Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



Parliamentary Record
Debates and Questions



Wednesday 21 May 2025

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Gwoja

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Gwoja be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today and tomorrow because of personal reasons.

Leave granted.

VISITORS
Darwin Skills Development Scheme

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of participants from Darwin Skills Development Scheme accompanied by their educators. On behalf of honourable members, I welcome you to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

ATTORNEY-GENERAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 19

Continued from 19 March 2025.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the opposition I contribute to the debate on the Attorney-General Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

At the outset, we acknowledge the Bill's stated intent, which is to modernise, streamline and clarify a range of laws administered within the Attorney-General's portfolio. In principle, the opposition supports efforts to ensure legislation remains contemporary, efficient and responsive to Territorians' needs and expectations.

Our legislation should never be static. It must evolve alongside the needs, challenges and expectations of the Territory community. As Territorians face new social, economic or technological pressures it is our responsibility to ensure that our laws keep pace. Continuous improvement is not just governance; it is how we uphold trust in our institutions and deliver better outcomes for all Territorians. When we were in government, we understood this. We worked hard to continue to improve legislation, and this Bill continues this work.

Although many of the proposed amendments are sensible and technical in nature, and we are pleased to support them, several provisions in this Bill warrant closer scrutiny and some questions need answers from the government.

I also note that this Bill was referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, and the opposition thanks the committee for its work.

I acknowledge the submission made by the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency. Its contributions on matters of access to justice and equity in the Territory are also worthy of careful consideration.

I will ask some questions and hope to get answers from the minister.

In structuring our response to this Bill, I will focus my remarks first on the non-controversial elements that are, in our view, justified and in the public interest. I will then turn to the two provisions identified in the NAAJA submission to the committee.

The opposition supports the *Health Care Decision Making Act 2023* amendment which enables the senior practitioner to delegate functions and powers to suitably qualified public servants. This practical reform will support the timely and effective delivery of care to people with impaired decision-making capacity, particularly in matters involving restrictive practices where delays could have serious consequences.

We also support amendments to the *Justices of the Peace Act 1991* and the *Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act 2010* which enshrine the existing requirement for national police checks for prospective

justices of the peace and commissioners for oaths. The opposition notes that although we need more JPs, they are positions of trust and it is only right that those appointed are held to the highest standard.

The amendment to the *Land Title Act 2000* to facilitate the Territory's transition to e-conveyancing is another welcomed reform. Allowing the Registrar-General discretion to issue paper titles only in specific circumstances aligns us with modern conveyancing practices across Australia and reduces unnecessary administrative burden.

We also support the amendment to the *Legal Profession Act 2006* which enables the Law Society, with the Attorney-General's approval, to adopt the Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules without needing to be drafted as subordinate legislation. This reduces red tape while ensuring consistency with other jurisdictions. I understand the legal sector has been pushing for this.

The Bill also takes a strong stance against the rising threat of synthetic medicines. The amendment to the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1990* is a timely and appropriate response to a growing health and safety concern. These substances pose a serious risk to Territorians and stronger enforcement powers are needed.

Similarly, the *Sentencing Act 1995* amendment provides greater flexibility for the courts by clarifying that home detention conditions can apply to part of an intensive community correction order. This helps correct unintended consequences from earlier legislation and makes sentencing more tailored and effective.

Finally, the amendment to the NTCAT regulations which exempts applications under the *Health Care Decision Making Act 2023* from fees brings consistency with other laws relating to vulnerable individuals and removes the potential barrier to access.

I turn to the two measures in the Bill that raise concerns that must be addressed by the minister.

First is the proposed amendment to the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act,* specifically clause 17. This clause seeks to clarify that NTCAT may award costs such as filing and service fees to the successful party. Although the Attorney-General has framed this as a matter of fairness, we share the concern raised by NAAJA that this change risks undermining one of the tribunal's core principles to provide an accessible low-cost alternative to the court system.

As pointed out in NAAJA's submission to the scrutiny committee, administrative tribunals were designed to lower the barriers to justice. Expanding the grounds on which costs can be awarded may discourage participation, particularly for those already facing economic hardship. NAAJA highlighted that other jurisdictions apply more rigorous thresholds for awarding costs, typically reserving them for cases involving vexatious conduct or serious procedural misconduct.

The government should reconsider clause 17 and adopt an approach more consistent with interstate models where costs orders are made only in exceptional circumstances. Accessibility must remain central to NTCAT's functioning.

Secondly, we are concerned by the proposed amendment to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999,* specifically clause 23 which seeks to exempt tenancies under the *Housing Act* from certain privacy protections relating to tenant information. It is not clear why social housing tenants should be afforded fewer protections than private tenants regarding how their personal information is collected, stored and destroyed. In the absence of a clear or compelling justification from the government, this appears to introduce an unnecessary double standard and risks further marginalising some of our community's most vulnerable members. We call on the government to clarify its intent and ensure that public housing tenants are not subjected to lesser privacy and accountability standards.

The opposition recognises many positive measures in the Bill. We support reforms that streamline legal processes, strengthen community safety, improve administrative efficiency and support vulnerable people. These measures are broadly technical, long overdue in some cases and largely uncontroversial. However, we also take seriously the concerns raised about maintaining fairness, accessibility and equity, particularly in relation to NTCAT and social housing tenants.

These are not trivial matters. They deserve more than a passing explanation. We urge the government to provide answers to the questions raised about clauses 17 and 23.

The opposition stands ready to work with the government to ensure the legislation delivers outcomes that are not only efficient and modern but also fair and inclusive for all Territorians.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on an omnibus Bill. We have not had any in here for a while and, as is often the case, they are a bit of a mixed bag. There can often be little things snuck into them as red herrings, but I am pleased to report on this occasion that this is a sensible Bill covering things that need to be done to tighten up small parts of our legal edifice.

I am encouraged by the words of the Member for Daly and the sentiment that legislation should never be static or perhaps that it should not be immutable. Things change, things need to be adapted and we need to modernise with the times. That is what is reflected in this Bill: a recognition of the fact that in some instances our legislative and administrative frameworks have simply not kept pace with the modern day. On the advice of the public service, the Attorney-General's Department and practitioners in the field, this government seeks to tidy up a range of small matters which in totality have a cumulative effect of being able to improve the rigour within our legal systems.

As to the matter of legislative scrutiny committees, as I alluded to on Thursday of the last sittings, there is much to be said about how they can, should and do function. Later this week I expect to speak at some length about the Scrutiny of Legislation Conference that was held in Melbourne at the end of last year. Coincidentally, the Member for Daly and I both attended that, and we learned a lot about how we could move forward in that space.

What we have now, which is positive, is a legislative scrutiny committee. The preceding government saw fit to completely abandon the prospect of having one. This omnibus Bill was referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. Sadly, or perhaps fortuitously, there was only one submission which was made by NAAJA. It was a considered submission that raised reasonable points for debate but were not profound enough to warrant any objection or substantive amendment to the Bill.

NAAJA does great work. I have known a lot of people who have worked there for a long time, and I will defend them to the hilt. However, I think it is fair to say that they err on the side of caution when it comes to protecting civil liberties and making sure that we do not accidentally run roughshod over rights, regulations and responsibilities. In that regard, I understand the concerns that NAAJA raised in their submission.

I presume everyone in this House has read the NAAJA submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee on this omnibus Bill, which I know you are all excited about. Having read it and having had plenty of experience with NTCAT, I do not necessarily think that we are messing with NTCAT in a way that will be deleterious to our legal system. For some time in this jurisdiction, NTCAT has been overwhelmed and swamped by people who have been putting in if not vexatious, then speculative, statements of claim. Something needs to be done in this space to clarify and codify that costs orders can be recovered and there is a minimum price of entry, as it were, to tango with NTCAT. I do not think this is a terribly bad thing; it will improve efficiency. I welcome a robust and accessible judiciary, but I do not want to set one up to fail by overwhelming it with vexatious claims.

I am encouraged by the support for the Bill that is evidenced in broad brushstrokes by the Labor opposition and the tone of the Member for Daly's statement which is constructive. Legislation should not be static and we need to be consultative, which the government was in this case. We provided an opportunity for people to make submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Having read the report, the committee had no axe to grind with the Bill.

In some ways, we are doing the equivalent of clearing the weeds from the back of the garden. It is not sexy work, but it needs to be done. Periodically, the garden gets messy out the back. There is a raft of laws, regulations and rules that simply are not maintained. If these things are not maintained, the garden goes to pot and, as I am finding out at the moment, the reticulation system is busted because I did not weed. Therefore, it is important that we do this kind of work.

I commend the Attorney-General for having referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee a review of all regulations in the Northern Territory statute book that predate 1990. It is important for us to do that work—to clear the back of the garden—to find out what is fit for purpose and which departments have processes in place to make sure that their statute book, regulations and procedures are still modern, fit for purpose and can serve the Northern Territory. That review is proceeding in earnest, but it still has a long way to go.

Without wanting to be too pointed, we are doing that review in no small part because nobody has done that weeding at the back of the garden for a while. A lot of these little fixes—I am sorry to say the last government did not do a good job of keeping the garden tidy out the back so that is why …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections. Through the Speaker, please.

Dr RAHMAN: I cannot draw attention to members of the Assembly who are absent, but I am sure that all former Attorneys-General of the Northern Territory would speak to the fact that we could have done more to maintain the weeds at the back of the garden over the years that have passed.

In any case, this is part of the government's commitment to tidying up and modernising. If we are talking about action, certainty and all that good stuff, part of it is about making sure that we do not have superfluous things hanging around the statute book and our systems. That is why this omnibus Bill has a range of different items, all of which do something to improve administrative frameworks within the Northern Territory.

I turn to the substantive items on the agenda. First of all, it is encouraging that the healthcare decision-making delegation has the support of the government. It is a sensitive area intersecting with guardianship and the difficult decisions that need to be made by one senior practitioner at the moment who has delegated authority. These are important decisions. There is a reason someone is prescribed to take on these jobs and it is not just carte blanche for anyone to do it. What has been proposed will help us create efficiency within the healthcare system by providing the senior practitioner the opportunity to provide delegated authority to, as I understand it, a couple of people who are earmarked as being able to take off some of that pressure.

Remember that healthcare requires not only clinicians but also administrators, infrastructure and systems. This is about improving that systemic background and set up.

I am encouraged that we are not having an unnecessary debate about coercion, public guardianship, control, powers and that sort of thing. Currently, two people within the healthcare system have been deemed appropriate, as I understand, to whom this authority could be delegated. That will take a considerable amount of pressure off the system from one person who, if not operating as a bottleneck, is overwhelmed by their responsibilities in isolation.

Let us move on to the justices of the peace and commissioners for oaths. This government prides itself on reducing red tape and creating regulatory efficiency. It would seem counterintuitive that we might be prescribing that all people who are commissioners for oaths or justices of the peace should require police checks as a mandated provision, because this Bill locks in the requirement for a national police check for anyone applying for those roles. However, it is important to realise that not everyone applies for those roles. There is a range of people who have these roles ex officio, including all of you in this Chamber. The Member for Karama probably uses his commissioner for oaths stamp more than anyone I know. We would not want to slow down his hard work.

It is important that we have commissioners for oaths and justices of the peace on the books, and enough of them. We could probably do with more of them, but we also want to ensure that we have the right people doing those jobs, so at the moment this is codifying what is already the practice in the Attorney-General's Department, which is to check that fit and proper persons are doing these jobs. This will not be a new administrative burden; it will add integrity to ensuring the people who certify and witness documents are fit and proper persons to do so. I am encouraged that we have the tick of approval from the opposition in this regard.

Modern conveyancing, land titles and property transactions—anyone who has attempted to purchase property recently will know how nightmarish it is in this jurisdiction relative to anywhere else because of the fact that almost nothing is done electronically. Not nothing, but a lot of things that are done electronically elsewhere are done on an abacus and stone tablets in this jurisdiction. I jest.

It is a step forward for us to move towards a modern conveyancing framework where we use e-conveyancing more to do land title transactions online rather than paper titles. This is a genuine modernisation step, and it reduces the friction within the property market. It is a significant point. There are studies about how when you make it easier to buy stuff, people buy stuff, and when you make it harder to buy stuff a lot of the time they become frustrated by the process.

In the ordinary course of events, people do not abandon property purchases because it is a massive pain dealing with conveyancers and paper. It just means it takes a lot more time and cost, and it slows down the fluidity of the system. What we are doing is genuinely long overdue. I have been hearing about it happening in this place for a long time; I am surprised that no-one has taken the bull by the horns on this issue previously. Potentially, the former government was more concerned about the front lawn looking good than weeding the

back garden. The point is we are doing the gardening work now. This is an important part of the edifice for us to tackle.

A legitimate concern that is raised from time to time is that electronic titling enhances Torrens title systems by making it faster, cheaper and more integrated, and maintaining government-backed certainty of ownership. There are risks, and those are well identified. It is good to put them on the record. Whenever you introduce electronic systems, there is a transitional period when you have to think about cybersecurity, accessibility concerns, technical vulnerabilities that need to be carefully managed through robust digital infrastructure and legislation and maintaining public trust. I am convinced, based on my briefings with the Attorney-General's Department, that those things are all being accommodated.

We are shifting from a 'must' to a 'may' situation to provide flexibility in a transitional mechanism so we can incrementally move towards a digitised system. There is no necessity to impose that, so for the older property investor who is used to doing things by paper and who knows their way around the system inside out, there will still be transitional mechanisms. However, for the increasing number of newer people moving into our marketplace, we hope—in keeping with incentivising housing supply in this jurisdiction—this will make things easier. A lot of people want to DIY, and honestly, it is pretty much impossible without digital conveyancing systems in place to give effect to that mechanism, so I am encouraged with the fact that it is happening.

Older people are the ones to be mindful of in transitioning to new technologies, so we are trying to mitigate any of those things by ensuring that people in remote areas and older people understand the digital systems and the transition away from paper titles.

In any case, it is almost impossible to purchase a property without a conveyancer, but at least this now provides people the option to move in that direction with the passage of time. That is a positive development as well.

The *Legal Profession Act* is the next part of this omnibus Bill. The amendments to the *Legal Profession Act* are also fairly sensible, bringing us in line with Solicitors' Conduct Rules. I am all for things that bring us up to code and up to standard with the rest of the country. This is an area where the legal profession has pushed for some of these changes, and we recognise that they are sensible changes to be made. At the moment, we go through a long process to adopt national laws that already work pretty well elsewhere, and this will bring the NT into line with uniform rules, improve processes and push us towards a best-practice environment which is what I think we are seeking to do in this space. It is uncontroversial, and I greatly appreciate the support from the government on this issue.

Synthetic medicines are probably the headline item in this omnibus Bill, and rightly so because they are a significant issue. It is important to understand that this has been pretty well thought through.

I will not go into a long lecture series on the danger of fentanyl. Fentanyl has its place within modern medical systems, but it is a dangerous drug that is increasingly starting to infiltrate recreational drug use. The consequences are significant, severe and not to be messed with. That is precisely why we are seeking to make fentanyl a Schedule 1 item, with a situation where you will have trafficable and commercial quantities for prescribed drugs being commensurate with other Schedule 1 drugs. That makes perfect sense to pretty much everyone operating in this space.

Sometimes there can be confusion when talking about the misuse of drugs, particularly when we are worried about one kid at BASSINTHEGRASS being caught with a pill in their pocket and then ending up with a mandatory 25-year sentence. That will not happen here. This will let people who are trafficking drugs be on notice that they are now trafficking a prescribed Schedule 1 substance and taking a significant risk if they choose to do so. Therefore, it is sensible to add fentanyl to Schedule 1, take it from Schedule 2 and make trafficable and commercial quantities the same as they are for other Schedule 1 drugs.

The safeguard is that the police and prosecution would still need to establish intent of sale and supply and would need additional indicia, for example, if somebody was supplying multiple pills or if somebody was to be prosecuted for being at an event and having recreational drugs in their pockets. We are trying to prevent harm, and this is a sensible amendment. One imagines that it has the opposition's support for that reason.

Continuous improvement is the object of this exercise and of our legal and administrative systems. I will not be any more pointed in my critique of what Labor has or has not done in regard to legislative reform and maintaining regulations that are fit for purpose. I have said enough on that, and we will come back to it in due course in any case. As to the matters that are objected to, I note that they are not strong objections as much as they are legitimate inquiries—that is how I would put them.

On the issue pertaining to NTCAT, I do not think it is unreasonable for us to move to a situation where, at a time when we know NTCAT is extraordinarily stretched, that we would make it clear and definitive that costs are recoverable in that forum. It does not prohibit people from initiating action in NTCAT. The bar for entry is still comparatively very low in every regard, not just financially but in terms of even the paperwork required to be put into that forum.

I think the changes are fine. If they were not, I would suggest perhaps amending that space.

NAAJA fulfils a valuable role in the Northern Territory. It has for a long time, notwithstanding that it has had some complex governance problems over a period of time, unfortunately. I respect the submission it made but also recognise that, on the balance of probabilities, these are reasonable changes to codify in the NTCAT space.

We are trying to stop vexatious litigation, and everything we do to shut that down and every small signal we put in place improves certainty within this jurisdiction. I want for a robust judiciary, a strong separation of powers, checks on executive power and for people to be able to access the justice system on reasonable terms. In that regard, I think we are making the right call.

The final part is the *Residential Tenancies Act* amendments. It is probably here where I must defer most to the guidance and expertise of the Attorney-General because the decision to make the amendment in this area sits with the Cabinet, to which I am not entirely privy. On the face of it, it seems entirely sensible to me. It is probably the case that over a period of time, we have set the public housing system up to fail on a range of metrics and this is potentially another area where that might be the case by having them maintain compliance with an administrative regulation that is simply unreasonable. I imagine that the Attorney-General will speak on that matter having been asked to comment on it by the Member for Daly.

These Bills are not as sexy and exciting as many other Bills, but I think they are every bit as important. I commend the huge amount of work done by the people in the background, because every one of these small legal changes can have a knock-on effect. Small legal changes in one place can interact and intersect with small legal changes in another place to the point where you can create unintended consequences. On the balance of probabilities, I see no real reason why we will accidentally trigger some harm by passing this law with minimum fuss.

It is worth reflecting on just how many Acts are covered in this law. This has intersections with the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*, the *Health Care Decision Making Act 2023*, the *Justices of the Peace Act 1991*, the *Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act 2010*, the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act 1928*, the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2014*, the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Regulations 2014, the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*, the *Sentencing Act 1995*, the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2006* and others.

I read that list out because I think it is important for everyone in the House to appreciate how much work has gone into this and how many people have had to look at this many laws to figure out how they intersect and how and when we can make these fixes. It is encouraging that the Attorney-General and her team have been able to pull together all these changes into an omnibus Bill. It is my hope that we will see more Bills like this in the future where we can engage in direct regulatory reform. One of the areas we talk about a lot but tangentially is alcohol reform. An area that comes up on a near-daily basis during sittings is domestic violence. There are things within the healthcare sector. There are enumerate areas where we could look at small fixes in legislation to improve regulatory efficiency without abrogating rights.

I encourage members of the Assembly to consider offering up those small fixes because an entire Bill is an enormous undertaking. We can identify specific problems. There is precedent around the world for parliaments filled with people of many different stripes being able to bring those forward to the government of the day and say, 'I have identified in this law this small thing that could be fixed with minimum fuss. Can you throw us a bone here?' Everybody gets a win out of it. Most importantly, the people of the Northern Territory get a win out of it when we improve regulatory efficiency.

If we are, in fact, to improve certainty, security and decision-making that people can rely upon, then we need to have robust systems in place. You need to do the remedial work of clearing things out from time to time as well. It is important that we do that.

I encourage especially the crossbenchers to think constructively about how they could offer to the government suggestions on small things that we might all collectively work on. Of course, the same offer is extended to the opposition.

There is not too much more I will say other than that there has been fairly extensive consultation on this Bill. I do not really think anyone can say that we did not ask for consultation on this Bill. Consultation occurred with the Attorney-General's Department, the Health department, NTCAT and some of the independent officers with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

This is probably one of the best considered pieces of legislation I have seen come through for a while. I think it will do good in its totality, albeit in small but significant ways nonetheless.

For those reasons, I commend the Bill to the Assembly and look forward to this being passed—touch wood—on the voices.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all the members who contributed to this important debate.

Member for Daly, thank you for your contribution. It was good to hear that you are supportive of this important omnibus Bill, which touches on a number of Acts across our system. I will answer the questions you had that were of concern to you. Maybe those questions were not asked during the briefing or in the scrutiny process of this Bill.

I also thank the Member for Fong Lim, who so eloquently summed up the important parts of this omnibus Bill with real-life examples of how each section of these changes can contribute towards our year of action, certainty and security. I particularly liked his analogy of tidying up Bills to modernise what is needed in our justice system which we need to be strong but has not been strong under eight years of Labor. He said it was a bit like Labor made its front lawn look good, but out the back it was full of weeds. That is exactly how it felt over the last four years in opposition listening to the Labor ministers go through their days. Sometimes during sittings we would have lots of statements and reports but not a lot of legislation.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Ms BOOTHBY: I am pleased and proud, as the Attorney-General, to have brought this Bill to the Assembly and to have had the contributions from the speakers. I am also proud that it was referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee—which we know was scrapped under the former Labor government. We brought the committee back in this term of government, and we are proud of that.

The Bill went out far and wide to see who would like to have their views heard. We received one submission from NAAJA (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency). I thank Anthony Beven, the acting CEO at NAAJA, for the work he did to put forward that submission and I will address his concerns as well in part of this wrap-up.

The Bill makes a number of amendments to various legislation and deals with the variety of relatively discrete amendments to legislation that fall under my portfolio as Attorney-General. I will not read through them all because I did that in my introduction speech, but I will talk about a couple of the key features of the Bill which will hopefully answer the opposition's questions.

The amendments to the *Health Care Decision Making Act 2023* will ensure timely and appropriate care of people with impaired decision-making capacity. To do that, the Act will be amended to allow for the senior practitioner to delegate their functions and powers to a public sector employee who has the necessary qualifications and experience to carry out those functions. This is important because the senior practitioner is a statutory appointment of one person who cannot attend to all requests for restrictive practices. We think this is a commonsense and much-needed change to this legislation.

I turn to the *Justices of the Peace Act* and the *Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act*. My colleague, the Member for Fong Lim, touched on the fact that justices of the peace and commissioners for oaths have an important role in the community, and sometimes it feels like there are not enough of them. I can vouch for that because often there are people in my community who are looking for a justice of the peace. There is a list of people who you can go and find, but if they are unavailable for some reason, it is difficult. This amendment ensures that we have measures in place with those national police checks enshrined in legislation. We want to make sure that only people who are fit and proper are appointed to these important roles.

This Bill will amend the *Misuse of Drugs Act* to make fentanyl and its derivatives a Schedule 1 dangerous drug. It was previously listed as a less serious Schedule 2 dangerous drug. This amendment is important because fentanyl is a potent and dangerous drug and has a high risk of overdose. The illegal sale of fentanyl has been increasing internationally, and the Northern Territory Police has been encountering more illicit substances where fentanyl is present. By making fentanyl and its derivatives a Schedule 1 dangerous drug, the sale and supply of this drug can now attract a maximum prison sentence of 25 years which will deter the spread of this deadly drug in our community.

I turn to the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2014*. NTCAT, as it is currently known, may make cost recovery orders for fees incurred by the successful party such as filing or service fees. However, there is a current level of uncertainty as to whether the NTCAT must consider this aspect against other considerations. The amendment that I make today will make it clear that a successful party is entitled to recover the costs associated with filing and serving documents required under the Act.

The NAAJA submission I mentioned at the beginning of my address expressed concern that the amendment will point decision-makers towards making costs orders, and it believes this moves away from the legislative objective of NTCAT which includes to be accessible to the public and to keep costs to parties at a minimum. This does not change that. It is important to note that NTCAT has always had the ability to make costs orders in favour of a successful party such as for filing or service fees. This amendment clarifies that NTCAT now 'may' instead of 'must' order that a successful party can recover out-of-pocket expenses because we believe people should not be worse off for using the tribunal successfully to enforce their legal right. Therefore, the amendment does not undermine the position of NTCAT to be accessible to the public or keep costs at a minimum.

The amendment to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Regulations 2014 will provide that there is no fee associated with an application under the *Health Care Decision Making Act 2023*. This ensures consistency with the rest of the regulations which state that there is no fee associated with an application under the *Guardianship of Adults Act 2016* or the *Advance Personal Planning Act 2013*. This amendment will ensure consistency for vulnerable people.

Amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* include sections 18A and 18B as an exemption for tenancies under the *Housing Act 1982*. This amendment recognises that tenancies made under the *Housing Act* operate in a different environment from tenancies in the private rental market. Sections 18A and 18B of the *Residential Tenancies Act* are designed to protect tenants' personal information from misuse, interference or loss by a landlord or a real estate agent. However, they are not practical or necessary in the context of a government-regulated social housing system. Unlike the private rental market, tenancy applications are stored for extended periods on a social housing waitlist which is administered by the agency responsible for social housing.

To answer the Member for Daly's question about what this all means and being careful to protect our vulnerable Territorians, the point is that this personal information must be kept by a government agency because the person is on a social or public housing waitlist.

The Northern Territory's waitlists for social and public housing are out of control. I heard the other day that someone had been waiting for 10 years to get into a property. The minister for Housing is having to do a huge amount of reform to try to get the waitlist times down, not only for the people wanting to get into those properties but also to ensure that those who are already in properties are following the rules and respecting the property that the government provides to them. There are some people who do not do that. They do not allow their neighbours to live peacefully and cause a whole heap of problems. Those reforms will be underway to ensure that those people are not afforded the expectation of having a house provided by the government. There is an opportunity for the waitlists to be reduced in some capacity by these reforms.

The amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* are needed because the waitlists are huge. It is a sensible approach. If an agency cannot keep names and information, they go off into the never-never which is not a good outcome. We need to know who is on the waitlist. It is a practical approach; it is not anything tricky or fancy, and it is not trying to hide anything or make changes to a group of people who the opposition said are vulnerable. It is about making sure that we still have contact with these people and try to reduce the waitlist which Labor let get out of control under its watch.

The Bill will insert a provision within section 48 of the *Sentencing Act 1995* to explicitly allow for a home detention condition to be ordered for a portion of an intensive community correction order. The amendment will make it clear that the intensive community correction order can contain a home detention condition that applies for part of the duration of the order. Although home detention conditions were intended to be an

option for courts to impose as part of an intensive community correction order, the current provision has been interpreted as an all-or-nothing approach and this amendment fixes that issue.

Additionally, the Bill corrects limitations on the setting of minimum non-parole periods unintentionally established by the *Sentencing and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022*. The amendment ensures that a 50% non-parole period applies to all offences where a sentence of 12 months' actual imprisonment or more is imposed when no other prescribed non-parole period is applied. The 2022 amendment limited the application of 50% non-parole periods to offences against the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1990*, the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* and the *Sentencing Act* where mandatory sentencing is applied to an offender. This amendment expands the application.

The *Land Title Act 2000* amendment modernises and accommodates the transition to e-conveyancing practices in the Northern Territory, transitioning the NT to the national framework of electronic conveyancing. The Member for Fong Lim pointed out that the transition from using the paper-based, clunky and time-consuming way of doing business into e-conveyancing will potentially make trying to buy or sell a home easier. This particularly applies to the younger demographic, who are the kind of people we want to be buying in the Territory. We want first home buyers to get into the market. We have had huge success with our home builder scheme for another 12 months.

At my community breakfast on the weekend I spoke to a number of people who were excited about this scheme being extended. It means they can go the bank, get their loan and use that $30,000 or $50,000 grant towards building their new home. We know what it is like when you build a new home; you generally stay in it for a long time, hopefully raise a family there and those kids grow up to stay here as well.

This is a good move under the *Land Title Act*. The commencement of electronic conveyancing will be in August 2025 and will remove the need to issue paper certificates during conveyancing transactions. As electronic conveyancing beds down fully, the need for paper certificates will cease over time. However, in the interim there may be occasions when issuing a paper certificate may be appropriate, such as to the owner of an unencumbered property. The amendment will give the Registrar-General discretion as to when to issue paper certificates.

In regard to the *Legal Profession Act 2006*, this amendment will allow the Law Society NT, with approval from the Attorney-General, to adopt the Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules model which will align with other Australian jurisdictions and create uniformity. Adoption of the ASCR is beneficial because it provides consistency for solicitors practising in the NT. I note that the Law Society has been calling for this for a long time.

I thank the staff at the Attorney-General's Department staff for all their hard work on this omnibus Bill, which covers a number of Acts. They have done a lot of work to get to this point.

I look forward to the passage of this Bill. Hopefully, we can agree in a bipartisan way to pass this Bill and get these amendments across government agencies. The purpose is to enhance efficiencies across a wide range of legislation throughout the legal landscape.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Ms BOOTHBY(Attorney-General)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION (2025–2026) BILL
Serial 25
and
REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 26

Continued from 15 May 2025.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I support the Treasurer's Appropriation Bill 2025 and the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. Territorians voted for change in August last year. They could see that the crime crisis was crippling our economy and eroding our unique lifestyle.

This budget looks at moving forward with certainty, action and security. For too long Territorians did not have certainty, action or security from the Labor government in the last eight years of its governing. This budget looks at completing the projects that have blown out with Labor's mismanagement of public funds and looks at spending to getting back to basics and moving the Territory back on the map where it belongs—as a place to raise your family and retire in peace.

The 2025 Northern Territory budget restores confidence and rebuilds our Territory by putting victims of crime first with prioritising law and order. We have invested $1.5bn into public order and safety. I welcome this spending as it improves the safety of the community after Labor left us with a mess.

The government continues to invest in rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle, and I applaud it for listening to the families in the Wanguri electorate with cost-of-living pressures. About 15% of the residents are senior members, and it is great to hear that the pensioner and carer concession scheme has been extended. These residents rely on these concessions to retain them living in the Territory, to which they have contributed to during their working life. I know that my seniors in the Leanyer seniors village will be grateful. It is refreshing to hear that this government is investing in the future of the Territory by looking at long-term goals and it is not short-sighted like the previous Labor government.

The Member for Drysdale's address reminded me that Labor could not deliver because it did not listen and could not see that our Territory was heading into financial crisis. As a member who worked in the financial industry, I know that many Territorians suffered financially during the global financial crisis in 2007, and the Territory was heading in the same direction pre-August last year. Territorians could not financially suffer any further downturn in the economy post-August last year.

Being last on the CommSec report for a number of recent quarters is not where we belong. In August the people of the Territory drew a line in the sand and said enough is enough, and they wanted to move the Territory forward with this government. Now the Treasurer has delivered a budget that looks at cleaning up Labor's mess and moves the Territory forward.

We are spending responsibly for safer communities with record spending for our hardworking police and emergency services workers and boosting funding for Corrections to address pressures associated with rising prison numbers to make our community safer.

We are spending responsibly in our justice system. We are giving Territorians cost-of-living relief in different areas, such as no increase to car registration for 12 months, free drivers' licences for 12 months, payroll tax exemptions, payroll tax-free threshold increases for business and first home owner grants for those who wish to set down roots in the Territory.

The list is longer, and we are spending responsibly in a number of areas, including education. I am pleased that Leanyer Primary School in my electorate is finally getting $1.5m to upgrade its administration block; this is long overdue. We are spending on domestic, family and sexual violence prevention, early intervention and response. We are investing in our youths who are our next generation. The announcement of the Youth Hub in the Wanguri electorate at the Leanyer Recreation Park is a great and positive announcement with $4.6m to be invested.

This is a fantastic outcome for all young people and families across Wanguri and the wider northern suburbs. By placing the youth hub at the Leanyer Recreation Park, we are making sure it is a place that is welcoming, inclusive and easy to access. My colleagues in the neighbouring electorates, the Members for Sanderson and Karama, will work with me to make sure that the space supports all youths who wish to use it.

There have been some concerns from some residents nearby about the potential of antisocial behaviour this youth hub may bring, but we have a blueprint to build on that and get it right. There is a current youth hub temporarily working at Sanderson Middle School and this will now give them a permanent home to continue that great work.

We are spending responsibly for infrastructure works around the Territory for all. I will reframe that to say that we are investing in our infrastructure to ensure that money is spent providing economic value to the Territory.

I thank all the government departments across the Territory and the Treasury department for the work done in preparing the budget for everyone. As the assistant minister for Treasury, I thank the Treasurer for bringing a budget to the Assembly that is sensible and provides the action, certainty and security for the residents of Wanguri and the Territory as a whole.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support this budget. This is not the ideal budget that we would have brought in an ideal world. This budget is the equivalent of saving a patient who has suffered a traumatic attack from eight years of neglect. This is a budget that draws a line in the sand to end the uncertainty and mismanagement of eight years of the previous government's failures.

We are left with debt and deficit of $55,000 for every man, woman and child in the Northern Territory with little to show for it. We have a number of over-engineered white elephant projects that would have made sense had they been project managed and looked after in a sensible and rational way.

It is a good idea to have an overpass at the Tiger Brennan Drive and Berrimah Road intersection. There have been a few deaths there. However, is it worth being—off the top of my head—$160m over budget? That is for Territorians to decide.

Is it worth having a shade structure over Cavenagh Street that does not keep anyone shaded or cool and that costs us hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to maintain? The shade structure at Cullen Bay is already well covered because of the simple choice of listening to the experts who know which vine will grow fast and provide the right cover.

Do I need to talk about the facility at the racecourse? The former Labor Chief Minister walked into Cabinet with $12m under his arm and his chief of staff wrote to the proponent and said, 'This is the letter you need to send us'. This is the legacy we have to deal with.

In my electorate of Blain, we had eight years of deficit in infrastructure spending. Moulden and Woodroffe were four of the original suburbs established in Palmerston in the 1980s. As such, some of their infrastructure is coming on 40 years old. The water pipes in Moulden are a constant trauma to the people there. To the good people of Gumnut Way—I hear you. Your pipes are 40 years old and failing, and you are left with insecurity and not knowing when the water will come back on or when it will be cut off next. I hear you, and I am fighting for you. This is the investment we need to have that I will continue to fight for. Unfortunately, because of the vast $11bn debt that we find ourselves in, I was not successful in getting money in this budget to repair your pipes, but I will continue to fight. We need a lot more investment in Moulden and Woodroffe.

We need investment in Bellamack. I will speak about the broken promise. When that suburb was designed, the developers promised parklands and lakes. People bought in Bellamack expecting there to be wonderful green areas to walk outside their house like the Sanctuary Lakes that my good friend, the Member for Drysdale, has in his electorate. Instead, what were these people left with as a legacy of the Henderson Labor government that managed the project? Nothing.

Mr Young: Just blame the developers.

Mr KERLE: No, no. The government is responsible for holding developers to account. Unfortunately, those developers are now bankrupt and gone. We are left to clean up the mess. Bellamack needs investment. This will have to be staged over a period of time to facilitate sensible investment.

My vision for Bellamack is that one day there will be green spaces there similar to Sanctuary Lakes for the good people of Bellamack to enjoy, to walk in the afternoon, walk their dogs and for the kids to go fishing in the lakes. They will not have to live through the burn-offs every year because the spear grass grows to the other side of their road. This is managed by our hardworking public servants and volunteers at Bushfires NT who do fuel reduction burning there, which means the entire suburb gets covered in smoke. I am sure they would love to have green lawns across the road to enjoy.

The car parking at the Palmerston Raiders home ground—we had a home game last weekend, and for every home game the Palmerston Raiders are unfortunately a victim of their own success because when that facility was built 15 years ago, it was designed for a certain size and number of members. They have now grown far beyond the original projection, so when there is a home game not only is the tarmac car park full but the grassy area inside the compound is full. People are also parking under the trees on the Raiders' grounds and up and down the road on Owston Avenue. They are parking on the Crown land next door and on the streets into Bellamack because there is not enough room to park. They need more parking, and I will be fighting for more room for people to park at the Palmerston Raiders venue for the safety of the community. Currently, people have no choice but to park on the road and on the yellow lines, and it is not safe.

We need money for youth programs. I want to talk about the fantastic Fuamatu2421 Boxing program that runs out of a shed in Pinelands. They recently went down south to represent the NT and did very well; congratulations to them. We need more programs for the youths of Palmerston. We have young people who are full of energy going through their teenage years. I know what it is like to be a young man—13 to 16 years of age—trying to define your own identity with a lot of hormones and growing muscles, and you want to prove yourself, define your identity and push back against the constraints of childhood. This leads to a lot of bad behaviour.

Palmerston has good programs and sports clubs, but it needs more. I would love to see more boxing programs for these youths because, unfortunately, I am hearing reports that instead of going home in the evening they congregate and form fight clubs where they sort out issues from schools in large groups. This is not acceptable. If they want to fight, have a boxing club where they can train and exercise, wear gloves and do it properly.

We need healthy and appropriate venues for teenagers to be able to exert themselves and work out their physical aggression. We have talked about male violence previously, and we need to accept male aggression as a fact and that it exists. The discussion should be on how we channel it appropriately. We need to channel it towards protecting, providing and building strength—for those purposes—by having an appropriate place for young men to learn how to control their aggression and learn discipline.

When I was a kid I did karate, taekwondo and shizen-ryu. These are all about discipline. You learn to fight and defend yourself —fair enough—but mostly it is about discipline and learning when it is appropriate to use force and how much force to use. The overriding principle was self-defence or the defence of others.

We need more good youth programs. Fuamatu2421 is fantastic, but it is a long way from Moulden and Gray—the Member for Drysdale's electorate. We need these programs where the people are. A lot of my constituents do not have cars and even catching a bus is a challenge.

I looked forward to the announcement from the Treasurer about the future of the Palmerston bus interchange, because many people have raised concerns about safety there. The number of incidents that have occurred there is on the public record. They have been serious violent assaults. We have responded with an increased police presence. When I talk to the good police at Palmerston they often raise the efforts they have put into the Palmerston bus interchange, but it continues to be a concern.

My constituents struggle. They cannot just jump in the car and drive to Pinelands. We need these programs in the heart of Moulden and Gray, accessible via foot falcon or pushbike, so that the kids can train, see healthy male role models and healthy masculinity modelled in an appropriate way and see that there is another path.

The problem I see in Palmerston is this gang culture that has unfortunately grown over the last eight years. I concede there has been a temptation to join gangs for a long time. When I was growing up the Karama Ghetto Boys, the Caz Boys and the Palmo Boys were well-known names, but we never saw the sorts of things we see now—carrying knives and machetes, planning assaults and riotous fights. I do not remember any of that when I was growing up here. I am interested to hear whether anyone else in this Chamber remembers anything like we have seen over the last eight years when they were growing up here.

We need alternative choices so that when these young men are growing up and look around them, they see two pathways. One pathway is their peer group, many of whom come from disadvantaged homes and grew up with intergenerational trauma and domestic violence—all those things we talk about a lot in this Chamber. In that group, how do they move forward and raise themselves from the hierarchy? How do they attract those of the opposite sex, which many young men are concerned with? They compete by fighting, beating up other people and establishing dominance, seeing who can commit various types of crime, who is baiting the police and getting away with it and who is wearing an ankle bracelet.

I do not think these are healthy ways for young men to compete. I would love to see more youth programs, and sporting groups—go the Raiders; go the Northern Sharks; go the Palmerston Crocs; go the Magpies; go the boxing clubs; and go the Woodroffe karate group. We need more programs like these so that young men, as they are coming into puberty and their testosterone is surging and they are seeking opportunities to break out and prove themselves, have the opportunity to choose a healthy path. On one side they see some of their peers who are making bad choices.

I shout out to the Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association. I have watched its amazing work for a while. Their constant mantra is 'make good choices'. I hear them regularly when dealing with at-risk youths.

They ask, ‘Are you making good choices tonight?’ They know them by name. They say, ‘Hey, Johnny. Are you making good choices tonight?’ or ‘Hey, Sally. Are you making good choices tonight?’ ‘Cool, keep making good choices’. That is what we need more of. When these young men and women are growing up, they see on the one hand a peer group who are at-risk, and they choose to engage with crime, drugs, antisocial behaviour and an under culture. They also have exposure to groups that are making a different and better choice, where they can be strong but focused, disciplined and constructive. They can build a life, skills and education. They can make a life for themselves and their partner, have children, buy a property and stand tall with respect and identity and be proud of themselves.

They do not need to fear any man, because what they have, they have built and earned. It is not because they have stolen or sold drugs and have to be careful because if the police come, they will get in trouble and will have to run away. They have earned it and can stand tall and proud. That is the vision I see for Palmerston—a place for families, without broken glass on the streets.

Thank you to the Attorney-General for her actions to take glass off the streets of Palmerston. There is a lot further to go there, and we will keep fighting. I see a future for Palmerston where children can walk the streets of Moulden, Gray, Woodroffe and Emery Avenue without fear of getting glass in their feet or dangerous dogs that have gotten out. People need dangerous dogs to feel safe in their home because young people who roam the streets at night are making bad choices and thinking it is cool to break into houses and steal people’s stuff, like Trevor Miller.

Our seniors need to be safe in their homes. When our young people make good decisions, our old people will be safe. They will not need to build big fences and have big dogs. They can go to bed at night and sleep well until the next morning.

I will speak about why the Territory needs the CLP government. Growing up here, it was a different world. I do not remember being aware of race as a child or teenager. We had people from all places. We had wonderful Indigenous families, Asian immigrants, people from Vietnam, Greece, Cyprus—all over the world. We all got along. There was some tension between groups, but that was mostly between friends.

It was common to forget to lock doors on the house or car. You would come home and leave the keys in the car. Most people were trustworthy. As a teenager, I remember going to mates’ houses, riding home in the dark and not even imagining that something bad could happen or I could be assaulted. There was a real sense that in the Territory someone could grow up and rise to be anything or do anything.

We had a boom-and-bust economy, but there were always opportunities for anyone who wanted to roll up their sleeves and do a hard day’s work. We never worried about the looming tax burden for our kids or whether there will be a future for the Northern Territory. Will we need a federal intervention? People are talking about a federal intervention. Will we need to have one? No.

When we were growing up, there were not these levels of debt. The debt was small and focused on capital works, infrastructure and co-investment. We did not have to borrow to pay for the day-to-day running of the government. What kind of a concept is that? I am speaking about the last eight years in which we had a situation that we had to repair. The previous government’s Treasurers who approved budgets that pushed us into unsustainable levels of debt should hang their heads in shame for what they have done to the Territory. They had a party, got drunk and now we have a hangover. We are the ones who have to make hard decisions. I would love to see investment in my electorate, but we cannot. It has to be deferred over multiple years, if at all, because we have a hangover from the previous government’s partying where they drank, got merry and got full drunk on the taxpayers’ dime. The bill is now due.

Growing up in the Territory under the CLP government, large infrastructure projects were conceived and rolled out keeping the good health of the balance sheets in mind. An important thing that those opposite would do well to remember is that the deficits of today are the tax burden of tomorrow. The unfunded spending of today is the bill that our children will have to pay tomorrow.

I have three boys, and I am trying to teach them about fiscal responsibility. I get them to do chores around the house. There are things they do because they are members of our house and that is expected. They have to clean their room, make their bed and get dressed in the morning. They have opportunities to earn money because I want them to have a growth mindset. Instead of limiting their mindset to, ‘I have to go and get a job, do my hours and get my money,’ they can think, ‘I can borrow dad’s lawnmower, and I can go to every house in the street, mow their lawn and make some money’. Their growth potential is unlimited.

I am trying to teach my children about responsibility. I give them IOUs because if I pay them cash that money will go straight to the canteen and turned into lollies. I started off paying them cash and said, 'All right, mate. You can mow the backyard. I will give you a hand.' I paid them $5 for that. A week later, I asked them where the $5 was and after a few questions I was told it had gone to the canteen and turned into Jumpy's, ice cups and lollies. We are now working on saving because I believe in raising young Territorians to know the value of a dollar. The know how hard it is to earn it and how good it is to save it so that when they spend it, it will be spent on something that has enduring value, not just lollies and Jumpy's that are here now—a sweet taste in the mouth and then gone.

In a great example of the management of the previous CLP government, the former—and, I believe, inaugural—Member for Blain, Barry Coulter was a great champion for the Territory. He fought hard for the Darwin–Alice Springs railway. The NT Government at the time could have gone to market, issued a lot of debt, built the railway on its own, and it would have been on the hook for the whole lot, but, no, he was a savvy businessman and he understood the value of a dollar. He understood that the Alice Springs–Darwin railway was a key piece of infrastructure linking the southern seaboard via Adelaide to our Asian neighbours in the north. It had to be built for the benefit of the Territory. It was key piece of nation-building infrastructure, but Mr Coulter did not want to go at it alone, so he lobbied the federal government and found private partners. They entered into a public-private partnership for which the NT Government had to chip in only about one-third of the price. We got 100% of the value for one-third of the price. That is a good deal.

I wish the previous Labor government had taken that lesson more to heart, because maybe our debt would be lower and we would have more assets on our balance sheet.

We set aside national parks and hunting reserves. The Member for Nelson is a strong advocate for hunting and fishing, and I look forward to the hunting reserves that he will be strengthening throughout this term of government.

One day I should do a speech on all the national parks that the CLP government has established over the years and compare that with the Labor government's record. In the previous term, our parks and waterfalls were closed due to failures of management, failures of relationships—Gunlom Falls, Douglas Daly Hot Springs and others.

Ms Uibo: Gunlom Falls is a national park under Parks Australia, not the NT Government.

Madam SPEAKER: That is enough. Leader of the Opposition, there is no discourse across the Chamber.

Ms Uibo: I am just pointing out a fact.

Mr KERLE: It is still closed all the same.

Ms Uibo: No, it is not closed; it is open. Maybe you should drive out there and have a look.

Mr KERLE: The DNA of the CLP …

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please be quiet, or you can leave if you continue to talk across the Chamber. You will have your chance in a minute to stand and talk if you choose.

Ms Uibo: Do I get a second chance, Madam Speaker?

Madam SPEAKER: Adjournment.

Mr KERLE: The DNA of the CLP was forged. I am a student of history. I have a lot to learn, but I am studying. I am studying the history of the CLP, and I am amazed by what I find. Hyacinth Tungutalum, one of the first Indigenous politicians in this country, was a proud member of the CLP.

The DNA of the CLP was forged in the frontier environment of this good Territory—fighting the elements, building infrastructure and attracting people from down south and around the world to come here, bring their families, lay down roots, start businesses, work hard and invest. As a result, the DNA of the CLP is strong, resilient and sometimes sharp-edged, but it understands the value of money and its preciousness.

I invite those opposite to consider what money is. Money is condensed time. It represents the only thing in this life that you cannot get more of—time. That is why it is so precious and must be ferociously guarded and carefully spent.

That CLP DNA is represented by all the members on this side of the Chamber, and I am proud of it.

I commend this budget to the Assembly.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain talked about his electorate. His teammate is the Treasurer, so just have a chat to him for some money, mate.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Let the Member for Arafura speak.

Mr BROWN: What can I say? For all the talk about balancing the budget, the government has delivered nothing more than a smokescreen, keeping the spending up while cutting investments for our roads, schools, hospitals and remote communities. Last year CLP members condemned Labor's budget as more of the same, claiming it had the wrong priorities and no actual play for the Territory. Now, in government, they have delivered more of the same themselves—debt without direction and spending without substance, not to mention reannouncing Labor projects.

Debt is projected to hit $14bn within three years, yet there is no plan to pay it down, no vision for economic growth and no road map for the Territory's future. We saw this coming when the CLP, the supposed party of fiscal responsibility, voted to remove the debt ceiling.

Despite the government spin, this budget is not an economic plan. It misses the opportunity to address the root causes of crime, foster economic growth and lay the foundation for future prosperity.

Instead of doing the hard work, the Treasurer spent critical budget preparation days fishing—lucky bugger. This is a government focused on media management while failing to deliver for fellow Territorians. This government criticises Labor's financial management, yet it is increasing debt without any long-term strategy to pay it down. The CLP's responsible budget measures include asking departments to find $20m in savings—a drop in the ocean given the $1.3bn deficit and escalating interest.

Treasurer, when in opposition, you and your colleagues were quick to point out the NT's poor economic performance under Labor, highlighting the Territory's last place ranking in multiple economic indicators in CommSec's State of the States reports. I acknowledge the Member for Wanguri for bringing that up, but what she did not mention is where we are sitting now.

The NT budget is being touted as a record spend on law and order, with the CLP framing it as a centrepiece of its first budget. It claims to have committed $1.34bn to Police, Corrections and the Attorney-General's Department, branding it as a record spend. However, this record spend ignores critical areas like crime prevention, youth diversion and rehabilitation—areas that evidence shows as being more effective at reducing crime in the long term.

Particularly concerning for me is that the government seems to have cut funding for Aboriginal law and justice groups. This will make things worse, and it is a breach of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement that those opposite signed up to. While addressing the root causes of crime, the CLP throws money at the face of the problems without solving them. Despite claiming to tackle the root causes of crime, the budget reveals no new major funding to education, housing or early intervention.

In Maningrida funding for local security is being pulled, with NT Police telling residents that there was not enough money to go around. Meanwhile, the CLP continues to tout that its law and order spending has been record breaking. This cut is despite escalating crime and community concerns. For the past two years the Maningrida Progress Association and other services have co-funded the private security patrols with the NT Government. These patrols kept the community safer, prevented break-ins and reduced crime.

Now that the funding has been pulled, the people of Maningrida have been left to fend for themselves. The real impact of the so-called law and order budget can be seen by the car that was set alight outside a home in Maningrida a few weeks ago. Crime is on the rise, but instead of proven security measures, the CLP is pulling the rug out from under this community.

The Chief Minister, who is also the Minister for Police, must explain why Maningrida is being abandoned. Eight police officers are doing their best in a community of 4,000. They cannot be everywhere at once. The security patrols fill the gap along with the night patrol, working day and night. NT Police says that a new facility is coming, but what good is a building when crime is happening now? What good is future funding

when security patrols end next month? This is not about a handout; it is about keeping a promise. The CLP claimed that it would be tough on crime, but it seems that applies only to CLP seats. What about our remote areas?

Infrastructure is critical, especially in the bush, yet in this budget we see devastating cuts to vital roads, health services and essential projects for remote communities. What do you call cutting infrastructure projects across the Territory? For all the talk about strategic investment and economic growth, the reality is starkly different. They are not just numbers; they are projects that Territorians rely on. Roads are now left unsealed, remote housing upgrades have been abandoned and schools have been deprived of essential expansion needed for rising enrolments.

Transport infrastructure is the backbone of regional development. The CLP has withdrawn over $600m from transport projects that are essential for connecting remote communities, supporting industry and improving road safety. While claiming a commitment to economic growth, the CLP gutted vital investments. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries faces a devasting 67% reduction from $32m to $11m. Essential projects supporting agribusiness precincts and regional jobs are now shelved.

Similarly, the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, which is tasked with vital land and housing development, had a staggering $98m cut, slashing its budget by 46%. These cuts undermine the capacity for urban regional centres to flourish.

In housing infrastructure, the CLP's actions starkly contradict its rhetoric. Housing infrastructure funding dropped by $100m, delaying critical projects and prolonging hardship for communities desperately awaiting adequate housing.

Health infrastructure is no different. The government cut $121m, or 39%, from the Department of Health's capital budget, severely impacting hospitals that are already under immense strain. Essential projects, including hospital expansions and remote health clinics, have been indefinitely postponed.

Education infrastructure is also hit hard, losing $53m, or 60%, of its previous allocation. This translates directly into fewer classrooms, fewer upgrades and inadequate facilities for growing communities, undermining the goal of improving student outcomes.

This government frequently claims it seeks economic growth and improved living standards, yet this infrastructure budget tells a starkly different story, especially for our remote communities. We asked the Treasurer yesterday about it and did not get an answer. Territorians deserve clarity on what has been cut, why and whether these critical projects will ever resurface. Meanwhile they face deteriorating roads, delayed housing and inadequate support for schools and hospitals.

I am particularly concerned that this budget strips vital health services from the new clinic at Gunbalanya. The $20m for the new clinic and morgue at Gunbalanya is seemingly now gone. The centre was not merely infrastructure; it represented essential healthcare, culturally appropriate facilities, emergency bays, dental services, X-rays, hearing services, renal treatment and more. This means the community members who do not have those services will flood into the major centres. You will get an influx. The CLP government has abandoned Gunbalanya, effectively telling families and elders, 'You are on your own'. Gunbalanya deserves better.

In conclusion, the budget is fundamentally flawed. Clearly, the CLP entered government with a genuine governing plan and strategy to win an election. Now it is learning that governance means more than just slogans. There is so much more I could discuss—the cuts to Tiwi Island roads, the cut to the Maningrida cyclone shelter and the scaling back on housing investment—but I will leave that for another time.

Promises on local government reforms and funding for decision-making have evaporated, leaving communities unsupported. The Territory deserves a government committed to economic development, critical infrastructure and sustainable employment for all. If this does not occur in remote communities, people come into the major hubs and towns.

Look at the Karama bus terminal, the Palmerston bus terminal and the Marrara tavern. The servo near the tavern is inundated with people sitting around. They are here, initially because of the lack of services on their country and in their communities. The Gray shops is another area. I drive around and talk to these people about going back home, but they do not have dialysis, support or housing there.

It is hard on us as well. I cannot go to the Karama Tavern without being humbugged by all the people from my electorate who are in town. Think about that. We are here to assist in getting people back with their community, back at work and with services. Most of them come into town because of the lack of specialised services. When an elder comes in, that elder brings in 20 to 30 family members because they fear that they will not see that person again. They spill out into the parks and get into those bad habits.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I never thought it would come to the day when I actually agree with something from the Member for Blain, who said that this budget is not ideal. We have a CLP member on that side agreeing with us that this budget is not ideal. We definitely agree with you, Member for Blain, so thank you for bringing that along and for acknowledging that this budget is not ideal.

I will tell you why it is not ideal, Member for Blain. It is probably because your Treasurer spends most of his time in my electorate fishing—a week before the budget. The Treasurer spends more time in my electorate than in his own. That is why this budget is not ideal, Member for Blain. The Treasurer does not have his eyes over the budget. I know the Malak Malak Rangers are near the Daly River boat ramp. I am sure he has driven past the Malak Malak Rangers a number of times. I can guarantee to you is that the CLP Treasurer, Bill Yan, has never pulled into the Malak Malak Rangers to tell them, 'You know the $12m commitment for rangers? We will not do it anymore. It is cut from the budget and you do not matter.'

Member for Blain, thank you for identifying that this budget is not ideal; we completely agree with you.

Mr Kerle: Fixing your mess.

Mr YOUNG: You are the one who said it. You stood up about 15 to 20 minutes ago to say that this budget is not ideal. That is on the *Hansard* record, and I am sure other members on your side agree with you about the budget.

In the March sittings, after questions surrounding the Treasurer's long and cushy stints in Darwin, away from his electorate in Alice, he claimed these accusations were unbelievable. I quote what the Treasurer said:

There is a reason I am in Darwin; I am helping the CLP government drive the Territory forward …

But Bill Yan is hooked on holidays, not hard work. The Treasurer has gone fishing while the budget sinks. The budget is best described as an exercise in smoke and mirrors from the CLP government, with cuts here, there and everywhere.

Territorians would have been hoping for a budget that delivers on a better life and a future where we move together with an actual vision; however, this is a disappointing budget full of missed opportunities. It fails to deliver opportunities for Territorians across our vast and beautiful country, from our dynamic Top End to our regional service centres. Tragically, it also continues to entrench disadvantage in our remote communities and does little to stem the drift into urban areas and beyond.

I have spoken in this Assembly about how Labor is all about the Territory. Our focus is on improving the quality of life for all Territorians, no matter their location. The former Territory Labor government demonstrated this in our record investment in infrastructure. We know that infrastructure is a key enabler of economic development underpinning our capacity to create jobs, increase productivity and stimulate growth. Infrastructure supports the quality of our social wellbeing, our children's future, our cultural and lifestyle experiences and the services we use daily. The current government talks big on infrastructure, yet it spends less on building our Territory.

Budget 2025–26 shows a reduction of $131m in the infrastructure budget. From the budget papers, there is a 65% cut to Infrastructure NT alone. The office that ensures the delivery of strategic projects to develop the Territory economically and socially has taken a significant hit.

There is also a whopping 68% cut to the Housing Support Program office. The stated objective of the Housing Support Program office is to improve urban and remote housing in land availability. It delivers design and construction services that provide serviced land, quality government housing and related infrastructure in urban and remote areas. It supports ongoing construction-related jobs across the Territory, yet this budget has been slashed.

Investments in road support, tourism and industry, sealing and upgrading roads can also ensure that those cut off during a heavy Wet Season are not as impacted and can still receive the delivery of essential goods

needed in those remote communities. That is why the former Territory Labor government invested in critical transport infrastructure and improved road access across the Territory. We will not apologise for that.

Since 2016 we upgraded over 2,200 kilometres of Territory roads, including the Central Arnhem Highway, Carpentaria Highway, Tanami Road, Tiwi Island roads, the Buntine Highway, the Kakadu National Park road and a section of the Port Keats Road, which I had the honour of opening with the then Chief Minister, Eva Lawler.

Territory Labor also committed funding in the 2024–25 budget to several road program upgrades, including the $340m for priority industry road upgrades to the Stuart Highway between Alice Springs and Darwin, the Barkly Highway and the Victoria Highway. We find in this budget that those important allocations have been shifted around with a number of reductions. This includes the Central Arnhem Highway, which has lost about $4.6m. The $73.1m for the Tanami Road and Central Arnhem Road future priorities program is also gone. Instead of continuing these commitments, the government has quietly dropped or deferred dozens of key transport projects. The total infrastructure program has shrunk, and the proportion dedicated to roads has been reduced.

What message does that send to Territorians outside of Darwin? That they do not count? What message does this sent to our civil and construction industry? That their industry is not valued as a result of these cuts? Let us be clear here. Investing in roads is not just bitumen and bridges; it is about jobs, safety, economic resilience and community strengthening. Every time a project is cut a job is not created, a business is not supported and a community is not connected. We will ensure that we get answers from this CLP government at the upcoming Estimates to understand exactly what it has cut so we can pass that information on to the communities that have missed out under this current government.

I turn to health. Every Territorian deserves quality and safe health services. No-one on this side of the Assembly will say otherwise. The Health minister acts as if we would not want any further investment in our Territory's healthcare system. The ironic fact is that the Minister for Health, up until 3 May, was trying to get the worst-rated Health minister in the country elected as Prime Minister. He stood in this Chamber saying, 'The CLP wants to ensure that the best health services are available to Territorians', but one of the reasons healthcare is getting such a boost this year is because of the investments it is receiving from the federal government. That provided the CLP government with an extra $51m towards Territory public hospitals as part of a nationwide funding boost to directly improve healthcare access in the Territory.

Instead of bashing the federal government—as some members in this House have done—the CLP needs to work in partnership with it to deliver on this significant commitment in the Territory, including the Darwin urgent care centre. It also includes the $60m to support the construction of a new residential care home in Darwin, delivering no less than 120 new residential care beds and addressing acute shortages in the Top End. The $10.1m to CareFlight to purchase a plane to support medical evacuations from remote communities and delivering an upgraded Medicare Mental Health Centre in Alice Springs and a headspace Plus for a youth-specialised centre in Darwin.

We are extraordinarily proud of the Albanese federal Labor government's investment in healthcare. Like all systems worldwide, our health services face enormous demand, which is further complicated by rising costs, staff shortages and changing demographics, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.

I acknowledge NT Health's greatest asset: its workforce. More than 7,200 staff operate across five regions, with six hospitals, 74 health clinics and several corporate offices providing a full spectrum of essential patient-centred health services. They do a fantastic job. Investing in Territory healthcare is needed to ensure we deliver safe, high-quality healthcare to meet current and projected future demands.

More than half of all Territorians will experience mental illness at some point during their lifetime. Territory Labor funded the mental health inpatient ward at the Royal Darwin Hospital. As I pointed out earlier, the CLP has continued its work with infrastructure. Significant progress was made in delivering the Territory Labor government's commitment to increase access to quality healthcare for all Territorians. We are excited to see the ongoing benefit it will provide to those who need those services.

The Territory Labor government did an enormous amount of work on mental healthcare—more than any other government before it. This new unit will deliver 24 beds for Territorians who need mental healthcare. The three-level building will contain mental health support services and provide short-term care for mental health clients who present to the emergency department. However, sadly, we have yet to see any real plans from the CLP regarding mental health support. I, like many other Territorians, want to see it step up for the vulnerable.

Access to appropriate support is also critical to the health and wellbeing of Territorians living with a disability, regardless of where they live. It is now on the CLP government to ensure that all government sectors meet their obligations to Territorians with disabilities who must have equal access to high-quality services and community participation opportunities.

VISITORS
Parap Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of students from Year 5 at Parap Primary School, accompanied by their teachers. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr YOUNG: A big welcome from everyone in the Chamber. I hope you enjoy your day today. For those who are not sure, we are speaking on the budget, which the government brought forward last week. It feels like such a long time ago, doesn't it?

Unfortunately, it was not important enough for the Treasurer to include in his speech. While the government's plan outlined its intention to improve access to a greater range of disability services and additional special needs schooling, yet again, the CLP has failed to highlight a clear, detailed plan on how it intends to help Territorians with a disability to access adequate services they need and deserve over the coming years.

All we can see from this budget is that the CLP is providing the bare minimum of delivering equal opportunities to Territorians with disabilities and to their families—as it should be.

Our Fire and Emergency Services do invaluable work across Territory communities daily. Territory Labor passed the Fire and Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill to split the Police, Fire and Emergency tri-service last year. This transition from the tri-service allows each agency to focus better on its functions and recognises that each agency has different needs. The budget states that the increase in 2025–26 is primarily to fully establish the Northern Territory Fire and Emergency Services as a standalone agency.

Territory Labor is excited to have implemented the reform because it strengthens and improves the operating environment for our hardworking Fire and Emergency Services.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Public Information Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 29.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Racing and Wagering Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 27.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that this Assembly calls upon the government to develop an evidence-based crime prevention framework that:

1. adopts a public health approach

2. is developed in consultation with relevant peak bodies, experts and organisations on the ground

3. recognises systemic racism prevalent in the Northern Territory and its impacts upon the criminal justice system.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that this Assembly:

1. acknowledges the overwhelming scientific evidence of anthropogenic global heating which is changing the climate and global weather patterns

2. recognises that in this climate crisis the Northern Territory will increasingly be impacted by more extreme weather patterns including increasing severity and length of heatwaves, prolonged droughts, sea level rise, more intense cyclones and flooding, as well as a broader distribution of tropical diseases and species habitat reduction

3. recognises that the Northern Territory Government has an obligation to its citizens to work to mitigate the impacts of the changing climate, actively create resilient communities and develop an overarching climate change adaptation strategy for the NT that focuses on:

   (a) consulting widely across sectors, our urban and rural communities, government, peak organisations and businesses

   (b) identifying key climate risks to our community, our economy, our infrastructure and our environment

   (c) analysing risks and impacts, costing, adaptation and mitigation measures

   (d) identifying the best ways to use funding, prioritise actions and advocate for federal money

   (e) ensuring those most vulnerable to heatwaves are supported to adapt to a hotter climate, including housing upgrades to improve energy efficiency and ensuring access to reliable and free air-conditioned public spaces

   (f) ensuring consideration of climate risks is embedded in planning for all large projects that include significant public investment

   (g) creating a climate risk adaptation framework for all future government budgets.

VISITORS
Member for Arnhem's Guests

Madam SPEAKER: On behalf of honourable members, I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery two special guests of the Member for Arnhem, Rachel Candino and Rosina Brown. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

QUESTION TIME

Territory Coordinator – Appointment

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Welcome to Rachel and Rosina.

In the scrutiny committee report into the Territory Coordinator Bill, the Members for Wanguri, Drysdale and Goyder—all government members—recommended that you set clear criteria for appointing the Territory Coordinator to be included in the legislation. The committee made clear its recommendation to strengthen transparency, accountability and parliamentary oversight. You chose to ignore your government members on these recommendations and voted down the amendments to put in checks and balances in the system through the legislation. You then appointed Stuart Knowles last week as the Territory Coordinator for the next four years without an open recruitment process.

How can you expect Territorians to have any faith in your integrity or transparency when you ignore your own members of government and refuse to exercise accountability in such a significant appointment for the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I welcome the question. I am alarmed at the tact that the Opposition Leader is taking in attacking public servants. I am not sure what the Territory Coordinator ever did to her or Labor, but it is

unprecedented to have such attacks on someone who has been appointed appropriately, given an interim role and facilitated all of the consultation and development of the Bill.

Let us not forget that this legislation started as a discussion paper. We then circulated a draft. We sent it to the scrutiny committee for months. There were public consultations across the Northern Territory on this. I took this policy to the 2020 election. We tried to pass it in parliament last term, and I took it to the 2024 election.

At the conclusion of the Bill, in which there is a framework for the appointment of the Territory Coordinator set out in the Bill, I appointed Stuart Knowles as the Territory Coordinator in accordance with the legislation.

I am not sure what it is the members of the opposition are getting at. I do not know why they continue to pursue this narrative against a public servant. I do not understand why they cannot get behind the Territory Coordinator. I can understand if you do not like the policy, and we know you do not like the policy because you failed to grow our economy and refused to back anything that would change the dial. We are not here to deliver status quo. Yes, you can dislike the policy—that is fine—but play the policy not the person, Opposition Leader.

This has all been done exactly in accordance with the legislation, whether you like that or not …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. There were two parts to the question: why did the Chief Minister ignore the scrutiny committee advice for recommendations, and why did she appoint the Territory Coordinator without an open recruitment process to a public service role?

Madam SPEAKER: You have made that clear.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have answered this ridiculous question. If you need other questions to ask me, I am happy to write you some, because there is a lot going on in the Northern Territory that you are meant to be holding us accountable on. At the end of the day, I appointed Stuart Knowles as the interim Territory Coordinator. The legislation then set out criteria to undertake that appointment, and that process was done. Then the Administrator appointed him, it goes in the Gazette where all the official bits and pieces happen and off we go. I do not know what else she is trying to get at. It is like she has never been a minister before or never appointed someone herself. She knows the process. I know she was not good at it, but she understands the process.

I can accept that you do not like the Territory Coordinator as a policy because it will get things done in the Northern Territory—something Labor failed to do in a decade. You used to say to me, ‘Stop talking down the Territory’. What is wrong with you? We are about to turn a corner for the Territory, and everyone in this Chamber should be getting on board.

Community Safety

Mrs CARLSON to CHIEF MINISTER

Our government has made it clear that community safety is our number one priority, and that is what the people in my electorate of Wanguri want. They want to feel safe in their homes and when they go to the shops. Since coming to government eight months ago we have strengthened our laws and given police more powers to fight crime and stop it before it begins. Can you update the Assembly on how our government’s changes to the law and other reducing-crime initiatives are helping to improve the safety on the ground and in our community?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri is a passionate advocate for her community, and like all Territorians, people in Wanguri want to be safe. They want to live in a safe community, send their kids to a safe school, go to a safe shop and work in a safe environment. Everyone deserves that. That is why, as soon as we came to government in August, we were already drafting laws ready to go for the first October sittings.

Member for Wanguri, I would love to give your community an update on how that is all tracking. We passed Declan’s Law, which strengthened bail laws and added wanding for our police to remove knives and other sharp-edged weapons out of circulation. I am proud to inform you, Member for Wanguri, that since October last year our police have wanded 5,063 people, which is huge. As a result of those operations, they seized

99 weapons. That is 99 crimes that may never have happened. We will never know the true impact of that wanding and the impact of deterring people from carrying weapons and committing crimes in the first place.

Our ramraid legislation had 24 individuals charged with ramraid offending. Our post-and-boast legislation had 10 people before the courts. Our nuisance public drinking law to deal with problem drinking in public places—227 infringements have been issued to 216 individuals.

Good early numbers are coming through from the legislation we passed in October, but of course we did not stop; that was just the start. We came back to parliament a couple of weeks ago to pass Australia's strongest bail laws and we are already starting to see, anecdotally, that the strengthening has worked, but there is so much more we need to do to make our community safe.

Our police do an amazing job. They are an incredible part of our community, and our record $1.5bn investment into law and order in this budget will go a long way. A total of $608m of that is for our police. Since September last year, our government has graduated 56 constables, 23 police auxiliaries and 11 Aboriginal liaison officers, which is terrific. Between now and the end of the year, we will graduate another 128 police constables, eight police auxiliaries and 18 Aboriginal community police officers who will either transition to constable or are on the pathway to transitioning, which is exciting.

I am pleased to announce that when you compare the same period from last year to now, the FTE total of police is 53 more than what we had. We will continue to put people's right to be safe above the rights of offenders. We will back our police with better powers and resources to do their job because community safety is our number one priority.

Voluntary Assisted Dying – Consultation

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

A comprehensive consultation process, which concluded less than 12 months ago, found that 73% of Territorians support voluntary assisted dying, or VAD, and the laws for giving terminally ill Territorians the choice to die with dignity. Why has your government started another consultation process when we have already had one of the biggest consultations in the Territory's history on VAD? Why do you keep stalling on bringing this important matter to parliament? Given the strong community support for progress on VAD laws and your support for a VAD Bill when you were Opposition Leader, will you now support the drafting of a Bill for the community to consider and consult on properly?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a good question. It shows that the Opposition Leader is not paying attention. I want to take you back to something, because the report that Labor did was after eight years of it being in government, so in the dying days of government, Labor finally decided VAD was something to get around to.

Opposition Leader, you were not committed to it at all. You created a committee to consult across the Territory and you spoke to a lot of people, but did the committee go to your community? Was it out at Beswick, Ngukurr, Lajamanu or Yuendumu? Absolutely not. Maningrida? You name it. The committee went up and down the spine. That is great, and it is important.

Mr Young: It went to Wadeye.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, it went to one remote community. Should I be clapping for that?

Mr Young: There was more than one.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, please.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The point is that report was something Labor did in the dying days of its government after eight years of being in power. If it wanted VAD, it could have, but it did not. You were part of that government. You were the Attorney-General who would have brought the law to the parliament, and you did not. That is point number one.

Point number two: your report, which was finalised well before the election, could have been acted on if you wanted to, and you did not. That consultation, in a lot of people's view, was limited.

Point number three: the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee was the right vehicle in which to bring legislation to this parliament on this issue and to do the consultation, which was not done as part of your preparation paper late last year.

This is a short timeframe. It has until September to report back to the parliament with drafting instructions. Your politicisation yesterday—where, all of a sudden, you have woken up and decided to jump on this as some sort of hot button political issue and draft your own legislation from opposition—is shameful. It makes a mockery of the importance of the issue and the respect that should be afforded to people who care passionately on both sides and all the people in between who have not turned their mind to it at all. We need to proceed through this process to have legislation that has credibility and integrity.

You running around and saying that you will do it is, frankly, disgraceful.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Chief Minister is not answering the question. It is clearly about supporting the drafting of a Bill to consider for the community.

Madam SPEAKER: I think she is answering the question. Please continue, Chief Minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Okay, you are not listening. The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is a committee of the parliament. It has CLP members, Labor members and opposition members. It will go around the Territory looking at your report, previous legislation and other jurisdictions, speaking to the people who, under Labor, did not get a voice, and providing drafting instructions to the parliament. That is a proper, respectful, consultative process. If you want to run ahead and try to score cheap political points, you will be judged for that by the community. We will stay the course on what is a robust and respectful process which will be concluded by September.

Bus Review

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Can you discuss the purpose of your recently announced bus review and why it is necessary? Additionally, how does this extension fit into the broader review of the bus system, and what long-term benefits are expected for bus passengers and drivers? Can you update the Assembly on the government's decision to extend free bus travel and how this initiative is helping improve safety and public confidence in the bus network?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina is a strong advocate for his electorate on many matters, in particular the safety and wellbeing of Territorians. We have had discussions about the Casuarina bus interchange and the public network on many occasions. It is good to be able to do something about that.

This week we announced that bus travel will remain free for another 12 months until June 2026. This is just one initiative which forms part of our Bus Safety Reform Strategy. This overhaul aims to streamline routes, ramp up safety and lift the whole experience on our public sector network, with faster trips, safer journeys and a better deal for drivers and passengers alike.

In regard to the free bus fares, let us not forget how we got there. Labor deliberately deceived Territorians nearly 12 months ago by claiming free bus tickets were a cost-of-living measure. However, the department, to its credit, was quick to advise me in August 2024 that the ticket system had malfunctioned under the previous government and many drivers were required to take cash payments. As you can imagine, assaults and attempted robberies of drivers soared. The previous government put drivers at risk and in harm's way.

We quickly took control of the issue and reached out to stakeholders like the TWU, a traditional constituent of those opposite. We listened to its concerns about safety which had fallen on deaf ears under Labor for many years. We took urgent action to fix the problem, unlike the lazy, do-nothing response of those opposite.

Within 100 days we installed protective screens on every urban bus to keep drivers safe and continued the free ticketing system so that drivers were not carrying cash and exposed to further issues. We did not stop there. We introduced a range of other safety measures, including direct radio links between drivers and the police, a driver duress alarm for emergencies, more CCTV in problem areas and on board buses and stronger powers for transit officers to deal with bad behaviour. These are real changes that will make a difference.

This is a big leap forward, but it is only the start. Our next wave of reforms will tighten safety even further, upgrade the right infrastructure and make every public transport journey better for everyone. Our goal is to build a safer and more efficient public transport system for everyone, and we are listening to our community and delivering.

Public Sector – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Before the election the now Chief Minister repeatedly promised that there would be no public sector cuts as part of the CLP's commitment to voters. It has now been revealed that the government plans to remove redeployment options for public servants, laying the groundwork for widespread job cuts across agencies. Will you recommit to no public sector job losses, as the Chief Minister promised multiple times? Will you guarantee that existing entitlements, such as work from home and flexible work arrangements, will not be cut by the CLP through an enterprise bargaining process?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this year there are a lot of enterprise bargaining agreements happening across the OCPE; the public service is one of them. We will not be making any cuts to the public service. I do not know why the Member for Daly seems to think that we will cut public servants. Before the election we said that we would not be doing that, and we will honour that promise. If there are people in the public service whose contracts are coming to an end and do not get renewed, that is a matter for those departments.

Ms Uibo: Are CEOs public servants? Seems like a few of those have been cut.

Mrs HERSEY: There are negotiations coming on. There are no cuts to the public service, and we maintain that those …

Ms Uibo: Other than CEOs.

Mrs HERSEY: I note the Opposition Leader interjecting constantly. We stand by that commitment. We value our public service and we have great public servants who work across …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing order 110; relevance.

Madam SPEAKER: If you are talking about relevance, she has plenty of time.

Mr YOUNG: I acknowledge the minister has answered one part of the question; I appreciate that. There was a second part of the question that I wanted to make sure she was aware of.

Madam SPEAKER: I think she is aware.

Mr YOUNG: Will she ensure that existing entitlements, such as work from home and flexible work arrangements will not be cut by the CLP through enterprise bargaining processes?

Madam SPEAKER: She has plenty of time. There will be no more relevance points of order.

Mrs HERSEY: I think I have more than enough time to answer the question. There are many enterprise bargaining agreements happening across the sector. We have fantastic public servants working in departments across the Territory. There is no problem for them in their job. There will be no cuts and, as those bargaining agreements go on, they are all things that …

Ms Uibo: What about entitlements?

Mrs HERSEY: I note that I still have one minute and 25 seconds, and the Opposition Leader is happy to waste my, hers and the Member for Daly's time by continually interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, please, minister.

Opposition Leader, you have not stopped interjecting throughout this Question Time. Please refrain from interjecting. If you do not, you will be removed. I would not like to do that in front of your special guest. Please pay some respect.

Mrs HERSEY: As the enterprise bargaining agreements go on, those fantastic public servants are doing great work across the Territory. That will be discussed with them. No-one's job will be lost. If there are work from home agreements that they wish to bring into the bargaining, it is up to that bargaining process. There is a process for all agreements so it is something that will happen in due course.
I look forward to all these agreements happening this year. The first of the agreements began on 3 February, and they are continuing to roll out throughout the year. As I said, there are eight of them.

Public Sector Enterprise Bargaining – Supplementary Question

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

You said that no public servant positions will be cut. Does that include CEO positions as well? Is it a yes or no that the work from home flexible work arrangements will not be cut?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is a yes or no. The enterprise bargaining agreements will go on. I am not sure what crystal ball you are looking in to see that maybe a CEO's job will be cut, but I can assure you that no CEO job will be cut that I am aware. In answer to the question, no. There are enterprise bargaining agreements going on. Those agreements will take their course. They are all had in good faith and, as far as I am aware, the agreements will continue; they are all part of the process. We will find out what the wash-up of that is when they end, and I will let the Assembly know.

Education – Teachers

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Under the previous Labor government, crime was out of control, population growth was down and the Territory struggled not only to attract but to keep teachers. I have seven education precincts in my electorate. I know that all of us in the Chamber agree that education is the cornerstone—the foundation—for change in the Northern Territory.

The CLP took a commitment to the election to give teachers financial certainty by moving them off short-term contracts and into permanent placements so that they can have the confidence to put down roots in the Territory, supporting our aim to increase the population. Can you outline to the Assembly what actions the CLP government has taken to deliver certainty and security to the Territory's current and prospective teachers?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, going into the election we had a commitment to attract and retain teachers in the Territory and take them off short-term contracts.

Under the former Labor government, the Territory had a poor reputation and crime was out of control. We want to make sure that teachers know when they come to the Territory that this perception was under Labor and it was detrimental to the people moving here.

We want teachers to move to the Territory. The Territory has the highest-paid teachers. When they come here, we want them to feel safe. We want them to move here, put down roots—you never know, they might pick up one of our home builder options that is continuing for 12 more months, because we want people to move here and stay in the Territory.

The Treasurer handed down the budget last week. It has a strong crime focus. We are reversing Labor's weak-on-crime legacy and doing what we can. We have done a lot in the short nine months that we have been in government to ensure that Territorians' lives are safe. We are committed to keeping people safe.

This budget includes important financial measures to keep and attract teachers. We took to the election that plan to give teachers financial security by moving them off short-term contracts and into permanency. There is $13.8m to increase the permanent classroom teacher workforce. We will give current and prospective teachers certainty and the confidence to put down roots and stay in the Territory. Our government's commitment is to increase the permanent classroom teacher workforce to 75% by 2027, and we are well on our way to achieving this. At the moment, 69% of classroom teachers are permanent employees, which is an increase of 6.7% compared with the same time last year.

The Finocchiaro government in our year of action, certainty and security is delivering a record $1.6bn spend in Education and giving schools funding certainty by funding schools based on enrolment, not attendance. We are taking action to give our hardworking teachers employment certainty. I will continue to work with Education and make sure that teachers are moved off short-term contracts and into permanency.

To turn the Territory around we need to make sure that kids are in school and on a meaningful education pathway to employment.

Public Sector – Executive Contracts

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Last week the Member for Karama urged you to take advantage of natural attrition and not renew executive contracts in the public service. How many executive contract positions have you created since coming to government, including the four new CEO positions? How many of these positions remain funded in the budget handed down last week?

Mrs HERSEY: Madam Speaker, I ask that the Member for Daly repeat the first bit of that question.

Madam SPEAKER: Certainly.

Mr YOUNG: I note that the clock was counting down, and we have not had any time for the answer. Can we take it back to three minutes?

Madam SPEAKER: That is not your call, Member for Daly.

Mr YOUNG: That is why I am asking.

Madam SPEAKER: You have been asked to repeat the question. You do not have to if you do not want to; you can go back to the minister.

Mr YOUNG: I will go back to the start of the question.

Last week the Member for Karama urged you to take advantage of natural attrition and not renew executive contracts in the public service. How many executive contract positions have you created since coming to government, including the four new CEO positions? How many of these positions remain funded in the budget handed down last week?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, with public service employees we are wanting casuals or those on contracts to move to permanent employment. I am not sure the premise of the question because I answered a question previously about the same thing. We value the public service; we have many good public servants doing great work every day. We are getting teachers off short-term contracts into permanent places, and we are doing that across the public service.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: You have asked the question twice. There is plenty of time on the clock.

Mr YOUNG: She said that she did not understand the premise of the question, so I thought I would ask again.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Take your seat. Minister, if you cannot answer the question you can take your seat, too.

Mrs HERSEY: I understand the premise of the question, but I already answered it. We have amazing public servants. We are making sure that they are coming off short-term contracts into permanency. We are doing that in Education and across departments. I think I have answered the question in the previous answer.

Berrimah Road Duplication Project

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

I have an intelligible question to an intelligent minister. Last week I tabled a petition in parliament on behalf of students from Haileybury Rendall School and its surrounding community expressing concern about the

proposed Berrimah Road duplication project and its potential impacts on the surrounding area, including on safety, environment, private infrastructure and investment plans for a range of stakeholders in the area. I note that local businesses in the area also raised significant concerns about this duplication project and how it could affect access to their premises and disrupt day-to-day commercial operations.

My constituent petitioners and I are delighted to learn that this duplication project has been removed from the current infrastructure program in the budget. Can you provide us insight on why you made this decision?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I spent some time with the Member for Fong Lim in his electorate. The key stakeholders in that area made it clear that they did not support this road duplication project, and I listened, whereas those opposite never did.

I visited Haileybury Rendall School with the Member for Fong Lim a number of weeks ago to hear the concerns of students, teachers, the principal and members of the board. They raised serious and valid points. Local businesses in this area and along Berrimah Road had enough as well. They had borne the brunt of delays, disruptions and detours caused by the chaotic planning of the Tiger Brennan overpass for almost two-and-a-half years. Their lifeline and access to their customers was cut off. The profits in their businesses suffered immeasurably. That is unacceptable. This ends now.

We will not allow our hardworking local businesses to be the collateral damage in bureaucratic mismanagement. They deserve better.

Ms Uibo: You just blame them for delays in contracts.

Mr YAN: I pick up on the interjections from the Opposition Leader. She obviously does not care much about businesses and the development of the Territory. She should listen to what I have to say.

The CLP government stands with businesses and does not get in their way. Icons of our Territory community, like Tommo's Pies, depend on steady traffic, reliable access and a government that listens. When I told them that this project was off the table, they were extremely relieved. Let me tell you that if you have not had a Tommo's pie recently, I suggest you get down there. I shared some with my office yesterday, and I can tell you that I will be back for more. They are that good.

I also heard from the school and nearby businesses, which have been waiting to invest their own hard-earned money in private development and access upgrades. This proposed project created ongoing uncertainty and made them put their plans on hold.

This government will not block private investment the way Labor has. We talk about being open for business, and we mean it.

To the Haileybury Rendall community and local businesses: I have heard you. The CLP has heard you. Your safety, environment and future investments all matter to us.

Today we draw a line in the sand. No more disruptions. We are giving them action, certainty and security. We will be putting local businesses first and where they belong—number one …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Budget 2025–26 – Multicultural Affairs

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

In the budget handed down last week, the Multicultural Grants Program was cut by $150,000. Targeted funding for events and activities to promote and celebrate our multicultural community was reduced by $15,000. What multicultural events would you like to see cut, and which events do you feel are deserving of less funding?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am not aware of a funding offering we have cut from the recent budget. We have increased the budget. We announced $1.5m for the Katherine multicultural facility. There is more than $5m we announced for the Alice Springs multicultural facility, which was not in the previous budget. That means there are increased millions in the budget for multicultural events. It is approximately $2m that we will have in grant funding as well …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, final warning!

Mr CHARLS: There may be some movement of the dollar figures, but overall when it comes to the multicultural allocation, it has increased by millions.

I do not know why the opposition is trying to say that we are reducing the funding for multicultural issues. In fact, our representation of four members of this side from the multicultural community in the Northern Territory will be a strong voice for the multicultural community members, which is about 30% of the population of the Northern Territory.

I reassure the Member for Arafura that whatever information he has been told by other colleagues is incorrect. We have increased the funding, not decreased it.

Exercise Raintree – Mock Animal Disease Outbreak

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

The Northern Territory plays a crucial role in protecting Australia from biosecurity risks that could devastate the economy. Unlike the previous Labor government which neglected the Territory's agriculture sector, this government is committed to prioritising investment, strengthening biosecurity and revitalising our economy through agribusiness projects. Could you tell the Assembly about the ongoing mock animal disease outbreak, Exercise Raintree, and how it will strengthen and enhance our capacity to prevent and manage emergency animal disease incursions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder knows how important agribusiness is to our economy. In fact, I remind the Assembly that the agribusiness sector is valued at approximately $1.3bn annually to our economy.

We know that if there is an outbreak of an exotic emergency disease it will devastate the industry. We cannot afford that. The Territory agribusiness is booming. There has already been a setback when the federal Labor government stopped the live cattle export, which devastated the industry. The other side's party devastated our industry, and it still has not settled after years. In fact, the person who stopped it has passed away. This Labor government has failed Territorians because that is how important this is.

We all have a role to play in Australia's biosecurity, and we know how important it is to keep Northern Territory's north free from these diseases. We know these diseases exist to the north of us—not far away. We need to make sure we are ready for any biosecurity outbreak in the Northern Territory because it will be devastating for the Northern Territory and for Australia.

We need to make sure that we are ready for it. My department, along with the Commonwealth, is now conducting a mock exercise where one of these terrible diseases has been brought to the Territory and there has been an outbreak.

We know the four Ps: preparation prevents poor performance. We are preparing for it because we need to make sure that if one of these diseases comes to the Territory we are ready and prepared. We want to make sure we have a great performance, fix it and deal with it immediately.

It is vital that we are ready for it. With this exercise, we are sharpening the tools to maintain it and deal with it. Practice makes perfect, and that is what we are doing. Australia remains free from these animal diseases, including lumpy skin and foot and mouth. We must make sure that if there is an outbreak, we hear about it quickly and do our best to either maintain it or eradicate it because if we do not, it will be devastating.

If there is a large outbreak of one of these diseases into Australia, it could cost the Australian economy $52bn over 10 years. We know how important the federal economy is to us because they give us money to pay our wages and to pay for police and education. It is important that we support biosecurity, and we focus and strengthen conditions so we can get ready to move forward to contain and manage an outbreak if it happens here. Otherwise, the results will be devastating.

Middle Arm – Business Case

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

The Middle Arm petrochemical and gas export hub currently relies on $1.9bn of tax handouts from the federal government because gas companies do not want to put their hands in their own pockets, instead relying on everyday people to pay for them to take our gas for free. On top of this public money, we have now seen the CLP budget increase from $5m to $14.5m per year for Middle Arm within the Logistics and Infrastructure budget.

Given that your government's latest business case for the Middle Arm gas export hub was rejected by Infrastructure Australia last year, how can you justify this tripling of funding to the project? When will the EIS for Middle Arm be released? Have you resubmitted the stage 3 business case to Infrastructure Australia?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love to talk about Middle Arm. Member for Nightcliff, I wish I had $1.9bn, but that is what the previous Coalition promised for the project. When it lost the recent election, Labor came into power and dropped that to $1.6bn, so it took $300m off the project pretty much straightaway.

It moved that money into equity towards Infrastructure Australia to provide for that Middle Arm project. This is not about spending money and providing assets to the private industry, as the Member for Nightcliff explained. This is about providing the infrastructure works in the area for a number of different proponents who are delivering outcomes for the Territory.

The initial EIS was put in some time ago, and it is the first time an EIS of this magnitude has been done in conjunction with the federal government. There were difficulties in doing it; I admit that. The department has gone back to redo the EIS after consultation with the federal government as to what it should look like and how it should work, because we want to make sure that all the hard work is done first for proponents coming to use Middle Arm. The previous government probably failed, on a number of occasions, to get that enabling work done so that when businesses and proponents want to come here, they will have certainty to get their project over the line.

That is what we are doing with Middle Arm and this large EIS, which will cover the entire Middle Arm precinct. When that is completed and approved by the federal government, proponents who want to set up shop on Middle Arm—depending on what they want to do, as a number of different projects want to develop the Middle Arm precinct for all our benefit—will have certainty that they can come in and have an environmental impact plan that allows them to set up and get on with their project.

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate your answer so far on the EIS, but is there a date or do you know when that will be released? The other part was that the business case was rejected last year. Have you resubmitted the stage 3 business case to Infrastructure Australia?

Mr YAN: The federal EPA is still working through the EIS. We are hoping to see the outcome of that later this year; the sooner, the better so we can get certainty for that project. Just this week, we announced the infrastructure corridor. That also supports the work at Middle Arm. For all those proponents through the Beetaloo and others hoping to use that infrastructure corridor, it is not just for gas; it is also for water and fibre optics. There are a number of things that can go in that corridor …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate the answer so far, but I did not ask about the corridor. Can you let us know if your department has resubmitted the stage 3 business case?

Mr YAN: The corridor is underway. The corridor supports what Middle Arm will be. That is the all-important work to link all those projects together. The department is working on that submission and will be going to the federal government. Hopefully we will have an answer by the end of this year.

Regional Air Connectivity

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

With the Northern Territory Government's funding agreement for the milk run up for renewal, what specific measures are the CLP government considering to ensure uninterrupted regional air connectivity beyond that date? Importantly, what is the long-term goal of this scheme? How does the government plan to balance the necessity of continued funding with the stated long-term goal of achieving economic sustainability and reducing reliance on subsidies without compromising the accessibility of essential transport services?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, let me be clear: the milk run will not be left in limbo under the Country Liberal government, unlike the previous government, which I said in the Chamber earlier in the year did not fund it past June this year. They did not fund the milk run. For all the people in Katherine and Tennant Creek utilising that service, the previous Labor government did not fund it ongoing.

I can confirm today that the CLP will extend the current funding agreement for the milk run provider, Airnorth, for another 12 months while we finalise a wider overhaul of the Territory's transport system. We are giving certainty to the people in Katherine and Tennant Creek who utilise that service. It is also certainty for businesses now that the area is expanding.

This extension will carry the service beyond 30 June 2025 giving residents and businesses in Katherine, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and other milk run stops the certainty that their vital air link will keep flying. Why are we doing it? It is because these flights are more than a timetable; they are economic arteries, and those arteries are pumping harder. In the first nine months of this financial year passenger numbers have jumped by nearly 50%. It is proof that demand is real and growing in our regions.

More tradies are getting to jobs, more medical staff are reaching clinics and more families are staying connected. That activity will flow straight into our local economies.

Our job is not just to write cheques. The extension gives us the breathing space to do three things. The first is to refresh the remote and regional aviation framework so that subsidies target genuine market gaps. We need to line up new partnerships, whether it is mining charters from Perth or freight backloading arrangements to lift revenue and drive down per seat costs.

We need to integrate the milk run with our broader transport reforms. Things like single booking portals aligning those freight schedules and common fuel purchasing can save operators money and passengers time. We will be exploring how these things can be delivered to make the service easy to use and more reliable.

Our destination is a network that can stand on its own two feet. That, coupled with the work this government is doing to bring more and cheaper flights to the Territory, will not only provide us with the people we need to work but will stimulate our tourism and economy more broadly. Until we get there this government will keep planes in the air because opportunity should never be grounded by distance. We support our regions.

Master Builders NT Fidelity Fund

J DAVIS to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Can you provide an update on the impact of the Master Builders NT Fidelity Fund and the HomeGrown Territory Grant scheme on the local construction industry and how the government is ensuring continued support for local builders and home owners under these initiatives?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Master Builders NT Fidelity Fund was established in 2013 to provide consumer protection to owners of new homes and units up to three stories in height in the event that a builder dies, disappears, becomes insolvent or is no longer registered. This is to ensure that those who are building their homes are covered up to a certain amount.

The fund does this through issuing fidelity certificates for each new home to provide completion cover for consumers by providing 20% of the contract price to a maximum of $200,000. Since I became the minister,

we have been ensuring that anyone left in the lurch by their builder has that measure of cover through this insurance scheme. This covers the cost of changing contracts, building permits and potential increases in costs associated with materials and labour.

The fund is operated by trustees with administrative support contracted from Master Builders NT. Since the fund was established, it has settled a total of 70 claims from home owners whose homes were at various stages of completion when a trigger event occurred. Those trigger events, as I noted earlier, include when a builder becomes insolvent, disappears or can no longer complete the project.

I am aware of current industry concerns regarding the operation of the fund. I have been speaking to many builders since coming to government about how we could improve the Fidelity Fund and ensure that the concerns of those in the construction industry have been heard. The Member for Johnston may know that I was an electrician by trade and worked with many builders who would often chat to me about how to improve the Fidelity Fund and streamline those processes.

The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment is also working with the Fidelity Fund and other Northern Territory agencies to provide advice on potential improvements to the fund or on its administering legislation for the government's consideration.

One thing that people have been speaking to me about is that at the beginning of the year they have to put in for how many homes they expect to build that year. If builders get cover for six homes at $3m cover and $0.5m for a house, as soon as building starts and they have another person wanting to build their home, they are not covered to build that house. Going forward, how can we ensure there is a rolling cover so that as soon as the first six homes are finished, they can then build another one? Right now, builders are telling me loud and clear that they have to go back to the Fidelity Fund to get further cover. Until they are able to complete homes, in some cases that cover is not granted. I genuinely appreciate the question, Member for Johnston. This is something that our government is working on to improve for builders and home owners across the NT.

National Volunteer Week 2025

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

National Volunteer Week 2025 is being celebrated across the Northern Territory this week, recognising the vital contributions of volunteers in our communities. My colleagues and I are proudly wearing the badge of the Emergency Services. In the Territory we are challenged by mother nature too often, either from cyclones in the Wet or fires in the Dry. We need people who are willing to roll up their sleeves in times of need. Volunteers play a critical role in our Emergency Services, often putting themselves on the front line to protect lives and property during these times. Can you advise the Assembly on how the Northern Territory Government is recognising and supporting the incredible work of our Emergency Services volunteers during National Volunteer Week and how Territorians can get involved?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama is a passionate supporter of volunteers across the Territory, especially in his electorate.

Member for Karama, you are a volunteer with one of your constituents, Tejinder Singh and his family, who run the food van and have been delivering food for vulnerable people in your electorate for 15 years. The Members for Barkly, Wanguri and Fannie Bay have also been volunteering with you.

Volunteering is an iconic part of being Territorian. The Malak Community Markets are starting again soon. If it was not for the amazing volunteers, that beautiful Saturday night market would be unable to happen. I give a big shout-out to Sachi Hirayama and May Aggabao, the volunteers who make that happen.

There are amazing people across the Territory like Andrew Kent, who has been a Lions Club member for 30-plus years, delivering the iconic Beer Can Regatta which is special and iconic to the Territory. It could never happen without the tireless work of volunteers. The people who contribute to the Northern Territory through volunteering are amazing.

Today of all days is WOW Day. We are wearing our Northern Territory Emergency Services badge. We went to the mall today to meet with emergency services workers and volunteers—Paddy Platypus was there, who

we love—to say thank you. Across the Northern Territory there are more than 800 Emergency Services volunteers.

We are thanking people, no matter where they volunteer or where they are, through award ceremonies. There was a ceremony last night in Alice Springs, and one is coming up on Friday. There will be a fantastic community barbecue in Darwin. In Alice Springs there will be the famous tug-of-war competition.

My portfolio of NT Fire and Rescue Service has about 260 volunteers. There are about 200 in emergency services across 20 units. Bushfires NT people are relied on, particularly in the bush. In the Barkly we added two new Bushfires NT staff. There are about 400 volunteers in Bushfires NT alone.

On behalf of our entire government I thank everyone for their countless hours of volunteer work. That is what makes being a Territorian special, from our seniors who do incredible work to our service clubs like Probus and Lions. I thank all the people involved in emergency services and the quiet volunteers who do important things in our community without fanfare or wanting thanks. In this National Volunteer Week our government is saying thank you to every Territorian for their tireless efforts.
xxx

Royal Darwin Hospital – Code Yellows

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for HEALTH

Last week you denied there had been any government directive not to call code yellows at Royal Darwin Hospital, contradicting respected AMA NT President, Dr Rob Parker. The next day on Mix 104.9 you admitted there are significant ongoing pressures at Royal Darwin Hospital, which the CEO regularly contacts you about. Code yellows are a vital tool for hospital management during periods of peak demand.

If there are ongoing pressures at the hospital why are code yellows not being called? Is it to avoid public scrutiny of your government's management of the health system?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I think I already answered this question last week. Perhaps the Member for Daly did not like the answer he received.

The staff at Royal Darwin Hospital are doing an incredible job to deliver services on the front line. We are backing, supporting and following our frontline workers. They are doing the job we expect of them. To hear the Member for Daly cast doubt on our frontline workers is appalling. Our frontline workers at Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston are doing the job everybody expects, often under serious and difficult circumstances.

Throughout 2023 and 2024 Royal Darwin Hospital experienced a number of operational pressures, and code yellows became quite common under the Labor government.

I have answered this before, but the situation at the hospital is that we see pressures on frontline workers. What I can say is that we have not been doing what Labor did—that is, calling code yellows. We are ensuring that we have resources on the front line, delivering services and responding when there are pressures in the casualty area—at the emergencies.

With the change of leadership, where there are pressures on our front line, our CEO goes to the hospital, gets on the front line, works with the staff, talks with the staff and ensures there are sufficient resources available to deal with the pressures the hospital is facing. That is the difference. We are dealing with the problems, not calling code yellows.

Calling code yellows is entirely the responsibility of the CEO. There has been no direction given by anybody when it comes to calling code yellows at the Royal Darwin Hospital. There has been careful planning, monitoring, daily vigilance and what we call daily huddles, where the team gets together to look at what is going on in the emergency area at the hospital, making plans, bringing in resources and dealing with the problems as they arise.

For the Member for Daly to cast doubt over our hardworking frontline workers is nothing but appalling. There are no directions regarding code yellows. We have people on the ground responding, and I thank them very much for the work they do.

Aboriginal Interpreter Service

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

As we are using adjectives for our ministers today, my question is to the very handsome Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development. I understand that the Northern Territory Government was the first government jurisdiction in Australia to commence the operation of an Aboriginal Interpreter Service. On 10 April 2000 the Northern Territory CLP government and the Australian Government released a joint statement to fund the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to provide crucial services for people who do not speak English as a first language.

Can you tell us about the importance of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and what work it does in the Northern Territory to empower Aboriginal communities and residents?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what a great opportunity to talk about our Aboriginal Interpreter Service. As the Member for Drysdale said, we recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to recognise the individuals who have contributed to the service over those 25 years. Being at the celebration in Alice Springs, meeting the interpreters face to face and hearing about the incredible work they have been doing for a number of years was outstanding. It was great to be amongst people who are on the front line, supporting people to provide essential two-way communication so people can understand what is happening in a range of different forums.

Since it was established in 2000, the AIS has provided crucial services for people who do not speak English as a first language to understand health, housing and legal services. Interpreters are in our courtrooms, the hospitals, call centres and other key services making sure people understand and are understood. As well as providing an interpreter service, the AIS also contribute to many strategic partnerships. We now have interpreters based in the Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre, supporting call-takers with Aboriginal language speaker emergency calls under a recent partnership with the Northern Territory Police.

This is an incredible achievement and a significant service for our community. Being able to ring 000 and communicate in your first language improves caller engagement. Another exciting partnership is the NORFORCE interpreter employment pathway program with the Australian Defence Force, which provides the opportunity for NORFORCE soldiers to become trained interpreters.

During its 25-year history, the AIS has grown to about 60 ongoing staff and over 230 contracted interpreters providing a service across 39 Aboriginal languages. Both Territory and Australian Governments continue to jointly fund AIS. I am advised that the NTG provides $2.1m annually and the Australian Government injects $8.5m per year from 2025–26 under the NTRAI agreement, which is a total of $842.6m funding package.

AIS is the only fully funded accredited Aboriginal interpreter service in the Territory, providing meaningful employment for hundreds of Aboriginal Territorians. Interpreter roles create economic independence, build cultural pride and offer long-term employment.

Last month's celebrations honoured interpreters including Heather Rosas, who is based in my home town of Tennant Creek. What an incredible amount of work she has done. Valda Shannon and Rosemary Plummer are also from Tennant Creek in the Barkly electorate and have been part of the interpreter service for many years.

Thank you to all interpreters for the work you are doing.

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

MOTION
Eradicating Racism

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I move that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly:

1. affirms the NT's obligation to prevent racism and racial discrimination under the positive duty law and calls for system-wide action aligned with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement

2. urges the co-design of an NT anti-racism strategy grounded in the National Anti-Racism Framework in full alignment with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

I bring this motion to the Assembly because I feel it is important that the Northern Territory acknowledges the fractured communities that we are living in and work towards some positive measures to make things better for everyone living in the urban towns and in remote and regional communities.

Racism exists throughout the world. We are not unique in the Northern Territory, but my concern is that it appears to be increasing. At times it may not be easy to see because it is hidden within the systems of society, and at other times it can be easy to see because it sits on the surface.

Last week, I met with First Nations visitors from Canada who said that coming to Darwin was like stepping back in time, because Canadian First Nations people have more rights today than what Aboriginal people have here. That, in part, is due to treaty. As an Aboriginal person in Darwin, I do not want to say this, but I am sad to say there is a strong feeling that I am no longer welcome here. This is the feeling in many towns on the Stuart Highway.

I have had encounters where I was treated without respect because I am an Aboriginal person. If I have these experiences when I visit Darwin when I am wearing a shirt and jeans and driving a hire car, what is happening to everyone else who is struggling with day-to-day living?

Many Aboriginal people have told me their experiences of racism as well. I have heard stories of security guards moving people on—people who are not a public nuisance but moved on because of the colour of their skin. Because they are Aboriginal people, they are seen to be a public nuisance just because of who they are and for being homeless in Darwin without a house to stay in.

When I was in Adelaide for surgery, I felt welcomed there. When we walked in the city, people in the shops would be welcoming us with a smile and had open body language. This is how Darwin used to feel too. I have been coming to Darwin since I was 11 years old. The first time I was here was for the Eisteddfod to sing with a choir. There was dancing and sports. We arrived in Darwin to the news that people had landed on the moon. It was a happy day and happy times. Darwin has been a friendly place for people for many years, but I am sad to say that it feels more unwelcome now than ever. This coincides with decades of neglect of bush communities, increased poverty and social issues.

If we look at the history of NT budgets we see that bush communities have often missed out. We know that the funding distribution means that things are built in Darwin—such as museums, Garramilla Boulevard, the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass and police stations—while in remote communities we continue to live with poor roads that become impassable in the Wet Season, dilapidated buildings, overcrowded housing, with barge landings that need repair and airports that are difficult to land at when there is lots of rain. We have less services to support our people.

I spoke last week about the findings of Barry Hansen's report done through NTCOSS that show funding that comes to NT for Aboriginal disadvantage often does not make it to Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal people. This has contributed to inequity across our communities.

In our remote communities we look around and see that most of the jobs are held by balanda. Most of these people are great and work hard to help our communities. They are teachers, tradespeople, health workers, pilots, council workers, police and more. There are jobs that we do ranger groups, assistant teachers and health workers, but for the most part, the jobs in our communities are done by people outside the community. A lack of effective education and training for our people has led to this.

It was not always like this. Many people in Arnhem Land like to think back to the mission days when there were fishery businesses, a bakery, a mudbrick factory, logging and timber milling. The cypress pine was used to build houses in communities by Yolngu people and sent to Darwin as well. People did a variety of jobs. My father traded crocodile skins for rations and continued to live on and care for country. He was a strong man—a mediator, leader and highly capable man.

When I finished school many people went into trades, becoming plumbers, electricians and mechanics. I was an aircraft maintenance engineer. In the 1980s there were many highly literate bilingual schoolteachers.

Over time national accreditation came in. As I have said previously, when the intervention came through many people who had skills and expertise were told that their training did not mean anything anymore, and

they were put on Work for the Dole schemes—including me—like painting rocks white to make a border for a car park or picking up rubbish around the community.

From this point we saw a great increase in the number of balanda workers who came into our communities, lived in new houses and earnt good money while not having to pay rent. Many of these people had new work cars or brought their own four-wheel drives.

The difference compared with the local community in overcrowded houses with very little money became stark. Right now, we are living with the consequences of children who have grown up seeing these stark differences, seeing FIFO workers come for work while community members do not, seeing houses where the power does not run out and the fridges that are always stocked with food.

I have been told that often, when kids are breaking into houses in community, it is the food cupboard and the fridge that is raided. The lack of employment in the bush for locals and lack of training for people—especially in the industries that we want to see—has led to widespread disengagement and despair. Not all people, but some have turned to gambling, kava, alcohol and ganja. Others have turned to the church and support the community in this way. Some, like me, come to the balanda institutions to try to educate balanda people about the ceremonies, laws, languages and cultures that we still have. We try to show people who we still live according to Yolngu Rom but that the clash of two cultures is risking the end for our people and culture.

We appeal for partnerships and genuine local decision-making to try to fix the problems that have occurred with constant failed interventions from government. We stand strong to teach our young people about Yolngu *rom*, *raypirri*, respect and the strength of our culture and ancestors so that our young people can be proud, self-disciplined Yolngu people. This is still happening, but it is becoming harder to do in the face of balanda assimilation.

North-east Arnhem Land and many communities in the NT, where strong cultural knowledge is still maintained and taught, are one of the last frontiers. We must stand strong to maintain our culture, kinship systems, language and law. Governments must support us to do this through genuine acknowledgement of our authority and acceptance of two ways, not this constant one-way assimilationist approach that is killing our people.

It is very sad to say, but today it is possible the growing numbers of people in jails may become a leading occupation for Aboriginal people in the NT. This is why the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the National Anti-Racism Framework have become so incredibly important.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the National Anti-Racism Framework.

Leave granted.

Mr GUYULA: There is increasing systemic racism within the NT, which must be addressed. Both of these documents create strong pathways to address systemic racism with a view to creating a fairer community, where Aboriginal people are not disadvantaged just because we are Aboriginal, and a community where we can live according to our culture. There is space in the NT to create an anti-racism framework of our own that works together with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

When five police officers said that there was no racism in the TRG and that the ‘noogadah awards’ were not racist, the ICAC failed to properly investigate the many years when police officers gave awards to each other for having bad hygiene or not doing a good job. It was something they thought was funny, but it is highly offensive to the Aboriginal people they work with every day and were supposed to treat fairly and equally but instead thought so little of.

The ICAC stated that the awards were clearly racist and that it is difficult to conclude how any person of reasonable intelligence could conclude otherwise. These awards were presented as evidence during the Kumanjayi Walker inquiry, which uncovered many problems that need to be addressed.

Commissioner Murphy understood that there was entrenched systemic and personal opinions of racism in the police force, which is why he came forward with an apology. This apology conveyed a promise of working to make things better. This included working towards a police review and changes to address issues of racism.

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) also provides a mechanism to audit government departments for systemic racism. This started with DIPL, but it did not go any further and no public report was provided.

However, these are the things we must move forward and do. We must look at everyone as people, not problems. We must find how we can work together to bring systemic change.

Sometimes it feels as though government discussion is about trying to make the NT feel comfortable and homely to visitors from outside, but there is little discussion about how to look after the people who are already here—the First Nations people who have always been here. How do we look after them? How do we make them comfortable and safe without looking to the horizon to see who else is coming along?

The government talks a lot about a Territory lifestyle. We also want to live on our country with our ideal lifestyle. This would be living according to Yolngu *rom*, but this government is not talking about our lifestyle. It does not reflect the diversity of lifestyles that exist in the NT. When the government talks about a Territory lifestyle it needs to include those of us who have lived on homeland country, learning from our elders about the land, our kin, responsibility, values, law and way of living.

I want to walk on my country each day, hunt and make a business that will become a family business. This is what my father did, and this is the Territory lifestyle that I long for, but policies over decades have neglected homeland towns and meant that many people have been forced into bigger towns where there are increasing problems.

Ms BOOTHBY: 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: The point I am making is that the NT Government has neglected the bush—both homelands and communities. An unspoken policy of putting money into towns has meant that problems in the bush have increased, but it is not just about money. The decision-making power has also been maintained in urban towns, with bureaucrats and ministers making decisions for Aboriginal people, ignoring our rights for self-determination. We have consistently felt that we are manipulated and oppressed by decisions made elsewhere—like the disempowerment from the intervention and through the closure of community councils.

The problems that have developed in the bush through disempowerment are now spilling into urban centres, but this has not resulted in increased funding and services in the bush so that we can solve these problems. Instead, the growing response is to throw more people into jail.

The Bills that have passed through this House under this CLP government will mostly impact Aboriginal people, yet we have not been consulted on any of the Bills. The number one priority of Closing the Gap is shared decision-making. This is how we close the gap; it will also help to eradicate racism through a flow-on effect where everyone is more equal, standing together on the same playing field.

It is not good enough for this CLP government to say that everything is bad because Labor did a bad job. This CLP government is the decision-maker now, and it is time for its members to own their decisions and account for their actions. The report into eliminating racism in the NT Government that was produced in 2023 by David Hollinsworth, advises that:

> *Not only is racism morally and legally wrong and physically or mentally damaging to its victims, it leads to a society with higher levels of violence, conflict and anxiety, whilst simultaneously failing to benefit from different perspectives and practices that increase social cohesiveness and collaboration, which also leads to reduced economic costs.*

For these reasons it is so important that we address racism in the Northern Territory and create a pathway for something better. This motion is about creating that pathway to develop an anti-racism framework. This is incredibly important to heal our communities because we are all hurting, and it is only by working together that we can bring genuine change.

VISITORS
Member for Johnston's Family

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, on behalf of honourable members I acknowledge the Member for Johnston's biggest fans—or some of them—her mother and her mother's partner, Deana and Kit. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, this is a matter of deep meaning, not as the Attorney-General, but as someone who cares deeply about our community and the future of the Northern Territory. I thank the Member for Mulka for his courage in calling out racism. I want him to know that he does not stand alone. I move an amendment to this motion that this Assembly:

1. acknowledges the harm caused by all forms of racism whether based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion across the Northern Territory

2. recognises the government's role in preventing discrimination and supporting the Territory's harmonious multicultural community

3. calls on all Territorians to stand up and call out racism when it occurs.

We are different in the Northern Territory. We are multicultural, young at heart, adventurous and transient. It is transient because of our location on the map. We are the gateway to Asia. We have people coming from all over the world enjoying our fantastic tropical environment and welcoming nature. We are proudly home to the world's oldest living culture, and we uniquely celebrate cultures from every corner of the globe, whether it is events like the Harmony Soiree at the Waterfront next weekend, the fantastic Barunga Festival or the Holi, Greek, Italian and Bangladeshi festivals.

Our markets are a melting pot of food, languages, music and identity. That is our lifestyle. That is our Territory. It is what makes us unique, and we simply cannot compare it to anywhere else.

I do not believe that racism is eradicated with more laws, red tape or more boxes to tick. It is important to have policies in place, but racism will not be solved by banning words or throwing money at this problem aimlessly. Approaching this problem with an ideological focus with no accountability is what Labor's approach was. Our government was elected to do things differently and reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our Territory lifestyle, and that is exactly how we will fight racism—by building a fair, safe and prosperous Territory where everyone feels they belong. When people feel safe, work, invest, raise families and celebrate who they are racism fades.

We will continue to support frameworks like the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the National Anti-Racism Framework, and yes, we support practical action. Let us be honest we inherited a budget mess. Net debt is forecast to hit $13.96bn. We cannot fix racism overnight with policies or paperwork. What we can do is empower people through education, community partnerships, cultural events and celebrations, and by enforcing the protections we already have. That includes the positive duty laws under the NT *Anti-Discrimination Act*. These laws ensure all businesses and organisations take active steps to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation, not just react to complaints but stop it before it starts.

These are laws we have in place and they apply broadly across race, gender, disability, religion and more. It also means continuing to work with national partners, including through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General and the National Anti-Racism Framework.

Racism thrives where there is division and where people do not feel safe and secure, but when there is a shared purpose and a lifestyle, there is a thriving community. Differences become strengths, not threats. That is the Territory I believe in. A place where it does not matter what your background is or where you are from, you can build a life, feel welcome, feel safe and have a fair go.

Generally, we are not racist people. We are welcoming and proud; we are Territorians, and we come in all colours and backgrounds. Like with everything else we are tackling, like reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle, it is about action, certainty and security.

We cannot fix racism with more paperwork or politics. We fix it by working together and backing the values that make the Territory great.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you need to sign that amendment and have it circulated before it can be debated. Do you want to wait for the amendment to be circulated before you speak, Member for Johnston?

J DAVIS: Do we vote on the amendment or at the end?

Madam SPEAKER: We will vote on the amendment and the motion.

J DAVIS: Together?

Madam SPEAKER: No, separately. We vote on the amendment, and if the amendment is passed then we vote on the amended motion. That is correct. We cannot vote on anything until the amendment has been circulated.

J DAVIS: They will be at the same time?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, in succession.

J DAVIS: I am happy to make my speech now.

Dr RAHMAN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I am trying to establish what is happening as well. If there is an amendment to that motion that is being circulated now, presumably the debate that is ensuing now is about the amended motion?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, correct.

Dr RAHMAN: Then, whatever vote transpires at the end—I am seeking clarity if nothing else—at the end of this debate, then there will be a vote on the amended motion?

Madam SPEAKER: On the amendment.

Dr RAHMAN: The amended is passed, then we will vote on the amended motion, but not the original motion? It supplants that, does it not? Is that correct?

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct.

Dr RAHMAN: That is the indication I am getting. I do not want anybody to be confused about what it is we are talking about now. I am not in a position to speak, so I am speaking through the Chair. I reiterate that an amendment is being circulated, and that is what we are debating now. At the conclusion of that debate we will vote on that amendment before anything further happens. If the vote is lost, then we will be considering the original motion, but if it is approved we will only be considering the amended motion. Correct?

Madam SPEAKER: Correct.

Dr RAHMAN: Thank you for clarifying that for me.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you need to continue to speak to move your amended motion.

Ms BOOTHBY: I moved at the beginning of my speech, then I spoke …

Madam SPEAKER: Now you are circulating your amended motion …

Ms BOOTHBY: It is circulated.

Madam SPEAKER: You need to continue to speak and move that motion. If you have finished your speech …

Ms BOOTHBY: I have, yes. I have moved the motion …

Madam SPEAKER: You can sit down. The amendment has been circulated. The Member for Johnston is happy to speak to the amendment, which may just mean speaking as normal anyway, if you choose. I will not lead you in any way.

J DAVIS: Can I clarify whether this adds to the motion or replaces the motion?

Ms Boothby: It replaces it. It broadens it.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Mulka, not just for bringing forward his important motion but for the example he sets in this Chamber and beyond. He speaks with courage about fairness, calls out injustice and continues to show grace in the face of the mistreatment he has experienced.

I also acknowledge all the First Nations people and others with lived experience of racism who do the emotional and intellectual labour of naming what many refuse to see and speak the truth about racism even when it is uncomfortable or costly.

There are people inside and outside this Chamber who reject the idea that racism is a problem in the Northern Territory. Some say we are all equal now; some say we treat everyone the same; some say talking about racism just divides people. To those people I say as plainly and respectfully as I can that just because they do not see racism does not mean it is not there. Because it has not happened them does not mean it does not happen every day to someone else. In fact, that is how racism works best—in silence, disbelief and the assumption that the system is fair, that the outcomes must be deserved and the problem is with the people not the policies.

Racism is not always loud. It is not always slurs or violence. It is being followed in a shop because of your skin colour, being refused a hotel room, being stopped by police again and again for no reason, being overlooked for jobs and being asked for ID at a petrol station. Racism is not just personal; it is systemic. It is what happens when our institutions consistently produce unequal outcomes and we fail to question why.

In the Northern Territory the data tells a clear and undeniable story of systemic racial inequality. Aboriginal people make up less than one-third of the Northern Territory's population but more than 90% of its prison population. Aboriginal children are placed in out-of-home care at a rate 12 times higher than non-Aboriginal children—a stark reflection of ongoing structural inequities. Aboriginal people are still dying in custody, in remand and in mental health facilities, often without answers or justice. Aboriginal people are still being overpoliced, under-protected and made to feel unsafe in the very systems that are meant to serve them. Can we really call that coincidence?

Naming racism does not divide us; ignoring it does. In this Chamber we do not get to pick and choose who deserves safety, dignity and justice; either we represent everyone or we represent no-one.

The Member for Mulka's motion is a call to responsibility. It asks us to do what we are already obligated to do under law—prevent racism and racial discrimination under the positive duty provisions in our federal anti-discrimination legislation. Reporting racism is not optional; it is required of us. It also asks us to honour our commitments under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, a plan we co-created with Aboriginal Territorians which clearly identifies racism as one of the drivers of over-representation in the justice system. We cannot fix the justice system if we refuse to talk about racism.

The motion also calls for the co-design of a Territory-wide anti-racism strategy developed with Aboriginal people, multicultural communities, legal experts and human rights advocates that is grounded in the National Anti-Racism Framework that the Member for Mulka tabled today. We cannot change the past, but we can choose what kind of Territory we want to build together next.

Other jurisdictions are already moving on this. Victoria and New South Wales have a strategy, and Queensland is developing one. The Northern Territory, home to the highest proportion of Aboriginal people in the country, has no coordinated anti-racism plan. This is a serious gap, and we can fix it.

A Territory-wide anti-racism strategy would not be symbolic. It would include real, practical steps like anti-racism training for all public sector agencies; accountability measures to ensure fair service delivery; education campaigns to tackle bias and misinformation; proper funding for Aboriginal-led and multicultural organisations; and system audits and equity standards to make sure that we are doing better.

This is about system-wide change, not just individual attitudes. It is about supporting the many people—teachers, nurses, police officers and public servants—who are asking for guidance, who want to do better and who are tired of working in systems that keep producing injustice. It is also about honouring the courage of those who continue to speak up, often at great personal cost, to make sure we hear what many would rather ignore.

We often say that the Territory is unique—we heard it in this Chamber today—and that we do things differently. Here is our chance to prove that.

This motion does not demand perfection, but it demands honesty, leadership and a commitment to building systems that treat no-one as less because of their culture, background or the colour of their skin. If we reject it, what message do we send? That racism is acceptable and not worth talking about? That we are not invested in addressing it? That the people who are affected by racism are exaggerating or do not matter? That our parliament is more committed to comfort than to justice? I do not believe that is who we are.

My own Jewish family knows the pain and fear that racism can bring. That history has taught me one thing: we cannot stand by and must not be silent when others are being treated unfairly, no matter who they are. The people of Johnston whom I represent come from all walks of life. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants, families of many faiths and cultures all live side by side. They want a Territory where everyone is seen, heard, safe and treated as equal. They want a system that works for all of us, not only some.

Let us not be the jurisdiction that looks away; let us be the one that looks hard at the truth and does something about it.

I commend the Member for Mulka's motion to the Assembly.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the words from the Member for Mulka; he is a man I have enormous respect for. Even though I will be touching on similar themes in my speech, I support the government's amendment.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released the National Anti-Racism Framework, a document shaped by national consultations and presented as a roadmap for reducing racism across key sectors like health, education, justice and media. This framework is sincere in its intent and captures stories of pain and hope from many Australians.

However, as someone who has worked across frontline services and government systems, I must be honest; the framework in its current form is not practical for government implementation. The scope is enormous. It asks the government to manage not only service systems but also human perceptions, community attitudes and individual interactions—things that no policy or budget can fully control. That does not mean the ideas should be dismissed, but it does mean that we cannot adopt this framework in full as it stands. Instead, we should continue to listen to communities, support fairness through action and confront racism in ways that are practical, measurable and unifying, not ideological or divisive.

In that spirit I will speak on racism, not from a place of theory but from lived experience and real stories shared with me by people in my electorate and across the Northern Territory. Let me begin by making my stance clear: I do not support racism in any form. I am not afraid to name it, call it out and challenge it, no matter where it hides or how it is dressed up.

I speak not only from my own experience but also on behalf of people I proudly represent in Sanderson. I speak with the stories of constituents, former colleagues from the public sector and many others from all parts of the Northern Territory. What I say may be hard to hear, but it is the truth.

There is an old saying: tell a lie often enough and it becomes the truth. That is not my line; it was a method used by Joseph Goebbels, a propaganda architect in the dark days of history. This is exactly the method Labor is using in this Chamber, in public discourse and in political strategy: repeat things that are false; stir emotions; play identity games; repeat it often; and hope it all becomes true with time. However, the truth does not need help; it stands on its own. Here is one of those truths: racism exists, but it exists in many forms, not just the kind that other people like to talk about.

Let us talk plainly. There is no race on this Earth made up of only good people—none. No race is made up of only bad people either. There are good and bad people in every group, culture and land; that is the truth. Pretending otherwise is not only false; it is dangerous.

In recent months members of my community have come forward quietly and respectfully to share their stories. Some have told me that they feel judged not by what they do but how they look. Others say that they feel they are being told in subtle ways that they do not belong and that they are a guest even when they are citizens, parents or elders in their community. This is not the Australia I believe in, and it is not something that I will accept.

As I said in my maiden speech, we all came from somewhere else. Every person in this country—if you go back far enough—has a story of migration, be it thousands of years ago, a hundred of years ago or just a

decade ago, like me. Let me say this clearly: my daughter was born here; her birth certificate reads 'Darwin, Australia'. I can say it another way: this is Larrakia land; that means I belong here too, because she belongs here. I am her parent; I gave her life on this land. I live here, work here and fight for this place. To anyone who thinks that some of us do not belong here, you are wrong. This land is my home, and I am here to stay.

I will share an incident from my election campaign. This happened in Wagaman, which is part of my electorate, during roadside waving. I was there with four or five friends from multicultural backgrounds and two mates who are Caucasian. We were simply waving and saying hello, being a part of our democracy. A man, about 75 or 80 years old, wearing a Territory Labor shirt walked by. He looked at us and said, 'You know we brought you here'. He meant that Labor brought people like me to this country. I do not intend to debate whether that statement was racist; I will leave that to those listening or reading *Hansard*. However, I can say one thing: it is soaked in arrogance. It reeks of ownership. It is the kind of mindset that says, 'You are here because of us; you owe us.' I say that no-one owns us. We are here because of our choices, work, dreams and rights, not because one party or group allowed us in.

This is exactly what I mean about a lie being repeated again and again until people start to believe it. The campaign of misleading claims is designed to stir up people. When that happens, when one group starts believing they are gatekeepers, the poison of racism spreads further. Let me remind all members of this Assembly that no-one holds a special rank. The Labor and crossbench members of this Assembly are no better than the members on this side of the Chamber. You are not above others; you are fellow Australians, equal to every one of us.

Racism is not always loud. It is not always someone yelling in your face. Sometimes it is quiet, in a gesture, a look or a tone. It is in policies that divide, words that explode and labels that keep people boxed in. Both forms are harmful and must be called out, but the answer is not to fight racism with more division.

When a government tells one race that they are better or deserve more, it is not healing wounds; it is making new ones. Since the day I arrived in this great land I have been told that Australia is the land of opportunity. I believed it, and I still do. I have lived it. This country gave me a chance, but I also had to earn it.

I will talk about something that has shaped my thinking. This is from science. Charles Darwin's survival of the fittest theory is a well-known theory from long ago. It still rings true in many ways. People are born with different strengths and talents; not all parts are equal. Not all people can do the same things. That is not wrong; that is nature. A strong education system helps people find their strength and follow it. Let me explain. If I think I can be a singer but when I sing people turn away, I must learn. I must read the room. If my sound does not please people, I should not say that they are racist for not clapping. That is not racism; that is feedback.

I reflect on something personal that might happen to me on any given day. If I walk into a takeaway shop wearing shorts and a T-shirt and with a phone in my hand, someone sees me and thinks I am an Uber Eats driver. Does that offend me? No. It is not hate; it is habit. It is built on what people see often. When certain patterns happen again and again, people make links. All of us do it in many ways. You may see a person in scrubs and assume that they are a nurse who works in a hospital; you may see a person in orange high-vis and assume they are a tradie or a road worker. These are not evidence of crimes; this is how people make sense of the world. No law can stop that.

No government can erase thought. You cannot police every look or thought. If a government tries to go too far it becomes something else entirely. When governments go down the path of banning people's culture, food and identity that is not fairness; that is control. That is where racism can grow again under a new name. Governments should stay out of people's lives unless something causes harm to others. We should let people live how they want to live, eat what they want, wear what they want and worship as they choose as long as it harms no-one.

I am a proud Australian of Indian origin, father and Territorian. I am proud of where I came from. All of these things can sit together. I do not need to choose one and throw away the rest. I will keep calling out racism, pushing for fairness and will not be silenced when someone says that I do not belong. This country has been made by many hands, hurts and journeys. I belong here, just like you.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the original motion that was put forward by the Member for Mulka, not to take anything away from the government's amended motion, which states:

1. acknowledges the harm caused by all forms of racism, whether based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion across the Northern Territory

2. recognises the government's role in preventing discrimination and supporting the Territory's harmonious multicultural community

3. calls on all Territorians to stand up and call out racism when it occurs.

I am sure that we on this side of the House offer bipartisan support and agree with what has been put forward. However, I am concerned that the government has fluffed this up by taking away from what the original motion was here for in the first place. There was a framework to be put in place—something practical—by the Member for Mulka.

We are not disagreeing with what the government has put in this amended motion. That is not what we are saying, so do not try to politicise it. However, that is exactly what the government did in its last speech. It is disgraceful because we all have stories—including me—about the treatment of people from certain political parties …

Mr Charls: That is racism too.

Mr YOUNG: All political parties, not just them. We had a framework that the Member for Mulka was calling for, and you did not even have the guts to talk about it and agree to it. That is what is shameful about the amended motion because …

Mrs Zio interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: Member for Fannie Bay, if you would actually listen and understand what the original motion means, it is saying, 'that the Legislative Assembly affirms the Northern Territory's obligation to prevent racism and racial discrimination under the positive duty law and calls for system-wide action aligned with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement'. I remind the CLP government that it signed this agreement when it was in opposition. We got bipartisan support on it, yet the government is now taking that away.

The second point urges the co-design of an NT anti-racism strategy that is grounded in the National Anti-Racism Framework and in full alignment with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which the CLP has signed. It was ironic that when it came to the signatures on it—I remember when it was happening because I was working for Selena Uibo, a proud Aboriginal woman from Arnhem Land who was the Aboriginal Affairs minister at that time—there was a non-Indigenous person on the other side worrying about the signature block. He wanted to take the glory away from the Aboriginal Affairs minister who is an Aboriginal woman. That is what is so ironic about this, because he was more worried about himself and a signature block for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

The government has made an amendment to take away what the Member for Mulka is trying to do—putting a practical framework in place and getting the government to agree to it. That is what the government has done; it has fluffed it up. That is what is disgraceful about the amended motion.

I will talk about the original motion, because it is important that we get this on the record. Evidence of racism's harm in the Northern Territory is clear and disturbing. Racism continues to be a blight on our country, trickling down to our community and on an interpersonal level. We witnessed it on the national stage a couple of weeks ago on Anzac Day where a group of Neo-Nazi's booed a welcome to country ceremony at Melbourne's dawn service, which was a disgusting act. Not only did it show the hecklers' blindness towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service, sacrifice and legacy in our country's military service, it spurred on another disgraceful discussion, which subjected First Nations people to unique experiences of racism.

The last week of the recent federal election campaign descended into a cultural war farce when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and issues were used as political footballs and a kicking stool in a last-ditch effort for votes. We saw that from this government when the Chief Minister refused to acknowledge the Larrakia people. She tried to kick Aboriginal people around and use us as a political football. That is what she was doing.

A member interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: That is not what she was doing.

Mr Patel: It was spoken about 10 times.

Mr YOUNG: It does not matter. She is the Chief Minister, the leader of the Northern Territory; that is what leaders do—acknowledge the traditional owners. We hear the heckling from members on the other side because they are uncomfortable about it, but do you know what I am now hearing? Suddenly, she has brought it back; she will now acknowledge traditional owners. We are hearing her say it at different events, and people are confused by this. Yes, she is using that as political football; we as Aboriginal people know that.

Do not try to lecture me as an Aboriginal person. We are First Nations people, and we are proud of that. We are not taking away who you are.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the Member for Daly be heard in silence.

Mr YOUNG: We are not taking away our wonderful multicultural community. I have many friends of different backgrounds; do not worry about that. Those opposite are missing the point because I can hear their interjections, and I suggest they go and educate themselves on it.

This includes the worn-out narratives of changing the date of Australia Day, not standing in front of either the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flag, welcome to country ceremonies and the return of the Voice. It was shameful. It sucked oxygen out of talking about what desperately needs airtime in regard to Aboriginal affairs, such as tangible and compassionate investments in Closing the Gap, education, housing, healthcare, culturally appropriate disability support and long-term employment.

There are those who talk about their experiences with racism, like we have heard in this Chamber today. Our leaders and communities have begun speaking out frankly about how they have seen racism occur in the Northern Territory. We have spoken before in this Chamber about the Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which acknowledges that improving services for Aboriginal Territorians requires identifying and eliminating systemic racism and discrimination.

We cannot ignore these warnings. This motion demands that we confront the poison of racism head on in every area of life. As the Member for Gwoja has repeatedly said in this Chamber, ‘The standard you walk past is the standard you accept’.

Looking at our justice system, the disparities are horrendous. Aboriginal Territorians make up 87% of NT prisoners even though they make up roughly 30% of the Territory’s population. Aboriginal men are jailed at 15 times and women at 14 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Territorians. Children suffer most of all. An Aboriginal child in the NT is 35 times more likely to be detained than a non-Aboriginal child. These are not just numbers; each one represents a young life deeply affected by a justice system that has not provided equal treatment for Aboriginal Territorians. This struggle goes beyond the confines of courts and prisons. The lingering effects of racism are present in many aspects of life.

It is a heartbreaking situation that calls for compassion and a commitment to change. There are many complex reasons for this over-representation, including factors within the criminal justice system, generations of failed policies and underlying factors that bring Aboriginal Territorians into contact with the justice system. This includes family and domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, poor mental and physical health and unemployment. All those factors could lead to high offending rates in society. For example, Aboriginal families are vastly over-represented in homelessness and overcrowding, making up 20% of Australia’s homeless population despite being only 4% of the country’s total population.

Census data highlighted by Homelessness Australia outlines that Indigenous Australians face homelessness at almost 10 times the rate of the broader community, driven in part by racism in the housing market, poverty and disadvantage—conditions that also undermine health, education and life’s chances.

The Human Rights Commission notes that 40% of Aboriginal households live without the essentials of housing, clean water and food, compared with 11% of other Australians. These housing, income and educational gaps are the hallmarks of systemic inequality. These numbers represent real people whose voices need to be acknowledged. Aboriginal Territorians have emphasised that racism has urgent and significant impacts.

Justice advocate, Leanne Liddle, a key figure in shaping the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, shared her powerful insights with the *Guardian* in 2023, recounting the painful experiences of Aboriginal people who confide in her about their treatment by law enforcement officials. Many describe feeling subhuman and

subjected to prejudice and discrimination purely because of the colour of their skin. Liddle's account backs up our urgent need for change and compassion in the justice system.

Liddle also warned that fixing bad apples is futile unless we change the system. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement embraces openness and ownership of systemic shortcomings by the government. Tragically, we have also witnessed recent inquiries exposing this reality's repulsive side. In a coronial inquest, we saw the so-called 'noogadah award', a certificate mocking Aboriginality with blackface imagery, and a 'sooty award' depicting an Aboriginal man in a demeaning way.

These are not isolated incidents of the distant past; they are happening today and demand urgent action. Under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, we must review every department for systemic racism. So far, only one has been completed, but without proper resourcing and following through from those opposite, these commitments will ring hollow.

Community organisations also see life differently. The Northern Land Council warns that racism is not just a relic of the past; it emphasises that our people continue to share their stories of discrimination and injustice at the hands of law enforcement. The NLC calls on this government, and us as representatives, to continue to take meaningful steps towards addressing systemic racism. We must heed these calls and act immediately if we care about safety, trust and reconciliation.

Fortunately, for those on the other side, comprehensive plans to guide them already exist. Accumulation of years of consultation went into the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and it continues to enjoy bipartisan support. It sets out dozens of targeted actions, including supporting Aboriginal leadership, building alternatives to custody and overhauling data and complaints systems.

The Alice Springs Alternative to Custody Program for Aboriginal women, for example, reported that 90% of participants completed the program and did not reoffend. This is fantastic. Under the agreement, the government committed to implementing every recommendation.

Crucially, the Aboriginal Justice Agreement recognises that we must identify and eliminate systemic racism at the highest levels and improve data collection so we can measure whether services truly meet the needs of Aboriginal Territorians. We must ensure that our courts, police and support services are culturally competent and free from systemic racism. These actions reflect exactly what community leaders and experts demanded.

At the national level, the Australian Human Rights Commission launched a landmark National Anti-Racism Framework last November. This is the first comprehensive plan Australia has had to tackle entrenched racism. It contains 63 recommendations for reform across law, policy and public life. The commissioner spoke plainly and heard consistently from First Nations and other multicultural groups that systemic racism is deeply embedded throughout Australia and requires an urgent national response.

The framework calls for things like a positive duty in anti-discrimination law, reforms in justice and policing and better monitoring of racial biases everywhere. It echoes the work of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement in the Northern Territory and pushes us to be accountable. An essential element of both frameworks is community-led solutions.

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement repeatedly commits to respectful place-based engagement and partnering with local Aboriginal leaders. We saw this in programs like the new Groote Eylandt justice centre, a 32-bed cultural rehabilitation facility, described by the Aboriginal Justice Agreement architects as an innovative community-based approach to reduce Aboriginal incarceration and reoffending.

Every community in every region has its wisdom. The government should listen and learn, because people in remote communities must be the most integral part of designing justice programs. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement envisages law and justice groups that will give communities that power from local court support to alcohol management strategies. We must ensure these groups have the authority and funding to implement local action plans tailored to their culture and needs.

Some may argue that these problems are exaggerated or that we tried enough, but the evidence and lived experience of Aboriginal Territorians and multicultural communities tell another story. While the Territory boasts a fantastic and diverse migrant population, Edwin Joseph, the President of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, stated that the impact of racism is very real for migrants and Aboriginal Territorians alike. The Northern Land Council makes clear that dismissing racism is merely historic and does nothing but further undermine trust.

Racism in our society is a cowardly plight. As representatives of our electorates, we must trust the testimony of our constituents, elders, families and children who experience discrimination in all forms, in clinics, schools and streets.

We have a bipartisan agreement that racism is a present danger in the Territory, harming public safety and community wellbeing.

A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move an extension of time to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr YOUNG: We have detailed blueprints from the Northern Territory's Aboriginal Justice Agreement to the new National Anti-Racism Framework that tell us what needs to be done. Taking proactive steps towards reform is essential for fostering justice and aligning with our core ideals. By acting, we can prevent further harm and create a positive impact in our community.

I urge those opposite to move beyond the rhetoric and commit to substantial, long-term resources for these frameworks and hold ourselves publicly accountable. We need ongoing, well-funded efforts to heal the deep-seated wounds and address the disparities in justice, health, education and housing caused by racism in our Territory.

For those who still may not be convinced on this issue, I will read a social media post from a public group that popped up following the discourse on welcomes to country. I touched on this earlier, and this is why the Member for Mulka's motion is important in eliminating racism. I urge those opposite to listen to this. These are the types of actions that lead to this. The language we use is important, because if we are using the wrong language, it can lead to social posts like this.

This was posted after the welcome to country in Melbourne where those people were yelling out. This is what we, as Aboriginal people, see on a daily basis:

> *Today, we gather to pay respects to the traditional custodians of Centrelink offices, courthouse waiting rooms, and stolen car auctions.*
>
> *We honour the generations who perfected the arts of welfare scamming, house breaking, car boosting, and daylight shoplifting—ensuring these sacred customs survive in every suburb brave enough to tolerate them.*
>
> *We give thanks to the tireless taxpayers—the real unsung heroes—whose backs are broken so the chosen few can enjoy a life of free money, stolen goods, and minimal consequences.*
>
> *May the cycle of handouts, home invasions, and high-speed chases never be broken, and may the blood, sweat, and taxes of working Australians continue to fuel this glorious tradition.*
>
> *Welcome to the land where theft is culture, welfare is inheritance, and responsibility is somebody else's problem.*

I hope that those listening understand the emotional toll this language takes on many First Nations people, including me. I hope that those opposite and all those listening reflect on the type of language, like they were calling out earlier, and understand what it causes. We are leaders in our communities. We are elected to do a job, so people listen to the language we use. Over the last nine months I have seen that start to filter down to communities, and people experience that.

I hope this Assembly sends a clear message that we will not rest while racism persists. I hope that those opposite consider the motion the Member for Mulka has put forward, because it outlines a practical framework that can help eliminate racism and get us on the right path. No-one is disputing the amended motion that was put forward.

We understand the story the Member for Sanderson told earlier. It is disappointing that it happens, and we will never accept racism in any form. We stand with the Member for Sanderson regarding his story, because it is disappointing that there are still people in the community who behave like that and that it still goes on. Everyone is welcome in this community, including our multicultural community.

The Member for Mulka has put forward a motion that the Assembly:

1. affirms the NT's obligation to prevent racism and racial discrimination under the positive duty law and calls for system-wide action aligned with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement

2. urges the co-design of an NT anti-racism strategy grounded in the National Anti-Racism Framework and in full alignment with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

We hope that the government considers the motion that has been put forward by the Member for Mulka.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. That is pretty much where we are at on this topic. I prepared to speak on this motion, which then morphed into another motion, which has then morphed into yet another motion on short notice. There is sincerity behind all three versions of those motions, but it has probably flushed out a lack of clarity on the intent behind what is going on.

The Member for Mulka's original motion was divided into two parts. One was calling out racism in its totality and the other was what might be done to reflect on racism, particularly focused on Indigenous people, and regarding the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The amended motion conflated these two, so we lost the first part of the original motion.

With the best of intentions, the government's amendment—which we are debating now, so I will confine my remarks to that—is a motion that acknowledges harm caused by all forms of racism in a more general form without being prescriptive as to solutions, frameworks, agreements or anything allied to that. That is not to say that we are not supportive of the underlying proposition, but the amendment suggests that the government's position is that it is more important to recognise the entirety of our polity and to broaden the debate.

There is a diversity of opinion in this House on all matters. It is important to remember that, from time to time, the opposition and the crossbench do not operate like one uniform being and neither does the government. At the risk of committing political suicide, I thought the Voice was a pretty good idea and an imperfect step in the right direction. The majority of people in the country disagreed with me and many others, and I respect that is the direction we have gone in now. It appears that the Albanese government, which championed the initiative, has also taken heed of that sentiment and is moving forward accordingly.

In a similarly pragmatic fashion, I will not rage against the machine on a decent motion that has been put forward by the government, which I would like us to pass because it is a good and reasonable motion. By the same token, that is not to diminish the fact that the Member for Mulka specifically wanted us to agree on something that the government, at this point, would like more time to think about.

Having said that, the positive measures that the Member for Mulka outlined are to be lauded. It is a positive thing that we have a man of his stature bringing forward motions to consider racism and what can be practically done to address Indigenous inequality. Rather than tiptoeing around everything, we all need the courage to speak out about the diversity in each of our respective electorates. We all have Indigenous people within our electorates, and we all have electorates that are also filled with multicultural voices, people and faces, which has been the case forever and a day.

The Member for Mulka pointed out that we are not unique in the NT in having to face racism, and that is absolutely the case. I am sorry to hear that he is feeling like he is no longer welcome here. That is a tragic thing to hear; nobody wants to feel that. The Member for Sanderson, in his own way, affirmed the same sentiment.

The idea that everyone is welcome is something we should be getting behind. A starting point is to agree on a baseline proposition before moving forward with how to put things into motion. I am not just interested in talking about motherhood statements either. On 26 March I gave an adjournment speech at length about diversity, multiculturalism and the fact that they are hard-fought gains and do not happen by accident. Laksa festivals do not just happen by accident, and neither does social cohesion or multiculturalism as a state-sponsored policy.

Likewise, I do not think racism disappears by ignoring it and hoping for the best. You have to work actively to encourage people to be tolerant and work together, so I am less libertarian than some of my colleagues in this regard. However, I am more focused on what binds us as common than what divides us. The amendment to the motion by the Attorney-General is a decent one that is asking us to acknowledge harms caused by

racism, to recognise that the government plays a role in supporting a harmonious multicultural society and to call out instances of racial discrimination and, I imagine, discrimination more generally.

The Member for Mulka expressed the sentiment that racism appears to be increasing, which is hard to say. A proposition like that needs to be tested empirically, not just with one-off anecdotal evidence. We all have stories; no one person's voice should be privileged over another. That is why it is not a bad idea to reflect on the data that is relevant in our jurisdiction, so that is what I did, given I am the data guy. I dug up data to use as a baseline in this conversation.

It is much easier to document socioeconomic fragmentation; it is more measurable. It can be done in empirical ways and causality can be assigned, saying that it is the downstream consequence of economic and social policies that have been put in place by multiple governments over a period; you can test it.

As to whether racism is increasing, the first thing to remember is our demographic context. The Northern Territory is the most ethnically, racially and religiously diverse place per capita compared with anywhere else in the country. The mix of that is changing over time, but according to the 2021 Census, the case is that 65% of our population is non-Indigenous. It is a good starting point to remember that whilst we proportionally have the largest Indigenous cohort in the country, we also have proportionally more diversity, and we need to accommodate it.

The peak body to look at that and what happens in the discrimination space is the Anti-Discrimination Commission. In its 2023–24 report, 73% of the complainants were of non-Indigenous heritage, noting there was a total of 317 complainants in that cohort. Of that, only 9% of the complaints were race based; a lot more were disability based. What does that tell us? The first thing we notice is that it is a similar trend to past years, and it is trending down slightly. That does not mean racism is going away. It could mean that under-reporting is occurring or there is conflation of various metrics, but it is loosey-goosey to say racism is on the rise. Racism is not necessarily increasing, but it could be. The key thing is to look at the data we have.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's recent work on the National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report from 2022 states that people from culturally diverse backgrounds in Australia, including the NT, regularly face racism and systemic discrimination, limiting access to opportunities like housing and employment compared with Anglo-Australians. Ethnic minorities as well as Indigenous people face systemic disadvantage based on the assertion made in the Australian Humans Rights Commission's report.

What then of institutional racism within government? As has been alluded to, the 2023 report on the Campaign to Combat Racism by Adjunct Professor David Hollinsworth suggested that there was institutional racism, including unconscious bias and discriminatory practices affecting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in multicultural communities. We also have evidence in reporting to suggest that we have problems within our civil service in that regard, which is something to look at as well.

Young people are not to be forgotten in this equation. The 2024 report, 'It's up to everyone to call it out', by the NT Children's Commissioner, surveyed 284 children and young people aged eight to 19 across the Territory and found that 80% of them reported having seen or experienced racism and 31% stated they had personally experienced racism. These are young people; it is even more insidious in some ways when young people are experiencing this.

These figures indicate that racism affects a broad spectrum of young people in the NT, possibly including those from multicultural backgrounds. We have a large Asian and South Asian community, and trying to control for the data on racism, disadvantage and discrimination in that community is very hard to do. One of the better places you can probably get some information on that is from the 2021 Asian Australian Alliance survey, which had a sample group of 377 people, reporting that 75% of Asian Australians—that is, non-Indigenous people—experienced heightened racial hostility, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, including verbal assaults and physical attacks. That is relevant to Asian communities; I am not suggesting that is specific to the Northern Territory situation, but it is notable that we have a large South Asian and Asian population.

The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Survey 2021 is also worth thinking about. The Scanlon Foundation, to reiterate for those who may have forgotten, is an independent not-for-profit research institute that exists as a bridge between academic insights and public thought on matters relating to Australia's social cohesion. The Scanlon Foundation survey reports that 27% of Australians from non-Indigenous, culturally diverse backgrounds reported racial discrimination in the past year, with 18% citing skin colour, ethnic origin or race as the reason.

A final one to think about is racism in the workplace because it goes to the core of what was brought up by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The 2023 Diversity Council Australia study finds that 43% of non-white, non-Indigenous employees experience racism at work, including exclusion and stereotyping, and only 25% felt that employers actively address it. There is the rub of it—actively addressing it. I am keen on the idea of us actively addressing things rather than hoping that the market will correct for all errors, particularly when it comes to making sure we maintain a harmonious and diverse society.

That is why on 26 March I spoke at length about the fact that it is great we all go to lots of events, take lots of photos and there are lots of costumes. However, it is a privilege that was hard fought, and we have to keep fighting for it together as a group by concentrating on what unites us rather than what divides us in order to move the debate forward. That is why the motion that has been put forward by the government is sincere in its intent.

What does all this data that I am pointing out really mean? The fact is no-one has a monopoly on the wisdom in this area, and I am not seeking to privilege any one voice or perspective. It probably means that you can fairly say, without getting too carried away, that there is significant quantitative data to suggest that discrimination on the grounds of race is a quantifiable proposition. It is silly to suggest that racism is gone, that racism does not matter or that racism has evaporated; likewise, it is silly to suggest that we should do nothing or can do nothing about it.

I am confining that body of data towards evidencing that there is significant quantitative data to suggest that discrimination on the grounds of race is a quantifiable proposition. However, the quantifiable data suggests that it may be a niche proposition, it may be an under-reported proposition or it may not, in fact, be getting worse, although there is plenty in the Zeitgeist at the moment about the increasing social polarisation within Australia and issues with social cohesion. I will not speculate on why that is the case. I am not interested in that part of it, to be honest; I am interested in how we move together as a group.

What then of the qualitative, because the qualitative speaks to the experience, which is probably more important. Based on the original motion that was on the notice paper, I reached out to a broad swathe of multicultural groups and communities around the Territory to say, 'The Member for Mulka is putting up his motion, which may come up some time soon. If you have any thoughts on racism that you might like to let me know about, I will try to feed them into thinking about how I might contribute to this debate sensibly.' I got a lot of specific responses about people's experiences. Sometimes there are specific axes to grind, if I am honest. Sometimes they pointed out that migrants punch down on other migrants. It is a complex system to explain social cohesion and why it may break down.

I picked out one contribution that I got. With the permission of the person who sent it through to me, I will read it out. The contribution is from Mr Mohammed Raziuddin, President of the United Muslims of Northern Territory. I picked him out because all of you are perking up and thinking, 'I know that fellow. He is a decent guy. He has a lot of decent things to say. He does not seem super partisan. He is running a community services organisation.' Yes, he does it under the label of a Muslim group, and as everyone freely knows around here, that is the faith to which I subscribe as well. I reached out to him because I thought his was a nice summary of many of the other contributions that I received.

The contribution I got reads as follows:

'I strongly support the government's focus on looking at harm caused by racism, especially the ongoing impact on our Indigenous communities. I also commend your intention to broaden the debate to reflect on the experiences of multicultural communities in the Northern Territory.

'From lived experience I can share that racism is still a reality for many people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For instance, I have witnessed international students and new migrants subjected to racial slurs in public places, and even in professional settings individuals have been overlooked or dismissed because of their accent or their appearance.

'In community work I have supported people who have been denied housing or employment opportunities, not because of a lack of qualifications or references but because of preconceived assumptions tied to their name, skin colour or religion.

'One young man confided that he removed all references to his cultural identity from his resume just to get a call back. Others feel they must suppress their identity to fit in and avoid scrutiny.

‘Importantly, many of these individuals express admiration and solidarity with First Nations peoples, seeing parallels in their struggle. There is a strong appetite amongst multicultural communities to walk alongside Indigenous Territorians in the fight against all forms of racism, provided there is room in the conversation to share our own realities as well.’

That is put much more eloquently than I would have tried to put across as a statement, and that is why I am grateful to Mr Raziuddin for sharing that statement so that I could read it out.

I can only fairly reflect on my own experience without wanting to prejudice the debate, so all I will say is this. I grew up here as well and, like everybody, have stories of when I sadly experienced discriminatory practice, either directly or indirectly. I do not reflect on them too hard, but I remember that when I left Darwin to move to Sydney, I really understood what discriminatory practice looked like because it was a whole different ecosystem for me personally compared with growing up here. I realised that, relatively speaking, Darwin was something of a Shangri-La. When I moved to England and spent an awfully long time there, I levelled up again on discovering what real racism looks and feels like. I was grateful for my time in Sydney, and I was grateful evermore for my time in Darwin.

I am not here to say that racism has gone away. I am not here to say that we should not actively work together to try to tackle it. I am here to say that we have it pretty good in the Northern Territory and in Darwin relative to a lot of places in the world, and I want us to work together to keep that as the case. Our chances of that happening improve if we respectfully speak to one another in this place. They would probably also improve in the future if we spoke to each other behind the scenes about what we will talk about and did not change the goalposts, which happens all the time in this parliament; it has been happening for 20-odd years.

It does not always have to be that way, but we could find more common ground if we chose to. We would probably find that our social and economic prospects would improve dramatically if we did this, because there is a range of things we will not be able to tackle in isolation in the Northern Territory without the help of the federal government, the cooperation of one another and building bridges with the wider world.

For that reason, I will be voting on the voices with gusto to support the Attorney-General’s amendment to this motion. I think it is a laudable objective to acknowledge the harm caused by racism, whether it is based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion; to recognise the government has a role in preventing discrimination and supporting our harmonious multicultural communities; and to call on everyone—which includes all of us—to stand up and call out racism when it occurs.

I thank the Member for Mulka for bringing this matter to the Chamber and for compelling us all to confront it together. It is only by moving forward together that we stand any chance of maintaining the Northern Territory that we all love and have fond memories of as children.

I support the motion and hope we all can unanimously.

Mr O’GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I believe that everyone in this House thinks racism is wrong. I stand with the Member for Mulka for calling out racism in our community, including what he has directly encountered through his own experience. Unfortunately, whether we like it or not, racism exists across the world, always has and sadly will continue.

I can give you many examples from across Europe, the Americas and Asia over the centuries where racism has impacted negatively on many people’s lives and has been a contributing factor to wars and conflicts. How can we minimise racism and its impact on people? This is a complex question that I do not have a succinct answer to, and I am not sure anyone else here has either.

I do not believe anyone is born racist. I think they may become racist through their own lived experience, upbringing and values shared with them by their families, friends and local communities. Unfortunately, you cannot fix racism with laws alone. In our freethinking society, we must accept that people have different attitudes, including attitudes that we may personally disagree with. Their lived experience may have influenced them to hold a view contrary to what you and I consider to be acceptable.

I will focus on my electorate of Karama and share some honest yet confronting lived experiences. Some elements of racism occur across and within many of the ethnic communities in my electorate. I am particularly conscious and dismayed that there seems to be a growing divide occurring between some sections of our Indigenous community and other community members in my electorate. That is the reality of what I see.

I am proud that approximately 15% of my electorate is Indigenous. Many of those are long-term residents who have lived in Karama and Malak for 30-odd years, yet they, like many other residents, are concerned by how crime and antisocial behaviour escalated and destroyed their community safety in our neighbourhoods under the previous eight years of a Labor government. They are also concerned about the negative impacts that some—I emphasise 'some'—of their visiting countrymen are causing in our community and recognise that these impacts are driving resentment through our community.

I heard and felt the honesty of the Member for Arafura earlier when he referred to his reluctance to visit Karama Shopping Plaza because of the increasing humbugging and safety concerns—genuine concerns that are shared by many of our local residents, including our Indigenous residents.

I mentioned previously that lived experience can influence people's attitudes. I will quote some confronting correspondence sent to me from a frustrated and scared local Karama resident yesterday evening and how her lived experience is changing her attitude. I note these are her words, not mine, but she has given me permission to quote her directly, whether we like the words or not:

'Brian, I have lived in Karama for 27 years and never felt so scared. I just drove past the Karama shops on my way home from yoga. In the front car park there were about 30 scattered countrymen, one about to belt the shit out of another—no security in sight. I am so sick of seeing this disgusting violence. It was 7.30 pm at night. We should feel safe to park our cars and go in, but no; that place at night is like a war zone.

'I know it is not your fault, but it is just really sad to see this continuous and bad behaviour happening. Why aren't they being stopped? If it was a bunch of white people, it would be all over the news.'

This next bit is important:

'I was not racist, but I am starting to be'.

That is a really sad reflection. It continues:

'I am so sick of seeing this rot. I go to sleep at night, scared when I am home alone. I am frightened because my dogs are old and will no longer probably be fit to protect me if they ever decided to jump my fence.'

Towards the end, she goes on:

'Please help clean this up and put a stop to the violence we are witnessing every day. I really don't like it; it is traumatic to see and not good for our children. We have come to treat it as a normal. It is not, and it is very disturbing.'

As I said at the outset, racism is wrong. I have talked about lived experiences. The best way to stop racism is to make sure everyone has a good lived experience and the same chances in life, including a good job, a safe home and a strong community.

Our government is focusing on things that actually make a difference, like safer streets, stronger schools and growing the economy. Yes, we need to continue to work to alleviate poverty, improve housing, and deliver good education and health services for all Territorians, wherever they live. However, this task does not rest with government alone. Our communities and individuals must also own their responsibility to help build the Territory and their future.

When people feel safe, have a job and a good future, there is less room for hate and fear. Everyone, no matter their background, should feel proud to live here and be part of the Territory. Racism is wrong, but we need to work hard to create a better future for all Territorians.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I move that the amendment be amended to insert after 'That' the following words:

The motion be amended to omit all words after 'That' and insert instead 'That'. I have nothing further to add, Madam Speaker, just that the motion be moved.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I support the Member for Mulka's original motion affirming the Northern Territory's responsibility to prevent racism and racial discrimination and to call for the urgent development of a comprehensive co-designed anti-racism strategy for our jurisdiction.

I understand the amendment from the Attorney-General, and I assume the second amendment is to make the amendment comply. While I agree with the sentiment of this amendment—I do not think anyone can disagree with the sentiment—I do not support the amended version proposed by the Attorney-General as it waters down and dismisses the tangible commitments put forward in the Member for Mulka's original motion. The proposed amendments change the entire motion, removing reference to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the National Anti-Racism Framework.

I will start by pointing out comments I heard earlier from the Attorney-General, who stated, 'When people can celebrate their families and culture, racism fades'. As nice as it would be for that to be true, it is not. People from all cultures celebrate their backgrounds and culture here, yet racism exists. As identified in the forward of the National Anti-Racism Framework:

> *We cannot effectively address racism and the harmful impacts it has without acknowledging its existence and then taking powerful action to confront it.*

Racism does not go away by ignoring it; we need to invest in creating a framework to eliminate it. We must be proactive in eliminating racism, not just calling it out when we see it per this amended motion.

Point three on the amended motion fails to recognise that racism is structural and pervasive—not just comments made by individuals. I do not believe that anyone who genuinely wants to combat racism would support this watered-down and weak amendment put forward by the Attorney-General instead of the well-considered motion from the Member for Mulka, which provides tangible and realistic actions to take to eradicate racism.

We are at a crossroads. The signs of systemic failure are not subtle. They are not buried in obscure datasets or hidden behind closed doors; they are in plain sight, visible in the daily experiences of far too many Territorians and reflected in the institutions that are supposed to protect and serve all of us equally.

Some members in this Chamber have taken umbrage when I have mentioned the word 'racism' before. I previously described the CLP government's tough-on-crime agenda as punitive and racist. This is something that has not been fleshed out in this Chamber, and we need to delve into this for better understanding.

I come here in good faith to put forward my thoughts. I have heard the simplistic retort from members in this Chamber that laws apply to everyone equally, therefore they cannot be racist. This reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how systemic racism operates in practice, and it concerns me that elected members can hold such ill-informed understanding of social policy and history. I appreciate that this motion has come before the Assembly because I know it has gone back and forth—members on this side talking about the racism in certain policies and members on the other side saying, 'How could we possibly say it is racist?'

Bear with me because I think it is important to put on the record. When people say that something is racist, such as the CLP's crime approach—because many people say that, not just me—they mean the following: when you have a law or a system that disproportionately negatively impacts or harms one type of person or particular racial or cultural group because of disparities such as discrimination, colonisation, poverty, systemic failures and historical reasons such as genocide, and you do not do anything to acknowledge or address these reasons but then still enact the law or system knowing full well the disproportionate impacts it will have to that group of people; that makes it racist.

The racism lies not in the explicit text of the law—as the simplistic retorts would have you believe from the other side—but in the wilful disregard of its predictable consequences. When government officials push forward policies knowing they will deepen existing inequalities whist simultaneously refusing to address the underlying conditions that produce those disparities, they perpetuate structural racism. That is what people mean by this.

This is not an abstract theory; we see the concrete results in the dramatically disproportionate incarceration rates of Indigenous Australians. True equality before the law requires acknowledging unequal starting positions and working to remedy them, not pretending they do not exist.

Police watch houses are so overcrowded that individuals are being held for extended periods in conditions that no Australian should be subjected to. Some people have waited months in watch houses that lack adequate access to healthcare, legal support and even sunlight. Not only is it disgraceful but also dangerous.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the NT's prison population rose from 2,236 to 2,400 in the December quarter of 2024. That is a 7.4% increase in just three months, and it has continued to rise since

then. More than 1% of the entire Northern Territory population is currently in custody. The only place in the world with a higher rate is El Salvador, a country emerging from decades of civil war and widespread violence. Is this really the company we want to keep?

It should give pause to every one of us in this House that in a wealthy and developed country like Australia, such extraordinary levels of incarceration are seen as normal, and even acceptable, when the people filling those cells are overwhelmingly Aboriginal.

More than 83% of adult prisoners in the NT are Aboriginal, despite making up only 25.9% of the NT's adult population. Aboriginal men are imprisoned at 15 times the rate of non-Aboriginal men, and Aboriginal women at 14 times. These are not just statistics; they are people, families and communities. What they show is not an isolated problem of individuals but the product of systemic failure.

Our judiciary is speaking out too. Justice Blokland recently called the NT's reliance on imprisonment a wicked problem and urged more creative, community-led solutions. The courts are asking for help and are not being listened to.

The original motion from the Member for Mulka is not only morally right; it is legally required. Through the *Anti-Discrimination Amendment Act 2022* the Northern Territory Government has a positive duty to prevent racism and discrimination before it occurs. This is not a voluntary standard; it is a binding legal obligation. Under this law, which came into effect progressively across 2023 and 2024, government agencies, service providers and employers must take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner is empowered to investigate compliance, issue enforceable undertakings and report to the minister. The days of waiting for complaints to be lodged and the damage to be done are over. This is about building fair and safe systems from the outset.

We already have a strong policy foundation. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement 2021–2027, developed through consultation with over 1,700 Aboriginal Territorians, sets out a roadmap for justice reform grounded in genuine partnership. It recognises what we already know: that racism is not just interpersonal but also structural; that justice cannot be achieved through punishment alone; and that solutions must be led by the communities most affected by the failures of our systems.

This agreement outlines three core aims: reduce Aboriginal incarceration; improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal people; and ensure Aboriginal leadership in justice responses. Central to that work is identifying and eliminating systemic racism across all government agencies and contracted service providers, yet we have not aligned these obligations. The motion before us seeks to do that by calling for the co-design of a whole-of-government anti-racism strategy—we heard from the Member for Johnston that it exists in other states—informed by both our positive duty under anti-discrimination law and the principles of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. This is not just good governance; it is smart evidence-based policy, and it is long overdue.

The model to guide us is the National Anti-Racism Framework, which was launched by the Australian Human Rights Commissioner in November 2024. This landmark document was developed over three years of consultation with community leaders, anti-racism advocates, legal experts, educators and public servants. It offers 63 concrete recommendations across justice, health, education, media and employment.

The framework calls for First Nations-led truth-telling and self-determination; anti-racism education in schools; formal partnerships with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations; anti-racism strategies in public and private workplaces; and stronger accountability mechanisms for systemic change. As Race Discrimination Commissioner, Giridharan Sivaraman, said at the launch:

> *This is a historic moment in the fight against racism. For the first time we have a comprehensive plan for eliminating racism in Australia.*

The NT must adapt this framework to our context, where the effects of colonisation are raw, the inequalities are vast and the consequences of inaction are profound. A core thematic finding in the consultation for this framework was:

> *… the refusal to name and confront racism has prevented meaningful progress on eliminating it. Too often those that call out racism are attacked more than the racism itself. The focus on multiculturalism and social cohesion hides or erases many communities' lived experience of racism as well as the nation's settler colonial foundations.*

A key finding was:

> *… there was an overall reluctance from governments to name racism or use the term. The report found that government preference for social cohesion initiatives has resulted in weaker approaches to anti-racism work and an overall lack of systemic, intersectional, strengths-based, and coordinated action addressing racism in Australia.*

This is directly talking to us. We have already disappointingly heard this failing in the government's response to the motion with the emphasis on cultural events, celebrations and social cohesion. This is exactly what this report is talking about; we need to name it and be open and honest about it.

As members of this Assembly, we are failing the communities we represent by failing to be honest about the racism in the Territory. So often members in this Assembly respond defensively when called out on racism, rather than responding with openness and a willingness to learn and act. We cannot continue to celebrate multiculturalism without the recognition of the enduring racism that First Nations communities face.

Some may ask whether a dedicated anti-racism strategy is needed. Yes, it is. Racism is not just a niche issue; it affects housing, healthcare, education, employment and justice. It fuels the over-representation of Aboriginal people in prisons, damages mental health, undermines trust in institutions and holds us back. As one participant in the Aboriginal Justice Agreement consultation said:

> *We don't want to go through discrimination. We all bleed the same blood.*

We can no longer afford piecemeal efforts. We need a coordinated government-wide response with clear objectives, performance measures and community oversight. We need legislation, policy and funding that reflects the real needs of communities, not assumptions made from behind a desk in Darwin.

We do not need a government that is tough on crime; we need a government that is smart on justice. Tough-on-crime policies have packed our prisons, criminalised trauma and condemned too many to cycles of harm. Being smart on justice means early intervention, culturally safe services, youth diversion, investment in housing and mental health, and fully funding the domestic and family violence sector. It means acknowledging the deep legacy of colonisation and actively dismantling the structures that perpetuate its harms today.

This is difficult work. It requires honesty, courage and sustained political will, but the cost of inaction is far greater. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement reminds us of the importance of transparency and accountability. It calls on governments to own the existence of systemic racism and to stop deflecting responsibility. It insists on evidence-based action. The Member for Mulka's original motion is aligned with that vision. Let us not be a government that waits until another tragedy forces our hand. Let us not be remembered as a parliament that acknowledged the problem but failed to act.

I will close with the vision of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement that:

> *Aboriginal Territorians live safe, fulfilling lives and are treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination.*

This is not just a vision for Aboriginal people; it is a vision for a stronger, fairer, more united Northern Territory. As the agreement also reminds us:

> *We are in one canoe, we need to paddle together.*

I commend the original motion to the Assembly.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, racism in any form has no place in the Northern Territory. It ruins not only individuals but also entire communities. It does not hurt just one group; it hurts all of us. As someone who was born in India, has lived in Europe and travelled since 2002, I have seen what division can do to society. In the Northern Territory, I found something different—belonging. That is why I say, with all my heart, that this is the best place to live and the place I probably want to die.

Our Territory is special because it is built on diversity. People from every background—Aboriginal, English, Greek, Indian, Filipino, Chinese, European and many more—live side by side. However, racism does not knock politely; it creeps in quietly, sometimes in public, sometimes online and sometimes in silence. When it strikes it is not just one community that feels it; we all feel the pinch.

Racism is not always loud; sometimes it is a look in a shop, a whispered comment in a hallway or a joke at work followed by, 'I did not mean it like that'. Sometimes it comes from ignorance, fear and habit. Whatever its source, its impact is real. Even I, as a Territory local and elected member of this Assembly, have felt the sting of it. I know many others in this Chamber have too. I will be clear: we are not here to blame; we are here to build.

I want to share a story, not just as a member, but as a father. Since she was a toddler, my daughter Anika would go to Casuarina with me every week. It was part of our routine—work, coffee, groceries and chats with shopkeepers—but lately she has become scared. She has seen fights, yelling and antisocial behaviour near the shops. One day she asked me, 'Dad, why are the Aboriginal people always fighting here?' I paused because that question did not come from hate but from confusion. I told her gently and truthfully, 'Not all Aboriginal people are like that, darling. In fact, most are good, respectful people. This is just a small group behaving badly, and every community has that.' That is how we raise our children—to see people as individuals, not categories, and to correct with love, not shame. I know many parents across the Territory, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, do the same.

A friend of mine shared her story of how she teaches her kids not to judge. These are the moments when we shape the future, not through politics, but through good parenting.

That is why our government is acting and not punishing race, but correcting behaviour. Tougher laws are about protecting the community, no matter who you are. We cannot let a small group drag down the reputation of the many.

We must be clear that accountability is not prejudice, just as respect is not weakness. When any person commits an act of violence, vandalism or intimidation, they should face consequences, but those consequences must be tied to the act, not the ancestry. If we ever allow anger at a person's behaviour to slide into assumptions about their background, we have missed the mark.

I want to work with every Territorian—black, white or brown—because we rise and fall together. If we are labelling people instead of listening to them and if we are boxing them in instead of bringing them in, then we will not fight racism; we will feed it.

We often talk about policies, frameworks and legislation. They are important, but racism does not live in laws alone; it lives in attitudes, habits, silences and our willingness—or our reluctance—to confront it when it shows up close to home.

Racism will not be defeated by paperwork or policy statements alone. It will be defeated in classrooms, workplaces, sports clubs and family dinner tables. It will be defeated when ordinary people choose decency over derision and inclusion over indifference.

We need to be honest. There is still racism in our streets, in our schools and in our systems, but there is also hope. There are people who step up every day to push back against hate—teachers, youth workers, police officers, nurses, business owners, volunteers and parents. They do not make headlines, but they make a difference.

Let me give you an example. A friend of mine runs a small business. He had an employee, a recent migrant, who was being mocked by customers for his accent. Instead of ignoring it, my friend stood beside him. He had quiet conversations with those customers and made it clear that disrespect would not be tolerated. Do you know what happened? The tone changed. Respect grew. That is leadership, not just in government, but in life.

We need more of that. We need workplaces where people feel safe to speak up; we need media that tells balanced stories, not just those that feed stereotypes; and we need leaders from all sectors who call out hate when they see it, even when it is uncomfortable.

We also need to address the deeper roots of poverty, intergenerational trauma and lack of opportunity, because racism often grows where people feel powerless or afraid. Some of the antisocial behaviour we see in our communities is a symptom of that broader story and of failure in education, housing, health and job creation.

Tackling racism is not separate from tackling crime. It is a part of the same solution, because the more connected people feel, the less likely they are to lash out. The more respected they feel, the more likely they are to respect others.

We must invest in our communities, not just in Corrections; in support, not just in sanctions; and in prevention, not just in punishment. That does not mean going soft; it means being smart. It means understanding that when a teenager vandalises a shop, yes, they need to be held accountable, but we also need to ask why were they on the street at 2 am? Where is their family? What are they running from? Those are the hard questions, but they matter and so do the answers.

I have visited youth programs that are doing incredible work, where mentors teach young people practical skills, life lessons and pride in who they are. I have seen kids who were once on the verge of criminal records now finishing school and getting jobs, not because they were punished into change but because they were supported into success. That is the Territory I want to build where we are honest about problems but never use them to smear whole communities; where we are firm on standards but flexible in support; and where we expect more from people because we believe in them.

I do not believe in giving up on people. I do not believe in writing anyone off because of where they come from or the mistakes they have made. I believe in second chances, dignity and the power of respect. That is what this speech is about—not slogans, blame or division, but unity, honesty and action.

We must say clearly that racism exists and it is wrong, but we must also say that the answer to racism is not reverse racism. The answer is not treating one group as always wrong and another as always right. The answer is balance, equality and shared standards.

I want my daughter to grow up in a Northern Territory where she does not fear people who look different from her, where she does not make assumptions because of one bad moment at a shopping centre, or where she does not have to unlearn prejudice because it was never planted in the first place. That starts with me, with us and what we model in this House, in our parties and in our public statements.

If you speak with fear, we will lead a fearful people; if we speak with hatred, we will lead a hateful people, but if we speak with compassion, courage and conviction, we will lead a Territory that is stronger, safer and more united than ever before. That is the kind of leadership I believe in.

Today I call on everyone in this Chamber, regardless of party or background, to join me in this commitment to call out racism where we see it; to resist the temptation to generalise; to understand before we judge; to teach our children well; and to lead by example. Every time we do this, we plant a seed of respect, hope and a better Territory. Let us make sure those seeds grow strong.

In this galaxy we only have one planet called Earth, where we can breathe, live, enjoy, survive and feel. There is no other place like it, so let us respect each other and enjoy our lifestyle.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I support the motion put forward by my friend, the Member for Mulka, calling on this Assembly to recognise the profound and lasting harm caused by all forms of racism across the Northern Territory and to urge the government to fully adopt and resource the actions and recommendations set out in our NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the National Anti-Racism Framework.

Friends, racism is not an abstract concept or a relic of the past in the Territory. It is a daily reality for far too many Territorians in our communities. From Darwin to the most remote corners of the Territory, it is experienced in classrooms, in workplaces, in encounters with police, in the justice system and, yes, even in the very institutions that are supposed to protect us. It is a lived reality for Aboriginal Territorians, and it affects our multicultural and multi-faith communities as well.

Across Australia racism is on the rise, and our job as leaders is to help stop it. For Aboriginal people in the Territory the impact of racism is particularly harmful. The NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement spells this out plainly. It details the systemic barriers that Aboriginal people face today when we are seeking justice, accessing health, finding housing and getting a job. It shows how structural racism continues to thrive in the Territory and it also sets out practical pathways for meaningful change. It should be mandatory for everybody in this Chamber to read that document. I remind those opposite who signed up to that agreement that you committed to those principles.

The National Anti-Racism Framework launched last year, but the Australian Human Rights Commission provides a roadmap for governments, institutions and communities to work together to eradicate racism. It is comprehensive, evidence-based and clear that combating racism requires coordinated, sustained and well-resourced actions. It highlights the need for community leadership, cultural competence and accountability to drive change.

Frameworks and agreements mean nothing without action, which is why the Member for Mulka's motion is important. It is not enough to endorse those documents in principle; they must be backed with resources, ongoing commitment and robust accountability to see genuine results. That is the job we are here to do.

At the very time we should be strengthening protections, the government is pursuing changes to the *Anti-Discrimination Act*, which water down those protections. The plan to repeal vital protections against hate speech will only make racism worse; rolling back the rights of Territorians undoes years of hard-won progress. It leaves the most vulnerable exposed to discrimination and vilification.

These concerns are not only coming from us. Peak bodies like the NT Jewish Community Association have sounded the alarm. In a climate where Neo-Nazi propaganda has appeared in Darwin, how can the government justify scrapping protections against vilification? The experts, including the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, are warning that it will open the door to dangerous hate speech.

I quote Commissioner Jeswynn Yogaratnam:

> *In this time where we are dealing with a lot of antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia … there is a need to have provisions like that to protect our community.*
>
> *…*
>
> *I think you're opening the doors for a very dangerous stream of hate speech here in the Northern Territory.*

While other jurisdictions nationwide and the Commonwealth are strengthening their laws regarding racial and cultural vilification, the move to scrap this protection sends a terrible message to Territorians.

Racism is not only a social or cultural issue but also a public health, economic and justice issue. It leads to poorer health, higher rates of incarceration, greater unemployment and fewer opportunities for those affected. It is a cost that the Territory cannot afford.

I call on the government to endorse, implement and resource the recommendations of the NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement and National Anti-Racism Framework. We need a whole-of-government response driven by various voices, informed by lived experience and accountable to the communities we serve.

I quote the Member for Mulka's post from 1 November 2024:

> *A servo in Darwin refused to serve me last week unless I provided ID. I was driving my hire car to the airport to fly out to Milingimbi after parliament Sittings and the pump wouldn't work.*
>
> *The attendant waved me inside and asked how much I wanted to pay. I said I didn't know because I needed the tank to be full. He said he wanted me to pay first. Again I said I didn't know how much because the tank needed to be filled. He asked me to provide ID before pumping so I said No, I will go somewhere else and walked away. Another car in front of me had arrived and filled up with no problems. Cars after me, filled up with no problems.*
>
> *…*
>
> *This is the culture that is coming through for Aboriginal people—that we are not equal, that we are all criminals. It's about colour … not about who we are or where we are from.*

It rings loud because he is a fellow parliamentarian; this is happening to him. They have singled him out because of who he is.

His post continues:

> *We need to call this out. We shouldn't be experiencing racism in our community. As I said in Parliament last week, I am sorry for the crime that is happening in our communities but this has come from decades of bad government policies like the intervention where our people were disempowered and dehumanised.*

That was the Member for Mulka's post from 1 November 2024.

Eradicating racism is not just about changing attitude; it is about transforming our systems and institutions. It is about breaking down barriers and building a Territory where everyone, no matter what their background, can live free from discrimination and thrive.

To the government: get on board with real action. Be better and do better. No Territorian should have to live with racism.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I support the amendment to the motion that this Assembly:

1. acknowledges the harm caused by all forms of racism, whether based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion across the Northern Territory

2. recognises the government's role in preventing discrimination and supporting the Territory's harmonious multicultural community

3. calls on all Territorians to stand up and call out racism when it occurs.

This is not just a policy statement for me; it is deeply personal.

As we in this House all know, I was born in Darwin of Indonesian parents but also have Torres Strait ties. I have 11 brothers and sisters who are Aboriginal. I grew up at Acacia Hills—a quiet rural community in the Member for Goyder's electorate, which I know he loves—at a time when everyone gathered together and worked as a community no matter what descent they were.

I have to admit that I had a wonderful childhood. I grew up in Rapid Creek where we had all races because it was probably the beginning of the multiculturalism that came to the Territory. We had many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students there as well. I have many long-term family friends from all ethnic backgrounds.

Racism is not always loud; it does not always come with fists or slurs. Often it is quiet, persistent and socially acceptable. It is in the lowered expectations, the suspicious glances, the awkward silences when someone says something inappropriate and no-one corrects them and when some people assume you are here to take something rather than contribute.

Racism is not just cruel; it is corrosive. It eats away at the fabric of our community. It stops people from reaching their full potential; stifles opportunity, productivity and trust; pushes people to the margins; and fuels division, resentment and, ultimately, crime.

We need to say clearly that racism is bad for everybody. When any group is excluded or stereotyped, we all lose. When someone is denied a job because of their name or skin colour, we lose their talent. When kids feel alienated in school because they speak another language at home, we lose future leaders. When someone feels unsafe walking down the street in their own neighbourhood, we lose the very notion of our community.

I do not stand here in despair; I stand with hope, because I know we can do better. I have seen the power of Territorians coming together. I share a story from when I was a child at Acacia Hills and our house burnt down and our community came together. They rallied—everybody of all colours.

In my street in Leanyer, there is a Greek family, two Asian families, an Irishman and some Aussies, so where I live is very multicultural. The Wanguri electorate is also one of the most multicultural electorates in the Territory, with Greeks, Italians, Filipinos, Chinese—people of all backgrounds.

I have seen people from all walks of life stand shoulder to shoulder. That is the Territory I believe in, but belief is not enough; we need action, as this motion rightly points out. It is not just about acknowledging the harm; it is about recognising our responsibility. We must do more than just call out racism when it happens. We must dismantle the structures that allow it to thrive. That means addressing inequalities in housing, education, health and justice. It means confronting stereotypes not just with slogans but with real stories, data and investment.

When people say racism is about bad apples, they miss the point. It is about bad systems that fail to see people equally; systems that assume Aboriginal youths are more likely to offend rather than more likely to be let down by their school or excluded from meaningful employment; and systems that treat someone with an ethnic name as a risk rather than an asset.

If we want to reduce racism, we need to reduce the root causes of exclusion and inequality. That includes reducing crime, because we cannot deny that fear and ignorance feed off one another. When there are high rates of crime in a particular group, people wrongly assume that race is the cause. However, race does not cause crime; lack of opportunity, trauma, exclusion and poverty do.

I commend the Northern Territory Government for its ongoing support of multiculturalism and anti-discrimination, but we need all Territorians to step up to the plate. However, calling out racism does not mean hating those who say the wrong thing. It is about helping people understand the impact of their words and actions. It is about building bridges and not burning them.

I have had moments in my life where someone was racist and later became an ally. Why? We had a conversation. They were willing to listen because someone challenged them with kindness, not anger.

Let us not be divided into good and bad people; let us recognise that we are all here learning and all call each other forward, not just out. I stand here today, not just as someone who has experienced racism, but as someone who has also witnessed incredible solidarity and change. I have seen kids from all backgrounds come together to fight bullying. I have seen workplaces embrace cultural diversity and thrive. I have seen elders lead reconciliation efforts that bring healing to entire communities.

This motion reminds us that none of this is guaranteed. Racism does not disappear on its own; it takes all of us—politicians, parents, teachers, leaders and neighbours—to make a choice every day and in every interaction and policy to stand for dignity, fairness and respect.

Let us make sure that every Territorian, no matter their skin, surname, accent or background, feels like they belong.

I began this speech sharing a story from my childhood. I want to end with a story from last week. I was at a community barbecue in Leanyer. There were kids running around and people from all backgrounds—Greek, Yolngu, Sudanese, Filipino, Tiwi, Indian and Chinese—all sharing food, laughs and stories. A little boy came up to me, about seven, and he looked up and said, ‘You look like my aunty who makes the best satay chicken’. We laughed. It was innocent, joyful and full of connection. That is the Territory I love; that is the Territory I want to build—a place where our diversity is not only tolerated but also celebrated, a place where racism has no corner to hide in and a place where our children not only feel safe, but also proud. Let us make that vision a reality, pass this motion and walk the talk.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I originally was not intending to speak on this important motion by the Member for Mulka. I thank the member for bringing it to the House; he is a powerful man from his community who walks in two worlds. I give respect to him for coming here and representing his people. Anyone who would treat him with anything less than the utmost respect is not Territorian. I apologise to you that you had to experience that situation at the servo. If I was there, I would have had a few words for that servo operator because that is not right; that is not Territorian.

I speak in favour of the amended motion. I speak of the people of Blain because we are talking about racism in the motion, but I think that there is a lot the Territory has done that the rest of the nation can look to in terms of the success of multiculturalism and people from diverse backgrounds and communities living together to enrich all of us. When you grow up in Darwin, you do not really appreciate this because it is just the way things are, so you do not notice until you go elsewhere. I moved to another Australian city for a period in my youth and it was homogenous. Trying to get a good laksa in Canberra is a struggle. The food there is not—you do not have the diversity or the markets that we have here. The Territory is unique. If you want to find an Indigenous person in Canberra, you pretty much have to go to the Tent Embassy, and I think Canberra is much poorer for that.

In my electorate of Blain there is a wonderful representation of people, not just Indigenous people and Anglo-Australians, but people from all over the world. We have large numbers of Indian and Pakistani people from the subcontinent, as well as people from Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and New Zealand. We have a significant number of Maori people, and they are amazing people. One thing I think we—particularly Anglo-Australians—can learn from our Indigenous brothers and sisters is how to have a good time. When you are hanging out with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, there is a lot of laughter and good times. They know how to have a bit of fun and really enjoy life, as do our Maori brothers and sisters. That is something I try to learn from them.

By and large, I find that when I am doorknocking in Blain, Bellamack, Woodroffe and Moulden, I never know who will answer. It might be a Catholic person from the Philippines, a Thai family who runs a stall at the markets or a Kiwi family I see at the rugby; you never know who will be there. Everyone gets along.

We also have diversity of faith. I have the honour of having one of the two mosques in the NT in my electorate. I do not know whether there is one in Alice Springs—one of the southern members will have to enlighten me on that. The Members for Brennan, Spillett and Drysdale have been there many times. The people at the mosque always welcome us with open arms and give us a special place. It is really enriching to see that diversity of faith and difference in cultural backgrounds. The commonalities between that faith and the Judeo-Christian faith—my understanding is that they have a common root.

I am always glad when I visit the schools in my electorate. Woodroffe Primary School has a mix of young Indigenous faces, Anglo-Australian faces and faces from Asia, and they are all sitting together—gingers, blonde kids and Indigenous kids—side by side. Colour does not matter to them. It reminds me of my childhood in the Territory where we grew up colourblind. One of the great things about the Territory is that we all lived together, had exposure to people who grew up in a traditional way and know what it means to live in the bush properly, and we have respect for the people who are still in contact with their ancient culture, traditions, and the sacred traditions of the land.

Danielle Banicek is the principal of Rosebery Primary School. She has a background in the arts and does an amazing job of putting on theatre presentations with the kids, celebrating our multicultural character and Indigenous heritage.

I call out to Moulden Primary School. I hate to raise one above the other, but when you look at my suburbs from a socioeconomic point of view, Moulden has the most challenges to overcome. Principal Sylvia Gregory does an amazing job. She is passionate about her kids, especially the kids from an Indigenous background. She goes out of her way, stays up late at night working, runs around and scavenges a bus to help these kids get to school. She organises a breakfast club so that if the kids get to school and they have not had enough to eat, they can have full tummies and focus on their learning. She cares passionately about these kids and does everything in her power—so far as she has power—to try to keep them from falling into the at-risk category and into the pathway to prison, as some might call it, that is unfortunately and sadly there for many of our Indigenous brothers. She does an amazing job.

The Moulden Primary School celebrates its Indigenous character. I looked up some stats the other day. About 25% of the people in Moulden are Indigenous. I love Moulden because it is almost like a meeting place of the communities. Members for Karama and Drysdale, you might have similar experiences in your electorates because of a number of factors. When people from community come into town they often stay in Moulden, or they have family who have houses there.

When I am doorknocking, I will run into families from Palumpa, Ramingining, Lajamanu, Minjilang or Croker Island. They are from all over the Territory, and it is great to sit down with them and listen to what they are …

Mr Young: What about the Barkly?

Mr KERLE: I am working on the Barkly—Ali Curung, yes. Not as many as I would like.

Ms Uibo: He might get jealous for his constituents.

Mr KERLE: Yes, come on in. I want to give a shout-out to Auntys Free Feeds. Sal, Romaine and the team of volunteers there do amazing work. You will have to come out one day, Brian, and I will visit the Sikh Family Food Van.

Food security is an issue with a lot of people who visit and even for the people who live in Moulden. I commonly hear that there is not enough food. The issues are around budgeting, income and secure work, but the fact is food security remains an issue. Sal, Romaine and the team of volunteers do an amazing job sourcing food every week and putting on a free feed for anyone with an empty tummy. There is often a line of people around 120-long. For anyone who wants to come, it is beautiful. Member for Daly, we have people from the Wadeye area, and we also have people from Maningrida and Ramingining, so I get to say hello to all of them. They are from all around the place. Everyone has a feed and then they take their food and share it with the people back at home.

Anglo-Australians and people from all backgrounds come too. There is no discrimination; it is open to all, which is a wonderful thing. The only thing you need is an empty tummy.

Moulden has challenges. Principal Sylvia Gregory does amazing work going above and beyond to help kids have the best possible opportunity to start their life with their literacy and numeracy—she has a laser focus on the basics in education, which is important.

I will briefly touch on the classical liberal philosophy of this debate. The Member for Nightcliff has talked about equity and that racism is when you have inequity of outcome, but we need to understand that people start from different places. We all acknowledge that we have a disproportionally high percentage of people with an Indigenous background who engage with the justice system. When you did down into the stats, we all have personal experiences. The Member for Gwoja spoke this week about having to personally intervene and call police to try to stop scenarios happening and build safety with situations that he was personally exposed to.

When you drill down into these statistics there are a lot of complicated issues, as the Member for Wanguri said. There is poverty, difference in economic opportunity, difference in literacy and numeracy and difference in expectations in getting jobs and future employment status. Unfortunately, we are aware of factors such as intergenerational trauma or growing up in overcrowded homes where children are exposed to domestic violence. We are all aware of the statistics. Sadly, our Indigenous brothers and sisters are disproportionally represented in these statistics.

Can a government legislate to change someone's mind, opinion or emotions? I do not think that is possible. The way we deal with racism is to firstly eradicate the tools of the state that treat one group differently to another because of their race. Martin Luther King in that famous speech said:

> *I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.*

I hope that in the NT we have made great progress towards that dream. I hope that in the NT that dream can be fulfilled, but we need to look at the drivers causing over-representation of our Indigenous brothers and sisters in heartbreaking statistics. Domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse and low literacy and numeracy lead to engagement in the criminal justice system, which then leads to all these terrible outcomes.

I reference the Member for Casuarina who spoke about his daughter observing some behaviour at Casuarina Square and asking him questions; that is heartbreaking. Unfortunately, that is how things are learned—not from the parents, but by kids observing different behaviours. I must confess that I was in the mall today talking with friends and heard shouting and yelling. When I looked over there was a couple, and the man was intoxicated and yelling at his female partner. I became hypervigilant because I thought about what would happen next—will he hit or attack her? Do I need to respond? Will he become aggressive to anyone around him? He walked past and yelled at his partner. It was loud, and everyone in the mall heard it. It is not ideal and not what we want happening in the mall.

We need to look at the roots of that behaviour. Why is that happening? Why are people drunk in the middle of the day? Why are they angry and yelling in public at the person they love and who loves them?

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr KERLE: The way we overcome racism is by eradicating the tools of the state that treat one group differently to another because of their race. I will not go into them, because it has been prosecuted broadly in other forums, but I have noticed and experienced that when people work together towards a common goal there is no time for racism.

My first job was at Sizzler washing dishes. I went to school with one of the guys there, an Indigenous fellow. I will not name him, but he is a good friend of mine and has been for many years. When you work together you do not have time for racism. You do not have time for any kind of discrimination or harsh attitudes; you have a job to get done.

One of the great things we can do is increase Indigenous participation in the labour market, bringing economic opportunities to the groups of people who are unfortunately disproportionately affected by the negative statistics of engagement with the justice system and low literacy and numeracy. There are issues regarding education and training, but the biggest thing we could do to move the dial would be to open up economic opportunities on country, where people are most disadvantaged.

I do not know what that looks like. It could be increased tourism opportunities. There is some of the most amazing country in the world on Indigenous land. The Member for Daly could, I am sure, talk for hours about the beauty of his electorate.

Mr Young: Hear, hear!

Mr KERLE: That is exactly right. There are so many sustainable opportunities and options where you do not have to bring out a drill rig or bulldozer—if the traditional owners want that, maybe it is an option—to bring economic opportunity to Indigenous lands and give people vision and hope for the future to engage meaningfully in the economy.

We talk a lot about getting kids to school, but if a child grows up in a place where almost no-one has a private sector job—I say that carefully, a private sector job—where most jobs are funded by the public sector, why would they have an incentive to go to school? Why would their parents have an incentive to send them to school, unless they are being made to?

If a child grows up and there are economic opportunities where people can engage and earn their own money and do what they want with that money, then there are incentives for children to go to school and for people to enter the labour market and work hard. When our Indigenous brothers and sisters work side by side, shoulder to shoulder, together with people from other places whose ancestors were not born here or connected to this land, this will tear down walls and our crime statistics too, because people will have hope, identity and belief in themselves. It will tear down the walls in people's hearts where they see someone and judge them by the colour of their skin.

At the end of the day, it is not about race or colour; it is about behaviour. In my electorate of Blain, poor behaviour is the biggest issue, far and away, bar none. The biggest issue is antisocial behaviour in public housing, as I am sure it is for you, Member for Karama. That behaviour is not appropriate when you live in the suburbs next to other people with 20 metres between your bedroom and theirs. When someone does not have to get up in the morning to go to work, have a couple of bottles of Jim Beam, a big loudspeaker and make a lot of noise all night, and there are other people who have to get up at 6 am to go to work who cannot sleep, night after night, that hardens people's hearts and leads to judgements based on superficial attributes. However, if people are working and have purpose, their behaviour will change. It is all about behaviour.

I will finish with a call to arms to those in the Chamber, anyone who is listening and anyone reading these words: challenge yourself. If you examine your heart and feel that when you see someone you judge them based on a superficial attribute, challenge yourself and ask, 'Why do I feel that way?' Go out of your comfort zone and help someone in need. Trust, believe and give people a chance. Let us all work together.

I commend this amendment.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak on the original motion put forward by the Member for Mulka; however, I have a further amendment. I know there have been a few amendments, and I had to get some advice. I appreciate the work of the people in the Table Office, the Clerk and his team to make sure we have the correct wording because there have been three amendments in a row. Thank you, Table Office, for circulating my amendment.

I move that the Member for Port Darwin's amendment be amended to omit 'omit all words after "that" and insert instead that' and insert instead 'insert after'. Thank you to the Table Office for the technical advice because I do not know if I would have the correct wording without them. I appreciate the work they do behind the scenes so that we can do our job in the Chamber to represent Territorians.

Effectively, I have moved an amendment to the previous amendment so that it will have the three points proposed originally by the Member for Brennan, which I hope the government is happy with, but will also incorporate the two points in the original motion by the Member for Mulka. Essentially, we have the best of both worlds, with the whole Chamber wrapped into one fantastic motion, which I think will have bipartisan support from the CLP government, the Labor opposition and the crossbench, including the person who brought the motion before the Assembly, the Member for Mulka. He has brought us all together on this fine Wednesday evening.

Mrs Hersey: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO: Thank you, Member for Katherine. Everyone had the right intention for this motion, and I thank the Member for Mulka for bringing the important original motion. Based on the contributions by the CLP

government members, I hope you find it satisfactory. The Member for Brennan's amendment to the motion will include the Member for Mulka's two original dot points, which will become dot points four and five of the amended motion.

This is the world of democracy at play and the work of the DLA staff—we have given them some fun to get the technical wording. I thank them for their advice and support with the words to splice together the important things being captured by the Member for Mulka's motion and the technical amendment by the Member for Brennan, brought before us by the Member for Port Darwin. This is why my amendment—I have learned a lot tonight—refers to the Member for Port Darwin's amendment, so it is three motions together; the original motion plus the two amendments captured.

For those at home, the motion will now be amended so that this Assembly:

1. acknowledges the harm caused by all forms of racism, whether based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion across the Northern Territory

2. recognises the government's role in preventing discrimination and supporting the Territory's harmonious multicultural community

3. calls on all Territorians to stand up and call out racism when it occurs

4. affirms the NT's obligation to prevent racism and racial discrimination under the positive duty law and calls for system-wide action aligned with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement

5. urges the co-design of the NT anti-discrimination strategy grounded in the National Anti-Racism Framework in full alignment with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

In speaking to the amended amendment to the motion, I thank the Member for Mulka for bring us together on something that everyone can agree on; racism has no place in the Northern Territory. This is clear from everyone who has contributed, and I acknowledge the experiences have been personal. Some members have shared sensitive stories, either personal or from their children, parents, constituents, friends, colleagues or strangers who have seen people affected but not known them. Thank you; I know it is difficult.

I understand some of the points the Member for Blain made about racism feeling like it did not exist in the Territory growing up—I am a few years younger than him, but we both grew up with a 'rural kid' upbringing and it felt like everyone was treated as the kid next door, down the street or at the block near Finniss River…

Mr Maley: I think you are much younger.

Ms UIBO: Yes, much younger. We will not bring age into this, Member for Nelson, but in terms of the feel of the Territory, I think that has been captured listening to the debate—everyone wants to feel that connection.

We love the differences in the Territory and want to celebrate them and call out when people are not celebrating being Territorian and acting in a way of good faith and looking after each other. It does not matter what colour you are—black, white, brown, brindle; all colours of the rainbow—we want to ensure everyone in the Territory feels safe, proud of who they are, that their cultural background is acknowledged and celebrated and, if there is a difference, it is not a bad thing.

In the Northern Territory we pride ourselves on the success of our multicultural community. I honestly believe from growing up, and up until today, that the Territory is the most multicultural community in Australia. It is important that debates, like this one brought on by the Member for Mulka, also celebrate the success that we have in eradicating discrimination. It also takes the important note that the member brought the spirit of the original motion in to ensure everyone—in this place and outside of it—knows that more work needs to be done to bring us together, keep us together and make sure we move forward together.

Honourable members in this House are eager to share some great stories, particularly from our electorates, and how proud we are to be part of the communities we represent and share culture, language, stories, art and music from all over the world, here in the Northern Territory—the best jurisdiction in Australia. We have Lunar New Year events, the Songkran festival, India@Mindil, the Darwin Waterfront Harmony Soiree, the Italian Festival, the Thailand Grand Festival, the Vietnamese Lantern Festival and the Greek GleNTi; there are many wonderful celebrations of the Territory's multicultural success each year. They have become mainstays of our yearly cultural calendar.

Just as we should be proud of our multicultural history, we should also be proud of the fact that the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country began over 60,000 years ago. There have been many turbulent times for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters in this country, but we should never take for granted that we now live in a time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is celebrated. It is an intrinsic part of the Territory's identity, and it should be celebrated.

The Northern Territory has come a long way in confronting racism through open debate, policy reform and community-led change, but the work is not finished. As leaders across the Territory, we must all continue to listen, learn and act when it comes to eradicating racism in the Northern Territory.

Going back to the amended motion and the original motion by the Member for Mulka, it was a proud day for the Northern Territory when the Aboriginal Justice Agreement was signed. I am so honoured that I was part of the government to bring that to the Northern Territory and sign it, when former Labor Chief Minister Michael Gunner signed it off. The Opposition Leader at the time, the now CLP Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro, and then shadow Attorney-General, Steve Edgington, and I as the Attorney-General were able to sign that in a bipartisan way.

There are many other signatories to this important agreement in the Northern Territory. It is still the case today that if you believe in the Aboriginal Justice Agreement principles, you can sign up, be a signatory to the agreement and provide practical ways to ensure the three main principles of the agreement will continue to be the guiding work of the agreement.

The Member for Mulka spoke at length in the delivery of this motion to the Assembly, but those aims are to:

1. reduce offending and imprisonment of Aboriginal Territorians

2. engage and support Aboriginal leadership

3. improve justice responses and services for Aboriginal Territorians.

We all know the deplorable statistics about Aboriginal Territorians and incarceration rates with the criminal justice system in the Territory. Working with and supporting Aboriginal leaders is key to how we can change outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians when it comes to justice. There is no greater need in the Northern Territory than to work together to ensure that we improve justice outcomes, not just for the social reasons; there is an economic story behind this as well.

It should be a concern to us all that there are decisions that have been taken in this parliament over the last few months that go against the principles of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

We have started by taking regressive steps of lowering the age of criminal responsibility. Despite all the evidence pointing to the fact that lowering the age will lead to more trauma, pain and the likelihood of reoffending, the CLP government still persisted with this change. Yes, we know it was an election commitment, but ignoring the evidence and expert advice does not make it any better that we will not see better outcomes from this legislative change.

Nine months on, with crime getting worse across the Territory, it might be worth trying to listen to those experts who were ignored.

Aboriginal children already disproportionately represent the justice system. Lowering the age will exacerbate this issue and lead to more children becoming career criminals. Increasing the age of criminal responsibility will lead to less crime in the long term when real programs are implemented and expanded so we can see that there is a commitment to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Why I talk about this and why it is part of the amended motion is we are starting to see more overt racism in the Northern Territory, which I never thought I would see at these levels. Most of us—or everyone in the Chamber—has a Facebook page as a work page, and probably a personal page too. In every domain I have seen, unfortunately, in open forum discussion—I am not anyone who wants to stifle free speech—more and more overt racism that becomes the norm and is accepted by the general public. That is a big issue for the Northern Territory in moving forward together.

While there are decisions that are made in government that seemed popular at the time, in my view, it does not necessarily address the long-term needs past the election cycle or four-year term of the government.

I agree that there needs to be more steps and action when it comes to community safety, but with that also comes a silent trigger of racism. It goes to some of the conversation and dialogue of the debate today where people talk around it without actually pointing to the colour of someone's skin or cultural background, in conversations that happen publicly and become more specific. A lot of that is not new in what people will think about a motion like this.

The National Anti-Racism Framework is being developed to ensure that Australia is a fairer country for all. Think of all the diversity and celebration that we love, not only about the Territory but also Australia as a country. This work has been developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission. The framework offers a road map to eliminate racism across the country. In its recommendations it tackled racism in our legal system, health care, education, workplaces, media and many other community spaces.

The framework is built on excessive consultation with over 496 First Nations people from diverse backgrounds. Their voices highlighted the urgent need for systemic change. The framework prioritises First Nations leadership and knowledge, and acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonisation and seeks to empower First Nations people in the fight against racism.

The benefits of the framework are not only for First Nations people but also the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community. The Australian Human Rights Commission has developed resources like the community guide to support those affected by racism. This guide provides vital information on support services and reporting tools. While the Australian Government needs to take the step for this national action to be implemented in this space, each state and territory government also has an important role to play, as both the major employers and local leaders across each jurisdiction.

There is a lot to celebrate in the Northern Territory, but we should also note that there is concern in the rising level of antisemitic and Islamophobic behaviour, which we are seeing around Australia. A strength of being Australian is living here where that difference is celebrated and respected. If you disagree with someone about most issues, you can do it respectfully.

Recently across the country there were public demonstrations that were clearly racist and should be of concern to every one of us. Unfortunately, a Neo-Nazi triggered a national debate on welcome to country during the federal election. Irrespective of your views on welcomes to country, acknowledgements of country and race relations, public debates on race relations should not be led with the views of Neo-Nazis. Looking at the results of the federal election we see that Peter Dutton and what was then known as the Coalition, until a couple of days ago, were punished by Aussies all over the country for attempting to lead a national debate on the back of the regressive behaviour. The overwhelming majority of Australians rightly punished the Coalition for that, and now there has been further internal combustion as a result.

In regard to the anti-discrimination changes within the context of this debate and the motion before the House, it is worthwhile noting that the CLP government's plan—it has talked about this publicly, but we have not seen anything yet to comment on technically—to roll back protections in the *Anti-Discrimination Act* is a huge concern. Our former Labor government's 2022 amendments to the *Anti-Discrimination Act* were the first significant overhaul in three decades. These reforms expanded the list of protected attributes and introduced a civil offence for offensive behaviour. As we understand it, the CLP intends to remove provisions …

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: As we understand, the CLP intends to remove provisions that make it unlawful to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate someone based on personal characteristics, such as race, gender or sexuality. These protections were designed to shield vulnerable communities from hate speech and vilification. This should be a huge concern to all of us across the Chamber and the people we represent in our electorates. Noting that recently around the country and the Territory there have been posters linked to Neo-Nazi groups, we urge the CLP government to rethink its plans and reconsider any changes that will diminish the rights and protections of Territorians when it comes to discrimination.

We do not want hate speech condoned in our community. Jeswynn Yogaratnam, the NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, has labelled the proposed repeals as a significant setback for human rights and equality. I heard some of the government members speak about equality and inequality and what we can do to work together to ensure that we have equality in the Territory. The anti-discrimination amendments proposed will

roll back any chance to push forward equality in a fulsome, practical and respectful way; it will only take us backwards.

The commissioner warned the Northern Territory and all of us here that removing these protections could open the door to dangerous levels of hate speech and discrimination. If there is a particular type of hate speech that the CLP thinks it wants to promote, we urge it to be up-front and talk about it under parliamentary privilege. Do not change the Act to allow people to do it in our community with no consequences. What is it that people cannot say now that will need an Act to be changed to be relaxed, more open and flexible to allow hate speech to creep into our everyday community? We do not believe this is acceptable. If there is something that needed to be said prior to the 2022 amendments, why can the CLP not articulate that now? We would like to place it on the record if they so choose.

We can be proud of the Territory's efforts to build a more inclusive society, but progress is not permission to stop. Racism still exists. It is not telling anyone in here anything that they do not already know, but our job as leaders across our communities and elected member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly is to keep pushing for a future where every Territorian feels safe, heard and respected for who they are.

Change in the Territory has often come from the ground up from our community voices refusing to be ignored. As political leaders it is our job to meet them where they are, not to retreat into complacency or cowardice. We have seen what is possible when governments listen to communities and when we invest in dignity, inclusion and truth-telling. That is the kind of leadership the Territory deserves, not one that rewinds progress or walks away when it matters the most to Territorians. Leadership means listening, even when it is uncomfortable. It also means standing up, not stepping back.

If we are serious about ending racism in the Northern Territory, we need to act with the same courage and conviction our communities have shown us for decades. We need to continue walking together and working together to stamp out racism in our communities.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Mr Deputy Speaker, I pick up on when the Member for Mulka spoke about his incidents at the service stations. It is sad that we live in a world where someone like the Member for Mulka, or anyone, can go to a service station and be refused fuel or whatever they are after just because of the colour of their skin. It is totally inappropriate.

I speak on this amended motion, not the opposition's amended one.

We acknowledge the harm caused by all forms of racism, whether based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion. We recognise the government's role in preventing discrimination and in building and supporting a harmonious multicultural community. We call on all Territorians to stand up and call out racism wherever and whenever it occurs.

Racism has no place in our homes, schools, institutions or hearts. Despite all the progress we have made as a society, we know it persists. It is sometimes hidden and sometimes overt, but always harmful. As the minister for Education, I know that one of the most powerful tools we have to combat racism is education; not just the education that happens inside classrooms, but the education that happens in relationships, in understanding and in empathy.

I thank teachers across the Northern Territory. Whether they are working in our urban centres, on remote homelands or in our small rural towns, they are on the front line of the fight against racism every day. They teach more than reading, writing and arithmetic; they teach kindness and history—our past—on the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They teach respect for diversity, pride in culture and the strength that comes from walking together.

I will digress and speak about the bilingual education schools. I have spoken to the Member for Mulka about these schools. Nine schools across the Territory teach bilingual education. Four of those schools have had bilingual education for 50 years—a feat in itself.

We have great teachers and environments in schools, and we want people to feel safe in there. We are working hard on getting children to school because in those bilingual education schools, the attendance rates are not really there. Some of them have only 30% attendance rates. Whilst education is a great way to stamp out racism and teach children right from wrong, we need to make sure that we get those children to school first and foremost.

I want to pick up the overt racism that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about on social media. That is a relevant point that, as members of parliament, we put things out on social media, and without disabling all comments you cannot make sure the people who will comment on your social media page are doing it respectively. In Katherine we have just had the Do It For Dolly Day, which is a cause close to my heart, from friends, Kate and Tick Everett who lost their daughter, Dolly. It is a great initiative across the Territory. Whilst it teaches about anti-bullying and being kind to people, I think it goes the same way in talking about racism.

People need to be mindful if they are going to speak or let their fingers do the talking on text messages or social media—make sure it is respectful and that it is not hate speech or being horrible to people.

I acknowledge some of the schools in my electorate of Katherine. Katherine is a community that lives and breathes multiculturalism. It is a meeting point for people from many walks of life—First Nations families, longstanding Territorians, newly arrived migrants, seasonal workers and those just passing through but never forget the welcome they receive. I speak of the great things that happen in our community often —that is one of the strengths of living in Katherine. As a community we are very welcoming of people and everyone looks out for each other. Even when we go through hard times, the community rallies together and comes out to shows their best.

Whilst we have a huge multicultural community in Katherine, they do not have a particular place to gather. They have different functions at Godinymayin, which is the cultural centre, but no space like in Darwin on Batten Road where a lot of cultures have a place to hold functions. The multicultural community of Katherine, with the Red Cross community, have fantastic events they hold each year. They have the Joy of Many Colours and other events that bring together the community with festivals from all different cultures where everyone brings their different food together and taste all the different cultures we have in Katherine. They are fantastic events.

As the Member for Katherine, I am proud to see the election announcement of $1.5m set aside for a multicultural facility. I look forward to seeing that come to fruition.

We have migrant families from Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East who speak of how the school community in Katherine was their first introduction to Australia. We see that also in our citizenship ceremonies. Each time we have a citizenship ceremony in Katherine, it is great to see people from different cultures across the world choose Katherine as their home. It is great to see them out and about and bringing their culture to our community.

Recently I went to the opening—and I have spoken about this before—of the Walk-In Talk-In Space with the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup. That is a fantastic space that has taken up an empty shop in Woolworths. That shop has been empty for many years—I want to say at least 10 years—but it has been a good welcome space for the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup. The funding was provided by the federal government with PHN. The elders there, Mavis, Chiyo and Joanne, have a residential facility where they take in young children and nurture, love and look after them like they are their own and put them on a better path. I look forward to seeing the great work that the Banatjarl Walk-in Talk-in Space does in the Woolworths complex.

I spoke about the bilingual schools. While I was at Shepherdson College celebrating 50 years of bilingual education there, a young girl working in the language centre had been a student at that school. It was great to see that she had gone right through to Year 12 and went back and worked in the language centre, having done the full circle of education in her community. We on this side of the Chamber talk about having these opportunities in remote communities for the children who go to school there. They are probably not as likely to leave that community—potentially my child will go down south, but fortunately they have all come back and reside in the Territory, because we know it is a great place with a world of opportunities—so it was great to see those children and the opportunities they have in their communities. It was great to see that young girl thriving in the language centre.

This is how the Northern Territory can be at its best—a place where diversity is not seen as a challenge to overcome, but something to nurture. We must be honest about the harm racism causes. It divides communities, wounds our children, limits people's potential and corrodes the fairness that every democracy depends on.

Racism is not always loud. Sometimes it whispers in lowered expectations, in assumptions made in job interviews, in schoolyards and in the way some people are followed in shops or spoken over in meetings, but whether loud or quiet, all racism chips away at belonging and the future we want to build. Our government recognises that racism is not just a matter of personal behaviour; it is a systemic challenge. That is why we are committed to addressing …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 15
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Edgington
Mr Young	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

PAPER TABLED
Letter from Public Accounts Committee – Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I table a letter from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee requesting amendment to the terms of reference for the inquiry into the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum as agreed on by the Assembly on 14 May 2025.

NOTICE

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall move that the motion on the committee referral regarding the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum as agreed by the Assembly on 14 May 2025 be amended by omitting clause (c) and inserting new clause (c):

'Implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendations by the former Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and the outcomes delivered to date.'

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, quite an interesting one, hey? It does not mean anything. I just stand firm in the middle trying to work with everyone.

Tonight I read an open letter from 170 NT healthcare workers to the Northern Territory Government. Before I start, I thank these workers for speaking up for our children and having the courage to speak out. I hope the government will engage with these health experts and consult and listen to their wisdom. I will begin reading the letter, and the Member for Johnston will continue on so it can be read in full within the time permitted.

The letter reads:

> *To the Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro, Health Minister Steven Edgington, and new CLP MLAs.*
>
> *We are healthcare workers and healthcare students from across the Northern Territory, providing care to Territorians across primary and hospital care, from urban centres to remote communities across nursing, medicine, dental and allied health.*

As healthcare workers, we are writing to express our deep alarm about the reforms to the criminal legal system recently passed by your government, which will jeopardise the health of our patients, and make the NT less safe for everyone. As clinicians, it is our professional obligation to raise these concerns with your new government.

We ask that your government urgently undertake reform of the criminal legal system, including raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years, legislating a total ban on spit hoods, and implementing the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission's 2024 report.

1. The age of criminal responsibility

The younger a child is when they first are sentenced to prison, the greater the likelihood of re-offending. A large body of evidence suggests that children in the criminal legal system have unmet basic needs for housing, food, healthcare, and education. Imprisoning children who are too young to have the emotional, mental, and neurological maturity to understand the consequences of their actions will have both devastating social and fiscal costs for the NT. Imprisoning children is estimated to cost the NT Government over $1 million per child per year.

In 2019, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the minimum age of criminal responsibility be increased by all countries to at least 14 years of age. This recommendation was made specifically to Australia in the CRC's fifth and sixth periodic reports, and has seen rising support nationally through the Raise the Age Campaign, which is supported by National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, the Australian Medical Association, and the Law Council of Australia. It is worth noting that the vast majority of children in prison in the NT are Indigenous, and at times make up 100% of all children jailed in the NT.

The majority of children aged 10 to 13 are not charged with a serious violent offences. In the rare instances where these problematic behaviours do arise, they must be met with therapeutic and developmentally appropriate services rather than jail time.

2. Spit hoods

We are concerned that children will die from the spit hood use in NT jails, and we recommend a ban on spit hoods be reinstated. Spit hoods are banned in custodial settings in New South Wales and South Australia and Victoria has forbidden the use of spit hoods on anyone in detention under the age of 18. Spit hoods have been implicated in multiple deaths in custody. In addition to being physically dangerous through posing a risk to a person's airway and breathing, especially in combination with prone positioning, they are contrary to human rights and have been reported in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention Against Torture. The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT states that 'there is no place for spit hoods or restraint chairs which should continue to be prohibited.'

Additionally, the justification for the use of spit hoods to protect against the transmission of disease is untrue, with the risk of communicable disease transmission estimated to be virtually nil.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mulka, I am sorry; your time has expired. There are no extensions allowed.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I continue the open letter:

The NT Ombudsman has also stressed there are many viable alternatives and protective equipment available to adequately protect staff. As health workers, it is evident to us that the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as safety glasses can protect staff in the rare instances when a person is at risk of being spat on. This is an inexpensive, readily available, and humane alternative to dangerous restraint.

3. Effective strategies to reduce youth crime

Crime is a concern for the NT community. However, punitive measures to jail developmentally and socially vulnerable children do not reduce crime. The 2024 Help Way Earlier *report from the Human Rights Commission clearly shows that adequate resourcing of crime prevention is a better use of human and budgetary resources. Measures to provide safe and affordable housing across the*

Northern Territory, improved education and culturally safe health care and social services are needed to address the drivers of crime.

We also support the commission's recommendation to adequately resource evidence-based culturally safe diversionary programs for children, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations.

As health workers, we implore you to consider the facts and repeal these harmful and dangerous laws. We request a meeting to further discuss these concerns and we look forward to a timely response.

I will now read the names of the people onto the Hansard:

Sophie Collins, Ngarla Kunoth-Monks, Lydia Birch, Violet Avena, Hilary Tyler, Lara Grady, Francesca Garnett, Rhianon Hutcheson, Fiona Darling, Sarah Bornstein, Bec Stewart, Tracy Clarke, Jermaine Charles, Natalia Filoni, Hamish Rahn, Annie Girdwood, Jessica Piggott, Iris Evers, Peniche Reu, Jack Martin, Isabella Kaiser, Tami Haddad, Louie Constable, Camilla Liebson, Cameron Scott, Lisa Bachmayer, Eremaya Albrecht, Stefanie Pender, Jesse Noon, Catrina Sturmberg, Grace Dwyer, Julianna Wan, Adelaide Dennis, Carleigh Duke, Raymun Ghumman, Emma Tucker, Dana Fitzsimmons, Ricky Delaney-Bindhneem, Jessica Brotchie, Jessie Lu, Lucy Owen, Natalia Canon-Duenas, Jemima Haxen, Meredith Hansen-Knarhoi, Adrienne Deans, Ruby Veale, Tia Hardie, Stephanie Naidu, Eamon O'Bryan, Laura Grace, Andi Wyayy, Caitlin McGuire, Rupert Langford, Dina Vassiledo, Jenny Jobst, Amelia Patersom, Jonathan Dow, Fraser Tankel, Sarah Inglis, Juliet Zaer, Raelene Martins, Jane Karmouche, Sibella Hare Breidahi, Charlotte Thomas, Chloe Wright, Kimberlee Fenner, Ella Moyses, Leah Heritage, Lisa Wong, Jack Boylan-Ascione, Alexandra Kay, Sarah Lynar, Ben Bambery, Oliver Fahy, Te-Yu Hung, Jennifer Yan, Thomas Atkinson, Tanya Manolios, Chloe McCarthy, Fiona McNaughton, Sage Bowman-Kean, Lyndall Heather, Ed Nicholson, Mikaela Sloan, Lara Clegg, Gina Majid, Sarah Dorrington, Olivia Conan-Davies, Chris Lowbridge, Teddy McDiarmid, Mick Heelan, Sharryn Koppens, Kat Byron, Jodie Clarkson, Caitlin McGuire, James Ingram, Yolande Turnbull, Vy Ha Tran, Lewis Gould-Fensom, Leah Ginnivan, Harry Dixon, Sophie Dunn, Emma Kelly, Whitney Comte, Indi Moran, Jules Willcocks, Paul Helliwell, Warren Adie, Abigail Creamer, Ronit Cukierman, Robert Duguid, Ronja Sen, Mary Frost, Ashlee Jewson, Cherisse Buzzacott, Kerry Mack, Joshua Bowles, Anna Holwell, Michelle Withers, Natalia Gracia, Alison Mapleson, Sally Steiner, Kylie MacFarlane, Madeline Simioni, Karolien Janssens, Larissa Ellis, Shearne Wilkie, Andrew Rankin, Jenny Sze, Stephen Gourley, Hannah Fyfe, Lauren Bostock, Tomas Crossland, Gem Walsh, Karen Greenlees, Victor Moriau, Catherine Marshall, Sarah Henderson, Daniel Adams, Stephanie Naidu, Clare Horsfall, Amelia Knox, Lena Rennick, Barbara Molanus, Michelle Doyle, Pat Bradley, Myra Ariyatnam, Anna Smith, William Cook, Ace Leeson, Mae Fraser, Christine Sanderson, Emily Tierney, Louise Woodward, Anna Fairbairn, Sonya Schmidt, Thomas Young, Andi Wyatt and Charlee Horni.

I seek leave to table this open letter.

Leave granted.

J DAVIS: I will use the rest of my time to talk briefly about Mother's Day. It is still May, so we can still talk about Mother's Day.

You have seen my beautiful mum in the Chamber tonight. As the Speaker said, she is my number one fan. She is a wonderful, amazing, inspirational woman in her late eighties and still keeps going every day. She is writing her third novel and is an inspiration to me, most definitely.

On Mother's Day, as I do every Sunday, I spent the day at Rapid Creek Markets. It is my favourite day of the week; it is wonderful, and I can speak to and meet many people in the community, including stallholders. One of the things about Mother's Day that is important for us to remember is that it is not an easy day for everyone. For many people it is a complicated day because they may want to be mothers but are not able to be, have a complicated relationship with their own mother or may carry longing, loss or grief; it is not simple.

It was an interesting day at the market where I had many conversations with stallholders who I have known for the 30 years. I have been going to that market every Sunday for 30 years. The people running the stores were little kids when I first went, and now, they serve me and know exactly what I want and ask about my kids. Many of them spoke to me about their loss and pain around Mother's Day.

I honour all mothers and the people who care for children and recognise it is not a simple day for everyone. My heart and thanks go to everyone who cares for children, our most important job in this Chamber and in

our life. I have said to many members who have little kids that anyone can be a politician, but only you can be the parent to your children. Sometimes when making difficult decisions about what we do with our time, whether we take days off during the school holidays—I am looking at you, Member for Drysdale—we need to think about that and how we can do that important job of bringing up good people in the world.

Happy Mother's Day to all the mums. The Friday before Mother's Day I had a fantastic morning going to four schools in my electorate, who all had a Mother's Day breakfast and events. It was a big whip around but fantastic. I got to fry bacon and eggs, have my nails painted, try on funny hats, meet people and see tired kids after a sleepover in the school library; it was a great morning.

I have wonderful schools in my electorate; we all do, and a lot members talks about the best part of their job being to hang out at the local schools. My children attended two of the schools in my electorate, and it is fun to go back and see they are doing the same events they did 15 or 20 years ago with some of the same teachers, which is lovely. It was a lovey way to lead into Mother's Day celebrations.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, like several of my colleagues I acknowledge National Volunteer Week from 19 to 25 May 2025.

Alice Springs would not function without voluntary workers; they perform a critical role in just about every aspect of life—the Beanie Festival, the Finke Desert Race, the Old Timers Fete, the West Macs Monster race that was held on the weekend, most of our sports events and the Alice Springs Show.

Yesterday it was announced that an Alice Springs woman, Christine Ponter or 'Chrispy', has been named Cricket Australia's Volunteer of the Year 2025. Chrispy is a legend, and I will talk about how magnificent she is. Selfless, kind, gentle, caring, heaps of fun, understated, humble, down to earth—those are just a few words I would use to describe her.

I first met Chrispy years ago. She has been working in the library at the Alice Springs Hospital for 27 years. I think I must have met her in the first couple of weeks she came to the hospital, because I was working there at the time. To think that she is still there, providing a seamless, effortless, pleasant, useful service to the thousands of health professionals who have come through the Alice Springs Hospital over the years needing assistance with their research and general library assistance, is amazing.

That is not why she received the award. Chrispy is a volunteer across the community. She has been involved in lots of different organisations, but cricket is her thing. I will read a little bit of what the *NT News* said about her:

> *Federal Cricket Club's vice-president and club legend Chris Ponter has officially been recognised as Cricket Australia's Volunteer of the Year.*
>
> *The Central Australian cricketer was chosen for the award through her transformative presence in women's cricket in Alice Springs, through her leadership in developing competition, boosting participation and her work behind the scenes fundraising and advocating for better facilities to make cricket more accessible for women and multicultural groups.*
>
> *A humble character, Ponter said she is still in shock that she has been named the winner of such a prestigious award.*

She was one of a group of women who started the cricket competition in Alice Springs more than 15 years ago. I remember it well. They had a magnificent group of women who participated. She said that once the local indoor cricket centre closed in Alice Springs there was no real avenue for women and young girls to play the game.

She has gone on to be a leader in cricket in Alice Springs. She also runs the Masters Games cricket competition, or she did at least. She was an ambassador forever. I think she might have even grown up in Alice Springs; she knows a lot of people and has deep and significant connections.

She was recently nominated for the NT News Woman of the Year. I thought the section would be something like 'all-round top chick', but it did not have a section called that. She was nominated for the Angels Among Us section. She did not win that; I do not know why. I cannot understand it.

Chrispy is a hero within our community. She is involved with a subtle organisation called Alice As One, just helping people behind the scenes.

To top it off, Chrispy goes to Thailand every couple of years. She hits me up for a donation. She donates things to an orphanage called Asia Hope. She just goes over there and hangs out with kids and loves them.

On her Facebook page she says, 'Lub my family and friends and fur babies, enjoy cricket and making sure everyone is happy'. We love you, Chrispy, and we are so proud of you.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak on an issue of growing concern about public allegations in relation to the misuse of public funds and mismanagement of conflicts of interest at the Darwin Waterfront Corporation (DWC). I formally announce that I will be referring this matter to the Public Accounts Committee.

Territorians continue to raise their concerns in relation to this matter with me and other members of the Labor Caucus. Since the CLP government continues to refuse calls for an independent investigation, I am compelled to act.

For a government that claims 2025 is its year of action and certainty, turning a blind eye to serious allegations and sweeping them under the rug is the opposite of action and certainty. These allegations are serious. They involve significant sums of public money, and they cannot be allowed to quietly fade into the background.

Among the claims are the alleged creation of a made-up part-time job for Mr Sam Burke, reportedly unadvertised and resulting in a $60,000 salary increase via a temporary higher duties allowance. The higher duties allowance allegedly continued for up to six years, long after the temporary role ended. There are reports of public service rules being repeatedly breached, with roles not advertised, promotions bypassing merits-based reviews and job evaluation processes ignored for the benefit of certain individuals.

There have also been claims of funds being moved between the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and the AustralAsia Railway Corporation—both taxpayer-funded entities—to support Mr Burke's salary. It has been further alleged that a memo outlines how the DWC would 'recoup' salary costs from AARC, raising concerns of potential fraud and gross conflicts of interest.

It has also been claimed that Mr Burke signed a new four-year executive contract in November 2023 promoting him from ECO1 to ECO2, with a salary of $259,824 plus benefits. The role was not advertised, it was not subject to the required Job Evaluation System review, and the contract was signed six months before his previous one even expired without clear justification.

I acknowledge that much of this allegedly occurred under the former Labor government, but that does not, and will not, deter me from demanding accountability, because this is not about party lines; it is about public trust, integrity and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are not misused behind closed doors for the benefit of a select few.

These allegations suggest abuse of public resources, nepotism, favouritism, mismanaged conflicts of interest and possible financial misconduct, and more importantly these questions demand answers. I will not accept vague assurances from the Attorney-General, a minister with a poor track record on matters of judgement as a substitute for proper scrutiny.

That is why I am referring the Darwin Waterfront Corporation to the Public Accounts Committee and have this evening written to the Member for Drysdale as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. I seek leave to table my letter and the accompanying documents that I have sent to the Member for Drysdale.

Leave granted.

Ms UIBO: I urge the government to support the referral, not for my sake, but for the sake of restoring public confidence.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I recognise and celebrate community choirs, as well as some community musical groups. I do so for some very pointed reasons. I have gotten up and recognised art for its economic value in our society a number of times. I have done it for its cultural value. Today I am getting up to talk about its social impact; it is kind of fitting on a day when we have been talking about all sorts of things in relation to social cohesion. Music is a binding and harmonising force, and it does wonders in our society and our polity.

I used the break between the last sittings and this one to get involved in some of our great community musical groups to show support and because, quite frankly, I needed a sanity check. I started off my tour of ensembles with the Darwin Chorale, which has been around for 40 years. It will celebrate its 40th anniversary soon which

is a big deal. For those of you who are looking less interested hearing about the Darwin Chorale now, you all looked super excited on Anzac Day morning when they were the ones singing the national anthem for us and volunteering to provide us a platform to be at that event.

I started off my musical tour there. I note that the foundational choir of the Darwin Chorale, Nora Lewis AM, was this week awarded an honorary doctorate at the Charles Darwin University. Nora, I am terribly sorry; I tried to get leave to come and help award your doctorate, but I was not able to get out of the parliament. It is recognition for her community service over a great many years.

I moved on from there to spend time with the Vocalective, an offshoot group from the Darwin Chorale which does a fantastic high-end super art music. The group did a concert celebrating the music of women composers. It is not the kind of thing we get every day, and it is phenomenal stuff. I want to take a moment to read a tiny snippet or two from their program:

> *In 2017 on a list of the 50 best conductors of all time, none were women. On the same list in 2023, eight of the top 50 were women. It's a similar state of affairs with composers. The top 20 most frequently performed contemporary works in 2019 were all written by men. In 2022, nine women made the list.*
>
> *In the world of pop music the situation is completely different. Women are at the forefront …*

The first song we sang out of here—and it was wonderful; we could have all rejoiced in voice in doing it—was by the British composer Ethel Smyth, who was the person who led the suffragette movement in 1910 in support of women's rights. It was wonderful to be involved with something like this and to sing the anthemic music that underpinned it.

I shout out to Shani Bryceson, Leonie Thomson, Fiona Wake, Laura Wade, Annette Anderson, Nora Lewis, Sarah Lynar, Jennifer Rivett, Alastair Burns, Mike Hore, Lee Levett-Olson, Craig McGiffen, David Ray, Greg Anderson, Callum Bowles, Brian Forester and Noah Vladcoff for letting me sing along with them in what was truly a beautiful celebration of music and a moment of great social cohesion.

I went along from there to another great set up, the Arafura Music Collective, which did phenomenally exciting music for a concert in the Anglican Cathedral, featuring Lucy Vallentine, Lily Coats and Sam Vallentine singing jazz a cappella music; a flute and guitar duet, featuring Claire Kilgariff of Kilgariff fame along with Brian Cullan; the Darwin Brass Quintet of Jessica Anderson, Sam Vallentine, Jethro Llewellyn, Kabir Khera and David Parkin; and the Early Music Mob with Bill Grose who is the principal of the NT Music School and Rosemary Antonini. We culminated by celebrating music for the kids by playing the *Bluey* theme, which was fantastic. It was enjoyed by everyone.

I then got the flu, as some of you may have noticed over the last couple of weeks, and for the first time in a decade I was unable to fulfill my musical obligations. At short notice I had to bail out of two concerts, one of which, Member for Johnston, was on Mother's Day. I let down a whole lot of mothers and the Arafura Wind Ensemble by not being able to go to cafe De la Plage. The Arafura Wind Ensemble is the original Palmerston concert band, Member for Blain, as you may recall. I note the Member for Blain and his family were at the event and asked me where I was afterwards.

My thanks to Stephen Peverly, the magnificent clarinettist and conductor of that ensemble, Natalie Chin, who runs the music program at Stuart Park Primary School for inviting me to be part of that, and especially to Rachel Wharem who covered all the songs that I bailed on at the last minute for everyone.

On the other end of the spectrum, I also then had to bail on the Seabreeze Festival, which broke my heart because it is a wonderful event, as the Member for Nightcliff has pointed out. The thing that I wanted to see me part of was the Darwin Beach Choir. Those of you who have not seen the Darwin Beach Choir …

K McNamara: Yes, I was in it.

Dr RAHMAN: I saw in the video, Member for Nightcliff; I take the interjection.

It is a choir for the musical and tone-deaf alike—what a wonderful ensemble. If any of you have not seen it before, look up Darwin Beach Choir and look online to watch the group singing *You're the Voice* or any of the things they do. It is a bunch of people who come together led by somebody marvellous called Thalia Hewitt, who I do not know and I have not met, but I would like to get involved with that ensemble, and she

brings together people to sing songs in community spaces. It is lovely, heartwarming, healing, fantastic stuff that we should encourage.

I also had to bail on the Hot and Cold Big Band, which was playing on the Legends Stage at the Seabreeze Festival. Fortunately, I was able to join the band on 30 April instead at UNESCO International Jazz Day for a Jazz emergency with the Railway Club when it was one saxophone player short to accompany its swing dancers who do great music and great community building work every week.

I wrapped up my tour of musical things on 7 May by joining the new Navy band, which is stationed in Larrakeyah and starting to form a new ensemble to create new options for our Defence force. So, there is a strategic alignment with me supporting music—chicken wings at Dinah Beach and the Defence agenda. It was fantastic fun to play music with the boys from the Navy.

Nightcliff has the Seabreeze Festival, and it is incomparable. At this time of the year with all the other festivals and events that we have been talking about—how could I compare with Finke or Barunga; the list is long—in earnest, and not to compete with the Nightcliff Seabreeze, in the month of July we will try to initiate the Fong Lim FANFARE Festival. We will have three days of music for the community which …

A member: Really?

Dr RAHMAN: Yes, we are; watch this space. I am proud to announce tonight, albeit to a small but loyal crowd, that we will be starting a small fledgling festival. I will not give it all away tonight; I will simply say this: I represent an electorate with a lot of cool places to make music that people do not know about—lots of airport hangars, industrial warehouses, microbreweries and gin distilleries, seaside venues and some great schools as well.

We will be focusing, over a three-day period, on dinner dances, a few concerts, and we will also be doing an educational component and some masterclasses for schoolchildren. I am indebted to the many people who are helping me work on this in the background, particularly those coming from further afield to contribute to Darwin's artistic scene over the Dry Season, which is the only time I can lure musicians here from interstate; it is too hot to play any other time.

It will be great fun. I will not say much more about it now. It is a fledgeling first, but I want to demonstrate that, on the smell of an oily rag and with a little bit of electorate allowance help and the community behind us, we will be able to bring life and vitality to my electorate, which is otherwise not just sheet metal fabricators but actually filled with a lot of people who also want to see signs of life and culture and activity.

I would love it if all of any of you are able to make it. I appreciate everybody will have extremely busy calendars at that time of the year, but—touch wood—it will be something for the future and for the ages.

On a serious note, all of these groups are volunteers who contribute to social cohesion. All of these groups are part of the Territory lifestyle.

I will be honest; I am a terrible fisherman. I am allowed to be in charge of sandwiches and music on the boat and never touch any of the tackle or the gear. I grew up here, and the Territory lifestyle was very much about the unbelievable artistic opportunities I had here as a kid. I want to make sure the kids in the future growing also have access to those same opportunities, particularly the ones who are working in the public school system, working with the excellent NT Music School. They require our love and support as well. It is great that we have so many fantastic independent and private schools now as well, but I want to share the love across the entire spectrum. I am pleased to say, without giving too much away, the schools in my electorate will all be joining in my fledgeling enterprise which, touch wood, will go off seamlessly, as all festivals do.

It has been a delight to share this bit of positive news. I look forward to seeing you all at some of the Fong Lim FANFARE Festival.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I am looking forward to the Fong Lim FANFARE.

My adjournment is on a few different topics and typing up some loose ends, but first, as others have done, I recognise that it is National Volunteer Week and thank every volunteer in our community without whom so many of our treasured clubs, events and programs would not exist. I feel incredibly privileged to meet and work with many of these volunteers in my role now.

I shout out to the volunteer parents on the Nightcliff Primary School Council. They are so dedicated to the school and to everyone's children, constantly trying to find ways to bring enjoyable events and important fundraisers and making improvements at the school. Thanks to Sarah, Sam, Caitlyn, Anna-Maria, Jodi and Jo.

At Seabreeze last week, which is run by many volunteers, I wanted to share some good news that was happening in my electorate. One of the stories I shared was that of the incredible hard work and success of the Rapid Creek Landcare Group. I only recently found out that almost all of the mangroves along Rapid Creek—Gurambai, as it is known in Larrakia—were bulldozed in 1974 to create a housing development that was going to be called Brinkin Lakes Estate. If you have seen the aerial photographs, it looks nothing like it looks today; it was just razed to the ground. In the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy, the plans were cancelled and the housing development did not go ahead. The entire habitat was destroyed. The mangroves started slowly naturally regenerating, but to go from nothing it needed a lot of work. The Rapid Creek Landcare Group was formed in the 1990s, and volunteers began revegetating and rehabilitating intensively. You can see the results today. It looks like nothing has changed; it is incredible.

The health of our beautiful Rapid Creek (Gurambai) is a testament to the hard work of Landcare volunteers over the decades. They still do planting and weeding all the time if anyone wants to come and join.

I also see the pins some members are wearing today for Northern Territory Emergency Services, which I previously volunteered for. I am handy with a chainsaw if the need ever arises. I thank all the NTES volunteers, who give up a significant amount of time to train and learn new skills, not only in emergency but also in the time they spend training to become first responders in times of emergency and disaster. Emergency and disaster management is something I have not spoken about yet, but it is something I am passionate about. Thank you to NTES volunteers. I love the badges.

To keep myself accountable, I put on the record that I am soon to become a volunteer phone counsellor for the Australian Breastfeeding Association, which is something I have wanted to do for a long time. It is to help women struggling at any stage of their breastfeeding journey—members in the Chamber may have also called that number. I will be a peer support counsellor, and I put this on the record to hold myself accountable and finally submit my form to apply.

I have received feedback from members of the community across the NT, not just from my electorate, about their displeasure, surprise and shock at some of the behaviour seen and things said in the Chamber, particularly the heckling and insults. People have said they could not believe that a grown man yelled across the Chamber at me, 'No-one cares about you,' during my motion on gambling. I have also had a member say to me as we have crossed paths during a division, 'You are a disgrace,' but quietly enough so that no-one could hear it.

I say this because in no other workplace is it acceptable to yell out personal jibes, insults or general hostile language. The public do see it, comment on it to me and they are not impressed.

I never mentioned it afterwards, but the awful responses from some members in the February MPI on the apologies to the stolen generations was distressing, which led to an Aboriginal member not feeling comfortable sharing their story. I was ashamed to be a part of this Chamber at that point for things that went down that day. I do not want to see that repeated and hope it will not, particularly after the eradicating racism motion we discussed today.

Of course there is a degree of argy-bargy; I get that it is normal in this setting, but I do not think there is a need for it to become personal, aggressive or insulting. As I have been getting used to this new role in parliament, after the first sittings, I decided that I would not refer to members individually, except when responding to specific members in contribution to Bills put forward or to ministers when covering certain topics.

I now try to only refer to the other side or the party when offering criticism or responding. I only point this out because it is a good strategy to try to depersonalise the hostility in this Chamber. I do not want to play a part in making this a hostile or unworkable space, which it is at the moment for some people.

Let us together—me included—operate to a higher standard. The public expects and deserves it, and so do we.

The last thing I want to address is something that I believe was said in the Chamber at some point during this sittings. I heard that perhaps there were certain constituents or people who did not feel welcome coming

to my office to speak to me because of a supposed way of thinking. I want to put it out there that if that is true those people have never come to speak to me, because I pride myself on speaking to people across the political spectrum.

I have said before in this Chamber that I was a rigger. I do not know if you know much about the industry, but there ain't that many Greens working as riggers. I have spent my entire life living with, working with, making friends with and having relationships with people from all different belief systems. I pride myself on this new role of being accessible to everyone. In fact, the last constituent meeting I held before this sittings was with a bunch of CLP voters. They came in, relatives and neighbours, and we had a productive conversation about their concerns about crime and safety. They are booked in again to come back in a couple of weeks to review some stuff we are working on.

If there is that idea, then it is totally unfounded, so send them my way. I enjoy that part of my role and value being able to have difficult conversations or come together because I have never lived in that kind of bubble; I do not think it is healthy.

Recently at the local shops someone came up to me—a stranger I did not know—and said, 'Hey, Kat, just so you know, I do not actually agree with all your politics, but I voted for you and really like what you are doing. Keep going.' That to me was, 'All right, thank you'.

I get that a lot in my electorate, and it is a level that I want to work towards—being accessible and open to people from across the political divide, because that is important; I am the member for everyone, and I wanted to put that on the record.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nightcliff, while you are standing, there was an allegation made yesterday in the parliament that you used the words 'racist' and 'budget' together.

K McNAMARA: Yes.

Madam SPEAKER: That has been checked, and the *Hansard* reports that you clearly did not say that; you said 'recent budget'.

K McNAMARA: Yes, I did not; I said 'recent budget'.

Madam SPEAKER: We will put that to bed.

K McNAMARA: Thank you. I do not know if this is the right time, but the evening before someone else in this Chamber called me racist, but that seemed to fly. I guess there was some confusion about your finding. We had this motion today, and we have all been speaking about it enormously.

Madam SPEAKER: I was not aware of that, so maybe we can talk about that.

K McNAMARA: I am not bothered by it because it is not true.

Mr YAN (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I was not planning to speak tonight, but I was upstairs listening to what took place this evening.

This parliament has descended to a new low. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition speak about family members. It is something we do not do; not even in federal politics does this happen.

There is a general unwritten rule within parliaments that partners and spouses stay out of politics. We do not talk about them. What happened here tonight was disgusting. I feel compelled to speak about it because this parliament has descended to a new low.

I could talk about the Leader of the Opposition's husband who works in a government department. He is a public servant who was investigated in that department. His work area was investigated by the ICAC over impropriety.

Did we raise that? No, we did not because we have a little more pride and scruples on this side of the House.

To go after the Chief Minister's spouse, specifically name him and speak about how much he is paid is a low.

The Chief Minister's husband has been a long-term public servant, serving both sides of government, not just the CLP but also Labor. He is a well-respected and accomplished public servant. The way that the Leader of the Opposition went after the Chief Minister's husband is disgraceful. It is like thinking that just because he is good at his job he should not have his job and should not be paid well.

That is abhorrent, and I will not tolerate it. That is why I am speaking about it tonight. It is disgusting. We do not talk about our spouses or our partners or go after each other's spouses or partners in this parliament because that is not what we do. We are above that.

The Leader of the Opposition has dragged her party to a new low in politics in the Northern Territory. She should be ashamed of herself. She should come back and apologise to this parliament and the Chief Minister.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.