Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



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Debates and Questions



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Members' Satisfaction Survey

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, every year the Department of the Legislative Assembly conducts a survey of members' satisfaction with a range of its services as one of its key performance indicators to gain insights on how to improve its services to members.

You will find a copy of the 2024 survey on your desks. When you have completed the survey, please press your attendant call button and one of our attendants will collect it.

As advised each year, we expect 25 responses. A non-response is recorded as 100% satisfaction.

VISITORS
Taminmin College and Milikapiti School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from Taminmin College accompanied by their teachers.

I also advise of the presence in the gallery of students and teachers from Milikapiti School, Melville Island, as part of their week at the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre.

On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Hon Nicholas Dondas AM

Madam SPEAKER: I draw the attention of honourable members to the passing of Hon Nicholas Dondas AM, former minister and Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and member of the House of Representatives.

On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to the family and friends of Hon Nick Dondas here today.

I remind honourable members that on completion of debate I will ask members to stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly expresses its deep condolences to the family and friends of Hon Nicholas Dondas MLA, former Member for Casuarina, Deputy Chief Minister and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

Today we gather to honour the life and legacy of Nick Dondas AM, a man whose name is synonymous with service, leadership and an unwavering commitment to the Northern Territory.

As we move this motion, let us take a moment to reflect on the extraordinary life of one of the Territory's most dedicated public servants who, through his tireless work, left an indelible mark on this place and its people. Nick's story is one of dedication and resilience.

Born in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, Nick brought with him a steadfast sense of purpose when he made the Territory his home. His early experiences forged a deep connection with community and imbued him with a profound understanding of the importance of public service. These qualities would define his political career and his life.

Nick was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in 1974, just three years after the Legislative Council. Representing the electorate of Casuarina as a member of the Country Liberal Party, he was part of the pioneering generation of politicians tasked with shaping the future of a young Northern Territory.

Over the course of two decades in this Assembly, Nick held portfolios that spanned Youth, Sport and Recreation; Community Development; Health; and Industry, reflecting the breadth of his experience and tireless work ethic.

Nick's leadership during the formative years of the Assembly coincided with one of the most transformative periods in the Territory's history, the push for self-government. As a staunch advocate for autonomy, Nick played a pivotal role in ensuring that Territorians could determine their own destiny. His vision was not simply about governance but about building a community where opportunity, progress and resilience were the cornerstones of our identity.

Nick's service as Deputy Chief Minister from 1983 to 1987 was marked by a clear focus on advancing the Territory's interests. He was instrumental in the establishment of critical institutions like the Menzies School of Health Research, a centre of excellence that continues to deliver groundbreaking research and training for the Northern Territory and beyond. This initiative, championed by Nick, exemplified his foresight and dedication to addressing the unique health challenges faced by Territorians.

As Speaker of the Assembly from 1989 to 1994 Nick upheld the integrity of the Chamber with a measured hand and a deep respect for parliamentary process. His ability to bridge divides and foster constructive dialogue set an enduring standard for those who followed.

Nick's political journey did not end at the borders of the Northern Territory. In 1996 he was elected to the House of Representatives as the federal member for the division of the Northern Territory. His time in federal parliament allowed him to advocate for the Territory on the national stage, championing its unique needs and opportunities by building on his legacy of service.

Nick's contributions extended well beyond politics. Although his political achievements are well known, his passion for sport, particularly rugby league and rugby union, was equally significant. Nick was not just a supporter but an active advocate for the growth of these sports across the Northern Territory. He believed deeply in the power of sport to unite communities, inspire young people and foster a sense of pride and identity.

Nick worked tirelessly to ensure that rugby league had the resources and support it needed to flourish, fostering pathways for young athletes to excel locally and nationally. His efforts in establishing rugby union and rugby league in the Northern Territory earned him an Australian Sports Medal in 2000.

Nick's involvement in sport was a natural extension of his commitment to youth and community development. Through sport he saw an opportunity to instil values of teamwork, discipline and resilience in young Territorians. His legacy is reflected in the thriving sports culture we have today.

Nick was more than just a politician; he was the builder of a community. He championed the establishment of a university in the Territory, recognising the transformative power of education. His advocacy laid the groundwork for institutions that now nurture generations of Territorians, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Nick's passion for health and education went hand in hand with his belief in investing in the Territory's future. Whether it was advocating for improved healthcare services or supporting initiatives to enhance educational opportunities, Nick approached every challenge with determination and a clear vision of progress. Nick's contributions did not go unrecognised. In 1995 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, an honour that reflects his immense service to government, politics and the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. This accolade was a fitting tribute to a man whose career was defined by his tireless commitment to making the Territory a better place for everyone.

Today we remember Nick for not only the positions he held, but also the values he embodied: dedication; humility; and a genuine love for the Territory and its people. His legacy lives on in the countless lives he touched, the institutions he helped build and the enduring sense of pride he inspired in being a Territorian.

As we reflect on Nick's life it is clear that his achievements are not merely political but deeply personal. Colleagues have spoken of his kindness, ability to listen and unwavering commitment to fairness and justice. Friends and family remember him as a man of principle, a loving husband and father and a steadfast supporter of those around him.

Nick's impact on the Territory can be seen everywhere from the thriving sports fields to the halls of parliament, the educational institutions he championed and the lives he touched through his advocacy and leadership. His life reminds us of the profound difference one person can make through dedication and service.

As we contribute to this motion, let us honour Nick Dondas by reaffirming our commitment to the principles that he held dear: public service; community building; and a relentless pursuit of progress for the Northern Territory.

To Nick's family, friends and colleagues we offer our sincerest and deepest condolences. We were proud to bring Nick's family the comfort of a state memorial to honour his life, legacy and contribution to the Territory.

Nick was a true Territory icon, a man of vision and action and a servant of the people. May we in this Chamber and beyond strive to uphold the standard of leadership and dedication he set for all of us.

Rest in peace, Nick. Your work is done, but your legacy will forever endure.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I support the condolence motion recognising and honouring a true Territorian, Mr Nicholas Dondas AM.

Today we remember a trailblazer, leader and friend of the Northern Territory. It is fitting that, in the week when we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first sittings of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, we are also honouring and acknowledging the contribution by Mr Dondas—more fondly referred to as Nick—a man who did so much to help shape the modern Northern Territory.

Nick was born to Greek immigrants in Perth and carried forward a deep respect for his cultural roots, which became a cornerstone of his dedication to fostering multiculturalism in the Northern Territory. After growing up in Perth, Mr Dondas first moved to Darwin to work for his uncle, Mick Paspalis. Like many Territorians, he came here for opportunity.

After going on to other adventures he eventually returned to the Territory in 1970 and was elected as a founding member of the Territory's First Legislative Assembly in 1974. For 20 years he served his constituents at Casuarina until he retired from Territory politics in 1994. Nick spent his lifetime serving the public. He played a pivotal role in developing the then fledgling Northern Territory. He was instrumental in the development of our democracy and model of self-government in the Northern Territory.

Mr Dondas served as the minister for a wide range of portfolios, including Health; Transport and Works; Youth, Sport and Recreation; Community Development; and Industry, Small Business and Tourism, which all contributed significantly to the growth and progress of the Northern Territory. Mr Dondas served as the Deputy Chief Minister from 1983 to 1986.

As the Chief Minister outlined he was instrumental in the development of the Menzies School of Health Research, an incredible legacy that lives on in the internationally significant research and knowledge on which the institution continues to lead in Aboriginal health research. It was an enduring gift to the Territory for future generations. At the time Mr Dondas said:

> *The government is committed to a University in the Northern Territory … The Menzies School of Health Research is the first part of that University, providing the Territory with a centre for research and training.*

Our wonderful sporting precinct at Marrara is another of Mr Dondas' lasting legacies. He was instrumental in the development of this much-loved and much-used Darwin and Northern Territory sporting asset. Mr Dondas was also a handy rugby player and an avid supporter, helping to found the NT rugby union committee, establishing a competition and securing a home for the sport at the Marrara complex. For his efforts, Mr Dondas won an Australian Sports Medal.

In 1996, after retiring from the Territory parliament, Mr Dondas successfully contested the federal election winning the Territory's then single seat. In his first speech in the federal parliament Mr Dondas said:

> *The aspirations of the territorians are really that we have security, growth, progress, new wealth, protection, an enhancement of our lifestyle, a good standard of living, a future for our children and a society that recognises the rights of individuals.*

It is fair to say that these are the things that Territorians still aspire to today.

Mr Dondas also spoke about our young population, emphasising the importance of formulating policies that consider the needs and aspirations of our Territory youths to ensure that there is a promising and lasting legacy for the future of the Territory.

In Mr Dondas' maiden speech to the federal parliament he spruiked proudly and celebrated the Northern Territory's rich and diverse multicultural communities. Mr Dondas said:

When moving around the Northern Territory, it is not difficult to realise that 51 per cent of the population born in the Northern Territory are non-Anglo-Saxon. Considering that 25 per cent of Northern Territorians are Aboriginal and indigenous, it certainly does give us the best mix in what we would consider to be a rich mix of cultures in the Northern Territory.

Once again, Mr Dondas demonstrated his deep understanding and appreciation of one of the most cherished aspects of the Northern Territory, which is our diversity. As a proud and active member of Darwin's Greek community Mr Dondas understood this intrinsically. Like so many members of our wonderful Greek community across the Northern Territory he was a true pioneer who dedicated so much of his life to building a strong and vibrant Northern Territory and, in particular, Darwin. The Greek Orthodox community has remembered him for his work in securing the site of the Greek Orthodox School, which is based in Rapid Creek and stands today as another of his proud legacies.

Mr Dondas truly embodied the pioneering spirit that has made the Territory what it is today. He dreamed big, believed in the possibilities and acted optimistically, positively and constructively. In doing so, he made an invaluable contribution to our wonderful Territory community.

On behalf of the Territory Labor team I extend our deepest condolences to Mr Dondas' family, friends, community, fellow colleagues, former colleagues, supporters and constituents. We acknowledge the profound loss that the Territory has suffered because of the passing of Mr Dondas. We hope that there is some comfort for Mr Dondas' family and friends in the wonderful memories that you have of him and the legacy he left your family and the Northern Territory. We hope you take comfort in the enduring high esteem in which Mr Dondas is held by so many people from differing walks of life across all the communities we represent in the Northern Territory parliament.

Vale, Mr Dondas AM.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to Hon Nick Dondas, who passed away in Darwin on 9 September 2024 at the age of 84. I was honoured to have been asked by Nick's daughters, Katrina O'Connor and Amelia Dondas, to say a few words at Nick's state memorial on 18 November. Today I have the opportunity to place those words on the record.

Katrina and Amelia spoke at his state memorial service, remembering their father's optimistic spirit, compassion and resilience. During my time getting to know Nick I learnt quickly that he was many things. Nick was a true Territory character, a dedicated public servant, a parliamentarian, a successful businessman and a proud Greek Australian.

Nick was a larrikin who loved life and brought joy to those around him, but above all else he was a loving family man who very much cherished his family. His commitment to his loved ones was evident in every aspect of his life, and it shaped his character as a leader and a friend.

Nick arrived in Darwin as a young man in the 1960s armed with little more than his entrepreneurial spirit and the willingness to have a go. He quickly made his mark on Darwin. His business acumen and community spirit led him into politics where he served as the Member for Casuarina and later as the Member for the Northern Territory.

Nick approached his parliamentary duties with the same enthusiasm he brought to everything in life. He was known for his booming voice and his ability to liven up even the dullest debate. I have been told some good stories about Nick, and I am reminded of the time Nick was giving a particularly passionate speech in parliament about crocodile management. I am told he got so carried away that he started demonstrating crocodile mating calls in the Chamber. I am not sure whether he convinced anyone in the room of his crocodile policy, but I am sure he woke up all the backbenchers.

Nick's Greek heritage was a great source of pride for him. He loved nothing more than hosting a great big Greek feast, complete with plate smashing and Zorba dancing. I have been led to believe that half of Darwin learnt how to say '*Opa*!' thanks to Nick's parties.

Beyond the jokes and the larger-than-life personality, Nick was a man who cared deeply about the Territory and its people. Whenever I sat with him Nick spoke fondly of his family, sharing stories that highlighted the deep bonds he shared with them. He believed that the strength of a community starts at home, and he worked tirelessly to create a better future for not only his children but all families in the Northern Territory.

His love for family extended beyond his immediate relatives. Nick embraced the broader community as an extension of his family. He understood that strong families build strong communities, and he dedicated his life to ensuring that families have the support and resources they need to thrive. He fought tirelessly for the interests of his constituents and played a key role in the development of our region.

Nick Dondas lived life to the fullest. While I may not have known him for long, fate had a wonderful way of bringing us together, and I am so thankful for that serendipitous encounter. From the moment we met it was clear that Nick was a force of nature. His vibrant personality and infectious laughter lit up any room, making it impossible not to feel drawn to him. Our friendship was a brief one, and it was filled with moments that left a lasting impression on my heart.

When he first told me he wanted to put a corflute on the back of his mobility scooter so that he could cruise around town showing my face to all who looked in his direction, I thought he was joking. He was deadly serious. The next thing I knew I started receiving messages from people all over town, telling me they saw my face heading down Mitchell Street, Smith Street or through Parap Village. People loved it. It had the impact Nick knew it would.

It felt as though we had known each other for years. He talked to me with great respect and as though I was a member of his family. It did not take long for me to realise how fortunate I was to have crossed paths with him. In our conversations he shared his passion for life, love for his family and unwavering commitment to serving the community. Nick inspired me with his stories and reminded me of the importance of kindness, laughter and connection. He had an incredible ability to make everyone feel special and valued.

Fate ensured that our paths crossed at just the right moment, and I will be forever thankful for the wisdom he imparted to me during our time together. Something that amazed me about him was that his memory was on point right up till the end. I am convinced that when we lost Nick, we also lost the most amazing library about the history of Darwin, its people and its politics.

Nick's spirit will continue to resonate in my life, guiding me to embrace every moment and cherish the connections we make along the way. His approach to life was often infused with humour, and he had a knack for making people feel at ease. Whether he was sharing a laugh or engaging in a serious discussion about policy, his warmth and kindness shone through. He had an uncanny ability to connect with people, making them feel valued and heard.

With his passing, Nick leaves behind his family, a legacy of service, a community made richer by his contributions, and countless friends, who will miss his laughter and zest for life.

Today, if you get the chance, please raise a glass of ouzo for Nick. May the bouzouki play in his honour, may the souvlaki always be perfectly grilled, and may his memory continue to bring a smile to our faces. Thank you, Nick, for coming into my life and reminding me of the beauty of every fleeting moment.

Opa, Nick. You will be missed but never forgotten.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I make a contribution to this condolence motion for Hon Mr Dondas, more commonly and fondly known as Nick. Although I never knew Nick personally, I knew him by reputation.

As has been said, he was a well-known member of the Darwin community and the Greek community, and a long-serving member of the Legislative Assembly. To serve in this Assembly for 20 years, from its inception in 1974 to 1994, is a testament to Nick's force and will. Nick held many portfolios and, from what I have heard, he represented every one of those portfolios with passion.

He is probably most known for his work in sport and recreation. Many people in this Chamber today and at Nick's memorial service spoke of him being the 'father of Marrara'. What a great asset that is to the people of Darwin and the Territory.

Nick served as not only a minister but also the fifth Speaker of this Legislative Assembly, from 1989 to 1994. He had a brief dabble in federal politics from 1996 to 1998 when he was elected to the House of Representatives, representing the Northern Territory. That was the level of depth and commitment Nick showed to the people of the Northern Territory.

Like many people in the Northern Territory, Nick was not from here but he chose to call this place home. He was born to a Greek migrant family in Perth in 1939 and moved to the NT in 1955 initially, as has been said, to assist his uncle Mick Paspalis at the Hotel Darwin.

Nick pursued many ventures. I have stories about a couple of them. He is most known for his ability in rugby. He played all over Australia and England. He then ended up running a premium car service in Hong Kong and managed several iconic Darwin businesses, such as Take 5 Cafe and Beef Baron.

I heard stories about Nick from people in Alice Springs. I was not aware until his memorial service of his work and passion for the food industry. I was told stories about Nick visiting Alice Springs when he was doing his ministerial work. He and another Territory icon, Crafty from the steakhouse, used to get together. I believe some interesting evenings were held at the steakhouse because Nick was fond of a wine, as well as Crafty, and he obviously liked his steak. I am told that there were many interesting nights held at the steakhouse when Nick visited Alice Springs.

Such was Nick's commitment to the Northern Territory that he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of his services to government, politics and the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

The Chief Minister highlighted his instrumental role in advancing higher education in the Northern Territory, particularly through the establishment of that all-important research centre, the Menzies School of Health Research, which provides an ongoing invaluable service to our health sector.

Nick, the 'father of Marrara', was pivotal in implementing and developing that site for now and into the future.

His commitment extended widely to rugby union. He was a founding figure of the NT rugby union committee, helping to establish a six-club competition, then securing the home for that competition at Marrara. Not only did he love the Territory and the Legislative Assembly, he also had that love of rugby union. He was a man of many talents.

Nick was deeply embedded in Darwin's Greek community. Lilliane Gomatos spoke on behalf of the Greek Orthodox community at his service last month. She remembered his integral role in founding the Rapid Creek Greek School and his unwavering presence at the Greek GleNTi Festival held on the Esplanade, where he volunteered for over three decades and up until near his death.

Nick is an iconic Territorian. The Territory will be a lesser place for not having Nick in it. I place on the record my condolences to Nick's family, his friends and colleagues.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, my contribution will not be long.

When I was growing up Nick's name was one of those politician's names you knew but you did not know why. I had the honour to meet Nick before he passed. In the last few years he came to one of the branches, addressed the room and went around and shook hands. We had a yarn.

I was incredibly impressed that this man, who had such a long and storied history in the development of the Territory and who served in this House and in Canberra, was still around and so sharp and full of stories. It is one thing to read about the development of the Territory in articles and various official documents; it is another thing to talk to a previous minister who has all these stories about how hard it was to get something done and all the gymnastics they had to go through to get things to happen.

I place on the record my condolences to the family of Nick Dondas and my appreciation that I could meet him before we lost him. I appreciate how sharp he was. I honour what the Member for Fannie Bay said earlier about losing a walking history book; he had such a wealth of knowledge.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support the condolence motion. I had the privilege of meeting the late Mr Nicholas Manuel Dondas AM during the 2024 election campaign and was deeply moved by his enduring interest in and commitment to the democratic process.

Mr Dondas was a first-generation Australian of Greek heritage. Like many Territorians, he embraced a can-do attitude, bringing that spirit to every endeavour he undertook on behalf of the Northern Territory.

Mr Dondas was a dedicated and respected member of the Country Liberal Party whose contributions to the Northern Territory will have a lasting impact.

Representing the seat of Casuarina in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from 1974 to 1994, he tirelessly advocated for the needs and aspirations of his constituents. During his tenure he held numerous senior positions, including Deputy Chief Minister and the esteemed office of Speaker.

From 1996 to 1998 he went on to serve as a Member of the Australian House of Representatives for the division of the Northern Territory, continuing his work on the national stage to advance the interests of Territorians.

Fondly known as the founding father of sport in the Northern Territory, Mr Dondas AM had a particular passion for rugby league. His dedication to promoting and expanding various sports exemplified his belief in providing opportunities for all Territorians and showcased his unwavering commitment to community development. He was awarded an Australian Sports Medal in 2000.

His legacy of service, leadership and dedication to the people of the Northern Territory will be remembered and honoured by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Mr Dondas leaves an enduring legacy in this building. For those who have not seen it, it reads:

> *A capsule containing contemporary memorabilia and documents was embedded in this floor by the Honourable Nicholas M. Dondas MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, on 21 May 1992 during construction of this parliament building.*
>
> *Not to be disturbed until 16 February 2048 being the 100th anniversary of the opening of the First Session of the Legislative Council of the Northern Territory.*

Nick spent the last few weeks of his life in Royal Darwin Hospital. He used to ask my friends who work as nurses at the hospital about how my election campaign was going. I provided updates to him through the nurses looking after him in the last few weeks. The message I was getting in return was that he was doing well, but at one point there was a deterioration in his health. I was informed by a few of my friends of the determination he showed in the last days of his life. He was indomitable; he had certain ways he wanted to see his life, and he ensured he continued his commitment to that. His family was here supporting his decision as well.

Vale, Nick Dondas AM. Although you may be gone, your contributions and unwavering dedication to bettering the Northern Territory will forever remain part of Darwin's fabric.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, today we honour the remarkable life and legacy of Nick Dondas AM, a true Territory icon whose contributions have left an indelible mark on the Northern Territory.

As the first elected Member for Casuarina, serving from 1974 to 1994, and as a founding member of this Legislative Assembly, Mr Dondas played a pivotal role in the establishment of self-governance in 1978, shaping the Territory's democratic foundations. Mr Dondas' dedication to public service was evident in his leadership across numerous portfolios, including Health, Transport and Community Development.

He championed the establishment of the Menzies School of Health Research and supported the creation of the Northern Territory's first university, leaving a legacy of educational advancement for future generations.

Known as the 'father of Marrara', he was instrumental in developing the northern suburbs sporting hub and growing rugby union in the Territory.

Beyond politics, Nick Dondas was a beloved member of Darwin's Greek community, dedicating his time to fostering cultural inclusion and tirelessly volunteering at GleNTi Festivals.

His life reflected the values of service, unity and resilience that define the Territory.

Through these initiatives, Nick Dondas significantly influenced the growth and development of Casuarina, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to benefit its residents. As we mourn his loss we are reminded of the responsibility to follow his example—building stronger communities, fostering opportunity and working tirelessly for the betterment of all Territorians. Let us honour Nick Dondas by continuing his legacy of service and dedication to the Territory's future.

On behalf of this Assembly I extend our heartfelt condolences to Mr Dondas' family, friends and loved ones. His loss is deeply felt, but his contributions will continue to inspire us all. May we honour his memory by carrying forward the vision and values he championed.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I support the condolence motion to remember Hon Nicholas Manuel Dondas, known to most of us as Nick. I pass on my deepest condolences to his family on behalf of me; my husband, Professor Len Notaras; and the community of the Port Darwin electorate.

Like my husband, Nick was a proud son of Greek immigrants, a first-generation Aussie who embraced the Territory as his home. He spent much of his life successfully fighting for the Territory. No doubt due to the fact that they shared similar backgrounds, Nick was one of the first people my husband introduced me to when I moved to the Territory in 1995. I remember him as a man of vision and passion, who had the courage of his conviction, who loved the Territory and who has left an indelible mark on the landscape.

Rest easy, Nick. Know that we are forever grateful for the role that you played in shaping our Territory.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge a great Territorian in Nicholas Dondas, who passed away on 8 September 2024. I was privileged to attend his memorial service last week at Christ Church Anglican Cathedral.

As a child who grew up in the Territory and a beneficiary of much of the work Nick did as a local member, minister, Speaker of the House, Deputy Chief Minister in the CLP government and later as a federal member, I am grateful for his tenacity and his long-term commitment during his time serving Territorians.

Nick was elected to the first Assembly as the Member for Casuarina. After what should have been the excitement of a new government forming and being able to take the lead for the Territory, three months in Cyclone Tracy decimated Darwin during Christmas 1974. Nick had purchased a block of land in Wanguri to build and put down foundations. He had his windows and other building materials onsite. They were all blown away during the cyclone, but Nick stayed and worked with the other members to rebuild Darwin.

He went on to serve for 20 years in portfolios such as Youth, Sport and Recreation, Community Development, Health, Industry and Transport. With portfolios such as these in the time that Nick served, we as Territorians should be grateful for his work and the advocacy he provided to pave the way for future generations to thrive in the Territory.

For those who have only recently made the Territory home, Nick was part of a Cabinet that helped shape our Territory to be what it is today, and my family and I are grateful for that. As a child I remember when Marrara was being built. It was special if you were chosen to represent your school to play sport there. Thank you, Nick.

I extend my sincere condolences to Nick and his family.

Madam SPEAKER: I also express my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Hon Nicholas Dondas AM.

Having served for 20 years as a part of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from the beginning is, indeed, an incredible accomplishment. His commitment, strength and perseverance were a credit to the man. He went on to become a federal member of parliament for several years after that.

I met Mr Dondas several times when he came to parliament. His was a familiar face when we had gatherings; for example, he opened the parliament. He had presence and was a true leader, and he will be sadly missed.

Motion agreed to.

Members stood for one minute's silence as a sign of respect.

Madam SPEAKER: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the motion. There is a morning tea in the Main Hall. I encourage friends, family and honourable members to enjoy that.

FINES AND PENALTIES (RECOVERY) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 9

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

On 24 October 2024 I introduced the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Amendment (Validation) Bill 2024. That Bill formed the first part of reform to amend the *Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Act 2001*. The purpose of that first Bill is to retrospectively validate enforcement orders and subsequent enforcement action made under the Act in response to issues identified in the administration of the Act.

Introducing that first Bill in my explanatory speech to the Legislative Assembly, I noted the purpose of the Act and the role of the Fines Recovery Unit established under the Act in the recovery of monies payable to the Territory through the taking of enforcement action. I also noted that the Fines Recovery Unit had temporarily ceased undertaking enforcement action until issues with the administration of the Act could be fixed.

The first Bill seeks to validate retrospective enforcement action; this second Bill seeks to streamline processes going forward so that the Fines Recovery Unit can recommence its functions and continue to enforce and recover unpaid fines and penalties.

This Bill does this by amending how enforcement orders are made, in clause 10 of the Bill which repeals sections 37 and 38 requiring an appropriate officer to apply for an enforcement order, and replaces the provisions with a new section 37 providing that the Fines Recovery Unit may make a penalty enforcement order.

New section 37(1) no longer requires an appropriate officer to apply for a penalty enforcement order or for the appropriate officer to certify criteria as met.

New section 34, as inserted by clause 8 of the Bill, is intended to operate to permit the use of a computer program to assist in the making of a penalty enforcement order under section 37. Under the previous provision an appropriate officer was formally required to certify criteria when making an application for a penalty enforcement order. Under the new provision the criteria can be automatically identified in the IT system, which triggers the making of a penalty enforcement order.

The criteria that will need to be met to allow a penalty enforcement order to be made are largely the same; that is:

(a) an infringement notice has been served on a person in relation to an alleged offence

(b) a courtesy letter has been served on the person following no payment within 28 days of the infringement notice being served

(c) the due date specified in the courtesy notice has passed or a time-to-pay arrangement has not been complied with

(d) the penalty under the infringement notice has not been paid; this includes additional costs associated with issuing the courtesy letter

(e) the person has not elected to have the matter dealt with by a court

(f) no complaint has been filed in relation to the offence by police or other enforcement agency

(g) not more than three years have passed since the offence is alleged to have been committed.

With the exception of (g), this set of criteria has not changed. It is the process of making the penalty enforcement order that has changed.

The criterion in (g) has changed to provide that a penalty enforcement order can be made up to three years from the date of the alleged offence. Currently the period is either 12 months or if the relevant period for when proceedings for prosecuting the offence must be commenced is longer than 12 months, then that longer period. This period varies depending on the offence and can be up to three years.

However, the IT system does not recognise offences allowing for proceedings to commence more than 12 months after the commission of an offence; therefore, the system does not allow a penalty enforcement order to be made outside of 12 months from when the offence occurred, even though proceedings for prosecuting the offence are still possible. It means that the Fines Recovery Unit is unable to enforce the unpaid infringement, as a penalty enforcement order cannot be made even if the Act permits it.

This amendment ensures that longer periods are recognised, and changes will also occur to the IT system so that penalty enforcement orders may be made up to three years from the date of an alleged offence.

These changes are the primary amendments of this Bill to streamline the process for making a penalty enforcement order, together with clause 8 allowing for use of a computer program to facilitate the making of enforcement orders.

This Bill also makes amendments to Part 5, Division 7 of the Act relating to the enforcement action relevant to functions of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles under the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949*. These actions are some of the enforcement sanctions where a fine or penalty remain unpaid following the making of a fine enforcement order or penalty enforcement order. These provisions of the Act allow the Fines Recovery Unit to suspend a driver's licence or vehicle registrations to encourage payment of the fine or penalty.

As I indicated in the explanatory speech for the first tranche of amendments to the Act, these sanctions are commonly used across Australia by bodies like the Fines Recovery Unit to recover unpaid fines and penalties and are necessary to uphold a robust infringement and penalty regime.

Clauses 15 to 20 make amendments to permit the Fines Recovery Unit to take enforcement action without having to ask the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to take steps to suspend a licence or vehicle registration.

In addition to these amendments, the Bill makes consequential amendments to the *Motor Vehicles Act 1949* so that the enforcement action taken by the Fines Recovery Unit is recognised and upheld.

Further consequential amendments in this Bill include:

- no longer establishing the Fines Recovery Unit as a registry of the Local Court, in clause 4
- no longer providing that the director and deputy director are registrars of the Local Court, in clause 5
- removing the need for delegates to be a justice of the peace, in clause 6
- providing a general liability protection for acts taken in good faith in undertaking enforcement action under the Act, new section 99AA in clause 24.

The Fines Recovery Unit being a registry of the Local Court is a matter remnant of the old system where fines and penalties were enforced by the Local Court. The intent of the Act was to separate the enforcement and recovery of fines and penalties from the Local Court. While in practice this occurred, at law the establishment of the Fines Recovery Unit as a registry of the Local Court retained the link with the Local Court in the administration of the Act. This amendment removes that link because it is not required.

This Bill forms the second tranche of amendments seeking to improve the enforcement processes implemented by the Fines Recovery Unit under the Act. This Bill makes amendments to the Act that will allow the Fines Recovery Unit to recommence enforcement activities and will reduce the administrative burden on the Fines Recovery Unit in undertaking enforcement actions.

It will commence immediately following the commencement of the first Bill providing for validation.

There is significant urgency around both Bills and a need to pass this legislation as soon as possible. Accordingly, I note that we will be seeking to have this second Bill debated and passed on urgency, along with the first Bill, in this sittings of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be declared to be urgent.

Motion agreed to.

Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development): Madam Speaker, I move that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Progress on the CLP Plan to Reduce Crime

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Clerk has received a ministerial report from the Chief Minister on the progress on the CLP plan to reduce crime. The report has been circulated by the Office of the Clerk, pursuant to Sessional Order 5.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, given this is the last sittings of parliament for the year 13 weeks into our new government and the breadth of legislative reform we took to the first sittings of parliament a month ago in delivering on our election commitments to Territorians with our reducing-crime package, I thought it prudent to give the community an update on the impact that these measures are having on police in supporting them on our front line by giving them better tools and powers to keep our community safe, and to specifically look at the breadth of work that is ahead of us.

Crime is by far the single-biggest issue facing the Northern Territory. It was something we heard loud and clear from Territorians, no matter where they live in this Territory, for a number of years.

The data shows that we are in a crime crisis. Under the previous Labor government—through its weakening of laws, its permissive approach to offenders and the erosion of consequences for people who do not uphold community standards—robbery, extortion and related offences went up by 210%; house break-ins went up by 107%; and domestic violence assaults went up by 82%. These are Territory-wide statistics.

Irrespective of the statistics, you only have to speak to people in your community to know that this is a major issue. People still feel unsure about whether they can go to the shops at night, where they should park their car and whether they will be the next victim of crime. Therefore, it is important that we continue to look at every opportunity to deliver better outcomes when it comes to community safety.

We have achieved a lot in just 13 weeks. We passed our reducing-crime package. That entailed amendments to the *Police Administration Act*, which gave greater enhanced flexibility to our police to undertake wanding for weapons. We put power back in the hands of police to determine when and how they wand and made it a much more simple, streamlined, quick process to organise approvals.

We also passed significant changes to the Criminal Code through Declan's law, which also had a wanding component. We have the new offence of ram raids so that police can charge someone for the standalone offence of ramraiding rather than a collection of offences. Police can charge people for post and boast—that is, posting crimes on social media in an attempt to glorify offending. We also lowered the age of criminal responsibility from 12 back to 10, as was previously the case in the Northern Territory before it was raised for a short period.

We made changes to the *Sentencing Act* in relation to assaults on workers. We increased penalties, including minimum mandatory sentencing for assaults on workers and on police, including spitting, which happens far too often to our frontline workers.

We made changes to the *Liquor Act* in relation to nuisance public drinking and drinking in public places by reintroducing the offence, so it gives police a broad range of discretionary powers to fine, charge and arrest people for public drinking in non-exempt areas.

Our changes to the *Bail Act* were a significant part of Declan's law. Although the other laws I mentioned came into force from 30 October, the *Bail Act* component of Declan's law will come into effect in January. We have spoken about the need to make sure our court systems and IT systems are ready for that and that Corrections have adequate electronic monitoring bracelets to fulfil the intent of that legislation.

We were serious about bringing that all on urgency. We did not do it lightly, but we took to the election a clear plan that those were our promises, so we had the surety of the community to make sure that reform took place last sittings, and it is now in operation.

Fast-forward a month since those laws have been in operation, with the exception of the bail component, and we continue to see dangerous severe offending throughout the Territory. There is no sugar-coating the situation the Territory is in. That immediate reform was designed to give police immediate tools, but we and the community know there is much work ahead of us to turn the tide. However, at least for the first time in as long as anyone can remember, the Territory is moving forward, and we are taking action on these issues.

We have seen horrendous offending, particularly in Alice Springs. I commend our police who stepped up Operation Ludlow in advance of when it was originally scheduled to commence, which surged police into Alice Springs and has a keen focus on making sure we get to the bottom of the crime that community is seeing, particularly as we head into the summer period.

Only last week or the week before someone from Daly Waters was kidnapped and had to drive into Katherine at gunpoint. You would see this in the movies; you would hardly think it would be happening in the Northern Territory. We have had knife crime; assaults; young people engaging in highly risky dangerous behaviour stealing vehicles; robbery; and more domestic violence. On 12 October a 61-year-old female was severely assaulted and one month later passed away in hospital from her injuries. That is a tragic outcome.

I talk about the continued escalation of offending and the severity of it because it is important to remain connected to what is happening and the true experience people are having across the Territory. That is why the work must continue. As we go into next year we will bring forward more reform in relation to community safety across a range of areas.

In the 13 weeks that we have been government we have been speaking with police and making sure we understand clearly what tools they need to keep our community safe. I thank all the police at all the stations I have had conversations with about their suggestions and ideas on how to get them back on the street faster and create efficiencies within the powers the police have across a range of areas.

We look forward to going into next year with serious reform to the Criminal Code, sentencing, the *Police Administration Act* and the *Youth Justice Act* to make sure that the legal framework of the Northern Territory is supporting better outcomes.

We have been working on supporting our legal services. NAAJA is in disarray. Legal Aid was chronically underfunded for the better part of a decade. We have provided Legal Aid with emergency funding and are working through what stable funding into the future looks like. This is a Labor legacy; it not only disempowered our police and removed consequences for offending but also allowed NAAJA to go into freefall and Legal Aid to be chronically underfunded for an extensive period.

There is a crisis in our courts. The Attorney-General is working through the gridlock in the court system. Next year there will be significant reform to make our court processes more efficient and better able to support the processes needed to make sure that victims are getting justice sooner.

We announced, in just a matter of weeks since coming to government, an entire master plan for our Corrections network. This was urgent work, and I commend Commissioner Varley for the work he did with us in making sure that we have a clear, articulated, transparent public plan on Corrections for the Northern Territory. The plan is on the website for everyone to see.

As we head into December we look forward to the transfer of adult prisoners into the Berrimah facility; the movement of prisoners around the Territory, including women and youths; and the opening of the new youth justice facility. Again, that is another Labor legacy; it was years over time and tens of thousands of dollars over budget, and yet we have a facility that in 27 minutes the offenders trashed and we are unable to use those rooms.

Labor's failures were endemic in this space, from our courts to the correctional facilities to the laws and the fact that it turned its back on our police at every opportunity for eight years. This is a mess. In failing in all those categories, Labor members turned their back on Territorians. Territorians sent them a severe message for that.

We understand clearly what we must do moving forward. We have already shown Territorians that we are willing to make the tough decisions and stand up to the noisy minority who only seek to maintain the status quo.

This not a status quo government and this will not be a status quo period in our history. Our job is to deliver change for the people who put us in this privileged role of leading the Territory forward for now and future generations. No-one and nothing will stop us in the execution of our duty in ensuring the good governance of the Northern Territory. That is the serious role we have been given. We wake up every day ready to work hard and deliver on those commitments, find new ways of doing business for the Territory and make sure we are not letting the Territory fall away, decline, degrade and disintegrate as Labor allowed the Territory to do.

There is much work ahead; it is far from perfect. However, I will talk about some of the ways in just one month our laws have given greater practical opportunities for our police to make our community safe. There have already been three significant wanding operations in the last month and probably more.

There was an operation in Katherine in which 399 people were scanned. There were 20 positive results, meaning there were weapons. Five arrests resulted from that wanding operation, which is huge; one notice to appear; and six cautions. That would not have happened had we not passed those laws on urgency, which means that the scissors, screwdrivers, knives and large machetes that police seized would have been on our streets and could have ended in any number of crimes, carnage and even deaths. That one wanding operation alone in Katherine is significant. Think about the size of that town. That 399 people were wanded is a huge proportion, and the outcome was fantastic. We will never know the carnage that wanding operation saved us from, but we know that our police are better for having it. We are proud of their work in that operation.

There was an operation in Palmerston where 40 people were scanned and a pair of scissors and knuckledusters were seized. In Casuarina 19 people were scanned and no weapons were found, which is a great result.

The message of deterrence is powerful. When people see the police wanding others it is a constant and timely reminder that if you do the wrong thing, you will be caught and face consequences. There are no excuses for carrying weapons. The more weapons our police take out of circulation, the better it is for everyone and the safer the Territory will be. We will never be able to count the number of crimes that did not eventuate because of that proactive policing supported by better laws.

Police used 17 ramraid charges in one month. To me that statistic is terrifying. It reinforces why it was important that we gave police this power. The courts now need to do their work, but the police have done theirs, supported by a government which backs them every day.

There have been five charges for post-and-boast offences; we are forging ahead and pioneering that in this country. As the federal government clamps down on the use of social media, it sends a strong message that offenders who think it is hilarious to not only commit crimes but also glorify them on social media will face the consequences of the law. We cannot have young people in particular thinking that type of behaviour is okay.

Many Territorians are concerned about nuisance public drinking. We have had 23 infringement notices issued, and two people have been charged with nuisance public drinking. There will be big operations happening over Christmas and new year, both for public drinking and traffic—we spoke at length about the tragedy of our road toll.

That is a snapshot. I intended this to be a clear update on the progress, and I wanted to give tangible examples to our community on why the law matters. It can be a dry topic at times; it can be something that most Territorians do not think affects their daily life, but something as simple as making more flexible wanding opportunities for police has contributed to less crime in the Territory, as have these other changes. We are proud of the work we did immediately, as we promised. We look forward to the detailed extensive work ahead of us next year.

Next year will be a big year for the Territory now that our machinery-of-government changes are done. We have bedded down and have a refocused public service. Major reform will take place, whether it is the Territory Coordinator legislation, significant reform in our court systems or across legislation that deals with offenders, gives our police powers and expands sentencing options—for example, to deliver our commitment to have more community service.

We have already started that work with the assaults-on-workers legislation, but there is much more to be done—including with the Department of Children and Families—to make sure that we are addressing the root causes of crime and doing the work that needs to be done ahead of family and domestic violence. It all has a role to play.

I look forward to January when the bail laws will come into effect. I will provide another update to the parliament next year when we see the impact of those bail laws. We must remember all the victims who lost their lives, and this particular law has Declan's name to remember him. There are many women and men—Territorians—who have lost their lives at the hands of people who have taken to violence, and it is totally unacceptable.

I wholeheartedly thank the Northern Territory Police Force. It had the most tumultuous time under a Labor government, but in working to encourage and assure police that they have our support and we will give them

the powers and the resources they need, I know they are feeling more confident in their ability to do their job. This was seriously coming into question under the previous Labor government; three successive police association surveys showed that the police did not feel that the Labor government supported them.

Thank you to the members of the Northern Territory Police Force who will be working through the holiday season. They will be surging into Alice Springs to support Operation Ludlow and community safety in that town that has been under siege. They will be protecting our families and leaving theirs. They will be out on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, missing special moments, and we thank them for putting up their hand to serve and protect Territorians. It is an admirable cause and decision to serve your community at that highest level. Thank you to our police; we are proud to have delivered better support to you this year, and we look forward to working with you over the year ahead to give you what you need to help us reduce crime and deliver a safer Territory for everyone.

I move that the report be noted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Gary Higgins

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Hon Gary Higgins, former Member for Daly and former minister. Welcome to the Chamber.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for that update, which is highly welcomed. This is after being in government for only 13 weeks. The legislation was introduced in October and we are already starting to see an impact, which is good.

Yesterday I put a question to the Chief Minister about how our reducing-crime laws were having an effect in a short time, and she gave a positive answer. As part of that question, I was relaying how on Monday at 2 am Domino's Pizza at Karama was broken into—smashed. The perpetrator stole three EFTPOS machines, grabbed the fire extinguishers off the wall and smashed up the internal part of the business premises.

This is a small business employing people and trying to get the economy going, yet crime is ruining it. I met the young store owner that morning. I went to my electorate office and could see the police were there taking photographs of all the damage, so I walked around and spoke to her. I asked, 'How is it going?' She said, 'Not good. This always happens, Brian. It has been happening for years. Nothing seems to stop it.' You can understand that despondency. Her father had come to lend her support. They were telling me that they have to replace the windows, the insurance costs will go up and it makes it hard for businesses to survive. They said that this Domino's Pizza business was subsidising pizza for everyone because they were not making a profit because all the profit went to fix the damage from crime.

That is typical of what is happening with a lot of businesses across the Territory. Business owners have been fed up. Their profitability is ruined; their confidence is down. Having said that, after the result of the last election there was a change in sentiment. People finally think that they now have a government that is listening to them and acting on their behalf. It is not only businesses but also residents. I am proud to be part of this government which is so committed to delivering what we went to the electorate with.

Do not be surprised that I will remind people of what we said we would do in week 1 of parliament. This was about crime. We would stop the revolving door of bail by making all serious violent offenders, with or without a weapon, start with a position of no bail. That we have done. We would make breach of bail an offence. That we have done.

We would introduce new minimum mandatory sentencing for assaulting a frontline worker, which I am passionate about. In debate on the sentencing Bill I relayed the story of my personal experience of my son, Fergus, who is a paramedic and who said, 'Dad, I would prefer to be punched than spat on'. I can tell you here and now that no frontline worker should be punched at all, let alone spat upon. This government stood up and brought in consequences for such behaviour.

We introduced ramraid legislation; using a vehicle as a weapon and posting and boasting on social media will be an aggravated offence. There are so many business owners who have suffered from ram raids, but they know that the perpetrators will now face consequences. Going back to the Domino's Pizza example, the

father said that he hoped the perpetrators would post and boast, because he knows there is now legislation in place so the offenders would face major consequences if they did.

As the Chief Minister said, we have given police powers to fine, charge and arrest for public drinking in non-exempt areas.

We also lowered the age of criminal responsibility …

Mr Young: Shame!

Mr O'GALLAGHER: … so offenders do not fall through the cracks and can be sent to meaningful intervention programs that turn around their lives.

I heard the word 'shame'. We have continually said that the intention is not to lock up 10-year-olds; it is to get to them early and help them get back on track—not be neglected like when Labor was in government. It is a shame it did this.

I will move on to other examples. I spoke about the Karama one. I have been talking to the managers of the Malak petrol station. They have been so affected by people walking in and stealing that the staff cannot go out because they are worried they will be attacked. It is getting to the stage that the company must make a decision: should it put up a small window for all operating hours so that people cannot come in and out and are just served at a secure window? The company is also thinking it may have to close the service station. That is where people in Malak go for their convenience food, milk and other stuff. It would be an impost on local residents. But we are now seeing some action. The police have been there, and they are starting to put on security.

We have under-resourced police because the Labor Party ran them to the ground. This government is 100% behind our police. We are looking to strengthen our police force, which will take time, but we are getting there. Do not forget that we have been in government for 13 weeks, and this legislation was introduced only in October. We are getting movement.

Foula and Drosso are local residents who had to build fortresses to keep crime away. When I talk to them, they welcome the fact this government has stood up for them and introduced legislation. They know it will not happen overnight, but there is a positive sentiment that we have turned the corner. We are for residents, not against them. We are listening and working hard. There is widespread community support; people see us doing something. Remember Bill from Malak? He said on the radio, 'We need a change of government because we are fed up with the inaction of the Labor government'. Bill is now much more confident that we are back on track.

We have to deliver. We have not delivered it all yet; we have only just started the journey, but our vision is in the right direction. Do we know where we are heading? Absolutely. We will push hard. It is not the status quo. This is the time to go and do it, and that is what we are doing.

I refer to the public housing forum I held in Malak recently, which the Housing minister came to. We heard horrific details of people who had been stabbed around the public housing tenancies. Do not forget that in Malak there were three deaths in the space of five weeks or so, predominantly domestic violence deaths, which is tragic. It just shows that we need to turn the corner and make sure there are consequences.

I go back to what we said in our plan:

> *We will make immediate changes to tackle crime.*

That is what we have done. It is only the start, but we are on the right track. Our plan continues:

> *Criminals will be shown consequences and while serving time taught job ready skills to stop the endless re-offending.*

We are committed to this.

I am privileged to be part of a 17-strong government that is united; has a clear vision; and will reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, Territorians are fed up with antisocial and criminal behaviour in our community. We believe that is fair enough, because enough is enough. Territory Labor is in agreement that we need to see consequences for antisocial and criminal behaviour in the Northern Territory. That is why when Labor was in government we toughened bail laws and invested in record funding for police so that they have the resources to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour.

We will never forget that the CLP promised to prevent crime in the first place. We have not seen any of these processes, policies or programs presented by the CLP since being in government. We hear no solutions from the CLP about how it will stop reoffending behaviour or ensure that Territorians who fall off the right track get back on the right track and that those who come into contact with the criminal justice system are supported to step out of it.

Consecutive Police Commissioners of the Northern Territory have all said that we cannot arrest our way out of crime. This was echoed by the Northern Territory Coroner, Elisabeth Armitage, this week when she handed down her findings into the tragic domestic violence deaths of four Territory women. We need consequences for criminal behaviour, but we need to hear the solutions from the CLP government—still crickets.

Simply building more prisons, wanding people and locking up 10 and 11-year-old children will not make our community safer in the long run. We need to focus on stopping and reducing criminal behaviour. The Northern Territory has the highest incarceration rates in the country, and evidence shows that imprisoning young children leads them to a life of further crime.

The CLP does not like evidence and listening to the experts. It does not believe in data and statistics anymore. Yesterday the Member for Port Darwin said that you can use data and statistics any way you want. The CLP will not rely on the data, evidence, statistics and expertise of people in the field, but we still call on the government to listen to all the evidence across the Territory, Australia and the world because it tells us that the earlier a child comes into contact with the criminal justice system the more prolonged their involvement will be; they are likely to reoffend and stay on the pathway to a life of crime.

When a child aged 10 or 11 years old in the Territory is sent to prison and exposed to a cell for the first time, we are collectively putting them on a path to further offending and setting them up to fail. It is likely that these children have already been failed by the adults in their lives and communities, the education system and the child protection system. It is unlikely that these children will receive a full range of wraparound therapeutic treatment to overcome the trauma of their early experiences to get them back on track, because the CLP government has merged adult and youth Corrections.

Do not forget the little change that the CLP snuck in late last night to remove from sessional orders the need for a human rights compatibility statement for Territory legislation in the 15th Legislative Assembly. This is a procedure manual for the whole Northern Territory parliament, not just the government. The procedure manual that is the sessional orders provides us with the process of the Northern Territory parliament, and the CLP without notice removed it—nothing to see here. That was more than 12 hours ago, but the CLP government has not committed to ensuring through its own Cabinet processes that it will provide a statement that shows human rights compatibility for any legislation it drafts and any processes it chooses to go through with its legislative schedule. The CLP members have said nothing. This is surely a big concern.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Orders 28 and 29: References to Other Debates and Reflection on Previous Vote.

Madam SPEAKER: Perhaps you could clarify which debates you are talking about, Member for Goyder.

Mr MACKAY: I am referring to the motion relating to sessional orders yesterday evening.

Madam SPEAKER: I will allow a bit of latitude, as long as you promptly conclude those comments in relation to the sessional orders and move on. The Member for Goyder is correct; you are not meant to reflect on debates that have already concluded. Thrashing them out unnecessarily is not a good use of parliamentary time, so if you could, move on to new points you wish to make.

Ms UIBO: That was a good way for the Member for Goyder to waste two minutes of my speaking time.

The sessional order has been removed, and no human rights compatibility statement is required by the 15th Legislative Assembly—not just for the government but the whole parliament. That is a huge concern.

The CLP …

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you need to move on.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. This is a ministerial report on crime; it has nothing to do with the sessional orders that were debated last night.

Ms Uibo: You talked about all your legislation that you are bringing in, so it is relevant.

Mr Young: It is relevant.

Madam SPEAKER: We will not debate this across the Chamber. I take the point that the Member for Goyder has made about your reference to a previous debate. Please do not go there. You need to keep this relevant to the ministerial statement that is being debated.

Ms UIBO: The CLP has a difficult time with accepting scientific evidence; however, medical and psychological experts are clear that the neurological development of a brain at the age a person is considered a child cannot be fully appreciated when it comes to the nature of their actions. They need care and support, not punishment, to ensure that they stay on the right track. Every time a child comes into contact with the criminal justice system makes it more likely that they will come into contact with that system time and again. Almost three-quarters of the people in Northern Territory prisons have been there before. How can it possibly make our community safer when we put 10 and 11-year-old children on that pathway?

We accept and endorse that Territorians have the right to be safe, and we will advocate for that; we hear that loud and clear from our community. Safety is a concern across the Territory for not only our Darwin and urban members but our mob in the bush as well. Lowering the age of criminal responsibility is not the answer to this. The evidence tells us that. You rubbish Labor and the things we did for the last eight years, but legal experts tell us it is not the way to go. We want children and young people to be held accountable for bad behaviour, but what has the CLP laid out for our kids who get into trouble to support them to be on a better pathway? Those opposite have nothing to say. They are not making a contribution to make our community safer; they are ignoring it and hanging their heads in shame.

This talks to the true nature of the CLP. The CLP members are not looking at supporting the Territory in the long run; they just want to make sure that in the next few months and years they can tick the boxes of the things they said that they would do. They are not looking to the future for the betterment of the Territory in the long term, as that requires hard work.

There needs to be early identification of the children who require and need intensive management, alongside the support of their families or carers—not all kids have the nuclear family that some people in this Chamber may be privy to. We need to ensure that there is investment in early intervention, prevention and diversion programs. The CLP clearly lacks the will to deliver and implement programs and does not want to listen to experts' evidence. By ignoring the research and evidence, the CLP is choosing to increase the cycle of youth crime. It is creating career criminals rather than ensuring that children and young people who fall off the right track not only face consequences but also have the tools they need to change their behaviour.

There is a range of programs, family supports and family engagement approaches aimed at teaching children about consequences and putting measures in place to change their behaviour. We would love to see the CLP invest in this area, and we will support it when it does that. There has been nothing since the CLP came to government to show that it wants to invest and build capacity in this area.

Our former Labor government invested $5m in the new On The Right Track program to deliver intensive family support services, keeping children engaged in school and connecting families with mental health, alcohol and other drug programs and parenting programs. We are hearing worrying reports that the CLP has scrapped funding to this and other justice programs. The Member for Karama said that the CLP does not want to lock up 10 and 11-year-old kids, yet the government, quietly in the background, is actively removing the alternatives that will make a difference in the long run. I would love to hear more about that. Please correct me; I will be happy to say that I am wrong.

I will again go through the list of organisations that have stood up and loudly told the CLP government that they do not support children being put in prison: Victims of Crime Northern Territory; Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT); Legal Aid NT; Danila Dilba; Congress Aboriginal health service; Tangentyere Council; Save the Children; NTCOSS; and Jesuit Social Services. That is just a few; the list goes on.

The real solution is to prevent crime before it happens through programs that divert young people from bad behaviour and offer them better alternatives. What we also need from the CLP government is long-term solutions that will turn around people's lives and get them on a better path. That means implementing enforced consequences for offenders that change their behaviour rather than further criminalising it with increasingly punitive headline-grabbing laws without corresponding measures that stop people turning to crime or stop them from reoffending to make sure that our communities are safer.

Our former Labor government delivered record investment in programs in prisons and the community to help break the cycle of reoffending. The Alternative to Custody Life Skills Camp in Alice Springs has been highly successful in turning around the lives of women caught up in the justice system through intensive support and tailored rehabilitation. The data and statistics—maybe the CLP does not care—speak for themselves, so please read them. Four out of five women going through this program in Central Australia do not reoffend.

You will not hear the CLP talk about this because it is not interested in those real solutions; it has a different narrative, rather than looking at both sides. The alternative-to-custody facilities in Alice Springs and on Groote Eylandt provide culturally appropriate community-led solutions that break the cycle of crime. These are the things that will make our community safer in the long run. The CLP has not committed to expanding and supporting these programs whilst it has been in government.

The former Labor government entered into a new partnership with Charles Darwin University to deliver education and training programs in prisons so that offenders can leave prison job-ready, which will help to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. We also expanded men's behaviour change programs, including establishing a new program for the Big Rivers region.

We invested $45m in delivering the Territory's first Aboriginal Justice Agreement. I remind those opposite that the Chief Minister and the Member for Barkly are signatories to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The Member for Barkly was the shadow Attorney-General, but obviously his four years of hard work paid him no dividends as the Member for Brennan won the lucky lotto to become the Attorney-General. For some reason the Member for Barkly was kept out of the important role of being the first law officer, but I would love the Member for Brennan to become a signatory to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

The Member for Namatjira, the Treasurer, is a signatory to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The social and economic impact of justice reinvestment is a story that the Treasurer can definitely drive in his new role. I hope he does so and does not just sit quietly because they did the deal some time ago to keep the Chief Minister in the leadership role when they were in opposition. I hope that the Treasurer takes seriously his responsibility to look at justice reinvestment because that early intervention and investment will make the long-term difference to community safety.

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement included investment in local solutions such as law and justice groups and Community Courts to assist communities to reduce reoffending and address local justice issues. Communities want to be part of the solution in addressing crime and antisocial behaviour, whether it is in our urban, regional, bush or remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Some people in remote and regional communities are desperate for CLP government members to visit, sit down and listen to learn from them about the programs and actions they want to see drive a difference for safer communities in their parts of the Territory. Please make an opportunity in your busy schedules in Darwin to come to remote communities to listen to those elders. Make sure you learn from them and act on what they are asking you, as the government …

Mr Edgington: The three Ls.

Ms UIBO: Yes, the three Ls; that is right, Member for Barkly. I respect that—look, listen and learn.

Make sure you have a full perspective on the whole of the Territory. Listen to remote Territorians about the locally led solutions they have suggested that they are driving and have been working on for many years, continuing that good work. Please do that, CLP government.

The CLP promised that it will address the root causes of crime, but at this stage its promise is without any substance. We strongly encourage the CLP government to continue to invest in those locally led community solutions that have been proven already across the Territory to make communities safer because there is local leadership and law and justice groups leading the way. Otherwise, whoever is in this Chamber in 10, 15 or 20 years' time will have the same conversations.

Long-term solutions require early investment in education, housing, health, training and jobs. These are the key pillars that will lift people in the Northern Territory out of poverty and therefore reduce crime.

Our former Labor government secured record funding in partnership with the Commonwealth for education and remote housing. I urge the CLP government to continue to honour in full these important commitments in the Territory.

We know there are shocking rates of domestic and family violence across the Territory. This, by far, is some of the most shocking crime experienced across the community. If we could only see the CLP government invest in the DV sector in the same way it has already done with the home ownership scheme, this will put the Territory on a better track to have safer communities.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, it seems that the Opposition Leader is still living in la-la land. It is a shame that we all cannot be living in la-la land and are stuck here in reality, with crime that still plagues people throughout the Northern Territory as a result of eight years of failed government.

As I was listening I took note of the Deputy Opposition Leader jumping in on the Member for Karama. I wonder whether that member would also defend the youth criminals who threw a rock at a bus on Victoria Drive last Tuesday night. There were about 20 people on that bus as the rock went through. Feel free to interject. Deputy Opposition Leader, would you defend that?

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I believe the member needs to put his commentary through the Chair.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes. Member for Drysdale, could you speak through me?

Mr HOWE: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether the Deputy Opposition Leader would defend the youth criminals who threw a rock through a loaded bus in Gray last Tuesday night. Does he believe they should not be charged? I await an interjection.

Members interjecting.

Mr HOWE: I am still waiting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please.

Mr HOWE: The silence is deafening. It seems he is unsure how to answer that question. We will move on.

The hypocrisy that comes from the Leader of the Opposition is she talks about her desire to reduce crime and says that everyone has a right to feel safe—they do, so thank you for supporting the CLP's position—and she spoke of human rights as well, but what about the human rights of the thousands of Northern Territorians who feel unsafe living in the Territory? She listed organisations. I do not care for these organisations; I am here to represent the people of Drysdale. That is who I care about representing. They have given me a clear mandate on how they wish to be represented in this Chamber. They want safety.

I enjoyed hearing the Leader of the Opposition talk about all the sweeping reforms Labor made to reduce youth crime, which is interesting considering the federal Member for Solomon, also a Labor member, recently said on radio that the Labor NT government failed to implement the programs and strategies necessary when raising the age.

There were failures, and we are left to clean it up. We will clean it up, but not for the organisations or all the loud voices who seem to know how to fix it and have been pursuing that for years. All you need to do is come to Drysdale and see that the fruit of that tree is rotten. I am proud to say that we have just started in our reforms. We are warming up when it comes to crime in the Northern Territory.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, strap in because it will get a lot harder for you over the next four years. I look forward to you defending more criminals as we clean up the Northern Territory.

So far the CLP has separated Housing from Territory Families. This will go a long way to helping enforce compliance with tenancies throughout the electorate. This will help Territory Families, which can focus on the protection of families and children, and Territory Housing can stop the coddling culture that has existed and move to enforcing tenancies.

I thank the minister for Housing for visiting Drysdale to see firsthand the mess that Labor left the electorate in, including some of the high-density housing, which is a root cause of crime, especially coming out of my community of Gray.

We are supporting police, which is a nice change for them. For the first time in eight years they have a government that supports them. We support frontline members. We are now information sharing. In the time we have been in government, I have had hundreds of reports from constituents that they are victims of crime. My office feeds that information to Palmerston police, which is strengthening law enforcement in the area.

I have a hotspot designation in my electorate. This has seen an increased police presence, with public housing safety officers, youth workers from Children and Families and security operating continuously. We will continue that operation.

We have a Corrections plan that will help free up the watch houses, which means police can start arresting people under our new laws like those that deal with nuisance public drinking, which the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition oppose. I find it crazy that they would oppose public drinking laws and let people drink in a park, increasing the rubbish that builds up.

Speaking of the rubbish, I thank the Corrections minister for we will soon have prisoners cleaning up the streets of Drysdale after the illegal drinking and littering that occurs. This will be welcomed. We have increased CCTV operations throughout the area. I have met the Mayor of Palmerston Council and discussed problem laneways. She is happy to hear that we will get resources through Corrections to help with the rubbish.

We are only just getting started. The people of the Northern Territory and Drysdale have seen the tip of the iceberg in the reforms that are coming their way. This is a new Northern Territory. Labor pushed its narrative for many years, but the line in the sand has been drawn and the tide has turned. This truly is a new era of politics in the Northern Territory. I look forward to coming back as a part of this new CLP government and pushing further reforms through this parliament.

I look forward to assisting the Chief Minister in her role as Minister for Police. Together we have grand and large plans for our police force. In both of us, police have two people who will have their back the entire way.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister has outlined to us the rapid action the CLP has taken on our crime crisis. Let us talk about our crime crisis.

In 2023 more than half the deaths by homicide and two in three assaults were domestic violence related. More than 65% of people in our prisons are in there for DV-related issues. More than 65% of our police time is spent on DV-related issues. More than 95% of the young people in detention are affected by DV.

Where is the action on this? We hear that this is a government of action. This government has spent no money on domestic, family and sexual violence since the election. There is money for new houses, swimming lessons and locking up people, but there is no money for what we know will work to stop the deaths and harm to women and children in our community.

It is impossible to understand how the minister can say that she needs time to act on this. It is manifestly untrue that there is no evaluation of the work that has been done and no evaluation framework in place for the work in the future. We know there is a plan, developed over years by experts, frontline workers and police. I cannot understand how this government says that it is taking action on crime when it is doing nothing to address the real crime crisis in the Northern Territory—the crisis which costs us the most, takes up the most police time and prison space, takes the most lives and hurts the most people.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to support this report by the Chief Minister that provides an update on the reducing-crime progress in the Northern Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the things that her previous government did for Territorians. It was astonishing. I will take you back in time. We had awful, horrendous situations during the last Legislative Assembly. In no particular order, one was the stabbing death of Declan Laverty.

Thousands of people came to protest on the steps of Parliament House. There were people who had never attended a protest in their life; they were not the usual activists who fly around the country to protest about anything and everything. They came because of the way the Labor government treated everyday Territorians

who want to live their life doing the right thing. They were told that crime is just a spike, perception and gossip and that the Labor government was doing everything it could to reduce crime in the Territory.

However, every time we came into parliament, the former government did not address crime. When Labor brought forward legislation to change the *Bail Act* it was prescriptive about the types of weapons to be included for a serious offence. The legislation did not include criminals' everyday choice of weapons used to attack people, such as broken bottles, star pickets and even a vehicle, which can kill people. The legislation had a long list of unusual items. I do not know whether any of us would have seen them in real life such as cat-o'-nine-tails, which is something out of the movies. Labor's legislation never hit the mark or shifted the dial.

Over eight years of Labor government crime went from bad to worse. It was at record levels; we were living in a crime crisis. It did not matter where people were in the Northern Territory, crime was what they spoke about. That is why we took to the election our plan to reduce crime as the number one priority followed by rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

Territorians overwhelmingly voted for the CLP, and we have 17 members sitting here because we accepted the fact that the crime rates were out of control. Territory-wide over the last eight years house break-ins increased by 87% and alcohol-fuelled harm and assaults increased by 38%. The former Labor government continued to tell Territorians that it was just gossip and perception. It did not listen to Territorians or take real action. That is exactly why we are here now.

It is also why we are proud to report on our progress since coming into government. It has been a short three months—we are not even at 100 days yet—and we deliberately pushed through, because Territorians expected it, a raft of new legislation on reducing crime.

This included amendments to the *Police Administration Act* so that police can do wanding more simply. This means that police can go into schools, on buses and wherever they need to go to detect weapons that people are carrying and which should not be carried. We are not talking about people with pocketknives or anything like that who are in the rural area hunting or fishing; we are talking about the youths and adults who are carrying big weapons.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS
Electorate Officers

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

On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES

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

- recognises that the invasive species gamba grass, through increased fire severity, threatens wildlife, infrastructure and lives in Litchfield National Park

- recognises the urgency of the problem and that without an adequately funded and planned response gamba will continue to spread in Litchfield National Park, threatening the viability of the park as a tourist destination

- urges the government to implement the fully costed recommendations from the CDU research paper, 'The cost of not acting: Delaying invasive grass management increases costs and threatens assets in a national park, northern Australia', Rossiter-Rachor et al 2023, which include:

    - expanding the eradication zone in the park to encompass the protection of 86% of visitor sites

- implementing a five-year eradication program, according to the investment recommendations in the report, followed by yearly ongoing maintenance

- installing a full-time gamba coordinator to plan and carry out the eradication program.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall move that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly:

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

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

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

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

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall present a motion calling on the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party government to:

- work in partnership with the Commonwealth Government to undertake an independent and comprehensive review of the Northern Territory *Water Act 1992* and, where required, implement legislative reforms based on scientific evidence

- commit to the continued implementation of priority actions identified in the Territory Water Plan, recognising that it is the Northern Territory's first whole-of-government strategic plan for water security and the result of comprehensive community and industry consultation

- honour the previous government's commitment and introduce the new Safe Drinking Water Act which was being developed by NT Health to be introduced to the Legislative Assembly by the end of 2024

- introduce a moratorium on all new water licences and allocations in the Northern Territory until an independent review is carried out.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill entitled the Liquor Legislation Amendment (Repeal of Minimum Pricing) Bill 2024, Serial 10.

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

1. Notes:

   (a) on 16 October 2024 the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Corrections moved the Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2024 be read for a second time, stating one purpose of the Bill was ensuring 10 and 11-year-old children who commit offences have appropriate rehabilitation that will provide them an opportunity to turn their young lives around

   (b) the vital responsibility that this government owes to all children and young people in the Territory, including a responsibility under section 4(b) of the *Youth Justice Act 2005* to ensure that young people who commit offences are dealt with in a way that acknowledges their needs and will provide them with the opportunity to develop in socially responsible ways

   (c) the vital responsibility that this government owes to all Territorian children and young people, police, Corrections officers, judges and justices, including a responsibility under sections 4(c) and 81(6) of the *Youth Justice Act 2005* to provide them with appropriate alternatives to detention and imprisonment.

2. Establishes a select committee on pathways for children and young people to inquire into and report on:

   (a) the alternatives to detention and imprisonment available to police, Corrections officers, judges and justices when dealing with 10 and 11-year-old offenders

   (b) additional pathways needed to help police, Corrections officers, judges and justices to prevent reoffending and provide children with opportunities to make safer, more responsible choices with the support of meaningful and engaging programs.

3. The committee will comprise three government, one opposition and two crossbench members to be nominated by the relevant Whip or crossbench member to the Speaker in writing.

4. The committee is to report by the first sitting day six months after the passing of this motion.

PETITIONS

Petition No 3 – Protect Litchfield National Park from the Spread of Gamba Grass

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 715 petitioners praying for immediate and effective action to be taken to protect Litchfield National Park from the spread of gamba grass. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

Ask the new Northern Territory Government to take immediate and effective action to protect the NT's beautiful Litchfield National Park from looming ecosystem collapse, safety risks to visitors and damage to Park infrastructure—due to the spread of invasive, highly-flammable gamba grass.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

Petition No 4 – Withdrawal of the Proposal to Establish the Territory Coordinator

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 706 petitioners praying for the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to establish the Territory Coordinator under the terms proposed. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

We the undersigned respectfully showeth:

We are opposed to the proposed functions and powers to be given to the Territory Coordinator and the Chief Minister, as outlined in the Territory Coordinator *consultation paper. In particular we are deeply concerned about the following proposed measures:*

- *Empowering the Territory Coordinator to direct decision-makers to make decisions within certain timeframes*
- *Empowering the Territory Coordinator and Chief Minister to 'step in' and undertake an assessment themselves instead of the NTEPA or other relevant decision-makers*
- *Empowering the Territory Coordinator and Chief Minister to exempt projects from approvals*
- *The introduction of a 'primary principle' for decision making that elevates the objective of driving economic prosperity above all other considerations.*

These proposals threaten to undermine oversight and accountability for projects in the Northern Territory.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that:

The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory recommends the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to establish the Territory Coordinator under the terms proposed.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION TIME

Legislation – Human Rights Compatibility Statement

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for DISABILITY

Last night you did not vote with the CLP government to remove the need for new Territory laws to be compatible with basic human rights, including protecting children, people with a disability and women from discrimination; protecting people from race-based discrimination; protecting the rights of people to practise their culture; and protecting people against torture. Do you support your government scrapping the need to comply and be compatible with human rights to be considered in new Territory laws?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the CLP government has three key areas of focus: reducing crime; rebuilding the economy; and restoring our lifestyle. The Department of People, Sport and Culture, which I oversee, looks at how we give equal opportunity and better opportunities for people. It does not matter where they come from, whether they are from a multicultural community or any other community in the Northern Territory, we need an option for everyone to have an adequate service.

Yesterday the CLP government was correcting some of the adjustments that happened recently. It was mainly around what the previous Territory Labor government changed over four years ago. It is almost the exact same action that we have done. It will not have an impact on anyone, and we will comply with all current legislation regarding human rights. I do not think it will impact any of the portfolios.

When it comes to the portfolios that the Opposition Leader mentioned, such as Disability and Equality, we are looking at how we can create better access to opportunities for everyone to have a better lifestyle wherever they live in the Territory.

Legislation – Human Rights Compatibility Statement – Supplementary Question

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for DISABILITY

Will your government commit to the compatibility of human rights statement being included in the CLP Cabinet process?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not think I need to respond to this question because the Opposition Leader is asking about a Cabinet process. I will not talk about that here.

Ms Uibo: Will you take that on notice?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has completed his answer. Are there any other questions?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Enough commentary!

Crime – Alice Springs

Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER

Our CLP team acknowledges that crime remains the number one issue facing Territorians. In my electorate of Drysdale, although I have heard some good news from local businesses—the staff at Good Times Bar & Grill reported a reduction in antisocial behaviour since our new laws kicked in—most residents still go to bed at night fearing their home may be broken into, their car stolen or worse. Many residents in Alice Springs feel the same way. Can you update the Assembly on how our CLP government is taking action to reduce crime in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Drysdale who is a passionate advocate for his community; he is constantly on the ground recognising that crime is destroying the lives of far too many people. It is totally unacceptable.

I gave an update today on the impact our reducing-crime package is having in supporting our police, but there is no question that there is a long way to go. I want the Member for Drysdale's community to know that the reducing-crime package was just the start. Next year presents an enormous opportunity for reform across a range of areas to make sure that we are doing everything we can to reduce crime.

Alice Springs is heading into summer, and it is a difficult time for that community, which is constantly under siege and bearing the brunt of Labor's failures over eight years to support our police and have laws to meet community expectations, to deliver consequences and to deal with the root causes of crime. This is why there is extreme, volatile and dangerous lethal behaviour such as stealing cars and weapon offences—and the list goes on.

Our police are doing an incredible job. I am proud to give an update on Operation Ludlow which has started in Alice Springs. This is ahead of time, recognising that the community is sick and tired of the high and ever-escalating levels of crime. It started on 14 November and will run through to February next year.

Operation Ludlow will support the people of Alice Springs, who are sick and tired of being victims of crime, with surge policing. Two sergeants and 14 constables will be there over the entire period of the operation. This will allow more high-visibility policing—that important community policing—and will target antisocial behaviour and offences against property and person. There will be a greater opportunity to have police at the point-of-sale intervention, which we know works in that community.

The Department of Children and Families will have six outreach officers overnight until 6 am. The Education department will have its new attendance officers engaging with families over the holidays to get kids to school in the new year. Public housing officers will be stepped up and work through until 1 am every day.

In the first two weeks of Operation Ludlow there have been 32 arrests; two notices to appear; eight warrant executions; 31 protective custody episodes; three breaches of banned drinker orders; nine new BDOs; three banning notices; 76 licensed premises inspected; and 24 infringement notices. A 72-hour police wanding operation has been implemented.

Schools – Swimming Lessons

Ms UIBO to TREASURER referred to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

You committed $3m for the free swimming lessons for students initiative. Now that you are in government, will you confirm for Territorians what the program will cost? Will you give schools a guarantee that it will not be funded out of their global school budgets, which are intended to fund teachers and classroom resources?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are proud to roll out free swimming lessons to all students in primary schools across the Territory and provide the ever-present safety net for young kids around water. Labor failed to do this, and it was a commitment we made leading into the election this year.

The money for this program comes from within the Education department. The Education department has been proactive in looking at how its budget works to find the money to provide the swimming lessons.

As this is not my portfolio, I will hand over to the Minister for Education and Training to give you more detail on how this program will be rolled out.

Mr Paech: She does not know.

Mrs HERSEY: Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for the question and even the Member for Gwoja, who seemingly wants to hear the answer to this question as well.

We had an election commitment of free swimming lessons for all Year 1 to 6 students across the Territory. It is a $3m commitment which, as the Treasurer said, will come from within budget.

Last week the Chief Minister was in Palmerston and I was in Katherine in my electorate with Royal Life Saving and schools delivering the programs. This is a lifesaving program for all students to access in schools. This has not been done for many years. As Territorians we love the outdoor lifestyle, whether it is in the backyard pool or at a lake or dam, so it is important for students to learn to swim. The Education department is happy to deliver this. All schools will be working with the Education department to get the best program for their schools. I note that a couple of weeks ago …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. In your response you said it would come out of the budget. Are you talking about school budgets or the department's budget?

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. The question has been asked, and the minister is answering.

Mrs HERSEY: The money for the school swimming is not coming from any of the schools; it is from within the department. We have made that clear. I have spoken about this numerous times in parliament.

The Member for Barkly has had many of his remote communities come in …

Ms Uibo: That is the first time you have answered, so thank you.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs HERSEY: I pick up on the interjection from the Opposition Leader saying that it is the first time. She has cloth ears as I have said many times that she needs to read the plan and see what is in there.

Economy – 2024–25 Mid-Year Report

Mrs CARLSON to TREASURER

This morning you released the 2024–25 Mid-Year Report on the Territory's economic and fiscal outlook. The report confirmed that Labor's reckless spending has left our Territory in a devastating position, with our net debt blowing out to more than $11bn. I am concerned about what this report means for the good people of Wanguri. How will it affect them?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the report was deemed tabled this morning and is available through the Department of Treasury and Finance's website for all Territorians to see.

The budget that we inherited from the previous Labor government paints a stark picture of what happens when financial management is driven by political expediency rather than responsibility. This report is a final nail in the coffin of Labor's mismanagement of the Territory's finances. It is also the final verdict on Lawler's legacy. This is a legacy of debt, deficits and mismanagement. The outcomes speak for themselves, and the people of the Territory deserve to know the truth.

Labor's 2024–25 budget was presented with great fanfare, but as the midyear figures roll in it is clear that it was all a facade. Labor left us with a financial legacy of poor planning, misplaced priorities and a failure to set the Territory on a stable path forward.

What do the numbers show? Since Labor delivered its 2024–25 budget the fiscal balance has ballooned by $263m to reach a staggering $2bn for the first time in history. Under Labor net debt was projected to balloon to $12.5bn by 2027–28. The net debt to revenue ratio, a measure of the ability of the Territory to pay its debts, now blows out to 133% by 2027–28.

These alarming projections were underscored during the Under Treasurer's presentation on 28 October this year, which revealed that the Territory under Labor's watch would in 2028–29 breach the debt cap set by Labor. Labor knew it would breach the debt cap in the 2028–29 fiscal year but was sneaky and kept it just outside the forward estimates so that it would not have to be reported to parliament, as the law requires. Even worse, the Leader of the Opposition sat in the budget subcommittee of Cabinet when the 2024–25 budget was developed, and presumably was okay with hiding the debt cap breach from Territorians. Quite frankly, this is a scandal. Labor misled Territorians by over-promising and underdelivering, leaving our economy vulnerable, and knowing it was blowing the credit card limit at the same time.

Territorians gave us a clear message, and part of that is to fix the economy. We are moving along and doing that hard lifting and hard work.

Schools – Swimming Lessons

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Can you advise how you intend to keep the cost of your swimming lessons for students initiative to $3m, given it will involve leasing pools at hotels and caravan parks? We heard you state the importance of students being in the classroom. How much time will teachers and students spend out of the classroom to attend these swimming lessons, particularly remote students who will need to travel long distances to get to the nearest swimming pool?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it sounds like the member does not want students in his electorate to have access to free swimming lessons. Shame on him; we have the highest drowning rates in the nation.

We have an election commitment …

Mr Paech: That is not what he said.

Ms Uibo: Answer the question, minister.

Mrs HERSEY: I am answering the question, Opposition Leader.

Ms Uibo: No, you are not.

Mrs HERSEY: It is important that all students in the Territory have access to swimming lessons.

Ms Uibo: Exactly! How much will it cost?

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20: No Interruption of Debate. I want to hear the answer to this question.

Madam SPEAKER: I agree. The minister will be heard in silence.

Mrs HERSEY: Yesterday we spoke about the importance of swimming lessons in all schools, with the Member for Blain's near-drowning experience in Litchfield National Park. These are the reasons that we took to the election a commitment of free swimming lessons in all schools. All schools can liaise with the department to work out when and how students will attend the lessons.

I was about to say in answer to the previous question on this, before I was interrupted by the Opposition Leader, that recently many remote community schools came to the Barkly region, had their swimming lessons over a couple of days and finalised that with a swimming carnival. That is a great outcome for those students.

There are plenty of those …

Ms Uibo: That is their normal process; that is not your commitment. It has nothing to do with you winning government.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mrs HERSEY: Opposition Leader, if you want to ask something else or want me to stop answering the question, I am more than happy to …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. School carnivals have nothing to do with swimming lessons. The question was about how remote students can attend swimming lessons under the initiative.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: I think she is answering the question. We will not have commentary across the Chamber. Allow the minister to finish; she has more than a minute to go.

Mrs HERSEY: It is interesting that while swimming lessons in remote communities and all schools boost attendance, the attendance rates in the four electorates of the opposition members are appalling. That is a shame on you as a previous government …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I am not sure how rubbishing our electorates, schools and teachers is helping answer the question.

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down. Allow the minister to complete the answer to her question …

Mr Paech: The performance of your kids is disgraceful, but we do not criticise you.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are talking over me; you are on a warning.

Mrs HERSEY: As I was saying, the school swimming program will be rolled out in all schools. For example, in Mataranka in the Member for Arnhem's electorate, they will be using the Manor pool. In Katherine we are using the Discovery Parks pool …

Ms Uibo: What about Numbulwar? What about Bulman?

Mrs HERSEY: This is a great thing happening in communities. It boosts attendance. As I said, the attendance rates are so low in remote areas …

Ms Uibo: What about Minyerri and Jilkminggan?

Mrs HERSEY: If the Opposition Leader continues to interject I can sit down and not answer the question …

Ms Uibo: You are not answering it, so just sit down.

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

Mrs HERSEY: It is extremely important for all school students to have access to swimming lessons. That is the bottom line. Parents will not be out of pocket. We know we have a cost-of-living crisis. This is a good news story for those parents in those remote communities.

If you do not think that is important in your electorates, I am sure those schools do not have to go. For the importance of education and getting those kids to school and decreasing the …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister, please take your seat.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Enough commentary across the Chamber.

Truancy Officers

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Under the previous Labor government school attendance rates dropped to shocking lows. Can you update the Assembly on how the CLP government has delivered on our election commitment to bring back truancy officers to help get our children to school?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Casuarina is passionate about education and increasing attendance rates. This is another election commitment we can tick off. It might not be something that the opposition wants to hear about, but it is about acknowledging the shocking rates of school attendance across the Territory. We went to the election with a commitment of boosting literacy and numeracy and bringing back truancy officers. We are delivering that commitment.

The Opposition Leader was one of three Education ministers in the previous government who oversaw shocking rates of attendance. In fact, attendance rates have dropped across the Territory. From 2016 to 2023 in the Barkly they went from 62% to 46%. In the Big Rivers region they went from 71% to 58%. In the Central region they were 66%. The Opposition Leader might like to listen to this one: 54% in the Arnhem electorate.

The swimming program can boost attendance. It gets kids excited about getting to school, and that is a great thing …

Ms Uibo: How many kilometres do they have to travel, though? How much money?

Mrs HERSEY: The Manor has come on board and is excited to have all those remote communities …

Ms Uibo: How much time will they spend away from the classroom?

Mrs HERSEY: I pick up on the constant interjections from the Opposition Leader, which is unparliamentary. She should listen to the answer.

We took a commitment to the election to increase school attendance rates by introducing truancy officers. It was in our plan, and no-one was left wondering. We told the Opposition Leader numerous times that she can have a copy of the plan. I think the Member for Karama tabled the plan, so it is on the record. We have delivered on that commitment.

Truancy officers, known as school attendance officers, through Education deliver compliance notices and have the power to fine parents who repeatedly break the law and fail to send their children to school. We have 35 school attendance officers across the Territory. They are recruiting 24 extra. I have recently been with the Member for Casuarina in his electorate and with the attendance officers in Palmerston. Last week we were in Alice Springs with the attendance officers.

They have been well received in communities. Some parents said that they are finding it hard to get their child to school, so they asked for information on how they can get better support. That is a good news story. The school attendance officers have been engaging with the children and parents.

If the students say that they are suspended, truancy officers can check that information.

Truancy Officers

J DAVIS to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

This is a question from parents in my electorate. What power do truancy officers have? What training is provided to them? Knowing that they will be engaging with children with disabilities and cognitive impairments, how will they be supported to do this work? What happens when children do not engage with them? Has the government commenced issuing truancy fines, and if so, how many?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have recently been on the ground with the Member for Casuarina and attendance officers, and in Palmerston and Alice Springs. Truancy officers are about educating parents, talking to them and students and giving a compliance notice, should they need to.

In regard to fines, I need to take that on notice; I am not sure how many fines have been given out.

When we were in Alice Springs last week the attendance officers said that of the fines they had given, there was a 75% increase in those students going back to school the next day. That is a good news story. Sometimes people need a bit of a nudge and a conversation about getting their kids to school, working out that school is important. It is about getting in, learning and boosting literacy and numeracy so that they can

get a job when they finish high school. It is against the law to withhold your child from school. There are many ways that the truancy officer can interact with a student or parent.

I note the other day that someone called the radio station, concerned that their child would be fined by attendance officers. We are not talking about people who have special needs; we are talking about students who are not going to school for a long term and parents who are not sending their children to school for whatever reason. It is not because they have gone to sorry business, gone interstate on holiday or been off sick for a week; we are talking about students who are repeatedly not going to school in the long term. There are students out there like that.

We have the lowest-ever attendance rates. Across the Territory there are 153 schools in total, and 16 of those schools have less than 30% attendance, and 52 schools have less than 50% attendance.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Part of my question is: what training is provided to truancy officers?

Mrs HERSEY: The truancy officers work in the schools and have an education background; they are just giving out a compliance notice. We have no qualms about boosting attendance, literacy and numeracy. I am sure everyone wants to ensure all students across the Territory are going to school. Fifty-two schools have less than 50% attendance; I think we can all agree that is shocking.

Approvals Fast Track Taskforce

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

As a former Deputy CEO of the NT Chamber of Commerce and an ongoing passionate advocate for our local businesses, I know the key aspect of our CLP plan to rebuild the economy is to cut approval times. This plan says, 'Speed up approvals'. I am excited about how this will benefit businesses in my local community and deliver new projects faster. This will benefit my residents in Karama with more jobs too. Can you update the Assembly on our CLP election commitment to establish an Approvals Fast Track Taskforce?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it was great to visit businesses in the Karama electorate with the Member for Karama recently. There are so many amazing people in his electorate working hard to earn a living, deliver services for your community and keep their head above water in difficult times, especially with the interface of crime and antisocial behaviour. Member for Karama, thank you for the opportunity to connect with them. We heard loud and clear that they want the Territory to be an easier and safer place to do business. That is exactly what we are delivering.

As part of our achievements in the 100 days of coming into government we have appointed the Approvals Fast Track Taskforce. This is a great group of passionate Territorians with real-world, real-life business experience. I thank Mark Garraway, who is a former long-term Property Council NT president. His team has: Michael Buckley, M+J Builders; Tony Smith, NT Link in Alice Springs; Stuart Kenny, Territory Instruments; Dan Richards, Humpty Doo Barramundi; Andrew Dalglish, Foxalicious Fruit; Hermanus Louw, Louw Group; and Bec Bullen, Stone House and Charlie's of Darwin.

This taskforce is deliberately and entirely made up of the private sector, supported by government in a secretariat sense only. On behalf of the industries they represent and the other businesses they engage with and from the feedback they have collected over their decades of vast experience, I want these people to look at what regulatory reform our government can do to make it simpler, quicker and easier to do business. It is about decreasing the regulatory burden. While we have the Territory Coordinator reform for large-scale and significant project developments for the Territory, this is more focused on the daily grind of people working hard every day to run their business.

We want to make it easier. That, coupled with our payroll tax reform starting 1 January, is about making the Territory more competitive. We want people to come here and start a business. We want people to have their businesses for the long haul. We want young people coming up through the ranks in the Territory to recognise and understand that they have an important role to play in our future.

Small business is the engine room of our economy. More than 98% of Territory businesses are small businesses. We take our hats off to them because they are working hard every day. We want to back them with a competitive Territory where doing business is easier for them.

School Attendance – Fines

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

On ABC radio you said that the truancy officer program was not about finding families but engaging with them first. You said that fines would be handed out to parents as a last resort in extreme circumstances. Communities are telling us that there has been no engagement with families over the truancy fines policy. You said that parents are responsible and will be receiving fines, but 15 and 16-year-olds can be fined. Can you confirm that 15 and 16-year-olds can be issued compliance notices and fines?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are talking about education and attendance. We went to the election with a commitment to boost attendance and bring back truancy officers. We are proud of that. There are 35 truancy officers across the Territory and the department has recruited for an extra 24 officers.

With the Better and Fairer Schools funding, schools can employ their own truancy officers, should they wish. I was in Karama a few weeks ago, and the school has employed an attendance officer. These people have a great connection with the community. The school's attendance officer in Karama has a great connection with the students. He is engaging within the school, as are the people I met in Alice Springs.

The compliance notices and fines they have given out saw 75% of those children return to school. That is a good news story.

The attendance officers have a certificate in school-based education.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was about whether 15 and 16-year-olds can be issued a compliance notice and fines.

Mrs HERSEY: All students who do not go to school, if they are repeatedly not going to school, or whose parents are withholding them from school so they are repeated non-attenders, will—in the end, after they have had compliance notices, engagement with school attendance officers and conversations about the importance of education—receive a fine. This is if they repeatedly do this; we are talking about children who are not attending school or whose parents are withholding them from school for whatever reason for a long period.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. She is saying 'they'; that is broad. I am coming back to the direct question of whether 15 and 16-year-olds can be issued a compliance notice and fines. I need that directly answered.

Madam SPEAKER: I am listening to the minister answer the question. She might not refer to exactly what you want her to, but she has generally said all students, and I presume that includes 15 and 16-year-olds. We will listen to the remainder of her answer.

Mrs HERSEY: Member for Daly, I do not know how many ways you would like to hear it. If you are a student and you repeatedly do not go to school, you will in the end get a fine. That is the end of it.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please. The minister is answering the question.

Mrs HERSEY: In the Member for Daly's electorate, where the attendance rates are extremely poor—many schools have very low attendance rates—do you not want …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance again. I am confirming …

Madam SPEAKER: No, you are grandstanding; take your seat. The minister has been answering the question. There are 14 seconds left.

Mrs HERSEY: I will let the electorate officers know that this is what we put up with on a daily basis from the opposition, hence after the recent election it has only four members left. We are in government because we took a plan to the election.

Fishing Vessels – Illegal Entry

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

We have seen a concerning escalation in illegal fishing boats entering Northern Territory waters over the past few months. Several foreign fishing vessels have been intercepted near the Kimberley coast and near Croker Island, just 250 kilometres from Darwin. Can you inform the Assembly what is being done to address the important issue of illegal fishing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I highlight that this government takes threats to biosecurity seriously. Having these illegal vessels in our waters and people coming onto land and walking down the road is a severe and dangerous threat to biosecurity.

The current response to the arrival of these illegal foreign vessels is insufficient, because they continue to come. There needs to be greater action and resources from Australian Border Force and federal agencies to deal with this major problem.

I have expressed my concerns directly with the federal Minister for Northern Australia, Madeleine King. I spoke to her last week. I wrote to federal NT members Luke Gosling, Marion Scrymgour and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy expressing my concerns about this and asking them to do something.

Can the opposition please ask its federal members to do something about this? This is a direct threat to the Northern Territory. Biosecurity is a major concern, and members of the Labor Party are doing nothing about it. The action is continuing, yet we have to rely on the land and sea rangers to do their job. I thank them for doing that.

The NT Police Commissioner contacted the Border Force Commissioner and the head of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority to request more resources in that region. Again, I call on the federal Labor members to back it up and get action on this. I understand the Police Commissioner is due to meet with the Fisheries Management Authority tomorrow to take action on this.

Last night members of a community in Arnhem Land alerted police to a group of unlawful foreign nationals walking along the road. Nine were located and they were all Chinese nationals.

This is a serious issue because it is about fishing and biosecurity, yet the resources are not there. I call on the federal Labor government to do something about it because if we get diseases that are not in Australia, like bird flu and lumpy skin, it will have a catastrophic effect on our economy and the Australian economy.

I thank the sea rangers at Maningrida and the Fisheries Management Authority because they seem to be doing the work that the federal Labor government should be doing.

I point out that there is a biosecurity threat, as well as people harvesting fish and sea cucumbers in waters that belong to Territorians.

Underground Power – Northern Suburbs

Mx McNAMARA to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Constituents of mine in Coconut Grove contacted me concerned and dismayed after your government's announcement that it will scrap the rest of the project to underground powerlines in the northern suburbs. We know that climate change is increasing the severity of tropical storms and cyclones. During Cyclone Marcus, our last serious cyclone, 29,000 homes in Darwin lost power and some for over a week. Have you factored the increased storm severity from climate change into this decision, and what is the plan for those residents when they lose power in the next cyclone?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an important question and there is quite a story to it.

Labor made announcements in 2016 about undergrounding power and did nothing about it for eight long years. Suddenly before the election, the previous Labor government said that it would underground power in

the northern suburbs and throw $60m at it. The members in those northern suburbs were walking around telling the residents that there would not be any poles out the front of the houses because all the power will be underground; it would all change for $60m. Member for Nightcliff, I can tell you that there is no way in the world that would happen for $60m.

I spoke to Power and Water about this at length before the decision was made. The $60m promised by Labor would have undergrounded some but not all HV powerlines along Bagot Road. That is all it would be able to do. To underground power throughout the northern suburbs would take hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars. Labor failed to tell that to the people in the northern suburbs. Labor announced that it would underground power with $60m, but unfortunately that $60m would not even scratch the surface.

I understand the risks in the Top End with major weather events such as cyclones and monsoonal activity. I understand why undergrounding power is a good thing for the Top End, but at the moment the Territory does not have the money.

I had to make this decision because of the document I am holding—the midyear financial report—which shows that we are staring down the barrel of an $11.1bn debt. I would love to do all these things in the northern suburbs. I want to underground power everywhere …

Mx McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I want the answer to the second part: what is the plan for those residents when they lose power in the next cyclone?

Mr YAN: I am getting there, Madam Speaker.

We cannot afford to do this. I would love to do it, but we do not have the money. I asked Power and Water to put something together that will give us a clear picture of what it would look like to underground power throughout the northern suburbs. I am interested to see what that dollar figure is.

The teams from Power and Water and TGen work hard and have plans in place for our cyclone season. They are well prepared for our cyclone season should we have power outages across the Northern Territory. I can guarantee that Power and Water have sufficient plans in place to deal with cyclone issues and power across the northern suburbs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery of Australia

Mrs ZIO to TREASURER

We have heard time and again about the devastating $11bn of debt we are in thanks to the catastrophe that was Labor's wasteful spending, pet projects and budget blowouts that were implemented not for the people of the Northern Territory but for members' own egos. The interest we pay on this debt is money that could have been spent in my electorate of Fannie Bay on improving public safety, supporting local schools, health services or even growing parks and playgrounds.

Ms Uibo: No underground power for you, though.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please.

Mrs ZIO: Treasurer, one Labor mess that springs to mind, which is one of many, is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery of Australia project. Can you update the Assembly on the CLP's efforts to clean up yet another Labor mess?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please. We will all listen in silence.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I note the interjections by the opposition members as the Member for Fannie Bay was asking her question. That shows their disdain and approach to managing fiscal responsibilities for the Territory. It seems that they do not care. Sadly, ATSIAGA is another example of that.

We released our master plan for the Anzac Oval precinct on Thursday 21 November after eight long years of Labor's mismanagement of this project. I will go back to the start because I was there in a meeting when

a senior member of the Gunner government came to Alice Springs and said, 'We will build an art gallery in Alice Springs'. Everyone was impressed about that because it sounded pretty good. I believe it was a previous CLP commitment. This was only a month or two after Labor had come into government. They sat there and told us it would be built on Anzac Oval. I thought, 'Okay; obviously they have talked to some people before they decided to do this', but it seems the government had not because when it did some consultation people said it should be built in other places. Labor then pushed ahead and compulsorily acquired Anzac Oval.

We will continue to build that gallery on Anzac Oval, but we will be fiscally responsible about it. We will live within our means. We know there was $150m available in the budget to build it, but since coming into government we understand now that the project would have exceeded $300m—that is $150m-plus that we did not have that would have gone on the credit card. I heard the Member for Gwoja say that there would be philanthropic money to build this project. I ask the members of this parliament what would happen if that philanthropic money did not show up? That is $150m-plus of extra debt that Labor members would put the Territory into for the sake of their own egos.

When we released our master plan the Member for Gwoja publicly said, 'I don't like this. This is not what I envisaged. I am encouraging the federal government to remove their funding.' They are the words of a spoilt child—'If I cannot have what I wanted, nobody gets to have anything at all'. Labor always spoke about us talking down the Territory, but Labor members are talking down Alice Springs and saying that we should not have development because it is not their idea.

School Attendance – Fines

Mr PAECH to the MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

You said earlier in Question Time that you will be fining children. Can you confirm whether you are in fact fining children up to the ages of 15 and 16, or are you fining their parents with your truancy officers?

You also said that you would be in contact with the federal government about referring families to income management if they do not send their kids to school. Can you outline what communication you have had with the Commonwealth Government about this, who you communicated with and what response you have had, or are you misleading Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, when we were caught up with the interjections from the Opposition Leader, I said that the $3m was coming from Education, which is reprioritised funding of new money. The Opposition Leader kept interjecting, so I put that on the record now.

The attendance officers will have a certificate in school-based education. They have the powers to go out, and there are 35 of them across the Territory working hard. Whether they are in shopping centres, walking down the streets like they do in Katherine, going to housing precincts or into communities, the attendance officers are out there to boost the attendance rates across the Territory. As I have said numerous times, the attendance rates in the Territory are extremely low.

The attendance officers will be fining parents should they withhold their children from school, which is against the law. We have emailed the federal members, and I had a conversation about this with Marion Scrymgour. I have spoken to the Minister for Children and Families about income management. There are many things that can happen to receive the money from these families.

First and foremost, this is about educating parents. If they do not already know the importance of getting their children to school, no-one will be dying wondering. At the election we said that we would boost literacy and numeracy and bring back truancy officers, known as attendance officers.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I am appreciative of the response from the minister. I seek confirmation: have you spoken to the federal minister for Education? Furthermore, can you confirm, from earlier in Question Time, whether you are fining the children or the youths or their parents?

Madam SPEAKER: There will be no more points of order for the next 55 seconds.

Mrs HERSEY: The Member for Gwoja is not listening when I answer the question because I started by saying that the attendance officers are talking to parents and the students who are not at school. They are issuing compliance notices. In circumstances when necessary they are issuing fines of $370 to the parents of those children.

This is all about boosting attendance. As I have said in this parliament numerous times, we have the lowest attendance rates that I have seen. Many electorates have very low attendance rates. We want to boost attendance rates across the Territory. If that means talking to parents and students, so be it. We need to get kids to school.

Harrison Dam Conservation Area

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

Hunting is an important part of the Territory lifestyle for many Territorians across the Territory, especially in our electorates in the Darwin rural area. Can you provide an update on the progress of the infrastructure upgrades to improve access to the southern part of the Harrison Dam Conservation Area? Can you inform the Assembly of how these upgrades will contribute to delivering our government's commitment to restoring our lifestyle?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder spends lots of time on the northern side of Harrison Dam at Humpty Doo Barramundi, driving in every day looking at the floodplains and listening to the honking of the geese as they fly around.

This is a strong part of one of our election commitments. This is another commitment we have honoured in less than 100 days. We have done crime, we are talking about school and this is about restoring our lifestyle. The Approvals Fast Track Taskforce has been announced. We have covered the three main pillars of our election commitments.

Last Friday I walked across the dam wall. I could see that people had already been across to the other side because a couple of spent shells were there. It has been used by not only hunters but also the rangers who can now access the southern part of the reserve to do weed control and land care of that area which was previously inaccessible.

This is one part of our larger commitment on hunting policy. We have also approved grants up to $50,000 for conservation. That means organisations like Field and Game can come to the government and get a grant of up to $10,000 for whatever they want to do in relation to management of hunting reserves. They can do some spraying themselves, look at Howard Swamp and Shoal Bay to work out whether there is rubbish that needs to be collected or work on access control. That is another part of our election commitment. Work has started on that.

I am not sure how many people here have been to Howard Swamp. The access road into Howard Swamp is, to say the least, a goat track. I have been there many times, and you effectively drive through an abandoned mining lease to get there. The road is winding, and you need a four-wheel drive. Even my LandCruiser has trouble getting there because the road is so bad. I have written to the Parks minister about getting that sorted because we need the access to that area to be up and running.

We have also locked in for five years the hunting bag limits of seven geese and 10 ducks to give certainty to people, because we know that many interstate hunters come to the Northern Territory during the waterfowl season to hunt magpie geese, whistling ducks and black ducks. They bring money into the community; they hire cars, stay here and go to the Humpty Doo pub or the Howard Springs Tavern for dinner. They inject money into the economy. This is about the broader picture of rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

The Harrison Dam is going well and is open for business.

Underground Power – Northern Suburbs

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES referred to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Before I ask my question, I give a shout-out to my dad, Mick Uibo, who is in the public gallery watching Question Time and making sure that I stay in the Chamber.

The former Territory Labor government was rolling out the 10-year plan to underground high-voltage powerlines in the northern suburbs to deliver more reliable and safe electricity for residents, schools and businesses. We completed the schools while we were in government. Underground power to Nakara, Wagaman and Alawa was costed, scoped and ready to go. The CLP in opposition promised to accelerate the program of undergrounding high-voltage powerlines. However, like in 2012, the CLP government has now scrapped this program. You deliberately kept this from voters.

With the cyclone season approaching, why do you and your CLP government continue to mislead Territorians about your plans, and why are you cutting the undergrounding of high-voltage powerlines in Darwin?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this sits more clearly with the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure. I will hand over to him to answer the question.

Mr YAN: Madam Speaker, I have oversight of this as the shareholding minister for the three government-owned corporations: TGen; Power and Water; and Jacana.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Can I get clarification? With the Administrative Arrangements Order the Treasurer is the shareholding minister and the Essential Services minister is operations; therefore, the operational question should go to the Essential Services minister.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has the call to refer to another minister of their choosing. I am satisfied with that arrangement.

Mr YAN: I am responding to the Leader of the Opposition because the decision came across my desk, as Treasurer and shareholding minister of those corporations.

The reason for this was our budget position, which was left to us by the Labor government. There was nothing hidden about this. The decision did not come up until post-election when we went through, with Treasury, Power and Water and all our different agencies, the fiscal position we found ourselves in.

From looking at the books we know that Labor would breach the debt cap in the 2028–29 forward estimates period based on its current spending. That is why difficult decisions had to be made. Undergrounding of power in the northern suburbs was one of those. The decision was not made lightly; it was a decision the CLP government had to make based on the financial position we found ourselves in.

We had to reprioritise funding in a number of areas. It is always difficult to make those decisions, because we like to see things happening in various communities across the Northern Territory, but we had to make them to try to maintain fiscal discipline because of the position we were put in.

It would have been only that small portion of HV powerlines along Bagot Road; that is why the decision was made. There were no ulterior motives, Leader of the Opposition. This decision was not made until well past the election date, probably three or four weeks in. Power and Water came to me, because we asked all our agencies to come up with savings to improve our fiscal position so that we could do what we need to do …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I want clarification from the minister. You are saying a small section of Bagot, but there were 13 suburbs in the program. Is the section you are talking about only for the Bagot area, or is it the 13-suburb program?

Mr YAN: The $60m that I was provided by Power and Water was to do HV along Bagot Road. I am told that was all the money was for. As I said, it was a difficult decision to make, but we had to make it to improve our fiscal position. I make no apology for that.

Darwin Port Operator – Fiscal Status

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Can you update the Assembly on important news regarding the Darwin Port?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the CLP government has been made aware of concerns surrounding the fiscal operating environment of the Darwin Port operator, Landbridge. We have provided notice to the federal government, given the port's national significance and its significance for the Territory economy.

The Territory government has written to Landbridge seeking further information about its financial status and ability to meet its payment obligations. This additional information will guide the Territory government's next steps regarding operations at the port. Our immediate focus is to ensure the port remains operational while its longer-term future is confirmed.

Tomorrow I will meet with the federal government's minister for Infrastructure, Catherine King, to discuss this issue while I am in Canberra attending the national Treasurers' meeting.

The Northern Territory is reviewing our rights, and our future action will be in the best interests of Territorians.

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

ANSWER TO QUESTION
School Attendance – Fines

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 155, I clarify that when the Member for Gwoja asked about the fining of students or parents, the $370 fine that the truancy officer will give to the parents should their children not be going to school can be given to the parents. Should those students be living independently—not with their parents—it can be given to the student, but they are 16 and 17; they are not minors. I wanted to clarify that.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I wanted clarity because in the question was 15-year-olds, not 16 and 17-year-olds.

Madam SPEAKER: This is a different standing order, Discussion Confined to Question. There is no opportunity for you to further question the minister. Question Time is over; we move on to General Business.

MOTION
Bipartisan Delegation to Canberra – Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly:

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

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

Domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory has claimed too many lives and affected far too many Territory women, children and young people. This issue transcends politics, and the Territory Labor opposition proposes a bipartisan delegation to travel to Canberra comprising CLP government members, Territory Labor opposition members and crossbench representative members. Together we will stand with victim–survivors; domestic, family and sexual violence prevention experts; and frontline workers to advocate for needs-based funding for the Northern Territory.

Yesterday we heard in Question Time that the Chief Minister agreed to this proposal, and we congratulate and thank her for agreeing with the Labor opposition and the crossbench on this important motion. A united

Territory approach is crucial when we are advocating at the federal level for needs-based funding to be delivered once and for all for the Northern Territory.

The federal Labor government recognises the national shame and disgrace of domestic violence not only in the Northern Territory but also, unfortunately, across the country. Our parliament's diverse composition, reflecting the federal parliament's makeup, enables effective collaboration between Labor, Liberal, Greens, minor parties and Independent members to advocate for the Territory.

We continue to call on the CLP government to urgently implement the Coroner's 35 recommendations which were handed down from the 17-month inquest this week. We urge the CLP government to roll out the much-needed $180m to the domestic, family and sexual violence sector to ensure that the 35 recommendations from the Coroner are implemented.

Territory Labor recognises that we must listen to experts and consider their advice on legislation, including the alcohol floor price discussion. I note that the Attorney-General gave notice of that, so I will not talk too much on it because I do not want to pre-empt the debate, but part of the Coroner's recommendation 5 was to reduce alcohol availability because of its impact on and exacerbation of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. I will leave it there, so I do not cross the line.

From Territory Labor's perspective protecting children and families across the Northern Territory demands swift action. We want the CLP government to pledge to avoid the status quo across the Territory. We urge the CLP government to prioritise, on behalf of Territorians, the needs of the domestic, family and sexual violence prevention sector by resourcing it through the rollout of the $180m that the CLP committed to in order to match the former Labor government's commitment. The hard work has been done over many years. We said openly that we would support the CLP in its endeavours to reduce and prevent domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory by ensuring that the sector is appropriately resourced.

A lot of work has been done within the government and non-government sectors, and we urge the CLP to take on its important role of leadership in this space. We will stand with them and support them. The crossbench members have also spoken about supporting them. I am not speaking for the crossbench but echoing that we reached out across all party lines to ensure that this area is far beyond politics. It is about Territory families, particularly women and children. The support of Territory Labor, federal Labor, the CLP, the federal Coalition and our crossbench has to be above politics. We want everyone to be on board regardless of political cycles.

We acknowledge that the Commonwealth contributes $147m over four years for family and domestic violence services in the Northern Territory. We do not think this is enough, but it is a start. We are simply calling on the federal government and those who wish to be in a future federal government to sit with us and the hardworking people in the sector and go across all party lines to make sure we do not lose more Territory women or traumatise more Territory kids through domestic, family and sexual violence.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I spoke with the Opposition Leader this morning about 11 o'clock and provided her with the proposed amendment to the motion. The opposition's original motion was that we travel to Canberra, but I felt it was more important that Canberra come to us on this issue. Equally, the last sittings of the federal parliament are about to wrap up, and politicians generally do not hang around Canberra; they go back to their electorates. I do not want this to be kicked down the road. The Opposition Leader had time to look at our amendment and agreed.

I will now move the amendment, given that it has been agreed to, so that it can be properly circulated to all members before I continue with my contribution. I move the following amendment:

1. In the title of the motion, omit 'to' after the word 'delegation' and insert 'from'.

2. Omit all words after 'within the Northern Territory' and insert the following words:

   'Call on the Commonwealth Government, both Senators for the Northern Territory and both Territorian Members of the House of Representatives to immediately visit the Territory and pledge their support to combat DFSV in the Territory in a bipartisan show of strength alongside members of the CLP government, the Labor opposition and the crossbench, standing alongside victim–survivors, DFSV experts and frontline workers. The purpose of this bipartisan pledge will be to advocate for significant federal investment and initiatives aimed at combating domestic, family and sexual violence, underscoring our collective commitment to addressing this critical issue.'

The opposition had hours to look at that. There is agreement across the Chamber, and I believe the crossbench was consulted by the opposition.

It is important as part of our amendment that we include our Territory-based federal representatives. At the end of the day, we have a Labor government at the federal level; a Labor minister, Senator McCarthy; the Labor Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour; the Labor Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling; and our senator, Jacinta Price. Three of the four Territory members sit on the government benches. Their influence and input into this is pivotal to yielding an outcome from the federal government.

Let us be plain and face facts about this. We had a Labor government for eight years which, during that time, was unable to secure additional funding from the federal government. When the CLP came into government we went straight to National Cabinet, which was discussing the national response to domestic and family violence, and could not broker a better outcome for the Territory. Although we will never give up, it is clear to me that the people who need to be held accountable for their role in lobbying for the Territory are the three Labor members. Of course, our senator has a role to play from opposition, but that is clearly much more difficult. We look forward to this work ahead.

There is precedence for this. We saw the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, go to Alice Springs and eventually announce the Barkly Regional Deal, following the horrific sexual assault of a toddler that took place in 2018. We again saw this in January 2023 when Prime Minister Albanese had to fly to Alice Springs to give Labor a stern lesson about the lifting of Stronger Futures to make sure it put that community back on a better footing, and he announced $250m in funding. I have significant concerns and reservations about how that money is being spent, and I have raised that directly with the Prime Minister because, ultimately, the Territory does not have a lot of control over that funding. We all know the woes of the Barkly Regional Deal.

I hope that we can get this level of representation in the Territory to consider this deal properly and what kind of resources it will need. I said yesterday that what is on offer will not touch the sides. We will play our role and do what is required at the Territory level with the resources we have and the commitments we have made. We stand by our decision to move carefully through the Coroner's recommendations to make deliberate moves that will advance the safety of Territory women and children because we know this issue is unacceptable. The rates are far too high.

It is clear to me that the Territory on its own cannot deliver the funding required; therefore, there is no alternative but for the Commonwealth to step up and play its role. Whether it chooses to do that will remain to be seen, but we are committed to the process.

We thank the opposition for putting forward this idea and for supporting our amendment which is practically a better outcome for the Territory. It is probably healthy to have these federal pollies in town more often. It never hurts. It is always good to get to Canberra, but I tell you what, it is good to get them up here too.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition for bringing the motion to the Assembly and working with the crossbench and the government to see this parliament come together in a bipartisan nature.

I acknowledge the Chief Minister putting forward an amendment. I understand that following our position taken yesterday there is a substantial number of people who want to participate in the delegation, so it is important to now have a delegation from Canberra come to the Northern Territory so that the delegates can have access to more Territorians who are experts in domestic, family and sexual violence and who are victim–survivors. It might afford them the opportunity to visit a number of the amazing organisations, shelters and crisis accommodation providers in the Territory, particularly in our remote and regional areas.

In response to the amendment, I think it is great to bring a delegation here. As a parliament we will need to work together to ensure that the voices of Central Australia, the Barkly, Big Rivers and East Arnhem are all represented and that the people, organisations and victim–survivors who want to participate in this have the opportunity and the resourcing support to come to Darwin or Alice Springs. Wherever it is held we will need to provide support for people to get to that important meeting to talk about these concerns.

It is important to have the Commonwealth Government here. Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, who is no stranger to the Northern Territory, is a proud Territorian and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs who is continuing to invest in the Northern Territory and across Australia; Marion Scrymgour, the Member for Lingiari; Luke Gosling, who seems to be at every event you attend in Darwin; and Senator Price can all participate in this important delegation.

It is important that we talk about the flexibility that needs to be awarded to the delegation. We need to make sure that we do not let the federal Coalition off the hook and that it commits to standing tall and supporting and resourcing this important matter.

We heard in the Chamber and the community, and have seen on the news nationally—particularly as we work through the 16 Days of Activism—the important work that is being done. While we are calling for additional resources, a lot is being done in this space.

Money has been invested by both federal governments; it is not a matter of one or the other. During the former Morrison Coalition federal government additional funds and resources were brought in under Minister Anne Ruston. That has continued with an increase in investment under Amanda Rishworth. Significant work is being undertaken, and I felt it was important to highlight that.

I acknowledge those in the sector such as the women's family violence services; the women's legal services; the homelessness shelters; and the men's behaviour change organisations, like Tangentyere Council and CatholicCare in Darwin that deliver those programs.

This will be an important moment. We spoke in this Chamber yesterday to acknowledge the amazing contributions that have happened over 50 years. Where we were yesterday and where we are today will be important milestones for the Territory's future, with this parliament coming together to resolve an important matter by calling on all members of the federal parliament to take note of what needs to be done in the Northern Territory and the assistance required.

Both major parties in the Northern Territory went to the election with the $180m commitment. Obviously, we have different ideas on where and how that money should be spent; however, it is important to acknowledge our unified Territory Legislative Assembly on this matter.

When we bring a delegation here we need to ensure it is not just a meeting in a room. Hopefully, when the government is organising the delegation we can work with the Chief Minister to ensure we get people out to various establishments to meet with organisations and groups to hear firsthand how they think investments can be done, whether it is financial or legislative changes in the Territory or Commonwealth. How that work can happen will be important.

We have spoken at great length about monitoring, evaluation and accountability. That important work was being done by ICRO and the sector. There is a plan. I seek leave to table the 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan for the Northern Territory Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework 2018–2028, and Its Action Plans'. That plan has a detailed response regarding data and working through the action plans: part 6 is about the evaluation plan; 6.2, the outcomes evaluation; and 6.3, the flagship reviews.

Leave granted.

Mr PAECH: Digressing for a moment, a lot happened in federal parliament this week that is relevant to this topic. There has been a federal inquiry into the deaths of Aboriginal women. Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, has a series of outcomes and actions that she is taking on as the federal minister in response to that, and it led me to think about how we as parliamentarians and the Territory's media respond to and report on domestic, family and sexual violence.

I draw members' attention to the volume of work done by the Northern Territory Government in collaboration with Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group and in conjunction with the Australian National University. Media Changing the Story is about ethical, responsible and respectful ways of reporting domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. Shirleen Campbell from Hoppys Camp in Alice Springs was heavily involved, as was Dr Chay Brown. Media Changing the Story is a good document for honourable members to download; it is available online. It reminds us and the media of the appropriateness, cultural responsibility and respectfulness we should have when we report incidents, such as using the appropriate names and seeking permission.

The Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence is working through the government's response to the Coroner's 35 recommendations. The opposition is happy to work with the minister on any of those recommendations because it is vital they be worked through. Minister, we respect your decision to work through the recommendations. We acknowledge the calls from the sector for ongoing investment.

As members of the Assembly we do not always agree on things. We often have the same objective in the end, but the path we take to get there is somewhat different. I thank honourable members for the respect we

had for one another in coming together on this topic and the unified position we will take with the amended motion. This says to every one of our constituents that this parliament takes domestic, family and sexual violence seriously and that we are demanding action. The Territory Legislative Assembly is doing all that it can and is bringing the other stakeholders into this important discussion and pathway forward, so our women, children and vulnerable people can live in a world free from violence. I am thankful to all honourable members. Minister Cahill, thank you for working with the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to put forward the position.

Enormous work is being done in the community this week. As we work through the 16 Days of Activism it is important to pay respect to those in the domestic and family violence sector. I acknowledge the eight lives that have been lost since the middle of this year.

Together as a parliament we can continue to work tirelessly to overcome those rates. We have proved wrong so many people in the community who accuse all sides of politics of playing politics on issues. Where we are at today with the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Minister and the Members for Johnston, Mulka and Nightcliff, it is incredible to have those five people working together on a solid plan. We will see a positive result for the Territory and show everyone in the wider community that we can come together. The world is not completely divisive on issues. We can come together and do what is right for Territorians, not to mention that parliament has a role in supporting the community to understand what is being done and where the $180m is being rolled out.

I support this motion as amended. It is a wonderful opportunity as a parliamentarian to see the unity.

Ms CAHILL (Prevention of Domestic Violence): Madam Speaker, in my report yesterday there were a couple of points worth noting: there is the financial cost to the Territory of $606m per annum due to domestic, family and sexual violence; and the emotional, social and physical cost is truly immeasurable. With domestic violence rates three times higher in the Territory than the national average, and the Northern Territory domestic violence homicide rate seven times the national average, there is no question that the Territory is in crisis.

I am incredibly reassured to hear that we will all stand together on this critical issue. We will take our message to the federal government that due to those high rates in our community, we cannot continue to receive funding on a population basis; we must receive funding on a needs basis. I appreciate the opposition's acceptance of the proposal that we bring a delegation from Canberra to here. In my experience in Health over the past three decades, I found that the only way to shift Canberra was to bring them here and show them, face to face, what we deal with.

I would argue that we do not just bring them to Darwin or Alice Springs, but we take them and show them on the ground in regional and remote areas exactly what everybody is dealing with. Let us not give them any option other than getting on a charter flight with us to see face to face what our communities are dealing with and hear from victims and service providers about what they deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Having said that, I thank the Member for Gwoja for tabling the framework that we have referred to over the last few days.

I table the summary report review of Action Plan 1 and the Final Status Report – Action Plan 1.

I did that because it is important to read both sides of the story and understand why, from working with the department and service providers, I say that we need to take a step back to make sure we get this right. As attractive as the framework looks, when it came to implementing it on the ground it was incredibly challenging.

Some of the comments made in the review were:

> *… the development of Action Plan 1 was compressed and required the bringing together of a diverse mix of initiatives …*
>
> *… Action Plan 1 was limited and … lacked a strong centralised quality assurance and coordination process.*
>
> *Some actions proved difficult to implement …*

That was because they were broad, vague or unclear and were peripheral to the central agenda of reducing domestic, family, and sexual violence.

This is the reason we need to take a step back and make sure we are getting it right. This is why I have consulted on the ground, and continue to do so, with service providers; departmental staff; and, on occasion when they are willing to share their stories, survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

I am pleased to hear we are in agreement that we cannot take the stance of business as usual and that we must together not take the fight to Canberra but bring Canberra to us. We must show them what we are dealing with, that the care and safety of our children is front and centre and that we will fight together to ensure they acknowledge that our need is dire and funding must be provided on need, not pure number.

Thank you for the opportunity to work together on this and deliver to our community what it so deserves—an opportunity to reverse what is happening and make true inroads into reducing the incidence of domestic, family and sexual violence in our community.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will be brief. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for putting forward this motion. Thank you for the support across the Chamber for the amendment. I also agree that it will be in everyone's best interests to get people to the Territory to have a look on the ground.

I am slightly concerned that there is a federal election next year and we might have a different government. We are calling for the Commonwealth Government to come here. I am worried that if it does and a change of government happens next year, and we have Peter Dutton or whomever, all our good work will be ripped up. If we are calling on the Commonwealth Government, including our Northern Territory senators, we should also call on members of the federal Coalition and members of the Greens, who may have the balance of power. We would benefit from having a broader cross-section of federal representatives coming here to have a look, because next year we might be looking at a different situation. I do not want the work we are going through now to be put to waste if there is a change of federal government next year.

I am heartened to see us, as an Assembly, standing together in unity on this. I was not sure whether it would happen. We have heard so much conversation in this Chamber about crime, property crime and youth crime, but there are still members in the Assembly who have not uttered the words 'domestic violence'. I back the call from the Independent Member for Johnston that this is the crime crisis we are facing.

As I said in my initial speech to this Assembly, we must look at all crime through the lens of domestic, family and sexual violence. Why are children out on the street? Why do we have these levels of dysfunction and poverty? We must be addressing it by looking at domestic, family and sexual violence. We need needs-based funding, which is why we are calling on the federal government, but we also have Territory funds. If we can find money in our coffers for things like street upgrades and housing bonuses, we have the money to give to this sector.

I also met with many people from frontline services during my campaign. Many of them were keen to meet with the Greens candidates—me and others—because they were desperate for alternative voices in this Assembly. They told me that they got nowhere with either of the two major parties in the time needed. I met with many of them over the last six months and time and again they said, 'Just put your money where your mouth is—no more consults, no more audits.' They have been telling us what they need. Can we please get the money rolling to them? That is urgent.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I am happy to strongly support this motion. As others said, it heartens me that this is an example of how we can work together as a Chamber to make decisions about things that are of great importance to the Northern Territory. It is wonderful to see us working together across the floor. This is good government. All of us are elected by our communities to take action on the issues that most concern them. This is an issue that affects everyone in our communities.

I strongly agree with the minister who said that when people from Canberra come here it is important to take them to see what is happening on the ground across the Territory so that they can understand what we are trying to deal with.

We all know that needs-based funding is needed to address this crisis. I look forward to seeing what happens when we work together with Canberra to achieve that. However, we cannot let this distract us from the urgency of what we can do right now, right here. I repeat that I am unable to understand why as a Chamber we cannot take urgent action on our domestic, family and sexual violence crisis—our true crime crisis.

As I said, in the Northern Territory more than half the deaths by homicide and two in three assaults are DV related; more than 65% of people in prison are there for DV-related issues; more than 65% of police time is spent on DV-related issues; and 95% of the young people in detention are affected by DV. I am sorry to have

to continually repeat these statistics. I wish I did not have to. If this government took action I would not have to.

I still cannot understand the rationale for no action. It is impossible for me to understand how the minister can say that she needs time to act on DV. I have no doubt that the minister is deeply committed to addressing this issue in the best way possible and in a way that we know will work.

I appreciate the minister tabling the review of Action Plan 1 and the Member for Gwoja tabling the Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan for Action Plan 2. I encourage people to look at these evaluation plans and reviews. As the minister said, they are full of important information which is good for us to understand as we move forward to try to address this issue.

This plan does not say that there is no way to evaluate. Quoting from the plan, it:

- lays out the theory of change, program logic and data
- flags which actions will be evaluated and how
- directs a midpoint evaluation of the framework
- gives an outcomes evaluation
- sets out the monitoring process for all actions, so there is accountability for actions in progress
- provides biannual public reporting on the status of every one of the 60 actions in the plan, public and online
- is accountable, transparent and well planned
- was written and approved by evaluation experts, including from our own Treasury.

We have been told clearly by experts, survivors, service providers and the Coroner what we need to do and what we know will work. Since the coronial recommendations came out every service provider, non-government organisation and sector worker has said that we need to implement these recommendations as a matter of urgency.

I welcome this motion and this Chamber working together, as I believe it should for the wellbeing of the whole Northern Territory. I look forward to going back to my electorate to tell the many people who continually raise this issue with me that the Chamber will be working together to address this. However, when they ask me whether this means there will be enough beds in women's crisis accommodation; whether our frontline services will get the resources they need to keep them safe; and whether over the holidays, when they are even less safe, the government will be doing something to help them, I will have to say no because the government is not ready to give the services the money that we know they need.

I am glad that we will be working together to get the resources that we need to properly address this issue. I am sorry that we are not taking action today to keep women and children safe when I know we could. I commit to doing everything I can towards a future where the crime crisis we face is not the crisis of killing and harming women and children.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION
Environmental Protections

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move the motion.

We live in one of the most beautiful ecologically diverse places on the planet. From the Red Centre to the Tiwi Islands, from our vast ancient escarpments to our pristine waterways, we are incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by such natural and unique beauty.

We know how much Territorians value our environment. It underpins our lifestyle, plays a huge role in driving our economy through tourism and is of immeasurable cultural significance to Aboriginal people. We spoke

earlier about the Territory economy and the work that has been done over many years to improve that vision for the Territory.

We are talking about the environment because we need to look after it for future generations. That was a strong focus for us in government, and it remains a key pillar of the Territory Labor opposition. It is why we are incredibly concerned about the CLP government's efforts to sneak in its dodgy Territory Coordinator Bill.

This says a lot about the government's record of being transparent and accountable. You do not try to sneak in a Bill and an unelected official to take on that role unless you are trying to hide something. It is not hard to see what the government is trying to hide from Territorians with the Territory Coordinator proposal. It is a massive overreach that will put an unelected bureaucrat and the Chief Minister effectively above the law so that they can bulldoze through new developments while sidestepping legislative and regulatory safeguards in the system, including environmental and cultural heritage safeguards.

The CLP already had to water down its original proposal and put it out for consultation, because it was well and truly caught out on this. It was a pretty shameful attempt at deceiving voters mere months after the election.

There are differences of opinion in the community about the environmental reforms brought in by the Labor government. Some people say they went too far and others that they did not go far enough, but I know the reforms made significant advancements in our legislative and regulatory frameworks to ensure our natural assets are better protected now and into the future. As we moved through our reform agenda we always sought to consult the community and ensure all voices were heard before making decisions on significant reforms, particularly environmental reforms.

We also ensured our reforms were guided by data and research from scientists and professionals who know more about environmental impact than anyone in this Chamber. Members opposite will have a difficult time with the data and evidence. They do not know whether they believe in the data. It is important to reflect on the importance of data and evidence.

I raise the concern brought up by the Member for Port Darwin yesterday. Her excuse for delaying domestic and family violence funding is that she wants to do an audit and collect evidence about the effectiveness of the programs. The next minute she said that data and evidence can be manipulated to support any argument. Seriously, the government needs to make up its mind.

We have never been in doubt that policy reform should be underpinned by strong evidence and informed by people with expertise and knowledge in those policy areas. Yes, we are out and proud in our love for experts and evidence. That includes the experts in the department of Environment.

The CLP seems to love denigrating people with expertise in a particular field, but it would do well to remember that there are many public servants in the Northern Territory Government who have built knowledge and expertise in their respective fields over many decades so that they can ensure government policy is informed and evidence based. When the CLP denigrates experts it is effectively denigrating these hardworking, highly capable and knowledgeable public servants. Territory Labor, on the other hand, has the utmost respect for the work of our public servants in agencies like the department of Environment. They should be proud of the work they did in overhauling the Territory's environmental regime.

The Labor government included Territorians in the conversation about strengthening environmental protections. Territorians lost faith in the former CLP government over environmental matters because they had to watch in dismay while that government handed out water licences to its mates and pushed through projects without a proper environmental assessment process in place. The then *Environmental Assessment Act* was only six pages and had not been amended since 1982.

The CLP's efforts were so far removed from the community's expectation of environmental protections that things had to change urgently. I acknowledge my former colleague, the former minister for Environment and Member for Casuarina, who, when we came to government, immediately set about modernising the *Environmental Assessment Act*.

We opened the process to extensive community and stakeholder consultation. It was a transparent process that ensured everyone had the chance to have their say at multiple steps along the way, including in the development of the new legislation and the process of developing the accompanying regulations.

What came out of that process was contemporary legislation governing environmental impact assessments and approvals—the *Environment Protection Act 2019*—which finally brought the Territory into line with other states and territories.

It had a number of objectives to:

- promote ecologically sustainable development so that the wellbeing of the people of the Territory is maintained or improved without adverse impact on the environment

- recognise the role of environmental impact assessments and approvals in promoting the protection and management of the environment

- provide for broad community involvement during the process of environmental approval

- recognise the role that Aboriginal people have as stewards of their country, and the importance of participation by Aboriginal people and communities in environmental decision-making processes.

This represented a massive step forward for the Territory in environmental protections.

Similarly, we upheld our pre-election commitment to place a moratorium on onshore gas exploration until a full scientific inquiry was undertaken, alongside extensive community consultation. That inquiry resulted in 135 recommendations which the former Territory Labor government met in full. This included significant amendments to multiple pieces of legislation, including the *Petroleum Act*, the *Water Act* and the *Environment Protection Act*. This framework ensures that the operations and regulation of onshore gas are robust and transparent.

The CLP continues to talk down the Territory. It appears that the reason it is so relentlessly negative is that it does not have an economic plan beyond riding Labor's coat-tails and claiming credit for projects that got underway under the former government, which went through the rigorous required and supported environmental protections.

Equally, it is becoming increasingly clear that the CLP has no plan for safeguarding the environment. In fact, its sneaky Territory Coordinator plan suggests that it intends to water down environmental protections, alongside cultural and heritage protections, to name a few.

As well as our environmental reform work, the former Labor government took a number of significant steps to better protect our coasts and waterways, recognising how central they are to our Territory lifestyle and our cultural, social and economic life. With a coastline extending nearly 11,000 kilometres, including 887 islands and more than 72,000 square kilometres of coastal waters, it is an incredibly unique part of our environment.

We implemented the first-ever Northern Territory Coastal and Marine Management Strategy to support the use of coastal and marine areas by Territorians and visitors for recreational and cultural purposes, manage the growing demand for natural resources and foster sustainable industry for the benefit of the economy and protection of the environment. Developed in close consultation with landowners, community and industry partners, the strategy sets a 10-year direction for the management of coastal and marine environments in the Northern Territory until 2029. At the time of the strategy's launch, senior Larrakia man Richard Fejo said:

> *Our people, the Saltwater People, have been managing the coastal waters and the coastal margins for thousands of years and now we can look forward to the support of other stakeholders in continuing that work for the benefit of future generations.*

In government we delivered another critical commitment to better protect our marine and coastal environment with the declaration of the Limmen Bight Marine Park Plan of Management. The Limmen Bight area is incredibly rich in marine life, including seagrass beds, dugongs, sea turtles and endangered sawfish. It also supports exceptional recreational fishing and valuable seafood industries. The plan provides a framework for the ongoing management of Limmen Bight Marine Park using best-practice monitoring and evaluation.

After extensive consultation with the community, we also took the critical step of permanently banning seabed mining in the Northern Territory's coastal waters. The vast majority of Territorians told us that they did not want subsea mining because of the potential risk to our coastal and marine environment. The then Territory Labor government said that subsea mining could not be accurately assessed and regulated in a manner consistent with the *Environment Protection Act 2019* due to the risks and uncertainty it posed.

It is extremely concerning to imagine what would occur under a CLP government without that level of protection or environmental benchmark in place, particularly when we consider how much it is hoping to interfere with good governance through its Territory Coordinator.

I turn to the critical issue of climate change. Climate change is real. Unfortunately, climate change will not go away, because of the lack of investment globally. It is disappointing that the CLP government no longer has a minister for climate change.

I know that those opposite will hate me talking about science and climate change, but it is clear that our climate is changing. More frequent and severe weather events are impacting our communities, particularly our remote communities. Our job in this House is to work to minimise the risks of climate change across our communities, environment and economy. We need to take big steps. We need to take smart climate action. We need to focus on low-cost clean energy opportunities, creating jobs for Territorians and protecting our natural assets.

In government we established the Office of Climate Change and the Office of Sustainable Energy to oversee and implement our climate change response, including our net zero emissions by 2050 target and our 50% renewable energy by 2030 target. It is critical that the CLP continues those initiatives to ensure we reach our targets. It is hard to have faith that it is taking climate change seriously.

Prior to the election the CLP had a shadow minister dedicated to climate change, the Member for Braitling. It then pulled a classic bait and switch, scrapping the Climate Change portfolio as soon as it came to government, just as it scrapped any requirement to consider basic human rights in legislation.

It is another sneaky move from a government that clearly is not serious about tackling this issue despite the significant impact it will have on future generations of Territorians. Many sitting across from me in government have children, grandchildren or even great-grandchildren. They should ask their young family members what they are most worried about when it comes to their future. I guarantee most of them will say climate change. You should get onto it.

Like domestic violence, it is one of the most pressing issues facing the Northern Territory. You can start by rethinking your Territory Coordinator Bill, which gives an unelected bureaucrat and the Chief Minister free rein to discard all environmental legislative and regulatory safeguards; ignore the advice of data, scientists and experts; ignore the advice of departments and their CEOs; and disrespect the decisions and judgement of the CLP's own ministers.

We support, where appropriate, streamlined processes, but they cannot come at the cost of good governance and the environment. A regime where the Chief Minister will apparently just give the Territory Coordinator a wink so that he can rubberstamp projects regardless of the outcomes, environment, cultural heritage and independent assessments—talk about pet projects.

You know you need to think about it when you are winking at someone to get something done. You have to feel sorry for the person who gets the unelected role of the Territory Coordinator because the CLP members know that the corners and red tape they want to cut could have major negative consequences for the Territory. Then they want to wash their hands of those decisions when the public finds out just how sharply they cut the corners. I encourage the CLP government to commit to the former Labor government's Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050. We have done the work for you; you are welcome to claim it as your own, just as long as you honour it and all the other reforms the former Territory Labor government put in place for the long-term protection of our beautiful environment.

If the CLP government is serious about maintaining the great Territory lifestyle, it needs to ensure that our environmental protection reforms are honoured. These measures were put in place not to hinder progress or cater to a minority; they were implemented to ensure environmental protection, preservation and accountability in decision-making. Yes, let us develop the Territory's natural resources, but let us not cut corners; isn't that right, Member for Nelson?

It is clear that Territorians care deeply about the environment, and the CLP needs to be up-front about any plans it has to water down our safeguards, as they result from many years of consultation and strong collective efforts. Every member of this parliament can see firsthand the abundance of beauty the Territory has, the uniqueness of the Territory's lifestyle and the ecosystems that exist only in parts of the Northern Territory. The Territory is home to the most unique ecosystems in the world. There are extremely important areas in the Northern Territory that should be preserved for generations to hold the importance of that. That is what we are talking about.

We need to back important ecosystems and environmental reform. When we talk about the need to do this work, it is for all of us—our kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, friends, families and constituents—to have a brighter future.

There are no jobs on a dead planet. If the planet is dead, the ecosystems are eroded and the weather continues to worsen, we will see people doing it even harder than they are now.

If we continue to ignore climate change and not invest in it, we will see vulnerable climate refugees living in remote locations who will have no option other than to leave their remote community and come to a larger regional town or city in the Northern Territory to seek support.

The climate is getting hotter, and our water resources are getting scarce. We need that comprehensive independent evaluation done to understand the water resources and to reform this space. It is important. We need to look at how we can adapt to and mitigate the areas of the climate that are changing, and we need to roll out the important renewable energy targets and investments because it is important.

I was out the front of Parliament House yesterday standing tall and proud with many Territorians who were there in opposition to the CLP's Territory Coordinator Bill. They were raising the alarm because there is not one person in the Northern Territory who is qualified to sit in that job and make decisions at any given time on all things Territory. It is physically impossible for one person to know everything about everything in the Territory and make decisions.

Decisions should be made by a Cabinet who can come together, talk about things, bring legislation to parliament for debate and send it off for public consultation and feedback. That is all being eroded in the Territory Coordinator proposal. It is simply dropping in someone—a former INPEX employee—to do the Cabinet and Chief Minister's job.

The CLP Cabinet willingly giving away all decision-making power to an unelected, undemocratically created position is disgraceful. The people of the Northern Territory did not elect a Territory Coordinator. The people of the Territory will make this known. If I were a member of the CLP, I would be shaking in my boots that the electorate will punish you for this decision.

If I was the Member for Braitling, I would be shaking because that seat will go to the Greens in the next election because of your mismanagement of the environment. You will cause your own downfall for bringing in a person who is not elected, just appointed by a bunch of CLP members.

We know from the last time the CLP was in government how much money you can put in Foundation 51 and then be given a water licence for a dollar. That is what you got under the CLP, and that is what it looks like you are getting again—'Here you go, mate. Do a job for me, and I will give the Territory Coordinator a wink to put your proposal through.' That is what was being talked about outside, where only one member from the CLP had the guts and courage to talk to Territorians.

Mr Maley: Did you go to the crime rally?

Mr PAECH: Did you talk to Territorians? No.

Mr Maley: No. That is what I thought.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, stop interjecting.

Mr PAECH: You did not talk to Territorians.

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: We hear interjections saying this and that about the Bill. You had an opportunity yesterday to communicate with the community about what is in your Bill and encourage people to have those conversations, but you were not willing to do that.

I find it hilarious that the Member for Fong Lim, a former Labor Party member who will never be a minister under the CLP because it does not trust him, is talking about grandstanding. He grandstands all the time about statistics and figures that are wrong, which he is picking and choosing …

Dr RAHMAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 26; that is a personal misrepresentation. I cannot be maligned for what I have said as being incorrect unless the member is willing to point to something specific.

Mr PAECH: I have not finished. Can you please stop my time?

Dr RAHMAN: I ask the member to withdraw the statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is still having a conversation.

Dr RAHMAN: Then let him have a factual one.

Mr PAECH: The Member for Fong Lim is a bit like the other members of the CLP government; they pick and choose what information they put in the public domain. It is his government that said the great thing about evidence, evaluation, accountability, monitoring and research is that you can pick and choose what you want. That is your government, Member for Fong Lim, not mine. The government you are a part of says, 'We will pick and choose what evidence, research and evaluations say, and we will make them say whatever we want'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, please direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr PAECH: The Member for Fong Lim's own team is saying that they will pick and choose the evidence and data, not me. That is what his own CLP Cabinet minister said.

We are doing the hard work. We will continue to hold the government to account on the Territory Coordinator Bill because it is important. While we are in opposition, we will begin our own process of talking with the community and building good policy to take to the next election that is reflective of what the community wants and needs because it is important to do that work.

Mr Maley: You are a failure.

Mrs Zio: Eight years.

Mr PAECH: The Member for Fannie Bay pops up again. This is the member who chooses what to tell her constituents. She does not tell them that she wants kids in spit hoods and to put kids under the age of 12 in prison. I bet she does not talk about the Territory Coordinator overriding all environmental protections.

We will work with the community and the environment sector in this great Territory. We will make sure we get to Fannie Bay to tell people that the Member for Fannie Bay is supporting a Bill that erodes environmental protections. The urban seats will probably be hit the hardest by the erosion of environmental protections.

This is important. We will do our job and talk to people about what is going on. The people in the environment sector who do a fantastic job in the community will be talking to Territorians to make sure they know the CLP government …

Mr Maley: The more the merrier.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, please stop interjecting.

Mr PAECH: The Deputy Chief Minister continues to interject because the truth hurts. He knows that this is a bad Bill. He knows that Territorians love the environment. He knows …

Mr Maley: You are telling stories.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20; you have just warned the Deputy Chief Minister about interjecting, and he continues to do so.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have not warned him; I asked him to cease interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: You warned him before.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Like I have told many other members, Deputy Chief Minister, please restrain yourself.

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.

Mr PAECH: I highlight the importance of the environment. Everything we do has a consequence in the environmental space. Every major project is important, but it cannot come at the cost of the environment. There are no jobs on a dead planet. We must be environmentally responsible in everything we do. These major projects are often welcomed because they bring economic opportunity, but that cannot come at the cost of the environment for future generations.

Some great initiatives are being rolled out in the Territory. The former Territory Labor government brought in a ban on buffel grass and declared it a weed. We did the gamba grass work.

We also need to talk about sacred sites. The Territory Coordinator Bill says that process is exempt. I acknowledge the CLP did good things there.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. I thought we were here to debate environmental protections, not the Territory Coordinator Bill, which is not before the parliament.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will let the member continue.

Mr PAECH: It is relevant given that the Territory Coordinator, in your discussion paper, will be making decisions about environmental reform. It is important that members of the backbench have read the consultation paper and proposal.

I acknowledge the government said that the Aboriginal sacred sites process needs to be adhered to; the Territory Coordinator will be exempt from reaching in there. What is not clear is that Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are not exempt. That is of great concern to Territorians, and we need further clarification from the government on that.

Furthermore, the CLP's Territory Coordinator Bill has no jurisdiction when it comes to Commonwealth legislation. When we are talking about legislation that involves the Commonwealth, whether it is part of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or projects on Aboriginal land, the Territory Coordinator will have no jurisdiction and, therefore, be irrelevant.

It is alarming that the CLP government has removed the Climate Change portfolio. People in departments say that they are not even allowed to talk about climate change around government ministers. Climate change is real. You cannot continue to ignore it. We see it every year with unprecedented rain and floods becoming more frequent. You only have to look at the last 15 years of weather to notice the patterns are changing; it is becoming far hotter in parts of regional and remote Australia and more frequently wet during the Wet Season in isolated areas. The severity and intensity of storms is increasing. We all need to work with the government on addressing and responding to climate change.

Another area we need to talk about is land clearing. That is happening across the Northern Territory at an unprecedented rate, and it is illegal. We need to do more work in this space to hold the people who clear that land accountable and ensure there are consequences for unapproved land clearing.

I make the point that people often cast sacred sites in a negative light. Sacred site clearances are important because there are parcels of land that Aboriginal Territorians have been locked out of. When there is an application for a development or project on that land it is often the first time in generations that Aboriginal people have been allowed access back onto country to see it, pay respect and make sure those sacred sites have not been desecrated and have been protected.

The former Labor government had a comprehensive suite of proposed reforms to the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*. Unfortunately, due to the parliamentary schedule and the August election, they were unable to be introduced. That protection and contemporisation of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* is something the government should look at. It is the strongest sacred sites legislation in the country, but it could be contemporised and improved. That is something to think about.

I acknowledge the amazing environmental groups across the Northern Territory. I give a shout-out to the Arid Lands Environment Centre, Environment Centre NT and the Environmental Defenders Office which are doing

fantastic work across the Territory with people to make sure we continue to invest, raise awareness and shine a light on this space.

It is also about making sure we continue to deliver infrastructure. In the Member for Barkly's electorate there is a group of community members working with Simon Quilty on remote housing and making sure that it is progressing towards being built for the changing environment—the hotter climate. There are different ways to innovate the construction of those homes. It is heartening that the Commonwealth Government, before the election, renegotiated that remote housing package to allow remote Territorians' involvement in the design of the homes to make sure they are fit for purpose and take into account the changing environment.

I do not want to pre-empt the debate for next year in General Business, but I look forward to having a conversation about water, including water allocation, and looking at what water is available and underground in the Northern Territory. Honouring the commitment of allocating water to the strategic Indigenous water reserves is important. Water is an issue that touches every Territorian's life. Remote Aboriginal people, urban people, our hardworking pastoralists and farmers and everyone in the Territory has a unique connection to water. Water is the lifeblood for every one of us. We need to do more about water.

In the new year Territory Labor will talk with the community about our future policy settings, making sure that we listen, learn and come back with a good position in the following years on environmental and water issues.

I look forward to contributions on this debate. It is an important issue that affects all of us.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Mr Deputy Speaker, the environment plays an important role in the lives of every Territorian. This government—through our key goals of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our important Territory lifestyle—is playing to our natural strengths.

This government recognises the vital importance of conserving the natural environment and balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability. Prioritising responsible development will ensure all Territorians benefit from progress while protecting the unique natural and cultural heritage of the NT.

Mining, gas, agriculture, tourism and Defence are essential pillars in the establishment of a thriving economy in the Northern Territory. This is essential, because we know what Labor did with our budget; it is getting up to $11bn in debt and fast approaching the debt ceiling of $15bn if we do not grow these critical sectors. That affects how we then look after our environment.

The mining industry has long been the largest contributor to the Territory economy. Valued at $8.1bn, the mining industry constitutes about 28% of gross state product, employs over 4,000 people and contributes nearly $210m in royalties.

The Territory hosts some of Australia's most significant deposits of lead, zinc, gold, silver, manganese, bauxite and rare earths such as neodymium. These are key materials used in everyday items such as mobile phones, the electric cars we all want to get in to reduce our emissions, steel, aluminium, appliances and building materials.

Our substantial onshore and offshore gas reserves are establishing the Northern Territory as a critical energy supplier for Australia and the world. Two liquefied natural gas facilities in Darwin Harbour process and export 10% of Japan and Taiwan's annual LNG imports.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors contribute approximately 2.8% of the Territory's gross state product, amounting to about $1.3bn annually, while directly employing about 1% of the Territory's workforce. Our beef, cattle, mangoes, melons, Asian vegetables, cotton, hay and other crops are all in high demand domestically and internationally. Importantly, the agriculture sector occupies a footprint of nearly half of the Northern Territory, and our pastoral industry plays a critical role in sustainably managing our vast savanna land systems.

The Territory's unique lifestyle and environment attracted more than 1.4 million domestic visitors and 191,000 international tourists in 2023, generating about $1.2bn for the Territory and supporting 7,500 jobs. They all come to view what we have in the Territory, which is some of the best environment of anywhere in the world.

The Defence sector employs more than 5,300 people and plays a crucial role in providing opportunities for local businesses.

In the Territory only 0.5% of the land is cleared. This includes for agriculture, towns, roads and airports. There is significant scope to grow the economy with minimal risk to the environment and the outdoor lifestyle we all love and enjoy.

Attracting investment in diverse gas-based industries can enhance LNG exports and promote low-emissions processing and manufacturing industries. The responsible use of these gas-based industries will attract further development and innovation in our transition to renewable energy technology. We have to make those solar panels somewhere.

This is about ensuring the benefits of these resources stay in the Territory. We must find ways to make sure all Territorians are beneficiaries. We will ensure the gas industry is safe and well regulated as its presence grows in the Northern Territory.

The onshore petroleum industry is regulated under a range of Territory laws, ensuring it occurs safely and in line with community expectations. Key legislation includes the *Petroleum Act 1984*, which is supported by the Petroleum Regulations 2020 and Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016.

Two ministers and two agencies are responsible for administering the *Petroleum Act*. The department and Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment are responsible for regulating matters relating to the environment, including the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations. The Minister for Mining and Energy is responsible for the regulation of petroleum titles, well integrity and petroleum service infrastructure, including pipeline integrity and maintenance.

Other regulators are involved in the safe regulation of the industry, including the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. I have met many times with the AAPA CEO, and I appreciate all his insights. There is the independent Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority, with Dr Vogel; the Environmental Regulation Division and the Water Resources Division; NT Bushfires; the weeds unit; and the Heritage branch.

The regulations governing the onshore gas industry in the Northern Territory are designed to ensure that all petroleum activities are carried out in a manner that reduces risks to levels that are acceptable and as low as reasonably practicable. Through a combination of risk assessments, safety standards, environmental management and community engagement, the regulations aim to minimise potential hazards to the environment, public health and workers while allowing for the responsible development of the petroleum industry.

When we speak more broadly about environmental regulation, I want to be clear that the previous government got rid of or at least tried to move a lot of its responsibility. It was afraid to make decisions and delayed whenever it could. We will get on with developing the Northern Territory whilst protecting our environment. We will continue to listen to scientists, not activists, when it comes to good policy.

Regarding the extreme claims about the Territory Coordinator made by the Member for Gwoja, the current draft Bill and Have Your Say are live. There is nothing sneaky about this reform. People will have the opportunity to have their say on this important legislation and be heard. The Chief Minister has outlined the scrutiny this Bill will have, and I look forward to contributing to the debate like all members will.

To the Member for Gwoja who tried to give the government a lesson in listening to experts, here is a lesson for you: your government ignored experts about water allocation and chose to reduce the water allocation in the western Davenport Ranges not because of what the experts and scientists said but because you were chasing votes. It was a disgrace. It was not good policy or science; it was simply that the former Labor government was trying to grab a few votes before an election.

Mr Paech: Is that the Greens Member for Braitling?

Mr BURGOYNE: Shame on you. You ignored the scientists and experts and made it up as you went along to try to win votes.

The water scientists in the department for which I am responsible are an incredible group of people who are sick and tired of being ignored. We will work with the experts so that water allocation can occur in a sustainable and well-thought-out way to ensure there is water for the environment, communities and then industry.

This government will expand the …

Mr Paech: You are looking pretty Green.

Mr HOWE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Member for Gwoja continually interrupts, and I am keen to hear what the minister is saying.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind all members that when a member is speaking, let them speak in silence. There has been banter on both sides that I have tolerated, but let us continue now with the Member for Braitling.

Mr BURGOYNE: This government will expand the Limmen Bight Marine Park, acknowledging its importance and working with the local people to ensure this occurs. The Member for Namatjira—now the Treasurer—worked alongside the Marra Sea Rangers to ensure this important work was progressed. I have seen indicative maps outlining the changes to be made to ensure that this area can be further protected and safeguarded for years to come.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for the opportunity to speak on this important topic.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this important motion on the environment to the Assembly.

I pick up on what the Environment minister said about the Have Your Say process for the Territory Coordinator. To trigger everyone's memory, the Territory Coordinator paper went out to certain stakeholder groups for consultation; it was not made public at that time. It was only because our members had been given that paper and tabled it in parliament that it became public.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the Member for Daly speak, please.

Mr YOUNG: I find it astonishing that the Environment minister tries to bluff it out, saying that it is on Have Your Say. It was only because we tabled that document that it became public. I remind those opposite that we were the ones who ensured Territorians had their say on this paper.

Mr Edgington: Unusual that you would take credit for anything.

Mr YOUNG: The Member for Barkly continues because he does not like the truth to get in the way. The Territory Coordinator paper was tabled by our Leader of the Opposition and then made public. I wanted to get that on the record.

Member for Fannie Bay, I want to hear whether your constituents agree with this because I have been speaking with many across the Territory, and I know they are concerned about this legislation.

It is not lost on this Assembly that the Northern Territory is home to some of the most breathtaking and unique landscapes in the world. It is a place of great physical beauty from the vast central desert region home to the heart of Australia, Uluru; the rugged beauty of Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks; the expansive wetlands in Litchfield National Park; to the broad beaches of Arnhem Land. These places craft natural environments which tell stories of ancient history and unparalleled biodiversity. These landscapes are not just natural wonders; they are also cultural and sacred treasures.

For over 60,000 years they have sustained and inspired Aboriginal people whose knowledge of their country is a legacy we must preserve and ensure is respected. I am fortunate, as my electorate of Daly is a treasure of natural beauty with a rich cultural history and incredible tourism opportunities for locals and visitors alike to explore. We have the incredible waters of the Daly River renowned—particularly in this Assembly by one minister—for its world-class barramundi fishing spots as well as the surreal beauty of Butterfly Gorge, just to name a few.

Our magnificent environment faces unprecedented challenges. Climate change is driving rising temperatures and unprecedented weather patterns threaten ecosystems and ways of life in urban, rural and remote areas across the Territory. Bushfires, invasive species of flora and fauna and habitat destruction are putting pressure on our wildlife and Territory lifestyle. Our coastline spanning from the Arafura Sea to the Gulf of Carpentaria and our marine population face threats from ghost netting and a variety of plastics coming ashore every day.

Our wetlands and rivers—vital lifelines in dry regions—are at risk from water mismanagement and rampant unchecked industry development if we do not conduct our due diligence. We think it is important that we bring this motion before the Assembly.

The CLP government's aim is clearly unashamedly to put an unprecedented amount of centralised power into the hands of an unelected individual who it seems will have more power than members of the Chief Minister's own Cabinet whose abilities are clearly being called into question. Why does the Chief Minister and her team believe that environmental laws or public health consultation should be dashed for political gain, especially when it comes to the impact major projects could have on our environment?

We said loud and clear in this Assembly that the CLP's track record on the environment speaks for itself. It is not just words; it will be actions. By implementing this Territory Coordinator position in its current form, the CLP is declaring itself a party that will put the environment last. This party will put the interests of current Territorians and future generations last.

The CLP said that it would cut regulatory timelines by 50%. How will it do that? We do not know. Will it be by cutting the time for proper and truly considered environmental assessments and by reducing and removing environmental protections when it can? It is clear that the only way to reduce the timeframes is to remove consultation processes and deny Territorians their right to have a say on applications that will impact the environment and broader Territory.

Territorians are waking up to the CLP's power grab, and they have a bit to say about it. I have spoken to many of my constituents over the last few weeks between the last sittings and these sittings. It is amazing how many people raise the issue. When doorknocking in Batchelor and Pine Creek I heard from teachers, Aboriginal corporations and others concerned about this draft Bill coming before the House. They understand the implications of what this draft Bill means and the power grab that the CLP is bringing to the table. It is concerning for a lot of people.

On this side of the Assembly we bring in the evidence, science and, above all, informed decision-making. We listen to the expectations of the community and people's views to ensure we have the balance of environmental protections, conservations and development right.

The former Territory Labor government understood that the natural environment is one of our greatest assets and that we must protect it for the benefit of current and future generations.

In this Assembly we talk a lot about how tourism is a vital part of the Territory economy and how it is a critical job-creating sector delivering significant financial and lifestyle benefits to our regions and cities. However, we should ask ourselves again why people visit the Territory. It is not just to get a glimpse into our unique lifestyle; it is for the opportunity to explore and experience our beautiful outback environment.

That is why the former Territory Labor government was passionate about and consistently backed the tourism industry. Working with the sector, the former Territory Labor government invested strongly in marketing strategies to bring more tourists here, in supporting infrastructure development and in initiatives that would guarantee them a wonderful experience. We also knew that a wonderful experience means investing in tourism that is sustainable and protects our Territory environment.

In 2022 Tourism NT released the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan. This plan recognises that the environment, biodiversity and living cultural values are closely connected with our tourism. It is crucial that the government and industry work together to protect and restore the natural environment while sharing our unique and stunning backyard with visitors from Australia and around the world. This means our tourism industry can continue to strive for economic resilience and we can enrich our diverse local communities while maintaining a balanced environment.

To build on this, the former Territory Labor government also provided Sustainability for Tourism Industry Grants which saw 11 tourism businesses—seven in the Top End and four in Central Australia—receive funding for projects to help reduce their ecological and carbon footprint and positively impact the Territory's natural and cultural environment.

This CLP government does not have a clue what it is doing with tourism. The CLP plan contains vague references to growing tourism, but all it has done is pass laws to lock up 10-year-olds and attempt to give an unelected bureaucrat the ability to fast-track unknown and unfunded projects which could negatively impact the environment and our tourism industry, which we rely on to get visitors to the Territory.

Speaking of tourism, the Territory is home to beautiful, natural and largely untouched parks and reserves which are our biggest drawcards for visitors and locals alike. It would be hard to imagine the Territory without the wonder and beauty of our parks and reserves. These valuable assets need to be managed in a way that opens them for public access but also protects their biodiversity, natural features, spiritual and cultural significance and sacred values.

That is why the Territory Labor government introduced the NT Parks Masterplan in 2023. This crafted an important strategic framework that establishes and prioritises how our parks and reserves will be cared for, developed and protected over the long term. This plan balances the need to deliver new tourism infrastructure, support Aboriginal economic development and our outdoor lifestyle with protecting the environment and biodiversity of our parks.

Another key component to protecting our wonderful environment is Aboriginal ranger groups, which are crucial in frontline service across the Territory. The former Labor government delivered the highly successful Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program, which over the past seven years delivered $10m of capital grants to 46 ranger groups and Aboriginal land management organisations and almost $11m to 31 groups to fund land and sea management projects.

Parks and reserves are valued. They are not only a key part of our lifestyle and biggest tourist attractions. They showcase the best of the NT and offer relevant services and activities to visitors, providing places and offerings for tourism and private development. Managing our parks and reserves involves ensuring all decisions are managed in a culturally respectful way with traditional owners' consent and approval.

Another important aspect of our parks environment we should highlight is the effect of gamba grass. I thank the Member for Nightcliff for bringing the petition for the next General Business day on eradicating gamba grass in Litchfield National Park. It is an important piece we will be debating, and Territory Labor will fully support that motion. We recognise that gamba grass is an invasive species that is already in Litchfield National Park.

Gamba grass threatens to overrun our Territory parks, particularly in my electorate. It endangers not only the wonderful tourism opportunities but also biodiversity. It is an issue at the forefront of the minds of community groups, industries and residents. That is why the former Labor government took steps to invest in the Gamba Army and the overarching gamba management plan.

Territory Labor understands that more action is needed and that this can be done through a sustained, coordinated and appropriately funded targeted approach to mitigate and eradicate gamba grass. Territory Labor calls on the CLP government to honour the funding commitments in the 2024 Territory budget, which will help ensure the hard work against this invasive species continues and that the Territory does not face the risk of an environmental collapse in our beloved parks.

The former Labor government delivered a modern environmental protection system for the Territory. In 2019 our government passed the Environment Protection Bill, which helped create a contemporary environmental protection regime. The *Environment Protection Act 2019* supports responsible oversight of development to protect the Territory's waterways, landforms, marine environments and biodiversity and to prevent irreversible harm.

The Act supports development and growth that bring benefits to everyone now and into the future without compromising the places that are special to Territorians. It supports better decision-making for the Territory where industry knows the rules and the public gets to have its say on how the Territory is developed.

The new and improved environmental impact assessment system replaced the outdated and ineffective system introduced in 1984. The former Territory Labor government understood it was outdated, inefficient and ineffective to deliver the environmental protections that are expected now.

The CLP is pushing for a Territory Coordinator who is focused on economic development, which is important, but this individual has the ability to discard our social and cultural wellbeing and a healthy and productive environment. This type of thinking does not support sustainable development in the long term. It reverts to the thinking that environmental protection is in opposition to our economic development. This is not the case. Environmental protection is integral to it. This is why the Territory Labor government passed contemporary environmental legislation. It is important legislation for industry and proponents because it puts in place an environmental impact assessment and approval process which is clear in its requirements, streamlined and efficient, resulting in greater certainty.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing forward this motion, and I look forward to hearing from other members.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing our attention to one of the Territory's greatest assets. The Territory's nature is world class. It is one of the reasons Territorians and visitors love this place, but our land and water are suffering under the pressure of poorly regulated agribusiness, industrialisation and flimsy legal protections. For a healthy environment that sustains our communities and economy, we must reject the CLP's plan to let big business trash our environment so that its gas and cotton industry mates can get rich.

We have heard this—as some might argue—vague and somewhat jingoistic slogan of restoring our lifestyle, but surely there is nothing more central to the Northern Territory's lifestyle than our natural environment. To restore our lifestyle, surely protecting the environment is a number one priority.

The Greens stand with our community to protect our environment, water and biodiversity because once it is gone it is not coming back. All across the Territory there are incredible places of immense cultural and natural significance. We should be doing everything we can to protect these places for generations to come.

We have a proud history in the Territory of fighting for our environment. Traditional owners have led and continue to lead historic people-powered campaigns to stand up for country. In 1998 the Mirarr people led a nationwide campaign which galvanised Territorians and brought people from across the country to stand in solidarity with the Mirarr and blockade the construction of a mine that would have devastated their country. More than 500 people were arrested over the course of the eight-month blockade under the inspiring and powerful leadership of the Mirarr, and they won. In June this year the Jabiluka mineral lease was not renewed, and the site was added to Kakadu National Park.

This is our proud history in the Territory of standing behind traditional owners to protect country and the environment. We have witnessed across the Territory for the best part of a decade a formidable fight to stop fracking from destroying our water, environment and climate. Territorians have been fighting in communities and towns, from the desert to the sea, against this destructive industry despite representatives refusing to listen.

Only yesterday two incredible people went to court and had their charges withdrawn for standing alongside Larrakia traditional owners to defend Binybara (Lee Point). The formidable Larrakia-led community movement to defend Lee Point has held off the bulldozers from destroying a site of immense cultural and natural significance. I acknowledge the Larrakia families who have been working so tirelessly to protect this place and the community who continues to stand alongside them. Members of the community have to fight incredibly hard for the places they love.

The Save Lee Point movement brought hundreds of community members together to stand alongside Larrakia traditional owners to protect a vital wildlife corridor. When community members protested the unlawful clearing of Lee Point—directly denounced by world-renowned zoologist, Dr Jane Goodall—they were dragged through the courts. Nineteen Lee Point defenders have had to pay thousands of dollars in fines to the NT, yet when allegations were made that Defence Housing Australia, a tax-funded statutory body, had breached planning and environmental laws, nothing happened and investigations were dropped.

What frustrates me immensely is that many Territorians give so much to fight for their environment, yet often they are fighting the decisions made by their own representatives. It is shameless that their representatives would rather work for the benefits of big corporations than their own communities. It is staggering that members of this Chamber can witness the community, camaraderie and passion of the people they represent and still choose to work against them as attack dogs for corporations.

This is why we need to bring more integrity to this place and to government. The connections between representatives in this place and fossil fuel lobbyists is extreme. I just heard the Environment minister mention Dr Paul Vogel, the head of the NT EPA. Because he mentioned him, I must point out that part of his role is to oversee the pollution that INPEX pumps out; however, we found out this year that Dr Vogel also works for a lobbying firm, the clients of which include INPEX. I am not sure that the Environment minister mentioning his name gives us any confidence in our environmental protections.

We need to do so much better to preserve this incredible place and honour the traditional owners and First Nations people who are doing so much to defend their country.

Throughout the election campaign I spoke to countless people who were voting Greens for the first time because they were disgusted with how their government was selling out our environment for the benefit of Texan gas companies and giving away our water to cotton agribusiness.

We need stronger nature laws and to respect these laws. We should not be watering them down.

The Greens have a powerful plan to protect our environment, water and biodiversity. I put our plan to this Chamber. We must establish a Northern Territory biodiversity Act and stop large-scale clearing in the Territory. This will protect places like Binybara (Lee Point) and the banks of the Daly River.

The Territory has never had laws that explicitly protect intact native vegetation, and we are the only jurisdiction without one. It is time to act. We must create a dedicated NT biodiversity strategy to protect our ecosystems in the long term.

We need to fix the Territory's broken water laws. We need to strengthen our *Water Act* to protect the Territory's rivers, wetlands and aquifers. We will repeat the mistakes of the Murray–Darling Basin if we do not act swiftly. Over-allocating water destroys the environment and local communities. We need to safeguard the Territory's free-flowing rivers and groundwater systems.

We also need to establish a safe drinking water Act. Bush communities from the north to the south of the NT are suffering from poor water quality and security. There is currently no legal enforceable minimum standard for drinking water in bush communities. All Territorians have a right to safe and adequate drinking water.

We also must revoke the Singleton Station water licence, the largest groundwater licence in our history that hands over 40 billion litres of water every year for 30 years for free. This ensures and fast-tracks the destruction of our arid ecosystems. Traditional owners are standing strong in opposition to this project, and we must stand with them.

Finally, the Territory also faces unprecedented threats in the face of climate change. The CSIRO has reported that the Top End is projected to be unliveable by 2070 due to blistering humid heat if we continue emitting from fossil fuels. The Red Centre is already vulnerable to scorching summers and bushfires. We saw unprecedented bushfires in the Barkly last year.

I must stress these predictions of an unliveable climate are what our most reliable modelling is showing. We are not on track, as a Territory or the entire country, to meet our emissions reduction targets. We will blow the 1.5-degree increase limit. We are almost about to blow past it today. We will enter a period we are totally unprepared for. Others in this Chamber might not be listening to scientists, but I am.

Instead of tackling these problems, the CLP is pursuing a relentless expansion of fossil fuels in the NT, backed by the gas industry which is one of its biggest donors. This is unconscionable. The CLP wants to build a petrochemical plant at Middle Arm, destroying our air, harbour and climate …

Mr Edgington: Where does your husband work?

Mx McNAMARA: I pick up on that interjection. I am so glad you brought that to the attention of the Chamber. Do you have a problem with tradies? Do you have a problem with people earning …

Mr Maley: We have a problem with you misleading the parliament. You are talking rubbish.

Mr Edgington: Disclose it; be up-front. Tell us the truth.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mx McNAMARA: The truth is that I was a tradie. My partner was a tradie. If you have something about people who were not born with a silver spoon in their mouth and know how to work hard for a living, that is on you.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop this.

Mx McNAMARA: They are calling out interjections over here.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay. Stop the interjections! Please take your seat, Member for Nightcliff. All discussion and debate goes through me. If you want to say something, say it to me. You will cease the interjections and listen to the Member for Nightcliff in silence.

Mx McNAMARA: The CLP wants to build a petrochemical processing plant at Middle Arm, destroying our air, harbour and climate. It wants to put communities in Palmerston at risk of cancer by increasing the carcinogens in the air they breathe by processing gas only three kilometres from where they live. I would hope that the members who represent those areas around Palmerston are concerned for the health of their constituents who will undoubtedly be negatively impacted by the pollution from Middle Arm.

The CLP also wants to ruin the Elizabeth River Jetty fishing area by building five export jetties and increasing shipping in our harbour. Local fishos and the tourism industry are furious about these plans. Apparently, the CLP supports local businesses but not the tourism business, one of our largest employers.

Mr Maley: How do you know it will destroy anything? Where is the evidence?

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections.

Mx McNAMARA: It does not have to be this way. The Territory has the potential to not just rebuild but also rapidly expand our economy by investing in renewables. This will meet the needs of current and future generations while also delivering a fair and just transition for existing energy industry workers and keeping electricity in public hands.

Instead of lobbying for handouts from the gas industry we could use that public money to invest in a renewable industry that could power our economy, just like South Australia which has signed a renewable energy transformation agreement with the federal government which will underwrite its ambitions to become 100% renewable by 2027. I do not want to hear one person in this Chamber say that the technology is not here yet. It is.

We are failing our environment which will affect every Territorian. At risk is our beloved Territory lifestyle; our recreational activities like hiking, hunting, fishing and camping; our tourism sector; our economy; our drinking water; and our communities. At risk is the very city we live in.

We have the most spectacular natural environment in the world with incredible native savanna and some of the world's largest free-flowing rivers, vast desert landscapes and breathtaking beaches. We should be doing all we can to preserve this. We must not let this place become a sacrificial zone for the gas industry. It is in our power to do this, and we owe it to future generations.

The Labor government took steps in the right direction with its Territory Water Plan and the NT Climate Change Response: Towards 2050 policy, but it is far from enough. Indeed, the NT's mismanagement of our resources made national news with an explosive *Four Corners* investigation into the unlawful water grabs made by the private cotton industry without oversight or repercussions.

The opportunity presented to the CLP government is to commit to, not undermine, the legislative and regulatory regime of environmental protections developed under the Labor government as a minimum and then to extend and strengthen them even further and commit to alternative pathways of economic growth.

As a self-proclaimed economically savvy government focused on rebuilding the Territory, the CLP should not be sold on the economic fiction that trading our environment for cash can result in long-term prosperity for the Territory. It is a lazy, uncreative and dangerous approach to economic growth.

Most Territorians I speak to simply do not buy it. They can see these foreign-owned gas companies coming to take our gas and government subsidies and not pay tax. We are essentially giving away our gas for free and destroying our environment in the process. The Australia Institute notes that NT drivers pay 30 times more in vehicle registration than the gas industry pays in royalties. Gas development has few economic benefits beyond those that flow to the gas industry itself. It is a systematic non-payer of tax that crowds out other industries.

Territorians understand that the environment is precious and indispensable. This is why hundreds of people turned out to protest at the front of this House yesterday. People are terrified of the ramifications of the Territory Coordinator proposal. Our environmental legislation—as weak as it is—exists for a reason. If the CLP wants to circumvent protections, what is the point of any of it? Why even bother pretending that you

care about our lifestyle or tourism industry? People are terrified because they can see that the Territory Coordinator is entirely designed to roll out the red carpet to gas companies and large agribusiness like cotton.

We saw scientists in their hundreds unanimously condemn the previous government for greenlighting fracking. Fracking and the expansion of fossil fuel projects are a death sentence for our future. That is the truth. The scientific community is beyond horrified and distressed that a bunch of people with a Year 10 science education think they have the understanding to ignore the evidence of climate change.

Members interjecting.

Mx McNAMARA: Would you like a moment there, Laurie?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Let us not focus on each other; let us focus on the debate.

Mx McNAMARA: The actions of the CLP last night in rushing to remove a reference to human rights in the sessional orders demonstrated the contempt for Territorians it is willing to show. I hope it does not stoop to that level again when it comes to our precious environment.

I urge the CLP not to take a single step back from the protections that are already in place. Safeguarding the NT's water and environment is non-negotiable. Anything less is a failure to lead and a betrayal of the people who call this place home.

I spend my time in this Chamber listening patiently and quietly to people's speeches—which I have feelings about too—and I do not interrupt. I expect the same respect in return.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about the importance of our environment, and I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this motion.

I was not born here, but I have been incredibly grateful to live here for the past 30 years. The richness, diversity, beauty and uniqueness of our environment is unparallelled. Like many here have said, my own life is bound up with the amazing environment, from walking in Kakadu to exploring remote Arnhem Land and the desert and swimming in my local Gurambai (Rapid Creek). I love and care for our environment at a personal level. Our job in this Chamber is to look after the NT, the environment and the people we all love.

I stand before you to address a matter of significant concern to people in my community that threatens the essence of our democratic processes and the strong environmental protections we have worked hard to establish. The proposed creation of a Territory Coordinator is, at its core, an undemocratic move that will undermine the checks and balances in place to ensure transparency, accountability and responsible decision-making. This is not just a policy shift; it is a direct challenge to the democratic principles that allow every Territorian to have a say in how their environment is managed and how their resources are used.

The decision to centralise power in the hands of one person, an unelected bureaucrat, together with the Chief Minister, has serious implications for our system of government. We risk sidelining the voices of local communities, businesses, experts, environmental stakeholders, landowners and traditional owners who have a right to participate in decisions that will impact their lives, businesses and environment. This is not how democracy works. Democracy is about shared responsibility, consultation and transparency.

The proposed coordinator will bypass the rigorous processes we have in place to ensure that policies reflect the needs and values of the people we are all meant to serve. It will instead create a situation where decisions are made in closed rooms, with winks to each other, without proper public scrutiny or input from those who will bear the consequences of those decisions. This is a direct contradiction of the principles of open governance and accountability I have heard this government commit to.

The draft Bill includes a Schedule of 32 laws that could be overwritten by the Chief Minister or Territory Coordinator. Many of these laws have nothing to do with the environment; they relate to the economy or to health and safety provisions that are designed to keep us all safe.

I am unclear on why we need to override these laws—for example, the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act 2004* or the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road Act. Why does the Chief Minister need powers to exempt projects from these laws? If the Chief Minister can assure us that the

Territory Coordinator will not override these precautions, why do those laws need to be included in the Schedule of the Bill?

The proposed role of the Territory Coordinator will dilute the expertise and effectiveness of the agencies and regulatory bodies established to protect our environment. These agencies are staffed by experts and professionals who have years of experience and a deep understanding of the challenges we face. The role of the coordinator will undermine their ability to do their jobs properly and may lead to a weakening of our environmental safeguards.

The challenge this proposal poses is to not only our democratic values but also the integrity of the environmental protections that serve us so well. These are critical to managing the impacts of mining, preserving our water and preparing for the challenges of climate change. These protections are not just symbolic; they are essential to our Territory's future. The *Environment Protection Act*, the Climate Change Response: Towards 2050 policy and the Territory Water Plan are not simply pieces of paper; they are the foundation of our approach to sustainable development. These are not tools to be tampered with or undermined for political expediency; they are tools that ensure we can balance the needs of growth with the need to protect the unique environment that defines us.

Concentrating power in one office with the authority to override or bypass critical environmental protections risks compromising the very laws that protect our land, water and climate. This proposal does not simply challenge our environmental safeguards. As I have said, it challenges the integrity of the democratic processes that allow us to craft, implement and use these safeguards in a transparent and accountable way.

Feedback from people in my community is overwhelmingly negative and concerned about the centralisation of power. People say, 'I support fracking and land clearing, but I do not support this proposal'. People are asking how we can trust the integrity of the consultation process if an interim coordinator has already been appointed to set up the office. How can we trust that the government is listening to our concerns when it is already actioning the office and pre-empting the results of the consultation? How can we trust the government when it has put someone in that position who worked for 10 years for a company that this Bill is set up to advantage? These are good questions.

We are being asked to accept a shift away from a system that values public input, community engagement, expert advice and protecting our environment. Instead, we are being asked to trust an individual to make far-reaching decisions without the same level of scrutiny or oversight that we all deserve. This is not democracy or good governance.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for giving notice of the gamba grass motion and for sharing the stories of the community working together to protect our precious environment at places like Jabiluka and Lee Point. I am proud to say that tomorrow I will present to this parliament a petition from traditional owners to return Lee Point to them.

I am committed to protecting our democracy and our environment. I want to ensure our environmental laws remain strong, clear and effective. I put on record that I will not support a proposal that concentrates power in the hands of one person at the expense of our democratic rights and the health of our environment.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this important motion to the House. Territorians love the environment and seek to ensure that there are strong protections for the Northern Territory environment.

In my electorate of Arnhem we have pristine landscapes we want to protect. There have been great stories of development and tourism on country driven by traditional owners in my electorate, like the beautiful Nitmiluk National Park formerly known as Katherine Gorge; other people may be familiar with the historic name. Nitmiluk National Park has more than 30 years of joint venture sharing between the Northern Territory Government and the Jawoyn people of that beautiful part of the Northern Territory. It has those protections because it is a national park.

Elsey National Park is also in my electorate. It is home to the Bitter Springs thermal pools and the Mataranka Thermal Pools off the aquifer. That water is special as it is crystal clear. It has been used in lots of Northern Territory tourism promotions. I am honoured and privileged to represent that part of the Territory for the locals and all the visitors who spend time, money and effort to come and enjoy the Territory.

During the COVID days when we had only internal travel available to Territorians I was surprised that lots of people who went there to spend their tourism vouchers—which the former Labor government introduced to

get people to enjoy the beautiful landscapes and places that they may not otherwise have visited—had not gone past Katherine previously. They had not been to Mataranka before. I was surprised when I saw lots of people in Katherine either on their way to Mataranka to spend their voucher or on their way back from Mataranka.

One can take it for granted if one has been doing it their whole life. In the last eight years I have done a lot of travel and a lot of kilometres in that beautiful environment. I feel privileged to speak on this motion about protecting the environment and the importance of water security, which are intrinsically linked. Ensuring future generations get the benefit of a healthy environment that those who came before us had is a moral obligation that we all play a role in.

From our beautiful parks and reserves to our red deserts, the glorious ranges in Central Australia, the rainforests, wetlands and tropical seas and waterways of the north and the places I represent in the Arnhem electorate, our environment is the envy of the world and a big reason we love this place. We want to share and continue to protect this place.

When we talk about community expectations, we can be certain that Territorians want our environment properly protected. With any development we want to ensure there are robust regulatory framework assessments so that the merits of it are assessed properly, independently and not for personal gain to ensure that the impact is positive for the Territory and the environment.

The Labor opposition does not want to block development or stall projects, but we want to ensure that any work or development proposals mitigate harm to ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources. We want to ensure development avoids or minimises irreversible environmental harm and protects endangered species, ecosystems and critical habitats. These are uncontroversial things to do, which you would expect of the Northern Territory parliament.

Many developers and industry groups who support this do not want to proceed with projects that would irreversibly harm and cause danger to the environment. This is why we believe the CLP's Territory Coordinator proposal raises a lot of questions.

We have heard from other members today, but I give the Deputy Chief Minister some credit because he said that the point of the Territory Coordinator is to cut corners. He might say that he misspoke and bumbled that, but we have seen the video of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister in hysterics laughing at this constant slip of the tongue. He could not get it right the first, second or third time; I just lost count. Member for Nelson, I commend you for having the courage to tell the truth about the CLP government's subconscious intentions to cut corners and sidestep important processes that Territorians believe should stay in place.

The Chief Minister's proposal to grant herself additional powers to override her ministers' decisions and undertake statutory processes is alarming. This move raises concerns about the erosion of democratic principles and the concentration of power that a Chief Minister and a government should hold.

By taking a page from Prime Minister Scott Morrison's playbook, Chief Minister Finocchiaro is, in effect, threatening to bulldoze her own team's decision-making if they dare follow the established legislation to reach conclusions she disagrees with. This begs the question: does the Chief Minister lack faith in her team's ability to make the best decisions on behalf of Territorians? If so, why appoint them in the first place? Maybe it tells voters that she doubts their judgement if she believes that something should be better. It is not about the legal responsibilities that they swear as ministers of the Crown. We are concerned.

The voices of Territorians are not being heard by the CLP government in regard to the Territory Coordinator proposal. We do not disagree with fast-tracking processes, but we want processes to be in place. I make that clear on the record.

Furthermore, the Chief Minister seeks the power to exclude or modify laws based on the Territory Coordinator's advice. Territorians are indeed correct to worry that if this provision is used it will silence dissenting voices and hide unpopular decisions from scrutiny. This is coming from the CLP government that promised to be transparent, open and accountable in its decision-making. It is looking a bit dark and unclear now.

The government's responsibility is to not only consult properly on decisions that affect Territorians and the things that we love like the environment but also make sure that we do not take for granted an election win. Consulting Territorians is ultimately what the government of the day should always do.

The CLP's attempts to weaken environmental safeguards and limit feedback mechanisms are deeply troubling. We must also consider the dangers posed by somebody like Peter Dutton, the federal Opposition Leader, and his open support of nuclear ambitions.

Mr Kerle: The next Prime Minister.

Ms UIBO: I pick up on the interjection. The CLP Member for Blain is hoping for his team that Peter Dutton becomes the next Prime Minister. I would be interested to see on the record what people in places like Litchfield National Park and Batchelor—the places where we grew up together—would have to say about the possible new Prime Minister Peter Dutton's nuclear ambitions.

Setting aside the concerns we already have about environmental health and the economy, it is clear that the federal Opposition Leader views the Territory as a convenient dumping ground for nuclear waste. This is a shame. Regardless of your side of politics we must make sure that the Territory does not become Australia's dumping ground for nuclear waste. The CLP's willingness to appease its federal counterparts is concerning at a social and economic level.

The combination of a CLP Chief Minister seeking to silence Territorians and a federal Liberal government which would be eager to dump nuclear waste is a frightening prospect for us all in the Territory.

We have seen cases in the Northern Territory's history when traditional owners and station pastoralists fought long and hard against decisions to remove the rights of Territorians to make decisions about land, country and property in the Territory. There are significant and landmark cases in the Territory. I am sure people will know which ones they are.

When Labor came to government in 2016, we knew that Territorians had lost faith in the former CLP government because of its inability to put the interests of Territorians ahead of its own vested interests. We introduced and passed the Environment Protection Bill in 2019 to help restore faith in decision-making by the Northern Territory Government when it came to the environment.

We hear environmental groups say that the environmental laws in the Northern Territory are not strong enough. We acknowledge that, but all the steps that we take to better the interests of Territorians—particularly the protection of the environment—need to continue on a solid platform.

The Labor government felt that it was important to ensure that environmental protection systems supported responsible oversight of development to protect the Territory's waterways, landforms, marine environments and biodiversity from irreversible harm. This development and growth brings benefits to everyone now and in the future without compromising the places that are special and loved by Territorians. We supported better decision-making for the Territory, whereby industry knows the rules and the public has its say on how the Territory is being developed, and there is a fulsome process to follow on from that.

The assessment system our former Labor government replaced was introduced in 1984—dare I say, the year before I was born—and had not been substantially amended since then. It was outdated, ambiguous, inefficient and ineffective.

The delivery of environmental protections in the contemporary manner that Territorians expected and deserved was a huge step forward for the Territory. It seems crazy that, when returned to government, the CLP axed the Office of Climate Change. Does it not learn from its mistakes? This was in its DNA before, from 2012 to 2016, and it has not learned from this; the CLP has done it again.

Climate change is one of the most significant and defining issues facing the Territory, Australia and the globe. We have a government that wants to wash its hands of any responsibility or discussion by axing that important government office focused on climate change.

After years of inaction and denial by the CLP in government, our former Labor government restored funding to environmental groups and restored the Office of Climate Change. We released the Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050 policy. If those opposite have not read that document, I implore them to do so.

If we do not act on climate change, we will see further negative impacts on water security, our personal health and wellbeing, major infrastructure, the thriving of key industries and jobs and the flourishing of our natural ecosystems.

The transition to a low-carbon economy underpinned by technology will not only get us to a net zero emissions future but also create new jobs and industries while maintaining the Northern Territory's competitiveness.

Our response paper said:

> *Climate change impacts are already being experienced across the Territory. Over the last century, annual average temperatures across the Territory have increased by 0.5˚C in the west and 2.2˚C in the south-east. There has been a significant increase in the number of extremely hot days, in both the Top End and central Australia. Climate modelling indicates that these trends will continue.*

I am sure everyone in this Chamber has seen the impact of climate change in the Territory. When I speak to Aboriginal ranger groups in my electorate and the wildlife rangers, we talk about the change in the seasons. People share stories about the changes they have seen from when they were growing up to when they were teenagers, then young adults and now in their midlife or elder years. People are concerned, particularly when it comes to a decrease in animal and plant species. They are concerned about the impact of climate change on the environment and what will be left for their kids, grandkids and great-grandkids. It is everyone's business to be concerned about climate change.

The CLP has not shared any vision or put on record what it will do to address climate change. The CLP has been in government for 13 weeks and has been quiet on this important issue. It would be great if the government explained what it intends to do in this space.

I am hearing from my electorate and other parts of the Territory that it is not good enough and Territorians will not accept this from their new government. We want to ensure we provide a fulsome overview of any legislation, policies or regulation we have oversight for in this place. It is ultimately provided by the government, but we still need to provide that information to our electorates, particularly when it comes to water security. Water is vital for our wellbeing. It does not matter what part of the Territory we are in; we all know how important water is. The functioning of our communities and key industries need certainty about the demand for water use and the protection of water.

The former Labor government focused on new safe drinking water legislation, securing Darwin's future water supply, improving water security for our remote communities and improving water outcomes for homelands on country. We have already done all the work; the new government can continue that work. It can be a Territory legacy, not necessarily just a Labor legacy.

The plan we worked on already delivered a targeted $28m remote water security and quality program. That work included new bores, network upgrades, improved water disinfection systems and the installation of meters to monitor and reduce water usage. It included working with the Commonwealth Government and Aboriginal land councils to deliver more housing in our remote communities through the remote housing program to reduce overcrowding. The program included investing $139m in essential service infrastructure and upgrades to support the remote housing investment program. Over the next four years this will be a big task the new government can continue. It will create a long-lasting Territory legacy; water infrastructure and protection of the environment are important parts of that.

We appointed a new Controller of Water Resources. The role is now an independent statutory decision-maker, separate from the former Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security. The controller has wide-ranging powers under the *Water Act*, including granting licences and permits, approving actions and enforcing compliance on water usage.

Mr BROWN: 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.

Ms UIBO: This provides institutional separation between water resourcing, allocation and management, as well as regulatory enforcement in accordance with the National Water Initiative.

The Territory Labor opposition calls on the CLP government to amend the *Water Act*. The current Act has served the Territory well, but in this term amendments should be made to:

- support and enhance sustainable development and promote the value of water and its management now and into the future

- implement a framework for allocation decisions that sets in legislation the protections of environmental and cultural values, taking into account the risk and impacts of climate change

- implement strong transparency measures and mechanisms to engage with the community and ensure that Aboriginal Territorians have a genuine and meaningful voice in the processes

- commit to renewal of the National Water Initiative and other key national water policy reforms.

In the last term of our Labor government we introduced reforms to manage the environmental impacts of mining. These included passing amendments to the *Environment Protection Act 2019* to transfer responsibility of environmental regulation of mining activities to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security and to establish a risk-based outcomes-focused environmental licensing regime for all mining activities in the Northern Territory.

We transferred mining officers from the former Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade to the Environment department to regulate the environmental impacts of mining under the new regime, and we developed and consulted on risk criteria and standard conditions for mining licensing.

Our former Labor government also progressed work on key deliverables under the NT Circular Economy Strategy, including expanding and simplifying the Territory's successful container deposit scheme by establishing ministerial recycling rate targets; undertaking analysis and consultation to inform a ban on problematic single-use plastics; and facilitating investment in waste management, resource recovery and recycling infrastructure across the Territory, including through the national partnership agreement.

In that time we were proud to work on initiatives to see what else we could do in government, looking at what Territorians and key environmental groups, as well as industry groups in the mining and gas sector, had brought forward.

I must mention the rangers and the important work they do across the Territory, particularly in preserving the environment and natural landscape. Our Northern Territory rangers, whether they are Aboriginal rangers or Parks and Wildlife rangers, make a significant contribution to the regions' environmental, economic and social wellbeing. Our rangers are dedicated and work hard on country, often in hot weather and sometimes in wet weather.

They are essential to protecting and preserving the Northern Territory's unique and diverse natural resources, including flora, fauna and ecosystems. They are essential to managing wildlife populations, monitoring species and implementing conservation programs to protect endangered species. They are instrumental in maintaining and managing protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, coastal reserves and marine protected areas, as well as Indigenous protected areas.

They also work on implementing fire management strategies to prevent and mitigate the impact of wildfires on the environment. They monitor and control invasive species such as weeds and feral animals to protect native ecosystems, and often they are involved in research projects, collecting important data and statistics—which we can use for whatever we want, apparently. This collection of data and statistics about the environment and ecosystems enables us to see over days, weeks, months and years the changes in the seasons and to the species of plants and wildlife in the Northern Territory.

Ranger groups in my electorate of Arnhem have a cool contract to collect space junk from the Equatorial Launch Australia rocket launches in North-east Arnhem in the Member for Mulka's electorate. The space junk has to go somewhere, and unfortunately it falls. The Mimal Rangers are contracted by NASA to track and find the space junk that falls from the important scientific research rocket launches in the Arnhem electorate in the Indigenous protected areas. That sort of work is important when we talk about looking after country and also in learning about the new technologies and how we can continue to preserve country.

There are many amazing groups, but there are two on the coast that I particularly want to mention: the Numburindi Rangers from Numbulwar and the Anindilyakwa Rangers from Groote Eylandt.

The Groote Eylandt rangers already have a partnership with Sea Shepherd, an international environmental group, for the protection of our coastal and marine beautiful sea country. Sea Shepherd was at Groote Eylandt last year—and I think this year, too—collecting kilograms of ghost nets, which are the old, abandoned fishing nets that drift in the ocean and cause great danger to marine species and plant life.

Excitingly, next year the Numburindi Rangers will also partner with Sea Shepherd in South East Arnhem Land in the Gulf of Carpentaria—my mother's country. They will also provide an opportunity to learn, share and teach Sea Shepherd and vice versa about the work they do on country, particularly regarding ghost nets. The Member for Mulka also has ranger groups in his electorate; our boundaries cross over between Mulka and Arnhem. Protecting sea country is so important because 80% of the Territory's coastline is protected Aboriginal sea country.

I acknowledge the work our rangers and public servants do across the Northern Territory, supporting cultural and traditional practices and promoting joint management of land and sea country. The work they do educating visitors from within the Territory or Australia or international visitors about the importance of the connection of local communities to our plant and wildlife and the importance of conservation, sustainability and environmental protections is invaluable. We thank you for that work.

Rangers provide the guidance to tourists and locals in supporting responsible recreation and tourism practices, particularly on country. Our rangers play a vital role in maintaining the health, resilience and productivity of the Territory's natural and cultural resources; it deserves to be protected, and their work deserves to also be supported.

Our commitment to protecting the environment has never wavered, and we are calling on the CLP government to at least consider the environment in the decisions it makes over the next four years. We would prefer this as opposed to an attack and attempt to silence people in the Territory who care about the environment, who look after the environment and who want to see more protections in the Northern Territory.

We will continue to work and listen to and learn from Territorians. We would love the CLP government to do the same to ensure that we can keep our Territory environment pristine and in great shape. I place on the record again my thanks to the Member for Gwoja for bringing forward this important debate because we cannot have a future in the Territory if we do not protect our environment.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this important issue to the Chamber.

Everyone has a responsibility to look after country. Whether you are a First Nations custodian on the land, whether you call this country home or whether you are a tourist and visit as a guest, we all have the responsibility to look after country.

I am concerned by the visitors to beaches outside Darwin where four-wheel drives are damaging turtle nests and impacting our beach environment. I am concerned by the increase in foreign vessels coming to our coast to steal trepang. I am concerned about illegal commercial fishing in the intertidal zone. I am concerned by the increase in tourists choosing to wander off designated pathways or roads into waterways and islands where there are sacred sites and protected areas.

We all have a responsibility to look after country, but we all need greater resources and powers from government for rangers and TOs to control and look after our country and waterways to enforce the laws because these crimes are happening on country and not being addressed. Our country is not Boundless Possible; there are rules and laws which must be applied with the same vigour with which the government is chasing crime in town.

In August last year the ABC reported two workers' account of spraying contaminated water into the ground for five days in the Tamboran Resources mine. These big risks are happening in the Beetaloo Sub-basin, but we hear little about this risk. I am not the only person who says no to fracking; there are many people in the Northern Territory who say no and do not want fracking on our country.

Many First Nations people know that if we care for country the country will care for us. When Yolngu looks at the country we can see ourselves in the land. The phrase 'You cannot get blood out of a stone' does not make sense to Yolngu because we can see our blood running through parts of our natural surroundings—rocks, trees and the rivers are who we are. We are connected to land, and it is part of us. The Yolngu people know that we come from the land, and we will return to the land. Our spirits and our ancestors' spirits are within the land and water.

There are many stories of people getting sick, and our country is sick because our spirit is connected to our country. This happened to my father who became unwell when bad fire was burning on his country. When the fire was put out, he became well again. This happened when he was old and his spirit was coming closer

to his country again, so he could feel the damage of the fire in his country and his body. This is how we connect to country. It is an extension of ourselves as our kin. It is serious and dangerous to damage country.

Over many years I have met with the members of the Nurrdalinji Aboriginal Corporation to hear their concerns about fracking in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. Like me, they do not want fracking on their country and have been fighting this for years. Recently they issued a media release about the government's push for the Territory Coordinator. Jingili elder and Chair, Samuel Janama Sandy, said:

> *We shouldn't hurry things, just so frackers can push more money into their pockets. We need to protect our water, our plants and animals and governments need time to make sure projects won't do damage.*
>
> *The Territory is a beautiful place. Traditional Owners have a responsibility to protect country and water for their families and everyone who lives here.*
>
> *The new government should be thinking about how to create better housing, health and clean energy for our communities and real jobs that don't involve digging into our country.*
>
> *This is all about money, money, money and opening the door for big companies to do what they want here.*

I share their concerns about the Territory Coordinator who has the power to say yes to mining and other activities, even though the custodians for the country may say no and the activities may be harmful to our environment.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur gave a statement in September last year stating that recent scientific reports suggest that the temperatures in the Northern Territory could make the region inhabitable for humans. Despite this, petrochemical and oil and gas industries are lining up massive projects. This threatens to make Darwin and the region a climate change sacrifice zone.

The Northern Territory should not be a sacrifice zone, and we need to be careful that a Territory Coordinator does not sacrifice the NT environment for the sake of the economy. First Nations people do not want to become climate refugees because our country is no longer inhabitable. Such displacement would also endanger the future of our cultures.

I call on this government to consider the legacy that it leaves the Northern Territory. You are talking a lot about the legacy that the last government left, but what will your legacy be? Will it be environmental and cultural destruction? Everyone in this Chamber—everyone who lives in the NT—has a responsibility to look after the land and care for country, and that should be the priority for this government. There should be a priority to work in partnership with First Nations people to ensure we are meeting the responsibility of looking after country and protecting everyone's future.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Mulka for his contribution which we always value. I am always amazed to see the Labor opposition trying to rewrite history. It is like when my boys were little and would make a little mess in their nappy. They would come to me and were so proud, saying, 'Daddy look at what is in my nappy; I have done a poo' and off we would go to clean it up.

In a similar way, the previous Labor government made a huge mess of—the list is too long—the Territory's justice system, as the Attorney-General, unfortunately, is finding out. She is now cleaning the mess there and with NAAJA. Labor members made a mess in the economy with record debt and deficit, heading towards economic destruction. They made a mess in our child protection system. They made a mess in our tourism sector, which has been declining year on year when we have some of the most beautiful tourist destinations in the world.

I will speak about a mess in gamba management. The previous CLP government, for all its flaws, did a smart thing. It introduced, or expanded, the free herbicide program. That program gives free herbicide, glyphosate, commonly known as Roundup, to landholders to assist them to manage gamba on their properties.

This is in line with the philosophy of the CLP. The CLP does not believe in the big hand of government coming down and smacking private individuals or telling people how to look after their own land. The CLP supports individual freedom and liberty, empowering people to look after themselves and their own property and to be the masters of their own destinies.

Indigenous landholders, traditional owners looking after country, freehold landholders, people on small blocks in the rural area—like the Members for Nelson and Goyder and some of the Member for Daly's constituents—and people on farms or cattle stations are smart people.

Some people call gamba the green bulldozer. I have seen the steady and inexorable advance of gamba and the hot fires that come with it, turning remnant rainforest in our tropical savanna lands into open grasslands covered by a monoculture of gamba. The mechanism of that is the gamba grows to three or four metres high and forms an extremely dense structure of clumps. It generally has a propensity to burn late in the season when you get intense grassfires that will burn all night and day. They tend to overcrop and destroy the trees, and the intense heat destroys the bushland. You end up with open country that only has gamba. It is a monoculture. It is not something our native animals do well in, although the pig hunters love it because the pigs love the gamba.

Gamba is a great food for cattle, and they are one of the few things that can manage gamba effectively. Our pastoralists are wise and can, with savvy management and rotational grazing, manage gamba and get it to a point where it is not spreading too much.

The former CLP government turbocharged the free herbicide for landholders. It was a great program because it enabled landholders to take control of the gamba on their property. No-one wants to have an invasive weed on their property. Landholders with cattle are happy to manage and control it, but no-one wants to see it spreading through the pristine wonders of Litchfield National Park. That program enabled landholders to spray gamba on their boundaries which assisted with their responsibilities under the *Bushfires Management Act* to maintain a firebreak.

That was a fantastic program, and it is still going, but this is what I want to get to: in 2020 the former Chief Minister Michael Gunner promised us an army of people to be crawling over the Territory and fighting gamba tooth and nail.

It is hard to see where the Gamba Army went because we still have gamba; it is still marching in Litchfield National Park, and it is still up and down the highway. Member for Barkly, you have driven the Stuart Highway a lot; have you seen any significant reduction in gamba? For the record, he is shaking his head. I am not sure what the Gamba Army did. Maybe it had some cappuccinos or cold drinks. The Gamba Army definitely had a snazzy car because we always saw people driving around in that freshly wrapped car, but we did not see a lot of action.

We saw a failure to match the funding for the free herbicide program for landholders with inflation, particularly as COVID hit. We all appreciate that was a challenging, unprecedented time. It was the largest pandemic in 100 years. It threw a lot of things into question.

I have some statistics from cropsmart.com.au. Glyphosate was $3.60 per litre pre-COVID and spiked to over $12 per litre during COVID. Over the first two years of the last term, glyphosate—which is the predominant chemical used to control gamba grass—increased in price approximately four times.

I am not sure that the budget for the free herbicide program increased to match that, so ultimately what happened was less herbicide was available. That is what I heard from people in the Litchfield area.

Previously there was a strong effort from the former CLP government to make sure there was sufficient herbicide to assist landholders to manage their boundaries. There are technical details about the different zones of gamba infestation and how some areas are zoned for management and some for eradication, but I will not go into that for now. However, if they were pastoralists and gamba was already established, they could manage their boundaries and the gamba on their property according to their own needs, and they could prevent gamba from moving off or onto their property.

Under the previous Labor government that was allowed to fall by the wayside, and it became harder for landholders to access herbicide via this program, with the result that landholder activity to control gamba on their boundaries significantly diminished.

People in the Litchfield area saw those gamba inspectors—maybe this is what the Gamba Army was getting up to—driving around in their shiny car with all the wrapping handing out compliance notices. Were they driving along the Stuart Highway? Were they looking at Crown land or the local council? No. They were driving along the tarmac roads, and if they could see gamba within 15 metres of the fence—even one little blade of grass—they would do a Google search, find the block of land and then send a compliance note to the landholder.

I have seen some of these notices, and they boggle the mind of any long-term Territorian. They were expecting landholders to do compliance to eradicate all gamba plants within 10 or 15 metres of the boundary by the end of February.

Some of those listening to or reading this may not be aware, but February in the NT is the middle of the monsoon. I do not know how they were expecting landholders to get out, because if you drove a tractor onto that land at that time of year, you would be bogged to the axles. You would not be going anywhere. You would be walking around pulling it out. You cannot drive a LandCruiser, as it would get bogged. Unless you had a hose about three kilometres long for some of these properties, good luck. That is what they were doing.

Instead of helping landholders and supporting them to manage gamba in a productive way, they went around using the big hand of government to whack them and say, 'Here is a fine. You must do the impossible; walk around in the middle of the monsoon and try to pull out the big clumps by hand, or we will fine you. We will use the big stick of government to perform enforcement. We will not look at helping you by increasing the budget for this useful program.'

I wanted to bring that to the attention of the Assembly because many people in the Litchfield area I spoke to were so disappointed. In 2020 the former Chief Minister was going around making such a big song and dance—Boundless Possible, the comeback capital of the Territory. He said the Gamba Army would save us from the green bulldozer of gamba grass. All we got was a few public servants in a shiny car driving around writing tickets, which was not useful.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this motion to the House. We are all Territorians who love and support our environment. It is one of the great things about the Territory. We all love fishing and getting away on the weekend for a camp. We need the environment, and we need it to be maintained for future generations but also need to balance that with sustainable development.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, it has been a great day for bipartisanship. What a pleasure to be in the Chamber on a day when we have been able to work constructively across the floor to try to execute a positive outcome for the Northern Territory in relation to the preceding motion.

I welcome the motion and thank the mover for giving us the opportunity to think about environmental protections, specifically recognising the importance of safeguarding the Territory environment for future generations and in support of our Territory lifestyle. We can all agree we want to live in a Northern Territory where we can enjoy our natural environment. There is nobody here who wants to wantonly destroy what we have in terms of landscape and amenity.

We are pleased to reaffirm support for our critical environmental protections. What is there to say? We are not seeking to tamper with our protections; we are seeking to maintain our environmental status quo. We are seeking to break the status quo in relation to our economic malaise. The two can happen at the same time. There is no reason for us to fear sustainable, economic development under the auspices of all or any of what we have been proposing to this point—likewise, that this motion seeks to have us commit not to undermine our strong legislative and regulatory framework to environmental protections is a welcome development.

The question of my political leanings is a recurrent fixation of the opposition, so let me deal with it for the benefit of contextualising my contribution to this debate. Let me freely declare that whilst I was a member of the World Wildlife Fund at age 10, I am not a member of the Greens Party. I do, however, applaud the sole member of the crossbench who has consistently provided evidence relying on actual data and research as opposed to the opposition who thus far demonstrated no such attention to detail in any regard. There has been lots of talk about evidence and data well into our second sittings day. Having beseeched opposition members to look into something in practical terms, there still is not a fact or figure of substance, just obfuscation, motherhood statements and grandstanding. I find it flabbergasting that opposition members could get to this point with so little information to rely upon in building all or any of their arguments.

Meanwhile, the Member for Nightcliff has logical consistency to her arguments with what she provides by way of evidence and data. That said, the key is that I respectfully agree to disagree with the Member for Nightcliff's conclusions and her substantive assessment of a range of issues. It is possible to look at the same set of information and respectfully disagree.

We are looking at the information and data, whereas the entirety of the opposition chooses to be wantonly blind to the reality of our demographic and economic decline and, indeed, the details of what we are putting forward in relation to our legislation on improving economic prospects.

This year would have marked the 20th year of my association with the Oxford University Centre for the Environment. That is where I was based before I came here. I mention it because it is relevant to establishing bona fides on this debate. The insinuation and assertion is consistently that we are all pro-development monsters over here who are out for all our monopoly money buddies, desperately trying to dig up every tree with every bulldozer at our disposal.

The fact is I was based at a place which is one of the world centres for research on climate change, carbon capture and storage and climate modelling. Even prior to my association with that place I was based—fortuitously, on the basis of the excellent public schooling education I received under a strong and stable CLP government for 27 years—at the University of Sydney in the school of geography where, again, sustainable economic development, mining sustainably, protecting our waterways, looking after our built environment and urban planning are matters of deep consideration and have been of great interest to me over many years.

One of the places associated with that School of Geosciences at the University of Sydney was the Australian Mekong Resource Centre which is renowned as a place of research, discussion and debate on development and environmental issues in the Mekong Delta region. Why do I mention the Mekong Delta? Because we are talking about water and rivers which we are all concerned about.

It is not just me who wants to protect our waterways; it is our many members who would be devastated at the loss of the capacity to catch a fish in the Northern Territory. We are not looking to exploit our natural resources to the detriment of the Northern Territory; we are looking to sustainably develop our economy and provide the regulatory frameworks with which to do so.

The point is that opposition members have no unique claim to being defenders of the environment, nor can they assume any specific moral high ground on issues pertaining to environmental protection. It is a shared and common aspiration for us to sustainably develop the Northern Territory whilst not damaging our environment. For that reason I reiterate that I welcome the motion and opportunity to debate it.

As I pointed out only yesterday in the reflections that this House had on the 50th anniversary of this Legislative Assembly, one of the ministers who spoke to provide context on our history was Hon Daryl Manzie. He weaved in noteworthy remarks regarding the foundations upon which our economic growth was predicated, including laying the preconditions for sustainable resource development, being in gas and mining generally, and providing the regulatory frameworks that have to date ensured we have been blessed to create economic growth using mining and resource extraction without compromising our lifestyle and environmental protections.

We are fortunate to have had virtually no incidents of catastrophe in the Northern Territory over our period of development. People have fought for protections and for development, and they had the opportunity to have their say. People will continue to have the opportunity to have their say under the auspices of this government and the frameworks we provide.

There have been developments since the 1980s, including many positive ones provided by both sides of government in the Northern Territory. That is great and how it should be. Frankly, I am delighted that Labor did useful work in this regard, alongside driving the economy into the ground over the last eight years. It is fortuitous that we have accelerated an agenda that may have been dated in some regard and that we have a foundation upon which to sustainably develop the economy.

I have personal experiences in and around decision-making in the major project space in the Northern Territory. This is key because it is clear that the opposition and the crossbench to a large extent have a real lack of understanding of what came out of the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report about the creation of the commission structures, under its auspices to streamline and fast-track major projects within a regulatory environment that was still robust, to provide major project delivery on any front.

The reason we have had such poor execution and delivery on major projects is that, undoubtedly, duplication exists, as does a lack of clarity on decision-making authority. We have a series of public service structures that were put in place over the eight years of the last government which resulted in nobody being able to make a decision definitively or pick up the ball to try to run it into the tryline. That is part of the reason we do not have any major projects to show for ourselves, other than works in progress.

The Territory Coordinator proposal is genuinely a sensible, good-faith, well-foreshadowed attempt to address a large part of this. The now Chief Minister introduced a private member's Bill in relation to the Territory Coordinator more than four years ago. There have been two parliaments' worth of discussion in this area,

and a great deal of thought has been put into this. I believe it to be a sensible good-faith attempt to address a lot of these issues.

One of the great concerns in the House is about gas. We are talking about the gas industry in broad terms without much reference to detail. I implore you to read the document in my hand, which is the October 2017 ACIL Allen Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, otherwise known as 'The Economic Impacts of a Potential Shale Gas Development in the Northern Territory'. I bring this up because lots of people have an opinion that they are positive about this document, but I am not convinced many people have read it cover to cover. I will be honest with you, I have not read it cover to cover yet either, but on the basis of the decisions that we have to make in this place it is incumbent on everyone in this House to know the detail. It is clear that people are picking bits out of it as and when it suits them to try to defend or discredit the idea of sustainable economic development in the Northern Territory.

The contrast of opinions on it reflects that it has been poorly read, but I confess that I am not the person who sourced this document. I took the opportunity to meet with people from Frack Free NT, because they wanted to voice their concerns in relation to a range of these matters. I am not the only one; many of my colleagues are making time to consult and hear a diversity of opinions. Sometimes we agree; sometimes we disagree, but we are trying to respectfully take on all the opinions and assuage reasonable concerns.

I met with Frack Free NT, in good faith, which provided me this document, which has provided me something to do over Christmas. It is disappointing that other institutional advocates for the environment have clearly compromised their own integrity in recent times by trying to fudge the facts and figures and/or the narrative. It is timely and serendipitous that today in the *Australian* there is an article titled, 'Serpent and a total Croc: emails expose collusion'.

I have friends who are anthropologists and scientists who work in related fields. When people fudge the figures, it discredits their work as well. It is about making sure we look at robust work, read it, take it on board and can balance sustainable economic development with environmental protections.

I confess that the other favour Frack Free NT did for me the other day was drawing to my attention this briefing note produced by none other than the Environmental Defenders Office. This briefing note on the role of the Territory Coordinator, dated 31 October 2024, is a great piece of work.

Interestingly, by the time I finished reading it I was much more comforted by the idea of the direction we are taking and the Territory Coordinator model. It points out a range of things that do not seem to be coming up in this debate at all in relation to the real scope of the Territory Coordinator's powers and the fact that it is not a superhuman Wizard of Oz but a statutory body that will be informed by other arms of government. We are vesting in a statutory body the capacity to finally make a decision to move things forward. I read nothing in this that suddenly horrified me and made me think we are dismantling democracy. We are trying to streamline a process and create efficiencies in a system that clearly is gridlocked and replete with inefficiencies.

A key thing to note is how the Territory Coordinator model will work with federal laws. It is clear that the Northern Territory Government does not have the power to modify, exclude or override Commonwealth laws which apply to projects. These include approvals under a range of Commonwealth legislation.

We are seeking to do our part of the heavy lifting of promoting sustainable economic development whilst protecting our environment. We are not seeking to autocratically dictate what should happen, where it should happen and why it should happen or to discredit any subject matter expert who contributes information.

I encourage you all to look at this document. By the end of reading it, I thought, 'This is great; these guys are on the right track.' We can respectfully agree to disagree, but we need to be looking at the same information. It is not possible to have these debates meaningfully unless we are willing to hear a plurality of voices and respectfully debate the issues.

In relation to the Territory Coordinator, the Chief Minister has been fair in providing opportunity for people to express concern, dissent or offer support. The consultation and review process has been clearly and publicly articulated, and there is every reason to believe if we follow that process, everyone will have the opportunity to contribute to the debate and these matters will come before this parliament again.

I am supportive of the proposition and motion put forward, and I see no logical inconsistencies with being supportive of this government's efforts to try to streamline economic activity in this polity.

My position on energy security is in the public domain. As far as I am concerned, we have an abundance of sun and gas, and we should seek to make the best possible use of both of those things.

Recent announcements by our Deputy Chief Minister point to our commitment to continuing to support solar technologies as part of a holistic approach to ensuring energy security. We recognise that large-scale solar generation supported by adequate battery storage is an important component of a stable and cost-efficient electricity system.

I am especially encouraged by the detail provided by the minister in recent weeks on our renewable energy hub. Our commitment to that renewable energy hub involves the co-location of up to six large-scale solar farms. Those farms would be capable of generating 200-odd megawatts of renewable energy alongside a battery energy storage system.

Mr CHARLS: 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.

Dr RAHMAN: The renewable energy hub will be capable of generating 180 to 210 megawatts of renewable energy, alongside a battery energy storage system, all on a single site. This is proximate to existing network infrastructure. That site is 940 hectares of Crown land located on the west side of Finn Road, just 19 kilometres south of Palmerston and four kilometres north of Berry Springs. The electricity produced in that hub will be fed directly into the Darwin–Katherine grid, supplying clean and renewable power to Territory households and businesses.

We are trying to balance things without turning this into an ideological stomping ground. We are utilising our natural resources, which are sun and gas in abundance. It makes good sense for us to have mature debates about utilising all of these in pursuit of energy security for the Northern Territory.

I am saddened by suggestions that we are all climate denialists and haters over here. To hear the word ‘hate’ is frankly nonsense and unfair. The reality and the rhetoric of climate change decision-making is different.

The fact of the matter is that the 1.5-degree targets on climate change and temperature change were long ago abandoned by the real decision-makers globally and top-tier scientists involved in those processes. I have not been to every COP, but I have been to climate change forums where these matters are discussed openly, frankly and transparently with a view of ensuring we do not destroy our planet while trying to do the right thing by future generations.

Multilateral spaces within which we have these discussions about trying to mitigate global climate change are the forums where these meaningful conversations should be had. You will find increasingly in multilateral spaces that the conversations are leaning towards pragmatism. It is not the overarching statements or headlines coming out at the end of COP summits that are of most interest to people; it is the important sidebar discussions where pragmatic solutions are made to try to mitigate climate change and create sustainable economic growth.

It is a reality that this government has chosen to no longer have a specific climate change portfolio. I do not think there is anything problematic in that decision insofar as the last climate change portfolio was not making great leaps and bounds in mitigating climate change in any practical way on any scale.

To what effect do we have a ministry—to what end and purpose? It makes no sense to create unnecessary administration and bureaucracy. We have not dispensed with caring about the environment or wanting to protect the Northern Territory’s natural resources simply because we have organisationally restructured the public service to ensure that there are better reporting lines and greater clarity for decision-making.

The Territory Coordinator model is an expansion of precisely that. It is the continuation of a model that has been in play from a time when we had ministers with high-level subject matter expertise surrounded by advisers with even greater expertise to the devolution of that model, creating greater powers in the public service and greater layers within the system to speed up processes whilst adding people to the equation, like commissioners. It is a model now where we are trying to put everything in a one-stop shop to make sensible decisions about cutting through paperwork and tape of all forms.

Climate refugees were referred to as well. As someone who has worked in both the climate and refugee space, we are playing pretty fast and loose with some of those terms. Yes, I am concerned about climate

refugees. However, I will be honest with you: I am concerned about them in Bangladesh, not the Barkly. Those are the places that will have people who are imminently facing loss of life and livelihood because of the downstream consequences of global climate change.

We have much more pressing socioeconomic matters to address in our remote and country areas of Australia and the Northern Territory specifically before we start worrying about creating climate refugees from south of the Berrimah Line. A modicum of perspective is warranted. What we have had to a large extent today—not entirely but to a large extent—is a bit of activism for activism's sake. We have had grandstanding; a lazy conflation of issues—specifically by the Labor opposition—fearmongering and an extremely lazy, if well-intentioned, voicing of concern.

I note that other members of the House on the crossbench raised some valid and well-informed concerns. I respectfully disagree with some of their conclusion. However, I find it galling that we keep hearing this nonsense from the Labor opposition about the model we are putting forward trampling democracy and ensuring that nobody can make a decision or be heard, with all-powerful Wizard of Oz-like figures who will determine the fate of the entire jurisdiction.

The Territory Coordinator is a statutory office, not a person who will singularly make decisions. The sad reality is within government there is considerable red, green and, probably most importantly, beige tape. The proof of those obstructions existing is work previously conducted within NTG. My Cabinet colleagues and former Labor members can dig up that work if they so choose. They will find that work on all the regulatory hurdles in this place has been buried, as with a range of other problematic information produced by good public servants in large numbers over the last eight years.

We will ensure that the gas industry is safe and strongly regulated as its presence grows in the Northern Territory. The onshore petroleum industry is regulated under Territory and Commonwealth laws, and we will ensure that continues to happen in line with community expectations. Do not forget just how many regulators are involved in the safe regulation of the industry. We have the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, the independent Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority, the Environment Regulation Division, the Water Resources Division, NT Bushfires, the weeds unit and the Heritage branch.

The reality is we have a regulatory framework to govern the onshore gas industry, and it is designed to ensure that petroleum activities are carried out in a way that reduces risks to a minimum. Through a combination of risk assessments and safety standards, environmental management and community engagement, those regulations will minimise potential hazards to the environment, public health and workers whilst allowing for responsible development of the petroleum industry.

We are here to talk about the environment writ large, which is bigger than just one industry, person or set of laws. You must look at the entire landscape, and there is a lack of faith in or appreciation for Commonwealth environmental legislation and oversight.

I return to where I started in noting that it has been a great day for bipartisanship, in my opinion. Therefore, I welcome the motion. Further to that, I, along with my CLP colleagues, look forward to continuing to support the NT's framework for environmental protections and promote models for sustainable development.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, before I get started I pick up on one point that the Member for Fong Lim forgot when he was talking about the government regulating the gas industry.

The gas industry will regulate the gas industry because it has big companies, and they have an environmental licence—a social licence—to look after the environment and their workers. They know if there is an environmental issue they will be held to account by the government and their investors. Their investors are looking for companies that will have a well-managed corporate structure that will look after the environment and, of course, make money.

The gas industry occurs not only in the Northern Territory but also across Australia and the globe. Investors in this industry are looking for investment across the globe, so we are in a competitive global market. I have been to the Beetaloo and spoken to general managers and major investors in the gas and mining industry, and they all raise the same thing with me. They care about the environment. They want to make sure their industry moves forward while looking after the environment and their assets because—I am not sure if you have seen a fracking fleet, but it is a lot—there is a lot of money and technology involved in that fleet. The industry looks after itself.

The CLP was elected on a three-pillar platform of safety, rebuilding the economy and lifestyle. The environment is part of lifestyle. How could you have any sort of lifestyle and restore it to what Territorians enjoy without considering the environment? It is critical to ensure that the environment is looked after, protected and advanced. It is critical to rebuild our economy from the state that the Labor government left it in. The Member for Fong Lim spoke about the Labor government's disaster of an $11bn debt. In eight short years it went from $1.8bn to $11bn, which is almost a billion dollars a year of overspending—a thousand million dollars.

We need to get the balance right. There is no point having a great family and lifestyle if we cannot afford to use it or to live here if there are no jobs. An important part of lifestyle is that if someone gets sick, they can get into the health system. If there is an emergency an ambulance will come and get you. I got into trouble for calling them a meat wagon previously, but they do a good job. I have been in an ambulance. Who pays for that? This is where the opposition and the Member for Nightcliff may come unstuck in their argument that we are money hungry and all about gas. The gas industry gives us jobs, a health system and an education system. It pays for the police and, in fact, the gas industry pays for rents and mortgages. The Member for Nightcliff knows because her family benefited from the gas industry; it paid the rent or the mortgage for her. It is a flow-on effect.

The gas industry will manage the environment. It needs some help, and the companies need to comply and ensure that their people are not doing the wrong thing because it is all about cost and the investors. We need to make sure we get the return on investment. That is where the government can step in. There is a whole list of regulators we have spoken about that do inspections as part of their jobs. They make sure people in industry are doing the right thing to ensure the environment is protected.

The use of the Territory's natural resources for development, agriculture, mining and energy is a key part of rebuilding our economy. The CLP will work with industry to ensure we have the right policy settings to attract investment, deliver projects, rebuild the economy for Territorians and protect the environment. There is no point in only having a great lifestyle and good environment; we need to also make sure that we have jobs and an industry, and we need to get the balance right.

We need to get the policy settings right to ensure we can afford to enjoy our lifestyle. The Member for Nightcliff said that people on this side grew up with a silver spoon in their mouths. I can assure the Member for Nightcliff that I did not. I ask her to consider what living in the rural area some 50 years ago was like. There was no quick slip into Palmerston to get McDonald's, I can assure you of that. Everything had to be planned. I grew up in a single-income family. My mum looked after my brother and I while my dad worked as a police officer on a government wage. He worked hard and had to work away. When the Member for Nightcliff talks about people on this side having a silver spoon in their mouth, I can assure you it is not me, and most of my colleagues here are similar.

The Member for Barkly did his education as an adult; he paid every cent for his education. I got my law degree as a mature-age student, and I paid for that. It goes to what the Member for Fong Lim said about making motherhood statements with no evidence to back them up. There is no evidence the environment will be destroyed by the gas industry. The evidence is quite the contrary. The industry wants to do the right thing because it needs to attract investors.

We have a Pastoral Land Board which plays a vital role in supporting the pastoral industry as a consent authority for pastoral land clearing and non-pastoral applications. Since 2014, on average, the board has issued 10 clearing permits and granted 22 non-pastoral permits.

The board takes its role seriously. Only 1% of land in the Northern Territory has been cleared. The Pastoral Land Board has done the right thing because the Territory is relatively natural and uncleared. We know we have cleared some land because we are living in urban areas which have been cleared and have roads on land that has been cleared.

I have been to the Beetaloo, and a drilling pad in the area is quite small. I have a five-acre block and imagine it would be smaller than that.

When the opposition members talk about this monster industry that will dig up everything and destroy the environment, my assessment is that is clearly wrong and goes to a political agenda to feed misinformation and make motherhood statements about an industry it clearly does not know about. The opposition did not do the research like the Oxford scholar over here has. I invite those opposite to talk to people like the Member for Fong Lim, because he has the research and information.

It is about doing this correctly and getting it right. That is why we are not rushing and why the Territory Coordinator model is out for public comment. It will be introduced early next year, then it will go to the scrutiny committee.

I do not think you could get any legislation that has been more publicly consulted on than this, noting that the previous Labor government scrapped the scrutiny committee in its term. The opposition says that we are hiding things, but the previous Labor government scrapped the scrutiny committee. We brought it back because we know the public needs to be consulted. Probably one of the reasons the Labor government was reduced to four is it did not listen and thought it knew what was best.

The agriculture and mining industries create this world where you can have a car or an air conditioner, buy a suit or drive an electric vehicle. All that technology and material comes from the ground. I have a book in my office called *30 Things*. It is about day-to-day items, where they come from and what minerals are mined to produce them. You would be surprised, and I was amazed how everything is based on mining.

If you want to live in a green world, I suggest you take off all your clothes. There is a TV show called *Naked and Afraid*. You get dumped in the bush and see how you go. From my experience being out in the bush—and I have been out a fair bit—it would be difficult. Living without what we call the mod cons is a difficult thing to do.

I agree to disagree with the Member for Nightcliff that the gas and mining industries are horrid beasts that are out there just to chew and spew and take things and go. They sponsor various organisations and sporting clubs. They spend money on community events. That is what you see these organisations do. They have a social licence, and they support the Territory. The industry needs support.

The Pastoral Land Board monitors the pastoral estate by tracking changes in land condition and in the environment. It is another check and balance to make sure things do not go overboard. Only 1% of land has been cleared, and this organisation is there.

This is what the government is about: having these checks and balances but allowing businesses to do what they want to do. When I was in private enterprise, we wanted to stay within the law but stay away from the government. We just wanted to get things going and move forward.

We need to support these actions of the board and the agriculture industry because they take care of the land. I have done a little farming myself; I have driven bulldozers, monster tractors and big pieces of expensive machinery. I have towed an instrument called a Kelly chain, which is 12 metres long and looks like a big diamond, and you can effectively go down to two centimetres in accuracy with the GPS coordinates on these huge tractors. Basically, you sit in it, get it going, push ‘set’ and it follows its path. It makes sure that the land is looked after and the plough is not too deep.

There is a lot of work done to get land ready for seed because you must get the erosion right. If you are doing 1,000 acres, a lot of seed gets washed away. If there is erosion farmers will fix it because they know that if they let it get worse or do not plan it at the beginning, it will impact their income. This goes back to those investors who will then go somewhere else.

We need to make sure our environment is protected because we want to have a place to enjoy the lifestyle. The CLP has been elected to restore our lifestyle, and that includes the environment.

The government grants economic carbon rights to support carbon farming on pastoral land, so we are not only about digging out minerals; we also talk about what we can do with carbon. We ask how we can effectively implement benefits to Territory producers for carbon farming. Can we do things better? Can we burn some savanna early so there are carbon credits? Is there any training or expertise available for that sustainable land management?

I know that in the gas industry and at Santos people are talking about carbon capture and storage, where they will utilise a previous gas well that has been emptied into that.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I support the motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Gwoja. This is an opportunity to highlight the immense value and significance of the Territory’s natural environment. Our environment shapes our lives, drives our economy through tourism and holds profound cultural importance for Aboriginal people, especially in my electorate in West Arnhem.

It is no exaggeration that we live in the most beautiful, pristine and ecologically diverse part of Australia. From the top to the bottom, the Territory has a unique environment and biodiversity. As the Member for Arafura, I am privileged to represent some of the most breathtaking sea and land country, from the islands around Cobourg Peninsula to West Arnhem and the Tiwi Islands. This region is truly a jewel in the crown of the Northern Territory.

Protecting it is not just a duty; it is a passion that motivates my work in this place and is a part of why I chose to run for parliament. With privilege comes responsibility, and we are obligated to not only those who elected us but also the generations of Territorians coming after us.

As an Aboriginal person, I can tell you this is not news to Indigenous Territorians. Our people know the importance of caring for country. It is what we have done for thousands of years. We grew up with the understanding of the environment and our place in it.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Arafura, the time for General Business has expired.

PAPERS TABLED

Open Letter – Save Litchfield National Park from Gamba Catastrophe

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I table an open letter signed by 31 businesses, 13 organisations and 51 scientists to save Litchfield National Park from gamba.

The Cost of Not Acting: Delaying Invasive Grass Management Increases Costs and Threatens Assets in a National Park, Northern Australia

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I table a research article relating to my motion, 'The cost of not acting: Delaying invasive grass management increases costs and threatens assets in a national park, northern Australia' by Natalie Rossiter-Rachor.

ADJOURNMENT

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

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: I acknowledge that the Member for Mulka has friends and family in the gallery to listen to his speech.

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

Madam Speaker, I welcome my family and colleagues from Galiwinku who have come to listen to my adjournment speech.

I give condolences to the family and community for the passing of my *dhuway*, Mawuyul Yanthalawuy. The family asked that I say her full name, as was her wish before she passed. I acknowledge the family in the gallery. Some stories I will tell you were provided by Mawuyul's daughter, Nadyezhda.

My *dhuway* was approximately 85 years old when she passed away peacefully after a full life on 18 November. Her family does not know her exact age because she was born on country in the bush in Milingimbi. Like many of our old people who were born on country and grew up moving across the country and eating bush food, she was fit, healthy and strong.

My *dhuway* witnessed and survived the bombing of Milingimbi in 1943. Although she was only a young girl, she could remember it all clearly and spoke about it often. She remembered running across the savanna to get to cover in the mangroves. This experience shaped her life because she often told her children that if she could outrun the planes that were bombing, she could do anything. She was also a survivor of Cyclone Tracy. She would show her kids the house in Wagaman where she lived when the cyclone hit Darwin.

I know her best as my bilingual teacher at Shepherdson College. I remember her as one of the early bilingual teachers; she taught with a teacher linguist, John Rudder, and several other Yolngu teachers. They all had

varying skill in teaching in Yolngu Matha. She could interpret and explain all the Western concepts in Yolngu Matha, which allowed me and other students to truly understand maths, science and English.

She was one of the pioneers of bilingual education; she was active and wanted to show the students everything and explain things clearly. She had an expressive character and would draw us into our learning with good humour and storytelling, such as translating words like 'hot dog' with humour into *gomurr-watu*. I remember this joke from our classroom 55 years ago. She was a dedicated and kind teacher, and this is something she is well known for because she was a teacher of 30 years.

Although she did not go to school herself, she was taught to read, write and speak English by the missionary children who were cared for in Milingimbi. The Shepherdson College was built, and everyone thought she would be a great teacher because she had good English skills. This is how she came to be my teacher. She also taught at Bagot preschool, Ludmilla Primary School and Jingili Primary School until she retired at the age of 65.

While she was a teacher at Bagot preschool in 1980, one of the teachers heard about a film that was being made by John Honey called *Manganinnie*. My *dhuway* played the lead role in the film, which was set in Tasmania at a time of massacres. The tribe was killed, and she was searching for family while at the same time the settlers' child goes for a walk and gets lost in the bush. Manganinnie finds, looks after and returns the child to her family before she dies. It is a story about humanity and relationships that did not see racism. This was how my *dhuway* lived. She was generous, kind and always gave back to the community. No matter who you were, she looked after everyone.

For her contribution to education and Aboriginal rights and her work as a volunteer, she was awarded the Order of Australia medal at a ceremony in Galiwinku. She retired not long after but continued to be a volunteer for many years until she was physically unable to continue.

The children remember growing up with a strong and caring mother who was famous. Nadyezhda remembers people in Darwin getting photos and hugging her. When she asked her mum why everyone was coming to her, her mother said, 'Because I am a movie star'. After that the children would take their mum to other children to tell them.

She spent the last three months of her life in Galiwinku surrounded by grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. She was known by her family to be kind, gentle, wise and always protective. She has given so much throughout her life and lives on in her family. It is now her turn to rest.

I express my sincere condolences to the family.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge Mawuyul Yanthalawuy who I have known through friends. My condolences to the family who are here tonight and the five of her children who are still around.

She passed away at the end of last week at the age of 85, we think. For an Indigenous person in this day and age that is a milestone.

I send condolences to Sandra Dhamarrandji, Jeffrey Danydjati, Susan Dhamarrandji, Natasha Pozzana and Nadyezhda Pozzana.

Originally from Milingimbi, she relocated to get married in Galiwinku in the 1960s. Mawuyul had 30 years of work with the Northern Territory Education department at the Shepherdson College in Galiwinku, Bagot preschool, Ludmilla Preschool, Ludmilla Primary School and Jingili Preschool. Many of her students are now community leaders and in solid positions in the public service due to her leadership, persistence and dedication.

For the small region between Galiwinku and Milingimbi she has inspired a lot of the up-and-comers to become actors. It may be small, but she acted in three Indigenous movies, being historical figures in these movies: *Manganinnie*; *Women of the Sun*; and *We of the Never Never*.

Her life was the definition of walking in both worlds, balanda and Yolngu, which is why we see bilingual education as an important tool because she taught that in schools. This is getting the children up from their Indigenous languages to try to speak English. That was the working tool she had. A lot of those kids today are working in government departments, as I said, because she inspired them to take up education in Western society as well.

My condolences to the people of Galiwinku, Milingimbi and the nearby homelands.

Mr EDGINGTON (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Members for Mulka and Arafura for contributing this evening.

I express our condolences on behalf of the Northern Territory Government and all our colleagues to all the family who are here and all family, friends and relatives of Mawuyul Yanthalawuy.

She had a long history as an educator. She was born in Milingimbi and, as the Member for Mulka said, survived the bombings in 1943. Mawuyul Yanthalawuy from Elcho Island was teaching in a preschool in Darwin when she was chosen to play the title role in the 1980 film *Manganinnie*. She was nominated for an Australian Film Institute award for best actress for this debut performance.

Her other film and television credits included *Women of the Sun* where she won a Penguin Award for best single performance by an actress in television. She also played a part in *We of the Never Never*, *A Waltz Through the Hills* and another movie called *Bedevil*.

She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the general division in 1991 for her service to education and to Aboriginal culture. Mawuyul was not only a schoolteacher but had an influence over many young people. She had an inspiring presence and influenced many young people to aspire to become actors in their own right.

I pass on all our condolences to the family in the Chamber on behalf of the Northern Territory Government and all members. Please pass on our condolences to the remainder of the family who could not make it tonight.

Rest in peace.

Madam SPEAKER: I, too, express my condolences to the family and friends of Mawuyul Yanthalawuy. She sounded like an amazing woman, and I thank you all for coming tonight to join in this celebration of her life.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.