia desperately needs the Beetaloo. Various states on the eastern seaboard went for renewable energy without any regard for the stability of the grid, prices and the control of costs. They are tearing up farmland to run powerlines, hell west and crooked.

We on this side love clean energy, but it has to be done in an appropriate way. It has to be part of the whole picture. The power grid needs to be, first, reliable; second, the least cost; and, third, affordable. If you run down a path because of an ideological bent, without any regard to reality, it is inevitable that reliability and cost will suffer. When those two things suffer, who suffers? It is Mr and Mrs Palmerston; Mr and Mrs Northern Suburbs; and the parents with young children who are running air con to help their baby to sleep. If the power goes out, the baby will not sleep because they are not used to the heat. If parents are running the air con, the power bill goes through the roof.

We are looking at first gas from the Beetaloo in September. If that moratorium had not been brought in, the Beetaloo would have been producing years ago. We would have royalties coming in from the Beetaloo now.

I do not know how cynical the Gunner government was. Maybe it was a cynical campaign promise Labor made, like the community battery for Nightcliff. I invite the Member for Nightcliff to explain to his constituents exactly where in his electorate that battery will go. Maybe it should go on the foreshore next to the cafe or on the Nightcliff Oval. It is not a small facility. A small one might fit in this Chamber, but you need setbacks and transformers. It is high voltage. Where will this community battery go, Member for Nightcliff? Tell us whose house will it go next to …

Dr Rahman: His house.

Mr KERLE: That is right. He talks about public housing, so I invite the Member for Nightcliff to tell us where we can build more public housing in Nightcliff.

Mrs Zio: Subdivided blocks.

Mr KERLE: Member for Fannie Bay, the Member for Nightcliff is a perfect Labor politician because he does not seem to stand for anything; he is happy to read his speech and the talking points and do what he is told. Maybe the faceless powerbrokers of the Labor Party decided that he would be a better deputy leader than the Member for Daly, the high performer, because it is clear that the Member for Nightcliff will just do what he is told.

This government is committed to fixing the Labor mess.

While we are talking about renewable energy, let us turn to solar farms. The previous government built a few solar farms. I remember—I am sure everyone in Alice Springs remembers—the great blackouts that resulted. In its ideological rush to claim green energy for Alice Springs—guess what?—it did not do the work. I am sure that Power and Water and TGen are full of hardworking, highly experienced, qualified engineers. These are people who go to work and every day think about what could go wrong, what could happen and how to keep the grid running.

To anyone who is listening, if you ever have the opportunity to visit one of the power station controllers, I strongly recommend it. The grid has to stay at 240 volts and 50 hertz. If it goes off that by more than a few per cent, all hell breaks loose on the grid. Supply and demand have to be tightly coupled to within a few per cent. That is constant work, day after day.

The previous government built a couple of solar farms. One of Gunner's mates is Tetris Energy, another company out of Melbourne in Victoria, like the Member for Nightcliff. There is something going on there; I do not know what that is. Anyway, they built the solar farms. The Gunner government signed a power purchase agreement, which is a long-term agreement to buy energy from those solar farms, and then sold them to Eni which runs the Blacktip gas field that we get our gas from. What happened? As soon as Eni had signed the cheque and given the money to Tetris Energy, it turned out that they could not be connected to the grid. Eni had a stranded asset. We had all these Flash Harry solar farms that could do nothing.

This government is doing the work. I have been to Channel Island. We built the BESS (battery energy storage systems) and connected them. That allowed us to connect the solar farms to the grid and they are now delivering power. If you have large-scale solar systems you must have BESS. You need large-scale batteries or what is called a synchronous condenser, which is a very large spinning hunk of metal connected to a generator which provides system inertia.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr KERLE: If you want large-scale solar you must have grid stability.

In the old days power was generated down south and overseas in coal-fired power stations. We got rid of ours decades ago under a previous CLP government. We built the Channel Island gas-fired turbines which dramatically lowered our carbon footprint before the Greens party was even formed. Thank you, CLP.

You must have stability with solar farms because when clouds come over, tens of megawatts can disappear within seconds. When the clouds go away, the tens of megawatts come back. You must have a battery storage system, a synchronous condenser or a large amount of spinning reserve aka turbines.

We have done the work. We built the battery energy storage systems and connected them and the solar farms, which are now working. Eni has claimed its power purchase agreement. I hope it is happy. We have minimised the amount of money going to Gunner's mates in Victoria.

We are happy for people to invest in the Territory. Every time I see a media release about the Beetaloo and I see those drill rigs drilling, I think, 'The royalties are coming. That is jobs.' As a former Labor minister once said, 'Jobs, jobs, jobs'. I agree with that. The more jobs we have in the Territory, the better.

Once that Beetaloo gas hits the grid, we will have a long-term stable supply and be able to negotiate long-term cheap gas supply at a competitive price. We will not have to go on the international spot market. We all know what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz with Iran and the US. A conflict is happening there, which I will not go into, but we know the impact it is having on the global energy supply. The strait is a choke point that 20% to 30% of global crude oil goes through, with probably a similar amount of global LNG and all the other LNG products that are downstream.

Almost everything we have nowadays is made from plastic. Where does plastic come from? Polyethylene. Where does that come from? It comes from natural gas and is turned into a precursor bead which then is turned into plastics and everything around it. It is turned into pharmaceuticals and a large number of candies that I try to convince my sons not to eat. It also produces the vast majority of fertiliser; most of the urea in the world is made from the Haber-Bosch process which relies on natural gas to feed it.

As the Beetaloo gets going there will be no end to the industrial possibilities that can happen at Middle Arm or maybe Gunn Point—somewhere in an appropriate location. Beetaloo gas will be a game changer that unlocks many different industries.

In the grand scheme of things one of the smaller financial benefits—but one of the things that Territorians will probably appreciate the most—it will bring is that stable, consistent, decades of gas. Once it is there, the Treasurer, the Minister for Mining and Energy and the Chief Minister will be in discussions to lock in long-term supply contracts so that we are not exposed to international volatility, such as there is now. When you buy gas on the spot market because of the previous government's failure to plan—which is planning to fail—you end up having to pay high prices. When you do the work and get things done, and have your own long-term stable supply of gas, you can negotiate a good price.

This motion shows that the opposition members have tin ears. They are getting poor advice. Whoever came up with this motion needs to get out, go for a walk, listen to real Territorians, check the history books and see what has been going on.

The 5.3% is the best that we could do, given the budget and the system that we inherited. The alternative is to be like the previous government and put it on the credit card and rack up more debt for our kids.

Where is previous Chief Minister Michael Gunner now? He is not in the Territory. The last I heard he was in WA. His kids will not pay the price for all of his poor mistakes. Unfortunately, too often we see this pattern, particularly with those on the other side. They come in, do their damage and when they are done, they go down south, taking on lucrative jobs and working with their mates whom they gave sweetheart deals. Not on this side; we are here, we are committed and we are not going anywhere.

The motion that the opposition brought today is ill advised, and I support the Treasurer's amendment.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I note that the government has amended the original motion to congratulate itself for a range of cost-of-living measures while condemning the former Labor government for leaving the Territory with growing debt, saying that future generations will pay the price.

For anyone out there listening, you might find, like me, the constant tit for tat between Labor and the CLP in this Chamber boring and a waste of time. I asked in Estimates how much it costs to run parliament for a day. There was no clear answer, but a back-of-the-envelope figure is that Territorians are paying $112,000 a day just to run this building and administration. That is without paying the 25 of us MLAs and ministers and their staff, millions more in salaries.

Mr Edgington: Turn the lights off in your office.

J DAVIS: Territorians have a right to know what they are getting for their money. When parliamentary time is wasted on endless attacks on either party, I wonder whether that is what they want to pay for. I wonder whether that is improving their cost of living.

Mr Edgington: Turn your lights off.

Mr Kerle: This is opposition time. Go talk to the opposition.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

J DAVIS: I am talking to the opposition and the CLP—both parties—about the amount of time that is wasted in this Chamber with attacking each other and slagging each other off, which does nothing to improve the lives of Territorians. That is who I am talking to.

Madam SPEAKER: Most of the time the Member for Johnston listens to you all in silence. I think you should pay her the same respect.

J DAVIS: I agree with one part of the amendment; that is, we should be thinking about future generations. However, if this government is serious about protecting future generations, as in the amendment to the motion, it needs to focus on the long-term costs of the decisions it is making. Whether those decisions are about energy, education, community safety or development, future generations will inherit not only our balance sheet but also the country we are standing on, our energy systems, our infrastructure and the consequences of our choices, including our climate choices.

The original motion was about electricity. The decisions we make about electricity today will determine whether Territorians face lower power bills and a more resilient economy in the future or whether they will remain locked into an increasingly expensive gas-dependent system. It is through that lens that I will speak to this motion.

Every day in Johnston I hear from people who are doing everything they can to keep their heads above water. Families are cutting back on groceries, older Territorians are skipping essentials and small businesses are struggling with rising operating costs, and all the time the cost of keeping the lights on continues to climb. We know in this Chamber, we have talked about it before, that electricity is not a luxury; it is an essential service, and in the Territory it is even more essential than it is in many other places.

Our climate means that people rely on air conditioning to stay safe through long hot summers. Refrigeration is critical. For many people, particularly older Territorians and those with chronic health conditions, reliable electricity is a necessity rather than a choice. When power bills rise, everything else becomes harder. It is one of the key drivers of the cost-of-living pressures that people are experiencing across the Territory.

These rising costs are not simply bad luck or an unavoidable consequence of global markets; they are also the result of political choices. The government has made a conscious decision to double down on expensive gas, even when much cheaper alternatives are available. For years Territorians have been told that gas is the answer to our energy future, yet today gas is the single-most expensive form of electricity generation in Australia. It is roughly twice the price of renewables, and the cost of renewable energy continues to fall. Instead of engaging with making the sensible economic choice to transition to cheaper renewable energy generation, this government continues to tie Territory households to an increasingly expensive energy source. It is difficult to understand why the government is still so committed to this after what has happened with gas supply in the Territory.

We heard in this Chamber today, and according to the Treasurer in Estimates, that the Blacktip gas field has failed. We know that Power and Water Corporation had to source replacement gas at significant costs because of supply issues at Blacktip; that there have been expensive contractual arrangements and commercial disputes; and that there have been costly failures along the way. What we do not know is exactly how much those decisions are contributing to Territory power bills; the government has not been transparent about that. Territorians deserve to know whether they are paying for failed contracts and poor planning, and how much these failed gas decisions are costing them every time their electricity bill arrives. Even if Blacktip had operated perfectly and the contract had gone according to plan, we would still be left with the same fundamental problem: gas is the most expensive way to generate electricity.

CLP, you will tell me that renewables are too expensive because of the set-up costs, yet at the same time you are investing hundreds of millions of dollars to support gas. You keep talking about how Beetaloo will be cost effective, but when I asked in Estimates about the modelling to support this, no-one could provide it. Not one minister could show me any proof that gas—including the gas to come from Beetaloo—is the most cost-effective option for power in the Territory.

What we know is Power and Water Corporation says in its annual report that renewables investment poses a risk to the price it can sell gas for. That is on page 54 in case anyone wants to read it. It says:

> *… the potential impact from the displacement of gas by renewables over time are risks to our ability to sell the gas at a price higher than the cost of gas and transport.*

PWC's report also warns that there is a significant risk that the value of its gas contracts could be reduced based on assumptions, including that all gas purchased is onsold, and the outcome of customer contract negotiations. In other words, PWC's own financial reporting makes clear that any future increased investment in renewable energy threatens its ability to sell gas at profitable prices. This means that PWC has a commercial interest in maintaining higher gas demand and prices, while the expansion of cheaper renewable alternatives poses a financial risk to its business model.

In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis when lower-cost energy options are increasingly available, a government-owned corporation with a financial interest in protecting higher gas prices simply does not pass the pub test. We heard that gas losses this year alone have cost PWC $132m, driven by the failure of the Blacktip gas supply arrangement with Eni. How much of this has been passed on to Territorians? How much of the 5.3% increase will go towards paying for those losses at Blacktip?

At Estimates, Territory Generation, which is responsible for the NT's power sources, told us that 65% of its investments are in gas. It said protecting that investment does not affect its decision-making, but it also refused to table any modelling showing how it makes decisions about investing, including in renewables.

Imagine if even part of the $355m the government gave to the gas industry in the last financial year was invested in renewables, batteries or helping households install batteries, upgrade rooftop solar or improve energy efficiency. Instead of subsidising expensive fuel and the expansion of a dying industry driving climate change, we would be helping Territorians permanently reduce their power bills.

The government cannot keep pretending that locking Territorians into more gas contracts and subsidising more gas expansion is the cheapest path forward when the evidence shows that renewables are far cheaper and the government has been unable to produce modelling showing anything different.

The Territory has some of the best solar resources in the world; we do not have to dig up and burn expensive gas. We should be making it easier for households, businesses and communities to generate their own power. We should be supporting startups like Original Power so that remote communities can have reliable, sovereign power sources. We should be investing in renewable generation that reduces long-term electricity costs; supporting the rollout of rooftop solar; helping people upgrade ageing systems; investing in batteries; and modernising our electricity networks so that solar and batteries can work and we can make the most of our cheaper renewable energy.

These investments reduce not only emissions but also power bills. They provide relief from the cost-of-living crisis that Territorians are facing, improve energy security and reduce our dependence on increasingly expensive gas. Once you build a solar farm, the fuel is free. Solar panels do not need gas, diesel or fuel delivery because every morning the sun comes up, for free. Once the infrastructure is built, the cost of producing electricity is dramatically lower.

It is not just an environmental failure I am talking about; it is a cost-of-living failure. Every dollar unnecessarily spent on expensive gas is a dollar that Territory families cannot spend on groceries, rent, school uniforms or healthcare. Every year we delay investment in cheaper renewable energy is another year Territorians continue paying more than they should to power their homes. Governments cannot control every cost facing households, but when a government corporation is controlling what sources of energy are available to Territorians, they can make decisions that either increase or reduce those costs.

This is not only a debate about the cost of electricity and the cost of living today; it is also about the cost of living for the next generation of Territorians and the liability of the Territory into the future. We all know that Territorians care deeply about the cost of living. The people in my electorate of Johnston care deeply about it and whether they can afford to keep the lights on and run the air conditioner or have enough money left at the end of the week for groceries, rent and school uniforms. They also care about leaving the next generation with a Territory that is affordable, sustainable and resilient. They care about that for their children.

The Territory is set to bear the brunt of climate change. Temperature rises will be much higher here than in places down south. We have heard from the government over and again that there is a belief in the climate crisis we are facing here. We know that if we do not move away from fossil fuels, the temperature will continue to go up. We are not talking about unliveable temperatures by the end of the century anymore, but by 2070; that is in our children's lifetime and the lifetimes of some of us in this Chamber. We have a responsibility to future generations of the Territory to protect this incredible place that we are all lucky to live in and which we are caretakers of, so that they can enjoy it and live here in the future.

If the CLP government continues to lock the Territory into increasingly expensive gas generation when cheaper and safer alternatives are available, it is not simply increasing today's electricity bills; it is locking future generations into higher costs, greater exposure to volatile gas prices and contributing to an unliveable climate and an energy system that will become more expensive over time.

The Territory has some of the best renewable energy resources in the world, and we should use that natural advantage to deliver cheaper power, reduce pressure on household budgets, strengthen our energy security and build a more sustainable economy and future for the Territory.

Good governments do not just think about getting though the next budget; they make decisions that protect all our futures as well as reduce the cost of living now and in the long term. Territorians deserve long-term planning and an energy system that delivers reliable affordable power, not just this year but for decades to come. Future generations should inherit a Territory that makes the most of our extraordinary natural advantages, with affordable power, lower household costs, greater energy security and an economy that is

built to thrive for decades to come. That is the opportunity before us as the people our communities have elected to make decisions for them now, into the future and for their children. The government may be thinking only in four-year election cycles, but the rest of us are here for the long term. We are thinking about the Territory we leave behind. Territorians deserve a government that does the same.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I notice that the original motion referred to a 5.3% price hike. On first glance, I acknowledge this is an important issue for many Territorians. All my government colleagues share the general community concerns about the rising cost of living, including those living in my electorate. The idea that we want to do this—I know people are hurt when prices go up; absolutely they do. There are a lot of people in my electorate who are struggling, and a small increase impacts on their ability to cover the cost of food and all that. They have to make choices. I do not underestimate the impact or belittle it. The impact of a 5.3% increase on grassroots people can be significant. I fully acknowledge that. There is no doubt that global fuel price increases and other inflationary impacts are a concern. They impact on the cost of living.

I also heard the views of the Members for Arafura and Gwoja about the significant impact these increases can have on remote and regional communities in the Northern Territory. If members recall, in previous speeches to this Assembly I acknowledged the importance of our regional and remote communities to our Territory's future. It is an important part of the Territory. We cannot just look at our city areas; we have to look at how we can maximise what we get out of the regional areas, including the Barkly, the land of opportunity. There is a need for greater investment in strategic roads, infrastructure and services in these areas to grow the Territory.

My recollection—the Treasurer can correct me—is that in the last budget we allocated about 59% of our strategic roads budget to regional areas. The majority of where we are putting our limited budget—we do not have too much—acknowledges the importance of our regions, and so we should because those regional areas generate much of Australia's wealth. It is not only the Territory; I have said before that we need to look across all of northern Australia. Our mining, energy and agriculture industries generate the bulk of the wealth for Australia. We need to support those areas.

In that context, our united and committed CLP government is focused on delivering our plan—you have seen it before—to rebuild the economy. I will give evidence of this because people are interested in evidence.

I seek leave to table statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Leave granted.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: The Member for Fong Lim and others referred to similar statistics. I have tabled that, so I will not go through all of it, but I will pick out highlights. This is from the ABS:

> *The number of employed people in the Territory is at the highest level on record—more Territorians are in a job than ever before.*
>
> *Employment in the Territory increased by 3.3% in trend terms and 3.7% seasonally adjusted …*

That is good. A lot of it goes back to the large projects we are supporting, such as Arafura Nolans, Core Lithium Finniss and the Beetaloo. Let us not underestimate the Beetaloo, unlike others:

> *Household spending in the Territory increased by 10.1% …*

As I said, I will not go through all the stats:

> *The Territory also has good news on the job vacancy front, with the number of job vacancies in the Territory increasing by 31.3% in the year-ended three-months to May 2026.*

There is an increasing number of vacancies. I can tell you that the best way for a lot of people, particularly those who are unemployed, to improve their cost of living is to get a job. There is dignity in work, and if we can create the opportunity for people who unfortunately do not have a job to get work, it will go a long way to helping them address the cost of living and a range of other issues in terms of a better lifestyle and so on and looking after their families. I wish them all the best.

It continues:

The value of Territory engineering construction work commenced increased by 18.0% to $347 million in the year-ended March quarter 2026.

Construction means roads. These are real jobs. This is getting our economy going. It is what we need to do.

Residential building approvals are up by 55.7%. That is fantastic. In the Real Estate Institute of Australia's home loan affordability index the Territory is ranked the second most affordable jurisdiction to purchase a home in. Is that not good? You might say house prices will go up, but if you look across the country you see that we are attractive. People want to come here because we are affordable. That is important.

Madam SPEAKER: You three up the back, I can hear you talking from here. Keep it down, please.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Why did we get these results? It is because we have restored confidence in the Northern Territory. The Attorney-General is leaving, but she mentioned that confidence is earned. You have to earn confidence; it is not just a word. We have been earning it from our businesses, investors and the general community.

How did we earn that confidence? We earned it by being a united and disciplined government team, delivering on a clear plan that we promised in the last election. Because we delivered what we said we would—whether people agree with it or not—people trust us. They say, 'I might not agree with everything you said, but, by god, you said you would do it and you did it'. That gives us credibility. It gives them confidence in what we say going forward is what we will keep doing. Trust is a big issue.

Obviously, I contrast that with the, dare I say, shambolic and disunited Labor opposition; that is what it is. That is unfortunate. I want us, just for the benefit of our democracy, to have a credible opposition. That would be good, but the opposition is not credible. Those opposite have been in opposition for two years. I hoped that they would change and listen. They might have started off with a bit of humility and then worked up, but, no, they have not; they have fallen into the old trap.

The previous CLP government had crocs in the Cabinet and got their egos going and everyone took over, but that government actually delivered economic benefits; it brought down debt. For all that other stuff, it did some good stuff.

In the previous eight years of Labor government, unfortunately, there was infighting. Labor members took that and said, 'This is an operating manual for how we work. We will keep changing leaders and do all that stuff'. They forgot who they were serving. It is a shame.

I was hopeful that this new opposition—sure, it is small, but we had smaller oppositions—would build itself up, come forward, be credible and go hard. What have we had? The Member for Fong Lim referred to calling the mothership to try to get information on how those opposite could improve. Unfortunately, that mothership is the *Titanic*. Yes, they have been shuffling the deckchairs, but the ship is still going down.

We still have the same captain. The Member for Drysdale might help me with military terms. Those opposite have replaced the lieutenant and pulled in the new lieutenant. They pulled in a new chief petty officer. They have them working out on the frontbench. They are out there saying, 'Wah, wah, wah'. Two other crew members, unfortunately, were demoted to seamen. They were pushed down, and they are not even able seamen; they have gone straight to seamen. I reckon they have been sent to the brig and are cooling their heels in there.

That is a pity because they should all be working together. Rather than looking after themselves and being all about themselves, they should be about the Territory. You may think I am the only person who is saying that. I have respect for some Labor federal members—not all. The Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour, I find is good …

Mr Paech: She is good.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Regarding all this shuffling on the *Titanic*, she said:

Territory Labor Leader Selena Uibo needs to show leadership …

I could not put it better myself:

… and end the long-running … scandal …

That has been going on:

… adding the ongoing scandal is 'not good for the Australian Labor Party' or the Northern Territory.

That the scandal just keeps going. That is a pity because those opposite should be going hard at this. I tell you what Labor members need to do: if they want to get on board, they should urge their federal colleagues to get behind the Territory. They should be lobbying them, saying, 'You have underfunded us for this and that. Why don't you come up here and help us? The Territory government is trying to do its best, but you have the lion's share of this. You can make a difference.' That is where this Labor opposition could add value, but does it? No.

Regarding the opposition's federal Labor colleagues, as I said, I have high respect for the Member for Lingiari, but not so much for the Member for Solomon because his policy efforts to help the Territory are a joke. When we talk about jokes, there are oldies and goodies. It is not an oldie and a goodie in his case; it is an Aldi and a baddie. That is all he can come up with. He will probably go to Germany and try to bring in Aldi. Why does he not focus on trying to leverage more funding for our health system, regions and infrastructure? That is what he should be lobbying for, but he is a bit too busy doing other things; I do not why.

Having said that, this is the contrast. I have to pick up on a couple of comments in the debate, which means I have been listening to it.

The Member for Nightcliff is good. He has come in new; you can see that—a bit green, but he is trying. Talking about our government, he said that we scrap and change policy on a whim …

Mr Mackay: What about Lee Point?

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Thank you, Member for Goyder, for stealing my thunder. Absolutely—that is exactly what I was going to, but everyone knows it.

One of the big challenges here is housing affordability. For eight years Labor was half-baked about it, but generally supported the idea. It said, 'Let's work with the federal government, develop Lee Point and get 800 houses out there'. However, just before the Nightcliff by-election, it scrapped and it changed. Labor did a policy-on-a-whim change and said, 'We don't support that'. Imagine what investors think about that attitude. Where is the certainty? There is definitely no confidence.

I pick up on the comments of the Member for Johnston, who is true to heart and believes what she says; I do not debate that. She should take up sand mining, though, because she has her head in the sand. I am telling you: she is right down there and will probably find oil if she goes deep enough.

Mr Maley: Or gas.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Yes, or gas. That is right.

I heard her talk about renewables, and I know she is passionate about renewables; that is great. Then she talked about Estimates and Power and Water. She said, 'Power and Water told us that we cannot do it because it is too expensive, so it has to remodel'. I was there too. I asked TGen, 'What about transitioning the gas to renewables?' TGen said no, because it is 96% reliant on gas and if it did not have gas, it would have to go back to diesel.

I agree that we would all love the renewables, but there is a transition phase. If renewable energy was economic, businesses would grab it now because market forces do not muck around; they go with it.

She says that the sun is free. Thank you; the Teletubbies know that the sun is free and you dance around it. Having said that, you have to construct the stuff. You talk about putting in solar panels, but they are not cheap. You must be sure of the transition and the power. You need battery storage and so on, because guess what? The sun does not shine 24 hours a day. You may not know that, Member for Johnston, but if you take your head out of the sand, you will understand. My theory is, yes, we should do renewables when we can and when they are affordable, but there will be a general transition and we will move to it.

At the moment, around the world, if we took your advice, turned off the gas and went to renewables, power prices would go through the roof. People would be unemployed everywhere. It would be totally uneconomic. We have a different view on that. I appreciate that you may have a different view, but mine is more cast in reality rather than dreaming.

I appreciate the general intention of the original motion. I acknowledge again that many Territorians will not find it easy; they never do. They will be struggling, but we are here to help. Our government is keen to relieve cost-of-living pressures in a range of ways, but we have to be fiscally responsible. I know that people do not like that term, but we are, because we do not have money to piss up against the wall, as they say.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I take particular issue with the motion the Labor Party raised because there is a figure that I want to talk about—that is, the $60,600 debt to which those opposite signed up every man, woman and child in the NT. To every man, woman and child in Drysdale, the Labor Party in eight years committed you to $60,600 in its forward estimates of debt—just debt. Those opposite lecture us about a 5.3% increase, and I will get to that, but for a family of four in my electorate, that $60,600 debt per person is $242,400. It is insanity that in eight years Labor could put that debt on the people of Drysdale.

Let us talk in actual figures about what we are doing in response. The average home is likely to have a $2.84 per week power price increase. The average home in my electorate has 2.5 people, so that equates to roughly 88c per person per week, but there is $60,600 of debt per person over eight years. Let us break that down: over eight years it is $145.67 per week for every man, woman and child in accrued debt. That is insanity. The Labor Party left the people of the Northern Territory—I will not say it left it to our government—that debt, and every person's debt extended by $145.67 per week. What have we done since coming in? In the first year we dropped it to $57,500 per person. This year it is $47,000 per person.

The Treasurer's budget for the first year was still tied to all the promised spending from the Labor government, but he managed to reduce the debt per person to $57,500, and now it is $47,000. These are the figures those opposite do not want Territorians to know about. They do not want Territorians to know that in two years the Treasurer has reduced debt by $13,000 per person. That is incredible. That is what the CLP government is delivering. It is a tangible figure that will have huge long-term dividends for the Northern Territory. Why do they not want you to look at those figures and are trying to shift the focus onto a 5.3% increase to the tariff?

The national economy is on fire; it is a disgrace. I will go through the facts, because the people of the Northern Territory deserve to know the truth. The cash rate is 4.35%, and the RBA has stated on the public record that cash rate was materially rising before the energy crisis. It was already aflame.

I will state—this is great—the federal Labor government's own figures. Prices nationally are up by 16.1% since Labor came to power. Mortgage rates—wait for it, people of Drysdale—are up by 140.6%. Households across the nation have paid $428bn in interest since federal Labor has been in government. That is from June 2022.

Real income, what you can actually spend your money on, is down by 4.3%. The federal government is overseeing us all getting poorer. When the people in my electorate struggle to afford groceries and pay their mortgage, or their rent has gone up, this is why. Quarterly income tax per household is up by 36.4%. As you have gotten poorer—by the federal government's own figures you are 4.3% poorer—your household income tax has gone up by 36.4%. It is coming for more of your money, and national debt has hit $1.1 trillion. That sets the national economic stage we are operating on.

In contrast, we have managed to get net debt down by 18% in two years. Those national pressures affect us just as much, yet our government has reduced debt by 18%. Debt is stabilising at $13.2bn in 2029–30, with the deficit reduced to only $5m in that year. It will not be $1.3bn or $1.4bn like we were running at, which is insane and why we were looking at $60,600 of debt for every man, woman and child.

By 2029–30 we will be down to a $5m deficit, whilst we have reduced taxes. I do not want a tax overburden on our people. Why would you want to raise taxes and take more from working families? It is insane to take from them when it is already hard enough. We reduced payroll tax. We have the highest threshold in the country, at $2.5m. We have taken payroll tax off apprenticeships and trainees. This is all to stimulate. We want people in work, earning money and keeping their own money. I dislike heavy taxation so much because it is disempowering to take more and more from your citizens.

On top of all this, national productivity is declining. That means the pool we have is getting smaller, and at the same time the federal government is taking more than ever. We are producing less, so the things we can tax are getting smaller and smaller. How has the federal government responded? It is taking more. That is the Labor economy: bigger government spending; more taxation; more debt; and you are poorer. It is simple economics.

Do not even get me started on the $275 that was promised. It was enlightening to find out during Estimates that Jacana Energy never heard from the federal government about a plan for how that would be implemented. It never heard from the Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling; he has never written or spoken to

Jacana about it. The federal minister has never written or spoken to Jacana about it. No-one from the federal government ever engaged with Jacana Energy on how it would be delivered. You cannot trust Labor.

I spoke about what high taxation is doing, and we are seeing the effects throughout my electorate. With productivity declining, the country's wealth will continue to decline, which means that governments at every level can produce less. As we have learned in the Northern Territory, you cannot just borrow and have the magic money fairy come to bail you out.

I should let the Labor Party know that all these figures are in my most recent newsletter. There is an old saying, 'Bullshit baffles brains', but it does not baffle educated brains. It truly does not, which is why I believe that education is the most powerful tool. All these figures and everything else I have spoken about are in the Drysdale newsletter, which has already gone out. Therefore, when the Member for Solomon and the Labor Party put up their '5.3% rate hike' corflutes in Palmerston, my constituents understand the full picture. They can make up their own minds, and they have. I have had incredible feedback from my constituents because they see members of the Labor Party committing political fraud by highlighting one figure, whereas they see the whole picture. That is powerful, and that is the power of education.

At the same time as all this, the federal government has a $31.5bn deficit and national debt will hit $1.3 trillion, which is $42.3bn per year in interest. Debt and interest rise, which means that the people in Drysdale and all levels of government have less money to spend whilst productivity goes down. This is all in response to federal policy.

Thank you, Treasurer. Against this tide he still managed to deliver for the Territory. Yes, the tariff has gone up by roughly 88c per person, but at the same time in two years he has dropped more than $13,000 off the debt bill of every Territorian. I have not heard Labor speak about that figure.

I put it to the constituents so that they can choose. They will have a choice; that is what we do. We have decided and—sorry, Madam Speaker …

Madam SPEAKER: Sorry; I was waving at Brian.

Mr HOWE: I also note that the Member for Johnston's mother and her family are in the gallery.

I care because it directly impacts the people in Drysdale; these decisions matter. People in Drysdale, when you see the Labor corflutes and the 88c per person per week rise in energy prices, remember that we have reduced debt by $13,600 per person in two years. You do not have to be good at maths to see which figure is far more powerful. It is a simple choice; the $13,600 saving is a better economic result.

I thank the Treasurer for his work and the hard decisions our government is willing to make. It is worth noting that at the same time we have reduced that debt, we have sheltered—I may be wrong and the Treasurer can correct me, but I believe the government absorbed 77% of the tariff rise. We did that whilst bringing spending and debt under control. That is what serious economic management and serious governing look like. We will continue to do that because we are here for the people of the Northern Territory. The future of this Territory is in trusted hands with the CLP because we will look after the people's interests.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is telling of the Labor opposition that this is the motion it chose to bring to us today. To me, it demonstrates that Labor members had a good look at our budget books and agreed that we are on the right track. The only thing they could attack in our budget is that power prices are going up.

Power prices are heavily subsidised by the Northern Territory Government and are being raised in line with inflation. That is the worst thing the Labor opposition can see in our budget. It is incredibly powerful to note that Labor members looked at our infrastructure plan and said, 'Good job'. They looked at our funding for police, courts, the justice system and health and said, 'They are actually doing a good job'. They looked at the $10m that the federal government gave us last week when we asked for $35m, and they also said, 'That is pretty good'. I say to the Prime Minister: we are still $25m short.

The Minister for People, Sport and Culture detailed the cost-of-living relief being provided to Territorians; hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies are going out the door. We heard from the Treasurer about the hard work that went into turning around this budget balloon that we were left with.

When the Labor Party was in government, it spent like there was no tomorrow. It did not care that the credit card was getting full, that it was approaching its own debt ceiling and what the generations of tomorrow would

have to pay. We are not talking about investments in healthcare or police—we have done record amounts in both—we are talking about the vanity projects, overgrown promises and delivering projects such as the State Square car park. While Labor members' constituents in the bush could not get a house, they built a car park. While people on the Tiwi Islands had concerns—we heard from the Member for Arafura about our fuel security—they said, 'You know what would be great? A shade structure outside my favourite pub.' That was the Labor government we had.

The fact is that Labor leader has only just said, 'What is the number one issue? What can I do to cut through to Territorians and prove myself to the Labor Caucus and voters that I am the leader who should be here? I will have a crack at power prices.' To me, it is incredibly telling that the Member for Arnhem moved her own motion to the top. I wonder whether this will be the last time she will address this Assembly as the Leader of the Opposition.

Sometimes I go home at night and think how incredibly grateful I am to be a part of the united team of 17 members who all understand the burden we were given by the previous government; the incredible amounts of debt that the Member for Drysdale spoke about; and the amount of interest charged on that debt with nothing to show.

When Labor members spent our money and increased debt, they did not invest in the rural area and the hardworking Territorians who live in the rural area around Darwin. They built overpasses in town, shade structures and car parks …

Mr Edgington: Shadeless.

Mr MACKAY: Shadeless structures—sorry. The Member for Barkly has a much better memory than me.

Labor did not invest in our rural roads and rural sporting clubs. During the election campaign, after doing a lot of work, the Member for Nelson and I went to see the Southern Districts Crocs at Norbuilt Oval. We said, 'If we are elected, we will invest in you. We will put lights on this oval so that when you play AFL in the Build-Up, you can play in the cooler part of the day. The women, children and men can play outside of the heat of the Build-Up.' The response from the then Labor government was, 'We will match that; it is an easy one.' After eight years of the club asking for it, the moment the CLP promised it, the Labor government said, 'That is a good idea; we will copy it.' There was not genuine care for the rural families who use Norbuilt Oval when Labor said, 'We will match it. It is nothing; if we are doing small million-dollar promises, who cares?' 'Small million-dollar promises' was in a press release and an *NT News* article.

That million dollars, which our government has delivered, ensured that last year from the first game of the AFL season to the last game, the lights were on at Norbuilt Oval. The women could train at night under the lights, safe and out of the dangerous heat of the Build-Up. The rural families going to watch a husband or older brother play can sit there in the cooler evening and enjoy the game. When the Deputy Speaker, local councillor Kris Civitarese and I were there watching that first home game under the lights, it was an incredible feeling. That is the investment this government is making.

This government is not pursuing ideological, little, vanity projects for the fun of it. Labor does not understand the damage it caused the Territory. If I told the Attorney-General we had a $12bn surplus, I am sure she would have lots of great ideas about what to do with it. If I told the Minister for Infrastructure and Logistics that we have $12bn in the bank, not $12bn in debt, he would fix the Territory. If I asked the Minister for Health what we could do with this money, we would be talking about a new hospital in Alice Springs or Darwin. Instead, we stare at a credit card bill of more than $12bn, asking: what did Labor achieve? What did it do for the Territory's future?

When I talk to people in the rural area who have small businesses—a lot of them are tradies—work hard for their money and pay a lot of tax, they ask: what for? Why do we do all these things? The answer until recently was so that Labor Party members could have fun little projects like the little shadeless structure in front of their pub and a nice car park while the people in their communities did not have adequate health facilities and unsealed roads.

This government is investing; we are making the right decisions to turn the ship around because it might not be my kids but my grandkids who will still be paying Labor's debt if we do not turn it around. If the people of the Territory had not decided to back the Finocchiaro CLP government, I hate to think how bad it would be now. A Territory defaulting on loans is what I imagine—a Territory that cannot afford the basics.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a lot of our budget goes towards what you and I would describe as the basics. The must-dos—the roads, rates and rubbish that councils get hammered for—are the schools, health sector, courts, police and bus drivers we fund. We back hardworking people across the Northern Territory day-in and day-out. The previous government had no plans to pay for those basics. It had no vision and no way of growing the pie.

Labor members were happy to sit twiddling their thumbs and ask, 'What else can we promise and not deliver?' They could not even fund their own projects. They realised that no-one would give them money for their projects. It sounds great to go to every community in the Member for Gwoja's electorate and promise the world, but he never had any money teed up to do it. Labor members went to health clinics and said, 'Next year'. The Member for Daly cares about the road at Wadeye. He would tell his people, 'Next year', but next year never came. Under a Labor government, next year would still be 50 years from now.

The Finocchiaro CLP government is getting on with the job and turning the tide. We ensure that when we make decisions that spend other people's money, we are making the best choice, with the best possible value for Territorians and the best possible way of growing our economy. We saw that with the home build and the FreshStart grants, which had a massive multiplier. We will help Territorians by giving them $50,000 if they are a first home builder or $30,000 if they have an existing home to build a new home. Across my electorate it was predominantly young people who took up that opportunity, using the money towards a deposit or the build, stimulating our construction sector for the first time in a long time.

That has been an incredible use of money to making sure we have Territory jobs, our local construction industry is thriving and Territorians have somewhere to live. We announced the scheme before the election and the Labor government at the time said that it would copy that. Labor members had no ideas of their own. They were not pursuing any way to turn the tide. Part of me wonders whether, in that final Caucus meeting before the election, they sat around and said, 'Really hope we do not win this one, guys'. I am sure they would have preferred it if a couple of them kept their seats, but Territorians knew their time was over and that you simply could not trust Labor. Territorians could not trust Labor with another four years because they knew that this was make or break.

We had a crime crisis that was costing Territorians in not only emotional damage, which is severe, from being unable to walk on the streets at night and feel safe but also property damage and the insurance rises.

While I am talking about insurance, because it came up earlier, the 0822 postcode extends from Wadeye in the west to Groote Eylandt in the east and from the Tiwi Islands in the north to just south of Katherine in the southwest. This lovely postcode, which includes a good chunk of the Territory, also includes the rural suburbs of Bees Creek, McMinns Lagoon, Lambells Lagoon, Acacia Hills, Marrakai and lots of other parts of the area of the Territory that I refer to as God's country.

This postcode has been an absolute menace in the last couple of months. A lot of insurance companies base their rates on postcodes and will not offer new policies because of a cyclone 700 kilometres away. I had constituents during the cyclone on Groote Eylandt come to my office because they were worried that they could not close on their home loan because you need your house insured to finalise it, but no-one would offer them insurance, despite the fact they were 800 kilometres from the cyclone.

In February I wrote to the federal Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour, on this issue. I said that this is above politics; it just makes sense. We need postcodes that define where people live, not one-third of the Territory.

It also affects shipping rates. Someone who lives 200 metres away in 0839 will have much cheaper delivery rates, because people think the 0822 postcode means they will have to go to Groote Eylandt, catch a ferry or boat, to deliver something when in reality the address is five minutes from a KFC and Kmart; it is near Coolalinga.

A couple of weeks ago when I was in Tennant Creek—the lovely land of opportunity in the Member for Barkly's electorate, second only behind Goyder—I spoke with the Member for Lingiari. We talked about the need for all government levels to come together. I sent her an email, and she replied. She said that she will take up the issue. If not, we will do it for her. It is something that impacts Territorians' costs of living every day. It took a couple of emails and a couple of months, but I look forward to working with our federal members to progress this issue. I look forward to support from the Members for Daly, Gwoja, Arnhem and Arafura. That is real cost-of-living relief we can deliver.

I know it is not the end of the world, but recently the Kayo deal excluded remote Territorians from accessing Kayo. Remote Australians have to use Foxtel. Multiple people living in Bees Creek have been cut off from

Kayo. I do not live in Bees Creek anymore—I live in Lambells—but Kayo on my TV no longer works. This just goes to show it affects all Territorians. This is another way that postcode discrimination is ridiculous. I think it is discriminatory to cut off services to remote Australians who are being serviced by the internet. That does not make sense to me.

Going back to the motion and the amendment to the motion, it is important that we not only reflect on the trajectory of the Northern Territory under Labor but also look to the future. Under the Finocchiaro CLP government that is turning the tide, the future is Territorians having the confidence to build their home, invest in the Territory and hire extra staff.

When we raised the payroll tax threshold, the money we recouped went up as businesses continued to grow. We want to grow the pie because we know that we cannot tax our way out of the hole that Labor built for us.

We are bringing the Beetaloo Sub-basin online. In about 40 days Beetaloo gas will be flowing and powering the lights in Territory homes.

Mr Maley: Charging EVs.

Mr MACKAY: The Member for Nelson will one day invest in an electric vehicle and be able to charge it with Beetaloo gas. I think it will be a long time before he retires the LandCruiser, but one day he might.

Territory gas will power the Northern Territory economy for years to come. Territory gas provides longevity. Territory gas can power the nation.

The federal government needs to come to the table to help us unlock Territory gas for the east coast. It is building import terminals on the east coast instead of backing Territory gas. The federal government is talking about building another three terminals or doing upgrades over the next two years on the east coast instead of investing in Territory gas. It would rather we import our gas than back Territory-owned gas.

The federal government does not want to support Territory jobs the same way we do. It does not want to back the Territory and help us grow. It constantly threatens our funding.

The federal government was dragged to the table regarding maternity services in the Northern Territory. Let us not forget that although the $10m investment is welcome, we asked for $35m. We needed $35m. We need about $300m more for our healthcare system because Territorians deserve the best.

Territorians deserve to have opportunity and the confidence that we are helping to deliver for the Northern Territory. It is the little things that keep me going. It is the little people who say, ‘I was going to move interstate. I was thinking about selling, but you know what? You guys are doing all right. You guys are turning it around. I can see this is a place I want to be with my grandchildren. I want to raise my family here.’ That is the stuff that makes it all worth it. It makes coming to this place and listening to terrible speech after terrible speech from those opposite worth it. It makes the rewriting of history …

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr MACKAY: I thank the Member for Casuarina. He clearly wants to continue to hear about the failures of the previous Labor government.

I knew countless people who, under the last couple years of the Labor government, decided that the Territory was not for them. They did not feel safe, want to buy property, raise their families and send their kids to school here. Those people are turning around; they are investing in the Territory and moving back.

Property prices have gone up considerably in the last two years of the Finocchiaro CLP government because people realise that this is the place to be; this is the land of opportunity, where you can get ahead, build a career, build a family and go out and enjoy the Territory lifestyle and just enjoy being in the last frontier of Australia. It is a place where I look forward to one day raising my kids, because I love the Territory. Under the Finocchiaro CLP government, I am sure that there will be a Territory worth living in.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 5
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Paech
Mrs Carlson	Mr Smelt
Mr Charls	Mr Young
Mr Edgington	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Ayes 17	Noes 5
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Paech
Mrs Carlson	Mr Smelt
Mr Charls	Mr Young
Mr Edgington	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the retirement of Superintendent Sean Parnell after 41 years of dedicated service with the Northern Territory Police Force. Sean joined the Northern Territory Police Force on 11 February 1985, and from that day his career has spanned the breadth and depth of the Territory.

Early in his career Sean served in Harts Range, 200 kilometres northeast of Alice Springs, where he and his beloved late wife, Kiim, welcomed the first two of their six children. Sean's career took him through Darwin station and Alice Springs and out to communities, including Wadeye and Yuendumu, serving in some of the most remote parts of the Territory.

Along the way Sean served in a wide range of policing roles, reflecting the deep professional capabilities and qualities of his character. Sean has worked with distinction in areas as diverse as criminal intelligence,

counterterrorism, prosecutions and at the police college. He has worked in executive roles in the Executive Services Division; the Office of the Commissioner and CEO; Aboriginal Employment and Recruitment; and the Selections Division. From March 2020 he was attached to the Casuarina District and Strike Force Trident where he dealt with property crime.

With 41 years and a working life given to one place and its people, Sean's sense of service and duty to the people of the Territory went far beyond the uniform.

When the Territory needed a new regulator built from nothing in 2014, Sean became our inaugural Director-General of Licensing. When Catholic Education needed his wisdom and leadership, he chaired the Northern Territory Catholic Education Council and represented Territory parents on the National Catholic Education Commission. He was a member of the Indigenous Partnerships Council in Alice Springs. Since September last year he has chaired the Australia Day Council of the Northern Territory, an organisation which recognises and celebrates outstanding Territorians. He found time somewhere in all of this to earn a master's in theology.

As Regional Hospitaller for the Order of Malta, he spent years alongside people sleeping rough in Darwin, called by his deep sense of faith and charity and his special care for Indigenous people.

Sean's service was recognised in 2000, receiving the National Medal, now worn with a 35-year clasp, and the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2014 for his service to the community in a volunteer capacity.

None of it was done alone. Sean's career and life of service was made possible through the love and strength of his late wife, Kiim. Kiim served the Territory through her own long and distinguished policing career—the Meritorious Service Award in 2021; the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2018; and a decade on the board of NT Police Legacy, an organisation she first new as a legatee after the death of her father, Senior Constable William Jacobs. I paid tribute to Kiim in this Chamber in February 2024, and I am glad to honour her name here again.

Sean and Kiim raised six beautiful children, all in the Territory—Tierneigh, Kelseah, Patraic, Kieren, Braeden and Ciaralii.

We ask a great deal of our police and do not often say how thankful we are for them and their lives of service to our community.

Sean, thank you for everything you have done for our Territory across so many fields of endeavour from policing to charity and public leadership. Sean leaves the Northern Territory Police Force as someone who upholds the highest ideals of service and leadership. On behalf of the people of the Northern Territory, I thank you for your service and wish you a long and happy retirement.

Words have the power to change minds. They can challenge assumptions, inspire actions and give voice to ideas that shape our future. The ability to speak with conviction and authenticity is one of life's greatest skills, and it deserves to be celebrated. I recognise a remarkable young Territorian who has demonstrated exactly that: Jake Germaine, a student from The Essington School, has achieved an outstanding result in the prestigious Rostrum Voice of Youth competition, becoming the Northern Territory champion and finishing among the top three speakers in Australia.

This is no ordinary public speaking competition. The Rostrum Voice of Youth competition challenges students to think critically, develop original ideas and present them with confidence. Competitors deliver an original prepared speech before being given just 15 minutes to prepare and present a second speech on an unseen topic. It is a demanding test of communication, composure and the ability to think clearly under pressure.

To represent the Northern Territory at the national finals and finish among Australia's top three speakers is an extraordinary achievement. Public speaking is often listed as one of people's greatest fears. It takes courage to stand before an audience and share your ideas, knowing every word matters and every argument will be tested. Jake embraced that challenge.

I congratulate Jake Germaine on becoming the 2026 Northern Territory champion and finishing among Australia's top three speakers in the Rostrum Voice of Youth competition. His achievement is one that should inspire young Territorians to find their voice, have the confidence to use it and never underestimate the difference that one person can make.

I acknowledge the 2026 Oceania Athletics Championships, particularly the Territorians who had the opportunity to compete on one of the biggest stages our region has ever hosted. For the first time, the Northern Territory

welcomed athletes from across Oceania to Darwin for a championship of international significance. It was a remarkable event that showcased not only elite athletic talent but also the Territory's ability to host major sporting competitions and welcome visitors across the region. From 18 to 23 May at Arafura Stadium in Marrara, Darwin become the centre for athletics in Oceania. Our city came alive with athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and supporters all united by a love of sport, competition and connection.

I acknowledge two extraordinary para athletes, Briseis Brittain and Telaya Blacksmith, who proudly represented the Territory in front of a home crowd in a range of sprinting and long jump events.

Eighteen-year-old Briseis, from Arnhem Land, competed in the finals of the women's para ambulant 100-metre sprint and placed fourth with a time of 13.4 seconds. She also competed in the final of the women's final para ambulant 200-metre sprint, placing fifth with a time of 28.9 seconds.

Nineteen-year-old Telaya, raised in Lajamanu, also had stunning results in sprinting and long jump events. She placed second in the women's para ambulant 100-metre sprint finals with a time of 12.44 seconds; second in the para ambulant 200-metre sprint finals with a time of 25.34 seconds; and first in the para ambulant 400-metre race with a time of 59.29 seconds. Telaya also won gold in the women's para long jump final, setting both a new Oceania championship record and an Australian T20 under-20 record with her jump of 5.23 metres.

I also congratulate Briseis, who is at the Commonwealth Games representing Australia in Glasgow. For a girl from Ramingining, this is an incredible achievement, and to her and her entire family it is a credit to her dedication to her sport. The games start tomorrow and I know we will all be cheering her on from home and wish her the best success over the next week.

I acknowledge an extraordinary Territorian whose life has been defined by service, leadership and an unwavering commitment to others. Dr Felix Ho ASM, OAM, is a doctor, educator, Australian Defence Force reservist and volunteer whose contribution to the Northern Territory spans more than three decades. This year Dr Ho was recognised as the Northern Territory Australian of the Year, an honour that reflects a lifetime dedicated to improving the lives of others.

Dr Ho's story is one of resilience, gratitude and purpose. After migrating from Hong Kong to Australia with his family as a young boy, he embraced the opportunities this country gave him and made a conscious decision to give back. That decision has shaped a remarkable life of service to the Northern Territory and Australia.

As a medical practitioner, Dr Ho has cared for Territorians from every walk of life, including those living in some of our most remote communities where access to healthcare can make a profound difference. As a reservist in the Royal Australian Air Force, Dr Ho has proudly served our nation, bringing the same commitment and compassion that have become the hallmarks of his career.

What defines Dr Ho best is not the titles he holds nor the honours he has received, but the qualities of his character and the example he sets for others. For more than 30 years he has dedicated countless hours to St John Ambulance, helping train, mentor and inspire generations of young Australians. Through his leadership, thousands of young people have developed the confidence, skills and sense of responsibility to step forward when their communities need them most. Dr Ho has often said that everyone has something to contribute. He reminds us that making a difference does not always require grand gestures.

Despite an extraordinary list of achievements, Dr Ho has never sought recognition. Instead, he has devoted himself to creating opportunities for others to succeed, believing the strongest communities are built by the people willing to serve. His example has inspired countless Territorians to become volunteers, leaders and active members of their community. On top of this recognition, he was also named the National Volunteer of the Year—the first one—showing that the Territory punches well above our weight.

It has been an incredible year for Dr Felix Ho, and I wish him all the best for the future. He is a tremendous ambassador for the Northern Territory.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I recognise an extraordinary Territorian whose sporting achievements, dedication to her community and lifelong commitment to healthy living deserve the recognition of this Assembly, Mrs Elfrida Kalich.

Since moving to Darwin in 1994, Elfrida has been a passionate member of the Darwin Table Tennis Association. Her sporting journey began long before she picked up a table tennis bat. Growing up in

Indonesia, she enjoyed playing table tennis as a child, but basketball was her main sport. Later, when living in Tasmania and Melbourne, she played squash and badminton. It was not until she was living in rural Queensland, where there were few organised sporting opportunities, that table tennis became part of her everyday life. Elfrida and her husband built a homemade table tennis table, and after inviting the local Catholic nuns over for dinner, they would spend the evening playing table tennis together. It is a wonderful story that reflects the simple joy that sport can play in bringing people together.

When Elfrida arrived in Darwin she joined the Darwin Table Tennis Association and quickly discovered that table tennis was far more complex than simply hitting a ball across the table. In fact, during her first Northern Territory championships she lost every match and seriously considered giving away the sport. Thankfully, she persevered. She learned that table tennis is a game of precision, strategy and continual learning. The type of rubber on a bat, the amount of spin and the smallest technical adjustments can completely change a match. To this day, she says that she tries to learn something new every time she plays.

That determination has seen her become one of Australia's finest veteran table tennis players. Elfrida has represented the Northern Territory and Australia at major championships across the world, competing in South Korea, Japan, Italy and Germany. Every year she competes at the Australian Veterans Championships, regularly contests the Asian Veterans Championships and competes at the World Masters Championships every three years. She is already planning to compete in Istanbul in 2028 and is considering Australia's new World Team Championships in Las Vegas next year.

Her achievements are remarkable. Since 2019 Elfrida has won five Australian Veterans Championships best performance medals, an award recognising the outstanding competitor across all six championship events. To earn that honour a player must win medals consistently across singles, doubles and mixed doubles, demonstrating exceptional versatility and consistency. Remarkably, the championships were cancelled twice during COVID, meaning Elfrida has won the Best Performance Award at every Australian championships she has attended since 2019.

Most recently, Elfrida represented Australia at the ITTF World Masters Championships in Gangneung, South Korea, where, alongside her partner, Tasmania's Kim Holcomb, she won the over-75 women's doubles world championship. She brought her medal to show me. It is an outstanding achievement, and one that has brought enormous pride to the Northern Territory.

Despite these remarkable accomplishments, Elfrida remains humble. She has won so many trophies over the years that she has donated many of them back to the Table Tennis Association for future winners. In one memorable moment, she won back a trophy she had donated years earlier and realised it had originally belonged to her.

Her greatest contribution, however, is not measured in medals. Elfrida trains four mornings each week and often spends up to six days a week at the table once coaching is included. She freely gives her time coaching children, adults and seniors, and alongside fellow coaches, Nick and Michael, introduces new players to the sport every week.

Next month they will deliver a free Seniors Month coaching program at Marrara, so I encourage all our seniors to go to see her.

She continues to encourage Territorians to stay active and connected. She is also a passionate advocate for growing table tennis beyond Darwin and Alice Springs, and has previously travelled to Arnhem Land to help promote the sport.

When asked what makes table tennis so special, Elfrida says that it is far more than simply hitting a ball; it combines physical fitness, flexibility, coordination and strategic thinking. Her advice to anyone considering the sport is simply give it a try. She believes that everyone can improve with encouragement and coaching, and that reaching championship level already makes someone a champion.

Elfrida Kalich exemplifies the best of our Northern Territory. Through resilience, humility, generosity and sporting excellence, she has become an outstanding ambassador for our Territory and nation. On behalf of this Assembly and the people of Wanguri, I congratulate Elfrida on her extraordinary achievements and thank her for the inspiration she continues to provide Territorians of all ages. I wish her every success at the Australian championships later this year, and on the international stage in the years to come.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I am lucky enough to have six amazing schools in my electorate, and they are all wonderful. But this year one of our Johnston schools, Nemarluk School,

celebrated an amazing milestone 40 years in specialist education in the Northern Territory. For four decades Nemarluk has supported Territory children with disability and additional learning needs to learn, grow, develop confidence and thrive. In doing so, it has supported generations of families and become one of the Territory's most loved and respected schools. It is a milestone well worth celebrating.

One of the greatest privileges of representing Johnston is that I get to visit schools across my electorate regularly. Joining in school activities and attending assemblies is one of the best parts of my job and I love every assembly I attend, but Nemarluk School's assemblies remain a firm favourite for their inclusivity. With children often helping lead the assemblies, there is often glorious chaos and wonderful performances. This is what inclusion looks like. It is not a policy document or a slogan; it is something you see the moment you walk through the school gates.

As Nemarluk School celebrated 40 years it was impossible not to reflect on how much has been achieved. Nemarluk's story began long before the school itself opened. Specialist education in Darwin was originally provided through a specialist unit attached to Ludmilla Primary School during the early 1970s. In July 1986 that program became a specialist school in its own right, opening with only 25 students. From those humble beginnings, Nemarluk has grown into a vibrant specialist primary school, supporting about 185 students on its Alawa campus and through satellite classrooms in mainstream primary schools across Darwin.

The school itself has continued to evolve. It adopted the name Nemarluk in 1994, honouring the Aboriginal warrior from the Wadeye region whose courage and determination remain part of Territory history. A preschool was established in 1998; a purpose-built campus opened in Alawa in 2012; and an inclusive playground followed in 2018.

As the school grew, it reflected a growing understanding that every child deserves an education that recognises their strengths, supports their individual needs and gives them every opportunity to succeed. That philosophy has been at the heart of Nemarluk School for 40 years.

Last year I invited schools across Johnston to take part in a speechwriting project, asking students: if you were the Chief Minister, what would you do? Nemarluk students embraced the challenge with enormous enthusiasm. Reading their speeches reminded me why I enjoy visiting the school so much. The students did not talk about politics; they talked about people and issues that are deeply relevant to us in this Chamber.

Miller told us that she would make travel more affordable so that children could experience different cultures, drawing on her own family's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Scottish and Russian heritage and their love of travelling together.

Jackson said that he wanted people to stop hurting one another. He spoke about creating opportunities for people who make bad choices to stop, think about their actions and do better.

Cecilia spoke about something many adults in this Chamber spend a great deal of time discussing—housing. She simply said that sometimes there are too many people living in her house. If she were Chief Minister, she would help people get jobs so that families could afford bigger homes. Her reason was simple, 'So kids like me can be happy'. In one sentence she captured something we often forget—housing policy is children's policy.

Matthias thought everyone should spend more time having fun.

Faith dreamed of becoming a musician and artist.

Sheree wanted Darwin to be a place where everyone felt safe, just as she does when she visits her home in the Tiwi Islands.

Tommy imagined a giant playcentre where children could learn mathematics through Minecraft and where families could travel more cheaply to stay connected with loved ones across Australia.

Their speeches were thoughtful, hopeful and full of kindness. They reminded me that children often see the world with remarkable clarity. They do not begin by talking about political ideology; they talk about feeling safe, being with family and having somewhere to live, learn, play, create and belong. In a week when we are talking so much about child safety, it is important to listen to children and hear what is important to them.

I acknowledge the principals who have led Nemarluk over the past 40 years—from Cynthia Rowe, the first principal and a wonderful Johnston local who continues to contribute to our community in so many ways—

as well as the teachers, assistant teachers, education support staff, therapists, administrative staff and support workers who dedicate their careers to helping children achieve things that they or others may have once thought impossible.

I give a huge shout-out to the current principal, Virg, and assistant principals, Judy and Larelle, and all the amazing school staff, the always smiling people at the front desk and all those who are part of the school community. Thank you so much for always making me feel so welcome in your school as well.

I also acknowledge the parents, carers and families. Often when I talk to families, Nemarluk is much more than a school; it has become a community, a place where they know their children will be seen, understood and supported for who they are.

Forty years ago Nemarluk School opened its doors to only 25 students. Today thousands of Territory children and families have benefited from the dedication of the people who have walked through those doors ever since. As we celebrate this anniversary, we should also recognise what Nemarluk represents. It reminds us that inclusion is not about expecting every child to fit the system; it is about building a system that supports every child to reach their potential. It reminds us that every child has strengths, something important to contribute and deserves the opportunity to be heard.

On behalf of the people of Johnston, I congratulate everyone who has been a part of Nemarluk School over the past 40 years—past and present principals, teachers, assistant teachers, therapists, support staff, volunteers, parents, carers, students and alumni. Thank you for believing in every child and creating a school where every child belongs.

Happy 40th birthday, Nemarluk School. May the next 40 years be every bit as inspiring as the first.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, June and July are action-packed months in the Territory, as we all know. Tonight I recognise the people and events I had the opportunity and good fortune to spend some of the months with.

On 4 June in my capacity as the assistant minister for Education I attended the Kids in Space showcase, a national education program for primary schools to encourage STEM pathways. It was a fantastic event. I was delighted to judge it, speak at it and check out all the cools things the kids had made to look at how to solve problems in space.

Anula Primary School did amazing work, as did Nightcliff Middle School. Ultimately, the winners were from Alawa Primary School. It was great to see our public schools well represented in this competition. Alawa Primary School created multi-sensory devices to help astronauts feel at home from space. I look forward to seeing how well they do at the national final in Adelaide shortly.

On 5 June my team Darwin colleagues, the Members for Fannie Bay and Port Darwin, and I hosted a community movie night at the Botanic Gardens, watching the *Minecraft* movie. Thanks to my colleagues for doing so much of the heavy lifting for that. It was a wonderful event that was well attended. The attendance was even better than the year before, I might add. We raised a good amount of money, and we look forward to doing another one in the coming months.

On 6 and 7 June many of us would have enjoyed the wonders of Greek GleNTi. There are so many people to shout out to for that event that it is almost impossible to isolate anyone. Many volunteers make that such a special, magical event. I certainly filled my boots over several days, and I do not regret anything. My favourite thing was seeing the 'diet starts tomorrow' shirts all around the place, which I thought was apt.

I make small mention of two groups from that. The Arafura Music Collective piggybacked on GleNTi this year, with a concert featuring beautiful Greek music, called The Unbroken Thread, following the end of GleNTi. A lot of Agapi Care's members are involved with the organisation of GleNTi. Agapi Care is doing excellent work to promote healthcare and aged-care solutions in the Northern Territory, and I look forward to working with it ongoing.

Another movie night that I was a part of was held on 13 June. It was the Northcrest movie night that the DCOH team and I put on annually. It was wonderful to watch *Kangaroo*, which everybody raved about. What a lovely movie it is. We bucked the trend this year: we did not do a sausage sizzle; we did nachos. I tell you what, folks, they flew out the door. I recommend nachos for quick slinging and plenty of time to have a chat with everyone. Amongst the barbecues, popcorn and the nachos we all had a fantastic night. It had huge attendance. Congratulations to Ibukun who won our jellybean competition. Her mum, Mayowa, was kind

enough to bring her to the office. She is one of the trainee doctors at CDU. We have an amazing community of people at Northcrest. It is lovely to support them.

On a similar note, I thank the CEO and Managing Director of DCOH, Shane Dignan, who met with me last week to try to accelerate plans to improve playground equipment in Northcrest. As everybody knows, the decision to finalise council affiliation is taking time, and we all hope for a quick resolution. In the meantime, we have to be committed to improving facilities in that community, and Mayse Young Park is in need of swings and improved playground equipment. I am grateful that the DCOH team was willing to commit to making that happen. Thank you to the DCOH team.

Like many of you, I enjoyed the World Cup and the Socceroos enormously, not least because suddenly everybody got on the refugee bandwagon for about three minutes. I loved the fact that happened because it is a great reminder that Australia is a multicultural nation and we have people from far and wide, including some who end up becoming Socceroos and some who live everyday lives like the rest of us and become great contributors to society.

The World Cup coincided with Refugee Week and Fusion Fest which Melaleuca held at its premises, which was a beautiful event. I say to everyone in this House that sometimes people have ideas of what a refugee looks like; it is not people from one specific part of the world. A lot of people whom we celebrate in this parliament on a regular basis—for example, the Latin Americans a couple of days ago. Tonnes of Latin American refugees are in the Northern Territory. It was good to support Melaleuca which supports people to rebuild and settle their lives constructively in the Northern Territory.

My family did not come to Australia as refugees. They came as skilled migrants, but they were refugees at one point when war broke out. Last week we celebrated 54 years of coming to Darwin and making it our permanent home. My grandad, who was a hydrologist on the Snowy Mountains, met another excellent Swiss Consul-General Peter Fuchs and Nancy Fuchs, his wife, who is the oldest member of the CWA in Darwin at 96 years old and still going strong. Nancy and Peter were kind enough to bring my grandparents and their three kids out here. It is lovely to be part of that lineage, and support refugees ongoing.

The other thing I was glad to do at the time was support Mariia Shevchenko, a Ukrainian refugee who settled in Darwin and was the winner for her artwork, Code of a Nation at the Melaleuca festival. I happened to buy the artwork before it was awarded first place, and it is on display in my electorate office. I encourage you all to come and take a look at it when you get a chance.

On 21 and 22 June we had the V8s at Hidden Valley. Everybody was there, but it is important to remember that throughout the rest of the year associations like the Drag Racing Association and the North Australian Motor Sports Club keep Hidden Valley going. I was delighted to hand out community benefit cheques on behalf of the government to those excellent organisations recently.

On 23 June it was great to recognise UN Public Service Day, representing the Chief Minister in my capacity as assistant minister for Public Service, and launch the IPAA Young Professionals Network. It is important that we have young people moving into our public service.

On 27 June there were 7,000 people at the Botanic Gardens for the DSO's amazing outdoor Movie Hits concert. What a great event. My thanks to Jon Tooby, Richard Mills and Claire Kilgariff for having me as a part of the concert; it was special.

Likewise, on the same day I attended the COTA Seniors Expo. I am grateful to Sue Shearer for having us all there putting on the event and working with me subsequently to put on a Q&A session about VAD laws in Australia and around the world shortly thereafter. We will do another of those shortly for the Australian Independent Retirees Association.

There have been brilliant lectures recently at CDU. There was one by Bernard Salt, which I will talk about later about demographic trends and data for Australia, and the excellent Austin Asche Oration by Justice Marcus Solomon where we talked about the implied freedom of communication in Australia and social cohesion; things that we need to have honest conversations about. That was a good crowd with tough questions and erudite answers. I am glad that CDU is putting on excellent events like it.

On 10 July it was great to get to Tennant and see the amazing crowd there. A big shout-out to NT Health for giving me my diphtheria shot. NT Health also proceeded to do vaccinations at the Katherine Show which I loved being at. What a wonderful country family show. Just quietly, I think I might even like it more than the Darwin one. I will probably get in trouble for that. In saying that, I very much look forward to being at the

Darwin Show this week, as will everybody else. I will spend the majority of my time at the CWA stall volunteering with the CWA members. They make the best cakes, which I can never hope to replicate.

Speaking of families, on 14 July it was great that at the same time as the Investment Summit, at the other end of the spectrum, the Family Business Association held its drinks. It is important to see those small firms which make a massive contribution to the Northern Territory as well. Thank you to CEO Catherine Sayer and to Angus Kennard, the former CEO of Kennards, who was the guest speaker. It was wonderful to bring all our important small, medium and large enterprises that are family owned together.

Speaking of important family-owned businesses, it is my great privilege and pleasure to recognise Kerry Ambrose-Pearce of Kerry's Automotive. A couple of days ago the Australian Automotive Dealer Association awarded Kerry a Lifetime Achievement Award. That is no small thing. Kerry has been there since 1988, as many of you know, and he has been a supporter of many local charities and sporting clubs. I was pleased to acknowledge that.

On 18 July we had the Viking Funeral, the largest shebang in the Fong Lim electorate, with 2,000 people. It was great to give tickets away. I look forward to promoting the Darwin to Banda yacht race which will happen on 1 August. My thanks to Commodore Adam Gollow, Wendy McCallum, Rear Commodore Sarah Meldrum and Verity Hawkins for having me on the merchandise stall in that tiny space for so many hours.

Finally, I will not talk about it at length tonight, but we just recognised the 60th anniversary of Stuart Park Primary School. It was an amazing event. The music was joyful; the choirs, the dancers and the school bands. My thanks to the NT Music School, to the Chief Minister and the Education minister for making time to go there, to my electorate staff and to Ton's Bistro for all their help putting on that massive souvlaki and the cakes. What an amazing event at Stuart Park Primary School, and what an amazing electorate.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I recognise NAIDOC Week and this year's theme, 50 Years of Deadly. I acknowledge my fellow Aboriginal brothers and sisters as well as our Torres Strait Islander communities across the Northern Territory, our old people, leaders, families and young people who continue to keep culture, language and community strong.

This year we celebrate 50 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievements, advocacy, culture and strength, but our history and story did not begin 50 years ago. Our cultures are the oldest living cultures in the world. For thousands of generations our people have cared for country, practised law, raised families, passed down language and knowledge and maintained strong systems of culture, trade and governance. We celebrate these 50 years, highlighting those achievements and hoping they become more visible. Fifty years of our people refusing to be silent, standing up, speaking out and demanding recognition, justice and self-determination.

In the Northern Territory we remember the courage of Vincent Lingiari and the Gurindji and Malngin people. Their stand at Wave Hill was about fair wages, but it was also something greater; it became a struggle for land, dignity and the right for Aboriginal people to make decisions about their own country and future. We celebrate 60 years of the Wave Hill Walk-off this year. That achievement was not simply handed down by a government; it was fought, marched and negotiated for.

That same strength can be seen across the Territory today in our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations; legal services; Aboriginal land councils; women's organisations; amazing Aboriginal art and culture centres; Aboriginal ranger groups; language centres; and family services. These are not just organisations or service providers; they are the heart and soul of many of our communities. They are where Aboriginal people have been delivering and developing Aboriginal solutions. They show what can be achieved when communities are trusted, respected and properly resourced to lead.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have excelled at every part of Australian life. Our people are doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, artists, musicians, academics, business owners, sporting champions, public servants and parliamentarians. Our artists take our stories and culture of Central Australia and the wider Territory to the world stage. Our Aboriginal rangers continue to care for and protect country. Our Aboriginal health workers keep our families strong and safe. Our Aboriginal teachers teach our children language and pass on the knowledge for future generations. Our elders continue to guide and strengthen us with wisdom and generosity. Our young people continue to make us proud. That is what is deadly.

NAIDOC Week must also be a time for truth. The progress we celebrate did not just happen because governments decided to do everything right. It happened because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people organised, protested, negotiated and refused to give up.

While we celebrate how far we have come, we must also recognise how much work remains. Too many Aboriginal families still live in overcrowded housing and lack reliable power, safe water, proper roads and essential services. Too many Aboriginal people have to travel huge distances for healthcare. Our children are still being removed from families. Too many Aboriginal people are ending up in prison. These are not failures of Aboriginal people; they are failures of systems, policies and governments.

We cannot celebrate Aboriginal culture during NAIDOC Week and ignore Aboriginal voices for the rest of the year. We cannot acknowledge elders at the beginning of meetings and then exclude them from the decisions that affect their communities. We should not have NAIDOC events at Parliament House and not invite one Aboriginal member of this parliament. Recognition without action is not enough. Consultation after decisions have been made is not genuine consultation.

The next 50 years must be about more than Aboriginal people succeeding despite the system; they must be about changing the system and having strong community-controlled organisations, safe housing, quality education, better healthcare, protected languages and real economic opportunities. Most importantly, they must be about Aboriginal people having the autonomy and resources to shape their own futures.

As an Aboriginal man and a person from Central Australia, I am enormously proud of what Aboriginal people in the Territory have achieved and continue to achieve. I am proud of our old people, whose courage created opportunities for us today; the leaders and workers who stand up every day to keep our community strong; our young people who carry the knowledge of their elders and the hopes for future generations; and our people because they are strong. Our culture is strong and always has value. Our voices are always strong, and they matter.

After 50 years of deadly achievement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still here, standing strong, leading and shaping the future of this country. It is important to recognise and celebrate these amazing achievements.

To all Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory, stay strong, stay black, stay deadly. Happy NAIDOC.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I am doing one of the things I love most about this job—talking about the incredible people in the electorate of Port Darwin, most especially the children.

I acknowledge students from Larrakeyah Primary School who were recognised in the last couple of months through my Citizenship Award. For May, congratulations go to Bethany McCann, the middle and upper primary recipient, for being a wonderful role model to those around the school and for representing Larrakeyah Primary positively during Gala Days; and Dani Ah Toy, the early childhood and lower primary recipient, who has consistently demonstrated a positive can-do attitude towards learning while exemplifying the school's values each day.

For June, congratulations to Praisha Thapa, who has been recognised for consistently demonstrating kindness, respect and responsibility within the classroom; and Max Kwok, the middle and upper primary recipient, who has consistently demonstrated the school values of respect, responsibility and achievement through his positive attitude, outstanding work ethic and commitment to learning. Max's leadership, character and dedication make him a wonderful role model for his peers.

While I am speaking about Larrakeyah Primary School, I also congratulate the school community on its outstanding recognition as finalists in the 2026 Australian Education Awards. A big congratulations to Fathma Mauger, who is one of the most incredible women I have ever met and who has been named a finalist for Government Primary School Principal of the Year; and to Danni Mattiazzo, who has been recognised as a finalist for Deputy Principal of the Year. Larrakeyah Primary School is definitely punching above its weight because, to top it off, it has also been named a finalist for Government Primary School of the Year. These are amazing achievements for an amazing school and a testament to the exceptional leadership, dedicated staff and supportive school community who work tirelessly to provide solid educational opportunities for our young Territorians. I wish the school every success in these awards.

I also recognise a couple of wonderful students from St Mary's Primary School, the other school in my electorate. Congratulations to Vashti Bradley, who has been recognised for her kind and caring attitude towards others. Acts of kindness have an enormous impact on those around us, and Vashti should be incredibly proud of the example she sets. Congratulations also to Vicky Koi, who has been recognised for being a supportive and helpful friend while consistently demonstrating St Mary's four Rs—respectful, resilient, responsible and ready to learn.

I acknowledge several outstanding Territorians in the electorate who were recognised in this year's King's Birthday Honours. Huge congratulations to well-known Territorian Stephen Margetic, who was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, a prestigious honour which reflects his significant contribution and service to our community.

Congratulations also to another outstanding Territorian Justin Coleman, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his dedicated service.

Someone whom we tragically lost recently was Dick Griffiths, or Uncle Dick as people referred to him. Just prior to his passing he was recognised with the Medal of the Order of Australia. I think there is not one person who has lived in the Territory for any length of time who did not have their lives touched by Dick Griffiths and everyone would agree that he was a worthy recipient of that award. His legacy of service will be remembered by everyone whose lives he has touched. His passing is a huge loss to all of us.

I recognise Captain Aaron Wurfel, who was awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal, an honour that reflects his outstanding commitment, professionalism and dedication to serving our nation.

A few other things were happening for people in our community too. In our business community there was an excellent result for business owner Estelle Cornell, who owns Magnolia Flower Merchants and Estelle's Florist. For anyone who needs beautiful floral arrangements, she is definitely the person to see. She was recognised in Sydney at the Small Business Champion Awards as the 2026 Champion Master, which is extraordinary. A huge congratulations to Estelle.

We are lucky in the Territory to have so many extraordinary businesses, and I am lucky to have quite a few of them in my electorate of Port Darwin.

I also congratulate Valma Eaton, who was admitted to the Order of St John during the recent Order of St John Investiture and Awards Ceremony. These awards recognise individuals who have made significant contributions through humanitarian service, particularly in support of St John Ambulance and the wider community. Valma's admission to the Order is fitting acknowledgement of the incredible work she does and her commitment to the organisation and its people.

Each of the people I have spoken about are true dinky-di Territorians who make the electorate of Port Darwin a delight to serve. I thank all of them for their efforts. I hope we continue to see them thrive into the future.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, nominations for the Australian Teacher Aide of the Year Awards closed on 25 June 2026, with official winners to be announced during Australian Teacher Aide Appreciation Week, on 3 September 2026.

The awards program is run by Australian Teacher Aide in partnership with the National Education Summit. These awards celebrate teaching assistants and support staff who make a positive difference every day in student learning and wellbeing across Australian schools.

There were several nominations across Northern Territory schools this time, but I will specifically mention the nominees from two schools in my electorate: Jayde Weckert at Bakewell Primary School; and Mio Humphrys at Zuccoli Primary School. Those two assistants are incredibly worthy of an award. I congratulate them on their nominations, and look forward to the outcome in September.

For Territory Day we launched a new school initiative to celebrate our unique story. Students at one school in my electorate, Rosebery Primary School, spent time exploring what it means to be a Territorian and why this day is significant to the Northern Territory. Students shared Territory Day stories and personal connections with their classes and created artworks representing what Territory Day means to them. They also heard from a teacher at the school who was present at the official 1978 Ceremony of Self-Government, which was special and a firsthand connection to that milestone in our history.

I was also incredibly excited, along with a couple of hundred Bakewell Primary School students, to go to the school oval and film ourselves creating a huge NT symbol on the oval. The letters were made entirely of students all in their school uniform. It was so much fun. I loved seeing the kids participate. They patiently lined up, ready to go. The team used their drone to get videos and photos; it was fantastic. My favourite part was chatting to all those students and hearing what they thought of Territory Day. I had to teach them a couple of things because a lot of them said 'fireworks', which we know is not entirely true—although we celebrate with fireworks, and are happy about that.

We want to ensure that our kids, and their kids, know how far we have come as the Territory. We want them to stay here to help us make the Territory the best place to live, work, visit and invest. We want Territorians from all walks of life to be proud of our one-of-a-kind history, culture and lifestyle, and it continues with the next generation.

I thank all the Bakewell Primary School staff who assisted in getting the students into the right areas on the oval. A big shout-out to Mrs Grazioli who coordinated everything. She is one of the greatest human beings that Bakewell has ever seen; she is fantastic. She had them all in shipshape condition in the letters N and T. They all did so well. It took a lot of time, but we got there in the end. We were in the *NT News*, so I am proud of Bakewell Primary School for its efforts.

The Palmerston Youth Festival, hosted by the City of Palmerston and sponsored by the Northern Territory Government, was held from 4 to 10 July. The week held loads of events, including GeekFest, which I went to, and it was fantastic; arts and crafts and STEM events; Inflate A'Maze at Cazalys Arena; and the Deadly NAIDOC Celebration. I attended some of those events, but I enjoyed GeekFest in particular. There was a heap of kids having a great time. Even their parents were getting involved. There were also lots of stalls and information.

At the Palmerston Markets on Friday 10 July, the final event on the calendar was held, Palmy's Got Talent. A lot of great talent was on show that night. We sat front and centre and watched all those young people being involved on the stage. Well done to all those participants; it was a great night.

NT Breatheasy S.T.A.A.R.S. Inc hosted a luncheon at the Palmerston Golf Club in July to celebrate its 20th anniversary. This is the only group of its kind and size that—in the whole of Australia—is a support organisation helping people with various chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases. It is fantastic that it is the only one of its kind in the country and we have it in Palmerston. At that luncheon event, I was joined by the Chief Minister, who is a big supporter of the group, and the Members for Blain, Drysdale and Wanguri; we had a fantastic time.

Breatheasy holds exercise sessions in Yarrawonga every Monday and Thursday. All the participants get together to socialise, which is the best part, and do light exercise. A big thank you to Di Dunn, who does a mountain of work for the group; they all love her. In fact, there is a committee of people who do a lot to support the organisation.

We always have a great time when we hang out with the Breatheasy members. They are a wonderful bunch of people. I congratulate them on 20 years of having people come each week to hang out and exercise. They keep each other company. Well done to NT Breatheasy S.T.A.A.R.S. Inc.

The Palmerston Game Fishing Club held its annual junior anglers event on Saturday 27 June to kick off the school holidays. It is a highly anticipated event. There is a waitlist of kids who register and have to wait until the day, hoping that someone cancels, to get there.

It is a great day. The kids who get to go along get up early in the morning and are dropped off at the club, registered, organised and briefed. They use flares in the car park and are taught by the volunteer SES people. Then they get on a bus. This year they went to the Humpty Doo Barramundi farm to have a day of fishing the ponds. When I was there in the afternoon, I heard that hundreds of barramundi were caught throughout the day. There was a competition about who could catch the most barra, which was fantastic.

We provided support with a barbecue lunch when all the kids and parents came back, which was fantastic. It supported the volunteers of the club who do many things. It is a nice big group of volunteers and because it is such a welcoming club, they have a lot of support, which is fantastic. A big thank you to all the volunteers. They do an amazing job, particularly at that event, let alone all the other things they do.

It was great to do the barbecue. I could tell the kids were having a great time. We had sponsorship and all chipped in to help out with the barbecue. The Chief Minister was there, along with the Members for Blain, Drysdale, Goyder and Nelson. A big thank you to everyone because we not only had a lot of fun but also fed a lot of kids. It was great.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge outstanding work by community organisations in the Nightcliff electorate—the Rapid Creek Landcare Group, the neighbouring Casuarina Coastal Reserve Landcare Group and the Friends of Casuarina Coastal Reserve. These groups do an incredible job caring for some of Darwin's most precious natural areas. Their volunteers give up countless hours for revegetation, weed control, community working bees and environmental education.

The Rapid Creek and Nightcliff foreshore is an incredible ecosystem. It is also a place where families gather; people exercise; birdwatchers visit from across the Territory, interstate and overseas; and locals come to enjoy our coastal lifestyle. These special places rely on government working with community to help protect and maintain this beautiful natural environment.

An example of this collaborative effort was the Rapid Creek Landcare Group's annual cleanup, following Territory Day celebrations earlier this month. Territory Day is one of our great Territory traditions enjoyed by many families, friends and a growing number of tourists, but once the celebrations are over, we have a shared responsibility to care for our beaches, parks and public spaces.

I thank everyone who volunteered their time to help clean up our foreshore and beaches after Territory Day, including the Member for Johnston who joined those efforts.

In particular, I thank Peter O'Hagan, Secretary of the Rapid Creek Landcare Group, for his leadership in organising this annual cleanup and bringing together volunteers from our local community.

This year dozens of people were out early in the morning, collecting fireworks, packaging and other litter from our beaches and foreshore. Importantly, we also searched for the smaller pieces of debris that can easily wash into Rapid Creek and the ocean, polluting our environment. I managed to persuade the full crew of my kids to help out as well. I also acknowledge the City of Darwin teams who worked alongside volunteers to remove the collected rubbish. It was a fantastic example of community and local government working together for the benefit of everyone.

I was also pleased to attend the launch of the ivy gourd mapping project on World Environment Day in June. This project brought tougher the Rapid Creek and Casuarina Coastal Reserve Landcare Groups, the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT, the City of Darwin and Landcare NT. It was fantastic to see all these government agencies, environment organisations and community volunteers working towards the same goal.

Ivy gourd is an invasive vine that is becoming a threat to our local bushland and coastal reserves. Through many hours of volunteer work these groups mapped its spread throughout the Casuarina Coastal Reserve to help build awareness and support future management efforts.

The launch of the map was followed by a community working bee around Rapid Creek and the yellow bridge, where volunteers removed ivy gourd from the area. Every vine removed helps protect native vegetation and preserves the biodiversity of this important natural space.

The Members for Casuarina and Johnston were also busy helping out on that day. I dragged along my helpful twins to help with the efforts. It is great to get them out and about at a young age, helping to improve our local foreshore and, hopefully, imparting to them the incredible importance of our natural environment.

I acknowledge Deborah Hall from the Casuarina Coastal Reserve Landcare Group for her leadership on this initiative. People like Deborah Hall, Peter O'Hagan and the many other volunteers involved in these groups are quietly contributing countless hours every year to help our community. They do it because they care deeply about our local environment and want to leave it in a better condition for future generations.

As the Member for Nightcliff, I place on the record my sincere thanks to everyone involved with the Rapid Creek Landcare Group, the Casuarina Coastal Reserve Landcare Group, the Friends of Casuarina Coastal Reserve, the committees, volunteers and many community members who continue to support their work.

I look forward to continuing to support these Landcare groups, attending future community working bees and seeing more projects that bring our community together to protect the environment that we are fortunate to enjoy.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the 50th running of the Finke Desert Race. This incredible local Alice Springs event started in 1976, then known as the There and Back, has evolved over the years to be the biggest event on the Alice Springs calendar. It was fantastic to enjoy this 50th iteration with the Chief Minister and colleagues in Alice Springs.

I thank the army of volunteers who make this event possible, from the committee led by Anthony Yoffa to every trackside marshal, the paramedics and St John volunteer crews, the Alice Springs Volunteer Bushfire Brigade and the locals who come back every year to ensure that this event can go ahead, along with long-time volunteer Glen Auricht, who maintains the track in his trusty old grader come rain, hail or shine.

This year's event marked 50 years of Finke, and just like in the first iteration in 1976 when local rider Geoff Curtis won the bikes category, local legend David Walsh returned from retirement to take out the 50th iteration, writing his name into the history books once again. It truly was one for the ages and will be fondly remembered by many in Alice Springs as the year the King of the Desert came home.

Another recent wonderful local event was the Alice Springs Show. This 67th iteration of the event served as a wonderful reminder of how much the local show means to the community of Alice Springs. Hundreds of entries flooded in across baking; agriculture and horticulture; art and craft; and photography.

I was pleased to be rewarded for the beautiful roses my family grows, receiving best floral arrangement in show.

A huge thanks goes to the President of the Alice Springs Show, Mr Andrew Barrett; Vice President, Craig Whan; along with committee members; and office legends Rachael Mashford and Nicky from marketing, for all putting in a huge amount of work towards this year's show.

From the amazing stalls and exhibitions to the cattle and chook shed, the Alice Springs show is one of those events I look forward to all year.

The Country Women's Association, with President Lauren Winter, Donna Digby and many incredible women serving scones all weekend, was a highlight. My family enjoyed finding a quiet spot to sit in amongst the hustle and bustle of the show sheds.

Thank you to all the incredible people who continue to make the Alice Springs Show a family favourite year-in and year-out. I look forward to seeing the crew once again come Christmas time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Braitling. The cattlemen's bar is a great way to finish off the Alice Springs Show.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will chat about my Fannie Bay Community Day that I held on Sunday 19 July.

It was an amazing event held at the Fannie Bay Equestrian Club. I thank my electorate team, Luke and Ella, who did a lot of the coordination for me because I have been busy lately. They coordinated the best event for residents of the area, but there was an additional bonus of lots of people coming from outside the electorate. I guessed about 600 people attended the event, but I have been told that I underestimated and it was more like 800 to 1,000 people.

It was a good event. The Fannie Bay Equestrian Club put on pony and hay bale rides, Ella did face glitter and hair colour and Luke was on the sausage sizzle. Other volunteers on the sausage sizzle were my husband, Riva; my chief volunteer, Joe; and Bettina and Brian who came to help out. The Member for Port Darwin visited; thank you. Hoops 4 Health brought its portable basketball ring; Waratah Football Club had games for the kids; and Just Coffee kept everybody caffeinated. There was Poffertjes, Hyper the Clown, NT Art Storms and a jumping castle. The mounted police brought their horses for extra fun for the kids. It was a great day. Thank you to everybody who helped us coordinate it.

I will go through a few events I have attended recently. On 18 June I was lucky enough to be invited to open the Pride event at the Darwin Botanic Gardens. It was great. The Members for Port Darwin, Fong Lim and I are proud sponsors of Pride. We sponsored it last year and this year. That was a nice event to open on 18 June.

On 19 June I attended Darwin High School's Colour Fun Run. I sponsored the sausage sizzle for the school, which was good. There were thousands of kids on the oval having a great time. It was good to see everybody relax a bit.

On 20 June I was lucky to represent the minister for Education as the students who attended the Chief Minister's Japan exchange went to the airport; I said goodbye to them. Just yesterday we had a chat to the students who had returned. They filled us in on all the fun things they did, the things they learned, the connections they made and their change in plans for the future after having that experience. That was nice.

Between 22 and 26 June, along with the Members for Drysdale, Wanguri and Johnston, I attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Residency Program. The best part of that program was connecting with other parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth, including people from South Africa, Canada,

Tonga, Bougainville and New Zealand. It was a good program to get to know the problems that everybody else has are similar to what we have here.

On 26 June I attended the graduation ceremony for our first police public safety officers. It was a proud moment for me to attend and speak with those PPSOs. They are out on the streets helping deal with our antisocial problems. Congratulations to those guys. There is another squad in the college now. There will be recruitment soon.

On 27 June I attended the Darwin Symphony Orchestra's Movie Hits show, where I saw the Member for Fong Lim show his prowess on the saxophone. That was nice to watch. It was a good event for the community. I think there were 6,000—Member for Fong Lim, help me out.

Dr Rahman: It was 7,000.

Mrs ZIO: There were 7,000 people who attended, which was awesome.

On 28 June I sponsored and attended the Lions Beer Can Regatta, which is an iconic Territory event. The community comes together, which is good.

On 29 and 30 June I spent a night camping with the kids at the Variety Children's Charity Camp at Goanna Park. I volunteered with the kids there; it was good. We brought them in the next day and took them to the Brickman show at the Convention Centre. They went to the wave pool. We made sure they had food and all the stuff they need.

On 1 July, Territory Day, along with the Members for Port Darwin and Brennan, I went to Mindil Beach. The Chief Minister and the Members for Wanguri and Casuarina were there as well. The Members for Port Darwin and Brennan and I had the cool opportunity to go up on the stage to do the buzzer for the fireworks which commenced at 8 pm. We got up there a little early, so we had a bit of a dance with Jon Stevens, who is a bit of an Australian rock icon. That was pretty cool.

On 3 July we had a special dinner to celebrate 80 years of Chung Wah. It was a beautiful night. The dinner was held at the Chung Wah Society in the city.

It was also a solemn night, given the passing—as the Member for Port Darwin spoke about—of Richard 'Uncle Dick' Griffiths. I had the pleasure of spending a fair bit of time with Uncle Dick; my next-door neighbour is a niece of his. I spent a lot of time with Uncle Dick and have been to a lot of parties with him. He loved racing, red wine and to dance. Every time music was turned on, I would be dragged up on the dancefloor, which is a pretty easy thing to do to me. I have lots of good memories of dancing with Uncle Dick. He could not dance, but he was always fun.

On 9 July I co-judged, alongside Sarah Johnson and Jenny Shepherd, the Tactile Arts NT Craft Awards. The awards ceremony was held the following night on 10 July at the gallery. I am happy to say that it was the first time I have judged an arts award, so taking in the different textiles and ways of working was different for me, but I had good help from Jenny and Sarah, who guided me through that process. That was great.

First prize went to Katherine Bradley for *Love Letters from the North*. I will not even begin to try to explain what these things are, but they are amazing pieces of work. Second prize went to Gerald Clapham for his piece of art called *Whanau*—that is the Māori word for family—which was beautiful. Third prize went to Doreen Dyer for *A Stitch in 9,* a wool-stitched piece of art.

I am a big supporter and sponsor of Tactile Arts. I attended its Makers Market on Sunday, after my community day. It was a good event with lots of people buying local, which is what we need to do because it directly supports Territorians. Everybody get out there and buy local for Christmas this year.

On 11 July I attended the NAIDOC Gala Ball. I give my biggest congratulations to NAIDOC Person of the Year, Leanne Liddle. I have known Leanne for a number of years and can attest to the fact that she is a powerhouse and worthy of that award. Congratulations, Leanne.

On 11 July I went to the Viva Colombia Fest 2026, which was a lot of fun. Congratulations to Ben Poveda-Alfonso. It had the biggest turnout, 7,000 people, for this festival. It was amazing and another great turnout for Darwinites.

I am a member or an honorary member of many committees. One of them is the Christmas in Darwin Association; I am helping it out with a few things. We have regular meetings. If anybody wants to jump onboard and help with Christmas in Darwin, it is a great committee, so let me know.

I am also an honorary member of the Darwin Trailer Boat Club committee. It is great to hear that this June was the club's biggest June in sales for years. I went to a meeting last week and the club is getting pumped, which is great for their business. People are saying that it has been busier than they can remember, and their sales tell them that as well. It is good that we are doing the work to make sure this happens.

On 15 July I went to Yoga at Government House at 6.30 am with Sue Brosnan, the wife of the Administrator. I highly recommend anyone wanting to join that to go the next time it comes up. I have it on good authority that Ms Brosnan would love to have line dancing on the terrace at Government House. We will sign up for that when it happens; watch this space.

On 18 July the Laneway Cafe in Parap turned 12. I was one of the first customers 12 years ago when it opened, and I have been going there ever since. I was grateful to be asked to help with that event. I sponsored Fairy Jill to attend that event for the kids. Happy birthday to the Laneway Cafe and Lisa, who is one of the owners.

Women's masters cricket has been pumped up this year, and two teams are ready to go to Tasmania in November. They are training every Monday at Tracy Village Social & Sports Club. If anyone wants to be involved with women's masters cricket, that would be great.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about education in the Casuarina electorate. Our schools are at the heart of our community. They are not simply places where children learn facts from a textbook; they are places where young people grow, build confidence, discover their interests, form friendships and begin to shape their futures. I am enormously proud of the students, teachers, support staff, school leaders, parents and volunteers across Casuarina. I will recognise some of their recent achievements and thank the people who make those achievements possible.

I begin by congratulating Gina Baker from Casuarina Senior College on her nomination for the Australian Teacher Aide of the Year Awards 2026. Teacher aides make an extraordinary contribution to school life. They provide practical support, encouragement, patience and reassurance, often at the moments when a student needs it most. Gina's nomination is a wonderful recognition of her dedication and the positive difference she makes every day.

At Dripstone Secondary College a group of students are preparing for an exciting trip to Singapore in Term 3 as part of the Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award. These students are also Dripstone Student Ambassadors. During the trip, they will complete the Adventurous Journey component of the award while building leadership, teamwork, independence and confidence.

Dripstone students also achieved impressive results in eSport and traditional sport. Twelve Year 8 students represented the school at a girls' eSport event hosted by The Array—Learn, Make, Play. They demonstrated excellent teamwork, positive attitudes and outstanding sportsmanship. Congratulations to Molly and Alex who secured first place in the competition.

I congratulate Year 8 student Isaiah Battye on his success in table tennis. Isaiah has been playing for only 10 months, yet he was recently named most improved player at the conclusion of the open C grade season. During the July school holidays he competed in the NT Open Championships across junior and open divisions. He won the junior doubles competition and finished runner-up in the open combined B and C grade doubles. That is an outstanding achievement in such a short time. It shows what can happen when a young person discovers a passion, commits to it and is supported to keep improving.

I had the pleasure of attending Nakara Primary School's art exhibition in June, which was fantastic. I was deeply impressed by the creativity, imagination and talent of the Year 3 to 6 students. It was wonderful to see the pride that students took in their work. I congratulate every young artist who contributed a piece.

I congratulate Nakara students Isabella Chan and Jeorgina Borondia, who received Term 2 All Rounder Awards.

Isabella consistently demonstrates Nakara's BEST values through her thoughtful participation in class discussions. She shows genuine respect for her peers, encourages others and treats everyone with kindness and consideration. She also demonstrates resilience when faced with challenges, approaching tasks with

a positive attitude and a willingness to persevere. Isabella is a wonderful example of a student who contributes not only to her own learning but also to the wider school community.

Jeorgina was recognised for her outstanding commitment to learning and her positive contribution to the school community. She works hard to complete every task to the best of her ability, takes pride in her work and continually strives to improve. Jeorgina is inclusive, kind and respectful. She makes sure that others feel valued and supported. She is always willing to help her classmates.

From Henbury School I congratulate Nicholas Klimis and Harvie Richardson on receiving All Rounder Awards. Nicholas was recognised for his excellent communication during a visit by interstate school leaders. Harvie was recognised for his communication and thoughtful reflection during a restorative conversation with his peers.

These achievements remind us that success at school is measured not only by examination results but also through communication, respect, resilience, self-awareness and the way we treat other people.

I acknowledge Tina Glover, who recently retired from Henbury School after an incredible 22 years of service. For more than two decades Tina supported and inspired students, families and colleagues. That kind of service leaves a lasting legacy in a school community. I sincerely thank her for her dedication. I wish her every happiness in the next chapter of her life.

I congratulate the latest All Rounder Award recipients at Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School. School Captains Lily Thompson and Yianni Roussos were recognised for their leadership and the dedication they continue to show their school community. Leadership at a young age is not about having a title; it is about setting an example, including others, accepting responsibility and helping to bring out the best in the people around you.

Every child is different. Some students find their passion in sport; others discover the arts, technology, leadership, public speaking, community service or something unexpected. What matters most is that our schools give each student the opportunity to explore, participate, make mistakes, learn and discover what they are capable of.

Behind every student achievement is usually a dedicated adult who has encouraged that young person along the way—a teacher, teacher aide, support staff member, principal, parent, carer, coach or volunteer. Those people may not always stand on the stage or receive the certificate, but their patience, commitment and belief are often the reason a student can succeed; that is why our schools are so important.

I always say that education is the key for success. Education is not only about preparing a student for a job; it is also about preparing a young person for life. It is about building confidence, resilience, kindness, curiosity, discipline and the belief that effort can open new opportunities for them. It is about helping young people understand that they matter, their choices matter and their future is worth working for.

I am deeply proud to represent an electorate with such dedicated schools, talented students and committed educators. To every student across Casuarina, keep learning, trying new things and believing in yourselves. Your school years are helping to shape your future. It is a privilege to witness and celebrate the achievements of so many young people across our community.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I remind people that this Saturday is Bess Hart's biggest morning tea. It is a great event on the Katherine Dry Season calendar. Bess was going to hang up the billy last year after many years and thousands of dollars fundraised for the Cancer Council of the Northern Territory, but through the volunteers and the Cancer Council it will still go ahead, and no doubt Bess will be stoking the fire and on the billy tea. I look forward to letting you all know how much Bess fundraised this Saturday.

I attended the Tennant Creek Show with the Member for Barkly and colleagues. My favourite stall at the Tennant Creek Show is the CWA, where you get the best pea and ham soup and damper on a cooler day and, of course, all the amazing CWA ladies' treats.

To all the members of the Tennant Creek community who provide entries for the show, and the show committee that worked tirelessly to bring the regional show together with what is a huge amount of work, thank you. I will talk about Katherine Show tomorrow.

This week I had the privilege to meet with a group of youths who had the learning opportunity of a lifetime when they were the first to attend the Sharing our History, Securing Future Peace Japanese study tour

sponsored by the Chief Minister. The students presented to the Chief Minister, the Member for Fannie Bay and I at Parliament House. The confidence, resilience and learnings they showed by sharing their experiences with not only us but also their parents and teachers is to be commended. Overseas travel has broadened their outlook and made them think about things they may not have necessarily thought of before. It has made a difference in their outlook towards Japanese culture, through conversing with Japanese students and visits to museums where they learnt of the atrocities of war—and visits to aquariums among many other things.

The students on the study tour were Jack McDonald from MacKillop Catholic College; Ramneet Gill from Darwin High School; Ruby Prime from Katherine High School; Sophia Griffin from Haileybury Rendall School; Esther Stark from Nhulunbuy Christian School; Zaharias Koulakis from Dripstone Secondary School; and Tallula Van Der Mark from The Essington School.

As we spoke to the students and the parents the question was asked about what could be done to build on this trip to make it better for the next group. They would be the ambassadors for the next group to learn from and ask questions of. It was pleasing that the feedback from everyone said the communication from the dedicated teachers was great and even the typhoon that was around at the start was communicated well, so the parents did not need to worry.

I thank the Chief Minister for the initiative of the study tour, the students who took to the tour and learned to the best of their ability and the dedicated teachers who went with them.

I visited Ramingining School and was met by Principal Deanne Kathagan and students. As I walked into the school they were all lined up to greet me and then the principal and leaders gave me a tour of the school. I asked about their assemblies and whether they knew about the meaning of Territory Day, as it was just before 1 July. The principal whispered to me that she had a confession and they did not sing the national anthem, but was committed to sending us a video when they returned this term. I received the video recently, and it was great to see and hear them singing both verses of our anthem loud and proud. I thank them. Well done to the whole school. Our government backs them all the way.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recently attended a graduation at the Palmerston Youth Centre in Moulden in my electorate of Blain.

Located next to the SWELL recreation centre, netball courts and tennis courts, the Palmerston Youth Centre is a fantastic, drop-in, supervised space for all young people aged 10 to 17. They are provided activities, food and support by their awesome team of youth workers who are constantly working to improve themselves. I attended the opening of the PYC in 27 June 2020. It is great to see that it is still going strong all these years later. The team there is fantastic and care so much about the youth of Palmerston who come in.

I attended the graduation of six of PYC members who have been studying and working hard and have earned tertiary qualifications. There was a speech by Jonathon McDonald, who is one of the team members. He is a legend. Certificates were presented by David Bradford of the Bradford Institute of Advanced Education. Congratulations to Ashley Richards, Arshag Aroyan and Katie-Lee Lewis, who received a CHC52021, Diploma of Community Services; and Christine Howard, Luke Roberts and Teneale Liddy, who received a CHC40421, Certificate IV in Youth Work.

Thank you to all the staff of the PYC who work hard to look after our young people in Palmerston every day.

I congratulate the following teacher aides in Palmerston who have been nominated in the 2026 Australian Teacher Aide of the Year Awards. Being nominated is a wonderful recognition of the dedication, care and positive impact these teaching assistants make in their schools and communities every day. Thank you to the school leaders who took the time to acknowledge and celebrate their outstanding contributions. The nominees are Brad Grant from Driver Secondary School, who was nominated by Thevi Chelliah; Matthew Gration from Forrest Parade School, who was nominated by Loretta Brown; and Michelle Petty from Woodroffe Primary School, who was nominated by Kristy West. Thank you to all the teacher aides who received nominations. I wish you all the best and hope you win.

I honour one of our Woodroffe champions, Brent Tanner, the Legend of the Tongs. Bunnings has found its latest community hero, naming Brent Tanner from the Darwin Buffaloes Football Club as one of Australia's barbecue legends through its nationwide Legend of the Tongs search, honouring unsung volunteers who keep Aussie Rules footy alive one snag at a time.

Two-and-a-half years ago, Brent Tanner stepped up to help grow the junior football program at the Darwin Buffaloes and has never looked back. The results have been remarkable. Junior numbers surged in 2025, with 35 players invited to the Northern Territory Academy tryouts and the club's Christmas party drew 180 kids through the gates. Brent did this while managing a full-time job, as well as the role of junior president and still finding time to man the barbecue at trainings and games.

Volunteers like Brent prove that community sport thrives on generosity. Balancing full-time work with his role as junior president, Brent still finds the time to man the barbecue at trainings and junior games, making sure families can stay, connect and enjoy a free meal together. Congratulations, Brent, on being named the 2026 National Bunnings Legend of the Tongs.

I congratulate the Palmerston NT Breatheasy S.T.A.A.R.S. on celebrating 20 years together. Their motto is: if you can't breathe nothing else matters. NT Breatheasy S.T.A.A.R.S. members, with President Di Dunn, meet every Monday at the Palmerston Golf Club. The group started in 2006 and 20 years later it is still going strong. Well done.

I attended the birthday celebration with the Members for Spillett, Brennan, Drysdale and Wanguri. It was a fantastic morning. We helped with the cake, which was great. The room was full of members and everyone had a great time; they got to hang out with the Chief Minister. Happy birthday, NT Breatheasy S.T.A.A.R.S.

I farewell and thank Principal Stephen Versteegh—or Mr V as he was affectionately known—of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in Woodroffe, who is moving on to new opportunities after several years at the helm of Sacred Heart. Coming in with big shoes to fill from previous Principal Gez Mulvahil, Mr V took the reins with gusto and made his mark at Sacred Heart with a strong focus on literacy, numeracy, discipline and Catholic values. Mr V had my number and did not hesitate to call if I could help with something. Thank you for your time, Mr V, and all the best for your next season. Hopefully I will see you around Palmerston.

I sincerely thank and farewell Assistant Principal Matthew Lotherington—or Mr Matt as he was affectionately known—of Moulden Park Primary School. Since joining Moulden in 2022 as a senior teacher and progressing to assistant principal, Mr Matt has made an incredible impact on Moulden Primary. He led significant whole-of-school improvement across structured literacy, mathematics, assessment, attendance and more, always keeping students at the centre of every decision. Mr Matt's strong connections with families and his unwavering commitment to advocating for every child have played a key role in driving positive change across the Moulden Park community. We will miss his singing, sense of humour and passion for whole-school growth. Mr Matt is embarking on a new instructional leadership journey at Berry Springs Primary School, and I wish him the best in the next chapter. Thank you for your service to the children of Moulden.

I welcome Daniel Sharp as the new Assistant Principal of Moulden Park Primary School. Daniel brings a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to supporting student success, staff development and positive school culture. Moulden Park is a fantastic school. I look forward to seeing him at assemblies and morning barbecues. Thank you for joining the Moulden Park Primary School family.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.