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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
The Essington School

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

Members: Hear, hear!

SENTENCING AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 1

Continued from 16 October 2024.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, no Territorian should have their health or safety threatened at work, but it is becoming increasingly frequent. This is an issue for the Northern Territory.

Jurisdictions throughout Australia are seeing a concerning rise in workplace incidents of aggression and violence. According to a new work report released by Safe Work Australia last month it is becoming increasingly common for workers to be confronted with angry and hostile behaviour, shouting, swearing, intimidation and insults. That is at the lower end of aggressive behaviour towards Australian workers. That is what they are being forced to put up with. At the more extreme end there has been a 56% increase across Australia in the number of serious workers' compensation claims for assault and exposure to workplace violence.

Territory Labor is the party for workers. We strongly believe that a safe and healthy workplace is a fundamental right of every worker, whether that workplace is an office, hospital, clinic, classroom, restaurant, vehicle or any other place where Territorians do important jobs in our community. Given the alarming rise in aggressive acts towards our workers, we agree with those opposite that we need to send a strong message that abusing or assaulting a Territorian in their workplace should not and will never be tolerated.

That is why, when we were in government, we introduced strong penalties. The new CLP government likes to pretend that it invented the *Criminal Code Act* and that it is the first to think of introducing tough laws to protect workers. That is nonsense. A range of strong penalties are already in place to punish those who abuse and assault Territory workers.

The Territory Labor government strengthened many of these penalties because our party will always stand up for the worker. In September 2022 the former Territory Labor government passed new laws to make spitting an aggravating factor for all assaults. Penalties for spitting on police or emergency workers were raised to a maximum of 10 years in prison. Labor did this in recognition of what is truly an abhorrent act—to spit on a police officer or emergency worker.

The CLP's amendments propose a minimum mandatory sentence of three months for this behaviour. It is tinkering around the edges. Mandatory sentencing does not work as a deterrent, but those opposite are more interested in chasing headlines than making meaningful change.

Those opposite need to be called out for the way that they have misled the community on their proposed new laws. In a press release yesterday the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure said that spitting on frontline workers would trigger a three-month mandatory sentence. That is utterly misleading. This amendment applies only to police and emergency workers. It does not apply to our hardworking bus and taxi drivers, teachers, Corrections officers and retail and hospitality workers.

It is disappointing that the CLP has tried to trick the community and Territory workers about this. It calls into question the CLP's promise to Territorians about being transparent and accountable. Government members will not come clean on how they intend to pay for their $280m worth of unbudgeted, unfunded promises or their glossy new Corrections plan. Now this smoke-and-mirrors trick happens again.

The Territory's penalties for assaulting police, emergency workers and workers are already amongst the strongest in the country. Mandatory sentencing already applies to assaults on police and emergency workers when someone has previously been convicted of a violent offence or if the victim suffered physical harm or the assault involved the use or threatened use of an offensive weapon. The penalties for assault on police start at five years' imprisonment and increase to 16 years' imprisonment if the police officer is subject to

harm. More often than not courts are sending first-time offenders to prison, even without mandatory sentencing applying to them.

The Labor government supported measures that increased worker safety and helped prevent assaults happening in the first place. This included tasking NT WorkSafe to work with businesses to address risks related to violence and aggression in the workplace and provide advice on how safety and security can be improved. As consecutive Police Commissioners have said, you cannot arrest your way to a safer community; there also needs to be a focus on prevention, something the CLP does not seem to understand or care about.

We overhauled trespassing laws, making it easier for legal occupiers to issue and enforce warnings to trespassers to stay off their property and for police to arrest anyone breaching a direction to leave a place.

We invested in improved safety on the bus network, providing additional funding for transit safety officers and private security officers across Darwin and Palmerston.

The Labor opposition is supportive of measures that will make our community safer, rather than making headlines, and which are in the best of interests of Territorians. This week it has become increasingly apparent that the government's answer to community safety is only punitive measures and headlines. We saw that last week with its position to lock up 10-year-old children. This approach runs counter to the mountain of evidence from here and around the world that punitive measures alone do not go anywhere to addressing and making our community safer and, in many instances, will make our community less safe.

Territory Labor always supports the rights of Territory workers, including their safety in the workplace, but we strongly urge the CLP to back up its after-the-fact approach to crime with measures that prevent assaults in the first place.

Clearly, the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure misled Territorians about this legislation. It does not cover the hardworking people who work in our retail outlets, the people behind the counter in hire car places, the people at airports or the security guards at pubs and clubs. CLP members say that they are protecting Territory workers, but they are picking and choosing which Territory workers. That is disgraceful. This is about …

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: We are not misleading anyone. Your press release said that you are protecting all Territory workers when this legislation states that it is for only police and emergency workers. It does not cover retail or hospitality workers. CLP members can come in here and talk the talk, but they cannot walk the walk.

We make it clear that mandatory sentencing does not work; it does not deter people from entering the criminal justice system. You only have to look at the criminal justice system to see that. We support our judiciary having discretion at the time of sentencing to make the most appropriate decision to send someone to a program or to send them to prison. That is the role of the judiciary. The government should not be playing Big Brother; it should be letting the judiciary do its job and exercise discretion.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I welcome the Year 5 students from The Essington School to the Chamber.

Today I address this critical issue facing our community; that is, the alarming increase in assaults on workers, including the despicable act of spitting on our frontline staff. It is time that we take decisive action to protect those who serve our community tirelessly day-in and day-out.

The Labor opposition would have you think that we are not protecting our staff. I ask the Labor members: what did you do in the last eight years to protect the staff that you say Labor fights for? You say that you fight for the people of the NT and workers, but what have you done? You had no impact; in fact, you had the opposite impact. The rates of assault on our workers have increased, yet you say that we are not doing our job. What have you done? You have not done your job.

First and foremost, let us acknowledge the gravity of this situation. In the past 12 months there have been over 140 reports of physical and sexual assault against the St John staff paramedics who serve our community. This translates to an average of one incident per operational paramedic, highlighting the severe risks faced by those who are committed to saving lives and maintaining public safety. This is not just a statistic; it is a stark reminder of the dangers our frontline workers face every day. These statistics represent real people—our neighbours, friends and family members—who have been subjected to violence while serving our community.

Our proposed amendments to the law are not only about punishment; they are about sending a clear message that violence against workers will not be tolerated in the Northern Territory. We are introducing mandatory minimum sentences for assaults against all Territory workers and even tougher penalties for assaults on police and emergency workers.

Under these new laws spitting on frontline workers will carry a mandatory minimum sentence of three months' imprisonment. This may seem harsh to some, but is it not harsher to subject our paramedics, nurses and police officers to the fear and indignity of being assaulted or spat on while they are trying to save lives? I have experienced the impact of a family member being spat on, after an offender bit their tongue producing blood, so I personally know the repercussions of this on the worker and their family.

The CLP government is introducing community correction orders as the minimum penalty for non-physical assaults. This approach ensures that even those who verbally abuse our workers will face consequences for their actions. This behaviour is not okay.

Our reforms do not stop there. We are expanding the scope of protection to include all workers, regardless of their profession. Physical assaults against any worker will attract a mandatory term of imprisonment if the offender has a violent criminal history. For first-time offenders we are mandating community correction orders. This approach balances the need for deterrence with the opportunity for rehabilitation.

Some may argue that mandatory sentencing is too rigid and does not allow for nuance. To them I say that the time for nuance has passed. As you would have seen in the video that was circulated yesterday of a bus driver being physically assaulted, our workers need protection now. They need to know that when they go to work the full force of the law stands behind them.

The nuisance public drinking laws passed in this Chamber yesterday further support our work in preventing public drinking, which often leads to assaults, and gives our law enforcement officers the tools they need to intervene early and prevent escalation. Critics might say that these measures are too harsh and that they disproportionately target vulnerable groups. Who is more vulnerable than a paramedic trying to save a life while being assaulted? Who is more at risk than a retail worker facing abuse from an intoxicated customer?

We are not just talking about punishment; we are talking about changing behaviour. In setting clear, strong consequences for these actions, we aim to deter potential offenders and create a safer environment for all workers.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mrs ZIO: Moreover, these laws are part of a broader strategy to address the root causes of violence and antisocial behaviour. We are investing in education, rehabilitation and community support services. While we work on long-term solutions, we must also provide immediate protection for our workers.

Let us consider the psychological impact of these assaults. Workers who have been spat on or assaulted often suffer from anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress. Some leave their profession altogether, depriving our community of their skills and dedication. By strengthening our laws, we are not just protecting individuals; we are safeguarding our entire workforce.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mrs ZIO: We are also sending a message to potential workers and investors that the Northern Territory is a place where a person can work safely …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Leader of the Opposition continues to interject. I am trying to hear what the Member for Fannie Bay is saying.

Madam SPEAKER: I agree. The constant chatter from the Opposition Leader is not acceptable. Please let the member give her speech in silence.

Mrs ZIO: I reiterate that we are sending a message to potential workers and investors that the Northern Territory is a place where a person can work safely and their contribution is valued and protected by law. This is crucial for our economic growth and community development.

Colleagues, in the spirit of working bilaterally across the floor, I urge you to support these amendments. They represent a comprehensive, balanced approach to a serious problem. We are not just changing laws; we are changing attitudes. We are saying to our workers, 'We value you. We respect you and we will protect you.' To those who would harm our workers, we say, 'Your actions have consequences'. To our frontline staff, we say, 'We have your back'.

The proposed amendments to our laws aim to address this unacceptable situation by introducing mandatory minimum sentences for assaults against all Territory workers. Specifically, spitting on frontline workers will carry a mandatory minimum sentence of three months. This measure is not only punitive; it serves as a strong deterrent against such vile behaviour, reinforcing the message that we will not tolerate any form of violence against those who serve us.

It is crucial to recognise that these legislative changes are part of a broader strategy to tackle work-related violence. We must also focus on prevention through education and training programs that equip workers with the skills to de-escalate potentially violent situations. Additionally, enhancing workplace safety protocols and providing support services for affected workers are essential components of our comprehensive approach.

Critics may argue that mandatory sentencing removes judicial discretion and may lead to unintended consequences, but the severity of these offences demands a firm response. Our frontline workers should not fear for their safety while performing their duties. By enacting these laws we are affirming our commitment to their protection and wellbeing.

Let us also consider again the psychological impact on those who have been assaulted or spat on. The long-term mental health issues affect not only the individuals but also their families and communities. Strengthening our laws is a necessary step to prevent further harm and ensure that our frontline workers feel valued and supported.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to support these amendments. By doing so we send a clear message that violence against workers will not be tolerated in the Northern Territory. We owe it to those who dedicate their lives to serving us to provide them with the protection they deserve.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, this Bill has given me pause because I am deeply concerned with the safety of workers like nurses, teachers, bus drivers and ambulance drivers. It is unacceptable for regular people to face violence in their everyday work. It is deeply upsetting to hear people working in care settings, like healthcare workers, facing violence while trying to help others. The occupational safety of workers is of utmost importance, and we must prioritise frontline workers who bear the brunt of society's most devastating failings—poverty, homelessness, a domestic violence epidemic and a mental health crisis.

Keeping these workers safe is crucial; however, it becomes increasingly difficult to do this for nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers and other healthcare workers if the hospitals they work in are chronically underfunded. It becomes increasingly difficult to do this for Corrections officers if the prisons that they work in are overcrowded and understaffed. We know this overcrowding will only get worse with the legislation the CLP has introduced. It is difficult to do this for teachers if the students they are working with are living in poverty or experiencing domestic violence and if schools are constantly scrambling for funding and staff. Addressing these issues is what will keep our workers safe.

I am concerned that I have not been given sufficient time to understand the implications of this legislation, as the CLP has given me only a few days to consider the Bill. I am concerned that mandatory sentencing may have unintended consequences and serious human rights implications. I again ask the CLP to respect due process when introducing laws like this. As elected members we should always be mindful of the impacts these laws will have on the lives of our constituents and be given the time to consult with our communities, experts, workers and First Nations communities so that we can understand the full extent of the impact of these laws.

I express my immense frustration and disappointment in the rushing through of all this legislation and the lack of respect for parliamentary process. For these reasons, I will be abstaining from this vote.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I support this legislation. Territorians deserve to be safe whether they are at home or work.

Frontline workers run to the danger that we run away from. They support us in our time of need, and they do a great job. This legislation supports them; it does not support the cowards who spit on, punch or assault

them. Those cowards should be punished for their behaviour. We need to send a strong message to the community that assaulting a worker, or a frontline worker, is simply not acceptable.

We know that the Labor government failed Territorians in this respect because the crime statistics went through the roof. I will run through some of the crime statistics to June, which speak for themselves. Territorians have had enough and are fed up with the crime wave that was caused by the Labor government.

This is another mess that the CLP government has been elected to fix. We will deliver on our promise. We will make sure that the Territory is a safer place, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. Territorians had an opportunity to vote, and overwhelmingly they supported the CLP because they have had enough of the crime, of becoming victims and of their friends leaving because of the crime wave across the Northern Territory.

I am sure everyone knows someone who has said, 'I have had enough; I am out of here.' That is a problem. It affects our economy because those people are not here spending their money, sending their kids to school or using the services of the local hairdresser or mechanic. When people move interstate it burdens every Territorian because there are fixed costs to run the Territory. We have to maintain our great lifestyle and location, but the revenue base is getting less and less because people are being driven away by crime.

The figures I will read out are until June this year. I will go over the last eight years and talk about the percentage increases. For homicide-related offences, there was a 40% increase.

Acts intended to cause injury had a 62% increase. This covers a range of injuries by cowards who assault nurses, teachers, frontline workers, Corrections officers and police officers across the Northern Territory. Those workers are there to protect us, and they deserve to come home uninjured.

Robbery and extortion are up by 343%. Offences against the person are up by 59%. House break-ins are up by 106%. Commercial break-ins are up by 28%. Theft and other related offences are up by 10%. Property damage is up by 35%. Domestic violence assaults are up by almost 82%. Alcohol-related assaults are up by 37%. They are the average stats across the Northern Territory.

I spoke about the offences in Darwin increasing. Alcohol-related assaults are up by 30%. Domestic violence assaults are up by 97%. Acts intended to cause injury are up by 56%. Robbery had a 330% increase.

I will go through the Palmerston figures, which are alarming. Alcohol-related assaults are up by 159%. Domestic violence assaults are up by 182%. Sexual assaults increased by 95%. Offences against the person are up by 124%.

I could spend a lot of time going through these. The Alice Springs figures are alarming, as are the figures for Katherine and Tennant Creek. For example, in Katherine there was a 1,100% increase. Alcohol-related assaults were up by 97% and total assaults increased by 138%.

These figures are alarming. In all those figures there is a victim, someone who has been assaulted and had an injury when they did not deserve it.

People deserve to be safe in their home and at work, so we need to make sure the laws are there to protect them. Offenders who are cowardly enough to assault police, paramedics, nurses, teachers, taxidrivers and Corrections officers deserve an appropriate punishment.

We need to send a strong message to Territorians that the CLP is here to support Territorians going about their business. We need tangible consequences for the cowards who assault frontline workers. Examples include paramedics being called to help someone and are then assaulted. In the last couple of weeks a paramedic in Alice Springs was assaulted in her home. She was doing an extra shift. I am not sure of the exact details, but she was doing the right thing to try to make Alice Springs a safer place. She had the ambulance and was in full uniform, ready to be called out, when a coward assaulted her. We need to show that type of person that enough is enough. There needs to be an appropriate sentence. Our mandatory sentencing Bill will make sure that these people see consequences.

This Bill changes the law in relation to spitting. If you spit on someone, which is a vile and disgraceful act, there will be a three-month mandatory minimum sentence, even for first-time offenders.

It must be clear that although spitting is not a physical injury per se, whereby you punch someone and give them a black eye or knock out a tooth, it is worse. When you spit on someone's face or body they must wait

for tests to come back to see whether they have picked up a horrible disease. The impact is not only on that person; it affects their family life because they cannot kiss their child or their partner. Their parents could be home, like my mum in her eighties who lives next door. You cannot have that relationship. It takes a long time for you to get those results back, to clear yourself and make sure you do not have a disease. If you have a black eye, for example, it might go away in a few days. If you are spat on, the effects are long-lasting on you, your family and the friends around you.

We want to send a clear message to people that if they spit on someone—that disgraceful, vile act—they are a coward and will face mandatory minimum sentencing. To be clear: spitting is a level of disgraceful behaviour that will not be tolerated by the CLP government. We are here to deliver on our promises to protect Territorians.

If a person assaults an emergency worker without physical harm it will result in a mandatory community correction order, even for first-time offenders. I will not go into the detail about what physical harm, harm and serious harm are. That is for the court to decide; it will use discretion and its tools to work that out. We want to send a clear message to the courts that enough is enough, and if a coward spits on someone or assaults a frontline worker there will be a consequence for that behaviour.

Let us not forget that Territory Labor left us in this mess. The Labor government was in power for the last eight years. In fact, Labor has been in power for 19 of the last 23-odd years. The mess lies squarely at its feet. The young offenders we are talking about were not even born when the Labor Party came into power. We hear Labor members talk about intergenerational change. They say, 'We will do this slowly; you cannot fix it overnight.' How long did it need? These children were not even born when Labor came to power, yet it continued to give them opportunities not to face the tangible consequences.

The CLP government has been in power for some 10 weeks and has strengthened the laws and made sure Territorians will be safe. The suite of legislative amendments we have passed during this sittings is about ensuring there are consequences for offenders. If anyone commits a crime in the Northern Territory there will be a consequence.

It is also about rehabilitation when someone makes a mistake and does something stupid. Unlike the Labor government that put offenders in prison, warehoused them and packed and stacked them without rehabilitation, training, skills or mandatory behaviour change programs and expected them to be better people when they came out—which we know does not happen—the CLP will support the Territory to be a safer place by making sure these criminals face tangible consequences and when in custody have an opportunity to be rehabilitated and come out a better person. Our laws are designed to protect frontline workers, police officers and Corrections officers.

Recently when I visited the jail a prison officer had to break up an incident. They were assaulted and ended up in hospital. That is simply not on. The CLP government will protect those people and put them in a better and safer place. That is why we released our Corrections Infrastructure Master Plan. We want to bring down the overcrowding that was caused by the Labor government's failure to invest or plan to make prisons better for the workers so that they are safe. The injuries that occurred in prison over the last eight years lie directly at the Labor government's feet because it failed to act. It knew about the problem. It had eight years in government and it chose not to do anything, letting the prisons become overcrowded and prisoners overflow into our watch houses.

Labor members are in opposition because they failed to protect frontline workers in our prisons and watch houses—the Corrections officers and police—not to mention the paramedics who, if you have an injury or have been assaulted, are the ones who save you. I am sure most of us have been in the meat wagon a few times; I have. Paramedics look after you. I remember when I was injured and waiting for the ambulance to turn up; when it did, I had a sense of relief because the paramedics would help me. I thank the people who help because that is what they do. They learn, are dedicated to their jobs, are hardworking and are good people. They deserve to come home to their families.

We are here to send a strong message to the courts and to cowards that this is not on; enough is enough. We are here to ensure the Territory becomes a safer place. By strengthening the *Sentencing Act*, that is what we intend to do.

In November 2022 the previous Attorney-General removed compulsory jail time for assaults, drug offences and breaches of domestic and family violence orders. Yesterday the former Attorney-General gave a heartfelt contribution about domestic violence, yet he seemed to forget he is the one who changed the law so that these offenders do not face mandatory sentencing. He was talking about doing the talk and not the walk; that is those opposite. They do all the talking but no walking. They do not back up their actions, unlike the CLP

government. This is our first sittings and the second week of the new Assembly, and we are protecting Territorians by strengthening the laws to ensure the Territory is a better place to live.

We are not doing this because we want to be nasty and put people in jail; we want to make sure there is an opportunity to rebuild our economy. If you own a business and want to come to the Territory and bring your workers and their families here, why would you when there is a good chance—I went through some of the stats of 99 to 100%; I will not read them again—a family member will become a victim of crime or your family's home will be broken into? These people will not come to the Territory with their businesses. I am not just talking about big businesses but small businesses of mums and dads who get their brothers and sisters to help or cousins from down south to help for a month or two. We have all heard stories of people coming for a two or three-week holiday and they are here 20 years later. That is the benefit to the economy that a safe environment provides.

The Labor government messed up the first step and dropped the ball in relation to public safety and consequences. The CLP is cleaning up the mess, just like we have with Corrections and the economy, because, holy moly, the information I read about the economy is shocking, and the Labor government just let it go.

We have just about a $12bn debt. I remind you that eight years ago debt was about $1.9bn. In eight years the Labor government overspent approximately $1bn every year. The Member for Fong Lim is pretty good at this, but I think there are 1,000 millions in a billion. That is a lot of money overspent.

If you have a $1,000 home budget you do not spend $2,000, because you must pay it back or you will pay interest on it. Unfortunately, this is another area where the Labor government dropped the ball. The interest payments alone were over $1m per day. Imagine how many …

Mr Edgington: One and a half now.

Mr MALEY: That is $1.5m a day. Imagine how many health staff, police officers or teachers could be employed with $1.5m a day.

Mr Edgington: Corrections officers.

Mr MALEY: Yes, Corrections officers. Imagine the benefit to our community if the Labor government had not dropped the ball on the economy.

This goes back to safety. We need to make the Territory a safer place. They are the flow-on effects of when the Labor government dropped the ball and messed up the Territory; safety flows on to the economy.

I could talk for another 20 minutes about our lifestyle because we know that the lifestyle is one of the key aspects that attract people to the Territory. We may have the best lifestyle but if we do not have a good economy or a safe place for people to live and work, why would people come here? That is the problem; our population growth is negative—I think it is at 1%. All these little things matter.

The CLP will strengthen the law to make sure that the cowards who spit on or assault a frontline worker, or any worker because the legislation is broad, will have a consequence. The message we want to send to Territorians is: if you assault a worker in the Northern Territory there will be a consequence. Enough is enough; it is not appropriate and we, as the leaders in this community, will not take it anymore. We want the people who are out there working to know that we have their backs, and we will support them so that we can make the Territory a safer place.

Labor has forgotten that the rights of the victim should come first. It seems that we all hear about the offender and how they feel, but what about how the victim feels? We need a strong community message sent that victims come first. The rights of the victim should be over the rights of the offender. The victim is the person who is sitting in their own home, the person who runs towards danger to save others and the person who is in the ambulance helping to save someone's life who is assaulted. I accept that the offender should not be put in a hole and left to rot like Labor wanted to do without rehabilitation or training. The Labor government messed it up; we accept that, and Territorians know that because on 24 August they voted in a new government. We are here to make sure that the rights of the victim come first over those of the offender because we want the Territory to be a safer place. We want to rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Interesting statistics came out over the last financial year. There were 61 assaults on staff at the Alice Springs and Darwin Correctional Centres. These people go to work, looking after these criminals, do their job and want to go home in the evening or morning, depending on their shift, and they are assaulted.

The Corrections Commissioner, Matthew Varley, was on the radio supporting our legislation because he knows how important it is to support his workers. Those workers support our community; without them our community would fall apart. We know that the Labor government failed those people because our crime statistics went through the roof. Labor changed the law to have fewer consequences instead of more. It has not managed the community's expectations like we have.

Police are important. I have said many times that my father was a policeman. The Member for Barkly has been on the front line and knows what it is like to arrest someone and to be assaulted, punched and kicked. I am not sure whether he has been spat on, but it would be a vile act. I thank the Member for Barkly for his time, and I thank all police officers, paramedics and Corrections officers—in fact, all Territory workers—for doing a good job in a tough environment. The Labor government deserted you, but the CLP has your back. We will support you and make sure that your life, your family's life and the economy are better so that you can enjoy our great lifestyle.

In the nine months to March this year 212 police officers were assaulted, with 56 assaults including bodily fluids such as spit and blood. There were 114 assaults with bodily force, such as kicking, punching and biting. There were 40 assaults including weapons. Twenty-eight police officers required medical attention and one was hospitalised.

Under the previous Labor government, no-one was safe. It did not support people going to work. Labor let it lapse and said, 'You will be fine. We will think about the offenders and make sure that they feel okay.' There will be a clear message coming out of parliament that the CLP is here to support the victims. We will make sure that there are tangible consequences if a person commits a crime. If a person does the cowardly act of spitting on someone, there will be a consequence.

In the last financial year there were more than 1,500 assaults on Territory workers in hospitals by patients or their family members. Let us set the scene: someone is working in a hospital, fixing broken bones, giving medicine or treating patients, and people come in and assault them. They are doing their job, trying to help and they get assaulted. That is because there are no consequences. The Labor government took all that away.

To anyone listening who works in the health system, the CLP has your back and is here to support you. We will make sure when anyone becomes a victim of crime that the offender will face a tangible consequence because it is simply not on. We are here to protect and support Territory workers.

I will touch on the economy. In the last financial year $13m was spent on security in hospitals and clinics across the Territory. How many more police officers, Corrections officers or nurses could be employed with $13m? Could buy a new ambulance or a new police car? Of course, we could. However, because the former Labor government failed Territorians and dropped the ball on community safety, these organisations spend money on security. Labor deserted them and failed to do its duty to protect them. That money was spent on security at hospitals to protect the staff doing their job of treating someone. It is even worse when a patient or their family member thinks it is okay to assault someone who is trying to help them and look after them.

More than 950 NTG staff were subject to assault or criminal behaviour while performing their work in the last financial year. As a result, 975 took a day off. That affects the economy. I feel for those people who are injured and need time off. I fully accept that, but we need to look at why they were injured and assaulted at work. It is because the previous Labor government created a mess and took away the consequences, so people thought it was okay to assault someone. There were 36 serious physical incidents reported by public housing safety officers and 23 assaults on transit officers.

The facts speak for themselves. No matter what industry a person works in there seems to be a trend of being assaulted at work. I sound like a broken record, but it is because of how badly the previous Labor government stuffed this up. It had eight years to fix this. All the warning signs were there. The crime statistics I read out come out every month; they do not just pop up out of the blue. Labor could track the data and work out whether its policies were working. Clearly, they did not because the statistics show this. The evidence is there.

Yesterday the opposition banged on about evidence. The evidence is here, but Labor chose to ignore it—not to mention the evidence about the falling away of Stronger Futures. People screamed from the rooftops, 'Don't do this. Do something about it.' The former Attorney-General went and bought shares. That is what he

did about it. He made money out of it—disgusting. Labor members did not listen to their own evidence, and they failed Territorians.

The stats I read out show that the Labor government dropped the ball. The CLP will clean up the mess and make sure we create an environment that will make the Territory a safer place, help reboot our economy and restore our lifestyle.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, this is a sad day for the Australian Labor Party, for may history know it was the Territory party that on this day protected workers. The Country Liberal Party stood up for workers, not on the grounds of a divisive class war, but on the grounds of morality and in our firm belief that every human being is and is made equal. We will protect them at all times. It is through this lens that the Country Liberal Party pushes this Bill. It is our inherent belief that equality demands the same respect, whether you are at work, at play or at home. We are saying loud and clear that on the grounds of morality, the Country Liberal Party will protect the workers of the Northern Territory.

The CLP tried to protect workers during the previous government, and may this Chamber know that it was shut down by the Australian Labor Party, and so it is us, a party made up of true Territorians brought from across the spectrum of the Territory, that wants to protect the people whilst they are at work.

I commend the entire country to stop and look at this day. May the people in Queensland who will shortly go to the polls stop and look at what we are doing in the Northern Territory. May the people of Townsville who are suffering the same issues stop and look to see what a conservative government will bring them. In one sitting of parliament a conservative government has broken the back of the criminals and introduced tough laws, and the people of Queensland can have that too.

We are an aspirational people. We wish to own our homes, build businesses and educate our children. We want better for the commonwealth of the Territory and the nation as a whole. A key part of that is going to work: it underscores how a family produces income; it is how the nation produces; and it is how our commonwealth grows. How can we grow our commonwealth when the people are not safe to walk out their door and go to work? It underscores the entire system, so we must encourage our people to feel safe at work so that they can grow this fine Commonwealth that we are a part of, so that we in this Chamber can, with their production, invest in a health system and an education system.

On the topic of education, I acknowledge my old school, The Essington School, whose students are here today. It is a fine school that produces fine Territorians.

This goes to the heart of what we are trying to do. We must realise that if we are to better provide for our people, we must let citizens provide for themselves and their families.

It is a dire situation in the Northern Territory. I wonder how many people in the last eight years have not gone to work for a day because they feel unsafe or something unsafe has occurred whereby they were the victim of an attack and needed to take sick leave or stress leave. They may have quit their job because they do not want to be put under that pressure.

How much lost productivity has the Northern Territory suffered? It is a key question as we face a despairing black hole, a cliff, which is our economy, this speaks to the heart. The cliff or gaping hole did not appear out of nowhere. Our fine Treasurer will expand on that. When people are not safe to go to work, the hole grows, and no-one wants to move here. Why would they if they will not be safe at work? The hole grows some more. People want to go to another part of the country where they can work safely, because we are aspirational people who do not want the government to give us everything and be fat and happy owning nothing. That is not the Australian way. Therefore, passing this Bill will have far wider consequences.

Speaking of the fine aspirational people of the Northern Territory, I draw your attention to Ralph Sinclair, a bus driver who lives in my electorate. He came with a colleague to see me during the campaign. They were fed up with being assaulted at work; assaults are so regular that they do not report them any more as there is no point. He said that we do not know what it is like to get into the bus everyday knowing that you will probably be assaulted. He is spat on more than once a week and he does not report that because there are other pressures. Our population is getting so low that it is a crisis, and we are struggling to hire bus drivers. The good men like Ralph do not report because they know the buses would not run.

They are trying to fulfil their duty and service to the community, but who is looking after them? Today, I say to Ralph and his colleagues that we, the Country Liberal Party, are looking after you. This issue will not continue with our government. You should be safe at work and you will be.

Ralph again came to me two weeks ago. He said that the spitting, alcohol use and fighting on the buses had sharply risen. I told him about this Bill. I am pleased to announce that Ralph and his colleagues support this Bill. It is for Ralph that I proudly present this speech.

Some members in this Chamber may have seen the graphic and disturbing video that was presented on the *NT News* yesterday. In one horrible, short video we see the realities that some Territory workers face. It is shocking and disturbing. For those who have not seen it, a bus is in motion at 80 kilometres per hour when a man jumps over and kicks the bus driver in the face multiple times. I applaud the bus driver. To the unknown bus driver, I do not know you, but I say: sir or madam, well done on your efforts to keep that bus on the road and bring it to a stop. That is an immensely confronting moment, and I am incredibly proud of how you responded and for not causing any fatalities during that event.

A disturbing part of that video is when you see a woman flung forward as the emergency brakes go on. It shows the spiralling of what one crime does. We see it throughout our community. It is not just one crime; it continues to ripple throughout our community.

The Member for Fannie Bay spoke about the impact on police officers, and I will come back to that. I speak to her words as a family member of a worker who has been affected. There are husbands and wives throughout the Territory who would be feeling anxious and stressed for their partner today when they go to work as a nurse, doctor or orderly at the hospital or as a bus driver or teacher. When their partners are stressed this can flow on to their children, and this heightened state of fear spreads like a virus throughout our society. Today we will stop the spread of this virus. We are saying no, and it is a firm and hard line that we draw in the sand.

I will speak about Jennifer, who works at the Driver Supermarket and is a model of what the aspirational Australian can do. Having the IGA in Driver is incredibly useful for many families. In fact, throughout my campaign I regularly used it to buy cool water, soft drink or Powerade to revitalise, and Jennifer was there every day. It did not matter what day I walked in, she was there.

I will never forget when I walked in at the start of the year and Jennifer had a humungous black eye. It had been a serious assault. I asked her what happened. People had come into the store to rob it and decided to punch her clean in the face. They then proceeded to attack the gentleman who works at the store, more senior in years, and he had a large gash on his forehead. Both required medical attention. This is in my local suburbia. This shop is where kids go after school to get lollies and where mums and dads go to get fresh milk and bread.

I cannot accept that as a society we say that is okay, and I go harder; it is not only not okay, but we will deal with you harshly. Know that this government is not mucking around when it comes to the law. We are sending a clear message with all our reforms: a new sheriff is in town and its name is the Country Liberal Party and it will stop at nothing until our streets are safe.

The Salvation Army store in Palmerston is fantastic. I have always loved the community that an op shop brings. My grandmother, who has since passed away, gave a life of service through the church and op shops—hello, everybody …

VISITORS
The Essington School

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

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr HOWE: I second that, Madam Speaker, and welcome students from The Essington School. I did my schooling at Essington. I hope you guys can watch this and know that any one of you can make it into here one day if you so wish. I encourage it.

I was discussing op shops. My grandmother gave a life of service and was incredibly supportive of local op shops. She loved her time volunteering at them until her passing in her mid-eighties.

Growing up, I had a deep sense of gratitude for all the volunteers who work at our op shops. They provide cheap and accessible clothing and other goods to many of us. I know many of us here have probably used an op shop. In fact, there are good bargains if you want to come to Palmerston and support the local op shops. Donate if you have goods. I will gladly take them to the Palmerston op shops.

I received a call from the Salvation Army store probably four weeks ago, not long after the election, to inform me of a serious incident that had rattled the seniors who volunteer there. A man came in, and he was violent. Using violence he spent 15 minutes in the store doing whatever he wished.

I acknowledge that there have been comments that we cannot stop all crime. That is true. The pattern is at a point where it is not surprising to hear of a man using threatening and violent action in a Salvation Army store to do as he pleases for 15 minutes and take what he wants. It was not surprising to the people who experienced it. They said that they regularly receive threats. That the bar has become so low is what I find so deeply concerning.

We will raise the bar so that workers everywhere, including the good volunteers of the Salvation Army, know that the law is on then side. Workers will know that when they put on a uniform and serve the community, the Country Liberal Party is on their side.

There is also violence towards taxidrivers. There are quite a few taxidrivers in my electorate. Taxidrivers and their industry had a hard enough time under the previous government, but they are now subject to horrendous abuse. They are constantly attacked, spat on and abused. They perform a role that is more than just getting drunks home. Who do you think drives people who are disabled? How many Ubers have access for people with disability? There are seniors who feel comfortable taking a taxi, perhaps with a regular taxidriver, and do not have access to the technology to get an Uber. If we do not protect this industry the free market will push these workers somewhere else. Why would a taxidriver want to be punched in the face or spat on? No-one wants that at work.

Retail workers have suffered immensely over the last eight years. I know because I speak to them. I have spoken to the retail workers at Gateway, many of whom are young people who are school leavers starting out in the workforce or who are still at school. My daughters, probably in 10 years' time, will be starting their first job. It may be with a local fast-food chain.

The Member for Brennan has two amazing boys. I give her credit for being a great mother. The oldest boy has just begun his time in the workforce. My mind goes to him, a young boy entering manhood, starting work. As parents, we want them to be safe. We want them to stand on their own two feet and shoulder the responsibilities and the burdens of this world. It starts with work, but it must be safe. This Bill sends a clear message to anyone who will threaten that.

I spoke about this the other day, but I was particularly confronted by the fact that the retail workers in Gateway, a lot of whom are young women between the age of 16 and 26, had witnessed violence, abuse and threatening behaviour. I see that as targeted. Our fine deputy leader spoke of the cowardice, which speaks to the targeting of those who are more vulnerable at work. This law says to them, 'No more'. We say no more will young people and vulnerable members of our population feel threatened at work.

There is a number of teachers in my electorate. One teacher expressed shock—he did not know how to convey this to me—that he has seven children with ankle bracelets in his class. He was finding it hard to teach because he was frequently managing behaviours and trying to stop brawls and assaults, which were becoming increasingly regular. I recently spoke to a student who is changing her career and moving into teaching. She spoke of the same thing; she was shocked at times by the violence that can exist in a classroom, and as a mother she worries about that. A 17-year-old boy can do a lot of damage to a 37-year-old woman. It is for the teachers that we do this.

While we are on the topic of these workers, I found confronting during the election the secrecy that some workers felt they needed when talking to me. People brought me into their home out of fear of repercussion for talking to me, as a conservative candidate. I say to the workers of the Territory: you are free to speak. You are free to express. This government will not silence you. You may speak to me in the street or call me. You may tell me your issues and views. You will not be persecuted. What existed for the last eight years—persecution of workers for political thought—ends. It is wrong. This Chamber, on all sides, should never, ever allow that to happen again.

Ms Uibo: Persecute people for their thoughts? My god!

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please refrain.

Mr HOWE: I turn to the police. To our great police force, to every man and woman who dons the uniform or assists in the department, I am immensely proud to be part of a government that will support you. What we do in this Chamber, the ideas and words, comes to fruition on the street through the police. They go to the danger and enforce the laws that we will pass today. To the police of the Northern Territory, I have your back, as does the Chief Minister and the Country Liberal Party. As a government, we will not allow what happened over the last eight years to repeat. Today is an act to tell police that we are here for them; we are listening. Together we will rebuild this Territory.

I am deeply honoured to assist the Chief Minister as the assistant Police minister. I am excited as I step forth. I see great opportunity. In that role I am a servant to every police officer in the Northern Territory. My duty is to them. It is additional to the duty to the people of Drysdale, but in serving the police I serve the people of Drysdale. I will not rest until the police of the Northern Territory feel that the government and the laws support them. This government supports the police, everyone who works for them, their families and children—every worker of the Territory.

A few people spoke about the physical act of spitting. I will speak to this point in the legislation. We are aware of the physical issues with spitting, the effects it can have on family as well as the individual victim, but I will speak to the moral grounds, the gross indignity.

Mr BURGOYNE: 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 HOWE: I gladly continue.

We know that spitting is a physical threat with repercussions, but there is a gross indecency when one human being spits on another. It crosses all cultures. ‘You are worth nothing. I can spit on you’, says something much deeper; it removes the humanity from the person being spat on. It says, ‘You are not my equal. You are not even my slave. You are below everything.’ That is what this Bill also speaks to. It goes to the heart of the Country Liberal Party’s firm belief in justice and the equality of every human being. A person cannot lower someone to the point that they can spit. It is a vile act. I find it a moral offence.

In that same vein I put it to the House that we must stand up to these moral degradations. We cannot sit by and watch as the flow-on effects of this happen. If we start accepting the act of spitting, not addressing it in the way it deserves so that those who spit feel the full weight of the law, we are telling people that not everyone is equal. No-one has the right to lower the status of another human being in the Northern Territory. It does not matter what has occurred; people should not spit on their fellow man or woman. I am pleased that when someone does that, they will find themselves facing the harsh realities that the Country Liberal Party has introduced.

In addition to the moral issue, there are practical reasons why we do this. I spoke of the support of workers. As we face the black hole that is left by the former Labor government and its debt, we have an issue with our economy. We need workers. This message is not just for the Northern Territory; it is to be spread across the nation so that people know they can come here and work safely.

Labor said that crime is an issue everywhere. Let us raise the big flag that in the Northern Territory it is no more. We will fight crime. People can come here, and the law will be on their side. I ask every Australian to look at what we are doing. We are taking action. Whether people are in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Christmas Island or the Cocos Islands, it does not matter; they can come here and be protected by the law. I invite the country to look at what this government is doing. We are leading the nation in the fight against crime. We are showing the entire country what liberal conservatism will bring. It brings inherent justice that is equality because we view every person equally through the same lens.

That is why we will make the Territory safe for every man, woman and child. That is the future I want my children to grow up in. It is the future I want for the Member for Brennan’s boys as they step into manhood. I want them to be able to go to work, get married and raise children, knowing that their wives or husbands can go to work and be safe, their children will be safe, their classrooms will not erupt in violence, they will not be spat on and they can catch the bus to and from work.

Think of the fact that catching the bus has become so dangerous in this town. What does that mean for those of a lower socioeconomic background? Cars and fuel are expensive. Under eight years of a Territory Labor government and a federal Labor government, everything is expensive. Many people in my electorate cannot buy a car, so they are forced to catch the bus where, as videos show, they can be kicked, spat on and degraded. The Country Liberal Party is saying, 'No more'.

I will speak about the economy. The interest repayments are going through the roof. Territorians will be in for a real shock when they hear how much of their money is wasted, and how it could provide more nurses, more police and more schools. When I see the interest figures, it is crushing to think that money has been—I do not know where it has gone. Can someone tell me where $12.5bn went? I cannot see it. When I step outside in Drysdale, I do not see large infrastructure providing 100 years of energy or 100 years of water security. I do not see huge roads that mean Darwin Harbour can open up to the country. I do not see where that money has gone. It baffles me.

I see the debt, this horrible dark debt which, off the top of my head, is now over $50,000 per man, woman and child, thanks to Labor. It affects every Territorian in my electorate. If you are a husband and wife and have three children—that is $50,000 Labor put on your head, your partner's head and the head of every child. That is one of the greatest tragedies in Northern Territory history, because that is the reality. Now we have bills to pay. The flow-on effect of our crushed economy is shattered health, Corrections and education systems. It does not matter where you look; it is a basket case.

We wonder why crime is on the rise. It was eight years of the ALP Northern Territory branch. It crushed the soul of this place, and the Country Liberal Party will restore it. It will be hard, but we are hard, and we will raise the Territory for every man, woman and child so that they can have the future they deserve. May the people of the Northern Territory know that what was done over the last eight years should never repeat. We are strong and aspirational people, and we will rebuild this great Northern Territory.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): [By leave, the member spoke in Yolngu Matha and self-interpreted in English.]

Madam Speaker, I will not support this Bill because I do not and will not support mandatory sentencing. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement agrees to take action on the review and reform of legislation and previous provisions within the justice system that are unfair, discriminatory or detrimental to Aboriginal people. This includes mandatory sentencing. I understand both parties are signatories to the AJA, and this is an area that truly needs bipartisan work if we are to improve the lives of our people across the Northern Territory.

In 2020 the Australian Law Reform Commission made a submission to the Northern Territory inquiry into mandatory sentencing and community-based sentencing options. The submission stated:

> *… mandatory sentencing increases incarceration, is costly and is not effective as a crime deterrent. Mandatory sentencing may also disproportionately affect particular groups within society, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples …*

In 2021 the NT Law Reform Committee made its recommendations to the government to repeal and abolish the mandatory sentencing provisions that exist within the Northern Territory legislation. The committee found that the great majority of the submissions it received took the view that mandatory sentencing provisions do not achieve their stated goals or objectives.

Mandatory sentencing provisions such as those enacted by the Northern Territory do not operate as either a general or specific deterrent because many offences are committed without thought being given to any consequences of the offending. Mandatory sentencing increases the likelihood of reoffending because of its focus on punishing the criminal behaviour of the offender rather than addressing the underlying issues and causes. Let us look at what happened in the past to see how the mandatory sentencing and crime are happening. There is something wrong; something has stirred up the person's offending.

These reports are written by legal experts from all over Australia, and they clearly state that mandatory sentencing is unjust and does not provide good outcomes for our communities.

This is the result of the intervention. What did my people do when the intervention came? The intervention people rolled a blanket over our communities and said, 'You will throw away your mechanical certificates and all the decisions that you made'. This is what they did. We came and lined up. They said, 'Mums and dads, leaders, come sit down'. I was there; I was one of them. I lined up and said, 'I am a senior lecturer of Yolngu

studies at CDU'. They said, 'No, you will not be needing that. Just sign this. There's a garbage bag and a pair of gloves, go and pick up rubbish on the ground. Mums, women, you sign up to make a group at the donga over there, get some brushes and start painting rocks for footpaths. We will look after your children.' This is what they did.

Seventeen years later, what has happened? What is going on? We have been disempowered. Spitting is not part of our culture. All the crime that we see is not part of our culture.

Way back the federal government and the Northern Territory Government said—I cannot remember when Indigenous people were allowed to vote in the elections—we could vote, so we started coming in and voting. Do you know what was left out? Our law of the land. It is not included in the white man's constitution.

This is the mess that we are seeing. When I listen to people talking about it, I want to say I am sorry in this area; this is what our children and young people, for the last 17 years, have grown up with to do this kind of mess. It is not our fault.

Maybe the government can say that it is not systemic racism. That is good, but the outside communities from Darwin now—it used to be from Katherine to Alice Springs; I know as I used to see that—it is creeping up. It is here now. Our families and Indigenous people would like to talk too. I live in two worlds, and I like to listen. I listen to brothers talking about it. I am with you, but we are sorry; something has come in and disturbed us. It is the underlying issues that we need to see. I wish we could help, but somebody needs to give us the treaty. We have been calling for treaty, and nobody wants to support it.

If this parliament could focus on making changes in the NT that address the underlying causes of why a person becomes involved in crime, we may be able to create lasting change. In communities we can see that the young people in detention and the people in prison are not being rehabilitated; they are becoming jailbirds. They learn how to become criminals and adopt that identity. This process makes our communities less safe. These crimes happen in communities with our families. They all fight us as well. We do not know how to fix this because it comes from somewhere we do not know. It is not part of our culture.

The government proposes greater imprisonment, and consequently more people will engage in crime. There will be more criminal activity. The end result is that we have more crime in our communities and more money going into building bigger prisons. The media and the Corrections Commissioner have clearly outlined that our prisons and watch houses are stuffed with people, and they are mostly Aboriginal people.

We need to create pathways out of jail that focus on early intervention, rather than creating more pathways into jail through mandatory sentencing. I have said in this Chamber:

> *We need more resources for community programs, local community peacekeepers and decision-making processes for our community to take control.*

That was taken from us by the intervention. For example, we need vehicles so that we can do the night patrol from midnight when the shire night patrol knocks off. We need support for *raypirri* camps, discipline camps and education camps to teach our young people to respect and honour, rather than stay with the pain of, 'The next one who comes to me I will spit at them'. We can stop this at *raypirri* camps. We have done it for over 40,000 years. We have survived and disciplined our children.

In remote communities peacekeepers can be the front line. We are related to community members; they are kin. If they break laws, it is our job to talk them down. If we are assaulted in the process, we will resolve the issue when all is calm.

Let me go back to the peacekeepers. I know we can do it. We will stand on the front line with police, with the law. I know because I have done it. If crime is committed in Milingimbi, Ramingining or Yirrkala—there was a big fight, clan against clan. In Galiwinku, every time they see a police car pull up and they get out in uniform, the offenders will try to hide and run away, because they do not know what will happen to them. But we know where they are when they run and hide. That is why, a few times, I have stepped in and said to police, 'Let me find him and bring him in'.

If you talk to some of the police in communities, especially in Arnhem Land in the Mulka electorate, they will tell you that I have always intervened to try to help. I would go and find this person. I say, 'It's okay. You need to go back there, and you'll be okay. They won't lock you up or do this, that and the other. They just want to give you maybe a fine. You promise me, because I am one of your elders.' They say, '*Yow*, I feel better'.

They feel better if there is a leader, a local Yolngu Indigenous person there to stand with them and say, 'It will be okay'. When they see uniformed security people that brings fear to them.

One time I rang someone from Ramingining. I was in Milingimbi. I said to him, 'I am going away, but make sure you have your breakfast then go up to the police station, where they are waiting for you'. I flew away and rang back home. They said, 'Yes, I've already been there'. They find that it is not too hard; it is just nervousness. That is why we need elders and leaders to be peacekeepers working with the law.

A couple of times I helped save the government I do not know how many thousands of dollars to find someone in the backyard or the bush instead of bringing in the forces from all directions, by saying, 'Let me go and find him. I'll bring him in.' And I did.

One time there was a fight in a town camp and the person ran away to an outstation. The police looked around searching for him, but they could not find him. They were talking about bringing in forces to run them through the task force. I said, 'No, I know where he is. I heard where he is. Let me call him.' I called my countryman and said, 'It will be okay. You might go to prison or court because you ran away, but you have to do it.' He said, 'Okay then, I will drive in'. He jumped in the car and drove in.

I spoke to the police and they said, 'We will meet him on the road'. I said, 'No, you wait here. He will come in.' That actually happened. He drove in. I said, 'The police will meet you. Come straight into the community.' He said, 'No, the people waiting there might attack me, so I will stop halfway up the road and the police can come and pick me up there'. That is what they did. He stopped up the road about one kilometre away. I said, 'He is there now; go and pick him up.' The police drove up, picked him up and took him with no fighting. The police were never spat at and he did not push anyone; he came quietly and walked with them.

That is why we need Indigenous peacekeepers to work on the front line. ALOs are okay, but we need senior elders to be there working with them. We need more resourcing for community programs, local community peacekeepers and decision-making processes. For example, we need vehicles, as I said, and support for *raypirri* camps. In remote communities peacekeepers can be the front line. We are related to community members; they are kin. If they break laws it is our job to talk them down. If we are assaulted in the process, we will resolve the issue when all is calm.

We need more resources for Community Courts and law and justice groups. It is not just about resources; it is about the power to make the right decisions. I know our communities will not see better outcomes until our clan leaders and elders are recognised as equals by the government. We need the government to match the funds for policing and detention facilities and place them with local leaders and elders so that we can work with police. You will see improvements for remote police and our communities. I know that this will work. As I said, I have worked with police to do this over the past eight years. I have a record. My grandfather was a peacekeeper, way back, working to resolve disputes.

While the government continues to step on and squash our Yolngu authorities we are stuck in the cycle of colonial oppression. We need to keep fighting for self-determination, treaty and the right to be Yolngu—Indigenous, a First Nations person—without discrimination.

The main reason that these five CLP Bills can be presented is that Labor did not properly resource community-led solutions. Other governments, CLP and Labor, have been working together for the last 17 years and we have not seen any resourcing. I do not think we will—or people listening to me. The failure of successive governments to properly invest in treaty and other community-led control mechanisms has created this crisis. Now the CLP government members are shouting about how bad the problem is, but we have been shouting about it for decades. We have said that undermining our law, leaders and elders leads to lawlessness, but no-one has been listening. Please start listening if you want to fix the problem.

It is up to the government to keep the promises it made over the past two weeks that it will increase alternative and diversionary programs. The government must put resources into alternatives rather than into detention centres to lock up children, jails to lock them up once they are 18 and police to put them in jail. The resources need to go into community-led programs.

It is not okay for frontline workers or any workers to be assaulted. People who are acting responsibly in the course of their jobs should not experience this. Someone must be held accountable for this behaviour, but there are better ways we can keep our people safe. There are better ways than creating mandatory sentencing, which ultimately creates a system where people become jailbirds, join gangs and continue to reoffend.

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 GUYULA: Mandatory sentencing ultimately creates communities that are less safe. In order to protect frontline workers and the community, we need to put a lot more time into addressing the underlying issues of crime and resourcing alternative diversionary community-led pathways that rehabilitate young people.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill entitled Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Amendment (Validation) Bill, Serial 8.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill entitled Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 7.

QUESTION TIME

Middle Schools

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Last year's independent review into secondary education in the Northern Territory recommended moving away from middle schools and introducing a comprehensive secondary school model. On 1 March this year the then shadow Education minister, now the current Education minister, said, 'We will not be getting rid of middle schooling'. Two days later you said, 'We will need to go back to Year 7 to Year 12'.

This is a critical issue in education that has significant bearing on our Territory kids' futures. You say that you want the best for our kids. Why does the CLP government not have a plan for ensuring every Territory child receives a quality education?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will clearly put forward the CLP's plan about education for Territory kids. There is no question that education is the key to a successful future. We need our kids at school, which is why the attendance rates of kids at Territory schools under Labor were concerning and, quite frankly, appalling, particularly in the bush. Without pre-empting debate—we have General Business this afternoon and we look forward to contributing to the Opposition Leader's motion about education and the Better Schools deal—our focus is on getting kids to school.

We acknowledge the secondary education review was done and it told everyone what most of us already knew; that for 20 years Labor—under the leadership, I believe, of Clare Martin at the time—embarked on a social experiment that has not led to better outcomes for our kids. The middle school system has been a failure. It was a system created and reviewed by a Labor government, only to say that it should not continue. We wholeheartedly agree with that; it should not continue.

The issue is: how do you unscramble that egg? It need to be done carefully. The Education minister is in discussions with the department. A principals' group has been pulled together within the agency to work through that consultation.

We have been clear that next year it is business as usual for Territory kids. School will look the same in 2025 as it does in 2024 because we cannot disrupt our Year 10, 11 and 12 students at that critical and important time in their school journey.

This work has to be done. It requires input from students and teachers, a review of infrastructure and for families to be involved. There is a big piece of work ahead of us that Labor did not do. One thing that is true, Opposition Leader, is that this failed Labor experiment has not worked, is not working and will not continue

into the future. However, we must tread carefully to make sure that our kids are supported with the greatest continuity of access to education we can provide during that transition.

We also have to look at what will happen to all the middle school facilities. There is a number of ways in which this could roll out. We are carefully working through that so as not to disrupt education. Make no mistake: our focus is on attendance and holding responsible those parents who deliberately deprive their kids of an education, which is their opportunity to have a future.

Payroll Tax Reduction

Mrs CARLSON to CHIEF MINISTER

During the election campaign the CLP outlined its plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore the Territory way of life. The plan included a reduction in payroll tax for businesses in the Territory to stimulate employment and investment, including for businesses in my electorate of Wanguri which will benefit. Can you update the Assembly on actions the CLP is taking to deliver on these commitments for the people of the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we came across many small businesses in the Wanguri electorate when we were doorknocking. People are excited about our reducing crime package, but business owners in the Territory are excited about payroll tax relief. On this side of the House, we know that payroll tax is a tax on jobs. It literally pushes employers to make a decision about whether to employ more staff, put on more trainees or apprentices or stay under this arbitrary cap in order not to need to spend that money on tax.

The $12m a year that the Territory will forgo in revenue is better spent by Territory businesses growing their business, investing in employing local Territorians, giving Territory kids traineeships and apprenticeships, and backing the Territory. This is about backing our future.

We not only promised Territorians that we would reduce crime but also said that we would rebuild our economy. Our economy was broken by a Labor government that was fixated on social policy and social engineering. It forgot that if you do not have a strong economy you cannot pay for projects, run hospitals and hire police and teachers. A strong economy is key to everything, and a part of that is making the Territory a competitive place to live, work, invest and run a business.

On top of our home builder scheme, which is the best home builder scheme in the nation, we will have the best payroll tax-free threshold in the country. If you are a young person wanting to get a home or if you are looking to start a business, come to the Territory because this is the land of opportunity. We are open for business, and we are backing Territorians who want to have a go.

We have pushed hard to get this scheme out the door as soon as possible. People in the Wanguri electorate will be pleased to hear that from 1 January the threshold of $1.5m to $2.5m will be lifted, meaning those businesses that currently have a payroll of under $2.5m will no longer pay payroll tax. That is 200 additional businesses which instead of spending money on tax can reinvest in their business, create more services for Territorians and employ more people.

From 1 July we will complete the tranche of work on payroll tax, which means that all those businesses up to $2.5m will have apprentice and trainee wages exempt as well. Businesses between $2.5m and $7.5m will receive the reduction from the $2.5m start cap.

This is great news about delivering on our commitments. It is good to rebuild the Territory with payroll tax relief for small business.

National Sorry Day

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

On 26 May every year Australians remember and acknowledge the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly removed from their homes, known as the Stolen Generation, through National Sorry Day. In September 2023 you wrote to the then Education minister in relation to students being taught about National Sorry Day. In your letter you said:

I am concerned that the beliefs of the teacher are being passed onto the children … Teachers are there to guide and teach to the curriculum but not pass on their personal beliefs to students.

I seek leave to table the former Education shadow minister's letter along with the attachment.

Leave granted.

Mr YOUNG: Are you aware of the purposes of National Sorry Day, and do you still think the Stolen Generation is just one teacher's personal beliefs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we will not be failing our children like the previous Labor government. We have a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and attendance.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease the interjections, please.

Mrs HERSEY: What I will say to those on the other side of the Chamber is that under their watch over the last eight years there has been a decline in …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, keep it to a minimum, please. A bit of interjecting is fine, but it is constant.

Mrs HERSEY: Over the last eight years we have seen a decline in literacy and numeracy, and dismal attendance rates in schools across the Territory.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Daly asked a specific question. Please answer it.

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has plenty of time to answer the question.

Mrs HERSEY: As I have hardly been on my feet for long, I have plenty of time to answer the question, which I was doing.

We have seen poor literacy, poor numeracy and poor attendance figures. In the *Australian* we saw an exposé on the state of chaos that the previous Labor government had across education.

The figures that came out were appalling. In the Barkly attendance rates dropped to 46%. The Member for Barkly is passionate about his region, and he has gone on about this for the last four years.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I note that the Education minister has not even touched on or talked about National Sorry Day …

Madam SPEAKER: There is plenty of time for the minister to …

Mr YOUNG: She is not answering the question …

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, Member for Daly.

Minister, continue; you have plenty of time to answer the question.

Mrs HERSEY: Attendance rates in the Big Rivers Region dropped to 58%. In Central they went down to 66% and in East Arnhem they went down to 54%. None of that is acceptable and all of it was on your watch.

In the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, which your government signed up to and we are agreeing to follow through with, there is bilingual education …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs HERSEY: Both the CLP government and the federal government have committed to honouring bilingual education, and this will ensure stability and continued support.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question is direct. It is about National Sorry Day. She has not even said the words and is not answering the question.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has 43 seconds to go.

Mrs HERSEY: Bilingual education, which happens in the remote regions, also has a great deal of support for Indigenous education and literacy to make sure that there are two streams of education happening.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I note that there is only 20 seconds left. She has not even mentioned the words 'National Sorry Day', which was the question. Does she endorse National Sorry Day being taught in our schools?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, can you answer the question.

Mrs HERSEY: In accordance with National Sorry Day, there is bilingual education. It is all about getting educated and across …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader! There is no point of order, Member for Daly.

Minister, complete your answer.

Mr Young: Bilingual education is not about National Sorry Day.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Answers will be concise and directly relevant to the question.

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down, Opposition Leader.

You have run out of time, minister.

Ms Uibo: Shame job.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, you are on a warning.

Territory Debt

Mr PATEL to TREASURER

During the election campaign the CLP outlined a plan to rebuild the Territory economy. After the years of Labor spending that exceeded budget allocations and saw debt grow rapidly, can the Treasurer provide examples of wasteful spending and failed projects overseen by the previous Labor government during its last eight years in office?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we came to power on the back of a position of rebuilding our economy. Our economy is important. Good financial management is the backbone for good governance of any economy in any state or territory. Without it, critical services are neglected, businesses lose confidence and taxpayers and the community overall suffer.

Our government must have a plan, spend wisely and ensure that taxpayers' money is used effectively to grow the economy and support the needs of the Territory and all its people. Sadly, over the last eight years the previous Labor government failed on all fronts. Labor's inability to manage the budget left the Northern Territory in economic decline. Procurement disasters, infrastructure mismanagement and trying to pick winners with taxpayers' money were the hallmarks of the previous Labor government.

Territory Labor has left a trail of waste, mismanagement and failed projects that have cost Territorians millions. Its approach was to throw money at problems without any foresight or accountability, leading to

a string of embarrassing and costly failures. Labor has left the Territory with ballooning debt, stagnant infrastructure and no strategic vision for the future.

I will highlight a few of Labor's failed projects and the unfortunate legacy this has left Territorians. These are only the tip of the iceberg. In the few short weeks since we were elected, every issue we have investigated has uncovered yet another problem that Labor left behind. I will review Labor's track record with a few notable examples.

Labor's handling of Project Sea Dragon was a clear failure. It funnelled nearly $72m of taxpayers' money into what turned out to be termed 'the road to nowhere'. Project Sea Dragon, once promoted as a key economic initiative, ended in voluntary administration in February 2023 leaving Territorians with nothing to show for it.

Labor handed out $10m to Akuna Springs, a water company that went broke a month later. It did not check whether the company was solvent. This is the kind of careless financial management that Labor consistently engaged in, handing out millions without any checks or balances.

Labor's reckless spending and failure to value taxpayers' money, focus on community safety and protect Territorians' unique lifestyle is exactly why it has been reduced to a small, irrelevant opposition.

It is up to us to restore financial stability and ensure that the Territory moves forward on a stronger footing.

Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education Program

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

One of the most effective ways to engage with remote students is by having Aboriginal educators in the classroom. I give a shout-out to all our amazing Aboriginal educators. The former Territory Labor government reintroduced and invested in the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program to increase the number of Aboriginal Territorians becoming teachers. Will you commit to continuing to fund the RATE program, given how important it is for getting Territory kids into school?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, with the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, which the previous government signed up to and we will honour, some funding will go towards not only bilingual education in schools but also the RATE program. That agreement allows schools to have better access and freedom to …

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The clock is not working.

Madam SPEAKER: The clock is working.

Mrs HERSEY: With the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, the budgeting goes out to schools. They have received their budgets for the following year. It is up to the school to spend that funding in the best way it sees fit. If schools in remote regions need more teachers with that RATE program, they can use some of that funding to get Indigenous members in their community to address the concerns they have in their school.

Regarding bilingual education, schools in remote areas need to get Aboriginal people in to deliver those programs. The schools now have access to those funds to spend how they wish. We honour that agreement.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The question related to the RATE program, which is a whole-of-department policy. Will the CLP government be supporting that?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister is answering the question.

Mrs HERSEY: I can see there is a theme. I am okay with that theme because we will not do what the previous government did and let down our students with poor literacy, poor numeracy and poor school attendance.

We have had to pick up the mess in education that was left by the previous government. Along with the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and accessing better funding for schools starting next year, there will be programs like the RATE …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I think I just heard the minister say that she does not support the RATE program; is that correct, minister?

Madam SPEAKER: You are not required to paraphrase what the minister is saying; just listen to her answer.

Mrs HERSEY: The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and bilingual education—the RATE program comes in there—allow better access for schools in remote regions to employ the people they see fit to run those programs.

We will not be letting down our students. We will make sure that children attend school. We will work with families to ensure that the importance of an education is first and foremost in their minds. We will make sure that literacy and numeracy is first and foremost in the minds of educators in our classrooms. We will not be doing what the previous Labor government did whereby we saw poor literacy, poor numeracy and poor attendance rates across the Territory on its watch.

2023–24 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report

Dr RAHMAN to TREASURER

During the election campaign the CLP outlined a plan to rebuild the Territory economy after years of Labor spending that exceeded budget allocations and saw debt grow rapidly. I am mindful that the 2023–24 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report was tabled in this Assembly yesterday. Can you update the House on the findings of the 2023–24 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the 2023–24 TAFR was tabled in parliament yesterday. Sadly, the TAFR paints a grim picture. Let us look at the details.

Labor projected a net operating deficit of $200m in its 2023–24 budget. What was the result in the TAFR? The deficit ended up at $638m. That is a $438m deterioration, a nearly half-billion-dollar blowout. Labor did not miss it by a small amount but by a large amount.

The fiscal deficit provides a reasonably more holistic view of whether the government is operating within its means, as it includes capital expenditure. Labor's 2023–24 budget projected a fiscal deficit of $1.134bn. Yes, that is a billion dollars. How did Labor go with that deficit? The final result was a fiscal deficit of $1.236bn. Yet again, it missed.

The Labor government forecasted net debt at $9.231bn in the 2023–24 budget. The final result came in $213m lower than projected, but this was not due to any prudent financial management; it was due to a number of leases not being included in the budget for that year which were carried forward and which will come up in the next financial year.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: No commentary, thanks.

Mr YAN: By looking at the figures in the fiscal balance sheet we can see what has increased. One key thing we all need to take away is that in 2022–23 the net debt to revenue ratio percentage was 97%. Labor projected that to be 113% in the next year's budget. Labor revised that up to 115%, and it ended up at 108%. It is the first time in the Territory's history that our net debt to revenue has increased to over 100%.

When we look at forward projections, we can see that net debt to revenue ratio is being pushed out. In Labor's budget it was over 125%, I believe, for this year. It is shown to be increasing in the forward estimates up to 130%. They are some of the worst figures in the country; I think only Victoria is worse than us. This is the position in which Territory Labor left the Territory economy.

Voluntary Assisted Dying

Mx McNAMARA to CHIEF MINISTER

Under a previous CLP government we were the first jurisdiction in the world to have access to voluntary assisted dying, or VAD. We are now the only place in Australia without it. Polling shows that around 75% Territorians support the right of someone to choose when they die. Members of the crossbench will soon put a motion before the parliament to urge the government to restore Territorians' rights to access VAD. Will you respect the wishes of terminally ill Territorians who wish to die with dignity by supporting this motion?

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, this is potentially pre-empting a debate listed on the Notice Paper. Are you okay answering that question?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is a motion …

Mr Young: No motion has been put for this yet.

Mr Paech: It is on notice.

Madam SPEAKER: It is on the Notice Paper. It is your call, Chief Minister.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am happy to answer it. Voluntary assisted dying is an issue that Territorians feel passionately about on both sides of the argument. The previous Labor government did not bring this legislation to parliament; instead, it pushed off the issue to a review committee to consult across the Territory and report to government. That report is public; I believe you tabled it the other day, but it has been on the public record for some time.

We were clear with Territorians in the lead-up to the election and since that this is not a priority for a CLP government. Our issues, and the platform on which Territorians elected us, are reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. As we have seen in the last fortnight in parliament, we are delivering on those commitments with our reducing crime package. As we announced today with regard to payroll tax, we are delivering on our commitments to make sure we slowly but surely rebuild the Territory's economy, and we will continue to do that important work.

I acknowledge that you have a motion on the Notice Paper for General Business. We will contribute to that motion, as we would with any. I respect your right, as a member of parliament, to bring up matters for debate that are important to you and your community, but we were clear pre and post-election that this is not a priority for our government.

Youth Diversion Programs

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

I understand the Back on Track program was defunded last week. When will the evaluation of this program be released? Further to that, what diversion options are in place for children and young people, and what is the timeframe for accessing these diversion programs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the CLP government released a comprehensive plan this week in relation to the Corrections system …

Ms Uibo: They stole Labor's plan.

Mr MALEY: … that was failed by the Labor government. It had eight years to deal with this problem and knew the prison system was overflowing into watch houses. We came up with a plan in just eight or nine weeks to deal with that problem across the Northern Territory.

This is a big issue because overcrowding in prisons affects not only prisoners but also prison guards. The programs are not available to those prisoners because the prisons are overcrowded. We looked at a holistic approach to deal with Corrections and allow prisoners better access to rehabilitation; programs, like Back on Track; training programs, like 'Sentenced to a Skill'; and prison industries to make it better …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; Back on Track is not a program run in prison; it is outside. It is a diversion program. I know they are trying to work out who is responsible …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, do not use a point of order to give a mini speech.

Mr Paech: I am trying to help him understand his own agency.

Madam SPEAKER: We do not need your commentary.

Mr Edgington: You obviously could not understand it when you were there.

Mr Paech: You are passing little notes between each other.

Madam SPEAKER: That is enough. Both sides of the Chamber, we will have silence for the minister.

Mr MALEY: I will continue to talk about how the CLP will deal with rehabilitation and training for people across the Northern Territory. These prisoners need to make sure they come out of prison better people. We understand that the Labor policy was just to pack and stack them, not giving them access to training whilst in prison. We will offer mandatory programs so that they can come out of prison a better person. We will provide alcohol rehabilitation and behaviour programs to ensure that prisoners can make a better choice to contribute in life moving forward.

Diversion programs are an aspect of that. They are ordered by the court through police, and a juvenile will be able to go through those programs as they see fit. They will work with police and diversion officers. We want to ensure that these programs are up and running.

Mr Paech: You cancelled it.

Mr MALEY: I will take it on notice, because our information is it has not been cancelled. We will get advice on that.

Mr Paech: Your department emailed them and told them all it was cancelled on Friday.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, stop interjecting and trying to add more information. It is not a debate; it is a question and answer.

Mr MALEY: We are taking a Territory-wide approach to this issue. We know that the prisons have been overcrowded and the rehabilitation and training has not …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The specific question was: when will the evaluation of the Back on Track program be released, what other diversion programs are in place, and when will people be able to access them?

Mr MALEY: We are taking a Territory-wide approach to make sure prisoners come out better people. We will offer rehabilitation to people on remand, if they want to take it on a voluntary basis. We will ensure prisoners, no matter where they are, have access to rehabilitation, training and diversion programs.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 46; I seek confirmation …

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down, Member for Gwoja. I have given the Member for Blain the call.

Tiger Brennan Drive Upgrade

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Tiger Brennan Drive is an important road for the movement of freight and for residents in Palmerston. Upgrade works on Tiger Brennan Drive have been taking place for some time. During the election campaign the ALP even went as far as to ‘open’ the upgrade works, even though they are not complete and no-one can drive over that bridge yet. Can you outline to the House what is happening with this upgrade and what the cost of the works has been?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain regularly travels from Palmerston to town and can use the bypass—or the uninterrupted travel through Tiger Brennan Drive.

I do not know why, but on a regular basis the Labor Party did press releases for the sake of doing press releases. To open works that had already been underway seemed interesting.

Let us look at the actuals for the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass. The Labor Party released this project with a budget of $65m based on scoping from the 1980s. Once the contract was awarded, the contractors came back and said, 'I am sorry, Labor government, but your figures are not quite right because you rushed it through', so it had to re-award the contract for $137.9m. DLI has put $165m towards the entire project. Again, Labor missed the mark; it was out by $100m.

At least we will see movement on this project. The projected completion for the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass, subject to weather, is around January 2025. The final design was in September 2024 for completion. We are hoping to see the final opening and use of that.

Importantly, we found out what Labor failed to say to anybody. We lifted up one of those rocks and a poisonous scorpion jumped out from underneath it. When it was doing the bypass works and closed gate B to the motorsports complex Labor was advised that it would put the Indigenous V8 round of the Repco Supercars Championship in jeopardy. Without a secondary gate there is no ingress or egress for emergency vehicles, which is a deal breaker for the V8 Supercars. Two weeks ago I found out that unless we do something about it—God forbid—there will be no V8 Supercars in Darwin and no FIM Motocross.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure is scrambling to try to find a way to reinstitute a gate B into Hidden Valley. The department told Labor about this, and it decided to do nothing. Yet again, the CLP is fixing more of Labor's problems so that we can maintain our unique Territory lifestyle.

Swimming Lessons

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

To date you and your colleagues have failed to provide details on how you will pay for your election commitments. Can you guarantee that no school budget will be worse off to fund the CLP's Swimming in Schools program? How do you intend to staff this program Territory-wide?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a great question because it allows me to let you know how great the election commitments of the CLP government were. We are eight weeks into government. We have passed numerous pieces of legislation, which is further along than Labor was in the eight years that it was in government. Shame on you; we are in front.

The school swimming program is funded by the department. There will be no cuts to education. We already said that with the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, as of January next year there will be further funding for all schools. Schools have already received their budgets for 2025, which gives them better flexibility in planning what they need to do in their school, depending on where that school is.

As with the bilingual education program, the RATE program and the swimming program, all programs will be run across the Territory. I said last week that if anyone has anything to do with the swimming program it would be me in Katherine. I am sure the Opposition Leader is aware that we do not have a swimming pool at the moment. That is something we are working through …

Ms Uibo: There are a lot of communities that do not have a swimming pool, minister.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please keep your comments to a minimum.

Mrs HERSEY: The Territory has the highest rates of drowning, so it is extremely important that all children who attend school can learn to swim. A group from Royal Life Saving will be providing that program. I have been talking with the department as to how that will roll out in the schools.

All schools are aware of that program. It will improve the lives of all our young people and make sure they are taught better swimming and lifesaving abilities. It is about our lifestyle; whether people are at a dam or a pool, have gone camping or fishing …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Arafura also asked how the minister intends to start the Territory-wide program at 152 Territory government schools?

Mrs HERSEY: The Opposition Leader must have cloth ears because I have addressed that. The swimming program will run across the Territory. I look forward to that program being in schools as of 2025.

Planning Approval Times

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

In my time campaigning throughout the Fannie Bay electorate and since taking on this role, I have spoken to many residents and local business men and women who, time and again, highlighted the concept of red tape being wrapped around the Northern Territory. Big and small businesses told me about processes which were continually put on hold because of this perceived red tape put in by the former government. On Saturday a representative came into my office and told me about a further delay; something that should have taken up to three months has taken 10 months and they have been told it would take another couple of months to come through.

Can you outline the key benefits of having planning approval times for Territorians reduced?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we went to the election with a clear plan to rebuild the economy by streamlining approval processes across government by 50%. This is an ambitious plan that we are working towards. We will do this by reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and making it easier to do business.

We are committed to developing a suite of options to further improve the planning scheme to deliver diverse housing solutions for Territorians. Future reforms to the planning system will be determined in consultation with industry and the community. This will involve a comprehensive review of standards and requirements to appropriately enable development and reduce processing times. By streamlining these processes we can significantly cut the time and the bureaucracy involved in obtaining permits. This will not only accelerate essential housing and infrastructure projects but also boost economic activity by making it easier for businesses to invest and grow.

Additionally, our reforms will promote sustainable development practices. We will introduce clearer guidelines on environmental considerations to ensure that new projects are designed with long-term ecological impacts in mind, contributing to the preservation of our natural landscapes and environment.

A perfect example of this and how we are already making a difference, as it relates to approval processes, can be seen in my home town in my electorate of Braitling. A builder had been waiting 19 months for an exceptional development permit—that is unacceptable—to build two units that two families could move into, which would free up more housing in our community. This builder came to us and asked what was happening. We need to ensure that we can get on with the job of building this Territory and making it a stronger place for all of us. Within two months of this Finocchiaro-led CLP government coming into power and being made aware of this issue, we gave this builder his development consent. He will forge ahead with building the two premises to ensure that families can move in. We resolved the issues that builder had.

The Member for Fannie Bay has heard the same thing in her electorate. We have been in power for two months and already we are moving ahead and ensuring that we can get rid of red tape so that businesses can get on with doing what they do best—building a better Territory for all. Through this we can ensure that there are better outcomes for all Territorians.

Swimming Lessons

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Regarding the Territory-wide swimming lessons, you said in the previous answer that Royal Life Saving Australia will run the program. Does this organisation have the capacity and staff to ensure all Territory kids enrolled in school will have access to swimming lessons?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this was a promise from the CLP that we took to the election. Our commitment is $3m to fund all schools across the Territory to deliver swimming and water safety lessons for children in Years 1 to 6. This will start from next year, and includes our remote and very remote schools.

The department has established a working group called Swimming Alliance—which is made up of Royal Life Saving, Surf Life Saving, Swimming NT, Triathlon NT, The Y Northern Territory, the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory and Kidsafe NT—to design and deliver on this program.

Schools have been told of their priorities for 2025 to plan on swimming lessons, and it is up to the schools. Access to swimming pools will need to be considered on a community-by-community basis. We do not have one in Katherine, but we are working with the RAAF base to be able to provide swimming lessons.

Schools in the NT deliver the Australian curriculum, which incorporates swimming lessons. It is a fundamental skill for children. Swimming and water safety programs in the NT are managed at a school level. Swimming Alliance will deliver them and work with the schools. Other jurisdictions address swimming lessons through either their curriculum or state-determined swimming and water safety programs.

Given the high rate of drowning in the Territory it is important that we make sure that swimming lessons are delivered in regions across the Territory. I cannot reiterate enough how important …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question is direct. It was regarding Royal Life Saving Australia's capacity to deliver the program for all students across the Northern Territory, but she has not answered that question directly.

Madam SPEAKER: I do not know whether the minister is capable of answering a question on behalf of another organisation. It is your call.

Mrs HERSEY: Our $3m election commitment will be rolled out and starting in 2025 across all schools in the Territory. I cannot express enough how important it is for all children in Years 1 to 6 to learn to swim. With the rates of drowning that we have and our lifestyle in the Territory it is extremely important that we get young people into swimming lessons in a school environment to make sure that they are safe in the community.

Swimming Lessons – Supplementary Question

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

What access to swimming lessons can you guarantee for schools like Pularumpi, Minjilang and Numbulwar in remote areas?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a good question. There are schools that do not have a swimming pool near them, so it is up to them to work out where the closest one is for them or work in with other areas …

Ms Uibo: What if it is 150 kilometres away?

Mrs HERSEY: Opposition Leader, if you stop interjecting I will be able to answer the question for you, without you being so rude constantly this afternoon.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: You have been interjecting nonstop throughout Question Time. Your point of order better be good.

Ms UIBO: Standing Order 1; all commentary is directed through the Chair and not at the member.

Madam SPEAKER: That is a bit rich, Opposition Leader.

Mrs HERSEY: I cannot stress enough to you the importance of school swimming to stop the high rates of drowning across the Territory.

In remote areas where a pool is not available there are potential options. For example, in Kakadu some of the hotels have pools and arrangements have been made whereby schools can access those pools. I am not familiar with …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has run out, minister.

Cattle Industry – Support

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

The Territory is known around the world for its production of clean, safe, high-quality food and animal products. Our cattle producers and cattle export industry are a critical part of the Territory's agriculture sector, especially with our proximity to Asian markets. Can you outline to the Assembly the work the CLP government is doing to assist our cattle sector and boost the NT economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the agriculture industry in the Northern Territory is strong, and the CLP government intends to support it.

Before I continue answering this question, I have had advice on the Back on Track program. That program has not been defunded—in fact, it has been extended to March next year—and a review is underway. That may answer your question.

The NT Cattlemen's Association stated, 'Livelihoods depend on governments we can trust'. The Cattlemen's Association can trust the CLP. This government is committed to supporting the Territory cattle industry, which is worth $1.2bn to our economy. We will continue to work with our Asian counterparts to deliver business certainty and continue to provide industry confidence across the Northern Territory.

We are committed to cutting red tape, and that is why we are setting up the Territory Coordinator which will keep industry moving. We will make it easier to do business in the Northern Territory. We will roll out the red carpet.

We are working with the peak body, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, to help provide it certainty. The beef industry employs approximately 10,000 people either directly or indirectly, including cattle producers, station hands, truck drivers, mechanics, grader drivers, shop assistants, butchers, stockies, chopper pilots, vets and our hardworking government employees who are responsible for monitoring the industry. We back the NT Cattlemen's Association and the entire cattle industry 100%.

Along with a number of my colleagues, I have already met with the NT Cattlemen's Association to discuss the challenges those in the industry face. We will continue to work closely with this industry group because we understand how important the industry is to the Territory. As I said, it is worth $1.2bn to our economy.

The Australian cattle herd has been going through a rebuilding phase over the last two years, which means producers have been holding on to stock, putting pressure on those hardworking producers. Despite this, live cattle exports through the Darwin port were up by approximately 150% at the end of June 2024 compared with the same time last year.

Each year 26 million Indonesians eat beef. We will continue to work with our Asian counterparts to deliver certainty and provide confidence to the industry. We will also work with our Indonesian counterparts to support their biosecurity program, ensuring that this industry continues.

Truancy Officers

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

The last time truancy officers were in place the evidence showed that it worsened school attendance and disrupted classrooms. You also said that you will remove Centrelink benefits from parents who do not send their kids to school—a promise you have no jurisdiction over. We know that under the CLP nothing is for free. How will the truancy program be paid for, and how do you justify the fact that this policy position does the opposite of what it was supposed to do?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, at the election we had a strong focus on education. Our commitment was that we would bring back truancy officers and focus on increasing school attendance and boosting literacy and numeracy. We will not fail like the Labor government did over the last eight years.

Attendance declined over the last eight years under the previous Labor government. In the Barkly it is down to 46%. In the Big Rivers region it is down to 58%. The Central region dropped to 66% and the East Arnhem region is down to 54%. That is unacceptable.

Labor failed to enforce the importance of kids going to school and ignored the law which states that all children over six years of age must attend school. The Territory Families annual report showed that only 24 family responsibility agreements were entered into.

Compliance and infringement notices were repeatedly ignored by the previous Labor government. In 2016 there were 365 infringement notices issued. Only 16 infringement notices have been issued this year to date. Over the past four years 132 infringement notices were issued to parents who repeatedly broke the law and did not send their children to school. It is against the law not to send your child to school.

This government has a strong focus on attendance and getting kids to school, which is why we said that we would bring back truancy officers.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Gwoja asked how you will enforce punitive measures on families if you do not have the jurisdiction in the Northern Territory Government to do so through Centrelink.

Madam SPEAKER: He did not ask that. That is a slightly different take on the question.

Mrs HERSEY: The question related to how we will enforce that. We will work with the truancy officers as well as families to make sure that they know how important it is to get kids to school.

We are building a relationship with the federal government. I have already had conversations with the federal minister. It is something that can happen already. We will refer families to income management. Your Labor colleague, Marion Scrymgour, has already publicly …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: That is enough commentary.

Mrs HERSEY: She has put on the record that she will be supporting …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has run out.

Major Events

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS

As a former enthusiastic F-grade sportsperson—family grade—with good experience across many sports, including Aussie Rules, cricket, basketball and golf, I know that major events in the Northern Territory are an important way of attracting tourists, creating vibrant local communities and bringing Territorians together. Can you outline to the Assembly how the CLP government's commitment to hosting major events like the wonderful Alice Springs Masters Games will help restore our lifestyle, boost community spirit and rebuild the economy in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am glad that the Member for Karama loves his sport; so do the people of Alice Springs. The Alice Springs Masters Games includes everyone, so the member could still do his sports there, even at F-grade level and maybe as a senior member of our community.

The Alice Springs Masters Games faced significant challenges under the Labor government. It was cancelled during COVID. It was cancelled in …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Enough interjecting from the opposition, please. Let us listen to the minister in silence.

Ms BOOTHBY: The Alice Springs Masters Games was cancelled again in 2021 after Labor cut the funding from $2.1m to $1.7m. It was postponed in 2023. When asked by the CLP at Estimates in June this year,

Labor's minister—the former Minister for Major Events Brent Potter—admitted there was doubt about whether the 2024 games would even proceed.

With pressure from the Alice Springs community, the games eventually went ahead. Only 1,240 athletes registered, though, compared with 3,010 in 2018, which was the last time the event was held.

Labor's failure to prioritise important economic drivers like major events such as the Alice Springs Masters Games and the Henley on Todd Regatta has severely impacted the region. When you combine that with people questioning whether it is safe to go to Alice Springs, airfare costs that are through the roof and uncertainty surrounding an event just months before it is scheduled to take place, you know that there is a real problem. However, in the face of these setbacks the resilience of the Alice Springs community and its participants remain strong. Despite the challenges, the community continues to back the events that bring people together, contribute to the local economy and lift the town's morale.

The CLP government is committed to restoring the Territory's lifestyle, driving economic recovery and fostering this community spirit. Events like the Masters Games are central to this, as they have historically attracted significant national and international visitors.

At this year's games Dawn Fraser, Australia's most iconic and decorated athlete, said, 'Each of you, regardless of age or background, are an inspiration to the rest of the country'. You could be too, Member for Karama. Dawn is right; the games and similar events not only boost the economy but also showcase the best of the NT, from our passionate locals—there are plenty of those—to our rich cultural diversity and stunning natural beauty.

We are also focused on addressing Labor's crime crisis which has damaged tourism and harmed major events. Labor's neglect is clear, especially in its plans to demolish Anzac Oval, a beloved venue used for the Masters Games. Thankfully, it will be saved now.

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

MOTION
Better and Fairer Schools Agreement

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly calls on the CLP government to uphold the bilateral Better and Fairer Schools Agreement in its entirety to ensure every school in the Northern Territory is fully funded by 2029.

This is an important motion because we believe that if we are to improve and change the Territory's future for the better we need to ensure that we invest in kids. Labor fundamentally agrees with and believes in this. We want to ensure that the new CLP government is also focused on the betterment of the Territory by investing in our Territory kids.

Before I start my formal delivery I acknowledge my father, Mick Uibo, who is in the gallery. He is a long-term educator, and who I got my inspiration about education from. They say that if you are a child of a teacher you either choose education or not. My sister and I chose education and followed in the footsteps of my father, Mick Uibo, and my mother who passed away three years ago, who spent nearly 40 years in education. I pay homage to Mick Uibo in today's debate. A huge part of my 39 years of education in the Territory is because my dad and mum left a legacy that continues in education. This is why it is so important for the future of the Territory.

Madam SPEAKER: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On 31 July this year our former Territory Labor government made a landmark announcement that will deliver monumental improvements to the lives of all Territory kids. We announced that all Territory public schools will be fully and fairly funded under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement in partnership with the Australian Government. That is right; all Territory public schools will be 100% funded by 2029, two decades earlier than originally planned.

The Australian Government will invest an additional $737.7m in Territory public schools from 2025 to 2029. Our former Territory Labor government committed to investing at least an additional $350m over the same

period. This means that on average every public school student will be $33,764 better off individually. Every non-government school student will be $7,596 better off under this agreement. Therefore, we want to ensure that this bilateral agreement is not just honoured but also celebrated and used to resource our Territory schools in the best way possible.

This is historic for Territory education. In fact, this is a landmark, historic Australian education deal. Do you know what is better? Some of the most disadvantaged students in the country—here in the Northern Territory—will receive and benefit from this funding.

On 31 July this year our former Labor government announced a new enterprise bargaining agreement deal with Northern Territory public schoolteachers. This new enterprise deal delivered a salary increase of about 13% over the next three years, with all classroom teachers moving up an increment point. The Labor government was proud to do this, and we are glad the deal was sealed. This deal ensures our Territory public schoolteachers are the best paid in Australia. Those on the other side of the Chamber claimed the fame for the EBA. That is fine, because we wanted to make sure they did not scrap it. Thank you, CLP government, for not doing in our teachers this time.

You always expect the unexpected in this place. Madam Speaker, you have been around for a long time, so I am sure you have nearly seen it all, but every so often you might see something new. I did not think I would ever see a CLP government minister championing a Labor achievement. I thank the new Education minister for trying to change the stripes to spots and championing two Labor achievements in her new role.

We are glad to see some wins for the new Education minister, but we will continue to hold the CLP government to account. Our door is always open to offer advice and support to the CLP government in its journey to understand the importance of education. We will work to make sure those achievements in education continue, not just through a three-year or 10-year deal, but always.

It is no surprise that the CLP has given only lukewarm support to upholding the billion-dollar education agreement because the last time it was in power, education, unfortunately, had a target on its back. We saw the CLP in its former glory slash $135m out of education. This meant that more than 500 school staff lost their jobs; they were sacked. To those on the other side, we want to ensure that this does not happen in the Territory again. Please, that is one legacy we implore you not to bring back.

With the former CLP government's values, support services and programs were cut from our remote and very remote community schools. We do not want that legacy brought back, and neither do our schools or students.

At one point Territorians rocked up outside parliament in force, here in the Northern Territory's capital, where there was a mock coffin which said, 'Rest in peace, education'. We do not want to see the new CLP government make any bad decisions that repeat history in regard to education. We expect the CLP to learn from the past and ensure that no Territory kid, teacher, principal or school is left behind again.

It is no surprise that we have seen a bit of hesitance from those on the other side of the room to back the education agreement, but I commend the new minister for saying that they will support it. We will hold the government to account in regard to what this actually looks like.

The new minister has committed to it, so we must understand the priority of education and the plans. It is pertinent to understand that level of investment, and I am sure the minister will respond when it is her turn.

In an interview on ABC Darwin the CLP candidate for Solomon said about the historic $1bn funding for education, 'That is half a billion dollars the Territory government has got to come up with. Where will we find that funding?' At least Lisa Bayliss is one CLP candidate who has the honesty to say that she is not a fan of the bilateral agreement that will see all Territory schools better off. Thankfully, she is not in the federal government.

Every young person, no matter where they live or what their circumstances, deserves to have the best start in life and the best access to a world-class education in the Territory. We know that supporting our schools, teachers and principals will lead to this opportunity. We will continue to focus on education as a priority because that is what Labor always does, and we want the new CLP government to place the same respect and importance on education.

We do not want kids left behind. We need to do more, and we know that education cannot stand alone. In order for people to benefit from education we also need to invest in the key social determinants of a person's

environment, like employment, health and housing. These four elements—education, health, housing and employment—lead to individuals, families, communities, regions and the whole Northern Territory thriving.

All our kids need access to school lessons that cover the diversity of the curriculum. Our students need access to a wide range of resources. We believe firmly that the new bilateral agreement will allow for this. Access to greater education infrastructure like our science, technology, engineering, arts and math centres—also known as STEAM centres—will inspire the future careers of Territory kids, young people and adults.

We want to ensure that the Territory always has a strong voice in key areas such as NAPLAN testing. We do not want the CLP to quickly criticise our Territory kids. We want the CLP to jump in front and defend our Territory kids at the national level, or what is the point? We cannot other our kids because our kids will not succeed if they are not supported.

Speaking of support, one of my former teachers happens to be in the gallery, Miss Sara from Sanderson where I was a high school student. Welcome to the gallery. That was not planned; I just noticed she is here.

Now that the CLP is in the driver's seat we want to make sure that the $1bn education agreement is not just a cash splash for the next four years; we want to see the plan. We want to analyse and support the plan that will support our Territory kids, teachers and principals. As we have seen this week and last week, there is no plan like the Corrections minister's plan, who suddenly unveiled a borrowed plan and slapped on a bit of CLP branding. If we do not see a plan, we do not know how to drive and we do not know which destination we will end up at. Having a plan is important.

Mr Edgington: We saw that under eight years of Labor—no plan and no idea.

Ms UIBO: The Member for Barkly knows about plans because he planned well to always be in a community with a new house that the Labor government built so that he could take his photo and support his constituents. The Member for Barkly understands that when you invest in remote infrastructure, like housing, you invest in the benefits that come with things like education, health and employment outcomes. We hope that the new government continues to recognise this.

When we talk about this important plan, which we are yet to see from the CLP government, we would love to share the details with all Territorians because most people—I would go as far as saying almost every Territorian—has skin in the game when it comes to education. Whether you have a child, niece, nephew, cousin, brother or sister in school or a mum, dad, aunty, uncle or grandparent who works in a school, we are all heavily invested in education in the Territory. Nobody wants to see our schools fail.

Funding is tied to reforms through the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. These reforms are as follows:

- A Year 1 phonics check and an early years of schooling numeracy check to identify students who need additional assistance.

- Evidence-based teaching and targeted intensive support, such as small-group or catch-up tutoring to help students who may fall behind.

- Greater wellbeing support for learning and engagement, including through student wellbeing officers and multidisciplinary teams providing services within schools.

- Initiatives that help attract and retain teachers and school leaders, including rewarding and recognising experienced teachers to work in schools that need additional support.

- Providing access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning for teachers and school leaders.

- Providing quality-assured curriculum resources that have been developed in partnership with the teaching profession.

- Implementing the recommendations of the Northern Territory Government's Review of Effective Enrolment to make funding methodology for NT schools fairer.

- Implementing the recommendations of the Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory to improve access to secondary education in remote and very remote communities.

I hope the new minister has a copy and is reading and tabbing all those recommendations.

The bilateral agreement with the Northern Territory also includes the following key targets by 2030:

- increasing the Northern Territory's overall student attendance rate to 79.7%
- increasing the proportion of students in the strong and exceeding NAPLAN proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 10%
- increasing employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in our schools
- increasing the proportion of students with Year 12 or equivalent certification by 7.5 percentage points.

Evidence-based policy is not the CLP's strong point. CLP members do not like listening to experts; they have said that time and again, particularly in the last two weeks. However, we want the CLP members to listen to the education experts when it comes to what the CLP said it would do—that is, bring back a failed policy of the past by reintroducing truancy officers and taking a punitive approach to attendance. This does not work. We have seen this time and again in the Northern Territory and around the country.

We would love to see resources, energy and funding channelled not into the punitive measures that the new minister is talking about but into true engagement that will overcome any local community or school issue to get children to school, keep them there and engage them in a rich and diverse curriculum in a way that is meaningful. This will allow Territory children to thrive in the classroom. The best opportunity to do that is by bringing everyone along in a supportive way, not through the punitive use of truancy officers.

In the past this policy cost taxpayers millions of dollars per year. What the CLP will do remains uncosted.

Will the CLP learn from the lessons of the past? In the past the participation rate for people through this truancy program went down to 8%. The CLP needs to learn the lessons of the past; do not need repeat history or bad policies and programs. We implore the CLP government to do the right thing by our kids, our schools and Territory families, and support them when they need the support, not penalise them, starve them out or make it about dollars.

If the CLP needs a full list of what the truancy officer initiatives achieved in a snapshot, I can provide that to the House. It worsened the outcomes in Territory education, was ethically problematic and was expensive for Territory taxpayers. It also potentially caused harm to our youngest and most vulnerable Territorians and their families or carers.

We commend the CLP government in doing right by Territory kids in ensuring that the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is supported, and we stand by that.

Most of the CLP government members will now realise that they are in government; they are not in opposition anymore. It is now their legal responsibility to deliver in each of the departments they are responsible for. It is not about blaming the last eight years of the Labor government; it is about what you will do to make a difference for Territory kids.

When the CLP members finally realise that they are no longer in opposition—that they are responsible for every decision that impacts Territorians, every piece of legislation and every taxpayer dollar spent—they will realise that the weight of their decisions, and not just the fun and theatrics of this place, means something to everything outside of this parliament. Every Territorian and visitor to the Territory will judge the Northern Territory over the next four, eight or 12 years regardless of who is in government. The decisions of today mean something tomorrow. This is a reminder that the weight of your decisions, for better or worse—I am hoping for the better—will mean something to the future of the Territory, which is our Territory kids.

When I was a Cabinet minister in the Labor government I was proud to have helped get the record $1.34bn investment in education services in the budget. Education has the power to change lives. We probably all have countless examples—in not only our electorates but also our personal or professional lives before we came into this place—we can rattle off about when someone got a fair go in their school, training or a job that changed their life. We want to ensure the record investment we supported will create a new era of opportunity for Territory kids to become our future leaders.

No government before us ever achieved full and fair funding for all Territory schools. This is a legacy that we proudly pass to the CLP. We want the Territory government to endorse this new way forward. Providing extra funding to our Territory schools means not only being fair but also giving more resources to equip our

hardworking teachers, principals and school staff to help our Territory kids be better equipped for their learning journeys, education and opportunities to enter the workforce, whenever that may be.

I am sure many in this House, even though we do not always agree, will agree that education is the bedrock on which we can build the Territory's future together. None of the objectives of the bilateral Better and Fairer Schools Agreement are controversial, which is why we are glad the CLP has openly supported it.

It is simple to acknowledge that high-quality school education is critical to ensuring our Northern Territory students will succeed in the increasingly complex world, but it is harder to make sure that happens. Australia's future in sustainability, new technologies and economic prosperity, particularly when talking about new industries and opportunities in the Northern Territory, is reliant on a high-quality, equitable and inclusive school system. The Territory has a vital role to play in this.

The objectives of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement are to ensure that:

- schools and the education system are equipped to provide all students with highly effective evidence-based teaching and equitable learning opportunities and support to maximise their learning

- schools take a structured approach to wellbeing for learning in a way that reflects their school environment so that students have a sense of belonging, safety and engaging with their learning

- the workforce is respected and continues to grow, and teachers and non-teaching school staff are supported to innovate and be at their best to ensure young Territorians thrive in their education.

A sustainable workforce means that the Australian community recognises the value that teachers and our school leaders bring to our students, our communities and the Territory's economy.

The Territory Labor opposition is committed to developing a homegrown local workforce to meet the workforce demands that are being experienced in the Territory and across Australia. We want to ensure the investment in our future is also home grown.

There can be no ifs or buts about honouring the deal that was made on behalf of Territory education, even if it means standing up to the federal Opposition Leader, Peter Dutton, and the CLP team in Canberra. As they get ready to have their federal election battle and campaigns we want to ensure that the CLP Territory government does not walk away from this deal and that candidates do not decide what the Territory government will do when it comes to this agreement. It will be a matter of continuing the best legacy possible—that is, supporting our Territory kids.

We heard about what it means for some of the CLP members to think about what legacy is. One of the members—it might have been the Member for Drysdale—said that every man, woman and child is born equal. We do not dispute that. What the Member for Drysdale failed to add to that sentence is that not every man, woman and child is born into equal circumstances. That is the difference our investment will make. That is when we talk about the circumstances that lead someone onto a path of better or worse for their life.

When it comes to ensuring that every man, woman and child in the Territory has equal opportunity, we need to talk about equity. A couple of years ago, the theme of International Women's Day was equity. It was global. It struck me, as a former educator, that the students who come into our classrooms are not blank slates; they come in with rich and diverse backgrounds and thoughts of the world, an eagerness and sometimes with reservations. The job of an educator and the supports for that young person are to ensure that they have no barriers or challenges to reaching their full potential.

For one teacher in a classroom of maybe up to 27 kids, that is 27 individuals who need to have a tailored support system to ensure, before the lesson has even started, that they are all starting from the same base. That is not the case in the Territory or indeed in other parts of Australia, but it needs to be the case when it comes to relieving any challenge or barrier to a child's learning. That means the investment in housing and health is important. How can our children learn if they have hearing problems and cannot hear their teacher speak? How do we overcome that challenge? If there are 27 or fewer kids in a classroom how do we make sure that every kid in that class learns in the same way? It does not happen. It is up to our hardworking educators and school staff to ensure that every pressure on a student is alleviated so that they can learn equally.

When we talk about being equal we must first address the issues of equity. This is what this agreement does. It brings all our schools up to the standard of being fully resourced and having the level of equality required so that everyone starts with a strong base and no child is left behind, no teacher or principal is not resourced

or supported, and no school community is left in the lurch because of where it is situated or the number of kids in the school.

We will see the delivery and the legacy of this education deal continue under the CLP. I wish the government all the best and implore it to continue to make our schools even better.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I pick up on comments from the Opposition Leader. It is rich that the Opposition Leader lectures the CLP government on the importance of education when she was one of the three Education ministers in the previous Labor government who failed our children. There is nothing lukewarm about this agreement with the federal government.

The Opposition Leader constantly talks about the previous CLP government, which I will remind everyone was almost four terms ago. There is a reason why things change and they are now on the opposite side of the Chamber and we have a 17-strong CLP team. The former Labor government failed our children on education with poor literacy, poor numeracy and poor attendance rates.

We took our plan to the election a mere eight weeks ago, saying that there would be a strong focus on those key issues of literacy, numeracy and attendance. I do not think anyone in voter land was under false pretences about what the CLP would do leading into the last election. We also said that we would raise school attendance, get back to basics and give teachers financial certainty by moving them off short-term contracts and into permanent places so that they can have the confidence to put down roots in the Territory to help grow our population. That is an important point. We want people to stay and put down roots for the betterment of the Territory, grow the population and realise how great the place is, like we all do.

As I said last week, the CLP and federal governments have committed to honouring the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, ensuring stability and continued support for schools across the Territory. The agreement was signed by the previous Labor government in July, and it remains unchanged. As with any program, there will be ongoing reviews to ensure its effectiveness. I want to be clear for the opposition that the agreement remains firm.
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The agreement commences on 1 January 2025 and replaces the National School Reform Agreement that expires on 31 December this year. It will ensure all public schools receive full and fair funding over the life of the agreement and will put every school on a path to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). It aims to improve education outcomes for all Australian students and build on the capability and capacity of the education workforce. It outlines a set of reforms in areas where national collaboration will have the greatest impact on driving improved student outcomes.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement sees a shared commitment from the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments to fully fund all schools at 100% by 2029. The SRS is an estimate of how much funding a school needs to meet the needs of its students, and was recommended by Gonski in his review of education in 2011. The Gonski review called for a minimum level of funding for every student, with additional needs-based funding to reflect that students experiencing disadvantage require targeted support.

The federal Education minister, Jason Clare, said that the NT's public school system was funded to only 80% of what was recommended under the Gonski review; in other words, one in five kids are not receiving funding. This agreement will fix that.

There is no excuse for the underfunding of the Territory's education system. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is another bailout from Canberra for Labor's mismanagement. Signing this agreement at the eleventh hour before an election shows how badly Labor got it wrong. The CLP has inherited this agreement, and we will do everything in our power to ensure that the money reaches those schools which need it most.

The CLP government set clear priorities for education in the election campaign. I have touched on that a bit. We will increase school attendance. We will boost literacy and numeracy by getting back to basics and retaining and attracting exceptional teachers.

Under Labor, attendance declined over the last eight years. From 2016 to 2023 annual attendance dropped in the Barkly from 62% to 46%; in Big Rivers from 71% to 58%; in the Central Region to 66%; and in East Arnhem to 54%. This is unacceptable. Labor failed to enforce the importance of kids going to school and ignored the law which states that all children over six years of age must go to school.

The 2022–23 Territory Families annual report showed that only 24 family responsibility agreements were entered into. We touched on this briefly in Question Time. We have had conversations with Marion

Scrymgour—the Labor colleague of those opposite—who has put on the public record that she supports income management. The Chief Minister has also raised this in Canberra. This is in place; it can happen.

Compliance and infringement notices were repeatedly ignored by Labor. As I said, this can be addressed by the federal government, but the previous Labor government failed to do so. In 2016 there were 365 infringement notices issued. To date this year only 16 infringement notices have been issued. Over the past four years only 132 infringement notices were issued to parents who repeatedly broke the law by not sending their children to school. These stats clearly tell me that the previous Labor government dropped the ball on the importance of getting an education.

Under Labor, Territory kids lagged behind the rest of the country in reading, writing and arithmetic. One-third of all NT students are categorised as needing additional support in literacy and numeracy compared with one in 10 nationally. NAPLAN results show that 58% of NT students, including 85% of Indigenous students, do not meet basic literacy and numeracy standards. It is appalling. Of those, 35% were performing at the lowest level. In Year 3 spelling NAPLAN results, NT students scored a staggering 88.5 points lower than the national average.

There clearly needs to be a change. We welcome the increased investment under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement to help fix the education system. Under the agreement, starting in January 2025, the Commonwealth will contribute an extra $737m to the Territory's education system between 2025 and 2029 while the NT Government will spend an additional $350m over the same period.

The Commonwealth's funding share for government schools will go up from 20% to 40% by 2029. This will allow NT government schools to catch up to similar funding levels of other systems. The non-government sector will receive increased funding in 2029. We are conscious that stakeholders in the non-government school sector are keen to see equity of resourcing match equity of choice. By 2029, however, all schools across the Territory will be resourced at the highest per-student rate in Australia.

This additional investment is contingent upon the NT increasing its funding share from 59% to 60% of the SRS for government schools and from 15.09% to 20% for non-government schools by 2029, as well as undertaking the reform activity outlined in the NT's bilateral agreement.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement includes national reform directions that build on existing efforts in the areas of:

- equity and excellence to improve outcomes and address student needs, especially priority equity cohorts, and reduce concentrations of disadvantage in schools

- wellbeing for learning and engagement to ensure all students and staff feel that they belong and are supported

- a strong and sustainable workforce to grow and diversify the workforce of confident and capable teachers and other educators, and ensure they are well supported to strengthen their practice and collaboration.

That is particularly important for the Territory's remote schools. For example, we have been talking about bilingual education. Schools will have greater resources and flexibility to employ more local Aboriginal people.

The agreement outlines key activities that the NT must undertake to contribute towards these national goals, including:

- moving to enrolment-based funding from 2025, rather than attendance-based funding, ensuring our most disadvantaged schools receive additional funding first

- targeted support for literacy and numeracy, including a Year 1 phonics check

- implementation of the Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory

- maintaining funding in Central Australia as part of the Australian Government's On Country Learning Measure.

As part of the NT's bilateral implementation plan the NT has committed to a range of Territory-specific activities, including the timing and sequencing of these reforms. The NT is on track to deliver on its commitment to complete all recommendations from the Review of Effective Enrolment by 2025, as required.

On 11 October 2024 all government schools across the Territory received their 2025 school funding. The Department of Education and Training is conducting regional workshops across the Territory to support principals and schools to proactively plan for next year, focusing on ensuring that the additional funding is used to implement programs and services that respond to community and school priorities.

Over the last two weeks workshops have been held in the Darwin, Top End, East Arnhem, Barkly, Big Rivers and Central regions. At the workshop in Katherine last Friday, I was fortunate enough to address the principals, business managers and school staff responsible for the vital planning work that goes into running our schools. In addition, focus workshops on school workforce, universal support offerings, engagement and attendance, target setting, budget planning and community consultation are being rolled out over the coming weeks. The feedback from principals on the regional workshops has been positive. Where there have been points of clarification, the department is working through this with schools and providing continued support as they develop their annual school improvement plans.

From 2025 NT government schools will be funded under a simpler and fairer system. Funding will be distributed through the needs-based funding model and ensure that our most disadvantaged schools receive additional funding first. School funding will be based on enrolments, not the attendance-based measurement currently used. This levels the playing field and is a more equitable funding model.

The new system increases the per-student base rate by more than 5%, from 7,669 to 8,113. This increase meets additional costs expected in 2025 and is based on wage increases, classroom teacher salary structure changes, non-educator wage increases and CPI.

Funding will be released once a year, providing certainty and stability to grow and sustain the workforce and programs. Previously, preliminary funding was released at the end of Term 3 of the previous year and finalised at the end of Term 1 of the funding year. Under the new system, more resources will be provided to support children and young people on their education journey, particularly disadvantaged students, with greater clarity and consistency in funding.

Schools will have more flexibility to allocate resources according to their specific needs, such as staffing, program improvements and infrastructure upgrades. This includes bilingual education. I understand the importance of this for many communities. These bilingual programs continue to be funded for 2025 and ongoing. There were questions from the Member for Mulka, and I have had a conversation with him to assure him that bilingual education will continue.

Schools will continue and can expand on programs that are responsive to the needs of their students. Existing bilingual programs will continue to run with all positions funded. Following feedback from schools, funding sheets have been updated to clearly and separately identify funding for bilingual education to ensure it is clear that the commitment to fund bilingual education in those schools remains.

All schools will be better off under the new system. I assure you that no schools will be disadvantaged by the changes to funding in 2025 and that schools have the resources to continue to operate and deliver quality education programs.

Further to that, the NT has committed to milestones in the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement which will support schools to cater for students and support delivery of these government commitments:

- boosting literacy and numeracy by designing and implementing a Territory-wide structured literacy and numeracy approach based on the multitiered system of support model, which is differentiated by school size, context and performance

- developing best-practice guidelines for intensive targeted support to students identified as requiring additional assistance to meet proficiency standards, including small-group tutoring

- for remote schools, providing support staff with lesson plans and tools to deliver small-group tutoring aligned with best practice.

We will focus on lifting attendance by:

- enabling schools to better support disengaged students

- implementing enrolment-based funding from 2025

- addressing the remaining recommendations from the Review of Effective Enrolment with a focus on implementing programs and services to ensure attendance at school

- building pathways to employment for students by implementing in full the recommendations of the Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory, including expanding credentialling and recognition of learning through SACE, micro-credentialling and learner profiles

- developing and implementing a pathways plan across the NT

- expanding regionalised delivery models to increase access and enable pathways to attain the NTCET

- providing regional support for schools to facilitate partnerships and pathways

- coordinating VET work experience opportunities and career advice, supporting work-readiness.

I cannot stress enough that with a shortage of tradies across the nation, especially in the Northern Territory, it is good to go down a VET pathway. Whether people do a school-based apprenticeship or go into an apprenticeship after finishing school, as someone who came through that pathway, I highly recommend it. It is a career for life. There is such diversity. If you are a little disengaged with school you can do a couple of days of your VET training and a school-based apprenticeship or you can do VET when you finish school. I cannot emphasise to people enough that it is a good pathway to go down.

The recent machinery-of-government changes which established the Department of Education and Training have also been a key step in building better pathways to employment for our students. Ensuring stability in the NT's workforce has been an immediate priority for the CLP government.

Declan's law was passed in parliament last week. It will improve the safety of teachers and make sure they feel safe in their workplace. This is one of the first steps that the NT Government will prioritise to improve teacher permanency. Teachers in the NT will be the highest paid in the country following the conclusion of the enterprise bargaining agreement.

This will occur alongside existing commitments in the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement to expand opportunities and build greater understanding and recognition of Aboriginal educators' knowledge with the development of an Aboriginal workforce strategy that includes professional learning designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—including the RATE program—and expanding activities to increase the diversity of the education workforce, particularly building on opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to be employed by schools. We spoke about that in Question Time.

We will report annually to the Australian Government on progress towards the reforms committed to under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. The CLP government has committed to improvement measures that will be reported annually and made available publicly, including:

- increasing the proportion of students with Year 12 equivalent certification by 7.5%

- increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee numbers in our schools

- increasing the NT's overall student attendance rate to 79.7%

- improving proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 10%.

The CLP recognises education's critical role in building a safe and strong Territory. We will work with schools, communities and families to get kids to school and support parents. We will not be afraid, as we have said numerous times, to hold parents to account. We will bring back truancy officers with the power to get kids back to school and work with families.

We will restore the safety of students and staff by expanding school-based policing programs and ensure qualified school counsellors are based in schools and properly resourced. We all know the importance of having a school-based counsellor. When students have an issue or need counselling, the last thing they want to do is ring up someone. They want to know that when they go to the school counsellor's door that there will be a person behind it. I have spoken about my firsthand knowledge of that on numerous occasions.

We will give teachers financial certainty by moving them off short-term contracts into permanent places so that they can have the confidence to put down roots in the Territory.

Our kids are our future. The CLP government will honour the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement because our children deserve more after eight years of underfunding, under-resourcing, poor literacy, poor numeracy and poor attendance rates that were less than satisfactory under the former Labor government.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I start my contribution by quoting a great and influential past President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, who once said:

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

I agree with that quote because education can create a better, safer, more inclusive Territory.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is a bilateral agreement that the former NT Labor government signed with the Australian Government to increase funding for all schools in the Northern Territory to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard. Our Territory public schools in suburbs and in the bush will reach 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard and that will be achieved two decades sooner than projected thanks to this extra $1bn investment.

The Australian Government will contribute $738m between 2025 and 2029, and the CLP government will contribute $350m in the same period—we hope. The CLP candidate for Solomon has been quoted as saying that she is not confident that the CLP will be able to uphold its end of the bargain.

I will talk about why the CLP needs to dig deep and ensure it honours its agreement that will see our schools, students and teachers have access to quality education regardless of whether they are in Stuart Park or Santa Teresa. This agreement is not just about policy; it is about honouring a commitment to our children and our Territory's future.

Despite what critics may say, the former Territory government invested more money in education than any other Territory government. Our last budget delivered $1.3bn into Territory schools, and that was without signing the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.

We invested in infrastructure, with more classrooms and preschools, upgraded sporting facilities, administration blocks and planning for future secondary school growth development. We ensured that Territory schools could invest in STEM pathways. We invested in programs focused on helping our children thrive and their teachers be eager to be in the classrooms to teach the next generation of Territorians.

Families as First Teachers is an amazing program. At last count it had 55 educators across Territory sites helping parents to be involved in their child's early education and building good habits with them to benefit their kids as they go through their schooling years.

The investment of $40m in the On Country Learning Measure supports schools in Central Australia. This program supports students and their families to engage in education and pathways to employment.

Since 2006 we have built five STEAM facilities, at Darwin High School, Centralian Senior College, Taminmin College, Dripstone Middle School and Katherine High School, because all Territory students deserve to have access to quality education infrastructure.

Since 2019 we have increased funding for government and non-government schools. We implemented the quality teaching and retention strategy to attract and retain teachers.

We re-established the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program. RATE is an incredible program. Having represented the great communities in the Warlpiri triangle—Lajamanu, Yuendumu, Yuelamu and Nyirripi—I have seen firsthand positive impacts that the RATE program has delivered. It was important to re-establish the program so that remote Aboriginal Territorians can gain pathways into the classroom, be recognised and have the opportunity to further their development and upskill to become teachers in their own community. It is a fantastic program.

I acknowledge all the amazing RATE educators across the Northern Territory. I thank them for taking the initiative to stand up in their communities, value education first and foremost and show our kids in remote communities that there are economic opportunities in these communities. It can be teaching the next generation of kids in the school.

An important point to make is that education is the act of teaching knowledge to others and others receiving and absorbing that knowledge. Sometimes we are focused on education as being only about a school

environment. It is crucial that we continue to invest in those areas, but for a lot of Aboriginal people and other people for whom English is not their first language and where there are other dominating cultural considerations, we should also support other aspects of learning and development.

In remote communities across the Northern Territory, particularly in my experience as an Aboriginal person and having family still in remote communities who are RATE teachers—I shout out to Grandpa Tommy and Aunty Doris in Yuendumu—it is about their role and how they walk between the two worlds of education, the Western education system and the cultural education system, which includes our culture, our *Tjukurpa*, our Dreaming and creation stories. That is what helps educate our young ones and keeps their identity strong, keeps them engaged in school and keeps their respectful relationships moving on.

Quite often there will be a level of shame when people talk about leaving school and what they do after school. For many Aboriginal people, country is also our school. Country is also our university. That is important. It is why I am big on supporting the on-country learning and ranger programs in schools across the Territory. They embed that cultural element into the Western education system and allows that emergence to continue.

Bilingual education is incredibly important. It allows Aboriginal educators—teachers, assistant teachers and assistant principals—to provide that level of understanding in the classroom and help direct young children through that cultural element.

One of the biggest challenges we have as legislators when we are talking about creating new laws, initiatives and opportunities is that we need to work with people so that they understand the value of what we are doing. That is also our role in education; we need to inform and help our communities to understand the value of education.

Families as First Teachers is an important program because it helps bring the parents into the school. When parents are in the school, the kids see that it is normal for parents to be supporting them and the teachers in school. When they see that there is a routine and a foundational link between home, school and the community, our children and schools thrive. That is ultimately the objective we are all trying to achieve.

Families as First Teachers is incredible for a number of reasons. It gets young people into school and is an incredible pathway for adults, who may have left school early on or who may not have attended school for various reason over many years, to become engaged in the education system as well. Suddenly, there are opportunities for the adults to engage in adult learning and development opportunities. This is an important initiative to talk about.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while I am talking about adult education I seek leave of the Assembly to table an article from this year's NAIDOC awards.

Leave granted.

Mr PAECH: I will showcase the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust. This is a great project. Here you can see Napaljarri and Nampijinpa. Sharon Anderson—it is a very proud moment—is my aunty. She has been a Warlpiri educator for so long. It brings the perspective that education is not just for kids; it is for everyone. We need to continue that investment across all areas.

I am thankful for the Education minister's contribution. It is heartening to hear that this agreement will continue to be honoured throughout the funding term.

Bilingual education is incredibly important. I shout out to the Utju school, which is also known as Areyonga School, and acknowledge that it has continued bilingual education for about 50 years. It achieves fantastic educational outcomes. Tarna Andrews is an educator. Originally from the beautiful community of Warumpi (Papunya) she has been living in Utju for more than 40 years and teaching at that school as an Aboriginal educator for over 30 years. That is an incredible milestone. Celebrating her commitment to Aboriginal education in that school is important.

This agreement provides funding that will ensure no child is left behind, no matter their background or what they have been taught in the classroom previously. Imagine that Territory schools can now offer students the opportunity to reach their full potential, with language no longer a barrier because they received their education from a school that helped build their culture, identity and educational outcomes. This is important, because in order for our mob, our people, our Territorians in all areas of the community to take on the jobs of the future, they need a quality education. Whether they want to be a bus driver, teacher, doctor or whatever,

education is the key. It is also important because when kids are in school they are less likely to get caught up in the justice system.

I acknowledge the government's commitment in regard to Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation and increasing attendance at schools. It is an important issue. Under previous policy settings of all political persuasions, there has been an attempt to get kids to school.

Although we need to do everything in our power to get kids to school, I caution that there needs to be a transitional provision in place. Putting a child straight into a classroom that is supposed to be their Year level presents a number of challenges when they have been disengaged from the education system for some time. Not only does the young child have the anxiety and distress of being thrown into a class for which they might not have the required level of literacy and numeracy, but also there are implications for that classroom and it can cause distress for the other students. It is clear that there needs to be some form of transitional classroom to get children re-engaged in the education system.

I represent a bush electorate predominantly filled with many of my family and relatives. I understand firsthand active enrolments versus passive enrolments versus attendance. So much of the bush still works through cultural and customary processes. We might leave a community for a period for cultural or ceremony reasons, but we are still engaging in the education system; we are at another school. There needs to be improvement in understanding that a young child who has moved with family for ceremony, sorry business or other business to another community can engage in that school; they are not absent from school. Those are interesting areas that we need to look at—how we capture those enrolments and the participation of our young people.

There is a number of fantastic teachers across Territory schools. This agreement funds the education system, but there is a range of areas within the education system that we need to look at.

I acknowledge that a number of non-government organisations across the Territory provide support for our Territory schools. They might run school breakfasts or nutrition programs. It is important to make sure that our kids have tucker in their belly in the morning to go to school so that they can participate. A lot of people in the Territory live below the poverty line and sometimes kids do not have access to breakfast.

The remote housing program agreement that the Territory government has secured with the Australian Government has been supported by governments of both political persuasions, federally and in the Territory. It is a great program because in a lot of cases kids might not go to school because they are in an overcrowded house—there have been 30 people in one house, the kid does not have a bedroom, there is lots of music playing or interactions, and the child has been up all night. The remote housing program also plays an incredible role in supporting the aspirations of getting people to school.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement provides sound investment in Territory teachers as it includes initiatives that will attract and keep dedicated teachers in our urban and remote schools. These initiatives will ensure that our schools are staffed with dedicated professionals who are eager to teach, paving the way for improved education outcomes across the Northern Territory.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement will assist with greater wellbeing support for learning and engagement. We will be able to identify children who need that additional support.

The only other caution I have is that there has been talk about the government increasing the rate of government employee housing in the bush. That is an area of concern because there is a national shortage of about 3,000 teachers across the country. We need to do everything we can to attract and recruit teachers to remote locations across the Northern Territory. We do not want measures that will disengage and disempower people from the education system. We want that to continue.

Some of the housing in those communities is ordinary. There is an allocation in the remote housing program to increase that investment.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: Everyone in this Chamber can be proud of getting behind this agreement. It is transformative and life changing. We address education when we address housing and health and provide support services for families.

The Member for Mulka has raised a number of times the value of bilingual education. I agree it is important that our teachers can provide that opportunity.

I am heartened to hear that the RATE program will continue for another few years, because it is an important program. I acknowledge that a number of educators in my electorate went through the RATE program. One of them is Nancy Oldfield, who is now the Assistant Principal of Yuendumu School. It is an incredible achievement.

The ranger programs were expanded. People might ask what a ranger program has to do with learning. It is incredible how the teachers apply principles of mathematics, English, science and the way our Aboriginal educators embed traditional science and practice because, let us face it, as Aboriginal people, we were the first scientists, educators and teachers. It is incredible to see that two-way learning in the education system through bilingual education and remote area teaching.

One of the most heartening things—the Education minister will have the opportunity to do this—is when you travel to a remote community, go to a school and talk to the kids about what they want to do when they leave school. It is heartening to hear the responses. Some kids want to manage the clinic; some want to be a shopkeeper or a bus driver; and some want to be a police officer, an astronaut, a teacher, a doctor or a scientist. That is what we can achieve with this funding. We will no longer see children being disadvantaged because of funding. They will have the opportunity to achieve greatness, regardless of where they live, where they come from or their background.

I have spoken a lot about Indigenous education because it is important. I also acknowledge the important role played by ESL (English as a second language) in schools, particularly for our new Territorians who have moved to the Territory from different nations. The ability for English as a second language to be taught in our schools helps our new young Territorians work in with the Territory school curriculum.

I look forward to contributions from other members. Education is important; it changes lives and allows people to believe they have a future and can achieve great things. When people are afforded the opportunity to participate in education, it stops them from being held back and living a life of disadvantage and disempowerment.

I acknowledge the strong advocates for education and shout out to the education unions, advocates and lobbyists who have pushed, for a long time, the need to continue our amazing bilingual education programs.

I shout out to the Territory's education institutions, Charles Darwin University and all the amazing public and private schools in the Northern Territory. I acknowledge the work that is happening at Batchelor and the opportunities there. This is an important discussion and the contributions are positive.

I acknowledge the work that is happening across Northern Territory Correctional Services. We signed the MOU with Charles Darwin University to deliver training and development opportunities and VET courses in our prison system.

In her contribution the Member for Katherine spoke about hairdressing and VET pathways. It is important to acknowledge that not everyone's journey will be university. That should not be seen as a negative, because we acknowledge, respect and need tradespeople. My first journey was an apprenticeship. TAFE and VET are equally important and valued; they equally contribute to our economy. This is important because we need Territory workers everywhere, and we need them to have a quality education.

For many Aboriginal people, our country is our classroom, our university and the foundation for our identity. When Aboriginal people learn through those elements, their culture and identity is strong, as are their respectful relationships. They listen to our elders and respond because of the foundations and the law of the land.

I thank the Education minister and the Leader of the Opposition for their contributions. A number of people here have been teachers and have done great work for the Territory. Being a teacher is not an easy job by any means. A study was done many years ago on the early establishment and federation of this country, whereby teachers were paid on par with politicians. That has swayed over the years. This agreement and the EBAs, which both political parties are honouring, respond to the issue of teachers' wages. We need quality educators in the Territory. It is not an easy job; there are complex needs in the Territory, particularly with young children who have learning difficulties.

I acknowledge and shout out to Territory schools. They are amazing, and so are teachers, the administrators, the bus drivers and the people who run the tuckshops (canteens) and the clinics. I also acknowledge the school-based constables. They all play an important role in the Territory's education system. Today has been

about their contribution and this funding agreement, which is good for the Territory's kids and parents. It is good for this parliament to get in behind the agreement and lock in this investment.

I thank everyone for listening and I look forward to hearing the other contributions.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I will again state that if any of the opposition members were in the Chamber at the time of my maiden speech last week, they would know that the quote …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The member cannot refer to members being outside the Chamber. I ask her to withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct. Please withdraw that.

Mrs ZIO: I retract that statement.

The quote from Nelson Mandela was already used by me last week, but I agree it is a good one, so thanks for repeating it.

Mr Paech: I heard you; I was watching.

Mrs ZIO: As a government it is our duty to critically evaluate government initiatives. We must also recognise when a policy serves the best interests of our community. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is one such policy that deserves our support and continuation. I will not argue the fact that the agreement represents an historic commitment to fully and fairly fund all Northern Territory schools by 2029.

The Labor government faced several challenges and criticisms regarding its handling of education, particularly in remote areas. Here are some key failures and issues that were identified.

There is a remote education crisis. The Labor government was criticised for not having a comprehensive plan to address the remote education crisis in the Northern Territory. Despite increased funding, there were calls for critical reforms to improve educational outcomes, particularly for Indigenous students in remote areas.

We have incredibly low school attendance. Attendance rates fell to a 10-year low, with overall attendance at 77.2% and Indigenous student attendance at a concerning 59%. In some remote areas attendance was as low as 20%. This decline in attendance was linked to rising youth crime and poor education outcomes.

The Northern Territory has the worst NAPLAN results in Australia, with 35% of students falling into the lowest bands of 'needs additional support' and only 6.5% in the top band. This highlights significant educational challenges that were not adequately addressed.

There are ineffective funding allocations. Substantial portions of education funding have reportedly been siphoned into bureaucracy and administration rather than being directed into classrooms, contributing to poor education outcomes. Additionally, the policy of effective enrolment led to reduced funding for schools in remote locations, exacerbating educational inequities.

The Northern Territory has the lowest rate of retention between Years 7 and 12, with only 31% of Indigenous students completing secondary education, compared with the national average of 65%. This is indicative of systemic issues in supporting students through their educational journey.

There has been a lack of support for Indigenous education, with a significant decline in secondary programs for Indigenous students due to inadequate budgets. This affected both remote and urban schools. Many schools could no longer afford to staff these programs, leading to disengagement and increased dropout rates.

The previous government failed to fully implement the Gonski recommendations, despite promises to do so, leaving many public schools underfunded. This lack of adequate resources hindered efforts to improve educational quality and equity.

These failures under the previous Labor government highlight systemic issues within the Northern Territory education system concerning funding allocations, support for remote Indigenous education and overall educational outcomes.

The CLP has a clear set of priorities for education. This includes increasing school attendance. I am someone with real-life experience in this space. I have led truancy prosecutions and a school enrolment and attendance

measure, which you might know as when Centrelink payments are affected by school attendance. I led these programs across the NT and I have seen the successes. The main problem with these programs is the implementation; they are not implemented properly and the case management supports that are wrapped around these programs are inadequate. You need to implement these programs properly, and it is not easy. It is about having a backbone; the CLP has a backbone.

Under Labor, not only did key metrics in those spaces go backwards but also schools were victims of Labor's crime crisis, impacting teachers, students and families of entire school communities. I am glad to say that this agreement is not only about funding, but about equity, excellence and ensuring every child in the NT has access to a quality education regardless of their background or where they live.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement aims to address the significant educational inequities that have persisted in the NT for far too long. Under the agreement, to commence in the next school year, the Commonwealth will contribute an extra $737m to the Territory's education system between 2025 and 2029, while the NT Government will spend an additional $350m over the same period.

Through this agreement, this government acknowledges that we are taking concrete steps to bridge the gap between urban and remote schools. The funding will attempt to ensure that resources are directed to where they are needed the most, particularly schools serving disadvantaged communities.

Under this agreement, NT government schools will benefit from enhanced support for students and expanded remote secondary provision. Whole-school approaches to wellbeing and inclusion will be included. These initiatives are crucial for improving student outcomes and providing a supportive learning environment for all students. By continuing with the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, we are investing in our children's future and ensuring they have the tools they need to succeed.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement also focuses on growing and diversifying our teaching workforce. By providing support to strengthen teacher practice and collaboration, we are building a workforce of confident and capable educators who can deliver high-quality education to all our students. This commitment to professional development is essential for attracting and retaining teachers in the NT.

One of the stand-out features of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is its emphasis on genuine partnerships with communities. By fostering local engagement and decision-making, we empower communities to have a say in their children's education. This approach not only strengthens community ties but also ensures that educational initiatives are culturally relevant and effective.

The agreement sets clear targets for improvement, such as increasing Year 12 certification rates by 7.5%, boosting Aboriginal employment numbers in schools and raising student attendance to 79.7%. These targets provide a road map for progress and hold us accountable for delivering results.

I acknowledge effective reforms under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement include:

- enhanced support for students, like the Year 1 phonics checks
- evidence-based teaching and targeted supports, like small-group tutoring for students falling behind
- greater wellbeing support through student wellbeing officers and multidisciplinary teams in schools
- workforce initiatives to attract and retain teachers and school leaders, especially in the schools that need that additional support
- high-quality professional development and learning for teachers and school leaders
- increasing Aboriginal employment numbers in schools
- community engagement by strengthening local governance arrangements in remote communities
- establishing local engagement and decision-making committees in schools to ensure Aboriginal voices are represented
- the community-led schools initiative, which will be implemented further
- implementing a data-driven system-wide school improvement framework

- providing tailored and differentiated support to schools based on their needs

- expanded remote secondary provision to improve access to secondary education in remote areas.

Although the full effects of these reforms may take some time to materialise, the agreement appears to address the key areas of need in the NT education system, particularly in regard to equity, student support, workforce development and community engagement.

There are several key areas of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement that need addressing. The agreement lacks a clear definition of 'equity' and specific targets to narrow achievement gaps between students from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds. There are no mechanisms to hold us accountable for meeting equity targets until schools are fully funded, which could be years away.

The learning equity targets based on NAPLAN scores could lead schools to focus on students just below or above target levels, potentially neglecting the most disadvantaged students. This approach could increase achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

This agreement also locks in underfunding for public schools for the next decade. It allows for extended timelines to reach full funding in bilateral agreements, meaning some public schools might not achieve full funding until the mid-2030s.

Although there are specific overall targets, like increasing Year 12 completion rates, targets for disadvantaged students are often vague, requiring them to only trend upwards. The agreement relies heavily on reading and numeracy NAPLAN targets, ignoring other literacy domains and broader curriculum areas.

New reporting and transparency requirements could add administrative burdens to schools and systems that are already overburdened in this space.

The agreement does not address fundamental issues in the education system or reverse growing inequities between the public and private systems.

There are ongoing negotiations and disagreements between the federal government and some states and territories which could impact the agreement's implementation. The agreement is unlikely to end the longstanding debate and conflicts over school funding in Australia.

These criticisms suggest that although the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement aims to improve educational outcomes, its design and implementation may fall short of addressing core equity issues and could potentially exacerbate existing educational inequalities.

The impact of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement on independent schools appears to be limited. The agreement primarily focuses on public schools, but there are few key points relevant to independent schools. Independent Schools Australia (ISA) welcomed the release of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, commending as positive initiatives the focus on evidence-based teaching, early intervention through phonics and numeracy checks and enhanced wellbeing support.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement aims to fully and fairly fund all Northern Territory schools by 2029, but the agreement does not appear to include significant new funding or reforms specifically targeted at independent schools.

On average, every student in Northern Territory public schools will receive $33,764 more over the lifetime of the agreement. Every non-government school student will be $7,596 better off over the same period. Given this, there are concerns that the previous government would not support independent schools with the resources needed to fully realise the potential of these reforms and share valuable learnings and practices across sectors.

The education system incorporates all schools, government and non-government. The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is a missed opportunity to deliver real outcomes for all schools that will deliver the collective goal of a better and fairer education system.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement includes strengthened reporting and public transparency requirements about how taxpayer funding is invested, which will apply to government and non-government approved authorities.

The agreement maintains the focus on fully funding public schools with $16bn of additional investment for public schools on the table. There is no mention of changes of funding arrangements for independent schools. Although the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement introduces reforms and increased funding for public schools, its direct impact on independent schools appears to be minimal. There are many independent schools in remote locations across the Northern Territory.

The main effects seem to be increased transparency requirements and potential opportunities for sharing best practices across sectors; however, independent school representatives have expressed disappointment that the agreement does not provide more support or resources for their sector to participate in and benefit from the proposed reforms.

The CLP agrees that although the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is a win for Territory schools and students that addresses many longstanding challenges in our education system, it is another Commonwealth bailout. It is an investment in our children, teachers, and communities.

By continuing with this agreement we are committing to a future where every child in the Northern Territory has access to a fair and equitable education. We need to work hard to ensure that this agreement is fully implemented and supported. Our children deserve nothing less than the best possible start in life.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for bringing this motion and for her work as the former Education minister in encouraging CDU to bring back teacher education programs for remote teachers. This was important work, and we need to see continued pressure and support for teacher education programs that are appropriate for remote Aboriginal teachers.

We must see university courses that develop training for bilingual schools because so many students in the NT will succeed in education if they are given access to strong bilingual programs that support the development of the English language and other Western knowledge through children's first languages. This is critical.

The CLP was previously strong in its commitment to bilingual programs. In 2012 Terry Mills' CLP government won the bush seats with bilingual policies. Terry Mills was bilingual because he had lived in Indonesia and spoke the Indonesian language.

I note that we have many bilingual speakers in the 15th Assembly. I celebrate the diversity of languages and ESL speakers who are here. This will be encouraging for many Aboriginal children who have previously felt ashamed of their languages. That is part of our colonial history, with the loss of language and children who were stolen from their parents being punished if they ever spoke their own languages.

This was also an education policy of the NT not long ago. In 2008 the previous Labor government brought forward the 'first four hours of English only' policy. This was incredibly damaging for our schools and communities. Many Yolngu educators left our schools at this time and never came back. They took jobs where they were more greatly valued.

Some schools took this policy so far that they locked the gates so that community members could not come into the school grounds. To ensure that no language other than English was spoken in the morning, they shut out the parents, grandparents, elders and leaders. Thankfully, this policy was eventually overturned, but people in my communities still remember the former Chief Minister Eva Lawler, before she became a politician, travelling to our communities to enforce the policy.

Following that we had Direct Instruction, an English-only program imposed on some schools. This program from America cost millions of dollars and saw declining attendance rates for children. Yolngu teachers were worried about the lack of first language use in the classroom.

Our remote schools have also suffered greatly under the policy of effective enrolment that Labor held in place for the last eight years and the CLP had before that. Thankfully, under former Education minister Lauren Moss a review into effective enrolment was called. It clearly showed that remote schools were being underfunded.

I was pleased to meet the Education minister and department staff yesterday and see that there will be an increased budget for all remote schools in my region and hopefully across the NT. It is good news that we are finally seeing our schools funded on enrolment rather than attendance.

However, I am concerned that the targeted funding for bilingual schools has now disappeared. This will likely impact small schools which will see a small increase in funding based on enrolment, but at the same time

lose funding because the targeted funding for bilingual schools has disappeared. It is bit like now you see it, now you do not, as the money is moved around.

I fought for funding based on enrolment so that our schools can have all the programs that are needed. Bilingual schools have extra expenses for teacher linguists, the production managers who produce the resources in Aboriginal languages and the Aboriginal literacy workers who create the resources and support teachers. These are specific bilingual needs for which, until now, the Education department has provided targeted funding.

This money is well spent. It is an investment in our future. I will be truly disappointed if the department is taking this opportunity to scrap a vital funding stream for our bilingual schools. I appeal to the minister to ensure that bilingual schools continue to be properly resourced for the bilingual programs they run.

I raise concerns about another education policy. Our Year 3 children should not be forced to sit NAPLAN tests. For bilingual speakers this is simply not okay. It does not help them, but harms them, when they sit in front of multiple long tests that they do not understand. The tests should either not be done or be done only in the children's first language. In bilingual schools there is no need to have these tests in Year 3 or Year 5.

In Year 3 students are learning in their own language. They are learning to read and write in Yolngu Matha and they have not seen English before, so putting an English test in front of them is pointless. I ask that consideration be given to removing these tests. I use this opportunity to appeal to the Education minister that the implementation of NAPLAN be reconsidered with these things in mind.

I am pleased to see that sections of the bilateral agreement also support the need to have teachers who are proficient in ESL pedagogy. This is critical for the future of our schools. The NT has 60% ESL bilingual speakers, so we need teachers who can teach these students. Migrant ESL students in Darwin have small classrooms and specialist ESL teachers. They possibly also do not do NAPLAN tests until later when they have stronger English skills. It is important that these children are given the education support they need, and it is important in our communities too.

As I said, I was pleased to meet with the minister for Education yesterday and I am pleased that we will see more money for many remote schools next year. I am pleased that this government has committed to the bilateral education agreement with the federal government.

Schools need to allocate the increased funding to local Aboriginal educators who can develop the Aboriginal education component that will sit side by side with Western education. If we invest greatly in *raypirri* (*rom*), which is the Yolngu education system that is about Yolngu knowledge and discipline and teaches kids about kinship, songlines, country, seasons, respect and more, I believe that we will see an increase in attendance and a decrease in some poor behaviours. Our children will be engaged in education if they know it connects to their language and culture and if they have local educators helping them to learn English and new concepts that are taught through their first languages.

I call on the minister and the department to please make sure that these increased budgets are spent on employing community elders and leaders and running strong language and culture programs for every school day that sit side by side with literacy, numeracy and all other programs. I hope we will see music, art and VET programs that will engage our young people in learning and bring kids back to school where they can get strong skills for the future.

I am concerned that homeland schools are not mentioned in this bilateral agreement. Homelands are our clan estate country where children can feel safe and have confidence. We have high rates of school attendance. We must have a strong commitment to homeland schools because this is where we will see strong outcomes for students. At Garrthalala Homeland many students are graduating and moving into work on country. This is promising to see. I encourage the minister to visit these schools and spend time seeing how valuable our homeland schools are and how little resources they have.

I look forward to working with this government to get better outcomes in education. I do not believe this should happen by using truancy officers; rather, schools should employ local leaders and elders who have a strong connection with community. This combined with strong Aboriginal language and cultural programs will bring kids and families back to school.

We must encourage all the community to be a part of the school, but the department must do its part. It must listen to the community and implement genuine community-led schools. I will work with this government to

get the best outcomes that we can, but this needs to be a partnership between Aboriginal elders and leaders, our communities and the government.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I support this motion and thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it before the Assembly. This motion calls for the CLP government to uphold in full the bilateral Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, signed by the Territory Labor government and the Commonwealth Government. This is to get on the public record that no public school student or public school across the Territory should be worse off in the future.

The former Territory Labor government made significant strides in advancing education, aiming to empower individuals and communities to best engage our kids and see the positive results. This included increasing access to quality education, improved infrastructure and the implementation of progressive policies. The Territory Labor government invested in teacher training, technology integration and curriculum development to equip students with the skills necessary for success in the modern world.

We recognise that investment in education helps Territory children to have the best start in life and reach their full potential. When asked about the CLP's commitment to the agreement, the Minister for Education and Training stated in Question Time last Wednesday:

> *… the CLP government will be honouring the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement … We will not go back on that agreement … we will be 100% honouring that agreement.*

However, it seems there is confusion between one wing of the CLP and its other half—which CLP members may need to clear up for the Assembly—because in an interview with ABC radio on 25 September the CLP candidate for the federal seat of Solomon, Lisa Bayliss, let slip the CLP's initial reluctance to honour the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. She said, 'This is $1.5bn the Territory government has got to come up with. Where will we find funding for that? That is an enormous amount of money. That will be a real challenge, I think, for the Territory government'.

Under this agreement all Northern Territory public schools will be fully and fairly funded to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard by 2029. The Australian Government will invest an additional $737m from 2025 to 2029, with the Northern Territory Government committing to invest an additional $350m over the same period. This means that Northern Territory schools will reach their full and fair funding levels two decades earlier than they would have if funding continued under the original settings. This means more resources to schools across the Territory and more support for the students and teachers who need it most.

It is concerning to hear to that Lisa Bayliss, the CLP candidate for Solomon, has already cast doubt on the CLP government's intention to honour this agreement for Territory children. Is this really who Territorians want to see representing us in Canberra—someone who is not prepared to stand up for Territorians? This agreement will ensure every child, through an adequately funded school education, will get a better start in life regardless of where they live in the Territory.

We all understand that the Northern Territory schooling system operates in a challenging socioeconomic and geographic context, requiring significant expertise and resources to deliver quality education for Territory kids. In the Territory service delivery is higher than in other jurisdictions, with 71% of NT government schools located in remote and very remote areas, but education is a fundamental right for every Territorian. It is the key tool which can drive every child forward, nurturing critical thinkers, problem solvers and lifelong learners who contribute positively to their community and the Territory.

This funding will help provide access to quality education, prepare students for diverse career paths and foster a love of learning and the curiosity that Territory kids have. That is why education has been and will always be a core Labor value. That is why we:

- delivered a record investment of $1.34bn in education services in the 2024 budget
- passed the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 to promote child safety and wellbeing, clarify suspension and expulsion rules, enhance assessment and review procedures and improve financial viability
- delivered Families as First Teachers in remote areas under the NT Remote Aboriginal Investment strategy, with 55 programs funded throughout the Northern Territory
- provided $40m of funding for on-country learning initiatives to boost attendance and engagement in all 46 Central Australian schools

- delivered four science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics centres, otherwise known as the STEAM program.

Education is a pillar that Territory Labor can always be proud of when we look back on our achievements as a government. We will never talk down Territory kids, which is why we will always be proud of securing this landmark deal of 100% funding for Territory public schools. Territory Labor also made sure that under the agreement the most disadvantaged schools will receive the additional funding first. This means enhanced support for students, increased resourcing for schools, funding certainty for schools, more educators and support staff in schools, genuine partnerships with community and early years phonics and numeracy checks will all be provided first to the schools that need it the most.

This agreement will reshape the schooling landscape in the Territory and the 51 schools that dot its map. Thirteen of those dots are in the Daly electorate, including Adelaide River School, Berry Springs Primary School, Batchelor Area School, Belyuen School, Douglas Daly School, Dundee Beach School, Palumpa school, Peppimenarti School, Pine Creek School, Tipperary Station School, Woolianna School and Woolaning School. The teachers and support staff from these schools do amazing work. I acknowledge them for their efforts, especially with World Teachers' Day coming up this Friday.

This motion asks the CLP to uphold the full funding of Territory public schools. Why is it that we hear from one member of the CLP that the government probably will not do it and we hear from the minister that it will? Where is the consistency? Why should kids in the Daly or across the Territory potentially have to attend a school that is not fully funded by the choice of their own government? Why should we, as representatives of our electorates, face the possibility of telling parents, teachers, principals and hundreds of kids that they may not receive the education they could have?

This is historic funding. We know that improved education outcomes have a direct link to kids going on to be positive, contributing members of the community. Education has the power to change lives, and Territory Labor secured this investment for young Territorians to get the skills and knowledge they need to get started in a job, position themselves to lead a good life and contribute to their local communities.

We have amazing public schools in the Northern Territory. No representative in this building hates the idea of attending a local school assembly to watch kids thrive in fantastic learning environments. This agreement is about making fantastic learning environments even better.

I am a proud representative of the Daly electorate and proud to be a part of the Territory Labor Party that secured this agreement for our schools. This agreement can mean enhanced support for students in Adelaide River School; increased resourcing for Batchelor Area School and Pine Creek School; more funding certainty for Berry Springs school; more educators and support staff for schools in Belyuen, Peppimenarti, Wadeye and Emu Point; and genuine partnerships with communities, which they deserve. This is what full funding can be for schools in my electorate and across the Territory.

We all want Territory kids to succeed. We want opportunities for Territory kids to be leaders in the industries that will shape the future of the Territory, but that also means there is no better time to take this funding offer and back Territory kids.

I commend this motion to the House.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion, and I wholeheartedly support it.

Every Territorian deserves a quality, free education regardless of their background or location. A quality education is one that provides students with the space to learn and develop their skills, creativity and a sense of self. A strong public education system across remote, rural and urban NT is key to building a fair, successful and cohesive society from which we all benefit.

Territory public schools and educators do some of the heaviest lifting in the country when it comes to educating our kids. We need to be backing them with fully funded schools. It is concerning, therefore, that Northern Territory public schools have been some of the most underfunded schools in our country.

This agreement, if honoured by the CLP government, will see schools reach their full funding level by 2029. Given the chronic underfunding of our schools and the high needs of the children in our community, I urge the government to deliver the funding in full by 2025 as a matter of urgency. It is only through quality and

fully funded public schools that we will be able to address some of the many societal issues that we discuss in this Chamber.

The review to inform a better and fairer education system found that Australia has one of the most socially segregated school systems in the OECD. This is shocking and unacceptable. The review found that concentrations of social disadvantage in specific schools are having a profoundly negative impact on student learning over and above the impact of individual socioeconomic status. The review also found that high concentrations of social disadvantage are generally found in the public system, and that non-government school fees and enrolment practices can be prohibitive for low-income families.

We must consider this when discussing school funding. We should do everything in our power to ensure that the inadequate funding of public schools does not continue. This undermines equity and achievement in our schools and the effectiveness of expenditure on education. This is what worsens poverty and disadvantage in our communities and fuels the social issues we are seeing in our community. This is what limits our children's chances in life.

The CLP government has in its power the ability to change this and give our NT kids a chance in life, no matter their location or their socioeconomic status. I call on the CLP government to honour this agreement, to back our students, educators and communities across the Territory and to fully fund our public schools.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I support the Leader of the Opposition's motion calling on the CLP government to fully commit to Labor's Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.

It is always an honour to speak in this parliament, but I am particularly pleased to talk about education. When I was growing up on the Tiwi Islands I went to Milikapiti School from preschool up to Year 7. I did not have a scope or idea of the surrounding society until I went to Kormilda College. There was so much opportunity. You could train or play sports and there were swimming pools nearby, so I stuck it out. That variety of options is what made me come back. Now kids have that opportunity because they have social media and can apply for those programs.

It is fitting that during the sittings fortnight we are focused on keeping kids from heading down the wrong path. We discussed one of the most powerful solutions—education. We know that better education outcomes help young people become positive, contributing members of the community.

That is an important point, especially for those coming from remote areas and kids who speak multiple languages. I echo what the Member for Mulka was getting across about bilingual schools. Someone spoke about English as a second language. That was provided at Kormilda, so kids could sit in on these ESL classes until they were ready to participate in the mainstream classes. That was important. They then would contribute and participate positively.

Investing in education is an investment in a safer, healthier and smarter Northern Territory. I will discuss the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and why it is crucial for schools in my electorate. I will highlight the success story from Gunbalanya, where education is creating jobs and opportunities in the community. Finally I will touch on two important programs, Families as First Teachers, also known as FaFT, and the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program, which I hope the new CLP government will continue to support.

This motion references the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement that the previous Labor government signed with the Commonwealth. This agreement ensures that by 2029 every government school in the Territory will be fully and fairly funded, two decades ahead of the original timeline.

The agreement represents the most significant education investment ever in the NT, with nearly $1.1bn in additional funding, of which the Territory government will contribute at least $350m. Crucially, this funding is needs based, meaning that more resources will be directed to disadvantaged and remote schools. It is great for schools in my electorate and in remote areas. This investment will help address critical areas of need and improve student outcomes; however, this can happen only if the agreement is honoured in full.

The funding will also allow for more flexible and diverse learning pathways, which is needed given that 39% of children in the Territory identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Schools need to adapt to the community, not the other way around, and this agreement will help achieve that.

The Territory has the highest concentration of small schools in remote and very remote areas, with 67% of all NT schools in those regions. When it come to government schools, that number rises to 71%. The Members for Barkly and Namatjira understand the unique challenges of education in remote communities.

With this funding we can expect more resources, improved infrastructure, better teaching and learning conditions and new programs to help students catch up, keep up and finish school.

This is in all our interests. We cannot ignore that many of our communities are among the most disadvantaged in the country. We know that the path out of poverty is employment, and the best way to employment is through education, good housing and access to healthcare. That is why I ran for the seat of Arafura—to fight for educational opportunities for my people that are on par with those available in the major centres. This agreement will help bridge that opportunity gap.

Of course, completing Year 12 is not always the best option for every student, especially for those in bush communities. The government must also provide training and skills opportunities that allow students to reach their full potential, ideally within our own communities. Bush mob do not always do well off country, so we must ensure equal opportunities regardless of location. It is critical to have other avenues of learning built into our education system through skills and training, with apprenticeships and traineeships offered through a package of education and training resources.

A great example of this can be seen in Gunbalanya, a bush school in my electorate that is leading the way in supporting students through their studies while opening pathways to trades and skills. The Gunbalanya secondary campus and trade centre has created strong industry pathways for graduating students, with some earning VET qualifications while others complete their NTCET.

This gives the kids opportunities to get out of their community and work in places like Darwin, Jabiru or Katherine if they wish. This flexibility has been key to their success, with students moving into good jobs ranging from health centres to the Gunbalanya meatworks. For local organisations it means there is a homegrown and skilled workforce at their fingertips, if they choose.

This school is a model for others, and I am incredibly proud of its success. The 230 students enrolled from transition to Year 12, as well as the participants in FaFT, are proof of the power of quality education in the bush communities. I call on the new CLP government to continue to invest in these education programs.

I am proud to have been part of the Labor government that invested in early childhood education. Research consistently shows that the years between zero and five are critical to a child's future success.

I will speak about FaFT (the Families as First Teachers program) which has been transformative. FaFT delivers quality early learning and parent support programs to young children and their families. It develops place-based programs to engage families and communities and build parents' capacity to give their children the best start in life. Taking part in FaFT from a young age sets up these young people and their families for a successful future.

The previous Labor government's $12m investment in FaFT significantly impacted the education journey of many graduates, with research showing that it has led to much better educational outcomes. Engagement and participation in primary and secondary education and beyond significantly improves outcomes.

There are 55 FaFT sites established in the NT. The Labor government was committed to increasing FaFT and prioritising all remote community schools to have a program. I call on the government to continue this.

All this extra funding will be in vain if we cannot attract good teachers, which is why I am proud that the government I was a part of passed an enterprise bargaining agreement that makes our teachers the best paid in the country. I acknowledge the new CLP government for honouring this agreement, because filling teacher shortages is essential. I think we can all agree that teachers deserve it.

All the education workers in my electorate do an incredible job, including teachers, assistant teachers, cultural teachers and school leaders from Gunbalanya, Jabiru, Manmoyi, Maningrida, Milikapiti, Nguiu, Pularumpi and Xavier. Thank you for educating, guiding and inspiring our students and making the Territory a better place. A special shout-out goes to the Aboriginal teaching staff whose cultural knowledge is critical to the classroom experience. We need more of you, and that is where the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program comes in.

The RATE program focuses on creating a local workforce of teachers who understand and belong to their community. The beauty of this program is that it looks at the talent and capability that already exists in remote communities. Educators support and create a formal pathway to recognise and value local teaching staff. This program is excellent because it allows community members to get formal qualifications through the

RATE program whilst still living and working at home in their remote communities. This results in better completion rates and more teachers.

The RATE program operated in the 1980s and 1990s across many remote communities in the Territory under what was called the remote Indigenous training education program. RATE students from that era continue to work in their community schools as assistant teachers and fully qualified and registered teachers. Many became senior teachers and school principals in communities like Gunbalanya.

Thankfully Labor reinstated the RATE program, but the CLP left a gap in a generation, causing massive damage to bush schools and student outcomes. We know how critical homegrown teachers are to our communities because education is about relationships. This program is essential for increasing teacher numbers and ensuring better educational outcomes. I hope the CLP will not repeat the mistake it made the last time it came into power.

Kids out bush need to be prepared for a future different from the one they are growing up in. Aboriginal students walk in two worlds and the education system needs to recognise this and deliver for them. Labor believes where you were born and who your parents are should not determine the education you get. This is core to our beliefs as a party.

In conclusion, I urge the new government to continue the previous government's strong record in education, honour the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement in full, support the continued rollout of the FaFT program and build on the success of the RATE program. Together, we can ensure that all Territory students—whether they are out bush or in town—receive the education they deserve.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, World Teachers' Day is coming up on Friday. I give a shout-out to all the teachers in my electorate and across the Northern Territory. Thank you for all the work you do. The teachers whom I have met do an incredible job in many Barkly schools, such as the high school and primary school in Tennant Creek and in the remote communities.

Essentially, what I heard was the Labor Party trying to rewrite history. It is incredible. I have heard various statements, such as 'a record investment in education', 'a sustainable workforce', 'a homegrown workforce' and 'investment in housing and health'. I think it was the Member for Daly who said that there had been significant strides in improving education infrastructure. That caught my attention because it is certainly not my experience in the Barkly.

The motion is that the Assembly calls on the CLP to uphold the bilateral Better and Fairer Schools Agreement in its entirety to ensure that every school in the Northern Territory is fully funded by 2029. From listening to speakers on the other side, one would think that Labor started delivering on this agreement, but it had not. Labor did not start to deliver one bit of this agreement because the agreement will start next year.

I am proud to say that the CLP government will be committing the $350m to support education in the Northern Territory on top of the $737m committed by the federal government. I am proud to be part of the CLP government that will deliver better education for schools in the Northern Territory because what I have seen in the Barkly and looking back at some of the Labor government promises made over the last eight years is appalling. I will get to that.

Labor failed Territorian children over the eight years it was in government. Under Labor the NT education system became a national embarrassment following an investigation by the *Australian* published in January this year. It was a front-page story, 'NT schools in crisis'. They are; NT schools had been in crisis for eight years under the previous Labor government. That investigation highlighted the mismanagement and failures of the Labor government. For each of 'school attendance', 'performance', 'safety' and 'funding', Labor got an F for fail. That is how it was rated.

Under Labor the NT had the worst educational outcomes in the nation. When the then Education minister—who went on to be the Chief Minister—was asked about the failings on her watch, she said that the *Australian* reports were a miscalculation. I think that same minister, who was also the Treasurer, was the person constantly miscalculating the budget. I am not sure what calculator she was using, but she had trouble calculating anything. Describing that article as a miscalculation is nothing but a Labor excuse.

Despite overwhelming evidence showing the true state of NT education, the Education minister went on to say that we have a strong, robust education system. That was trotted out by those on the other side of the Chamber, so anyone who did not know the history of what Labor delivered over eight years would think that everything has been fine in the Northern Territory.

Over the last eight years under Labor there was a drastic decline in school attendance. Since 2016 school attendance Territory-wide has gone from 80.8% to 74.3%; in my electorate of Barkly it has gone from 62% to 46%. These incredible failures by Labor over eight years were highlighted in the *Australian*. Some of these statistics are appalling. In the Big Rivers area attendance dropped from 71% in 2016 to 58% in 2023. Attendance in Central Australia has dropped to 66%; East Arnhem is down to 54%; and since 2016 school attendance in Darwin has gone from 88.7% to 83.6%. In the last eight years Labor failed to deliver educational outcomes for young Territorians. Last year not one region met the national average on school attendance. This is clearly unacceptable.

Labor abolished truancy officers who had the power to get young kids to school. Instead, the Labor government's $10m engagement strategy saw an increase in attendance of only 0.6%. I remember when that strategy was published because it was about the same time that Labor scrapped the early childhood quality adviser position in Tennant Creek. On one hand it released an education strategy saying that this is the great work it is doing and will do, but on the other hand it scrapped education positions in Tennant Creek. That is appalling.

Labor failed to enforce the importance of kids going to school and ignored the law which states that all children over six years old must go to school. The Territory Families annual report from 2022–23 showed only 24 family responsibility agreements were entered into. I keep handy this media release from 20 June 2020 in which Labor said:

> *Family Responsibility and Accountability: returning Family Responsibility Agreements and Orders that were previously scrapped by the CLP government—allowing agreements to be made and courts to order families of troubled youths to participate in family group conferencing and counselling, education or training, housing management and financial counselling or on-country programs.*

I have previously pointed out that statement is another blatant lie by the Labor government. When Labor said that the CLP scrapped family responsibility agreements, it had not. It is a lie put into a media release. Not long after this, it was drawn out during Estimates that family responsibility agreements had never been scrapped by the CLP. I discovered that family responsibility agreements existed, but in the Barkly the Labor government at the time had regulations in place preventing family responsibility agreements from being used. That is a short story about family responsibility agreements, so it is hard to give Labor members any credibility when they start talking about education.

Compliance and infringement notices have been ignored. This year only 16 infringement notices have been issued. Over the past four years 132 infringement notices have been issued to parents who repeatedly broke the law by not sending their children to school.

Under Labor Territory kids lagged behind the rest of the country in writing and maths. These results are extraordinary.

With the short time I have to speak it is important that I talk about the Barkly electorate. I heard statements that Labor made significant strides in improving infrastructure, so I will give you a snapshot of what did in the Barkly for the last eight years. I can tell you that it was not much when it came to supporting young people and families, building the infrastructure and making sure that there was a proper environment for young people to go to school.

One of the first things the Labor government promised was that every school would receive $300,000 under the Building Better Schools initiative. That was announced in March 2018. In the Barkly a number of schools did not receive any of that money until five years later. For example, the school in Ali Curung eventually received a $300,000 playground five years after that program was announced by Labor. There were many times I called for that money.

Another issue in Ali Curung has been the quality of the school. I was Mayor of the Barkly Regional Council from 2017. Since that time, for nearly eight years, I called for the Labor government to do something about Alekarenge School. I will give you the history. Alekarenge School burned down in the 1970s, so we are talking more than 40 years ago. Temporary classrooms were brought into the school and some of them are still there. About five years ago the Australian Education Union described it as the worst school in Australia.

Over the last four years in opposition I constantly hounded the Labor government to do something about that school. What do you reckon it did? It did something; it put in three new classrooms over an eight-year period and did nothing further than that. It removed a couple of old buildings.

When visiting you would stand in different areas and nearly fall through the floor. It was unsafe and unsuitable for children, families and teachers. The school does not even have a proper staffroom for teachers. Alekarenge School does not have the basics that one would expect to see in a school such as a science lab, library, playgrounds, fencing and landscaping; none of that exists. School attendance in the Barkly dropped to 46%, and that is the state of the school at Ali Curung.

Over the last four years I called on the Labor government to do some work at the Newcastle Waters, Mungkarta, Alekarenge, Borroloola, Wogyala and Corella Creek schools. How much do you think it invested? All Labor invested in was three classrooms at Alekarenge.

Earlier this year I visited Borroloola and the high school had closed. On my way back to Tennant Creek, I drove down the Tablelands Highway and stopped in at Corella Creek. There was a padlock on the gate and the school was closed. The grass around the school had grown to waist height, causing danger because during the Dry Season if that goes up in flames, the school goes with it. That school has a house adjacent to it. I found out there was no teacher at Wogyala and no teacher at Mungkarta.

In Estimates this year I asked the then Education minister about the vacancies at Tennant Creek Primary School. Labor did not know how many vacancies there were at that primary school. In fact, when I asked the question I was told there were not any vacancies, even though everybody, except Labor, knew that there were five vacancies at Tennant Creek Primary at that time.

These are some of the challenges and the Labor failures just in my Barkly electorate. What Labor has left behind in the Barkly is shameful. Going through these issues shows that Labor was unwilling to do the work to get kids to school and get learning rates up. Labor did not want to do the work.

It is clear that Labor failed to even recognise there is a problem. We found that schools were unfunded. The federal Education minister, Jason Clare, said that the NT's public school system was only funded 80% of what was recommended under the Gonski review. Labor members try to convince us that they did all this work in education, but over the last eight years education was only 80% funded.

I am proud to be a part of the CLP government because we will deliver on that agreement and invest $350m. As the elected CLP Member for Barkly, I am proud to say that we will eventually deliver that new school for Ali Curung. We will work with families, residents, teachers and students to try to get school attendance rates back up to where they should be.

The Labor government failed my electorate. Without looking around the Territory, I have no doubt it also failed many other electorates, so for Labor members to present information which would suggest they did their job over the last eight years is wrong. The evidence shows that Labor failed young people and their families, and that is why attendance rates, and literacy and numeracy levels are so low amongst students in the Northern Territory.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the members who contributed to debate on this motion about education. Obviously politics is played in this House and we know how it all works, but at the end of the day I get a steady sense of the importance of education from all members who contributed and the passion they have in their roles as local members. I take heart that representatives across the political spectrum—as remote, regional and urban members—are all here to make sure we do our best to create the future we want all Territory kids to have, thriving in a strong and vibrant Territory.

I acknowledge the members who spoke, including the Minister for Education and Training, the Member for Gwoja and the Member for Fannie Bay.

The Member for Mulka has always been a fierce and passionate education advocate. He strongly advocated for the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program, which was returned under the Labor government. The Member for Mulka represented his electorate strongly to reinitiate that program in the Northern Territory.

The Member for Mulka has also been a fierce advocate of bilingual education. It is great that the new minister for Education has learned what bilingual education is in her first sittings fortnight.

Member for Nightcliff, thank you for your contribution. You come with a diverse and new experience in parliament, particularly regarding processes. It is valid and strong to have your thoughts, ideas, concerns and suggestions on the record so that the new government can listen to the diversity of our electorates across the Northern Territory.

The Member for Daly, my colleague the Deputy Opposition Leader, also spoke.

Member for Barkly, we have our differences at times, but you are a fierce advocate of education as well. As bush members we come to this place with a different perspective from our electorates, so I am glad that you are in government as a bush member. It is important with the great result that the CLP got that it does not forget about the bush because the electorates it has are predominantly urban. Member for Barkly, thank you for your contribution and your politics playing, of course, but ultimately wanting the best for your electorate and Territory education.

I acknowledge my father and mother who instilled in me a strong sense of education, which I take with me into this role. I learned about education at all levels, from being a student to becoming a teacher to being a member of parliament who was honoured and privileged to be the Education minister for nearly two years. Therefore, I have seen education from many angles.

We still have a lot of improvements to make, so education is not an area of the Territory that we can afford to skimp on, ignore or push out of the limelight. Our Territory Labor Party is shining the spotlight on behalf of Territorians to ensure the new government continues this journey to invest in education. We need to see a difference in the Territory for the better, and this is where we will see it in a positive and constructive way.

We have planted seeds, watered them and those seeds have grown. We have tended those seeds which have started to turn into trees. That is what knowledge is about; it is passing it on to the next generation. There is a great saying—many members would be familiar with it—that our role as leaders is not to necessarily wait for the shade of that tree to enjoy it, but to grow that tree so that the next generation gets to enjoy the shade. We want to make sure that we are tending to as much as we can in our capacity as local members, representatives and leaders in our communities. This particularly applies to the government ministers, who have the ability and the power to make decisions that, for better or worse, create impact and change for the Territory. We want to see that positive change. I truly believe that of all of us in this place.

Some of those key aspects of that long ongoing journey in education have been put on the record through the contributions to the motion—I appreciate that—with the programs we have seen that really do stand the test of time and create a positive change.

I will mention the Member for Arafura's round-up of the Families as First Teachers program, or FaFT as many people know it. FaFT has been running for nearly 14 years. Some of the Year 12 graduates from Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) in January this year were in the first cohort of children who entered the FaFT program. That is in the Member for Arafura's electorate.

When kids are supported at that early age and their families and carers are well supported, we see that strong link and continued connection to positive interactions and engagement in education. The FaFT program started under a former Labor government, and it is probably one of the most successful engagement and early childhood programs ever seen in the NT. I acknowledge that good work and I am sure that the bilateral agreement will help that program to continue to flourish and see the engagement of children from programs like FaFT into transition and Year 1 in mainstream schools.

Another program members mentioned is the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program (RATE). The Member for Mulka has been a fierce advocate for that.

When I was the Minister for Education in the Labor government, almost everywhere I went across the Top End people talked to me about the success of the RATE program. They asked why we did not have that program, because it was successful in the 1980s and the 1990s. They asked why it had stopped and when they could have it back. At the ministerial decision-making level in Cabinet and the policymaking level, I was able to work with my department at the time to reinstate and reinvigorate the RATE program.

That is a testament to the work, advocacy and the great education legacy of all those remote educators who went through that program successfully and continued to be a part of education. Unfortunately, many of them have passed away, but we honour their legacy and the fact that it does not matter where you go in the Northern Territory, in some of the remotest parts of the Territory you will have fierce advocates for education.

It was an affirming message to me when I was the Education minister that I can make change, so I have the responsibility to look at this program and bring it back. The Labor government did that. That is another area we want to see continued under the new CLP government.

My father, Mick Uibo, was in the gallery today. When I travelled around the Territory as a minister it was amazing to have people I had never met before in places I had never been before come up to me and say, 'You are Mr Uibo's daughter, and he was my teacher', 'He was my husband's teacher 40 years ago', 'He was my lecturer at Batchelor college', 'Your mum worked with me in bilingual education' or 'Your mum worked with me in the department'. I had this proud sense of connection in the education field and I felt the huge weight of responsibility to deliver for this critical part of the Territory's operations and day-to-day life. I also understood and honoured the legacy that educators leave as it can last generations.

I was part of reinvigorating RATE, and the opposition will continue to support the program. We will be asking the new government about how the program is going. Success in that area will have a positive impact on our community schools and the workforce will benefit because that will create opportunities and social and economic strengths.

We also heard about the negative impact of using income management as a punitive measure for school attendance with the truancy officers. The student engagement attendance measure (SEAM) was not shown to increase attendance. If we are to learn from the past and not repeat those mistakes, I urge the new CLP government to take a fulsome approach to attendance policy by looking at the data and what will make a difference. Do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

As a decision-maker who is responsible for the money and resources for education, I urge the new Education minister to do her homework to understand the impact and support informed decisions based on evidence. We want to see a positive impact, not the negative impact we saw in the past when punitive measures did not increase attendance rates.

We have spoken about the diversity of the Territory. Programs like the bilingual education curriculum have flourished in a local context. As the local member, I represent Numbulwar School, which is also a school I taught at. Numbulwar School runs a program that, although it is categorised under the bilingual education banner, is a revitalisation program. The students' first language is Kriol, and the traditional language for our Nunggubuyu people is Wubuy (Nunggubuyu) so the revitalisation program is for the Wubuy language.

Ngukurr community is 150 kilometres from Numbulwar. Numbulwar's closest swimming pool is in Ngukurr, so it would take three hours in a school bus to drive one way for a 40-minute lesson and another three hours to drive back. Hopefully, the Minister for Education and Training can also consider schools in remote places which have their closest swimming place so far away.

At Ngukurr School most kids' first language is Kriol, so it implemented a Kriol program for language engagement. There are seven other traditional languages for the region that have been integrated into the language curriculum and program. The school has taken a different approach because of the different family groups there. Ngukurr also has a 100-plus-year history of the Christian mission. The contact with English came much sooner in that part of the Territory. In 1952 the first missionaries went to Numbulwar.

You can see what benefits can be had from the strengths of each of our schools, whether they are in the Top End, the Central Desert or everywhere in between.

Of course, we have connections to our non-government schools and consider best practice when sharing great programs for students or teachers. For example, Catholic Education Northern Territory had its own Growing our Own program, which was similar to the RATE program principles. It focused on delivering an adult education program to ensure that community members and educators from the schools it has a footprint in have the opportunity and support to become fully qualified teachers in the Catholic education system.

There are great stories. The CLP will lead you to believe it is all doom and gloom in education, but please remember to honour the legacy of those educators, particularly those who have passed away, who fought their whole lives to ensure that their communities and regions have a better future for the next generation.

I will enlighten the House with a great story. A couple of years ago we honoured nine Warlpiri educators as part of a World Teachers' Day ceremony in Alice Springs. A lot of Warlpiri educators had officially retired. Some had been RATE teachers, some had retired and a couple had passed away. We honoured nine Warlpiri educators in Central Australia in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and paid homage to the legacy of education. A lot of these educators should have enjoyed their retirement many years before, but every one of the award recipients was still working in schools in the regions to contribute to the Warlpiri education triangle curriculum by teaching the next generation of language speakers and educators in the Warlpiri region and to fight for support for and access to better resources in the Warlpiri triangle.

It was a humbling experience as an Education minister to be with these educators who had worked in education longer than I had been alive. Some of them—particularly the Warlpiri women—knew my mum through the bilingual education curriculum and the work that had been done. They sat next to me and said, 'We knew your mum. She used to support us in the work that we did.' It was a full circle story.

I truly believe it is two degrees of separation in the Territory, not six. If you do not know someone, someone you know knows that person. Everywhere else the theory is six to be linked to all kinds of weird and wonderful characters. The Territory is a tight-knit community, even though we are spread out over large geography. Our Territory kids, teachers and school principals are too. We can benefit from that network more by honouring that legacy and creating a strong future for our kids, whether they speak English or another language, have a disability, are young or old or are starting or completing their education journey.

Regardless of their sexuality, language, culture, religion or skin colour, all our kids deserve to be put front and centre. I hope that we can see a shift from the CLP government to the positive reinforcement of children and young people in the Territory. Lift up the importance of education so that we can all work together to ensure that we are strong in the Territory.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Importance of Improving Decision-making, Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in our Parliament

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly recognises the critical importance of improving decision-making, integrity, transparency and accountability in our parliament and to that end commits to the following measures:

- re-establishing scrutiny committees that allow for public submissions and thorough review of Bills before the parliament

- limiting government-to-government questions (Dorothy Dixers) in the Chamber to a maximum of two out of every three parliamentary sitting days

- exploring pathways to enhance public engagement and participation in the legislative process, including through citizens' juries.

In 2017 the government introduced scrutiny committees based on the recommendations of its own Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People and the subsequent recommendations of the Standing Orders Committee. At that time, the Chief Minister said:

> *Scrutiny, accountability and transparency is a crucial feature of a healthy democratic society, it protects against corruption and wrongdoing and produces better decision making and greater benefits to the community.*

Scrutiny committees are used in the Queensland Parliament, which like the NT is a unicameral parliament; it has only one House. This means that we do not have the checks and balances and the accountability that is brought by having two Chambers. This need for checks and balances is even more important when we have a parliament in which one party has the overwhelming numbers. To ensure good, democratic process we need to ensure that all voices are heard.

We saw the value of the scrutiny committees in this parliament firsthand during the 13th Assembly. Their presence significantly enhanced our legislative process, allowing for a thorough examination of government actions and policies. Between 2017 and 2020 the scrutiny committees reported on 81 Bills, received 1,179 submissions and recommended changes to 56% of Bills. Of the 194 amendments recommended, the Assembly accepted 166, or 86% of them.

We heard repeatedly in the election campaign that people were sick of politicians and did not trust them to act in their interests. We can change that in this Chamber. Scrutiny committees are one way to ensure that our leaders act in the best interests of the people. They provide a structured forum for examining legislation, enabling input from all stakeholders and consideration of the intended and unintended consequences of any laws before this parliament.

If we had the opportunity to refer the five Bills that we have been asked to vote for in these two weeks to scrutiny committees, I believe we would be making better, stronger, more informed law.

I welcome the CLP's announcement that it will re-establish the Legislative Scrutiny Committee from the next sitting of parliament. As proposed by the opposition on the first day of this parliament, I want a member from the crossbench added to ensure that the committee is not dominated by government members and can properly counterbalance the Chamber. I heard the Leader of Government Business advise that this will be considered, and I look forward to his response on this.

I believe that re-establishing this committee is a clear commitment to a more accountable government, one that values the voices of the people it serves, and I look forward to serving on this committee with fellow members of parliament and being able to enhance our democratic process and increase trust in government.

I also moved that this parliament limit government-to-government questions in this Chamber to a maximum of two out of every three sitting days. This is a crucial step towards ensuring transparency, accountability, and the integrity of our parliamentary processes.

As you may all know, the term 'Dorothy Dixer' originates from a popular advice columnist who was known for answering questions posed by readers, but they were questions she had written to herself. In our parliamentary context, a Dorothy Dixer is a question posed by a government backbencher to a government minister, typically designed to showcase the government's policies and achievements rather than scrutinise them. Although it is important for us to celebrate successes, we must also hold ourselves accountable and engage in robust, open dialogue.

In 2016 our Legislative Assembly introduced a sessional order aimed specifically at reducing the frequency of these Dorothy Dixers in the interests of fostering a more balanced and democratic discourse. This order prohibited such questions on one day of each sitting week, ensuring that we prioritised genuine scrutiny over self-congratulatory rhetoric. Regrettably, this sessional order was not reintroduced at the beginning of the 14th Assembly or the 15th Assembly in October 2024. This absence has created a situation where Question Time has the potential to devolve into a platform for ministers to promote their achievements, rather than engage in the critical examination that our democratic process demands.

By reintroducing this sessional order, we can reaffirm our commitment to good governance. We acknowledge that the role of parliament is to not only celebrate successes but also engage in thorough oversight, ask tough questions and address hard truths. The people of the Northern Territory deserve a government that is willing to be held accountable, and limiting Dorothy Dixers is a meaningful way to facilitate that accountability.

In addition, this motion would encourage a more dynamic and effective use of our Question Time. By reserving it primarily for the crossbench and opposition members, we would empower those who represent the voices of all our constituents, including those who are often on the front lines witnessing firsthand the impact of our policies and decisions. We need to bring these questions to government and compel it to provide thoughtful and comprehensive responses.

I ran on a platform of doing politics differently and of bringing community voice into the parliament. I believe this House should belong to the people, and we need to approach our work of lawmaking for the Northern Territory with the whole community at its heart.

It heartens me to hear CLP members say in this Chamber over and again that they believe in listening to community and doing what the community has told them they want. This is what I believe in too. I know that to ensure all people's views are considered and represented, we need a good process that is beyond mainstream media and privately funded campaigns that often represent vested and special interests. We need processes to make sure there are pathways for people to truly talk about what matters to them and what their ideas are for addressing these concerns.

The CLP talks a lot in this Chamber about its mandate based on the people who voted for it. To be clear, according to the NTEC, the CLP received approximately 48.9% of the primary vote. Our actual mandate in this House is to represent 100% of the Northern Territory. We need to put in place whatever processes we can to make sure we are doing that.

I urge this Chamber to commit to exploring pathways to enhance public engagement and participation in the legislative process. This can include building on existing mechanisms such as Youth Parliament and Have Your Say and developing new processes which have been used in other governments—local, state, territory and national—to bring people into parliament in a meaningful way.

This can include processes of deliberative democracy, citizen panels and citizen juries. I recognise these may be new concepts for people in this Chamber, and I am happy to provide links to resources and information on this, including an excellent resource that I have a copy of here if anyone wants it. It is called 'An introduction to deliberative democracy for members of parliament'.

In brief, a citizens' assembly or a citizen jury is a geographically representative cohort to ensure that the voices of the whole community are heard. It brings people together to consider issues of public importance, provides them with information to make decisions, facilitates a process to make recommendations and then uses those recommendations to inform decision-making.

In our own communities both the Darwin and Palmerston Councils have used this model to help them develop strategic plans and their budgets. These models have been used in South Australia for over a decade. In Victoria and New South Wales there are examples of citizens' assemblies and citizen juries at the local and state government levels facilitating effective and inclusive decision-making. Internationally, many parliaments use this model to great effect, including the Scottish, Irish and German Parliaments. They describe it as enhancing their decision-making processes. These examples illustrate the power of bringing citizens into the fold, ensuring that legislative actions are grounded in the voices of those we serve.

One thing I love about the Northern Territory is that we have a strong belief in doing things differently. We can make this parliament a beacon of democratic innovation and an example of how to truly connect with our communities, listen to their voices and act upon their needs.

I invite you to join with me in committing to this vision of deliberative democracy and create the structures necessary for meaningful public engagement. Together I believe we can reshape our legislative processes to reflect the diverse voices of the Northern Territory. I urge every member of this Chamber to join me in this endeavour.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing this important motion before the Assembly.

I have come in here off the street like any regular person and what I have seen so far in this Assembly, in Question Time and debates, has been a shock. In regard to government questions, or Dorothy Dixers, in what other workplace is it expected that employees ask their bosses questions simply to blow smoke up the bosses' proverbial, for no other reason than to hear their own voices? It is so painful. You can ask a regular person on the street whether they think this is a good use of our time—spoiler, they do not think so. The people who elected us expect us not to waste time and work hard for our high wages. We can show them some respect and get rid of Dorothy Dixers; I will wholly support that. A party that stands by its own policies should not be afraid of questions and feel the need to fill Question Time with fluff from its own members.

I am heartened to see the CLP commit to re-establishing the Legislative Scrutiny Committee which, considering we are a unicameral system with no other House for checks and balances on legislation, is desperately needed. It was disappointing, though, that it has effectively stacked the committee with three CLP members to one opposition and one crossbench member. This is not acting in the spirit of real accountability and leaves me feeling despondent about the sincerity of this government in these accountability measures.

If there is one thing that unites voters across the political divide it is their distrust of politicians. This sentiment is not to be ignored or shrugged off. If left to fester, the public's lack of trust in politicians and our government is dangerous for democracy. With the Territory's history of opaque decision-making, scandals and negligible accountability, the public has every right to be distrustful—but it does not have to be that way.

Throughout the election campaign voters made it abundantly clear to me that they were disillusioned with the lack of integrity in politics. On a personal level, this lack of integrity and the blatant influence of lobbyists on our politicians was a massive driver for me to put up my hand to stand for election. I could see that politics in the NT was not working in the best interests of the people.

It came to light earlier in the year that the previous Chief Minister Natasha Fyles, my local member, had Gerard Richardson, a gas lobbyist, as a senior political adviser. Whilst his lobbying firm was working for a Texan fracking company, the previous Chief Minister was green-lighting fracking in the Beetaloo at the same time. This was and is unacceptable to me and my community, and it should be unacceptable to everyone in this Chamber. It is one of the main reasons that pushed me to run and one of the main reasons I chose to run for the NT Greens, which refuses to take corporate political donations.

This is the integrity that we desperately need in the NT. Both major parties accept tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars from big business, gas and gambling companies and property developers, and they expect us to believe that this does not affect their decision-making, but Territorians are not buying that anymore.

As they say, the best disinfectant is sunshine. If members of this Assembly believe everything they do and every lobbyist they meet with is aboveboard, they should have no problem letting the public know about it.

Here are the integrity and transparency measures that we need to ensure we have a robust democracy that works in the best interests of everyday Territorians.

Politicians in the NT have been tangled up in dodgy donations and lobbyist scandals for decades. This distracts from the work our government should be doing and makes you wonder who the government is really working for. Is it our community or big corporations?

We need to get dirty money out of politics. Both major parties accept substantial donations from corporations, including gambling and gas companies and major property developers. We need to ban political donations from prohibited industries such as gas and fossil fuel companies, mining and resource companies, property developers, construction companies, real estate agents, the liquor industry, gambling corporations and venues with pokies and the tobacco industry.

We need to highlight what goes on in parliament. The NT is the only jurisdiction in Australia without a public lobbyist register. We have the weakest lobbying regulations in the country. We need enduring structures in place that ensure our politicians work for the people first and not their corporate donors.

We need to establish a lobbyist register; demand public diaries for all politicians, so we know who is meeting with them; ensure that any government employee cannot concurrently work for a lobbying firm; reinstate the policy scrutiny committee, which we are doing; and make the rules for alcohol companies attempting to lobby parliament the same as those for tobacco companies in order to reduce alcohol industry interference in health policy.

We also need to make what happens here accountable to the community. The Northern Territory Ministerial Code of Conduct (NTMCC) is not strong enough to stop politicians from getting their personal interests mixed up with their main responsibility, which is to do the right thing for the community. The code of conduct is unenforceable and leaves too much to individuals' discretion.

We need to strengthen the NTMCC to hold our representatives to the federal government standard, stop the revolving door between parliament and private sector jobs by enacting a three-year post-employment prohibition for ministers in industries they have worked with and impose sanctions for breaches of the ministerial and lobbying codes of conduct so that there are real and enforceable consequences. We need to clean up politics and get corporate influence out of parliament. This is how we start working to regain the trust of the public.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak briefly about why I will not support this motion. I agree that the committees part is good. I give the respect to the Member for Johnston to explain that I cannot support a motion that would in any way limit the people of Drysdale whom I represent in this Chamber. That is why I will not support the motion.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing this motion about this important topic.

When Labor returned to government in 2016 public trust was at an all-time low and understandably so, given the circumstances and the performance of the Giles CLP government. Recognising the need for change, the former Labor government moved to introduce key reforms. We openly invited more scrutiny of government to restore the community's trust in government and because it was the right thing to do.

We established the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption to promote transparency and accountability. This was after the CLP refused to establish the ICAC.

We amended the *Public Information Act* to ensure public funds spent on communications activities were focused on providing the community with essential information and not misused by partisan political promotions.

We also got rid of Dorothy Dixers on Wednesdays during parliamentary sittings. I note the CLP has brought them back, denying the opposition and crossbench valuable opportunities to scrutinise the policies and initiatives of this government …

Mr Maley: You brought them back. You had better check your facts.

Mr Edgington: Where have you been living?

Mr Maley: Where have you been for the last four years?

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Cease the interjections.

Mr YOUNG: We fully support the Member for Johnston's call to return to the previous system under Labor where Dorothy Dixers were limited to two out of every three sittings days. This is an opportunity for the CLP members to redeem themselves after they denied opposition members and crossbench members …

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20; interjections. The CLP members have an opportunity to speak on this if they want to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you keep quiet on this side, please.

Mr YOUNG: The CLP denied members, including brand-new members of the House, the opportunity to properly scrutinise the legislation they have rushed through during these sittings. One minute the CLP government made a fuss about bringing back the Legislative Scrutiny Committee and the next it said, 'But we will not actually put any of our legislation through it; it is just for show.'

Mr Maley: You took it away.

Mr YOUNG: There is a theme emerging from CLP members about expecting others to meet standards they do not think they apply to them.

Mr Maley interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, stop interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: I will put on the record a number of other initiatives that the former Labor government introduced to improve the transparency and accountability of government. In December last year the Territory Labor government announced a review into the reporting of the ministerial conflict of interest and declarations register. Even though there is a number of legislative controls and procedures in place regarding conflicts of interest, it is timely to review current practices, examine their adequacy and make recommendations to strengthen policy, practice and procedures. The then Chief Minister, Eva Lawler, committed to implementing all 12 recommendations from the review to improve transparency and governance and make more information readily available for Territorians. It is a question for the CLP government as to whether it will continue with this important transparency reform.

We would very much welcome the establishment of a lobbyist register, as suggested by the Members for Johnston and Nightcliff. We fully support you on this.

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: I pick up on the interjection from the Deputy Chief Minister. This is a question to you, as you are now in government. You hold 17 of the 25 seats, so you have the power to do this.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Stop the interjections, please.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 18; when the member is speaking, he should direct his commentary through the Chair and not at the deputy leader.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Fair enough, but I ask all members to stop interjecting and let the Member for Daly speak.

Mr YOUNG: The CLP said that it would introduce one, but let us watch this space.

Another area where the former Labor government enhanced transparency was in detention centres. This was an incredibly important step to ensure the community had confidence that our facilities were free of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. We all well know about the incidence of this sort of treatment that was uncovered through the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. It was right that we shone a light and allowed greater scrutiny of these facilities.

In October 2022 the former Labor government passed the Monitoring of Places of Detention (Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture) Amendment Bill to allow inspectors full access to places of detention across the NT. The changes also enabled inspections at places such as mental health services.

The Northern Territory Ombudsman monitors police watch houses, correctional facilities and court watch houses. The Children's Commissioner is responsible for all places where children under 18 years are detained, and the Principal Community Visitor is responsible for mental health and forensic disability facilities. The amendments gave agencies with the power to investigate allegations of torture to have unrestricted access without needing to notify before their arrival. We continue to support full and open access to these facilities by independent inspectors.

It is incredibly important that we are treating Territorians in detention, particularly vulnerable children, with appropriate care and respect. We expect the CLP to maintain this standard, given the range of punitive laws it introduced in these sittings.

Again, I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing on this important motion. The Labor opposition is supportive of your efforts to improve the transparency and accountability in our parliament through the measures you have proposed, so thank you.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is an important motion. I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing it to the Assembly because it provides us with an opportunity to look at what is being proposed and what the future direction should be. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, we will support this motion and support a register for lobbyists; it is an important step in the right direction.

We heard from the government that it wants to do things differently. Tonight is an opportunity to show that you will do things differently. You have been critical of Labor and what happened in the last Assembly and you have acknowledged the work that was done in 2016 in the first term of the previous Labor government. You are critical, but not wanting to change. You have the opportunity to amend the motion, put in additional provisions and talk about things; instead, the Members for Nelson, Brennan and Katherine come in here and laugh. They have all been chuckling.

Mr Maley: It is General Business; it is your day.

Mr PAECH: This is the parliament's day. It is General Business day, Member for Nelson. I know you have not been here long enough to understand how the parliament works, but let us be clear: today is a parliamentary day; it is General Business day.

Mr Maley: Yes, you finally got it!

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Nelson making fun of this motion, but the Member for Johnston is representing her constituency. The good people of Johnston and the Northern Territory have an opportunity to have an added layer of accountability and oversight to restore integrity in this parliament.

The CLP keeps saying, 'We'll do things differently. We'll be more transparent, open and accountable.' Why are you hiding from supporting this motion and allowing these changes to come in? We have heard from only one member of the government, a backbencher, who spoke for less than three minutes.

Mrs Hersey: It is your business day.

Mr PAECH: It is hilarious that the Education minister throws those interjections. The Member for Katherine said, 'It is your business day'. No, it is parliament's day. The people of Johnston, Nightcliff, Gwoja, Arafura, Arnhem, Daly and Mulka should not be seen as any less equal because we are not in government. This is every constituent's day to have a motion debated in the parliament about transparency and accountability and making sure parliament makes good decisions.

You brought in five Bills in the last two weeks that have had no scrutiny, oversight or consultation. We found out that they were not that urgent because they do not start until January. They could have gone to a scrutiny committee, had a public hearing and been spoken about.

The CLP lied to Territorians about the bail Bill because it will not start until January. You said that it was urgent and had to be done, but, no, you could have debated it here. You pat yourselves on the back saying, 'We're great. We're doing things differently', but you are not. You talked about bringing in a scrutiny committee, but what did you do with the committee? You dominated it with your own government members. There are three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member.

Ms Uibo: Everything you said that you did not want to do.

Mr PAECH: That is what you have been saying you did not want to do. Did I say that we were perfect? No. Was there room for improvement? Absolutely. But you are doing exactly what you criticised us for doing when we were in government and you were in opposition. Actually it is worse because your treatment of the Independent members of parliament is atrocious. They are brand-new members of this parliament and you are laughing at their motions for transparency, accountability and being open.

Mr Yan: I am laughing at your comments about transparency.

Mr PAECH: There we go; the Treasurer is saying, 'Your comments'. That is a childish attitude. You are meant to be a Minister of the Crown and you are in here laughing about accountability and transparency. I am flabbergasted.

The only government member who had the courage to speak on this motion was the Member for Drysdale. Although he does not support it, at least he had the guts to say that he does not support it. It might have been 20 seconds worth, but it was something.

This is an opportunity for everyone to come together, talk about it and acknowledge that everyone in this parliament needs to do better when it comes to transparency, openness and accountability. We should all be working together to rectify the provisions that need to be tightened.

The fact that there was not a contribution from any of the ministers and there are interjections saying, 'This is your day, so we will not speak' is alarming. This is not our day; this is a parliamentary day when we put forward ideas. If the government has issues with the motion presented by the Member for Johnston or the contributions by the Members for Nightcliff and Daly, a CLP member could move an amendment to add something that they think would be better or move an amendment to remove something.

It is alarming that you are so arrogant you do not even feel it is appropriate to contribute to this motion. It is a message to Territorians that your actions speak for themselves. You talk the big talk but you cannot walk the walk. There will be a scrutiny committee that is dominated by the government and will have a government Chair. The CLP criticised the former government for doing this, but it is doing the same thing.

This government could have allowed the two brand-new members of the crossbench an opportunity to look at and talk to people about the Bills, but it rushed through the legislation on urgency. It became apparent that the legislation will not even commence until January when the Member for Johnston asked the Corrections minister about it. The minister was clearly struggling at the time; he did not know what he was saying and let the cat out of the bag. It cannot be that urgent because if it was, you would have taken it to the Administrator and had it gazetted and commencing.

That is where we are at; it is not open, transparent or accountable. The fact that no-one is willing to talk tonight speaks a huge volume. The Member for Drysdale is the only person from the government who has spoken on this. There is a range of things in the motion. It is a big motion; I will admit that.

I will also admit that you have attempted to look like you are doing something by establishing your scrutiny committee, but again it is everything that you criticised the previous government for. You are doing everything you said you would not do. I do not see the new members of the government in the same light as many of

the Cabinet ministers who, when in opposition, were kicking and screaming about the unfair treatment they felt they were getting but who have just adopted all that.

The citizen jury is a great idea to engage people more in the parliament. The register is important. They are all great ideas, and we should have more time to talk about them to understand them.

We are also hearing from the government that its consultation was done by its candidates in an election. That is not consultation; it is people talking and promising the world.

It is a great disappointment that we cannot come together on this important motion. Member for Johnston, this should not be the end of the commitment to bring these motions about transparency and accountability, because it allows each of us to have those important conversations about reforming things. People make mistakes, there is no denying that, and when you have conversations you can talk about how you can enhance existing measures or bring in new measures. It is important to talk about that, and we should do so.

Member for Johnston, thank you for bringing the motion. Member for Nightcliff, you raised some important points, as did the Member for Daly. What the Member for Johnston proposed does not erode or stop the voices of any local community; it enhances those voices and enables people to have those conversations.

Let us be clear: if you do not live in the Top End, your constituents are often so far removed from the halls of power that they feel voiceless and powerless. This motion proposes opportunities to engage with our citizens so that they are more democratically involved. Groups can go out and meet people in communities, have those public hearings and do that important work.

The Member for Daly spoke about the previous government and the work that was undertaken from 2016 to 2020 by those scrutiny committees. It was good but there was room for improvement. They disappeared; I acknowledge that. Should they have disappeared? No. Should they come back? Yes.

Mrs Hersey: What did you do about it?

Mr PAECH: Member for Katherine, I pick up on your interjection. We are talking about it now. I want to hear your contribution on this, because you have done exactly what you were critical of the former government for doing, which seems to be …

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Stop the chatter.

Mr PAECH: It seems to be a rotational thing. There is crickets from the Member for Katherine when we talk about transparency and accountability. We are here to have those important conversations.

Moving forward, when we discuss Bills, will we see a similar position whereby the CLP decides that a controversial Bill should not go to a scrutiny committee and it will just be brought in on urgency, removing the entire scrutiny process? That is potentially what we will see, and we do not want to see that.

There is heaps of work to be done and it all should be framed around improving parliament for the people. There was work done in 2016 when the Member for Araluen, the former Member for Fong Lim and other Members of the Legislative Assembly travelled to Queensland, which has the same system. It is a unicameral parliament; there is no upper house because it was abolished a number of years ago. It has a similar process to us with Estimates and it has those scrutiny committees.

I remember that work was important. I remember the members talking about their trip and how it could be done with a social and economic lens, so legislation that targets a cohort or a particular issue could be discussed and possible pathways considered. There would be public hearings, not just in the capital city but across the jurisdiction. That is important for people living in East Arnhem Land or in the south-west region of my electorate who often do not get to participate in hearings due to barriers of transport or requirements for financial assistance.

Something we should do—which the Member for Arnhem and I support and which we pushed to our parliamentary colleagues when we were in government—is have regional sittings. Many years ago, under Clare Martin, we used to sit in Alice Springs. We took the parliament there so that people in Central Australia and the Barkly had access and could see parliament in operation. School groups and everyday people got

to see how Question Time worked and how legislation is interrogated, debated and considered in detail. It was a good process.

I acknowledge there were issues with security, the cost of Hansard and the infrastructure needed to accurately record parliament. However, the re-establishment of regional parliamentary sittings is another measure that the government could consider. It would not have to be every year; it could be once a parliamentary term that parliament sits in Central Australia and gives people access to the democratic process through regional sittings. It would be an important step. I would have liked that when we were in government.

Mr Maley: Another Labor failure.

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the interjections; the Member for Nelson clearly does not like Central Australia because he is interjecting about it. However, it is a good opportunity and something we could …

Mr Maley: I just do not like you.

Ms Uibo: What did you get nasty for?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition, can you both cease.

Mr PAECH: They are some options that we could be discussing tonight. The government could propose these things for debate if it did not want to support what the Member for Johnston has put up. We have not heard anything from government members, so we are unable to get an understanding of why they will not support this important motion.

Members, I encourage you to support this motion. I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing it forward. We look forward to supporting it.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for providing an opportunity to address the critical importance of improving decision-making, integrity, transparency and accountability in our parliament.

The suggestion from the Member for Johnston early last week claiming that there is no mechanism to scrutinise Bills before parliament is absurd, as Sessional Order 14 in our new sessional orders for the 15th Assembly clearly defines the functions of the scrutiny committee, including inquiring into and reporting on any Bill referred to it by the Assembly.

As the Leader of Government Business I presented the sessional orders to the Assembly last Tuesday 15 October 2024. These sessional orders established a Legislative Scrutiny Committee made up of government, opposition and crossbench members. The Member for Johnston is a member of the scrutiny committee, as are the Members for Wanguri, Drysdale, Goyder and Gwoja, who we just heard from.

The committee was adopted before the Member for Johnston tabled this motion after we had already moved standing and sessional orders. The scrutiny committee provides opportunity for the scrutiny of legislation and reporting to the Assembly in advance of second reading debates with some consequential amendments to the process of the passage of a Bill to allow for this additional scrutiny where conducted.

Let us not forget that the former Labor government abandoned this committee. In the 14th Assembly there was no scrutiny.

For people in the Assembly who have not seen it, the document I am holding is called Restoring Integrity to Government. That document was tabled in this House on 30 November 2016 by the previous Labor government. Have a look at it when you get a chance, because Labor did not restore any integrity to government. Labor members should be ashamed of themselves.

The interesting thing is that the Member for Gwoja is now on the record admitting Labor made mistakes when in government. I wonder whether he considers abandoning certain elements of parliamentary process such as the scrutiny committee was one of Labor's mistakes. There was a scrutiny committee between 2016 and 2020, but the Labor government that came into power in 2020 scrapped the scrutiny committee to ensure there was no scrutiny of legislation coming into this House.

In relation to limiting government questions in the Chamber to a maximum of two out of every three parliamentary sitting days, the standing orders place no restrictions on who may ask questions, and longstanding practice is that any private member may ask a question. Crossbench members receive the call in proportion to their numbers in this House. There is nothing in the standing orders that prevents Dorothy Dixer-style questions. In fact, parliaments all over the country operate in the same way.

All members should maintain the right to raise issues. Each member in this parliament was elected by the people in their electorate. They should all have an opportunity to contribute in Question Time and debates in this House. To try to restrict that is unparliamentary; in fact, it could likely restrict the notional ability of any member to take part in the proceedings of this House. Restricting members' participation is not what we are about. We encourage participation by all members in this House. I want to make sure that every member in this House has an opportunity to represent their electorate, contribute to debate, ask questions and raise issues.

The House belongs to the people. The people of the Territory vote, and the members elected reflect the views of Territorians. Every member here was elected by Territorians. That is why they are here representing their electorates. To try to restrict that in any way is clearly wrong.

The Member for Johnston is keen to explore pathways to enhance public engagement and participation in the legislative process, including citizen juries. It was interesting to hear the Member for Gwoja say that it is a great idea. Again, I pick up this document because in 2016 Labor was talking about citizen juries. The Member for Gwoja said that it was a great idea, but his government had eight years to do it and it did not. He sat in this parliament for eight years and not once did he raise it in this Chamber, apart from today.

Committees provide the public an opportunity to be involved in the work of the Assembly by making submissions and speaking at hearings and public forums. Parliamentary committees provide a forum for all parliamentarians to play a role in the legislative process. It is incumbent upon the Member for Johnston to seek out, consult and represent the voices of her constituents. The role of every member in this parliament is to get out, consult and speak to their constituents.

It is the Member for Johnston's job to reflect the views of her constituents. It is also my job and the job of everybody in this parliament to reflect the view of their constituents; that is why we were elected and why we are sitting here. It is not about having citizen juries or setting up other processes. My advice to any member is to talk to your constituents and look, listen and learn what is going on in your area and represent those views in the parliament.

Through the committee process the Member for Johnston will be afforded a forum for experts and members of the community to share their views on a proposed policy or law, investigate gaps or shortcomings in existing laws and policies and raise matters critical to the lives and rights of Australians.

In addition, the government has expanded the opportunity for discussion of petitions. We have doubled the length of time that a petition can be debated. Under Labor in the 14th Assembly, a petition provided for only 16 minutes of discussion. In this parliament a petition can be discussed for up to 32 minutes and more members will have an opportunity to contribute. The mover will also have more opportunity to speak to the issues contained in the petition, once again having the opportunity to discuss and represent the views of their constituents.

The sessional orders presented to the Assembly last week provide the community additional opportunity to bring its views to the parliament through its members. All members hold that responsibility through government or general business, debate on matters of public importance, petitions, in adjournment or any other form of debate that allows members to contribute.

To this end there is no need for citizen juries. The Member for Gwoja thinks it is a great idea, and he had eight years to bring in a citizen jury. It was in this document I am holding. The Member for Gwoja said that he likes the idea, even though he failed to do anything about it over the last eight years.

The sessional orders of the 15th Assembly, unlike the 14th Assembly under the former Labor government, enable a vast improvement in mechanisms for improving decision-making, integrity and accountability …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 44; I move that the motion be put.

Motion not agreed to.

Mr EDGINGTON: The motion is about re-establishing scrutiny committees that allow for public submissions and thorough review of Bills before the parliament. We have scrutiny committees.

I have spoken about limiting government questions (Dorothy Dixers) to a maximum of two out of every three parliamentary sitting days. Limiting Dorothy Dixers would limit the opportunity for every member in this House to participate in the process. Every member was elected by people in their electorate to ask questions and participate. Therefore, to try to limit Dorothy Dixers would limit the ability of elected members in this House to represent their constituents.

In regard to the third part of this motion, the idea of a citizen jury was originally placed in the Restoring Integrity to Government document. It was never pursued by the Labor government. A citizen jury is another layer of consultation; it cannot replace what every local member needs to do, which is to talk to the people who elected them.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, the time has expired for General Business.

Debate suspended.

ADJOURNMENT

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

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, like 11 other people in this Chamber, I am brand new. Like all the other new members, I came into this role because I want to make things better in the Northern Territory and in our parliament, and I want us to make good laws. I know we all do. Like every member in this Chamber, that is why I am here.

I have heard the CLP members say that they are committed to integrity and transparency, and I welcome that. I welcome the scrutiny committee and the extension of time for petitions. I am extremely disappointed that the CLP does not want to support what I put on the table in terms of moving towards more integrity and accountability.

I heard the Member for Barkly explain to me what my role is in terms of listening to and talking to my electorate and my community. I understand that role very well, Member for Barkly. I understand that is what I am elected to do and that is what I intend to do.

I was elected on a campaign of bringing integrity, accountability and scrutiny to parliament because people felt like that was not what was happening in this building. My community asked me to try to do this and I have been trying to do it from day one in this Chamber. I do not want to go back to my community and tell it that our government does not support this. I do not want to tell my community that this government does not support extra mechanisms that can bring integrity, accountability and transparency to our political processes.

Mr Maley: Do you want to join the CLP?

J DAVIS: Beg your pardon?

Mr Brown: Let her speak, mate.

Ms Uibo: Stop being so arrogant.

Madam SPEAKER: Let us stop interjecting, and direct your comments through the Chair, please.

J DAVIS: I stand before this Chamber with disappointment but also with hope. I have heard from my fellow new members—when we have had time to spend together—and from the returning members that there is a commitment to doing things better and doing things differently. That is my intention. I look forward, with some disappointment now, to doing that in the future.

I have a bit more time, so in my adjournment speech I will say what I wanted to speak about. I give a shout-out to some people and the members of my community, which the Member for Barkly talked about.

I have hit the ground running in terms of being elected, but the campaign that I ran was engaged with the community, and I have done as much as I can to continue that engagement since being elected. My

community of Alawa, Moil, Jingili and Millner is engaged. People have come to my electorate office—even though it is not an accessible place—to meet with me and tell me the things that they want to make sure I do for them in this parliament.

There are so many people in our community who are worth celebrating. Just to name a couple, there are two young people in the community who recently had amazing successes in the arts field. Omar Gad, who lives in Jingili, went all the way to Edinburgh to compete in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Ciella Williams, who lives in Alawa, just won an amazing award. What an incredible writer, playwright and artist. There are many people in our community, young people, who are doing incredible things, who I want to celebrate.

I give a special shout-out. Throughout my campaign and since I have won, I have been fuelled daily by the Greek men's club at Millner shops, where a group of old, retired men sit and have coffee every morning. I think I might be the first woman who has gone in there and sat down with them. They became my strongest supporters, and they watch me in parliament. They make great coffee, if anyone wants a Greek coffee or a frappe. I shout out to Stan, who is my coffee maker, thank you.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for her adjournment remarks. I think we all share a commitment to wanting to make things better. That is my aspiration in my electorate of Fong Lim. I believe that is the aspiration of everyone in this House in respect of the electorates they all individually represent and that we collectively represent in this great Northern Territory.

Utilising parliamentary mechanisms to their fullest is our obligation as members in this House. Wasting time, speaking superfluously or not utilising the mechanisms at our disposal makes a mockery of the excellent processes we have to work with. I believe there was a great amount of debate today about alternative processes, but it is important for us to acknowledge that there are processes at our disposal that we do not use to full effect, and information at our disposal which we do not use to full effect.

That includes, of course, understanding our economic position. It is difficult to do much without understanding our economic position. There is an enormous amount of debate in this place about how to spend money, without understanding how the money has been spent for a large period, and the economic position we all now collectively share responsibility for taking carriage of.

It has been duly pointed out that everything that happens in this House is the business of all in this House. There is no 'our time' or 'your time'; this is collectively the time of the House. With my brief time at the end of this long day, I will reflect briefly on the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, which was tabled yesterday and which makes extremely important findings that are of significance to everything we have been discussing this week.

The headline, of course, as my learned friend the Treasurer pointed out, is that the net debt to revenue ratio is astronomically high. It is at a staggering 108% in 2023–24. That is 11 percentage points higher than even the absurd 97% that was recorded in the preceding financial year. That is a gross and disproportionate amount of debt, unless you can point to what it is you have to show for that debt.

Debt itself is not always a bad thing. We need lines of credit in order to buy, borrow, spend and create growth, but you must have something to show for it. In eight short years our latest debt position has gone from $2bn to what we will soon find out is approaching $12bn.

What do we have to show for it? Where could that money be collectively better spent? On education, we have heard plenty today. How could that money be more purposefully allocated towards education? Ask yourself those questions. Use your time in parliament wisely to ask those questions is my challenge to you.

We have borrowed beyond our means and have an Aa3 credit rating which has remained unchanged. If it continues that trajectory, good luck borrowing money to do anything useful in the Northern Territory. We are instigating reform to stabilise the Northern Territory. It begins with crime and social dysfunction but it will progress to economic reform. We are committed to rebuilding the economy because without that there will be little left to defend in this Chamber or elsewhere.

Non-financial public sector fiscal balance improvement, which is in the books, is primarily due to revised timing of expected government leases and lease renewals specifically. For the general government sector net operating balance there is a $90m improvement. But what is that owing to? It is owing in no small part to $59m of GST revenue which happened as a result of the upward revision of Commonwealth estimates of national GST collections from the May 2024 budget. I mention that because we did not make money through

judicious saving or by growing our population; we made it through accounting. It is only the tiniest bit of good news in a sea of what is otherwise a horror tale.

Learned colleagues, I implore you, please, before the next parliamentary sitting, learn a little about our financial position before you start beseeching the House for more money on all and everything, to try to improve our prospects collectively.

Bear in mind that GST revenue and Commonwealth grants comprise three-quarters of the money we collect in the Northern Territory to spend collectively on what we do in this place. It is incumbent on us to make judicious use of that money. I put it to you that we have not made judicious use of that money in the last 10 years and specifically in the last eight years of the Labor government.

I eagerly anticipate the opportunity and, more importantly, the necessity of being able to forensically deconstruct Labor's fiscal and economic mismanagement over the course of the last two terms of government. There will be plenty of time ahead to examine financial statements.

Regarding fiscal strategy and objectives, I draw attention to principle 1, sustainable service provision, in this document. As determined by Treasury, over this budget cycle we are not on track, in no small part owing to targets for growth being premised on population growth of 1.1% whereas we are tracking at 0.8%. We are in a state of demographic decline. Do not yawn on the other side of the House; this is the stuff that matters.

Health is the government's largest expenditure category and ideally illustrative of economic mismanagement. Former Health ministers should know well enough that the increased expenditure in hospital services is largely driven by skilled workforce shortages, requiring increased utilisation of high-cost agency labour and overtime. The quantum of that figure is $228m as a result of Labor's mismanagement of the economy. These are failures of Labor's economic policy and it is important to recognise them as such.

How and why do we have this problem? It is because in Labor's relentless pursuit of financial capital and chasing vanity projects, what we have done is sold the farm. Where are the people to work the farm anymore? In the relentless pursuit of financial capital we stopped pursuing human capital. That is why I applaud our government for creating a new ministry for International Education, Migration and Population.

Our government will tackle these issues with gusto because as important as it is to call out to members of our community through adjournment speeches and to recognise the contributions that everybody makes at a granular level, it is also extremely important and incumbent on all of us to recognise what needs to be done at a macro-economic and collective level.

This is important stuff. What I came to fight for in this House—you should be fighting for this as well—is more money and a fairer deal for Northern Territorians so that we can spend that money on public health, housing, education and infrastructure that gets delivered.

Colleagues, at the end of a long day adjournment speeches are often an opportunity to reflect on some of the positives, but our time here is limited. As I said, from my maiden speech onwards, it is important we use our time wisely and the parliamentary mechanisms at our disposal, imperfect as they might be, to prosecute the cases that are required to improve the material conditions of existence for the people in each of our electorates and collectively across the Northern Territory.

Our demographic decline has not fostered economic development and it has had an attendant impact on the quality of life for all Territorians. It has diminished it, not improved it. It is a large part of why our 17-strong government has been given a mandate to act differently to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore lifestyle. We are working through those things collectively and we ask you to work on the journey with us. You can make a contribution with respect to the specifics, but it begins with having a better understanding of our financial position. I implore you to spend the time to get across that detail, interrogate us where possible and compel us to do better.

I am confident that this government will do better and make strides towards rebuilding the economy.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Member for Fong Lim's contribution to the adjournment debate. He is saying a lot about Labor, but all I can think is that he put his hand up for Labor first, so it is a bit confusing for me.

I am using this time to respond to some things that were said in the Chamber this week. Yesterday we had the chance to speak on a matter of public importance raised by the Leader of the Opposition on the scourge

of domestic violence in our communities. I note that the Member for Fong Lim chose to use most of that time to instead talk about the precision of statistics used by crossbench members in the previous debate on the *Liquor Act*.

In relation to the paper referred to by the member, Clifford et al, the Member for Fong Lim asserted that the conclusion of the paper was that the minimum unit price (MUP) had no effect. To back that up he read out a line from the paper's abstract regarding the relationship between the minimum unit price and PALIs. This interpretation is an oversimplification and, therefore, inaccurate.

The introduction of PALIs at the same time as the minimum unit price in some places has made ascertaining the exact cause of any impact difficult, but that does not mean that the minimum unit price was not effective. The authors of this study have been clear on their impression that the MUP has had a positive effect on lowering alcohol-related harm in the Territory.

We do not need to get hung up on one paper; there are many others. Another example, by Miller et al, 'The Impact of Minimum Unit Price on Police-recorded Alcohol-related Assault Rates in the Northern Territory, Australia', found a 14% reduction in alcohol-related assaults in Darwin and Palmerston after the introduction of the MUP.

These researchers, whose job is to simply investigate and present their findings, say that they are seeing trends that support the minimum price reducing the rates of alcohol-fuelled violence and harm. We should be listening to them. They have no ulterior motives in publishing their findings and presenting their evidence, which begs the question: what are the motives of those who are disputing this evidence?

I will simply say that the Chief Minister's new Chief of Staff, Alex Bruce, was the head of the alcohol lobby a mere three or four weeks ago. When I asked the Chief Minister in Question Time whether Alex Bruce was involved in developing the CLP's alcohol policy or how she would ensure that alcohol policy was made in the best interests of our community and not big business, I did not get a straight answer.

When considering the success of the MUP, or floor price as it is sometimes called, it is important to note that the recommendation was to have it set at $1.50 per unit of alcohol. This was watered down to $1.30 after backlash from the alcohol lobby. Furthermore, this price was not indexed to inflation. As inflation has increased, it has rendered the floor price much more ineffective than it otherwise would have been. From Taylor and Livingston's peer-reviewed paper titled 'The market matters: Shifting the minimum unit price' I quote:

> *Indexation should also be properly implemented to maintain the impact of the policy; stronger wording may be required to in the legislation to avoid the lack of indexation seen in the NT. Political and industry resistance will make implementing another MUP difficult, it is important for public health advocates to ensure that the version implemented is as effective as possible. The NT's MUP was an intervention with a limited impact due to its implementation …*

The CLP is throwing out a measure that has demonstrated impacts on lessening some alcohol-related harms, but if implemented properly it has the potential to be much more successful. The CLP is doing this due to pressure from the alcohol lobby. It is shameful.

It is so simple. You will give people access to much cheaper alcohol. They will drink more of that alcohol, so alcohol-related harms like assaults and presentations to our emergency departments will increase. It is blindingly and infuriatingly stupid. Please do not remove the minimum unit price. Instead, strengthen it so that it can work as intended. Then you will be doing something positive to help reduce crime, domestic violence and the pressure on our emergency departments.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, Friday is World Teachers' Day. It is an opportunity for us to come together to recognise and celebrate Territory educators across the Northern Territory. It is an opportunity for us to say to our Territory teachers: we see you; we hear you; and we value you.

Teachers do an incredible job across the Northern Territory, whether it is teaching our kids in classrooms or out on country, supporting them through Families as First Teachers or as our early childhood educators in childcare centres. It is a time to recognise those outstanding achievements.

I will place on the *Parliamentary Record* the list of the 2024 Teaching in the Territory Excellence Awards finalists. The ceremony is happening on Friday, but we want to give them all a shout-out to thank them for everything that they do. They might not all win the awards, but every name I read out is a winner.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year finalists are: Bonita Woodman, Canteen Creek School; Sharon Jones, Tennant Creek Primary School; Chanece Raymond, Elliott School; Robert Campbell, Katherine South Primary School; Sonia Joshua, Ngukurr School; Cameran Kossack, MacFarlane Primary School; Violet Hildebrandt, Ross Park Primary School; Delsey Campbell, Larapinta Primary School; Kenneth Braun, Centralian Senior College; Damien Fuller, Henbury School; Craig Viellaris, Ludmilla Primary School; Melissa Ah Kit, Darwin Middle School; Mundatjngu Mununggurr, Yirrkala School; Rachel Wunungmurra, Gapuwiyak School; Donelle Dingo and Monica Taylor, the AIEW Team from Gray Primary School; Pauline Thompson, Jabiru Area School; and Abigail Carter, Maningrida College.

The Early Childhood Educator of the Year finalists are: Lauren Tassell, Elliott School; Alixandra Chapman, Casuarina Street Primary School; Julie Bewg, Alice Springs School of the Air; Lauren Brown, Rona Glynn Preschool; Tamara Matthews, Larapinta Primary School; Bianca Maia, Stuart Park Primary School; Carla Wall, Nightcliff Preschool; Sheree Gordon, Nakara Primary School; Di Plumridge, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Lee Milroy, Alyangula Area School; Munya Chigiga, Gapuwiyak Preschool; Melissa Keelan, Driver Primary School; Alyse Bonney, Rosebery Primary School; and Tracy Bond, Humpty Doo Primary School.

The Inclusion Educator of the Year finalists are: Emma Gerrand, Tennant Creek Primary School; Emily Wilson, Canteen Creek School; Losalini Rokovada, Kintore Street School; Anna Geary, Casuarina Street Primary School; Richard (Rikki) Truscott, Braitling Primary School; Nari McGifford, Larapinta Primary School; Bronwyn Andrews, Bradshaw Primary School; Amy Gleeson, Nemarluk School; Jan Leo, Sanderson Middle School; Brendan Flynn, Henbury School; Marrion Niven, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Madeline Coreno, Maningrida College; Jennifer Clifton, Woodroffe Primary School; and Karen Tagumasi, Zuccoli Primary School.

This is good news; it is a great education story.

The Leader in Education finalists are: Katrina Georgiou, Tennant Creek Primary School; Heather Carter, Ngukurr School; Nicolle Gadd, Casuarina Street Primary School; Jessica Screaigh, Katherine School of the Air; Jackie Mullins, Larapinta Preschool; Ioana Sucia, Bradshaw Primary School; Kate Worrall, Ross Park Primary School; Danielle Ford, Ludmilla Primary School; Melissa Davy, Sanderson Middle School; Kathryn Hamilton, Nemarluk School; Lesley Colling, Wagaman Primary School; Zoe Bertrand, Gapuwiyak School; Holly Harlow, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Tania Jones, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Loretta Brown, Forrest Parade School; Tamara Johansen, Humpty Doo Primary School; and Natasha Koroi, Belyuen School.

The Primary Educator of the Year finalists are: Netani Ramuatiqa, Epenarra School; Emily Wilson, Canteen Creek School; Tyler Horwood, Tennant Creek Primary School; Caitlin Young, Casuarina Street Primary School; Damian Fox, Yarralin School; Katie Honan, Borroloola School; Sarah Koehne, Titjikala School; Jess Adami, Ross Park Primary School; Laura Haigh, Bradshaw Primary School; Mario Mairou, Wagaman Primary School; Jasmine Murdoch, Jingili Primary School; Kathy Cluse, Nakara Primary School; Haylee Malan, Alyangula Area School; Anna Hennessy, Laynhapuy Homelands School; Emmy Macrae, Gapuwiyak School; Alyssa South, Humpty Doo Primary School; Will McInerney, Bakewell Primary School; and Lauren O'Loughlin, Durack Primary School.

The Principal of the Year finalists are: Mitchell Valentine, Murray Downs School; Renez Lammon, Casuarina Street Primary School; Philip Russell, MacFarlane Primary School; Dowreen Lata, Mount Allan School; Tim O'Sullivan, Bradshaw Primary School; Joanne Alford, Centralian Senior College; Anne White, NT School of Distance Education; Liza Parr, Nakara Primary School; Mandy McKinnon, Wagaman Primary School; Rachel Blundell, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Genevieve Wild, Alyarrmandumanja Umbakumba School; Brad Madden, Nhulunbuy High School; Tony Clegg, Adelaide River School; Carolyn Edwards, Zuccoli Primary School; and Cindy McLaren, Durack Primary School.

The list goes on; there are so many names.

The Vocational Education Trainer of the Year finalists are: Steven Miles, Katherine High School; Meg Davis, Darwin High School; Chris Spurr, Gapuwiyak School; Melanie Brown, Taminmin College; and Benjamin Richardson, Maningrida College.

The Secondary Educator of the Year finalists are: Bridget McMeel, Canteen Creek School; Timothy Cribbes, Elliott School; Tasha Dack, Katherine High School; Bradley Gill, Centralian Middle School; Judith Coverdale, Centralian Senior College; Darren Pittaway, Nightcliff Middle School; Amanda Thomas, Henbury School; Dawnie Tagala, Casuarina Senior College; Gathapura Mununggurr, Laynhapuy Homelands School; Peter McDonald, Gapuwiyak School; Nicholas McKinnis, Jabiru Area School; and Timothy Brown, Taminmin College.

The Support Person of the Year finalists are: Jodie Lutze, Tennant Creek Primary School; Mya Bond, Tennant Creek High School Juno Centre; Lauren Rogers Smith, Kalkaringi School; Mathew Neal, Katherine High School; Kerri Hughes, MacFarlane Primary School; Uia Amituanai, Centralian Senior College; Julia Pearson, Centralian Middle School; Bec Pearson, Gillen Primary School; Rachel Trier, Moil Primary School; Donna Cartwright, Sanderson Middle School; Leanne Phillips, Wanguri Primary School; Carrieann Warr, Laynhapuy Homelands School; Kylie Hendry, Gapuwiyak School; Sharon Scarabello, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Chris Bryett, Palmerston College; Corallee Mackie, Forrest Parade School; and Melissa Hayes, Maningrida College.

That is the list of Territory champions. I shout out my congratulations. I know that the Education minister, as well as everyone in this parliament, joins me in wishing everyone a happy World Teachers' Day.

This is Territory excellence—Territory educators being recognised for their amazing jobs. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. It is a hard job but you do a great job. You are growing the future Territory change makers and leaders. We see you; we hear them; we love you. Happy World Teachers' Day.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, to follow on from the Member for Gwoja, yes, it is World Teachers' Day on Friday. As the Minister for Education and Training I will be in Katherine in the Big Rivers region for the celebrations there. I look forward to that.

What a great number of teachers and educators who had their names put forward. We have a great range of teachers across the Territory, even if they did not have their names put forward for an award. That is something we are proud of. We should be working harder to attract more great teachers to the Territory. I give a shout-out to all the nominees. I look forward to the award announcements this Friday.

A couple of weeks ago I went to my first awards ceremony as the Minister for Education and Training at the DoubleTree by Hilton. It was the Northern Territory Education and Care Awards for Championing Excellence in Education.

Celebrating the outstanding achievements of early childhood educators and services across the Northern Territory, this annual event honours those who consistently deliver high-quality education, embrace innovative approaches and demonstrate unwavering commitment to enriching the lives of Northern Territory children and their families. It was the 11th year of the awards. There was a remarkable range of nominations from both urban and remote areas, shining a spotlight on the exceptional educators, programs and services delivering outstanding early childhood education and care throughout the region.

This year's ceremony was organised by Child Australia in collaboration with the Northern Territory Government. The independent judging panel comprising sector leaders with no conflicts of interest was chaired by Early Childhood Australia to ensure an impartial selection process.

It was a great evening talking to some of those early educators. Congratulations to all the people who were nominated for the 2024 Northern Territory Education and Care Awards. Obviously there can only be one winner in each category.

The Outstanding Educator award went to Amy Kearns from Good Shepherd Lutheran College.

The Outstanding Aboriginal Educator award went to Felicity Hayes from Families as First Teachers Maningrida.

The Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher award went to Gowree Nagatharan from Families as First Teachers Ntaria.

The Outstanding Leader award went to Madelline Forster from Clyde Fenton Long Day Care. That was unique. I should know the lady who accepted the award; she is from Katherine. I think her name was Teagan. It was fantastic because they had Madelline on Facetime. She was obviously away for the awards. She was so excited. We had a photo with her on Facetime. It was so good that even though she was not there she was still part of the ceremony. Technology brings you in from wherever you might be in the world. She was enjoying a nice holiday, I think.

The Outstanding Education and Care Program award went to Roper Gulf Regional Council Creche. That was sponsored by Catholic Education.

The awards were sponsored by Charles Darwin University, Kentish Lifelong Learning and Care, Goodstart Early Learning, Catholic Education and the Industry Skills Advisory Council.

It was a fantastic night. Well done to all the award recipients and nominees for their outstanding efforts and excellence in education.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, it is great to see everyone's enthusiasm for World Teachers' Day. It is a fantastic list of award winners and nominees.

On Saturday morning I had the pleasure of co-chairing a Northern Territory Vietnam Business Council meeting of Northern Territory businesses and Vietnam businesses. The leading Vietnam businesses were brought over as part of the delegation with the Vietnamese Minister of Planning and Investment. That was a high-level visit by the Vietnamese minister to the Northern Territory. He had been to South Australia, but he made the time to come up here. I know he met with our minister for Asian Relations and Trade in the morning, which was fantastic.

This was also about the Northern Territory Vietnam Business Council and the businesses getting together to explore trade and investment opportunities in the business sense. I had the opportunity to co-chair that with Minister Dung. It was well attended; there were probably about 50 businesses there from either Vietnam or the Northern Territory.

Some of our leading businesspeople were there—for example, David Dinh, who lives in Malak. David is probably one of the largest mango producers in the Northern Territory. He employs a lot of people across the Territory in the agricultural industry.

Jason Hanna was not there but his whole group was, because Jason is the Vice Chairman of the Northern Territory Vietnam Business Council.

The Chair is Mr My from the VABIS Group, whom I know well. He is an Australian citizen but he spends probably 70% of his time in Vietnam and 30% in Australia. He has also made significant investments in the Northern Territory. He owns the old Capricornia hotel, and we did a soft launch of the offices for the new NT Vietnam Business Council there. We cut the ribbon with the minister; that was really good.

Mr My owns about a 50% stake in the old Batchelor abattoir. They are getting cattle and other carcasses and cutting them up into quarters, chilling them and exporting them. They are not exporting live animals; they are exporting broadly processed meat from here. He is looking to expand that. There are always challenges with logistics and getting the volumes and the shipping costs, but that is what they are doing. They are doing value-added work in the Northern Territory.

We also had Vietnamese groups come over, some of whom I know well. The TH Group Chairman Mr Hai was there, and I have met the owner of that group, Madam Huong, a number of times, both in Vietnam and here in Darwin. I was in Vietnam many years ago. I met her as being part of the government and also as part of the Chamber of Commerce.

I recall doing a trade mission with former Chief Minister Gunner up there. I was in the Chamber of Commerce at the time, and I encouraged him to take the opportunity when he was in Hanoi to meet Madam Huong. For some reason, I do not know, they were misadvised and must have gotten the names wrong. They were confused with someone else and said that they could not meet her; it would not be right. I think eventually they had a little coffee meeting. She had invited him out to dinner. You have to understand that she is like the Gina Rinehart of Vietnam. It was politely declined; 'No, we are too busy to do that'.

Despite those efforts—I met her on a number of occasions and she came here—the group has invested over $165m in the Northern Territory. That is real investment, and it is looking to do more. These are the types of relationships we need to build.

People from the Vingroup came; they are exploring some opportunities. It is a large group that is involved in tourism, hospitality and a range of property development in Vietnam. The fact that it has people coming here is good.

Also there was Anna Dam, Co-Founder and President of the Australian Vietnamese Family Association. Many of us would know her from our many multicultural events. The Vietnamese community in the Northern Territory really adds to our society, contributing economically and culturally.

It was wonderful to support the event, and I thank the minister for coming. You can understand we do formal moderation with speakers from industry, then a break for lunch, after which the ties and jackets come off and

that is when the real relationships start. That is when you sit down with the minister, start exchanging mobile numbers and talk about family. That is the way it works.

One of the key areas we looked at—we discussed tourism, critical minerals and agricultural developments—was international education. That is powerful. My good friend Sean Mahoney owns and operates the International College of Advanced Education. As I said in my maiden speech, I worked there for four years as the international business development manager.

I popped out during the lunchbreak because there was a graduation at his school in Rapid Creek. More than 50 wonderful students, doing commercial cookery and hospitality management and other VET courses, were represented. The incoming classes cook and put on a magnificent spread of food. It is well done. The program is broadcast on social media to each of the countries; there are likely 12 or 13 different nationalities in that group of students. It is broadcast to the Philippines, Vietnam and the Indian subcontinent.

Congratulations to Sean. I know he is taking advantage because he came to that meeting with the Vietnamese and is heading there on Friday. He has built the relationships and contacts to go to Vietnam, not only to bring students here, but also to deliver services in the country. We always need to discuss two-way trade and investment; it is not only one way. If we can be of benefit to them and they can be of benefit to us, it is fantastic.

I again thank our Vietnamese community and all of our business community. Reconnecting with Asia is a part of our way to get the economy going and get the Territory back on track.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I will keep this brief. I recognise and celebrate education in our rural area. My electorate is home to six fantastic schools: Bees Creek Primary School; Sattler Christian College; Humpty Doo Primary School; Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School; Taminmin College—my former high school—and, last but not least, Middle Point School.

Education is the foundation upon which we build our future and I believe it is crucial to shine a light on the efforts made to enrich the learning experience for young students. With that in mind—the Member for Gwoja has listed many names—I pay credit to the finalists in this year's Teaching in the Territory Excellence Awards, especially those in the rural area: Early Childhood Educator of the Year finalist, Tracy Bond from Humpty Doo Primary School; Leader in Education finalist, Tamara Johansen from Humpty Doo Primary School; Primary Educator of the Year finalist, Alyssa South from Humpty Doo Primary School; although not in my electorate, I pay credit to Principal of the Year finalist Tony Clegg from Adelaide River School; Secondary Educator of the Year finalist, Timothy Brown from Taminmin College; and Vocational Education Trainer of the Year finalist, Melanie Brown from Taminmin College.

I extend my thanks to Sam Middlebrook from Bees Creek Primary School who has been instrumental in organising the Rural Enrichment Academic Challenge (REACh) program. The program brings together students from four great rural schools, Humpty Doo, Howard Springs, Girraween and Bees Creek Primary Schools.

This year the REACh program brought together Year 5 and 6 students, challenging them to collaborate and form an inquiry question based on a significant topic relating to the Northern Territory. This year's theme was fire. Students engaged deeply with this topic conducting research and ultimately presenting their findings in a public forum, a task that demands creativity, critical thinking and teamwork. Although I was unable to attend the presentation on Thursday 17 October, as I was in this place, the feedback I received was positive and clear that the day was successful and inspiring for everyone involved.

Congratulations to the winning team on their question: how can we guide our community's view to see fire as a positive thing? The team members who crafted this exceptional inquiry are Alexis Smith and Ashton Jukes from Howard Springs, Heath Myer-Parker and Savarna Orne-Gliemann from Bees Creek, Lachlan Hill from Girraween and Xavier Forsyth from Humpty Doo. Each of these students deserves our recognition for their hard work and innovative thinking.

I also applaud Jayden Moore from Bees Creek who was awarded the prize for best speaker of the day. I extend my congratulations to all the students involved.

It was a pleasure to present the Bees Keys award to well-deserving young achievers at Bees Creek Primary School. The Bees Keys award is a significant award that requires the student to achieve four merit awards and recognises the student's achievements in the categories of collaboration, inquisitiveness, reflection and resilience. Last Friday I was pleased to present Bees Keys awards to Riley Baker and Heath Myer-Parker,

and last month to Eli Frost, Aliyah Hughes, Taz Clayton and Allira Politch. Congratulations to these hardworking students on their achievement.

To all our teachers in the rural area, thank you for your hard work.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, while we are on the theme of education I bring to the Assembly's attention two groups of students from Dripstone Middle School who will attend the Tournament of Minds International Finals in Sydney on 1 and 2 November. Although the school is not in my electorate, many students who attend this middle school live in my electorate.

The children worked extremely hard this year. When the school competed at the NT Tournament of Minds, it won the language literature category and the arts category. The students, parents and school have been working hard to raise funds to help them with their travel to Sydney to participate at the international level.

The language literature team consists of Indiana Grimes, Caitlin Boulton, Ann Mariya Joseph, Jasmine Brown, Yeemiao Yeo, Vhanna Fernandez and Satine Peterson. The arts team consists of Keya Goveas-Fernandez, Angeleena Joseph, Isabel Vandenburg, Alice O'Donoghue, Naomi Raico, Amelia Fong and Aliyah Maddern. I look forward to seeing the children do well at the international finals and wish them all the best.

Dripstone Middle School is led by Principal Nektaria Pikoulos and her amazing team of educators and staff. There are more than 600 students and 70 staff. I attended the school council meeting last month as an invited guest and the council showed me the new market garden project that it assisted in funding. Thank you to Ms Leash and Ms Jacobson's classes who have been working on the foundations of the garden. The school is now looking at fundraising for items to grow and maintain the garden which supports the students and school. If you see the school running a barbecue, raffle or cake stall, please support it.

I also acknowledge some outstanding members in my community. Mrs Kate Carter has volunteered her time to provide justice of the peace services from the Wanguri electorate office community room each week. Mrs Carter has agreed to continue volunteering her time each Tuesday for a couple of hours to ensure the community has access to this service. I thank Mrs Carter for volunteering her time.

I thank the residents at the Leanyer seniors' community for allowing me and the Member for Casuarina to attend their monthly lunch, held on the first Monday of each month. Residents have their own community room at the Leanyer Drive complex, and each month 84-year-old Dorothy Daby (also known as Dotti) volunteers her time to get the flyers organised and delivers each one in the residents' letterboxes. Treva Gerschwitz holds the key to the community room and gets the room ready with other volunteers. The residents each bring a plate to share. There was a wonderful array of food; we certainly did not go hungry that day. In fact, it was Alphonse Shields' 70th birthday which he kept quiet but was too special not to mention.

I acknowledge Marion Davey, who lives in my electorate and is on the Nightcliff Orchid Society committee. The association recently held it's annual Spring Show at the Tracy Village Social Club where there was a wonderful display of colour. It is not an easy feat to organise a show like this, as there were many orchids that were entered into different categories with entries from around the Darwin area.

I was privileged to present the champions with their prize ribbons, especially the grand champion rosette to Timothy West who has been entering for decades to try to take out this prize. Marion said that it takes a lot of hard work to organise a show like this, but she enjoys seeing beginners and experienced hobbyists participate. Marion is a positive pillar in my community, and she should be commended for volunteering hours upon hours over the years to ensure the orchid Spring Show continues each year.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the 2025 Australian of the Year Awards nominees for the Northern Territory which were announced today. Health advocates, a wildlife carer, a woman uniting people through football, a cultural knowledge keeper and a sculptor are some of the nominees for the 2025 Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory.

The 2025 Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory award nominees are Donna Ah Chee, Indigenous health champion from Alice Springs; Franck Gohier, printmaker, painter, sculptor and artist from Darwin; Zainab Mohamud, football and diversity advocate from Palmerston; and Grant Ngulmiya Nundhirribala, musician, role model and cultural leader from Numbulwar.

The 2025 Senior Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory award nominees are Georgina Bracken, community change maker from Tennant Creek; Michael Foley OAM, community volunteer and founder of

Seniors of Excellence NT from Casuarina; Frank Holmes, Alyawarr knowledge-keeper and advocate from Ampilatwatja; and Jennifer Messell, registered nurse and aged-care facilities manager from Nightcliff.

The 2025 Young Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory award nominees are Nilesh Dilushan, community service leader from Darwin; Jules Gabor, youth advocate from Darwin; Carlito Rodrigues, athlete and co-founder of the One Percent Program from Darwin; and Melissa Wurramarrba, Indigenous education trailblazer and advocate from Ngukurr community, Southeast Arnhem Land.

The 2025 Local Hero for the Northern Territory award nominees are Yvette Clarke, sepsis prevention ambassador from Berry Springs; Gaylene Yenhu Gurruwiwi, co-founder of Galiwinku Women's Space from Galiwinku; Mandaka Marika, Indigenous community and land conservation advocate from Yirrkala; and Mignon McHendrie, wildlife carer and advocate from Darwin River.

From the Australian of the Year Awards website you can see that the Northern Territory nominees are among 137 people being recognised across all states and territories. The Northern Territory award recipients will be announced on Monday 4 November 2024 in a ceremony at the Darwin Convention Centre. We will also be able to watch online at australianoftheyear.org.au. They will then join the other state and territory recipients as national finalists for the national awards, which will be announced on 25 January 2025 in Canberra, ACT.

National Australia Day Council CEO Mark Fraser AO, CVO, congratulated the Northern Territory nominees on their recognition.

I will read the bios of two of the award nominees because they are from the Arnhem electorate, and both of them are family members. I was surprised to see the award nominees, and I am extremely proud as a local member and, of course, a family member.

The 2025 Australian of The Year for the Northern Territory award nominee—my cousin—Grant Ngulmiya Nundhirribala was in this Chamber on Tuesday last week as the lead singer who helped dance and sing me into the parliament for the 15th Legislative Assembly. My cousin Grant is the son of my mother's brother—one of my two uncles—and he is the lead songman for our family on the Nundhirribala Red Flag side for the southeast Arnhem Land community of Numbulwar.

Grant's bio reads:

> *Musician, role model and cultural leader*
>
> *Internationally recognised, 49-year-old Grant Ngulmiya Nundhirribala is a musician and cultural leader in Numbulwar community, Arnhem Land.*
>
> *Grant has inspired Numbulwar's next generation to excel at performing their traditional music and dance. He's shown how Numbulwar people can make an income from expressing their internationally esteemed culture, in a place where employment is scarce.*
>
> *Bridging cultural differences, Grant has been an ambassador for his music, language and culture across the world. He collaborated with the Budapest Art Orchestra to release an award-winning album and worked in Japan with North Indian classical artists. He's travelled to Ubud, Bali to collaborate with a Balinese Gamelan and recorded an album with a Spanish guitarist in Barcelona.*
>
> *Grant was the driving force behind the three-day Numburindi Festival in Numbulwar. He regularly performs at Garma Festival and took 45 Numbulwar artists to the Barunga Festival two years in a row. And for decades, he's led the renowned Red Flag Dancers.*

Congratulations to my cousin Grant.

The bio for 2025 Young Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory award nominee Melissa Wurramarrba reads:

> *Indigenous education trailblazer and advocate*
>
> *Melissa Wurramarrba was the first person in her community to graduate from university in 36 years when she attained her Bachelor of Arts (Education) degree from Macquarie University in 2023.*

A trailblazing Alawa woman, Melissa defied the odds. And through her work for the Child and Family Services section of the Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation, she's now working tirelessly to give other young people the same opportunity.

In addition to passionately advocating for education, health and cultural preservation, Melissa is striving to address the root causes of low school attendance. Knowing the transformative power of education firsthand, Melissa's aspiration is for Ngukurr School to achieve 95 per cent attendance.

A natural leader, 27-year-old Melissa also serves on the Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation Board and energetically captains the Ngukurr Bulldogs Women's Australian Football League team. In role modelling resilience and showing what's possible, Melissa offers guidance and inspires hope for Indigenous youth.

I am proud to see such esteemed Territorians on the honour roll as nominees for the 2025 Northern Territory Australian of the Year categories. The Labor opposition wishes every nominee all the best, but in particular—of course I will be biased as the Member for Arnhem—I wish Grant Nundhirribala and Melissa Wurramarrba all the best for their categories. I am extremely proud because, first and foremost, it is a long way to travel into Darwin from the two communities of Ngukurr and Numbulwar. It is an even longer to travel if they are the winners of their categories and go to Canberra to represent the Northern Territory on the national stage.

I have not had a chance to ring Grant or Melissa, but I will do that tomorrow to wish them all the best. Hopefully, regardless of who our award winners are, everyone in the Northern Territory will get behind the final four Territory finalists who go to Canberra and have a crack at winning the Australian of the Year title.

I have always looked up to Grant for the work he has done. I am his youngest cousin on my mum's side. My mum had three siblings who were from the same mother and same father, but another 10 siblings from the same father. My grandfather had four wives back in the day. He must have been a handsome man because he had four wives of traditional marriages. Grant symbolises and immortalises the connection to country that our family, the Nundhirribala clan, through my mother's side have had for thousands of generations.

Grant has done a lot of work on linking Australia, Indonesia and the Makassan trade over many generations and hundreds of years on the east trade winds to southeast Arnhem Land. He has also done his own research through not just the language and cultural connection but also the family and kinship connection. We understand that family members went to Indonesia and stayed and vice versa; Indonesian members of that Makassan trade era came to southeast Arnhem Land, married in and stayed. It is an interesting part of the Northern Territory's history. We talk about economy and trade, and it has been happening for hundreds of years. A lot of the framing of that connection Grant has with our Indonesian neighbours has been about the cultural relationship and the music, the dance and the arts.

Thank you for all the work you do, Grant. It is a job you never got thanked for. There is always family relying on Grant to do funerals, cultural ceremonies and men's initiations. It is a huge honour, with all the work you do for all our families across southeast Arnhem Land, to be recognised at the Territory level. I am proud as your younger cousin, and culturally as your daughter.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, last Saturday was a fantastic day in the Alice Springs community. I was up bright and early at 5 am dropping off the barbecue to the Rona Glynn bake sale before heading off to take part in the Masters Games triathlon. The Masters Games was back after six years away, and I can confirm it was an incredible event that brought the community of Alice Springs together.

I thank Lucy Berk from Triathlon NT who came from Darwin to Alice Springs to assist with the event; Craig Needham, otherwise known as Spanky, an incredible Ironman whom I looked up to as a young athlete and who came back from being away from Alice to once again assist with the event; and Jesse Mortensen, who has 31 years of experience with triathlon and was revving up everyone on the morning before the event. Without the help of Lucy, Craig and Jesse, the event simply would not have gone ahead.

After I competed in the triathlon that morning and watched my incredible wife, Lisa-Marie, finish her first event since having our second child, I was off to the Rona Glynn bake sale to cook pancakes. I thank Sarah Jericho who reached out and got me along to the event. This was the second year of being involved with the bake sale, and it continues to go from strength to strength. To Miss Tilly, Miss Ivy and all the incredible staff and volunteers on the morning, congratulations. I thank you for your efforts for our wonderful community.

Later in the afternoon I attended the Desert Paradise showcase and was immersed with incredible dancers from across the Pacific who performed traditional dances from their home countries. The colour and vibrancy

was something to behold. I thank the committee and volunteers who ensured the event could go ahead. It was wonderful to attend and enjoy the performances.

To finish off the Saturday, after awarding a range of medals at lawn bowls, Aussie 9s and golf, I attended the Masters Games closing ceremony and recommitted our government's support for the games into the future. I thank Minister Boothby for allowing me to close the games for 2024. I look forward to the 2026 games with work well underway to ensure the next games can be bigger and better than before.

To the Northern Territory Major Events team, including Aimee, Shannon and Dale McIver, who all assisted in the event throughout the week, thank you for leaving your families to come to Alice Springs and ensure the event was a wonderful success.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the war widows who attended the inaugural War Widows Day recognition event on Friday 18 October at Parliament House. War Widows Day is officially 19 October each year. A special thanks goes to Australian War Widows, NT Legacy, Veterans Australia NT and Mates4Mates. I also thank Bonnie Poulter, Christine Nekrasov and Jenny Gregory.

Last Friday I gathered with 40 war widows and family members, along with the Members for Fannie Bay, Drysdale and Wanguri, in a solemn moment of remembrance and profound gratitude. War Widows Day is a day to honour those who have endured unimaginable loss and hardship, the families of our brave service members, particularly the war widows and widowers who have borne the weight of grief with strength and grace.

War Widows Day is a reminder that the impact of war reaches far beyond the battlefield. It is a day to reflect on the sacrifice, resilience and ongoing contributions of war widows and widowers to our community. As we honour those who have given their lives in service to our country, let us also commit to remembering the families they left behind. It is our duty to ensure their wellbeing and to offer our unwavering support, not just on this day but every day. I honour, respect and support those who have sacrificed so much for our nation.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for his spirited contribution. That is the most I have enjoyed listening to him so far these sittings. I could listen to him name teachers and educators from my electorate all night. For now I will recognise the educators I know of in my electorate who are finalists in the Teaching in the Territory Excellence Awards.

A finalist for Early Childhood Educator of the Year is Alyse Bonney from Rosebery Primary School. I have to declare a conflict of interest because she teaches my middle child. She is fantastic and she is also one of my constituents. Alyse Bonney, I hope you win; you do an amazing job.

A finalist for Inclusion Educator of the Year is Jennifer Clifton from Woodroffe Primary School.

A finalist for Leader in Education is Loretta Brown from Forrest Parade School. That school does amazing work for our kids with special needs in Palmerston and the surrounding rural area, supporting them to achieve all that they can. We honour the work people do at Forrest Parade School, which I think was built by the CLP.

Ms Boothby: It was.

Mr KERLE: Thank you, Member for Brennan.

Finalists for Support Person of the Year are Chris Bryett from Palmerston College and Corallee Mackie from Forrest Parade School.

Thank you so much, wonderful educators of Palmerston. I wish you all the best and hope you are successful in the awards.

I will also speak about Amber NT. It was founded in 1985 by two mothers who lost their children, Roxanne and Phillip, to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). There was no specialised support in Darwin at the time and this motivated them to start an organisation that would ensure all Territorians had access to much-needed support. In 2021 SIDS and Kids NT made a decision to focus on support for parents who have lost a child from conception to 18 years of age, and it rebranded to Amber NT.

This week Amber NT had its AGM and appointed the 2024–25 board. I honour those people for their service. They are chairperson, Taylah Peters; vice chairperson, Joost Boomkamp—whom I believe is one of my constituents in Bellamack, congratulations—secretary, Emma Cook; treasurer, Stevie Greenwood; and board members, Stacey Clements, Hannah Meacham and Danielle Eveleigh.

I also thank a former Patron of Amber NT, when it was known as SIDS and Kids NT, Kyrrie Blenkinsop, who at the time was a newsreader for Nine News. I also thank former Chair of Amber NT Peta Preo for her service to the community in helping Territory parents.

I will put on the record a lot of names from the Northern Sharks Rugby League Club, a fantastic local sports club in Palmerston. They train on Moulden Oval in the electorate of Blain and have a great crew.

The Sharks under-14 boys were the NRL NT grand final winners. Player of the Match was awarded to Dylan Stanley. Well done, Dylan.

The Women in League Award finalist was Heather Criddle, the under-13 girls team manager, NRL Community Awards. The Citizen of the Year finalist was Kym Hanna at the City of Palmerston. The NRL NT Spirit Award went to the under-10s Top End Cup in Katherine. Referee of the Carnival was awarded to Lachlan Specketer, Gordon Tallis Cup in Townsville. Club Person of the Year was Rebecca Dunbar. Junior Club Person of the Year was Emma Cawood.

The NRL NT Continuous Service awards are impressive, so I honour these people:

- five years—Aaron Tilley, Kezia Tilley, Andrew Waters, Kylie-Ann Roe and Manaia Downes
- 10 years—Paul Carroll, Hildegard Hounslow, Anthony Castro, Heather Criddle, Mark Lasker and Emma Lasker
- 20 years—Gordon Hounslow. Thank you for your service, Gordon.

The NRL NT Reserve Grade Player of the Year Nominee was Jayden Berto. The NRL NT Women's Team of the Year award went to Tokerau Munro and Tamara Madzika. The NRL NT Junior Referee of the Year Nominees were Lachlan Specketer and Jack Anderson.

I thank all the Northern Sharks volunteers for the 2024 season: Anthony Ah Mat; Mykala Baker; Mitchell Bateman; Max Browne; Caleb Burke; Melanie Campbell; Anthony Castro; Emma Cawood; Haydon Chapman; Kerry Cole; Dave Cox; Tamika Criddle; Jason Criddle; Heather Criddle; PD Downes; Nigel Doyle; Amy Drahm; Rebecca Dunbar; Harley Eagleston; Lenny Elber; Kylie Forsyth; Shorny Harvey; Stephen Harvey; Racheal Hill; Gordon Hounslow; Hilde Hounslow; Ayesha Kay; Mark Lasker; Emma Lasker; Emma Macintyre; Cianne Mcconville; Damien Mick; Mark Mick; Kate Munro; Ash Newman; Sholan Palavi-Reed; Emma Pollard; Taylie Pulman; Kym Hanna—what a legend; Kylie Roe; Jade Roebuck; Hayley Saengkaew; Mel Sneddon; Jack Stephenson; Kenneth Sutton; Angie Teikamata; Aaron Tilley; Kezia Tilley; Cameron Versteegh; Sandra Walker; Chelsea Walter; Andrew Waters; Sharna Waters; and Melissa Waters.

I have been involved in sports teams, and they do not work without the committee, the parents and the volunteers who give their time to make everything happen.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.