Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



Parliamentary Record
Debates and Questions



Wednesday 26 March 2025

CONTENTS

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT 1431
Unparliamentary Language 1431
VISITORS 1431
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School 1431
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AND VICTIMS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 1431
Serial 22 1431
MINISTERIAL REPORT 1434
Federal Budget 2025 1434
VISITORS 1442
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School 1442
NOTICES 1450
QUESTION TIME 1450
Domestic Violence Legislation – Consultation 1450
Federal Budget 2025 1451
Domestic Violence – Coronial Recommendations 1452
Northern Territory Economic Strategy 2025 1453
Domestic Violence Prevention – Funding 1454
Darwin Port Ownership 1454
Private Hospital – Maternity Services Closure 1455
Federal Budget – Remote and Regional Support 1456
Domestic Violence Legislation – Consultation 1457
Domestic Violence Legislation Consultation – Supplementary Question 1458
Federal Budget 2025 1458
VISITORS 1460
Youth Detention 1460
Northcrest – Council Services 1461
ICAC Report – Operation Beaufort 1461
Casuarina Coastal Reserve 1462
Gunbalanya Clinic 1463
MOTION 1464
Economic Development – Infrastructure Program 1464
ADJOURNMENT 1501

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Unparliamentary Language

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, it is timely that I give direction to the Assembly on unparliamentary language. Freedom of speech, particularly freedom to criticise those in government and those who aspire to be in government, is fundamental to the Westminster system. The Assembly's debate must be open and rigorous; at the same time, Westminster parliaments have always had rules on how that debate should be conducted. Debate must be relevant and in keeping with the dignity and purpose of the Assembly.

Under our standing orders and the Westminster tradition, offensive words must not be used against the Assembly or a member of the Assembly. It is also disorderly to imply improper motives of a member or to make personal reflections on other members.

The scope of what is and is not disorderly is difficult to define by a set of rules as it is context dependent. There are, however, three guiding principles:

1. Allegations of bad faith are disorderly unless by way of substantive motion. Words commonly listed as being disorderly such as 'liar', 'corrupt' or 'racist' are unacceptable as they impute improper motives to the member.

2. If you are calling names rather than making an argument, you are being disorderly.

3. If what you are saying is not relevant to the question being debated or the purpose of the Assembly, it is disorderly.

In presiding over the debate, I prioritise free and fair discussion over a strict application of the rules; however, if debate becomes disorderly, adherence to these principles will aid in keeping it on track.

I also propose to change the approach to offensive language against groups of members, such as a party. The Assembly has allowed offensive remarks against a group of members. I do not think that the Assembly's debate is enhanced by allowing speech against a group that is too offensive to use about an individual. The House of Representatives of Australia changed that practice in 1981. It is time the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly did likewise.

VISITORS
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AND VICTIMS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 22

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 22, and table the explanatory statement.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*, the Domestic and Family Violence Regulations 2008, the *Victims of Crime Rights and Services Act 2006*, the Victims of Crime Rights and Services Regulations 2010 and the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2006*.

This Bill will restore mandatory sentencing for certain domestic violence order (DVO) breaches which the previous Labor government removed. The amendments in the Bill ensure that in certain circumstances the court must sentence an offender guilty of a breach of DVO to a term of actual imprisonment.

The changes are a clear indication of the Finocchiaro government's commitment to addressing domestic and family violence.

In 2024 under the Labor government, amendments were made repealing mandatory sentencing from section 121 of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*. The repealed sections previously provided that mandatory sentencing of seven days' imprisonment was required for a repeat breach of a domestic violence order. Although the new section 121 provides tiered penalties for contraventions of DVOs, it does not impose, nor is there currently any mandatory sentencing requirements for, breaches of DVOs. This Bill will reinstate mandatory sentencing for certain breaches of a DVO.

The court must now sentence an offender to a term of actual imprisonment if there was harm involved or a threat of harm to the victim, a prior breach of a DVO or a situation where the offender repeatedly breaches the DVO in a short amount of time. This will ensure that perpetrators of domestic violence face real consequences for their actions. Offenders who breach these orders must be sent a strong message that this behaviour will not be tolerated and they will face the strong likelihood of imprisonment.

The Bill also corrects the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007,* which is currently ambiguous as to the status of a domestic violence order in circumstances where the court confirms a police-ordered DVO without variation.

I now turn to the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2006*. This Bill amends section 8 of the Act to allow for a modernised electronic application process aimed at speeding up applications. This includes removing the unnecessary and outdated processes and facilitating electronic forms which are used as a standard practice across government.

The Bill also amends this Act to remove the requirement for the Crime Victims Services Unit assessors to be lawyers. This will assist in increasing available assessors, and more assessors will increase efficiency.

The amendments will also provide that a public sector employee who is employed within the unit is automatically appointed as a Crime Victims Services Unit officer. Currently the requirement is that they are individually appointed in writing by the CEO. This amendment will streamline administrative processes by removing time-consuming requirements of a CEO.

The next issue the Bill addresses is the Victims Register. The register allows victims to receive certain information from the Crime Victims Services Unit about an offender. Section 17 of the *Victims of Crime Rights and Services Act 2006* provides that the information available from the register is only in relation to an offender who is sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The Bill amends the Act to expand its application and remove the reference to a term of imprisonment, ensuring it will also apply to sentences which do not result in imprisonment which means more information is provided to victims about the perpetrator so they are not kept in the dark.

The Bill also addresses a further concern related to breaches of orders. For example, if a parolee subject to electronic monitoring cuts off their monitoring device, the registered victim may be at high risk. Currently, the Crime Victims Services Unit are unable to notify the registered victim of the breach in a timely manner. The Crime Victims Services Unit need the ability to notify a registered victim in particular circumstances.

The amendments ensure that information regarding electronic monitoring breaches of certain orders be communicated. These include breaches of electronic monitoring conditions of parole orders, suspended sentences, intensive Community Corrections orders and supervision orders.

These amendments send a message to offenders that domestic and family violence is unacceptable and is just one of many steps this government intends to take to improve responses to domestic and family violence and increase support for victims.

Finally, this Bill modernises the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2006* by updating the calculation method of the victims levy a person has to pay when they are found guilty of an offence but not sentenced to a term of imprisonment. As a result, the victims of crime levy will increase, which means more money available to be used for victims' services. This Bill also corrects outdated references to repealed sections in some Acts.

I thank everyone we spoke to when preparing for this new Bill. It was wonderful to meet some of the women's legal services in the Territory. Over the past six months, I have met with the Top End Women's Legal Service three times, the Central Australian Women's Legal Service in Alice Springs three times and the Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit in Alice Springs. Those organisations come together as a community

legal services cohort, and I met with them in an informative session where they told me about their work in our community, which was important.

I particularly thank the Top End Women's Legal Service. We had an in-depth conversation about the Victims Register and how important it is that the people they work with have access to the register as it can work in their favour to keep them safe.

This Bill will strengthen protections, streamline processes for victims and keep domestic violence offenders off the streets. Labor let victims down by removing the mandatory sentencing for DVO breaches. We are reinstating this because we are putting the rights of victims above the rights of offenders, and domestic violence perpetrators must face real consequences. Under this Bill domestic violence offenders would go to prison if there was harm or a threat of harm to the victim, a prior breach of a DVO or repeat breaches of a DVO within a short time.

We will continue strengthening the laws and considering all aspects of legislation to address serious and violent offending and protect Territorians. Under Labor's watch we experienced the highest rate of domestic violence in the country, with an 82% increase in domestic violence assaults over the past eight years. We are taking action to change these alarming statistics.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 May 2025.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, the opposition is supportive of this measure to refer the Bill to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for review. In the last 24 hours we heard that the Top End Women's Legal Service, the Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network (CAFVSAN), women's shelters and Men's Behaviour Change Programs across the Territory all raised concerns that they were not involved in the consultation and development of this important Bill. I acknowledge that the Attorney-General has met with a number of stakeholders in this area, but meeting does not equal consultation.

This is an important opportunity for those in the sector to have their say and hopefully have input into the development of sound, robust legislation that will address issues in the Northern Territory. It is crucial that the domestic and family violence legislation captures the lived experience of victims of domestic and family violence.

They often have their voices amplified through the hardworking women's legal services, the Legal Aid Commission, CAAFLU, NAAFLS, WoSSCA, the Tangentyere family violence programs and the Future Yayes. These important organisations help amplify the voices of vulnerable women and children and those who have lived experience.

This is an amazing opportunity for those organisations to now be involved, considering that they were not involved in the initial development of the Bill. I welcome and encourage submissions from all the Territory social services organisations to have a say in shaping this important legislation. A number of provisions are being brought forward by the government that we can have a robust discussion about, as there are interesting aspects to the Bill.

Capturing and hearing the voices of victim–survivors and their loved ones is incredibly important. I acknowledge it was the domestic and family violence sector and the social services sector in the NT that led to the contemporisation of the Territory's domestic and family violence laws two years ago. It is important to continue to build on those important aspects.

I thank the Attorney-General for referring this important legislation to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. To all the amazing organisations and social services across the Territory, we welcome the opportunity to hear from you about your concerns and, importantly, the ways in which the committee can strengthen this legislation. I hope that the government will take on board any recommendations from the committee to develop and strengthen this Bill, which will be based on experience.

This might be an opportunity for the government to highlight where the additional $36m is. People in the sector say that they have not seen it yet, and they are not sure where it will go.

It also might be an opportunity for the government to provide clarification on which recommendations from the coronial inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory will be embedded through legislative frameworks and when that will happen.

I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this Bill to parliament and referring it to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to working with my fellow committee members in calling for submissions. I welcome the testimony from organisations and victim–survivors in relation to strengthening the Northern Territory's responses to domestic and family violence.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Federal Budget 2025

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to deliver a ministerial report on the 2025 federal budget.

Leave granted.

Mr YAN: I will speak about the disgraceful federal budget handed down in Canberra last night, which has profoundly let down the Northern Territory and each of its 255,000 residents.

This week's federal budget was not even on the cards; the smart money assumed that we would be heading to the polls on 12 April, wiping out any chance of the usual March budget drama. However, ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred threw out all those plans, and now we are stuck with a budget that no-one expected, and it shows.

This is, without exaggeration, the worst federal budget handed down to the Northern Territory since we gained self-government in 1978. Territorians have been given nothing short of a slap in the face by the Albanese Labor government. Consider this: out of a staggering $786bn in the total federal budget, an almost incomprehensible sum, the Northern Territory has received only one new conditional commitment of $200m. That is conditional. It is an insult, plain and simple.

Contrast this with the clear and urgent priorities outlined by the Chief Minister in a direct letter to the Prime Minister in December last year. The Chief Minister highlighted the crucial areas desperately needing attention, including our Defence capabilities, road infrastructure, gas development in the Beetaloo Sub-basin, population growth initiatives, tailored migration policies, aviation improvements, resilience initiatives and mineral resource development.

All these critical points were clearly spelled out as fundamental to the Territory's future, but what was Canberra's response last night? Complete and utter neglect. Labor spent months promising Territorians the equivalent of a trip to Disneyland, raising hopes and expectations, but when it came time to deliver, all we got was enough funding for a modest night out at Timezone in Casuarina.

This morning on ABC radio we heard Labor Senator Malarndirri McCarthy trying to threaten Territorians that the feds will take their money away. The senator referred to how much money the feds contribute to our overall budget and that our CLP government needed to be careful in our language. I have news for Senator McCarthy: this is not your money; it is taxpayers' money. It is the money of hardworking Australians and Territorians who, under your total failure of a Labor government, are struggling to make ends meet.

How dare the senator threaten to stand over Territorians because we are doing what is right and standing up for the people of the Northern Territory. We are calling it for what it is: a sham. This is how the Labor Party rolls. When it feels challenged, it does not like it. In the next breath, it threatens to take our money away.

It is time for Senator McCarthy, Marion Scrymgour and Luke Gosling to take a long, hard look at themselves. All three have failed the Territory miserably. It is outrageous, and the insult does not end there. One of the critical issues facing the Territory is the uncertainty surrounding the Darwin Port. It is crucial infrastructure for not only our economy but our national security and Defence interests.

What clarity or certainty did we receive last night? Absolutely none. Labor's federal Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling, repeatedly promised Territorians that announcements were imminent, claiming a public-private partnership was on the horizon. The budget has made crystal clear exactly how much weight Luke Gosling carries in Canberra. His own federal colleagues have cut him loose completely. He has been left isolated, floating aimlessly and looking irrelevant.

Around Darwin and the Top End we have a word for that; he is behaving like a goose. It now seems Canberra thinks exactly the same. Darwin Port is not some minor project; its essential infrastructure is vital to our trade, crucial for industry and fundamental for creating and protecting jobs in the Territory. Given its strategic role in Australia's Defence capabilities and regional security, you would think it would be front and centre of any responsible federal government thinking, but clearly Labor does not see it that way.

If Prime Minister Anthony Albanese could find some time and money to secure steel production in Whyalla, why can he not offer the same certainty for support of the Darwin Port? The reality is the federal Labor government does not see us as equally important. We are an afterthought at best, so it seems. We are a distant speck on the Canberra radar, and that is disgraceful, shameful and disgusting for all Territorians.

We have made a compelling case to Canberra for bold initiatives, including tax incentives to encourage people to live and work here, revive our population, retain skilled workers and incentivise investment in the Northern Territory, yet Labor's federal budget ignored these essential measures to boost our economy and community. Additionally, we requested flexible migration policies tailored to the Territory's unique circumstances, streamlined visa processes and incentives to attract skilled migrants, alleviate skill shortages and effectively service remote areas. Once again, Canberra's budget provided nothing to address these pressing needs.

Luke Gosling is not the only culprit; Territorians have two other Labor representatives in Canberra—Marion Scrymgour and Malarndirri McCarthy. What have these representatives been doing? Where are their voices in this federal budget to support the Northern Territory? Have they stood up for Territorians? Have they argued passionately on our behalf? The evidence last night said loud and clear that they have not. Instead, all three Labor representatives sat silent while billions of dollars were showered on other parts of regional Australia.

Other regional areas are seeing transformative projects and funding boosts that will create jobs and drive growth. What have we been offered? A paltry maintenance budget, with routine funds that keep things ticking along but achieve nothing in terms of real growth or prosperity for the people of the Northern Territory.

Let us talk about Middle Arm. We have an economic goldmine—a precinct perfectly situated for industrial expansion, liquefied natural gas export and mineral processing. It has everything, being strategically positioned proximate to our major international shipping routes and the incredible potential to generate thousands of new jobs. In Canberra last night what did we see for Middle Arm? Nothing—not a single dollar was specifically allocated to accelerate its development. All the funding sits in Infrastructure Australia and is equity funding; there was no cash allocated.

This is economic negligence. It is deliberate neglect by federal Labor, and Territorians should see this for exactly what it is—contempt. The Chief Minister has clearly emphasised to the Prime Minister that roads like the Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways are lifelines for industry, tourism and remote communities and improving these roads is strategically vital. Despite their critical importance to economic development and regional connectivity, Canberra's budget last night failed to provide even a single cent toward this essential infrastructure.

It is not just about economic projects. Let us look at Kakadu National Park. This iconic World Heritage site, a jewel of Australian tourism and Indigenous heritage, has been overlooked again. Six years ago Luke Gosling stood proudly next to then Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and pledged $220m for Kakadu. Six years later, what has been delivered? Nothing—zero, doughnuts, not even crumbs.

The neglect extends further. Our Chief Minister explicitly called on Canberra to provide better access to affordable and reliable air travel, highlighting its critical role in boosting tourism, supporting local business and improving the quality of life across the Territory; however, Canberra's federal budget made no effort to improve aviation connectivity.

Is Kakadu no longer important to Labor? Does its cultural heritage mean nothing to Anthony Albanese and his colleagues. Apparently not.

Adding to this neglect, we specifically urged Canberra for federal investment in resilience and capacity-building initiatives, emphasising how frequently the Territory faces natural disasters and extreme weather events. However, Canberra has again ignored this critical need, leaving our communities and infrastructure vulnerable.

What about the Beetaloo? Here lies one of Australia's most promising natural gas reserves, a 30,000 square kilometre area capable of transforming the Territory's energy landscape, fuelling domestic demand and powering international markets. Given Australia's current energy challenges you would expect federal Labor to prioritise such a resource, but last night the budget ignored it. There is not one dollar, not a cent, to accelerate development in the Beetaloo Sub-basin. This is neglect of the highest order.

Just months ago, after his visit for the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, we urged the Prime Minister to provide federal support to help the Beetaloo reach full productivity and capacity, highlighting its enormous potential to secure Australia's energy independence, reduce domestic energy costs and position the Territory as a leading energy exporter. However, this appeal fell on deaf ears.

The Albanese Labor government seems oblivious to the strategic importance of the Territory. It simply does not grasp our potential, capability or value to the entire nation.

That brings me to Defence infrastructure, another critical area neglected by federal Labor. Given our geographical proximity to Asia, the Territory plays an indispensable role in Australia's Defence posture. Our military installations such as Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal near Katherine are not optional extras; they are fundamental to national security.

The Northern Territory provides Australia's frontline defence, acting as a vital surveillance hub over the entire Indo-Pacific region. Despite this strategic imperative, last night's budget delivered nothing new—no additional investment to enhance our Defence infrastructure or capabilities. It has been highlighted to the Prime Minister that the Northern Territory is a critical front line for national security, stressing that additional troops and investment are urgently needed behind the wire and beyond to bolster our Defence capabilities and support long-term economic growth. Last night Canberra ignored that strategic imperative.

Labor seems to misunderstand or deliberately ignore the significance of the Northern Territory in Australia's Defence planning. We are not just on the front line; we are the front line. We host crucial deployments of allied forces, particularly the United States Marines and now the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, enhancing Australia's Defence readiness and our relationships in the region. How can any federal government that is serious about national security overlook additional investment in our all-too-critical Defence infrastructure? It beggars belief.

Territorians have every right to feel angry today. We contribute greatly to the nation, providing economic opportunities, strategic Defence capabilities, cultural richness and unique environmental assets. We are on the front line, yet in return all we receive are scraps from Canberra's table.

Labor's three federal representatives—Luke Gosling, Marion Scrymgour and Malarndirri McCarthy—have failed spectacularly in advocating for us, the people of the Northern Territory. Their silence and lack of action in Canberra has damaged our prospects. They should hang their heads in shame. Territorians deserve better.

We deserve a federal government that recognises our immense potential and invests accordingly. We deserve representatives who fight passionately and tirelessly and put the Territory first every day. This budget was a test for the Albanese Labor government. It was its chance to demonstrate a genuine commitment to our Northern Territory. It was its opportunity to deliver countless promises and finally show that Territorians matter, but instead it abandoned us and left us behind. Enough is enough.

It is time for every Territorian—whether they live in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or remote regions—to stand up and say to federal Labor, 'We will no longer accept this kind of neglect'. This budget has failed the Northern Territory comprehensively. It has failed our economy and future, which fails the people of the Northern Territory. It is a disgrace. It is shameful, and we must not allow it to continue.

I urge all Territorians to hold Labor to account. Demand better, demand fairness and demand a government that recognises the value of the Northern Territory to the rest of Australia. Our people in the Northern Territory are resilient, strong and incredibly capable. Investing in the Territory is not just about supporting our region; it is about strengthening and supporting the entire nation. We have that capability and capacity; we can do that for the rest of the country from the Northern Territory. Every dollar spent here contributes directly to a stronger, more secure and more prosperous nation.

Canberra had the opportunity to act on this wisdom but instead chose neglect. We cannot keep doing more with less; we cannot continue being forgotten by federal Labor. This budget must be a wake-up call. Canberra must recognise our worth, fund our future properly and treat Territorians with the respect we deserve.

We will continue to fight because our Territory and our people are worth it. It is about time Canberra understood that as well. We see the development opportunities available in the Territory in our infrastructure corridors and hubs and, of course, in Middle Arm. Last night, rather than federal Labor taking money it has tucked away in equity and hidden in Infrastructure Australia—which is not actual cash; it just sits on the books—it never removed any of that money out of equity, even though we have been asking for it to be moved to cash so we can start to deliver these all-important projects for the Northern Territory.

Last week the Darwin Major Business Group presented its report into the future of the Northern Territory. That future was clear. It said for the Territory to grow and dig itself out of the financial mess that the previous Labor government placed us in, we need to drive private investment in the Northern Territory. To drive private investment, we need the government to invest in the infrastructure corridors and hubs so that private investment can commence. Private investment will drive the Territory's growth and economy.

What did we get last night from federal Labor? Not one dollar of that equity money sitting in Infrastructure Australia was released to start these projects to drive the Territory out of the economic issues we face that were inherited from the previous government.

It is a shame that the federal government does not understand this. We have been passing this message on for many months now, and it still has not listened. Canberra needs to listen to us today. Territorians need to stand up and say that they will not take this anymore. We need the federal government to support those in the Territory and drive our growth.

Maintenance money from the federal government is no longer enough. We need direct investment in our infrastructure so we can grow the Territory and make this place what it can be. We can make the Northern Territory the economic powerhouse of Australia. We have the capacity and capability to be the next Western Australia. We have the resources, the minerals and the gas to drive our economy forward and be a powerhouse in the economic development of Australia. However, we need a hand-up from the federal government.

I am not asking for a handout; I am asking for a hand-up. I need the federal government to commit to its promises, take that money out of equity and move it over into cash so that we can start delivering these infrastructure projects that will drive our economy forward, which will improve our private sector investment and create jobs for the Territory to create economic wealth and benefit for all Territorians.

I move that the report be noted.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it is laughable that the CLP Treasurer Bill Yan is standing in this Chamber and attacking a budget that delivers more tax cuts, power bill cuts and affordable healthcare to every Territorian who will benefit. I understand why the Treasurer is doing it; he is obviously trying to build himself up for the federal election to say, 'Look what we have done in the Territory' to try to help the CLP's mates get in.

In telling the story to Territorians, it is laughable. Imagine playing politics, which we have just seen the Treasurer do, with a budget that has delivered more for the Territory in cost-of-living relief; more money for education, Territory hospitals, roads and police; and—always the cherry on top—extra GST. This is a windfall for the Territory, which the CLP Treasurer can play with. Let us hope the government plays with it in the right way.

All up, the Albanese Labor government will invest more than $7.2bn in the Northern Territory this financial year. The Treasurer—they are good at this—will pick all the bits of data the CLP wants to tell us with parts of its own narrative but will not tell the whole story. This is being disingenuous to Territorians. There is $7.2bn for the Northern Territory. Using the Deputy Chief Minister's language, that is more than 7,000 lots of $1m.

Has the Treasurer read the money that is coming in and those budget lines? I know it was released only last night, but has he done his extra homework? Has he stayed up late at night, like previous Treasurers have, underlining, scoring and highlighting all the much-needed income that the Territory will receive? Has he had that late night doing his job, which he is paid for in the Territory? How can the Treasurer talk about the good news for the Territory budget, which the CLP will capitalise—it is not a Labor government in the NT; it is a CLP government. The Treasurer will capitalise on this good news for the Northern Territory with his team.

I can only describe this as a professional tantrum, and I do not think I have seen such an unwarranted piece of grandstanding in this place by a Treasurer ever. It seems the CLP is stuck in opposition mode despite being seven months into government. All those opposite know how to do is attack and whinge, and they

cannot for the life of anybody in the Territory talk about good stories, programs and investment when it comes. It is like the whole story cannot come out of their mouths.

This is strange strategy from the Treasurer; perhaps he has political leadership aspirations. He keeps going back to the Darwin Port. I am not sure if the Treasurer did his homework, but before he was in parliament Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro was part of the CLP government that sold the Darwin Port. It blows my mind that the Treasurer keeps trying to distance himself. We see the Chief Minister awkwardly standing back in press conferences when the Treasurer goes for the Darwin Port conversation like, 'Oh, actually I was part of the team that sold the port'. It is a strange tactic. Maybe the Treasurer does not even know that he is putting his leader in it by pointing out the Darwin Port story, which was sold under the CLP government. He either does not do his homework or does not know or care. It is bizarre.

Another important part of the Territory—which many people know and love—is Kakadu. The Treasurer mentioned this in his speech. It is an important part of the Northern Territory story. I was fortunate to represent Kakadu National Park and Jabiru township for four years when I became the Member for Arnhem in my first term. It is a beautiful part of the Territory, but it has a lot of complexities attached. I continued to learn about Kakadu over the four years.

Mr Kerle: It was closed under Labor.

Ms UIBO: Wait for this one, Member for Blain. On 13 January 2019 there was $216.2m announced for Kakadu under then Coalition Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Aboriginal Affairs minister Senator Nigel Scullion, and standing in the photo, press releases and video was the failed CLP candidate for Lingiari, Jacinta Price.

In 2019 we saw federal government retained by the Coalition, and Scott Morrison stayed the Prime Minister; I think he called it a miracle himself. For three more years under the Coalition government that money was not rolled out in the Territory for Kakadu National Park and the work in Jabiru.

Interestingly—this was before my time and possibly many members in this House—the then Minister for Lands and Planning, David Tollner, wrote to Senator Nigel Scullion on 8 December 2015 writing off the township of Jabiru and handing it back. He said that it was too complex for the CLP government to do the job. I quote the last paragraph:

> *Accordingly, and recognising that both the grant of Jabiru as Aboriginal land and the mining future of the Ranger Project Area are Commonwealth decisions, the Territory has decided to discontinue any negotiations for future tenure arrangements in the town.*

I seek leave to table the letter.

Leave granted.

Ms UIBO: All Territorians will now have this record.

Another ill-thought-out, or clever, strategy is that Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro was a part of the CLP government that decided to hand back Jabiru to the Commonwealth Government because it was in the too-hard basket. The Chief Minister entered parliament in 2012; she was a part of the government in 2015 when it wanted to wipe its hands clean of doing any hard work for Jabiru. It was an interesting strategy by the Treasurer to mention Kakadu and Jabiru. Luckily I did my job as the local member; I know the history, but many in this House do not. This was a great opportunity to share it with the Assembly, particularly the CLP government.

Every day it is becoming increasingly clear that the CLP government has no positive agenda or economic vision for the Northern Territory. It has a whingeing, whining, punitive, 'give-me', and 'we know better than you' mentality. The Treasurer should spend less time fishing and enjoying the hospitality of the Northern Territory and more time with the federal government to understand what is going on. I am sure that the federal Labor government would be happy to walk him through it and teach him how to be a Treasurer.

The Albanese Labor government has already managed to deliver $7.2bn for the Territory without the Territory's Treasurer. Territorians want a government—either federal, local or the Territory government—that behaves like adults, forges strong partnerships in Canberra, is interested in the best interests of Territorians and has them at the heart of decision-making. We want a government that can rise above the petty politics—we have not seen that in seven months—and eventually engage and be mature when making decisions,

lobbying and advocating. We expect all Territory governments, regardless of politics, to lobby the federal counterparts to deliver and invest in the Territory.

Territorians expect a government to take the time to listen and consult with them before barging through simplistic laws and ignoring evidence-based policies, experts and those with real-world experience. It is small-mindedness regarding policy, laws, approaches and so-called consultation. This government has no idea and no vision. The Treasurer, Bill Yan, is the Bill that the Territory simply cannot afford.

The good news for Territorians is that the federal Labor Albanese government is not waiting for the CLP to catch up; it is getting on with delivering in spades. The federal government understands that Territorians want, deserve and need a strong government, so it has done that at the federal level. The investment in cost-of-living relief, critical services and infrastructure will grow the Territory economy. For nearly a decade we suffered under the previous federal Coalition government, and Peter Dutton was a part of that government; he ripped away billions of dollars from the Territory. In fact, some of those cuts are still being felt deeply in the wounds of the Territory today.

You will not hear that from the Treasurer because CLP members pick and choose the stories to suit their own narrative rather than being genuine and telling Territorians the full story. At the time—we can go back to timeframes—while the federal Liberal counterparts were robbing the Territory blind, Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro stood by and said nothing. There is nothing we can find to quote Lia Finocchiaro, the now Chief Minister, who stood by and saw the federal Coalition rip money away from the Territory. We cannot even quote her saying that it was not a good thing or that they were not happy; we cannot find a single thing.

This federal budget shows the Territory is always better off under a federal Labor government. It understands us. Yes, we get frustrated with decisions made in Canberra about us and not with us, but that is the job of the Territory government—to fight for the Territory. That is the job we all do in our roles in this place.

We want to make sure we have a future Prime Minister who will care about the Territory and Territorians, and Peter Dutton is definitely not that person, nor are the Liberal cronies at his side. We do not want the cuts that Peter Dutton has already openly said he will impose on Australians. If the cuts hurt other parts of the country, especially the big populations on the east coast, imagine the pain we will feel in the Northern Territory. If Peter Dutton is fortunate enough to become Prime Minister, he would likely rip GST away from the Northern Territory, just like the previous federal Liberal governments have done, and he was a part of that team. I am sure he would have a good memory of that, as Territorians continue to hold it in their memories.

Let me break down some of the $7.2bn so that Territorians can understand the good deal we are getting under the Albanese Labor government. They will not hear it from the Treasurer, who is disingenuous about the dollars and the figures, where they are going and how they will come in. Public schools will see $736.7m to enhance education infrastructure and resources by fully funding schools, and healthcare and hospitals have $600m to improve healthcare services and facilities across the Territory. We had a matter of public importance yesterday about health infrastructure and the lack of planning so far from the new government. Let us hope this will help the government get its skates on to plan.

There are tens of billions of dollars over the next decade to support the local Defence industry and to create jobs in the Territory; $2.8bn over the next 10 years to upgrade and seal the road network; $840m for remote housing to address housing shortages and improve living conditions; $200m for remote policing to enhance community safety and policing services; and extra GST funding of $4.6bn to support the Territory's economic development. That is a windfall.

If you were playing government lotto, the GST is the lotto windfall—the jackpot. The Treasurer has said nothing about the GST windfall in his contribution, speech, report—whatever you want to call it. He said nothing about the GST that will come in under now a CLP government. How will the government spend the money? What will it do? We will find out in May.

You would not even think there was an increase to the GST given the Treasurer's lack of talk about it. He could have claimed it as his good work or whatever—we would celebrate it as long as we get the GST; that is all we are worried about on this side—but he missed the opportunity to capitalise for himself and his team by acknowledging that great windfall. We will see a GST increase for the Northern Territory, which the former Labor government fought for year on year since that horrible $500m cut to GST we experienced years ago.

You understand the dollars, Madam Speaker, because you have been a Treasurer of the Northern Territory. I understand it is a hard job, but when good things are happening we all want to hear about it. We want to

hear about the jobs that will be created through economic investment. We want to hear that health infrastructure will be improved for our everyday lives and that there will be safe access on roads. We want to hear about our hospitals and service delivery.

Federal Labor is directly addressing the cost-of-living pressures. Every taxpayer will receive new tax cuts up to $268 in 2026–27 and up to $536 in 2027–28. Combined with Labor's first round of tax cuts, the average benefit to NT taxpayers will be $2,713 in 2027–28.

All 88,000 households in the Northern Territory will get an extra $150 to help with their energy bills—every dollar counts—along with 11,000 eligible small businesses. The government's energy bill relief plan to the Northern Territory in 2025–26 is estimated at a total of $14.9m.

More than five million Australians will save from 1 January 2026 through the government's maximum general patient co-payment of $25. In real terms this will result in 40,000 cheaper prescriptions that are expected to be dispensed on average each year in the Northern Territory, saving more than $1.3m.

A total of 18,000 people using the Higher Education Loan Program—or HELP, but most people will remember that it used to be HECS—will save an estimated $81.9m from their outstanding loans for higher education. Each Northern Territory student will have on average a reduction of $4,573 on their higher education loan.

The CLP claims health investment is negative and nonsense. The investment in bulk-billing is estimated to result in an additional 168,000 bulk-billed GP visits each year in the Northern Territory and 80 general practices moving to bulk-billing so that all residents in the Territory will look at savings of between $444 and $677 per year.

The extension of the federal government's National Health Reform Agreement will see the Northern Territory receive an additional $51m—great news for the Member for Barkly as the Health minister—from the Commonwealth for a total federal funding contribution of $600m in health for the Northern Territory, a 30% increase compared with the 2024–25 budget.

If you cannot do your jobs with that extra money, I do not know what the priorities of the CLP government are. We are yet to hear that because the government keeps saying we need to wait until May. We will wait, but we definitely will not hold our breath.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I support the Treasurer's ministerial report on the federal budget.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the $5 tax cut starting in 2026. We are only in the third month of this year, so there is a lot of time between now and then in the cost-of-living crisis that the previous Labor government brought upon Territorians.

The federal budget was a flop. The federal government has clearly forgotten about the Northern Territory. It is not hard to find us. If you look at a map of Australia, we are the giant chunk of land sitting at the top in the middle. Our border is from South Australia to the Arafura Sea. We are a 1.42 million square kilometre landmass. We have the highest population of Indigenous people per capita in the country. We have gas reserves that could power the country. We should be a priority.

Our Treasurer, Bill Yan, spoke publicly about his take on the budget, and we just heard his formal response in the Chamber. He is right to criticise the federal budget. The only new money announced for the Territory in this budget is a $200m payment, which is conditional, out of a $786bn budget. I will let that sink in—$200m out of a budget of $786bn. I also heard the veiled threats from Senator Malarndirri McCarthy on ABC radio this morning. She basically said that if we are not grateful, we might lose federal funding. She said:

> *… I'd be very careful in terms of the kind of criticism that's coming towards the Federal Government on this. They still have yet to provide their first budget. We do inject significant funding into the Northern Territory as a whole.*

I wonder what that means. I wonder whether she is happy to leave Territorians out to dry and look after her mates in Canberra and on the eastern seaboard. We are yet to find out. It is shameful. Do those opposite in the Labor Party support that position? We are yet to hear.

We will never apologise for fighting for Territorians. As my colleague the Treasurer mentioned, the Territory has been forgotten. Who is fighting for us? People on this side of the Chamber are, but we are not sure of the people on the other side. We know their party is not, because they have forgotten about us.

We all know there will be structural gas shortfalls on the east coast by 2027–28. The Beetaloo, which is Australia's biggest onshore gas reserve, could provide a solution to that. The east coast needs cheap and abundant gas rapidly to avoid large-scale blackouts, but without investment in the Beetaloo the Territory cannot deliver. We need infrastructure investment, airport and runway upgrades, Katherine bridge upgrades and the underwriting of pipeline infrastructure to deliver Territory gas to Australians in the rest of the country.

Cheap Australian gas fuels a competitive manufacturing industry that north Australia lacks and was the core for the Middle Arm development. Gas provides jobs, which will provide population growth in the Northern Territory. We all know what I have said about that; the more people we have, the more indirect jobs there are in the Northern Territory, such as mechanics, hairdressers and truck drivers.

Such infrastructure projects can provide critical regional and remote employment for Territorians and drive the expansion and upskilling of our local workforce, creating meaningful, well-paid jobs for Territorians.

The royalties and income from onshore gas come into our budget, so we do not have to rely on the federal budget. We use taxpayers' money, no matter where it comes from in Australia, to pay for the health, education and police systems.

We just heard from nearly a thousand delegates in Darwin at the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association's biggest beef conference this year. Our men and women in the cattle industry are the heartbeat of the bush, driving jobs, sustaining families and keeping the Territory thriving. We need to support this billion-dollar industry to thrive, as it continues to provide jobs and economic stability for the NT. It creates direct and indirect jobs for regional people and townspeople across the Northern Territory. This CLP government understands this, but, sadly, it does not seem that our federal counterparts recognise the crucial role our cattle industry plays in the Northern Territory economy.

The budget was handed down last night, and the Northern Territory saw nothing but $200m out of the $786bn, which is conditional upon us chipping in money. The budget was cooked by the previous eight years of a Labor government. The Treasurer spoke about a $5bn program where Labor allocated only $313m-odd to pay for it, so those opposite knew they could not deliver it. They did it in a way to sneak the budget through in an election year. Those programs were to commence in the Northern Territory but simply cannot be funded because the previous Labor government failed to plan ahead and have money in the budget for the programs it started.

We have heard loud and clear that our cattle industry needs roads, and roads need to be a priority. We understand that time is weight and weight is money, and taking the long way around is not good enough. Our roads are a mess and have been left to decay over eight years of no money being prioritised to upgrade vital infrastructure.

It is also an animal welfare issue when trucks drive across roads that are broken down and dangerous, with the cows being vibrated around and, in the worst case, trucks rolling. How can we expect our cattle industry to get to the port for live export to Indonesia when road trains are struggling to safely travel from properties onto the roads and up the highway to the port? How can Central Australian producers move their cattle off property when the roads are simply unsafe to travel on? Live exports are the lifeblood of our economy and a crucial part of our trade with Asia. We take that seriously because we have introduced a Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations who has been overseas promoting Territory livestock and a better relationship with our partners to the north.

We must protect and expand these markets. I will do everything in my power to ensure live exports remain strong and move forward in the Northern Territory. We have heard that the Sandover Highway is a mess. The Tanami is a liability, although it is being repaired bit by bit.

The Member for Barkly tells us about the roads. I have spoken to people who live in the area and driven down some of those roads; they are disgraceful. I think I have told the story where I was on Stuart Highway about 40 kilometres south of Tennant Creek. It was a gravel road, and a car driving up hit a pothole and broke down in front of me. I stopped to take photos of how bad the Stuart Highway was. Our roads connect our trucks to the mines and our mines to the ports, and it is crucial that we ensure roads are a priority.

The appalling Labor government, instead of handing down a responsible budget for the Northern Territory, focused solely on trying to get re-elected. Shame on them. The Member for Solomon has been speaking about the importance of the port for the last few weeks. Why? There is no money or focus on a crucial port being the gateway to Asia; it has again been ignored. Billions of dollars have been promised to other parts of regional Australia, yet the Northern Territory got mere maintenance money.

It seems that the federal government has forgotten about us, and those opposite refuse to fight for Territorians. They are just some of the many things in the budget.

Let me give you an example of the things that …

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

VISITORS
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, we have special guests in the gallery this morning, being Year 5/6 students from Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School. We welcome you and hope you enjoy your time in Parliament House this morning.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker. I support the ministerial report by the Treasurer.

The federal budget handed down overnight is clearly a slap in the face for Territorians. There are many issues across the Northern Territory. I will quickly touch on roads before I talk about issues with the lack of investment in health in the Northern Territory from the federal government.

We see $200m-odd in the budget for part of the Stuart Highway. We know the Stuart Highway, the Barkly Highway in my electorate and the Victoria Highway. Roads in my electorate, many of which are unsealed—particularly the Tablelands Highway, the Barkly Highway, the Sandover Highway and the Murray Downs Road—require significant investment from the federal government.

There was more than $160m of investment in the Carpentaria Highway. That money was put forward by the Coalition about three years ago. I commend the Coalition which invested that money just prior to the previous election in May 2022. That investment in the Carpentaria Highway is going ahead. Roughly 90 kilometres of bitumen has now been laid.

Our roads are of strategic importance and can unlock economic opportunities. Investment improves safety but also ensures efficient transport of goods and services in the Northern Territory. The Member for Nelson spoke about the cattle industry. Pastoralists are constantly transporting cattle. The condition of the Tablelands Highway is atrocious. Cattle producers are taking a long way around as they cannot get across the Sandover Highway into Queensland because of the lack of investment in our roads.

Getting the roads right is important as the Northern Territory faces challenges of frequent natural disasters and extreme weather events. Federal investment is needed to ensure there is a focus on resilience and capacity-building initiatives to prepare for and mitigate these important weather events that often impact on roads but also put lives and property at risk. It is disappointing to see little investment in roads and building the resilience we need to keep roads open.

Last year and the year before we saw significant weather events which closed the Stuart Highway in a couple of areas. The lack of investment in the main arterial road in the Northern Territory is noticeable. There needs to be more investment in the Stuart Highway, the Barkly Highway and the Victoria Highway and significant investment in key roads in my electorate. It is disappointing to see the lack of investment.

I remind people that the Barkly Regional Deal was signed on 13 April 2019. We are talking nearly five years ago. Talking about roads and weather events, one of the critical pieces of infrastructure still has not been delivered. I would have to go back to the federal budget to see if there is any investment. If there is, it must be hidden away in a line item somewhere. I believe $17.8m was earmarked to deliver a weather radar in the Barkly five years ago that still has not been delivered by the federal government. This is of critical concern not only to pastoralists but emergency services, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in remote areas

and businesspeople. This weather radar is critical infrastructure that must be delivered in Tennant Creek. It gives people the ability to check the radar before they leave Tennant Creek. It impacts on the ability for contractors to get out to various places to deliver services. I urge the federal government to ensure that investment is still going ahead.

It is important that I remind people that the Northern Territory is the most underfunded part of Australia when it comes to delivering health services. In a National Cabinet decision on 6 December 2023, the federal government indicated that through the Commonwealth contribution rate every state and Territory would eventually get to 42.5% of the Commonwealth funding pool, but at the moment we are significantly behind. We are the lowest in Australia, and we only receive 31.8% of the Commonwealth contribution rate for overall funding. This makes it extremely difficult to deliver health services.

I will briefly talk about the fact that we are significantly underfunded and face inequity when it comes to Commonwealth funding. For example, in Australia the Commonwealth provides funding for aeromedical retrieval services across other jurisdictions, including Central Australia; however, it does not provide any funding for aeromedical services in the Top End where we are speaking today. Basically, from Elliott upwards the Northern Territory Government is funding aeromedical retrieval services, and at the moment approximately $40m per annum is paid to CareFlight to deliver this service. I have a map in front of me which shows that all the retrieval services are funded everywhere across the nation except for this small portion in the Top End. That is just one example of where the Northern Territory is paying for a service that is funded by the Commonwealth in every part of Australia except for the Top End.

It was disappointing that the Northern Territory has been working diligently with the federal government to try to get an investment of $120m in aged care. I am hoping that negotiations continue, but there is no line item in the budget to indicate that there is $120m to deliver an aged-care facility in the Northern Territory. From a health perspective there are still 60 to 80 aged-care patients taking up beds in the hospital and being cared for by health services in the Northern Territory, so it is disappointing to see that the $120m has not featured in the budget.

Yesterday I mentioned that the federal Labor government promised on 26 April 2022 to deliver 500 new First Nations medical trainees, 30 new renal clinics and double the funding for rheumatic heart disease. Territorians have been waiting nearly three years for that funding to be delivered. It is difficult to have any trust in our federal politicians in the Northern Territory. We have the Member for Lingiari, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy and Luke Gosling, the Member for Solomon, and no investment in aged care from a promise made nearly three years ago. Renal disease in the Northern Territory has reached crisis point. That is the situation we face. All these empty promises to deliver additional services, funding and infrastructure to tackle serious health problems we face have been ignored by the federal government in this budget.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, when a lot of people woke up this morning to the federal budget, they will have seen $17bn in tax cuts. What that really means to most Territorians is 70c per day returned to their pocket, whilst the Northern Territory has $11bn of debt, much of which was accrued under the previous Labor government.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that $7.1bn will be provided to the Northern Territory from the federal government as part of the budget. Let us be clear that the $7.1bn from the federal government to the NT sounds like, and is, a lot of money, but in Queensland $7.2bn was put aside for the Bruce Highway in January this year. One highway in Queensland is getting as much money as the entire Northern Territory will receive in the next financial year. That is why we talk about equity and fighting for our fair share.

It does not seem that the federal government is ensuring the Northern Territory, as the Treasurer put it, is given a hand-up to get us out of the mess of the former Labor government. We could wipe the Territory debt with $17bn, with people receiving 70c per day, giving us the ability to invest in key priorities and ensure that the Northern Territory can deliver for our country in regard to economic development.

Defence is one of our key priorities, and the NT needs investment to ensure the stability of our region and security of the country. Unless the federal government is worried about penguins invading from Antarctica, our Defence capabilities need to be in northern Australia. An increased focus on basing troops and strategic Defence infrastructure in the north will need to be implemented to properly defend our nation in a time of unrest. Recent announcements of troops being redeployed to South Australia might look good on paper; however, to redeploy to the NT would give a more immediate response, should it be required.

Infrastructure investment is another key priority for the Northern Territory. The Members for Nelson and Barkly and the Treasurer have spoken about how important roads are. Our Territory roads, especially the

Stuart Highway, have been left to deteriorate in recent years. I remember almost losing the Member for Barkly in a pothole near Tennant Creek; he also spoke about the state of that road.

This critical infrastructure is important to ensure the transportation of goods and people up and down our federally recognised highway. I again point out that there has been a $7.2bn commitment to the Bruce Highway, a 1,600-kilometre stretch of highway in Queensland, yet we still see our national highway go under water and be washed away during the year.

In my home town of Alice Springs, we have once again been dudded. The federal Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour, promised the town's sporting fans a grandstand at the CDU oval in 2021. Years later, we are now facing a federal election commitment which is nothing more than an empty promise from the feds, whilst Alice Springs is missing out again.

There was $250m as part of a support package that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was forced to make during our crime crisis, of Labor's making, in Alice Springs. He has delivered little for our town. Our government is now being told during briefings that the money is fully committed—to what? It looked like the Member for Gwoja ended up with plenty of money for his electorate—surprise, surprise. The town at the centre of the furore has once again missed out.

Remote communities in the Member for Gwoja's electorate will get millions spent on splash pads and BMX tracks. I do not hold that against them, but the $250m was promised as part of that due to the increase in crime in Alice Springs. That is what led the Prime Minister of Australia to come to our town, yet we are still waiting to see a lot of that money spent on the ground. In Alice Springs we have also been waiting for our own splash pad for some time. With eight years under Labor, we were yet to see that, and it is now up to our government to deliver on these commitments that were promised for so long but never delivered. Do not even get me started on the national Aboriginal art gallery.

If the federal government wanted to support the Northern Territory and was serious about getting us out of the position its Labor mates got us into so that we can better support Territorians, it needed to put its hand in its pocket and ensure we get our fair share so that we can rebuild our great Territory.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, it is important to speak about the initiative that was rolled out last night. It is disappointing that the Treasurer has failed to follow parliamentary processes and afford members of the opposition and crossbench the appropriate notice so that they could prepare a response, but that is what you get under the CLP. It is a government that does not follow processes or give the appropriate notice. There are Independent members of this parliament who were not afforded the opportunity to prepare a response to the budget, and that is disgraceful.

Time and again we see the arrogance of this government not affording opposition and Independent members the appropriate notice. To make these changes without suspending standing orders or following the appropriate processes and giving the appropriate notice is just laughable.

We heard from the Territory's Treasurer, the Bill the Territory cannot afford, who makes false claims and statements about the federal budget. The federal budget has delivered significant investments in the Northern Territory. It is giving the Territory additional money through GST revenue, but the Treasurer continues to talk down the Territory. That is all he is programmed to do—continually talk down the Territory.

In its budget last night, the Commonwealth Government invested in a range of areas. It was disappointing to hear the Member for Braitling, who is supposed to be a proud Central Australian, use divisive language about remote Aboriginal Territorians and isolating them from Alice Springs. Our region thrives when the whole of Central Australia thrives, so investing in critical infrastructure in the region is important. Addressing critical infrastructure shortages that have been legacy issues for generations in the bush is an important step to addressing disadvantage in regional and remote areas. That is something we should work on investing in.

The Commonwealth continues to invest in remote housing, critical road corridors and infrastructure. This will continue to have a positive impact on people living in the Northern Territory. We see additional money in the federal budget for domestic and family violence support. Hopefully, that money will roll out quicker than the Northern Territory's commitment, which has not seen a single domestic and family violence group receive any of the funding they were promised.

We continue to see initiatives such as remote food security being rolled out in the budget. That will address critical goods and services in remote communities, addressing the transportation and freight costs that have driven up costs and made it harder for people living in remote regions. That includes pastoralists who access

community stores and Aboriginal Territorians who live in remote communities. Providing this initiative is incredibly important.

The federal budget also continues to invest in health and education. Ensuring every Territory school is fully funded is crucial. These are investments we will continue to see rolled out across the Northern Territory.

The CLP members talk about playing politics; they are the ones who play politics. They have brought on discussion about the federal budget to try to make themselves look better and talk down the federal government when they should be working with them to ensure the investments made last night continue to roll out.

We have seen investments in national parks, critical infrastructure, information telecommunications improvements and corridors which are crucial. Investment will roll out with the new signing of the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment strategy (NTRAI). This continues to fund critical initiatives in education, health, community safety and police. It addresses additional investments in peacekeeping and justice initiatives as well.

These are welcomed investments in the Northern Territory. This is important. Money in the budget through the appropriation of the NTRAI looks at investing in up to 12 community-controlled child and family centres across the Northern Territory, which is an important initiative. We want to see that continue.

We will continue to see critical infrastructure investments rolling out and a continuation of housing initiatives in our towns, cities, regions and remote areas. This investment is welcomed. Any investment from the Commonwealth that comes to the Northern Territory either directly to the Northern Territory Government or through investment and stimulus is good for business here. It stimulates the economy and provides businesses the opportunity to access a pipeline of work, and it grows.

We have seen investment in supporting HECS debts and in supporting small business. They are important investments. There are conversations and investments from the Commonwealth concerning tax cuts. These are welcomed investments in the Territory because they will go in some way, shape or form to stimulating the growth of the Territory's economy.

It is disappointing that the Treasurer has not read important literature in the Northern Territory, *Crocs in the Cabinet,* because if he had, he would remember that the CLP government chose to sell the Port of Darwin. Now CLP members are trying to win votes by looking like they are the champions advocating for it to be in public hands when they sold the port to a foreign national group.

It is hypocritical for the Treasurer to be making those statements. Territory Labor always supported the port remaining in the hands of the public. That is important, and I stand by that. Work can and should be done on that, but let us remember the CLP has a history of selling public assets. It sold TIO and wondered why the insurance premiums went up; it has no control over it. It sold the Port of Darwin. It was preparing to sell Power and Water and Jacana when it was doing the structural separations, because that is what CLP governments do.

It is important to highlight that last night we saw federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers hand down his fourth budget. A range of investments in that budget will directly impact and improve living conditions and the cost of living in the Northern Territory. We have seen rebates to help people with the cost of living through incentives for power, education, taxation and supporting business through a range of innovative grants and schemes which will stimulate the Territory's economy.

I encourage the Northern Territory Government to work with the Commonwealth Government on rolling out those critical investments so we can see growth in the Northern Territory. It is a welcome investment. I thank Malarndirri McCarthy, Marion Scrymgour and Luke Gosling.

If the CLP wants to talk about transport, let us look at its own senator, Jacinta Price. She knows a thing or two about airlines because she is on a plane every chance she gets to get out of the Territory, rather than be here fighting for Territorians like Senator McCarthy, Marion Scrymgour and Luke Gosling. They are here for the Territory; they always have been and always will be here to put the Territory first, not themselves.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I begin by correcting mistruths from the beginning of the Member for Gwoja's spiel. I want it noted on the record that last night an email was sent to the Opposition Leader, the opposition Whip and Independents on the crossbench stating that today we will have a 2025 federal budget

ministerial report by leave. I cannot control the inner workings of the team on that side. We fulfilled our obligation.

This morning it was given by leave. We did not have to suspend standing orders because the opposition agreed, by leave, that we would make this ministerial report …

Mr Paech: Go back to Litchfield Council. Oh, wait, no-one wants you there.

Mr MACKAY: If they do not communicate with the future Opposition Leader, I cannot do anything about that.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr MACKAY: We also sent an email to the Opposition Leader address, which I am hoping the Member for Gwoja has access to by the end of the year. Until then, I cannot help if his three colleagues do not talk to him. I cannot change that fact.

The other thing I point out is that three federal members for the Northern Territory are within the Labor Party. It is incredibly disappointing to see the lack of investment in the Territory from the federal government.

We are an important strategic part of Australia. We have a significant per capita proportion of Indigenous Australians, yet we do not see that investment flow. It is disappointing to hear them saying today that we are playing politics. When I am in this Chamber, I represent the people of Goyder and Territorians.

The Country Liberal Party is the party I am proud to be a member of. The people of Goyder come first, the Territory second and political parties third. It is incredibly disappointing to see on that side of the Chamber they will defend their federal colleagues who are not fighting for them or the Territory. Instead, they say, 'Oh, it is magical.'

A $236—I believe that is the number—payroll tax cut does not even come this financial year. It is $5 a week and is not a cost-of-living savings measure that will make a difference in remote communities in the Territory. It will not change anything. There is $150 off our power bill. I love my air con. My partner loves putting on all three in the house. That $150 does not scratch the surface of my power bill and does not change anything across the Territory.

If these are the cost-of-living measures that are coming, Labor is completely out of touch with ordinary Australians and Territorians. It is not good enough. I would love to see more investment in the Territory. An announcement of $250m for a road is an 80/20 split with the Territory without consultation with the Territory. What about the Arnhem Highway, the Victoria Highway, the Barkly Highway or any of our roads to remote communities? When will the money flow to see the Territory thrive?

When will the supporting infrastructure come down so we have more own-source revenue? Why, if the federal government is throwing money away, is almost the same amount that is coming to the Territory from the federal government going towards one highway in Queensland?

The federal government does not care about the Territory. It does not want to see us thrive. It breaks my heart knowing that the Northern Territory has broadly been represented by Labor in the seat of Lingiari, and the Northern Territory prior to that, for decades under Warren Snowdon, now under Marion Scrymgour. I have enjoyed seeing Marion. I have a lot of respect for her. The three times I have seen her in the last four years, I have said hello. I would love to see more of them out and about, working hard for the Territory.

We all need to realise that we are Territorians first, and political parties are third or fourth on our priorities list. I would love to see the Member for Gwoja get up and say, 'Hey, do you know what? We could have had more. I will ring Marion, Malarndirri and Luke and say, "Hey, Luke, I have not seen you in two years, but can we have a chat about the budget?" I want to see investment coming. I would not even mind if they pork-barrelled it a bit.

Mr Paech: Where is your useless senator? Writing a book about herself?

Mr MACKAY: Our senator shows up to parliament and fights hard for the Territory. We acknowledge she is in opposition. We have three other people in the federal parliament, including the Minister for Indigenous

Australians who comes from the Territory and is meant to be a fierce advocate but instead is threatening the Treasurer on the radio.

I love the Territory, and I think everyone in this Chamber should reflect on their love for this wonderful place, but we need help from our friends in Canberra. It would be great if they could realise that we are a strategically important part of the future of this country. We are the gateway to Asia. We are the solution to our gas problems in the country. We want to keep the lights on around Australia.

I do not have a lot of love for Canberra as a city; it is far too cold and roundabout-y for my liking, but there are lots of good people in the other territory, and I would love it if they acknowledged our presence.

Not that it is particularly relevant, so please bear with me, but I discovered that people in the ACT also call themselves Territorians, and it shocked me.

Mr Paech: They are a territory.

Mr MACKAY: Yes, but it feels weird.

I reiterate that the budget was passed at about 7 pm our time, which was after the 6 pm deadline for us to lodge a ministerial report in the normal way. It was communicated last night to the Opposition Leader, the opposition Whip, the Independents and crossbench and Madam Speaker that we would do a ministerial report by leave, and that leave was granted. We did not need to suspend standing orders.

The first half of the Member for Gwoja's speech is a fabrication. It is disappointing to see that amongst the four of them, they cannot communicate. Member for Gwoja, when you have access to the Opposition Leader email at the end of the year, you will be getting these emails.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, the federal budget has sadly left Territorians feeling disrespected, neglected and let down. The federal government has failed to deliver a fair share of resources to our region. This leaves us questioning whether we are truly part of this nation or merely an afterthought in Canberra's eyes.

The Chief Minister clearly outlined where we need monetary support in the Northern Territory, and what did the federal government give us? A measly $200m for a road. This is an insult to the people of the Northern Territory, as that is out of a $786bn budget. Yes, we need more funding for our roads, such as the Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways, which are lifelines for industry, tourism and remote communities, but we are so much more than roads.

The Northern Territory is a valuable asset for the whole of Australia when it comes to national security. We need more support in this space to continue to strengthen our capabilities and economic growth. We have the potential to be a powerhouse in the gas industry, which is not only a critical contributor to our economy but also crucial for Australia's energy independence. Unlocking our true potential would secure domestic gas supplies and position us as a leader in energy exports and lower energy costs, which would bring much-needed relief as the cost of energy continues to climb, yet we received nothing.

The Territory needs access to more affordable and reliable air travel. For too long it has been too hard and expensive for people to get to the Territory for business or leisure. We have had some movement in this space, with our government recently welcoming several new flight routes, but we simply need more. Flight routes are an important step to making the Territory the best place in the country that we know it can be to visit, live, work and invest.

Increased connectivity boosts our local economy by increasing business opportunities and attracting tourists. This will grow our tourism sector, create new job opportunities for Territorians and make it easier for people to visit their loved ones.

That leads me to my next point. We need to grow our population and give people incentive to stay here. The federal government is not recognising the Northern Territory at all. People are leaving left, right and centre.

In addition, streamlining our processes for migration to the Territory will also play a key role in rebuilding our economy. Making it easier for people to migrate here could help with skill shortages, even in remote and rural areas, and they might stay in the Territory long term, but the federal government will not entertain changing the caps it imposes on the Territory for our international students to assist with migration. That is a shame.

In the Territory the weather can be unpredictable, and sometimes we face intense and extreme weather events. Federal investment in this space is so important. Year after year during the Wet Season the Stuart Highway is cut off. Our supermarket shelves are empty, with little federal investment in roads to ensure we can put food on the shelves in supermarkets. We just do not get the look-in that we need from Canberra.

We are fortunate to live on land rich in critical minerals, and we must use this to our advantage. The Territory has the potential to play a leading role in securing resources which are vital to so much, and this will also drive economic growth. Our mineral exploration spending fell by almost half under a Labor government, according to the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

We deserve much more than offcuts thrown at us from the budget. We deserve real investment in our future that will help build infrastructure, create jobs and unlock the full potential of our region. This will be critical as we continue our promise to Territorians to rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. We will continue fighting for a better future for all Territorians. To receive such little support from the federal government is unbelievable, but that will not stop this Northern Territory Finocchiaro government fighting to get our fair share.

We are a critical part of this nation, and the Albanese Labor government has shown complete disregard for the Northern Territory. I cannot believe that Senator Malarndirri McCarthy was on the radio this morning, threatening Territorians and us for standing up for Territorians. That is what she should be doing, and she is not doing it. She is too busy throwing pot shots at the government. Senator McCarthy, Marion Scrymgour and Luke Gosling need to take a good hard look at themselves. What have they delivered for the Northern Territory? A measly budget. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition cannot see how this budget has let down Territorians beggars belief. She is blind to the fact that this is not good enough for Territorians. Those opposite stand here defending the federal government's decisions on this measly budget. It is disgraceful.

This federal government announcement is another example of Labor failing the Territory and kicking us when we are down after we were officially ranked the worst-performing economy in the country under Labor. It does not help that Labor has left us on track to the largest debt in the Northern Territory's history with unfunded operational expenditure and further cost blowouts on Labor's pet projects, revealing our forecasted accessible borrowing for 2028–29 is projected to hit the $15bn mark.

We are working hard to turn this around, but we need so much more support in the Northern Territory. We have outlined our clear strategy to rebuild our economy, which has those five key pillars, and this includes being the best place to do business, building a bigger and better workforce, delivering for Australia, unlocking regional growth and connecting the Territory.

We need the federal government to help us do that. After eight years Labor let down every Territorian, which is a disgrace. The federal Labor government had the chance to tell Territorians that they truly do care and would not—as Albanese did—fly to Alice Springs, make an announcement of maintenance money and fly back again. Territorians know that Anthony Albanese does not care.

We have a new Territory government, which has done more in eight months than the Labor government did in eight years. We now need a new federal government which will do the same and support the Territory, get Territorians back on track and make the Territory the best place in the world—like we know it can be—to visit, live and invest.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, following last night's budget announcement, I stand with a heavy heart and deep disappointment. I am not surprised by the Albanese Labor government failing the people of the Northern Territory once again. The federal budget delivered yesterday has again failed the people of the Northern Territory. While the rest of Australia celebrates economic growth and prosperity, our Territory has been left behind, forgotten and ignored. This budget is not just a missed opportunity; it is a betrayal of the hardworking Territorians who deserve better.

The Australian Local Government Association's plea for $1.1bn per year to enable infrastructure and unlock housing supply has fallen on deaf ears. A measly contribution over three years for remote housing and urgent repairs to social housing in the Northern Territory, this pittance is an insult to our communities facing severe overcrowding and substandard living conditions. The budget provides inadequate housing support for Territorians with no guarantee that the NT will receive an equitable portion of these funds. Once again, we are left fighting for scraps.

The budget fails to address the unique challenges faced by the NT, including our vast distances, sparse population and the need for significant infrastructure investment. There was no mention of support for our

key industries or initiatives to boost economic diversification in the Northern Territory. The budget details limited infrastructure investment; only $200m for highway upgrades was announced, which is inadequate for the NT's needs.

There is a lack of attention to First Nations issues, confirming the perceived decline in the government's interest and commitment to First Nations people, despite previous promises of reform. There is a failure to address unique challenges as the budget does not adequately address the NT's specific needs, such as its vast distances, sparse population and significant infrastructure requirements. The federal budget does not fully meet our expectations or requirements, particularly in those areas and for First Nations people.

This budget demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the NT's needs and potential. It is a stark reminder that we are often an afterthought in Canberra's corridors of power. I say this to the federal government: the Northern Territory is not just a vast expanse on a map; we are real people with needs and potential. Your failure to invest in our future is not just short-sighted; it is economically irresponsible. We demand better. We demand a fair go and a budget that recognises the unique value and challenges of the Northern Territory.

To my fellow Territorians, I say this: we have been let down, but we are not defeated. Our resilience and spirit have seen us through tough times before, and they will see us through again. As you have seen with our Finocchiaro CLP government and as you will continue to see, we will fight for the people of the Territory and the recognition and support that we deserve.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak on last night's disappointing budget which left Territorians out in the cold. I will engage in a brief history lesson. The former Member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs, was in opposition for two terms and, sadly, in government for one term. That is something we Palmerstonians missed out in the loss of Natasha Griggs from the federal parliament.

I put on record that when Natasha Griggs was in government she delivered something that helped Palmerston people who work in the city every day by delivering the extension and duplication of Tiger Brennan Drive which increased the average speed from 60 kilometres an hour to 80 kilometres an hour …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; relevance. The Treasurer, whom I respect, has brought in a motion about this budget. We do not care about Natasha Griggs.

Madam SPEAKER: We are not giving a speech. Please continue.

Mr KERLE: I appreciate the delivery. That is an example of something that can happen when you have a federal member who fights for Territorians. This government is dedicated to growing our own-source revenue, but with the legacy of the last two terms of Labor government there is a lot of work to do in that space. Until we get there, we unfortunately must rely on our friends in Canberra to come through for us. We need strong representatives from the Territory in the federal government who can go in to bat and deliver for Territorians with infrastructure, health and education funding that we need.

Natasha Griggs, in her short term in government, did that. We appreciate that. I look around at the current Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling, and I struggle to see what he has delivered. The current budget that was delivered—he promised us in Palmerston a fishing club on the banks of the Elizabeth River. There is nothing—not even a plan, announcement or federal minister standing out there with him announcing this mythical fishing club. Sadly, it seems that he does not have any influence in his party room to deliver for Palmerston and for Territorians.

Speaking about senators, the Labor senator …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, please.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The continual interjection by the Leader of the Opposition-in-waiting is unwarranted.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, I think you are right. Please keep the interjections to zero. We only have a few minutes until lunch, so that is not a huge expectation.

Mr KERLE: The Labor senator for the Territory and minister in the federal government, Malarndirri McCarthy, unfortunately does not seem to have—except for the seat of Gwoja; I think she has delivered for you, Leader of the Opposition-in-waiting, but for the rest of the Territory …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; use of correct parliamentary terms. I am not the Leader of the Opposition; that is my colleague, the Member for Arnhem. I am the Member for Gwoja.

Madam SPEAKER: You are quite right. Member for Blain, please refer to the members as they are not what they might become.

Mr KERLE: I withdraw that statement. Going back to the Labor senator, Malarndirri McCarthy, who has been unable to deliver for Territorians—I have driven the Stuart and Barkly Highways. The highway that was left to us by the previous government is, sadly, a mess. The Member for Nelson spoke about the potholes that are damaging cars every day, even as he was driving past. We need more money to fix that road for our cattle trucks, for tourism and for all the people who need to drive on those roads, including your constituents, Member for Gwoja. Sadly, there are only crumbs.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mr BURGOYNE (Water Resources): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Water Amendment (Aboriginal Water Reserves) Bill 2025, Serial 21.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 23.

QUESTION TIME

Domestic Violence Legislation – Consultation

Mr PAECH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Why did you not consult with the domestic violence and legal sectors before announcing new domestic violence laws? Have you done any work to ensure these changes align with the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, which the Northern Territory is signed up to? Have you considered whether this aligns with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement or the 35 recommendations from the coronial into the domestic violence deaths of four Territory women?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have seen an increase in domestic violence across the Northern Territory of 82% over the last eight years under a Labor government. It failed to take action to keep people safe.

This government, which was only elected less than a short eight months ago, acted immediately. We want the Territory to be a safe place. We will take the steps needed to ensure that women—and men in some cases—are safer from domestic violence than they have been over the last eight years.

We have done much work in this place already. I have met with the women's legal services a number of times. I met with the Top End Women's Legal Service and the Central Australian Women's Legal Service three times in the last eight months. I have also met with CAAFLU, the Central Australian Aboriginal family violence organisation in Alice Springs.

There has been consultation. We had a number of conversations about factors to do with keeping women safe and providing legal services to women, especially those who are victims of domestic violence. One of the key things I spoke specifically with Top End Women's Legal Service about was the Victims Register, something I introduced in this parliament this morning, which will be expanded. It was part of the recommendations of the coronial you mentioned in your question.

We are looking to expand all of that. Legislation will be debated in the next sitting of parliament which means that more victims will be notified more times when their offender is on the move. Most importantly, we want to protect Territorians …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question is directly to the Attorney-General. The sector is saying it has not been consulted. Why did she not consult with the sector before introducing these legislative changes?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, the minister is answering the question.

Ms BOOTHBY: I was saying that the most important part of the legislation introduced today is that people who have breached their DVOs will receive a mandatory sentence. That is important because victims need to be kept safe. Some of the deaths we have seen in the Northern Territory are because the perpetrator was out on bail in the community to revisit their victim time and again. Those people need to be dealt with. There needs to be consequences for the perpetrators of domestic violence.

That is why I brought forward that …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. It is specifically about the consultation process for the Attorney-General …

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has talked about the consultation she has done; that is what I heard her say.

Ms BOOTHBY: Labor members do not want to listen. This is why the Territory was in such a state and why they were voted out last election.

I spoke this morning and this afternoon about the meetings I had with the women's legal services, which are important. We need them to provide service delivery to our women, the most vulnerable people in the Northern Territory.

The other part of the legislation is the victims levy, which will increase to 41% for victims' services …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Federal Budget 2025

Mrs CARLSON to CHIEF MINISTER

Last night Labor showed its true contempt for Territorians with the federal budget and failed to understand the importance of the Territory in this nation's future. With three of the four federal members being Labor, how can Territorians send a message to Canberra that we will not sit down and take their insulting maintenance money?

Mr Paech: Yours is too busy writing a book about herself.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, Member for Gwoja.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that is a fantastic question from the Member for Wanguri. I know her constituents are disgusted at the lack of respect that the federal government has shown the Territory overnight, with just $200m in new money coming to the Territory for a little bit of road between Darwin and Katherine—which, by the way, is contingent on Territory taxpayers having to fork out $40m to meet that money. If we do not stump up, the federal government does not stump up.

It is smoke and mirrors from a Labor government that has fundamentally missed the strength, importance and point of the Northern Territory to this nation. It is short-sighted and downright offensive.

The federal government does not understand our strategic Defence advantage with our position in the Indo-Pacific, our proximity to Asia, the vast array of minerals and rare earths the Northern Territory has to build renewable futures and provide Defence manufacturing opportunities. We have enough onshore gas to power the nation for hundreds of years, which the east coast desperately needs. We have agricultural opportunities

which will provide jobs on country and feed the country in the off season to everywhere else. We also have iconic tourism opportunities, embracing our stunning, vast, wild and beautiful landscapes. It also does not understand the depth of our cultural heritage and significance.

Yesterday Labor showed Territorians that it fundamentally does not understand how important the Northern Territory is to the country and every other Australian who should be looking to us for solutions to this country's problems. Instead, the federal government's priorities were more on delivering pandas for Adelaide Zoo than better economic and social outcomes for Territorians.

The Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling, has been crowing about the port and delivered nothing, showing he has no influence and is as irrelevant as the three of four federal members we sent to Canberra. Three out of four are Labor members, and what did they deliver last night? They delivered pandas to Adelaide Zoo.

Where is our broader reform and zone tax offset? Where is our increase in migration numbers and international student numbers? Where is our tailored infrastructure plan so we can deliver minerals, rare earths and the gas? Where is our investment in Middle Arm and the Beetaloo?

The reality is that Labor turned its back on Territorians last night. This federal election is Territorians' opportunity to turn their backs on Labor.

Domestic Violence – Coronial Recommendations

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If your government is serious about addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory, why do you keep ignoring the recommendations of the NT Coroner's recent report into the deaths of four Territory women? Why will your CLP government not commit to implementing the 35 recommendations that will actually make a difference across the Territory when it comes to the horrific rates of domestic violence in our community?

Can you also update the Assembly on the recommendations you have implemented, as outlined by the acting minister yesterday in Question Time?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I must confess that I am continually bemused at the lack of understanding of how these processes are meant to work. We have such a focus on, 'Why aren't you consulting?' from those on the other side, when we are consulting with all the people impacted in this space to make sure we get it right. Over the last eight years, with an increase in domestic violence assaults of 82% across the Northern Territory, we have not seen a system that was getting it right. We immediately rolled out the recommendations regarding intervening early with youths, creating pathways to change behaviour and expanding the co-responder model, embedding it into our system. Those were two of the recommendations from the coronial.

The rest of the recommendations have taken careful consideration and extensive consultation with our service providers and our departmental people to look at what we are doing that works and what does not work. We are making sure that as we respond to the recommendations—those opposite should be ashamed that those recommendations had to be made at all when they almost mirrored those of the previous Coroner, Greg Cavanagh, in 2017. They took zero action and should be ashamed.

We take this matter seriously. It is for that reason we have started working with our young people. Through the Circuit Breaker Program we are working with their families. We already have referrals through the program to family support, education, housing, prevention of domestic violence services and emergency and crisis accommodation all through the interventions we have taken by working with the young people who are severely impacted by horrendous domestic violence.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked what recommendations have been implemented as outlined in Question Time yesterday.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, from what I am hearing, the minister is directly answering your question.

Ms Uibo: I want to know which recommendation number.

Madam SPEAKER: You have the call, minister. Please, Opposition Leader, be quiet and listen.

Ms CAHILL: For the benefit of those opposite—because clearly they have not read through the recommendations, otherwise they would already know which ones I am referring to—I have repeatedly stated in parliament that they would be recommendations 7 and 17. The balance of those recommendations has received serious consultation.

There has been extensive consultation across all the departments. I have personally spoken to a range of services across the Northern Territory. I have talked to service providers, legal service support workers and those who are providing crisis accommodation so that when we put these programs in place going forward, we will get it right.

Northern Territory Economic Strategy 2025

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

Last night the Albanese Labor government released the federal budget for 2025–26. Only a week ago our CLP government released our Northern Territory Economic Strategy 2025 to guide the rebuilding of the Territory's economy over the next three years. The five priorities of our economic strategy are to:

- make the Territory the best place to do business
- build a bigger and better workforce
- deliver for Australia
- unlock regional growth
- connect the Territory.

These priorities hinge on playing to our strengths and natural advantage in areas such as energy. Can you inform the Assembly of the impact of the federal budget on our government's economic priorities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, based on the Member for Karama's previous history, he knows how important it is to have a strong economy in the Northern Territory. The federal government had nil impact on our priorities because the federal government forgot about the Territory. As the Chief Minister pointed out, Labor spent $3.8m on pandas in Adelaide and forgot about the Territory. The federal budget fell well short of what we need to support our economic strategies and key priorities; that is why this government has to do it alone.

Our core priority focuses on energy and resource production through nation-building projects like Middle Arm and the Beetaloo Sub-basin. Our economic strategy aligns with the federal government's policy, and our 'deliver for Australia' policy reflects the Commonwealth's focus on manufacturing and energy security, yet it forgot about us.

We expect the government to honour its billion-dollar commitment to Middle Arm to support low-emission technology and manufacturing, but that funding has not yet been delivered. For those focused on renewables, it is important to remember that major projects, such as SunCable and the TE H2 project, may not proceed and could be affected if Middle Arm does not go ahead. Our ability to fast-track energy production from the Beetaloo Sub-basin, central to our key economic strategy, is being held back through the lack of federal support.

The 2025 Gas Statement of Opportunities shows that the east coast will face gas shortages by 2027 or 2028—a few years in front of us. The Beetaloo is the largest onshore gas resource and could help fill that gap. Our commitment to deliver for Australia includes providing Australia with reliable and affordable gas that the big states like Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria desperately need. Territorians benefit from the role we play in delivering this energy. We need to build our economy to help Territorians. We expected infrastructure investment to back the Beetaloo, such as runways in Daly Waters and Tennant Creek, the Katherine River bridge upgrade and support for pipeline infrastructure to deliver affordable gas to Darwin for Territorians and to the east coast on a second tier.

The east coast urgently needs cheap, reliable gas to avoid major blackouts. The federal government should be investing in the Beetaloo, not building ports to import gas from overseas that deprive Territorians of jobs, royalties and opportunities. We need to make sure our gas is cheaper so that Territorians and the Territory benefit from gas onshore.

Domestic Violence Prevention – Funding

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The domestic and sexual violence sector is yet to see a single extra dollar from your government. Minister, be straight with the sector once and for all. Is the $36m a year you keep referring to genuinely new funding, or is it existing money repackaged? Most importantly, when will this funding begin to flow to the frontline services that urgently need it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am a little baffled because I thought those opposite would understand how budget processes work and that much of the work involves consultation with the sector to see what is and is not possible. The budget process for 2024–25 was put in place and completed by those opposite, but when I look at the significant deficit we have, perhaps it is not so baffling.

The issue is that two critical services fell off the radar and funding track in March this year. They were the co-responder model in Alice Springs and the extra support for our young people. That money was invested to the end of the current financial year. Those services have continued and have been expanded to the Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine regions.

On top of that we have put together an extensive program for the $36m that we have committed in unprecedented ongoing funding to the domestic, family and sexual violence sector until we see real results in this space. Where the funding is going will be announced in our upcoming budget, but we have already made the commitment that those critical frontline services, which were due to fall off the funding cliff in June 2025, will be secured for the future or the next 12 months. We continue to work with them to develop the programs we know have an impact, will deliver results and will not just see more of the same horrendous outcomes in our community due to the impact of domestic, family and sexual violence.

I am excited to see what is coming from that space. I wish I could discuss in more detail now, but it would not be appropriate. The feedback and support we have received and the information and innovation that has been put forward is truly encouraging. We will not continue to do more of the same because it will only deliver more of the same horrendous results, which is an escalation of victims.

Over the course of the next couple of months we will see clear information and projections about what to expect in that space. That $36m is new money. We made the commitment that the previous government refused to make. We will deliver those services. We will see positive results and a safer community.

Darwin Port Ownership

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Last night federal Labor proved that Luke Gosling has no influence and cannot deliver for Territorians. His bluff and bluster regarding Darwin Port returning to Australian ownership has been nothing but hot air. Last night was the last chance for the Albanese government to buy back Darwin Port, and it failed. Can you outline the impact on Territorians from the uncertainty Labor has created regarding Darwin Port?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Albanese Labor government failed again to provide certainty in regard to the port. As the Member for Fannie Bay stated, Luke Gosling has again failed Territorians. Labor has cut Luke adrift. Territorians are paying the price.

It seems the self-appointed salesman Luke Gosling is running open homes without consulting his leadership team or, more likely, he does not have any influence. It seems he is about as successful in port acquisitions as he is in attracting Aldi to the Northern Territory. Maybe it is time for him to resign from commercial real estate, although his secondary position as the Member for Solomon does not seem to be going that well

either. He is clearly just another number in the Labor party room, lacking credibility with his team in Canberra, and our community is suffering for this.

He stirred serious uncertainty at the port for workers, local businesses and major exporters that rely heavily on our port. It is clear that the Labor leadership team left him out of their conversations. Despite all his commentary on the port over the past few months, what did we see in the budget? We did not see a thing—nothing, nada, zip.

But for his South Australian colleagues in Whyalla, there were billions of dollars within just a few days. Just last week and earlier in the month, Luke Gosling was on Sky News saying that there would be more to say about the port. He said:

> *I'm meeting with them to have further discussions about their interest in selling the port this week …*

People at the port told me that he had not been there in seven years; it was his first visit. He said that he would:

> *… get a bit real regarding where the price point would be and hopefully that's a fruitful discussion because we can all have a win–win here, they can get a return on their investment, return the port to Australian hands, probably a mix of federal government funds and institutional investors, but Australian, and we can put the investment into the port that we need.*

Last night was the opportunity for Luke Gosling's colleagues in the federal government to step up and commit to that promise. They did not.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Northern Territory is quick to grandstand on the decision to lease the port. Where is her voice on the future of this asset now? All the Leader of the Opposition can focus on is what happened 10 years ago, not what matters now.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, please.

Mr YAN: Government is about doing what is needed now, but the Leader of the Opposition's voice is nowhere to be found. Even the Member for Gwoja has come out forcefully and put his views about what should happen on the record, but it is crickets from the Leader of the Opposition.

Private Hospital – Maternity Services Closure

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for HEALTH

The Royal Darwin Hospital maternity services are preparing to support an extra 300 women and their babies due to the imminent closure of Healthscope's private maternity services. This is a significant increase in demand on our public maternity services. The federal Labor government made it clear that it stands ready to provide additional funding support to help with the increase in demand, but apparently you have not contacted the federal government to take up that offer. When will you ask the federal government for assistance so that Territory women can be assured of quality maternity healthcare when they are having their babies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say that Royal Darwin Hospital is preparing for the closure of Healthscope on 6 June 2025. At this stage, it means that 45 of the 114 expectant families will be affected by the closure on that date. Prior to that the closure was to have been on 17 April, and that has now been extended.

The reality is that the department has been working carefully through this issue. The work going on in the department has been incredible. I thank the department for all the work it has been doing with Healthscope to address this devastating news for families, particularly in Darwin, and the families outside Darwin who had preparations in place for birthing at the private hospital.

It has been working well. On 28 February Mark Butler said:

> *The Northern Territory government under Minister Steven Edgington has been doing a terrific job …*

The federal minister has been praising the work done by not only my office but also the department, working with insurers to pick up the slack that Healthscope will leave behind. The federal government offered $6m to the Tasmanian health service and offered to work with our department to ensure there was additional money.

I can confirm that there have been plenty of negotiations between the Department of Health and the federal department to …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. My question was if Minister Edgington had spoken to the federal government; I appreciate the department has done so.

Mr EDGINGTON: The federal minister has already praised the work that the department and I are doing, which highlights the work that has been going on through the Department of Health. Those negotiations are continuing and will continue. There is nothing in the federal budget to back up what we have been asking for; not a single line in the budget increases maternity services in the Northern Territory. Shame on the federal government. We want better negotiations and for the federal government to start handing over the money to support our services.

Federal Budget – Remote and Regional Support

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

Last night the federal budget was a chance for the Albanese Labor government to provide for all Territory residents, including those in remote and regional parts of the Territory. It was a maintenance money budget that maintains the status quo, which only rehashed previous announcements and contained no new money for people in communities in remote and regional parts of the Territory. Could you update the Assembly on Labor's budget that turned its back on the bush and our remote communities?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition members, please be quiet.

Mr Mackay: They do not care about the bush.

Madam SPEAKER: You too, Member for Goyder.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the opposition members are concerned when I talk about the bush, as they know—if you look across the Chamber—that the four Labor members are from bush electorates.

There is nothing in the federal budget for the bush. I have heard nothing but crickets from the four members over there who live, work and represent people in the bush. They have not said boo about the lack of investment in the bush through this federal budget.

They have accepted the norm, as have other Labor members in the government, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, Marion Scrymgour and Luke Gosling. One would have expected we would hear from the opposition, but we have not. Out of the $760bn federal budget, we have a conditional $200m for a road between Darwin and Katherine. That is the extent of the new money from the budget.

Federal Labor said that the upgrades to the Stuart Highway will be transformational for residents and visitors to Darwin and Katherine, but what about the rest of the Territory or the bush? We have heard nothing from members opposite who are living in, working for and representing people in the bush. They seem to think it is okay that there is no additional money in the budget for remote areas.

Last night we spoke about the importance of health services, housing and community safety, but there is no additional money to advance them. It is disgraceful that we have heard crickets from the Labor members in the Chamber.

When it comes to the bush, we need federal representatives who fight for the Territory and are heard, not dismissed. We need representatives who are all about action to deliver certainty and security for Territorians. Our economic strategy is focused on the Territory being the best place to do business, building a bigger and better workforce, delivering for Australia, unlocking regional growth and connecting the Territory. There is

nothing in the federal budget that will support the economic strategy we have put together. The federal government is not listening to what is happening in the Territory.

There is plenty that can be done in the bush regarding roads, health, police and education. The roads in the Barkly are in an appalling condition. The Barkly, Tablelands and Sandover Highways and unsealed roads need major investment, but the federal government and the Labor Party failed.

Domestic Violence Legislation – Consultation

K McNAMARA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

We heard you speak about all your supposed consultation with women's legal services on your new law proposals. I direct you to yesterday's joint media release from KWILS, Top End Women's Legal Service and Central Australian Women's Legal Service. They said:

> *… expresses serious concern over the lack of consultation with specialist Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence (DFSV) services …*
>
> *… we cannot support legislative changes made without meaningful consultation with those who work on the frontline every day to protect women and children in the Territory.*

The CEO from Top End Women's Legal Service, who you mentioned, said:

> *Women are dying. More must be done to end violence … but this cannot be achieved without working with the organisations and experts who provide critical support …*

What is your definition of consultation? How can you say that you are making laws for DV victims when the people who are doing the work say that you are not consulting them and they do not support your legislation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am happy to answer all these questions about the state of domestic violence in the Northern Territory. We know it increased by 82% over the past eight years under a Labor government that used to bluff and say nothing; it never took any action to protect the victims.

We had so many deaths under a Labor government over the past eight years. We heard the minister talk about a coronial that was held a number of years ago by a former Coroner, from which no recommendations were taken up. That is shameful. We had another coronial, and we are working on taking action from it.

As I did this morning and earlier in Question Time, I will tell you that we are bringing forward legislation and taking action to keep women safe and to put the perpetrators behind bars. We are increasing the victim levy by 41%, which means that there is more money in the bucket to pay for victim services. We have not seen an increase in the victim levy for a long time. Labor did not increase it, and we need more money because the federal government does not care. It did not give the Northern Territory any extra money for domestic violence services and legal services for women.

We care about victims of domestic violence, which is why I brought forward this legislation. We will ensure that if a perpetrator breaches their DVO and there is harm caused, they will go to jail. We will ensure that when something changes in the offender's life—like if they get out of prison or cut off their ankle bracelet—the victim knows where they are. Labor did not fix that system.

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I did not ask about Labor. I specifically asked for your definition of consultation, seeing as the organisations you named said that you have not consulted them. How can you say that you are making laws for DV victims if you will not meet with these organisations and consult properly?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, the question was about consultation, but you will be heard in silence.

Ms BOOTHBY: As I said a number of times today, I have met with the women's legal services several times, including the Top End Women's Legal Service three times and the Central Australian Women's Legal Service three times. A group of women's and community legal services came together in this building to meet with

me for about two hours. They told me a lot of information about what they are looking for and the things that the previous Labor government failed them on.

We also sent that legislation to the scrutiny committee, which will ensure …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: If it is about relevance, you can sit down because she is talking about consultation.

Ms UIBO: It is actually a different part. Standing Order 110(3); if the minister cannot answer the question, can she redirect it to the minister who can, like her colleague Minister Cahill who can actually answer a question.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

Ms BOOTHBY: Labor scrapped the scrutiny committee. For the last four years it said, 'No, nothing to see here. We will just ram legislation down your throat.' That is not us; we are taking action and being transparent. We sent that legislation to the scrutiny committee so that everyone in the Territory can have their say about it. There is plenty of time for that to happen because we have a pretty big break between these sittings and the May sittings. Everyone will have their chance. Put forward whatever you want to say; put submissions forward and present it to the public hearings.

Domestic Violence Legislation Consultation – Supplementary Question

K McNAMARA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Are you saying that these three orgs that put up this joint statement are lying when they say you have not consulted properly with them? That is what they are saying.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not know what else to say to the Member for Nightcliff. I have talked about the number of times I have met with these organisations. There is so much more to be done with the scrutiny committee for the next two months before the next sittings.

I cannot speak on behalf of the people who say these things about our accountability. We are bringing forward legislation based on what Territorians voted for us to do; they want us to keep people safe. We want to keep women and victims of domestic violence safe. If that means the perpetrator is behind bars, guess who is safe? The victim. That is the most important part.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Are you suggesting that the people you named who you met with are lying about the lack of consultation?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister is answering a peculiar question. It is her call.

Ms BOOTHBY: No.

Federal Budget 2025

Mr HOWE to TREASURER

This morning you provided a ministerial report on the federal budget, which delivered zero dollars for Palmerston, Katherine, Alice Springs and the people who live along the Stuart Highway. In your speech this morning you highlighted a $200m federal contribution for the duplication of Stuart Highway between Darwin and Katherine. Regional roads such as the Stuart Highway are critical to the movement of resources, cattle, goods and exports and our military equipment and personnel—an area of increasing focus. Safe regional roads are also critical for the Territory residents who travel to work and leisure.

Can you outline to the Assembly the terrible deal the Territory got from the federal budget last night? I have a few ideas for where Prime Minister Anthony Albanese can stick those bamboo sticks …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, Member for Drysdale.

Mr Howe: If he digs deep enough, he might prod his brain and remember there is a Northern Territory.

Mr Young: The time for the question expired 10 seconds ago.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, I said that. Your time had expired, Member for Drysdale.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 109: Manner and Form of Questions. I believe the Member for Drysdale was out of order in the last component of his question. I ask that he asks again, as there were insults and imputations about the Prime Minister of Australia.

Madam SPEAKER: What the Member for Drysdale said about the Prime Minister was disorderly. Please withdraw that.

Mr HOWE: I withdraw.

Mr Paech: It is not funny.

Madam SPEAKER: Let us calm down and let the Treasurer answer the question that was asked.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, last night I watched as federal Labor's budget was handed down. This federal budget is more than a slap in the face; the federal government may as well have thrown the budget book at us. The main takeaway from budget night was a lacklustre commitment to the Territory of only $200m for the duplication of the Stuart Highway between Darwin and Katherine. That is conditional on the Northern Territory putting up $40m to make that project go ahead.

Let us not forget that the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass alone cost $200m. What will we get with $200m for the duplication of the highway between Darwin and Katherine? We would be lucky to make it past Palmerston.

Queensland, on the other hand, received $7.2bn in new funding for the Bruce Highway. Last year, the Territory's budget was just over $11bn. That is right; our entire budget for the whole Northern Territory—which covers infrastructure, health and education services and the work we do to protect the community and improving public safety—is not even double what Queensland received for a single highway.

Two hundred million out of hundreds of billions of funding commitments is just chump change to the federal government. It is maintenance money, not the serious investment we need. We may have a population of only 255,000, but we punch well above our weight. We may make up only 1% of the national population, but we grow over half of Australia's mangoes. We are home to the McArthur River Mine, which is one of the world's largest zinc, lead and silver mines, and we are the frontline defence for allies in the Asia-Pacific region. We are not on the front line; we are the front line.

I think the federal Labor government needs a reminder that Territorians do a lot for this country. We contribute a lot to our economy and deserve a lot more than a couple of hundred million bucks for the Stuart Highway, which was given last night. By not investing in the Northern Territory, the federal Labor government is letting down the nation. The Northern Territory has everything the nation needs, yet all the feds could cough up is a road.

What about support for infrastructure in the Beetaloo, which has enough gas to keep the lights on in the country for up for 400 years? What about the funding, not just equity for Middle Arm, and our infrastructure hubs, which will be the goldmine for this country's economic development?

It is obvious that the federal Labor government sees the Territory as a frontier town with nothing to offer. All it sees is a backwater that wants nothing more than the Stuart Highway duplication. This is a dog deal that the Albanese Labor government gave the Territory in the worst federal budget in recent history.

VISITORS

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

Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Detention

Mr GUYULA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The media reported that a 15-year-old girl was held in a watch house cell by herself for three nights and three days over a weekend after being arrested by police. This is not an appropriate response to the child. Why has funding not been provided to ensure that a bail hearing can be assisted? When young people are detained over a weekend—this is a child who should be taken care of, not left alone by themselves in an adult watch house. Where is the government's duty of care?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I heard that story in the media. It is sad that youths are committing crimes and need to spend nights in the watch house. The saddest thing about that is that there are children on the streets committing crime. Young people are out on the streets breaking the law. If they are breaking the law, the police will catch up with them. They need to be dealt with.

We have seen an unprecedented crime crisis over the last years, which was left to the new government by Labor. It is shameful. There were so many youth offences that I do not think anyone could keep up with the youths who were on our streets causing a lot of problems.

My message to young Territorians out on the street who do not want to spend a night or two in a police watch house is not to go out at night and break the law. They should stay home and be safe. We do not want our youths out and about in the middle of the night breaking the law and being arrested by police. We want to address the root causes, which is what we have been talking about throughout our election campaign. In fact, for four years in opposition we were talking about what we needed to do to reduce crime. Our youths play a big part in that. It is a conversation we must have.

There are youths on our streets every night breaking the law, which means they will be picked up by police and will spend a night in the watch house. That is not okay, nor is it okay that they were on the streets in the first place.

The work we have already done since coming to government is starting to make a difference. The Minister for Children and Families will bring forward the Circuit Breaker Program, which intervenes in young people's and their family's lives to ensure they can lead a meaningful and fulfilling life, go to school, have the right services and have a life with a good job.

Fantastic work is happening. When we first came to government we moved youth justice out of Territory Families, which is now called Children and Families. The Corrections process …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Mulka asked where is the government's duty of care to these young people?

Mr Paech: They could be out on the street because of DV, and you think that is fine. You are a disgrace!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are on a warning.

Ms BOOTHBY: I was saying that we moved youth justice out of Territory Families and put it in Corrections because we needed to address the youth crime problem.

Over the last eight years Labor did not invest in our Corrections or justice system, pushing the system to breaking point. Police were arresting people, prisons and watch houses were full and it was a nightmare.

We are putting actions in place to turn that around. Our Corrections master plan is well on track …

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Northcrest – Council Services

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Since being elected as the Member for Fong Lim I have been regularly contacted by residents of the Northcrest community about the provision of services and the lump-sum payment of their rates. As I have repeatedly noted in this House, I am committed to helping Berrimah Northcrest actualise its potential as a suburban haven for young families. Frustratingly, Northcrest faces significant service deficits, including an absence of a postal service, supermarkets, schools and permanent council affiliation. Can you advise the Assembly what this government will do to help address these challenges?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know how passionate the Member for Fong Lim is; he is committed to representing all 12 areas in his large electorate in Darwin. I thank him for the work he is doing. I also know he is invested and engaged with residents at Northcrest and has been a strong and genuine advocate for resolution in relation to a permanent council affiliation.

I congratulate him on the work he has done to advocate for young families and children living in Northcrest by securing multiple bus routes to schools in the northern suburbs for residents.

Northcrest is an important development for the Territory. It is important to recognise the developer, DCOH, for its investment and commitment to increasing our housing supply. Northcrest will provide living options for up to 2,000 homes. In the future it will be home to thousands of people and have a full range of services and amenities to service a vibrant community.

As Northcrest develops further, more residents and prospective businesses will look to put down roots, and the demand for certainty will increase. Under our $50,000 First Home Owner Grant we are expecting further growth in that area.

Our government creates certainty. For over six years Northcrest has been in limbo under Labor, sitting as an unincorporated area with no local council representation. Council maintains community infrastructure, council administration or by-laws.

Member for Fong Lim, I know you have engaged with residents at Northcrest; you have widely consulted, doorknocked extensively and are strongly presenting the message your constituents have given. I thank you for bringing those concerns to me. This includes a strong preference for where residents would prefer their council alignment to be. Residents of Northcrest have a strong view as to where they see a natural council alignment and are wanting the resolution and certainty that a final decision on council alignment will bring.

Member for Fong Lim, I assure you and the residents of Northcrest that after six years of Labor indecision, which was unacceptable, I will commit to this issue that is a priority for our government. I expect to resolve this matter this year.

We can blame the Member for Gwoja for six years of inaction in Northcrest, as he was the Minister for Local Government for a substantial amount of time and failed to deliver.

We are keen to work together with the Member for Fong Lim and resolve the issues once and for all.

ICAC Report – Operation Beaufort

J DAVIS to CHIEF MINISTER

Last week when I asked you for information on the Operation Beaufort report you said that you could get me more information. Specifically, I would like to know what disciplinary action the department took against the police officers who openly committed a crime of lying to the court. Given the ICAC investigation was clearly flawed, was it referred to the DPP for investigation, given that it was clear that they had committed a crime?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, separate to that ICAC report—obviously the ICAC report was done, and we have talked a lot about ICAC over the last three or four weeks. As members of this House are aware, if ICAC finds an issue that they think has any illegality involved, it is then referred to the DPP. That is the appropriate process.

If the ICAC has not found that, there is no reason for anyone else to believe that the ICAC has missed that. I am not aware of any referrals to the DPP. It is not something that I would be involved in as Minister for Police. It is within the remit, scope and the practice of the ICAC to do that if they believe it necessary, so I will leave that as a matter for them.

From the policing side, I can confirm that an internal review is being done in relation to Operation Beaufort and the members that you have mentioned. That is an operational matter that sits within Police to deal with, but as you are aware, the ICAC went through the matter.

There is not much more I can add, but I know our police are out there every day making us proud. They do an incredibly difficult job. From time to time matters like this come up, and it is disappointing. I am conscious of making sure that we are not condemning all our police and painting them with a broad brush, as it is not deserved for the men and women who put on that blue uniform every day and leave their families to protect ours. That is not lost on me for a second as the Minister for Police; I have the deepest and most profound respect for our police.

We have already seen amazing crime stats coming forward after last week's crime stats announcements. Territory-wide house break-ins are down by 57% when comparing January this year with January last year. Commercial break-ins Territory-wide are down by 36%. These things do not happen magically; they happen because our police are putting their hearts, souls and energy into their job.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I thank the Chief Minister for partially answering the question. My question was what action has the government taken against the police officers who have committed a crime?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Did you just allege they committed a crime? Because you might want to walk that back.

J Davis: Allegedly committed a crime.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Stand up and say it.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you cannot instruct the Member for Johnston …

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am sorry, but she is alleging that police committed a crime. She might want to correct that for the record, or I will hold her to account for it.

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat.

Member for Johnston, did you want to correct what you said rather than being instructed to do so?

J DAVIS: I am happy to say, 'police officers who allegedly committed a crime'. Thank you, Madam Speaker and Chief Minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Such is the disregard other members have for our police. If you think someone has allegedly done something wrong, why don't you walk to the DPP and let them know, Member for Johnston. As far as I am concerned this matter is closed. It has been dealt with as an operational matter. I will stand here every day and defend our police because they are out there making the Territory safe, which is what Labor failed to do for eight years.

Casuarina Coastal Reserve

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for PARKS and WILDLIFE

Casuarina Coastal Reserve is a treasured natural asset valued by residents, Territorians and visitors. I regularly visit the reserve and engage with my constituents, and I share the deep passion for its preservation. Recently I had the privilege of joining a birdwatching tour when I witnessed some of the 269 beautiful bird species that call the reserve home. The Friends of Casuarina Coastal Reserve expressed strong interest in

being actively consulted as key stakeholders in future decisions affecting the reserve. Can the minister outline how the government is working with this group and other community stakeholders to ensure the protection and enhancement of this significant nature area?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina's passion for that area, which he lives close to, is shared by many other Territorians. Our government is committed to ensuring its long-term preservation. The Casuarina Coastal Reserve is a well-loved coastline attracting over 1.4 million visitors annually. How is that for the Territory lifestyle? Even though most people do not swim due to the jellyfish and crocodiles, it is a popular spot for families to play in the sand, walk dogs and trek through the monsoon forests.

It is home to a diverse ecosystem, critical sea turtle nesting sites and prolific birdlife. The reserve's biodiversity, historic World War II sites and popular recreational activities, like mountain biking, walking trails and birdwatching, make for a vital part of our beautiful and unique Territory lifestyle and tourism economy. The sunsets are breathtaking.

Managing this balance between recreational and conservational is essential. That is why the CLP government is committed to ensuring stakeholder consultation is at the heart of any future management decisions of the reserve. We want to ensure the right protections are in place so that the Casuarina Coastal Reserve remains a thriving, sustainable space for future generations and, most importantly, for Territorians to enjoy our beautiful and unique outdoor lifestyle.

As part of the process, I met with the Friends of Casuarina Coastal Reserve on 17 February, and we discussed a range of important issues. The members highlighted their ongoing challenges, such as arson in the reserve, invasive weeds from residential areas and the need for additional resources. All this feedback is valued as we continue to engage with Territorians about this precious natural asset.

Member for Casuarina, I hear that you are going to the BioBlitz, which is the Casuarina Coastal Reserve event on 29 March. This community-driven nature-based event, funded under the NT community grants program, will bring together scientists, Darwin park rangers and the local community for biodiversity surveys and educational activities. It is a great example of how science and community can work together and support such conservation efforts.

Gunbalanya Clinic

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for HEALTH referred to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

The previous government's 2024 budget committed $20m for a new primary health centre and morgue in my electorate in Gunbalanya. With the design already complete, the construction tender is scheduled to be released in the first quarter of this year. Yesterday you said the project is well progressed, but unfortunately this is not what people are telling me. Could you update the Assembly on the status of this important project, explain the reason for delays and confirm whether your government will honour the original timeline and full funding commitment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this question might be best answered by the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure.

Mr YAN: I do not remember the Gunbalanya health clinic being scheduled to commence in the first quarter. After looking at the infrastructure papers, I can see there was a $5.2bn program with $313m allocated to deliver. I told the Assembly about this recently. Labor delivering that program, amongst other programs, would have been difficult.

The proposed health clinic at Gunbalanya was with revoted money. I do not have the papers with me, but the money had been revoted into the outer years, as Labor did not provide the actual funding to deliver many programs. The $313m Labor allocated in this budget covered only three of its large infrastructure projects, which were already underway: the housing program; the gallery next door, which we probably do not need; and the new Mandorah jetty across the harbour.

That was the total scope of the money Labor allocated in its infrastructure budget for 2025–26. To deliver everything that Labor put up would require careful consideration and possibly a lot of borrowing. Labor did not budget for projects or put them in scope. Labor tried to hide the fact that it would breach the debt ceiling

by not funding ongoing projects. That is why only $313m was in the infrastructure budget this year, but at least $1.2bn was needed to deliver its commitment. We are talking about a $5bn program.

I cannot specifically speak on the Gunbalanya clinic. It is on the program, but I do not remember it being scheduled to start this year, considering the budget was not there. I understand it had been rolled over into future years under Labor's infrastructure program.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.

MOTION
Economic Development – Infrastructure Program

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

- acknowledges the outstanding work done by the private sector in developing a portfolio of projects valued at over $57bn, spanning critical sectors such as minerals and resources, digital innovation, renewable energy and agribusiness

- commends the 2024–25 Northern Territory infrastructure program for its significant contributions to building a better Territory, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for all Territorians.

Before I begin my contribution to this important motion, I welcome my father, Mick Uibo, who has come to enjoy parliament. He is one of the people who regularly watches the broadcast. It is always great when he can be here in person.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, Territory Labor is always proud to talk up the Territory because we love this place. We are proud to see Territorians succeed, and we want to ensure that every Territorian—no matter where they live or how much money they have in their pocket—has the chance to thrive. A strong economy and good social policy that lifts people up rather than demonises them can and should go hand in hand with the focus on economic development and growth in the Territory.

Despite facing enormous headwinds, the economic pillars handed over to the CLP government in this term are solid, no matter what it says. The claims that those opposite have somehow turned around the economy in just seven months is nonsensical. In fact, the CLP government is benefitting from that solid foundation built under the former Labor government.

The last Labor government made significant progress in revitalising the Northern Territory's economy despite inheriting a dire economic situation from the Giles CLP government. I will remind all members and those listening that Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro was part of that team and tumultuous time—the chaotic four years that we never want to see repeated in Territory politics. This included a significant budget deficit and escalating debt levels, even after the CLP government sold and leased public assets, like the TIO (Territory Insurance Office) and the port, which the Treasurer continues to refuse to acknowledge the Chief Minister was a part of.

The former government acted swiftly to manage the situation we inherited but faced significant challenges. First, the cruel decision to cut $2bn in GST funding to the Territory by the former federal Coalition government was a contributor to unforeseen challenges later, such as the COVID global pandemic and its accompanying global recession.

Now, there is the ongoing uncertainty of global unrest impacting supply chains, the inflation of costs of materials and the cost-of-living crisis that Australians are experiencing. Unfortunately the Northern Territory is not immune to this.

Jurisdictions around the world are facing the same budget challenges as a result of these far-reaching external factors, although the CLP government would have us believe that it is only in the Northern Territory and has been for the last eight years. That is how narrow its focus is. There is no vision relating to supporting the economy in Territory. To suggest otherwise is either naive or completely misleading.

The new CLP government will not acknowledge, other than what it is taking credit for, that it inherited the years of hard work and foundations laid by the former Labor government to ensure there are ways out of the

downward direction of the Territory economy. There are bright spots on the horizon. I heard just yesterday the CLP quoting terminology that was used by a former Labor Treasurer, such as green shoots. I have heard the government using that language already, and I wonder if it will continue to grow when it starts to discover what it is to be in government.

Early this month we heard the great news that the federal government will hand us close to an extra $250m in GST. We have not heard the Treasurer compliment this or talk about what the plans are regarding this windfall from the GST lottery. We will receive about 4.8% of the GST pool, which is a huge win for the Northern Territory, but the general public would not know that because the Treasurer and the CLP government fail to acknowledge this. It is a much better outcome for us with that GST windfall than it was a few years ago when we saw the federal Liberal government ripping away GST from the Northern Territory.

The now Treasurer Bill Yan welcomed the additional GST from the Albanese Labor government and acknowledged our unique economic and social challenges in celebrating the GST boost. A brief display of positivity and collegial partnership got the Treasurer in the bad books with his Liberal political masters, because since then he has gone to ground, criticising and whingeing in that horrible CLP way. It is the hallmark of the Finocchiaro CLP government.

It may be part of the professional tantrum we saw today by the Treasurer, because he is starting to realise the complexity of what it means to govern in the Northern Territory and that growing the economy while delivering services is not simply about speaking buzzwords or glossy media releases. The CLP is still acting like it is in opposition.

It takes hard work and sustained effort to move the Territory forward, and the current CLP government is not a heavyweight. Those opposite are lightweights and unfortunately cannot work in a sustained way to benefit the Territory, particularly the economy.

Last week I had the pleasure of attending an important Darwin Major Business Group event where it presented the Over the Horizon Opportunities economic report, prepared on behalf of the AEC Group. The report talked about the importance of stimulating private sector investment. It is always a timely reminder; this is nothing new to us.

I said at the lunch that this has been a focus of every government in the Northern Territory since we achieved self-government in the 1970s. The report broke down how we need to achieve this by investing in enabling infrastructure, expanding industry and developing our Territory workforce.

When I think about the work of the former Labor government, there are three key ingredients to sustained economic prosperity given plenty of focus, leaving a strong foundation which we hope the CLP government will look to build on. We do not expect the CLP to be gracious about any of this solid groundwork or even acknowledge it, but for the sake of Territorians we are pleased that some of these elements are still in train and that CLP members have not axed everything, which is normally in their DNA.

The CLP likes to rubbish the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass. It is exactly these types of enabling infrastructure projects that will make a difference to the Territory in the long run. The great Territory company, Sitzler, is the contractor completing this huge project. I told a great story at the lunch last week that the engineers at Sitzler spoke to me about. First-time technology is being developed and implemented in the practical sense at the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass. It is the first overpass in Australia—they think maybe the world, but definitely Australia—to use technology and engineering to take the weight of a road train.

While the CLP continues to rubbish projects like that and the amazing company doing the work, there is technology leading the rest of the nation in the Northern Territory. It is also an example of how, when working in partnership with the federal government, the Territory government can get things done for the betterment of the Territory.

I strongly suggest that those opposite take the time to learn the important lessons of the past, so they do not repeat these mistakes in the future. When we work with the federal government, Territorians are the beneficiaries. When we pick fights with the federal government for petty political reasons, Territorians lose out. It is a pretty simple lesson; they do not need to learn that themselves. It has been done in the past; we do not want to see it repeated.

The Tiger Brennan Drive overpass will provide a safer, more reliable route for Territorians travelling in a growing area, but most importantly it will enable safer and more efficient freight movement to and from East Arm industrial area so we do not see the horrific accidents of the past which caused fatalities.

The former Territory Labor government understood the importance of enabling infrastructure, investing significantly in the road network to support industries with freight and logistics, including the gas industry roads upgrade program, jointly funded with the Australian Government.

Regarding expanding industry, there is much to build on here thanks to the work of the former Territory Labor government. We heard the Deputy Chief Minister belabouring his support for the gas industry, but economic strength requires diversity, which is why the former Labor government invested in growing and developing a wide range of existing and emerging industries, including agriculture, fisheries, renewable energy, digital technology, critical minerals, tourism, Defence industry support, construction and much more.

Prior to the last Territory election there were 24 projects aiming for final investment decisions—FID, as most businesspeople call it—in the next 12 to 24 months. Let us hope the CLP government has not dropped the ball on any of those 24 projects that have basically been handed over for safekeeping through the next term of government.

Workforce development in the Territory is again an area that the former Labor government invested in heavily. Last week we welcomed the Designated Area Migration Agreement that was signed off. That hard work happened previously between the Northern Territory Labor government and the federal Labor government. We applaud Minister Cahill for continuing that work in her department, although there have been machinery-of-government changes. The fruit of all of that labour—politically Labor and the hard work of the public servants' labour—was to see the next iteration of the DAMA signed. This will continue a significant investment for job pathways and growing the skills in the Territory we need for jobs, particularly through the focus on apprenticeships and traineeships.

This is great news for the Northern Territory. I note the Member for Fong Lim was at the signing. We will be there to back you guys in the great news stories that continue to be celebrated by the CLP government. There is little to no grace in acknowledging that work has taken many years. I met with industry leaders at the end of last year, and they were concerned that there was no movement or traction about the final signing. To have that signed off in the first half of the calendar year was welcomed.

We continue to support the DAMA. Whether it is through specialised programs, full qualifications or upskilling to keep up with technology and advancements we are seeing across the globe, a skilled workforce to enable businesses and industries to get on with the job is most important.

In 2023–24 the Territory government committed over $85m for vocational education and training and to support vital programs to see Territorians upskilled and in important jobs. There are about 4,000 apprentices and trainees in the Territory. About one in three of those trainees and apprentices are female, and one in three are Aboriginal. That is fantastic. We want to see more of this and will continue to support those programs that make a difference and provide opportunities and pathways for Territorians.

We hope that the new CLP government maintains the focus on growing our skilled workforce through apprenticeships and traineeships so we can have workforce ready to take up the many opportunities coming down the pipeline. We have so much to offer to ensure we have training and skill development opportunities for Territorians and those who want to come to the Territory to make their lives and futures here. That investment is critical.

It is important when we debate the future of the Territory and the opportunities for growth that we do it in an evidenced and strength-based way. If we cannot talk up the Territory, why would we expect people to stay if it is always negative? We will continue to talk up the Territory because we want Territorians to stay, new Territorians to come and the investment for our future to grow.

On this point, I urge the CLP government to follow the lead of its own Under Treasurer and be truthful about the state of Territory economy instead of the relentless negativity that is unfortunately becoming a trademark of the CLP government.

The Under Treasurer of the Northern Territory, Mr Tim McManus, pointed out in his Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook Report that the Territory economy strengthened in 2023–24, with state final demand growing by 4.1%. The Under Treasurer said this completely exceeded Treasury's own expectations.

Economic growth, as measured by gross state product, was higher than forecast in the pre-election fiscal outlook. Mr McManus, a highly competent and knowledgeable public servant who has served the Territory with dedication and distinction over many decades, goes on to say:

> *The stronger finish to the year reflects a surge in private and public investment, and a more resilient household sector, which has been supported by recent Commonwealth tax cuts …*

That is thanks to Prime Minister Albanese. I continue:

> *… and improving real wage outcomes. Real wage growth is now positive, following a period of decline in recent years, as new bargaining agreements come into effect that recognise and offset recent cost of living pressures.*
>
> *Inflation pressures continue to ease in Darwin. Inflation has declined for six consecutive quarters to be 3% in June 2024, well below the national rate of 3.8%, and is expected to return to the RBA target band of 2% to 3% later this year.*

Bill Yan, the Northern Territory CLP Treasurer, loves wringing his hands and carrying on dramatically about how terrible and dire everything is in the Territory, failing to talk the Territory up. The economy has solid foundations, as quoted by his own Under Treasurer just a moment ago.

Despite seeing the many external factors and historic challenges in the Northern Territory, the CLP's relentless negativity will be draining for all of us—not just in this Chamber but Territorians, businesses and industry—for the next four years if it maintains the 'talking the Territory down' sentiment.

The work commented on by the Under Treasurer did not happen overnight, and it did not happen in the last seven months since the August election either; it is a result of careful fiscal management and a strong economic vision over many years and the legacy of the former Labor government that laid these foundations. Yes, there have been ups and downs—there have been projects that have not got off the ground—but there was vision, and we do not see any of that from the CLP government.

The way the Deputy Chief Minister goes on about mining, you would think that he invented it himself, but he did not. The mining industry continues to be a cornerstone of the Northern Territory economy, as it has been for many decades, driving regional development and economic opportunities across the beautiful and vast Northern Territory.

I remind the Deputy Chief Minister that it is not the only industry in the Territory; it is an important one, but it is not the only one. I wonder how those working in agriculture, fisheries, renewables and tourism—and the many other incredible and diverse industries that bring dollars to the table for the Territory but never get a mention by the CLP government—feel.

Like other industries, they get on with the job because they know they play a vital role in the Territory's economy, particularly with providing opportunities, supporting remote communities and fostering economic growth at the local and Territory level.

Last year petroleum and mineral exploration investment reached $545m, the second highest on record. The Santos Barossa gas project is on track; it will produce its first gas later in 2025, delivering billions to the local economy and supporting hundreds of local jobs. Again, the foundations have been laid under the former Labor government, but we do not expect the CLP government to even mention any of that hard work. I am sure the CLP will be there to celebrate it and take credit, though. This has been many years in the making, not just the last six months since the change of government.

Castile Resources Rover 1 is a $279.5m project to produce downstream critical and precious minerals in the Barkly region. The Nolans rare-earth mine and processing facility 125 kilometres north of Alice Springs will see the country's first ore-to-oxide rare-earths processing operation, which will create hundreds of jobs in the Territory.

There is community concern about the new onshore gas industry forming. That is why the former Labor government worked to ensure that development of the onshore gas industry would be responsible and sustainable, with decisions based on data and science. This ensured Territorians could have confidence that their government would do everything the right way, with processes and mechanisms in place, and not be hiding from public scrutiny.

The former Territory Labor government implemented all 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry to ensure that onshore gas activity took into account environmental, social and cultural considerations. At the time we reformed the mining legislative framework to ensure that regulation of its environmental impacts sits with the minister for Environment to keep it segregated. We completed the Strategic Regional Environmental

and Baseline Assessment (SREBA) for the Beetaloo region, with extensive data and information collected on plants and animals, as well as social, cultural and economic values.

The onshore gas industry is now well on its way with a regulated, sustainable way of working. We are soon likely to see the first gas from Beetaloo. This is an important development for the Territory and the rest of Australia to secure an affordable energy supply until we can complete the transition to renewables. Australia is not in a position to simply switch off gas without significant adverse impacts across the country. Gas is an important part of the energy mix in this country. In the Territory we are at the forefront of capitalising on that.

These are just a few of the significant mining projects in development across the Territory. I remind the Assembly that they were all approved under the former Labor government. Projects of this magnitude come with enormous opportunities for local businesses and Territorian jobs.

A key focus of the former Labor government was to ensure that these opportunities were maximised by working in partnership with bodies like the Industry Skills Advisory Council. Labor not only backed and progressed major projects like Nolans but also worked hard to ensure that Territory businesses had the capacity and capability to deliver goods and services for these projects. We worked hard to ensure that as many Territorians as possible had the skills to take on jobs in these sectors that were developing.

We have been left to quietly await any plans from the CLP government about upskilling Territorians and businesses. That does not seem to factor in the government's thinking at the moment. Obviously, the CLP cannot govern and do more than one thing. The Territory Labor opposition strongly encourages the CLP government to continue working on the solid foundations laid out by the former Labor government and maintain the investment in skills, jobs and pathways for Territorians.

Labor has always supported and encouraged the growth of a safe, competitive, innovative and sustainable resources industry that builds the economy for all Territorians. We support the resources industry to ensure that local jobs are created and Territory businesses are given the opportunities to build and grow.

We support the CLP government's efforts in the same vein when it comes to job creation, but unfortunately we see fewer plans and more of the petty and small-minded talk that is becoming a bad habit.

When we took government in 2016, two terms ago, the Territory Labor government's international reputation was a joke because of the former CLP government during the Giles era. The former Labor government did an enormous amount of work to create a stable investment environment and back the industry, and we strongly urge the CLP government to build on this legacy.

It is pleasing to see that the Chief Minister understands what an economic driver Defence is for the Territory. With the $18bn of planned investment in north Australia over the next 10 years, as outlined in the 2024 National Defence Strategy, the restructured integrated investment plan, there is a lot of positive news for the Territory in the Defence space.

The Master Builders Billion Dollar Partnership report on Defence investment identified the following items:

- $6bn investment over the next four to five years, with approximately $3bn from the Australian Defence Force and $3bn from the US Department of Defense
- an extra 7,600 jobs in the Top End
- an estimated 4,300 jobs in construction and 3,300 across the economy
- a potential uplift of economic activity of nearly 5% should the majority of those investments be captured by local businesses in the Territory.

It is an exciting investment and process to follow. The Territory is home to a vibrant Defence industry. With over 1,000 businesses actively involved in the market and supply chain in the Territory, this is indeed an area of economic growth. Decades of development and growth have established the Territory as a trusted partner for Defence.

Local businesses have worked hard to meet the needs of Defence, investing in quality assurance, integrated management systems and upskilling staff. Contracts are going to local businesses because they get Defence. This is opening more apprentice and traineeship opportunities for young Territorians, First Nations

Territorians and female Territorians. Our capability and capacity grow, and the benefits to our economy, particularly the circular economy, will continue to flow.

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: My team and I will be keeping an eye on the work at RAAF Base Tindal in my electorate. The work at RAAF Base Tindal will include the redevelopment of facilities to maintain the capability of the base, including expanding the base infrastructure and trunk engineering services to support demand growth, replacing facilities or equipment at the end of their useful and economic life and upgrading infrastructure to reduce ongoing maintenance.

Our federal Labor colleagues back Defence investment in the Territory, and the Territory Labor opposition will continue to work with them to ensure this remains a key economy-boosting sector for the Territory.

The worldwide transition to cheaper, cleaner, greener renewable energy presents incredible economic opportunities for us in the Northern Territory. The work of the former Territory Labor government identified this many years ago, releasing the Roadmap to Renewables in 2017 with a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030, which is an ambitious target. The road map also made clear the significant economic benefit to be leveraged from our abundant solar resources and proximity to key export markets, such as Asia; the CLP government talked about this. During the ministerial report by Minister Cahill last week we spoke on the importance of continuing Asian relationships, and we support that.

Our proven expertise in the energy export market and our commitment to net zero places us in a favourable way when it comes to being the capital city of the north of Australia, as well as the closest to our Asian neighbours.

I mentioned SunCable in previous contributions. SunCable has signed a non-binding agreement with Singapore's Energy Market Authority. This is huge for the Northern Territory in particular. The agreement is to supply 1.75 gigawatts of low-carbon electricity from Australia. Where do they want to do it? In the Northern Territory just outside my beautiful region of Big Rivers in the Barkly. This is an exciting opportunity, not just for the Territory but for the country.

SunCable's AAPowerLink is proposed to include the world's largest solar farm which will operate in the Northern Territory for the next 70 years. AAPowerLink is a program of works comprising two unique projects, DarwinLink and SingaporeLink.

DarwinLink will deliver onshore generation, 800 kilometres of overhead transmission and connection to support new green industry in Darwin. SingaporeLink seeks to deliver offshore transmission and connection to Singapore via a 4,300-kilometre subsea cable. That will be the longest in the world. The only one that comes close is a 4,000-kilometre cable in Europe.

The SunCable project will play an important role in regional trade security through the development of a new export industry in renewable electricity. It will enable new industrial development in the Northern Territory with further export potential, including hydrogen and hydrogen derivatives.

What we have to look forward to will take a lot of work. We hope the future is bright for the Territory when it comes to renewables.

The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report—commissioned many years ago now—noted:

> *The digital age is upon us …*
>
> *…*
>
> *A strong digital services industry located in the Territory underpins the growth potential across the economy*

The opportunities for the Northern Territory to transform from a physical gateway to Asia into a digital gateway and service hub for north Australia and Asia is developing rapidly. This is an exciting space. Improving the Territory's digital connectivity with contemporary high-speed, low-latency links to Asia, the United States and

the rest of the country is critical to achieving the vision of the Territory as north Australia's most advanced digital economy and Australia's digital gateway to Asia and beyond.

There are subsea projects, including Asia Connect Cable System and the new Hawaiki subsea cable; a number of terrestrial projects, including the Unite Cable System and the Telstra intercity fibre network; as well as data centre projects. We have already seen a data centre in our capital city of Darwin.

The Northern Territory is well placed to get the most out of the digital opportunities and challenges that we face now and into the future. Again, a lot of this work over the last eight years was under the former Labor government which laid that solid foundation.

The Deputy Chief Minister has a keen eagerness to be the king of gas, but we seem to have forgotten other key portfolios that he holds involving other critical economic drivers of the Territory, such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism and hospitality. I note that Minister Boothby also holds some of those portfolios.

It is clear that the CLP will only gamble its money on gas and has completely and utterly sidelined these other extremely important sectors and economic growth drivers in the Territory. The Deputy Chief Minister forgot about the importance of diversifying the economy. I hope that can get his government back on track with that.

The former government invested strongly in each of these sectors. This is the sort of investment that the CLP government classifies as wasteful and not important in many of its speeches and answers to questions in parliament.

As with health, there has been no vision, plan or clue about how to support growth in these important sectors. It appears that the CLP members will not listen to anyone but themselves, as we know they do not like listening to experts. We will have to watch this space. Perhaps the CLP government will use the word 'gas' somewhere in the industry title, and it might get attention. We strongly encourage those opposite to start putting their thoughts and rhetoric into action for our economy and openly support other critical job-creating, economy-boosting sectors.

For any government to succeed in the Territory, there needs to be a clear vision for infrastructure investment which enables the growth of our economy and population. Infrastructure investment creates jobs, stimulates economic activity and attracts businesses to every part of the Territory. Investing in infrastructure helps essential services such as healthcare, education and transportation, improving the liveability and quality of life for people in our communities. It is important that the Northern Territory's population grows and infrastructure investment keeps up with demand, particularly with the big industries I mentioned.

Our former Labor government had a targeted approach to infrastructure investment. We strategically prioritised projects that advance the Territory economically and socially. The former Labor government made decisions with clear objectives in mind because we know that the right investment can yield many benefits, including increased productivity, competitiveness and resilience.

The 2024–25 infrastructure program provided a $4.42bn commitment to invest across the Territory. These investments would support access to and the delivery of housing, health, education, community safety and other core government services as well as develop the NT's economy.

I note that the CLP government has already started to scrap infrastructure projects, and we have not even hit the budget. This is incredibly short-sighted and will take years to catch up. It is concerning to hear rumblings that the CLP government does not believe in the public sector and the work it does to invest in the economy. This is a deeply concerning sentiment that fails to understand public investment is crucial for jobs and economic growth. Public investment instils confidence in the private sector to invest in the Territory.

The former Labor government's work on strategic infrastructure investment prioritised future investment and took a considered approach. We believe that this should be continued by the CLP government. Throwing away all that work would be counterproductive and deliberately sabotage the work done in the best interests of Territorians.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I send birthday greetings for yesterday, Leader of the Opposition. I also welcome your father in the gallery.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I can agree with some but not all of the opposition's motion. I acknowledge the outstanding work done by the private sector across the infrastructure portfolio towards driving our economy in the Territory.

This motion is an opportunity to highlight the manifest failures of the previous Labor government in infrastructure and our economy. I was incredulous listening to the points the Leader of the Opposition made about the successes of the former Labor government in the economy and infrastructure.

It is easy to highlight the issues in the economy; there are about 11.5 billion reasons there are issues with Labor's management of the economy.

I note the Opposition Leader spoke specifically of the debt when Labor came to government. If my memory serves me correctly, it was about $1.8bn. In just eight years that has increased to $11bn, and $1.6bn of that debt was put on in the last 18 months. That is disgusting. What is there to show for all those billion dollars of debt? What did NT people get for that? It is a tragedy.

The previous Labor government failed Territorians. Labor's infrastructure program is a chaotic mess of unfunded promises and budget blowouts. I have mentioned over the last few days that Labor's capital works program for 2024–25 was $5.086bn, and the spend was in excess of $1.288bn.

What had Labor programmed for the next year? If you are spending that much money in your infrastructure program in this financial year, you would think you would put cash into the next financial year to deliver your infrastructure program into the outer years. What did Labor budget? It was $313m. That is a $900m shortfall to deliver the infrastructure program. Labor was more interested in announcing the next big shiny thing that it would do than it was in putting any cash towards that program.

The projects that Labor put forward suffered huge cost blowouts which, in turn, affected the ability to deliver the infrastructure program into the future. Labor had not put any cash in the outer years against its infrastructure program. Why did Labor do this? It wanted to ensure that leading into last year's election, it would not show a breach of the debt ceiling it put in.

Labor not only failed to fund projects despite announcing them; the projects it got off the ground blew out in cost by orders of magnitude. What the hell was the Labor government thinking? What was Labor thinking when it decided to build not one but two new art galleries? The people of the Territory continue to ask me why we are spending money on art galleries when we need infrastructure developments in health, aged care, mental health, roads and communities. Why are we spending on that and not those all-important pieces of infrastructure for all Territorians? I ask myself the same question.

Labor kept announcing projects every year to make it look as though it was doing something. In reality, Labor was doing nothing. It is easy to announce a project, but it is much harder to fund and deliver that project. That is where Labor fell over.

Take, for example, the lofty promise to underground power across Darwin's northern suburbs. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has a motion on the Notice Paper. I will set the record straight. I have said this a few times, but the ears of the opposition members might be painted on because they are not listening. The former Labor government put up $60m to underground power in the northern suburbs. Those opposite say that we went to the election knowing that we would remove it. That is incorrect. After we got into government and I became Treasurer and the shareholding minister for government-owned corporations, Power and Water came to me and said that $60m to deliver underground power in the northern suburbs is a farce. The people at Power and Water said, 'We cannot do it. We need to stop it. We simply cannot do that.'

That is the third time I have said that in this Chamber, so I hope those opposite are listening today. Power and Water came to me as the minister and said, 'We cannot do this because there is not enough money'. My response to Power and Water was, 'If $60m is not enough, what will it actually cost to underground power in Darwin's northern suburbs?' Power and Water did the work and came back to me with a number in excess of half-a-billion dollars. It would be $500m-plus to underground power in the northern suburbs, and that is being conservative.

The Labor members were gaslighting the people of the northern suburbs, telling them something they could not deliver. That is the modus operandi of those opposite—'Let's make a big announcement and make it sound great, but there's no money for it.' When it came time to do it they would have to borrow and borrow, and that is why the debt kept increasing.

Did Labor care? No; it was just another announcement Labor members thought would perhaps swing a few more votes. It did not work for them in the northern suburbs, Mr Deputy Speaker; you sitting in that Chair is a testament to that.

Labor fell way short when it came to competent economic management. What was driving Labor members to make such incompetent decisions? We all know. Sitting in budget Cabinet, worrying about the optics of breaching their self-imposed debt ceiling in an election year, they deliberately pushed out spending and reduced funding or did not fund projects at all. That is what we are finding as we are going through, working out this year's budget. All the hidden funds—or lack of funds—the projects and programs they had on the books were laid bare, but there was no money attached. They were just hollow promises.

Labor members were worried about being seen as incompetent, because they are incompetent and they know it. They pretend to understand the private sector, but in reality they are too self-absorbed in arcane Labor politics of plotting, factions and identity politics. They have no understanding of the real economy. They go straight from union politics to becoming MLAs, with little real-world and commercial experience. Most have never had to run a business to make sure the overdraft and their employees are paid. It is easy for Labor members when it is not their money but other people's.

I listened intently when the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Darwin Major Business Group function last Friday. It was pleasing that AEC clearly highlighted the issues facing the Northern Territory as well as the way out. The good thing about the way out is it aligns with our policy positions put forward in our budget for rebuilding the economy. That is the strategy on a page. The AEC's priorities align with ours. It is great to see that the government and private sector have the same ideas to work towards the same goals to pull our economy out of the hole it is in.

I table the AEC report, Over the Horizon Opportunities.

This is a great document, because it shows what we can do. I will summarise a bit of the document, so people have an idea of what it is about.

The first thing it speaks about is private sector investment. Private capital investment is the most critical component of growth, historically contributing to over 75% of total investment. Growth periods align with strong private sector confidence and investment levels. A decline in private sector investment has contributed to slower economic growth in recent years. This is specifically highlighted in this document. We can see that in 2021–22 public sector spending increased, then private sector investment decreased.

The private sector was using funds released by government to make money rather than investing its own capital to do so. This report and the Darwin Major Business Group highlighted that as an issue for our economic development.

Major projects was another one. While major infrastructure and resource projects provide short-term boosts, they are not sufficient alone to reach long-term growth targets of 5% annually. These projects can only act as catalysts, enabling small and medium enterprise growth. We need growth-focused policy and regulatory certainty, which is what we are delivering.

Policies that reduce red tape, provide fast-tracked approvals and offer clear incentives are necessary to build investor confidence and reduce delays. Regulatory clarity is especially crucial for attracting private sector involvement, and it is only in the last few weeks that we are providing that certainty and security for private investment.

We passed the Territory Coordinator Bill, and it is now a reality. The Territory Coordinator can now drive investment in major projects across the Territory. We removed third-party merits reviews last night to provide additional certainty to the sector so that once a decision is made, the decision is made.

There is further legislation coming that will provide certainty to the private sector. We have done work on payroll tax relief for small to medium businesses by raising the threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m. We are working to support the private sector.

The Approvals Fast Track Taskforce is doing a body of work to make sure we provide the right regulatory environment for businesses to invest and grow with the least amount of red, green and beige tape. We need to clean that up because, until we do, businesses will not have that ability to move quickly and be agile in their investment and development in the Territory.

We need to invest in enabling infrastructure, and sadly we did not see assistance from the federal budget last night. We need investment in roads, energy, water and digital connectivity. They are foundational to unlocking regional growth and industry expansion.

We need to unlock our infrastructure corridors. We need to unlock infrastructure hubs and do the work to develop Middle Arm. We need the money out of equity into cash and grants so we commence the work to drive these projects forward and to provide enabling infrastructure for our private sector to come and invest.

Workforce shortages are a major barrier, and we need to expand training and relocation incentives and vocational pathways, especially for Indigenous Australians and regional populations. This is key for our economic growth, and we are doing that work. We need to attract and retain a skilled workforce, and this is closely tied to other drivers like liveability and housing. The CLP government is doing this work now.

We are working on our social order issues. We have put in place our home grants—the best in the country—to get people to come to the Territory, get people and families to set down roots here and increase our population and economic growth.

We need to leverage our strategic geographic location. The work being done by the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations is key because the NT's proximity to Southeast Asia is underutilised. We need to strengthen our export capacity, trade partnerships and regional logistics hubs, like the Port of Darwin, to elevate our growth.

Defence and government sector opportunities are also key. As a strategic military hub, Defence infrastructure and employment offer additional opportunities for investors and supply chain development. This is key to our infrastructure development longer term.

We cannot achieve all these things without reducing crime and enhancing safety for the people of the Northern Territory and the people we want to attract to live in our communities.

All these drivers are interconnected and collectively represent a growth mandate aimed at reducing dependency on the boom-and-bust cycles and building a sustainable economic future for all Territorians.

That is a summary of the report I have just tabled from the Darwin Major Business Group. All the things in that report align with what the CLP is doing. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition trying to make reference to that and what Labor had done in that space over the last eight years. I did not quite get the numbers; they did not add up. Labor was doing everything but what this report says. It clearly highlights the issues that commenced eight years ago.

Our infrastructure issues started in the last four years. Our infrastructure program always sat around $1.4bn to $1.5bn over the past 10 years. It was in the last three to four years that we saw a huge increase, and with that was the increase in debt.

In 2021, off the back of COVID, we knew there had to be private and public sector investment from the government. Labor took this as a green light to go crazy. Total infrastructure payments used to sit at about $1.5bn. From 2021 Labor increased that by more than $1.2bn and up to $2bn, and it is projected to go as high as possibly $2.7bn. There is no cash to deliver that. It was all great to announce these projects—'We have all these wonderful things that we want to do, and they will cost billions of dollars'—but there was no cash to deliver them.

When Labor delivered the projects, the costs blew out. Let us look at Tiger Brennan Drive overpass—$100m. We knew that Labor wanted to spend over $300m on the art gallery in Alice Springs (NAAG), but it had a budget of only $150m to $160m. The gallery next to our building has increased by more than $70m. There was a lack of concern and oversight of these projects by the previous government. It was, 'Let us announce all these things but then not have any specific oversight of them. Let them blow out.'

The cash available to deliver the projects decreased because they are dealing with blowouts. We will continue to deal with the blowouts because we have inherited all these legacy issues from the previous government. It will take us a long time to pull that back into line and get some semblance of control over what the infrastructure program looks like. It is gross negligence, and we are left to pick up the mess.

Half the problem we see was lack of oversight and strategic direction and the abrogation of the responsibility for an infrastructure program that was not funded properly and was inflationary, with an Infrastructure department overloaded with competing priorities. It is all great to make these announcements, but they put the department under immense pressure. Rather than delivering 100 projects well, the department is stuck trying to deliver 1,000 projects. Unfortunately, it cannot have oversight over all of those. Then we start to see problems.

The Infrastructure department was being pulled in different directions. The department was allowed to continue on without being given clear leadership or specific direction and no clear governance that I can see. The department was left to its own devices to determine how to implement an impossible government agenda. The government grasped at everything new that was coming out and kept announcing new projects. It overloaded that department without the cash behind it to deliver that program. That is the mess we have to clean up.

Our civil and construction industries know the truth about Labor. They were not listened to. Not a day goes by that I do not receive complaints about the previous government and the way it made it so difficult to do business. I have said a hundred times and will say again that if you do not want somebody to do something, you make it difficult to do. That is what the previous Labor government did with the bureaucratic processes it put in place in those last eight years.

It is also about the way it did that with procurement and tendering. There was a lack of certainty about what was real and what was just an announcement. The competing priorities for the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure were atrocious. All the former Labor government did was make announcement after announcement and overloaded that department to the point where it did not know where to go next.

There was a lack of appreciation for how the private sector works. When a department is overloaded and overworked because of an unrealistic infrastructure program, sometimes the simple things like paying the bills to our contractors become difficult. However, simple things like paying bills on time mean a lot to the small businesses in the private sector. Small business is the heart of our economy in the Territory. Contractors are carrying accounts receivable in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. That is disgraceful, but that is what happened under Labor. That puts undue stress on private sector investors.

This afternoon I heard Labor members pat themselves on the back and congratulate themselves for the mess that they put us in. They have learnt nothing. It is pure delusion on their part about the infrastructure program they put forward.

The fact Labor did this knowing it was not funding the program correctly into the future is shameful and disgusting. That does not provide certainty to the industry and the contractors. The department was putting out tenders, but all of a sudden there was no cash to do these projects. That causes projects to stretch out and costs to increase, which further adds to the blowouts within the sector.

I cannot support the Leader of the Opposition's motion. I support our private sector because it will drive the economic development of the Territory. Private sector investment will pull us out of the economic nightmare hole that those opposite put us in over the past eight years.

Labor increased debt by more than $1.2bn a year since it came into government in 2016. They are horrendous numbers. We have been left to try to pick up the pieces. We have to deliver an infrastructure program that Labor put in place because work is underway that we cannot stop and the contractors must be paid. This means that we will have to borrow money to pay the contractors and businesses so that they can pay their employees and creditors and keep delivering. Labor did not put any money in the forward budget for that infrastructure program. It beggars belief that would happen; I do not understand it.

We are in the position where we need to borrow more money to cover Labor's incompetence and inability to deliver an infrastructure program that rarely delivered for Territorians. Labor should have invested in infrastructure that would grow the economy and enable our private sector to invest and grow. However, money was put into projects that had little economic development for the Territory. Labor was short-sighted in what it put forward.

There were a lot of projects. Never forget the shadeless shade structure on Cavenagh Street. Every time I walk under it I must wear a hat, otherwise I get sunburnt. I get a crosshatch sunburn on my head because the former Labor government could not grow a vine over the structure, but one thing it could grow was debt. If Labor could grow a vine like it grew debt it would have covered the entire Cavenagh Street structure and it would be lovely under there. Unfortunately, Labor cannot grow vines like it grew debt.

Labor failed to plan, think ahead and be strategic about its infrastructure program. The issues we face and what the CLP must deal with and repair is ongoing. Labor failed to plan and prepare. When you do not plan, you do not get the performance needed. I will keep it clean.

I cannot support the motion brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I support our private sector and always will. I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition on how great Labor's infrastructure program is, because it failed to deliver for all Territorians.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will highlight a number of key projects under the previous and current governments in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory. Investing in regional and remote areas of the Territory is important.

The Northern Territory is a pretty vibrant place. In the Territory we need a strong and inclusive economic development plan to ensure our regional and remote areas are not left behind.

The Northern Territory has incredible potential. Our people, landscapes and industries are diverse, resilient and full of opportunity. To unlock that potential we need to be thoughtful and forward-thinking with economic plans that do not just cater to our urban centres but prioritise the growth and prosperity of regional and remote communities.

We are facing a gap in leadership and vision when it comes to economic development in these regions. The CLP has no real economic plan for the regions beyond what already exists. It continues to rely on a few ongoing projects without laying the groundwork for long-term growth, sustainability and innovation. That is not good practice.

I acknowledge that the government is talking about the resource sector. Whilst I am not suggesting that is not worthwhile, it is not the only sector in the Northern Territory. Regional and remote communities are the backbone of the Territory. From our pastoral heartlands and natural resources to tourism hotspots and cultural assets, these assets and areas drive much of our economy.

It is not just about numbers; these communities hold the soul of the Territory, our history, culture and future. Without proper economic planning we risk losing those vital connections. Without investment in infrastructure, education, housing and job creation, we leave people behind. Economic development in the regions is not just about creating jobs or boosting GDP; it is about ensuring equity and recognising that every Territorian, no matter where they live, deserves access to opportunity. They deserve roads that connect them to services, schools that connect them to education, housing that shelters them and industries that employ them.

We need bold and ambitious plans; investment in emerging industries like renewables, agribusiness and technology to create jobs for the future; infrastructure that opens access and connectivity, ensuring that no community is isolated; support for small businesses, the lifeblood of our regional towns, to grow and thrive; and meaningful partnerships with traditional owners to ensure economic development respects and uplifts culture and country.

The future of the Northern Territory cannot be built on short-term thinking. It must be built on sustainable, inclusive growth that benefits everyone from Darwin and Alice Springs to the most remote communities in the Northern Territory. We need to continue that important work to demand better services and investment. We must insist on plans that look beyond election cycles and towards the next generation, investing in people, our land and shared future.

When we talk about investment in our regional and remote areas, we talk about infrastructure. It is important not to just measure the investment by a sum. Investment in remote and regional communities creates opportunity—through remote housing, subdivisions, repairs, maintenance and job creation for our wonderful Territory businesses in remote locations and the opportunity afforded to remote Territorians to engage in those projects—to look at the development and skills enhancement and to work on those sites.

I know several construction companies in Central Australia working in our remote communities, building houses and employing local people from those communities to be involved. Every time we invest in a Territory road we are investing in Territorians economically and developmentally. They can have opportunities to work on those roads. I have been on many roads across the Territory, particularly when I travel through the electorate of Gwoja, the second-largest electorate in the Northern Territory. I see road crews with members of the local community working on those roads, having an income and access to employment. That is incredibly important.

Important work is being done at a Commonwealth level—including the work of Senator McCarthy, who spends a lot of time in the Territory—to reform the CDP (Community Development Program), creating real jobs, employment and conditions so that Aboriginal Territorians can engage and have a meaningful job in a

remote community with a real wage, purpose in having a job and the employment entitlements and conditions they deserve, as does every other Territorian.

This is important work rolling out across the Northern Territory. This is—in some way, shape or form—continuing to grow economic opportunities in regional and remote areas. Continuing to support strategic Indigenous tourism grants and opportunities is another way governments can continue to invest.

When I was a Cabinet minister I visited and experienced Indigenous tourism operators after they received those important grants to upgrade critical infrastructure and put in plans, policies and practices to employ their fellow countrymen to offer tourism opportunities, whether it is working with one of the local operators at Nitmiluk National Park or Aboriginal people engaged in ranger programs across the Territory—joint management like parks at Uluru-Kata Tjuta. Investing in ranger groups is a fantastic way of growing the economy because every time you employ a local person out bush, recognising their skills and understanding of the cultural landscape and practices, addresses economic development opportunities in the bush.

Telecommunications is a huge issue. Amongst developed nations and across the Australasian region we have seen that when you increase telecommunications in areas that have suffered from poor connectivity, there is an increase in GDP. If we can continue to roll that out we can continue to provide opportunities for regional and remote Territorians. Whether it is remote communities or pastoral properties, they can then upgrade their technology to help them get products to market.

We have seen amazing work in the pastoral sector where, when communications are enhanced, they can have telecommunications to access innovative technology for bore maintenance, movement of cattle, watering cattle through the appropriate trough systems, measuring cattle and understanding the weights. Remote communities also have the ability to move to online portals to sell goods and services. Investing in those areas is important.

The Northern Territory's creative industry is a huge economic generator. It invests about $735m into the Territory economy every year and provides the opportunity for over 2,500 Territorians to be directly or indirectly employed through the industry and our arts community. We need to value that contribution because we might be small in population, but we are big in creativity. We need to recognise the value our arts sector brings.

It is important that we invest in those areas because it is important for recreation as well as people's livelihoods. The arts sector is the lifeblood of the Northern Territory. It is a place we can engage in understanding and seeing amazing works being created and important stories being told. Art, by definition, should be controversial, and we should welcome that. It is expression and creativity, an important outlet for Territorians to experience.

I acknowledge fellow parliamentarians who are supportive of and invested in the arts. If not them, I acknowledge their family members who work in the arts and do a fantastic job. It is important to recognise the arts.

The Northern Territory Government, under the leadership of Malarndirri McCarthy—when she was the local government minister—created the employment subsidy for local government to employ more Aboriginal people out bush to give them the opportunity to participate in the workforce. It was an incredible opportunity, and it is great to see it continue to roll out through successive governments to provide a platform in remote communities for people to engage.

There are many things to celebrate when it comes to the economy. There are also many things that need to be done to strengthen and respond to the economy. It is also important to acknowledge that work needs to be done on the Northern Territory's economy, but we need to make sure it does not come at a disadvantage to particular cohorts of Territorians.

We need to see this government's commitment to investment in Central Australia. It is a land of enchantment, great beauty, magic and amazing people. We need to see additional economic investment and plans. We know the area is rich in naturally occurring resources, but that cannot be the only economic driver for Central Australia. We must see investment in tourism.

We have also seen work on the Aboriginal art gallery—the ATSIAGA, as it referred to—and the investment in that. I acknowledge the new government is working through plans for that project, but we must look at how we can diversify Central Australia's local economy. We cannot be an economy solely reliant on two resource sectors—one being natural, and one being purely seen as a social service town.

We must look at a number of other opportunities before us, including investments in education and renewables. Alice Springs has the opportunity to become the solar city of the Northern Territory again. We have enormous abundance of sun in the Territory. We have amazing institutions and research centres in Alice Springs. It would be great to see ongoing investment in those areas to grow the economy and look at innovative ways of doing things differently.

We are working towards the Territory budget. The Treasurer has highlighted the work that has been done by this government on the budget. I have been in a budget Cabinet before. I know it is a difficult task to work through those areas. I emphasise that any investment in a remote community can be measured in so many other ways than just a dollar value. It is measurable in the wellness of people in those remote communities and the opportunities and pathways that are created for people in remote communities. That is the type of investment we need to measure. Yes, I understand it is always important to look at the return on investment and the economic generation, but it is equally important to look at the measures of wellness and opportunity.

It is also important to look at the return on investment. I do not often pick a member of the government and say that they were right, but tonight I pick the Member for Fong Lim who said that when you spend a dollar on the arts, you get a substantial return on investment. It would be great to recognise that. Hopefully, the Treasurer can factor that in because the return on any money that is invested in the arts is enormous. Any investment in the arts is incredible, as well as for major events.

As a Central Australian I know how economically important amazing events like Parrtjima, A Festival in Light, in Alice Springs are. It is truly amazing. If members have not been, get down and check it out. People come from all over the country to share in the magic of the Finke Desert Race. It is incredibly important, as it brings money to the town. These are investments we need to continue to support. There are investments across the region.

Equally, through a range of grants that go out across the Territory, there are local community events. The measure of economic generation for events like the Garma Festival in Arnhem Land is important and magical to the local community. The amazing events that happen at Kalkarindji and Daguragu like the Freedom Day Festival inject money into the local community, which gets to share in part of that. Regional events are just as important, and it is important to recognise that.

I encourage the government to keep those investments in regional arts grants and programs moving forward, because it is important.

I recognise that, yes, there is always work to be done and investments that need to happen. I am sure the government will work through those investments. Critical infrastructure investment in the bush is important. It is about job creation and opportunities.

The Commonwealth minister Malarndirri McCarthy is rolling out new CDP and jobs reform, creating opportunities for real jobs in remote communities. It is not about the NT Government creating those jobs but local organisations being able to apply to the Commonwealth to create positions in their organisations in remote communities to create those pathways for people.

It is amazing to see organisations that have done that. If you walk into a clinic, a shop, a school or a local Aboriginal corporation that is doing repairs and maintenance, plumbing, electrical or roadworks and hear someone yell out to you, 'Hey, *Japanangka*', and they have a job and are so happy they are providing for their families—that is something we should all be working to achieve.

Yes, sometimes you have to invest early on, but you will reap the benefit in the long run, as long as you stick to it and keep investments going.

It is a good opportunity to talk about the Territory's economy. There is always work to be done. It is challenging. Of course, 70% or thereabouts of the Territory's budget is Commonwealth funding through a range of agreements and streams. Looking at self-generated revenue is important but should not come at the cost of the environment and regional or remote areas not receiving an important project or benefit.

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 was wrapping up. Now I feel like I need to talk.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Not necessarily.

Mr PAECH: Investment is happening in number of remote communities. There have been partnerships in the past. I encourage the telecommunications minister—I cannot remember who it is. There was a program previously with the federal government and Telstra because a few communities still need telecommunications turned on. It is important for safety and for them to participate in the economy and sell goods through arts; everyone loves a bit of online shopping. We should be supporting local businesses so we should continue to do that. You can buy a lot of goods over the internet and support local businesses.

Sports carnivals are also important. When remote communities have footy or softball events, they bring money to those remote communities and help the shops and arts centres. Indigenous rangers are a great investment, creating real jobs. A number are being rolled out in the Territory. Remote housing is also important. It is great to see continuing investment; that was a bipartisan commitment with ongoing investment. Any opportunity to grow the workforce in those communities is good.

What is meaningful? I can speak about this since I have an extension of time. Training opportunities for remote Aboriginal Territorians are important, but they have to be meaningful. My family lives in remote communities; I am a proud Aboriginal person. The disappointing thing I have seen over many years—I am not blaming anyone politically, because we all have something to answer for in this sense—is that so many of my family members have enough qualifications and certificates to wallpaper their houses, but they have not been awarded the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment or training and practice.

There is a lot of work to do. I appreciate the commitment of Charles Darwin University, which does a fantastic job. I am excited about the projects it is rolling out with VET programs in building, carpentry, electrical work and job-readiness. It helps a long way in seeing investment.

There are lots of conversations happening tonight. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that Tourism Central Australia has an amazing campaign at the moment called Love Letters to Mparntwe/Alice Springs to celebrate the beauty of the place, whether it is the landscape, the culture or the people. It allows us to showcase that. Yes, Alice Springs has had a bad rap over a number of years. I acknowledge the Member for Fannie Bay grew up in Alice Springs—very proud.

There is so much to celebrate in Alice Springs. It is a beautiful place and land of magic, and if we continue to support tourism operators and showcase and sell the magic of that place, every Australian will have the opportunity to see how wonderful my home is. There is a great opportunity for educational tourism, which I have said to the minister for Tourism. Every Australian should come to Alice Springs to see the magic of language, law and culture being spoken and practised every day on the streets. You can walk down the main street of Alice Springs and hear ancient languages from 20 different Aboriginal nations. It is remarkable that we can still celebrate the connection of language, law and culture in our beautiful town. That is an invaluable tourism experience.

To all our tourism operators, Aboriginal tourism operators and businesses, keep up the great work. NT IBN does a deadly job to get the Northern Territory Government to increase Indigenous procurement positions. Supporting local business is important. Though the world is moving online, there are still great businesses. Novita Gifts in Alice Springs recently celebrated its 50th birthday, and we must continue to support it.

This has been a great chance to speak about economic opportunities. The Territory is the land of opportunity, particularly when it comes to the economy, so we should all get behind innovative projects. I remember when Gerry McCarthy—a former minister in the Northern Territory—used to speak about hydrogen, and people thought he was off the mark. Now, we understand how enormous the opportunities are regarding hydrogen.

We should be looking at innovative ways of doing things and not be scared to be bold, but it must be done sustainably.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, it seems rude to interrupt the Member for Gwoja's love letter to Alice Springs. I am almost saddened to have to bring the debate back to economic development and infrastructure, but that is the issue of the day, so I must do as needs must.

I applaud the courage of the Labor opposition for drawing attention to its record on the economy, delivery of major projects and realisation of infrastructure, but honestly, for the second day in a row, this is an own goal. I am amazed to have the opportunity to—once again—point out just how grossly negligent Labor's handling of the economy has been for eight years.

I will not be unsporting about it because I understand from the Deputy Speaker that it was the Leader of the Opposition's 40th birthday yesterday, and I do not want to be the one to ruin the celebrations two days in a row. I will be gentle in what I say and make sure I stick to things that are constructive and useful to reflect on.

Similar to yesterday when we talked about health infrastructure, there is a lot of inability to face reality. We are now in a fantasy land of historical revisionism in terms of what was done with the economy in the last eight years regarding bricks-and-mortar infrastructure and workforce. Yesterday I spoke at length about healthcare workforce because that is an important, salient topic.

Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the shout-out regarding DAMA III. This is a great achievement, and I thank the Minister for International Students, Migration and Population for allowing me to be a part of the signing the other day. I had a bit to do with the background in years past. This is a great step forward for the Northern Territory.

Alas, we are talking about infrastructure today, not workforce. On that note, let us start talking about bricks and mortar, because that is what the bulk of the agenda and this motion is about. It is about the portfolio we diversified into and about creating greater opportunity for everyone in the Northern Territory through the delivery of major projects. Hang on to your hat, because there is a lot to say about that.

I spent a bit of time in the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, as I have said before. It coincided with my return to Australia and catching up on a lot of Australian television. There is a fantastic show by the Working Dog crew, *Utopia*. I have to be honest with you; at a certain point I was binge-watching *Utopia* whilst trying to do good constructive work within the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet—within the Investment Territory and Major Projects space—and I could not tell whether I was on set or in a feverish dream. It was hard to distinguish between rhetoric, reality and fantasy.

I remember the Major Projects Commissioner—I should not name a public servant—saying, 'Take down that *Utopia* sign. It is confusing for everyone.' That was the state of affairs for Major Projects. In the year that I spent there, I saw a series of public servants scrambling because they were subject to the whims of ministers associated with Infrastructure, Major Projects and Treasury. There was a constant succession of announcements of god knows what. There was a lot of high-vis and not a lot of shovels. We did not get many major projects off the ground.

It is true that it is great to have blue-sky thinking and to think about diversifying our economy. I applaud the period in the wake of the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission report and the period of thinking laterally about how we might structurally reform our economy. I will not take cheap shots today, but clearly prawn farms were not the answer. There are limits to diversification of the economy. That is what we discovered through that period.

It is about bringing it back to bricks and mortar. Today is not about workforce or love letters to Alice Springs; I do love Alice Springs, I might add. It is about the difference between infrastructure of substance and necessity and ventures of vanity. That is the thing. We concentrated a lot of time on infrastructure ventures of vanity.

My learned colleague, the Treasurer, already spoke at length regarding these issues and pointed out case studies in that space. It does not warrant reiterating the litany of disasters of announcements that have failed to materialise into anything beyond a press release.

The contention by the Treasurer is—I have every reason to believe him—that we have a $5bn former infrastructure program, which notionally we are here to support and celebrate in this motion, but Labor did not leave the money to fund any of it. If that is the case, it is a terrible shame. Labor was running on fumes and tricking the Northern Territory public into thinking that we were doing things—that we had the money and the capacity to do things—when all we were doing was celebrating the naked emperor. It is a tragedy that has been uncovered in the books.

Rarely did we see a shovel touch the ground. There was plenty of high-vis but not many shovels. The two best examples of that are the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass and the art galleries. I would love to see those projects materialise. The fact is that they remain nothing more than artists' sketches. The Tiger Brennan Drive overpass is at least making some progress.

The government and the Treasurer are committed to doing a full review of the infrastructure program. Those on the other side are doing this Chicken Little 'the sky is falling in' routine of, 'The government will cut stuff'.

We will not cut stuff that did not exist. What can you cut? There are a lot of fantastical promises, some of which will now be revealed as being fantastical promises with no money to pay for them, which we will wipe off the books because they are just taking up space on the books. There will be a lot of that happening. There is no doubt that must happen.

Things need realistic secured funding. This government will deliver infrastructure responsibly with proper funding and within a well-managed budget framework to ensure the Territory's infrastructure needs are met without ballooning costs or delays. Do you know why I believe that? I say this especially to members of the opposition. It is because I will hold my government to account on these matters. Good luck wasting money on my dime. That will not happen.

My issue with the Tiger Brennan overpass is not the initiative—it is a great road and makes things much faster—but the mishandling of that project's execution, as evidenced in the significant $100m blowout.

It is useful for all of us to have a moment of economic Zen and agree that it is good to diversify your economy, but there is such a thing as spreading yourself too thin. That is what we did. We spread ourselves too thin over time. In the relentless pursuit of trying to keep people happy, win votes, be politic and be populist, we had a lot of things being announced which, frankly, were not going to materialise.

It is great that we now have a foray into the critical minerals sector and that hydrogen, which was once thought to be a nonsense venture, has meat to it. There is a range of areas we have made forays into that are positive, but we also took some speculative bets without concentrating on our core areas of expertise, and at a time like this you have to come back to concentrating on those core areas.

I support the government's plans to focus on five key sectors because they are the ones that have historically paid off for us. My caution to my colleagues and the whole House is that, whether it is mining, gas, Defence, agriculture or tourism, it is hard to do anything without people. Therefore, we will need to work together on the workforce component of this solution. I think we are making positive steps in the right direction. DAMA III is a good example. I thank the minister for letting me know in advance, so I could pick the right tie for the photoshoot.

I go back to the Leader of the Opposition's soliloquy because it was beautifully put and fundamentally off the mark. The reality is that the fundamentals of the economy are not sound. I am afraid you will have to do better than randomly pick snippets of the Under Treasurer suggesting that things may be tracking all right. I am a fiscal conservative—as I have pointed out, I am discovering that I am more fiscally conservative than some of my peers in this regard—but I am also an economic rationalist. The rational economic position speaks for itself.

As early as November, a month after coming into this House, I let you all know that the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report's headline was net debt to revenue ratio. Net debt as a ratio to revenue was 108% in 2023–24, which was 11 percentage points higher than the 97% recorded in the year prior. We are all starting to understand—it is great that we are all getting on the same page—that debt is not a bad thing. You need to borrow money to do things. We need lines of credit and money to mortgage houses. You borrow money to make money, and you spend it productively. However, we borrowed beyond our means. We will need to be more restrained and disciplined in how we spend and move forward; otherwise, our credit rating—which is currently Aa3, which ain't much to write home about—will be in jeopardy.

The government has inherited a difficult position whereby it does not want to depress consumer demand or have mass lay-offs of public servants. We are not that dumb; that will not happen. We are trying carefully not to spend our way out of the problem but make sure that in the short run we spend enough to keep the wheels of the economy turning to maintain confidence and, in fact, translate what is optimism at the moment into economic confidence. They are two different things, and we will all learn that over the next period. It is great there is optimism in the market, but translating that into economic confidence requires facing reality and making tough decisions.

I applaud the fact that the Treasurer is doing a pretty good job so far after being handed an absolute hospital pass and trying to work with it as best he can. It is tempting to forensically deconstruct Labor's fiscal and economic mismanagement—really tempting. I waited, chomping at the bit, to rip apart multiple Treasurers' statements from bygone years, but we need to move forward constructively now instead.

I love these small moments of bipartisan Zen that we have. I thank the Member for Gwoja for acknowledging our shared interest in the arts sector and that there is a high return on investment and a multiplier effect when we invest in the arts in the Northern Territory. Who knows? Someday soon we may end up at a gig together.

However, for the time being we need to move forward constructively by looking at what we have—the nuts and bolts—in the numbers on paper. That is what we on this side of the House are doing at both the macro NT scale and the local scale. However, let us first talk, given there are so few chances to do it, about the national scale in the wake of the federal budget from last night.

It is true, I am sorry to say—my colleagues are by and large right—that the federal budget does little to help the Northern Territory Government anew. We have obviously maintained a lot of existing commitments, and a lot of things are being done for Australians across the board, but there is nothing super special just for us other than a short stretch of roadworks. That is true.

To that point the shadow Treasurer, Angus Taylor, is I think bang on in his assessment, which is that the budget released last night is for the next five weeks but not for the next five years. That is entirely predictable, given that we are all but five weeks away from a federal election. It is disappointing that the budget does little to address the medium-term structural deficit which is probably expected to total close to $180bn over the forward estimates. Likewise, it does little to address productivity, aged care and constructively moving forward the housing accord. It does nothing on migration, even after having foreshadowed the essential skills visa which should have been progressing at this point.

Those things might all seem like macro concepts that have little bearing on the Northern Territory or infrastructure, but they do; that is the thing. We are all the more dependent and affected by the choices that the Commonwealth makes, so it is a missed opportunity. However, I will say again that it is a budget for five weeks, not five years. It is a budget that came about because Cyclone Alfred turned up and a budget had to be delivered. That is the truth of it. I will not browbeat about tax cuts; the fact of the matter is if you have more than 73c a day, as is predicted going over the forward period, you would probably stoke inflation. It is a modest adjustment in the lead-up to a federal election.

Instead, we should be thinking about how to build bridges with the Commonwealth, no matter who is in charge, for the betterment of the Northern Territory. I think we must work together on this because all versions of combinations at the moment are dangerous for us, no matter whether the federal government is Labor or Liberal and no matter whether there is local representation that is Labor or Liberal—sadly, I do not think it will be Greens in either instance, Member for Nightcliff. No matter which version of those four permutations you have, all versions of them could be problematic and challenging for the Northern Territory and its economy going forward.

We would do a whole lot better with the feds if we had a consistent and united position on wanting to get more of our fair share, because the only time they really take any of those arguments seriously—at least dignify them—is in relation to Indigenous disadvantage and closing the gap, and so they should, but there are other issues to be addressed. They are not addressed because we cannot consistently put up a unified front to the federal government to say, ‘This is what we need’.

Cast your minds back to when we did the 50th anniversary motion. Think about those people who pioneered putting together this Legislative Assembly and about the causes they fought for together. It was their unified front on self-determination for the people of the Northern Territory that resulted in some of that coming together.

Frankly speaking, I fully maintain that we are in the crux of an economic crisis up here. Social and economic collapse is not an impossibility. I genuinely believe that unless we come together, start talking about economic ideas, agreeing on some of them and lobbying for them collectively, we will be a managed economy. We almost are at this point, and we are creeping ever closer towards that, by the day.

The federal budget from last night did little to address productivity, aged care or the housing accord and did nothing on migration. That is a problem in a place that needs unique and bespoke arrangements for migration, as with north Queensland and north-west Australia. It behoves us to work in cooperation with those jurisdictions that have much more political clout than us but face similar problems. We need to band together and ask for a new compact on migration for the north of Australia because that is the only way we will be able to find the sustainable workforce to supply people for all these industrial sectors that we have a desire to improve economically.

What was clear, though, from last night’s reveal of the budget was that there is no more money for us for infrastructure. Here we are back at today’s topic.

The fact is that after years of Territory Labor mismanaging our money—most recently over eight years, but probably a bit before that as well—the Commonwealth simply does not trust us to use its money. It ties it up

in equity rather than giving us cash. If we want more pocket money, we need to start making a more compelling case for not just why, but what we did with the last lot. We failed to do that for a time. 'I'm sorry. I don't know what we did with the pocket money you gave us.' 'What do you mean? You don't even know what you spent it on?' 'No, I just lost it'. That has been our situation for a while. We are, essentially, in a managed income situation. Think about that: we are basically operating using the equivalent of a Commonwealth BasicsCard. The Member for Gwoja was slightly off; it is not 70%.

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.

Dr RAHMAN: Thank you, sir. I looked around at the rest of them and asked myself whether someone would do me a solid. As I said, it is a wonderful day for bipartisanship and a great day to talk about infrastructure and the economy for our mutual benefit.

We are now essentially in a managed income situation. Everyone is starting to get wise to that and the fact that there is some method to the manner of the deputy leader, who is pointing out that unless we start making money in new ways we will be hamstrung. I maintain that I am pro-sustainable resource development; whether it is mining or gas, I just want things to add up economically. We need to ensure that we have viable industries that are viable economic propositions which work in harmony with our society and our natural and built environments. Going forward our shared aspiration should be to build things that provide a return on investment that do good and provide us all with greater options, particularly for future generations.

Last night's budget revealed that we could use more money for infrastructure. That is true, but after years of us mismanaging our money, and particularly egregious mismanagement over the last eight years, I am sad to say that we are just not trusted. This government is seeking to rebuild some trust and confidence by demonstrating greater fiscal responsibility and discipline. That is required at this point.

We sometimes talk about the private sector, saying that unless we provide it with greater signals to market that we are a responsible jurisdiction people will not be interested in coming to park money here. Here is a hot tip: our number one ticketholder, our sugar daddy, is the Commonwealth. Unless we are in a position to demonstrate to the Commonwealth that we know what we are doing with our money, good luck getting more of it. We are working on exactly that.

This is why the Treasurer is systematically reviewing the Infrastructure portfolio, which was a catalogue of *Utopia*-esque nonsense, and is now trying to make good on that and turn it into something that we can deliver on. I fully expect, and demand, that when the Treasurer puts out a list of projects that we will invest in, they are infrastructure projects that will be costed, sensibly funded and ultimately delivered. That should be the aspiration.

We have spoken about the national scale. I will not speak about what happens at the Territory-wide level, because that is the purview of the Treasurer, and he will no doubt deal with that systematically over the coming months in the lead-up to the budget. The other important scale for us to talk about in regard to infrastructure is the local.

I see it in my electorate. I see Stuart Park, Winnellie shops and the state of disarray and decay at suburban shops across every electorate, frankly. Drive around Darwin—to say nothing of Alice Springs—to see where we have dropped the ball on investing in infrastructure that is less sexy, but in many ways is far more important because it provides the building blocks for sustainable growth. You look after a suburban shopping centre and it looks after the local community. There is a multiplier effect. There is a symbiosis when you invest in stuff at the local level properly. Infrastructure deficits exist in those areas across the Territory because of the preoccupation with ventures of vanity, focusing on things that were a bit more razzle-dazzle, but, frankly, did not have the return on investment that we need.

The thing with enabling and essential infrastructure—which we are all starting to talk about more in here, which is great—is that it comes in lots of different forms. My problem with the shadeless shade structure is not sunburn—I do not have a sunburn problem so that is not the issue—but that there is a necessity to invest in infrastructure, in particular, with a better return on investment. What would we get back from that development? Just think about it as a thought experiment at this point. Sure, it might have beautified the area and made it a bit shadier. Would it increase footfall and traffic in that area and make it easier to cross to and from? Would there be any significant economic multiplier effect from that project? No, it was largely somebody's thought bubble, 'I reckon we could put up a thing with some vines and make it look prettier in

the CBD'. 'Great, let us do that'. It was never a seriously well-thought-out project and, clearly, it was not well executed.

The challenge when we have limited money is that we need to invest in infrastructure with a better return on investment. In saying that, not all investment needs a high return. I have no problem whatsoever with art galleries. I will have it out with anyone who wants to take a pot shot at the art galleries. My problem is that the art gallery infrastructure projects were poorly and disingenuously costed and had no reasonable chance of being delivered on time or on budget. There is a social good that comes from investing in infrastructure of the type of art galleries.

One of the best bets on the local scale for an enabling and essential piece of infrastructure with a high potential for return on investment is the Stuart Park high street. I keep coming back to it because not only is it in my patch—of course I am championing it because it is in my patch—but also it is the neck that supports the head of the CBD on the body of the Northern Territory. That corridor, that strip of land, starting roughly where Ozanam House is down to the Daly Street Bridge, is an area ripe for gentrification. On one side is The Gardens and on the other is Stuart Park. There is high-density living, shops, cafes, restaurants and street frontage. That is the kind of area where Labor should have targeted its money. It had the capacity to do so; the planning scheme was in its favour and it had the money. Up and down that strip are some of the most important landholders and businesses rooted deeply in the Territory. That is the kind of area where we get an extremely high return on investment when we invest in infrastructure.

What would it take to improve that area? Not much because a lot of the work is already done for us. It is about traffic management in the first instance and making sure we fix the nine lanes of wasted traffic and instead have free-flowing traffic. Once you have free-flowing traffic in that area you can create wider shopfronts. There is a wealth of potential in that project. As I said, it is one of the best bets. It is not the only one, but it is the one that I will bang on about repeatedly. Unlike shadeless shade structures or a series of other things that are so big and far away that you will see no return on investment, if you were to tackle the Stuart Park high street you would find a much sooner than expected return on investment because the preconditions are already there for us to succeed in that space. We need to be smarter about what we do with infrastructure spend, which we clearly have not been for a long period.

Nobody is talking down the Territory. On this side of the House we are facing reality. Labor's delusional optimism and denialism beggars belief. The opposition—I say this advisedly—is out of its depth on the economy. I do not think that is necessarily the fault of the current opposition members; quite frankly, they probably had very little to do with setting the economic agenda of the last eight years and the last two administrations. However, now is the time to own the fact that you were led down the garden path by people who did not know what they were doing in economic management, distance yourself from it and start finding common ground with us on how to move forward. We are all in this boat together and we will go down together unless we work together.

I can only hope that the opposition will come back with a more credible analysis and more credible arguments before the May budget sittings; otherwise, this will be painful for all of us and we will all just be slinging mud in silly ways when we have limited money, limited time and an economic crisis. Now is the time for us to collectively band together and do something about it. Do we need more money for infrastructure? Yes, 100%. Should we spend it more prudently and wisely on things that will provide a better economic and social return on investment? Absolutely. I implore all of us to think about trying to do that collectively.

Today's motion is that we acknowledge the outstanding work done by the private sector in developing a portfolio of projects valued at over $57bn, spanning critical sectors such as minerals and resources, digital innovation, renewable energy and agribusiness. Yes, partially we can. Looking at the second part, do we commend the 2024–25 infrastructure program for its significant contributions to building a better Territory, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for all Territorians? I am afraid not. I am sorry; no. We have not achieved that, but we could. I want us to achieve that. I believe that we will achieve that if we can work together.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I would have continued the bipartisan Zen and given the member another extension if I could, but, sorry, I might kill the bipartisan Zen now because I will talk about gas.

The struggles of the Territory and the global economy more broadly are getting worse. If done correctly, however, the private sector, regulated such that people are put before profit and with unions at the table so that workers are represented, can transform our local economy to the benefit of all Territorians. Recently in Australia this has rarely been the case. Economic benefit has gone to the very wealthy and the very few. In

Australia 92% of the economic growth from 2009 to 2019 went to the top 10%. In 2024 Australian billionaire wealth rose at a staggering rate of $3.2m per hour. Meanwhile, Territorians face another year of financial uncertainty as the cost-of-living crisis drags into 2025.

It is not hard to see how all this money is leaving our constituents' pockets. Despite companies' record profits the Northern Territory makes 30 times more money from car registrations than it does from the gas industry. The Member for Nelson brags about how good he reckons the gas industry is for the economy, but he would be better off bragging about how many cars will be registered this year.

We have heard about the $8m that the entire gas industry brings to the Territory. Honestly, I am embarrassed that he thinks this is a figure worth bragging about. I said this in Question Time, but it is worth putting on the record again. We heard that last year we received approximately $8m, which apparently pays for police, education and the health system. That $8m is 0.09% of the Territory's total revenue. With budgets of $472m for police, $2.2bn for health and $780m for education last year alone, the gas industry cannot possibly be paying for all of that, so someone is telling porky pies.

Even with future fracking in the Beetaloo under the most optimistic scenario, the independent fracking inquiry's ACIL Allen modelling showed that royalties would be $69m per year—and that is with gas fields everywhere. That is still less than 1% of the NT's total revenue, and it does not touch the sides of our police, health and education budgets.

INPEX and Darwin LNG have never paid royalties, which means they have been allowed to take our gas for free. When a company does not pay royalties it takes our resources for free.

It is a sham. This is because both major parties at the Territory level and federally are beholden to gas lobbyists. Territorians should be furious. They sold us out for party donations.

Yesterday in his answer in Question Time the Minister for Mining and Energy said that $8m was from just one company and that there were 'others'. That is not true; there are no other gas companies in production—none. All the Territory is getting, since offshore gas pays no royalties, is $8m, which makes up less than 1% of our healthcare budget alone. He said that figure pays for education and police too, but that is literally impossible. Will the minister finally be honest with Territorians about the gas industry? The numbers do not lie. The Mining minister needs to sit down, stop his corporate boot licking for a second and get some maths tutoring.

It is not just Territorians' pockets that are hurting for the sake of corporate profits; it is their environment too. Within a generation Darwin could become uninhabitable due to climate change. Analysts have found that the Beetaloo fracking project alone would produce annual carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to up to 11% of Australia's total emissions in 2021. Climate Analytics CEO and climate scientist, Bill Hare, said that projects like Middle Arm and the Beetaloo basin would 'produce a climate bomb that cannot be offset'. We are already struggling to get people to move here and contribute to our economy. Worsening the NT's sweltering heat would be disastrous for attracting vital workers.

You may often hear me espouse doom and gloom on the climate, but when I do I will always come with a solution, and the ECNT has provided one that is outstanding. It commissioned Springmount Advisory to produce a report on a comprehensive alternative to the dying fossil fuel industry that is destroying our climate. Those opposite will have shut their ears when hearing from an organisation that they have carelessly defunded, but I urge them to open their minds to a promising alternative. The report is called Recharging the Territory. I seek leave to table this report.

Leave granted.

K McNAMARA: I recommend that everyone in the Chamber read it. This report shows that redeploying the federal government's $1.5bn commitment for a gas hub at Middle Arm into a recharging the Territory package would deliver more high-quality jobs for locals, directly tackle the NT's cost-of-living crisis and provide the foundation for a strong and diverse new industry sector.

The recharging the Territory package modelled in this report would generate 7,622 jobs across the NT, as opposed to 2,800 jobs from Middle Arm. These would primarily be jobs for local tradies, electricians and educators. Training the next generation of workers will ensure that we have future-ready skills in the Territory, reducing dependency on an interstate workforce. In contrast the Middle Arm gas precinct is likely to be dependent on FIFO workers brought in from interstate, as determined by the NT Chamber of Commerce.

Although this may be news to some, Territorians have been learning this the hard way from similar projects for decades.

It may be for these reasons that Infrastructure Australia rejected the business case for Middle Arm. Like many Territorians, it does not see the value in pursuing projects that fail to prioritise local benefits, create limited long-term job opportunities for Territorians and lock us into a reliance on industries that exacerbate the climate crisis.

Instead, we need to focus on projects that deliver meaningful and sustainable growth for our people and our region. The Recharging the Territory report has outlined clear steps to achieve this.

The first step is to expedite strategic industrial land development at East Arm or use the funds to renationalise the Port of Darwin and establish East Arm as a sustainable industry hub. The sale of this port by the previous CLP government was irrational and follows a long trajectory of conservative Liberal governments selling off our national infrastructure projects to the detriment of local people. The 99-year lease has generated ongoing concerns due to it being Australia's most important port and naval base in the north and a critical export facility. The CLP should never have put us in a position to buy back our own port, but getting it back is a no-brainer for our economy.

The second step is to fund a Darwin big battery and new microgrid investment across the NT. We could take advantage of our solar and keep the benefits when the sun is not shining. This is tiring to repeat, but again the Territory is behind the rest of Australia. Every other state and territory—except Tasmania which is stuck in the dark—have a grid-linked big battery system. This would be nowhere as large, and it would not need to cost as much as the eastern states.

The third step is to establish a four-campus northern Australia renewable energy training centre and subsidise relevant TAFE and university courses. This would provide free or heavily subsidised courses for Territorians undertaking university courses such as electrical engineering and TAFE courses such as Certificate III in electrotechnology, as well as support for apprentices and remote community members. Having fly-in fly-out workers getting paid here and then spending it elsewhere is literally taking money out of the Territory. Training a local workforce ensures that this does not happen.

The fourth step is to double the number of homes with solar and deliver climate-safe upgrades for every low-income household in the Territory. Darwin has the highest solar irradiance of any capital city in Australia, and the Northern Territory as a whole has higher rates on average than anywhere else in the country. More than 40% of dwellings in each of the Territory's neighbouring states have solar—there is 44% in Queensland, 41% in Western Australia and 47% in South Australia—yet we have one of the lowest rates of household solar installations in Australia at 23%.

To let this limitless low-cost energy go to waste is economically senseless. Depriving local households of low-cost clean power exacerbates the cost-of-living pressures facing many households and hamstrings our economy. The whole of Europe can do it. If cloudy, rainy Germany can have solar on every rooftop, so can the Territory. We constantly talk about the cost-of-living crisis. Solar is one of the best ways to give people a leg up and reduce their power bills, but it must come with government support.

The fifth step is to install solar insulation and air conditioning in every public housing property. Investing in a better homes upgrade program will create good-quality ongoing work for trades workers throughout the Territory, provide more Territorians with solar energy and directly tackle the rising cost of living. Importantly, this initiative will capitalise on the existing workforce strengths and capabilities in the NT, providing jobs for locals and mitigating the negative effects on house prices and rent caused by dependency on FIFO workers.

Homes in the Northern Territory, especially those in remote areas, experience higher rates of energy disconnection and are poorly equipped to deal with extreme temperatures becoming more frequent. Providing better energy security improves the lives of our most vulnerable, some of whom rely on power for medical machinery such as dialysis equipment. Better power will reduce the number of healthcare emergencies from heatstroke or failing medical equipment, saving taxpayers' money.

The steps I mentioned have been costed in this report at $1.5bn. This is the same investment required for the petrochemical hub/climate bomb disaster of Middle Arm, which could not make it past Infrastructure Australia scrutiny. The steps from this report outline many opportunities for private investment to assist in transforming the Territory, but they are just not happening. Too many governments for too long have been lured in by the final death rattles of the fossil fuel industry. Instead of taking advantage of a high-growth

industry we have missed out on so many opportunities just so our ministers can work for Tamboran once they lose their seats. No more of this—Territorians deserve better.

The world now invests twice as much in clean energy than it does in fossil fuels. Global annual investment in solar surpasses all other generation technologies combined. This is a $5 trillion global industry that we are letting pass us by in one of the sunniest, windiest places on the planet. The three global hotspots for access to solar power generation, according to the Global Solar Atlas, are the Atacama Desert in Chile, the southwestern United States and north and Central Australia.

I am sick of the major parties giving palliative care to a dying industry instead of taking advantage of one of the greatest investment booms in history. We need governments that have a willingness to embark, with vision and hope, on using promising technologies of the future. It is time that the government stopped chasing ghosts and joined the rest of the world in rapid decarbonisation. Territorians deserve to be a part of the renewables future economy and the improvement in living standards that it will bring.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I only recently thought I might speak on this topic, probably because it goes to my heart and I feel strongly about it.

Strategic infrastructure is well worth investing in, particularly if it will support ongoing economic productivity and long-term growth. That is what you have to do—not investing for the sake of it. Some examples of strategic infrastructure that come to mind include strategic roads that support our key industry sectors, including beef roads. That is the type of long-term infrastructure we need to invest in. It is also about energy pipelines and distribution to support our long-term energy industry. It is about ports, warehousing and setting aside logistics parks so that our goods can be produced and delivered to markets in a more productive way. That is the type of infrastructure I am talking about. We need to ensure that we have strong communications across the Territory. We need roads that are resilient to floods for long-term growth, supporting not only people getting between townships and economic centres but also future tourism growth and our agriculture industry.

I am all for putting in long-term infrastructure. The government might think it can do it by itself, but we do not have enough money. This is where the private sector is called upon. This government is focused on leveraging the private sector to help deliver some of this strategic infrastructure. The Member for Johnston was shaking her head a bit the other day when I said that I am not too sure she is a big supporter of the private sector. I probably would not have her out as our investment attraction person. Why do I say that? I am not trying to be disparaging; I am going from what the Member for Johnston told me. I will quote her from *Hansard*, so I do not get it wrong. She said:

> *Major private investment never played a major role in the NT economy and the standard of living for most Territorians, and it never will.*

She also went on to say:

> *Major private development plays a minuscule role in the NT economy.*

You could imagine us going out the private sector saying, 'Come and invest here', but if people in the private sector read that they would say, 'No thanks. We will leave the Territory aside. I think we will go overseas or elsewhere in Australia because these people do not really want us; they do not believe in the private sector.'

The CLP government believes in the private sector, and we will leverage it. The Treasurer mentioned that fulsomely in his speech.

I know we have all been involved in successful projects. I have been involved in successful projects. The railway project was strategic infrastructure. The INPEX project was strategic infrastructure delivering gas. There was the East Arm port development and all of that. I was involved in the Darwin logistic base, the old Business Park, there. If you look at the growth there with the private sector investing in it, you will see that it is strategic.

Who was the Chief Minister in April 2021? I believe it was Hon Michael Gunner; the first of the failed trio. He was good at giving speeches about projects, 'We have this project coming up and we have that project. Project Sea Dragon is coming. Everyone get in there. Come on; I will go to the Convention Centre and show you a big slide show on this. Get behind me.' It failed …

Mr Kerle: Boundless Possible—failed.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Boundless Possible—absolutely, Member for Blain.

Then the Labor government had to come up with a new strategy because the projects were not happening, but no. It said, 'We can come out with press releases. We will have a reshuffle. That is how you make projects happen; you reshuffle the deckchairs.'

The former Labor government came up with the idea of new commissioners. The Member for Fong Lim made reference to the commissioners. First of all Chief Minister Michael Gunner announced two new ones, the Investment Commissioner and the Major Projects Commissioner. It sounded good. He said that they:

> *… will be appointed to bolster private investment …*

Private investment—that was a good thought:

> *… in the Northern Territory with the goal of reaching the government's decade-long $40 billion economy target …*

Guess what the critics said? They said that it was an admission of years of economic failure. They said that it was economic failure back then, and they were proved right.

What were these people to do? Mr Gunner said that they:

> *will 'become key links between industry and government' and will have the power to make recommendations to Cabinet …*

Wow! This is good; it sounds fantastic. We will bring in these new roles, and those people will drive the whole thing forward.

The strange thing was that the former Labor government also brought in an Infrastructure Commissioner, so it had three big grand poobahs. There were three existing public servants—no disrespect to them; I believe they were good hardworking public servants—who had their titles rebadged. That was it. It was a rebadging of titles, yet this was the major change of the Gunner government. It was the same people with different titles delivering the same failure, which was no investment. The article said:

> *The commissioner roles are the latest Gunner Government's attempt to attract much-needed private investment to the Territory, that follows the $200 million Infrastructure Development Fund that was shuttered in 2019 without attracting a single dollar of private investment; 'Team NT' and 'Team Territory' which were groups led by former Labor politicians to identify investment opportunities; the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission; Investment Territory bureaucrats; and Major Projects teams.*

It was just a bureaucratic reshuffle, and we were supposed to say, 'You are magnificent. You will save us.' It did not happen.

The CLP Opposition Leader at the time, Hon Lia Finocchiaro, had to comment on this wonderful reshuffle. She called:

> *… the latest announcement of two new commissioners a 'pathetic' effort that shows the government is out of ideas and has failed to attract private sector investment to the NT for four and a half years.*

How true was that? She was on the money. She said:

> *This is just adding additional red tape and bureaucracy to an already bloated system that by the government's own admission isn't working …*

I go back to the fact that we must change it. We have projects, but we must get the private sector behind us. Let us be honest, we do not have enough money to do it ourselves. We must get the private sector in there. Let us get the good strategic infrastructure going.

I believe that the onshore gas industry gives us a real initial chance to get the economy going. It will be fundamental. It will go ahead because we now have a government that is not stymieing its development, has not delayed it for five-and-a-half years, but is rock solid behind it, saying, 'Yes, we believe you. We want the

private sector investment to come here and help us generate a new growth industry, delivering royalties and own-source revenue to the Territory.'

I was involved with INPEX. It was a construction project, and all the royalties went to the federal government. We might get some of that back in GST, but that is the flow. We do not get the royalty benefits. Onshore gas coming to the Territory is what we need. We need good investment in key sectors like Defence and other critical industries, including agriculture, tourism and energy.

I highlight again that I believe in strategic infrastructure because it is critical for long-term development. However, it must be done right. We must do it when we can afford it, and it has to be done particularly with the private sector. Only the CLP believe in this to make it happen. We are the only ones who will turn it around.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I will focus on the first part of the motion, which is to acknowledge the outstanding work done by the private sector in developing a portfolio of projects valued at over $57bn. Thank you, private sector.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr KERLE: Hear, hear!

The Territory has a long history of trying to build the private sector and get out from underneath Canberra. We started off underneath Canberra, then we were under South Australia, then we went back under Canberra and in 1978 we managed to get self-government. It has been a long, hard slog of trying to grow private sector investment in the Territory. However, it is not just private sector investment; I will talk about infrastructure.

I was interrupted by the clock earlier when I was talking about the Tiger Brennan Drive duplication, which was delivered by the previous Member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs. That was a fantastic piece of infrastructure …

Ms Uibo: You are stretching the memory a bit!

Mr KERLE: It was delivered by her and the CLP government at the time. Unlike the previous Labor government, the CLP government knew how to manage projects and deliver them, not just revote fictional budgets year over year. Every time I drive to this House I thank Natasha Griggs for that duplication, so we can sit on 100 kilometres an hour all the way to Bayview, in the Member for Fong Lim's electorate, before it drops to 80 kilometres an hour as we go over the hill.

About this time three years ago we were treated to one of the National MPs, Barnaby Joyce, who I believe was the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, pledging $1.5bn to the Territory to develop Middle Arm. Middle Arm is placed to be a key piece of infrastructure. Critical gas resources in the Beetaloo can power not only the Territory and eastern seaboard but also the world. However it has to get out of here somehow. It must be liquefied and put on a boat, and that is what Middle Arm is about.

We had a pledge of $1.5bn to build infrastructure and jobs, to bring people to the Territory who would buy houses, put down roots, fall in love, get married, raise a family, send their kids to our local primary schools, go to the hospitals and contribute to GST relativity. Unfortunately, when there was a change of government that $1.5bn, like many other Labor promises, seems to have drifted away in smoke.

We have talked enough about the shadeless shade structure. Dare I bring up the Turf Club of much renown? Under the previous Labor government and Chief Minister Michael Gunner there was no end to the new announcements. Every time someone asked about one of the old ones, it was time to roll out a new one. Whether it was the amphibious planes or the Turf Club, he always had a new thing coming. Boundless Possible—he might have been grammatically challenged, but he definitely was not challenged for new announcements.

We now have a government that is focused on delivery. This government will not promise the Earth and deliver nothing, or simply revote infrastructure funding year over year. We will need to reprioritise some projects.

I love talking about the Tiger Brennan Drive duplication, but there is another piece of Tiger Brennan infrastructure that is not so well managed—that is, the Tiger Brennan overpass. I think we lost two lives at

that intersection, so it is important to have an overpass there. However, you can have an overpass or you can have the gold-plated, done-to-the-nines overpass—Treasurer, how far over budget is the overpass?

Mr Yan: About $100m, I believe.

Mr KERLE: That is $100m …

Mr Paech: Through the Chair; you cannot just be talking.

Mr KERLE: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

The Tiger Brennan overpass is over budget $100m. How many schools could we build for $100m? Member for Arafura, that could deliver the Gunbalanya health clinic.

Unfortunately, these projects were poorly managed and lacking ministerial oversight. It is the ministers who are accountable to the people of the Territory. We have a fantastic public service and a great private sector which deliver these projects, but the accountability rests with the ministers and the government of the day. Territorians chose to show the previous Labor government the door and voted in this CLP government because they were sick and tired of being lied to and being promised the Earth and all these wonderful things and never seeing anything come to fruition.

I will not labour the point too much. The record of infrastructure project management and delivery under the previous government stands for itself—overblown, overbudget, underdelivering, over-promised and letting down Territorians.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank all the members who have contributed to this important motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

Over the course of this sittings period we have spoken at length about economic development in the Northern Territory. I put on the record that Territory Labor understands that economic development is the key to the Territory's overall success because Territory Labor cares about the Territory. We want to see the generation of good-quality jobs and accessible employment pathways for Territorians across the regions, particularly for those in the bush. No economic development can occur without a solid infrastructure program. Territory Labor will be proud to see the foundations we laid come to fruition and watch Territorians partake in a stronger, more prosperous economy. We understand that investment takes time, but there is confidence in the Territory.

During the October sittings I spoke about how infrastructure is a key enabler of economic development and its importance in underpinning the Territory's capacity to create jobs, increase productivity and stimulate growth. Infrastructure supports the quality of our social wellbeing, our cultural and lifestyle experiences, the services that locals and visitors to the Territory use every day and the future of our children.

It must be said that when Territory Labor was elected in 2016 it was clear that the Giles CLP government did not have a plan to navigate the post-INPEX boom period or to deliver the jobs, projects or infrastructure that Territorians needed. That is why Territory Labor stepped up and ensured that there was a pipeline of infrastructure projects across the Territory, from small maintenance jobs to large road and infrastructure builds—builds which the CLP members will always talk down but always use.

Territory Labor responded to the needs of industry and brought forward a number of significant infrastructure projects to meet the shortfall of work in the construction sector and deliver on the unmet need for key public infrastructure to help drive economic growth and create sustainable local jobs for those in not only the civil and construction industry but also the Territory businesses where workers spend their money—corner stores, cafes and shopping centres, just to name a few.

In the October sittings the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure said:

> *Labor stood up every year of the four years that I have been in this parliament and lauded its record spend on infrastructure.*

We understand why he is so impressed. You can see what the former Territory Labor government delivered.

Thanks to our $11bn investment in infrastructure since 2016, Territorians now have a multistorey car park at Royal Darwin Hospital; the Darwin indoor netball courts, delivered in partnership with the Australian

Government; an integrated preschool in Tennant Creek; a new home for rugby league at Warren Park; the Palmerston Police Station; the finished works on Garramilla Boulevard, along the duplication of Tiger Brennan Drive; and the State Square underground car park in the CBD. That is some of Territory Labor's legacy, and that infrastructure will stand for the benefit of all Territorians.

Territory Labor will always invest in infrastructure that enables the Territory economy and population to grow and supports the wellbeing of all people who want to put down roots here. The right infrastructure is key to sustaining growth over the longer term.

The 2024–25 infrastructure program provided a $4.42bn commitment to infrastructure investment across the Territory. It includes investments to support the delivery of housing, health, education, community safety and other core services Territory-wide, developing our economy and delivering jobs for Territorians and training pathways into jobs.

Territory Labor understands that connected Territorians and businesses means economic development. Roads get the Territory moving, regardless of whether it is an urban, rural or remote road. I can vouch for the bush members that we know exactly how vital our roads and transport corridors are.

The Leader of the Opposition and I had a conversation about this earlier, regarding a recent trip she had to Gapuwiyak and the surrounding homelands in her electorate. We talked about the rains that have just arrived, as there has been a delayed Wet Season this year. We understand the importance of connectivity for those homelands, for people to be able to come in and to be part of the services in the larger communities. It is also important for many service providers and for us as local members to be able to plan ahead when we are heading out on long trips into some of the most remote parts of the country.

The former Territory government's Budget 2024–25 contained $2.3bn of investment in transport infrastructure, alongside $480m from the Australian Government to deliver stronger, safer and more reliable roads for all Territorians. Road and transport infrastructure investment continued to comprise more than half of our total infrastructure program. Key projects from this roads program include:

- $340m for priority industry road upgrades, including the sealing, strengthening and widening of priority corridors
- $209m for Central Arnhem Road upgrades
- $189.3m for upgrades to Plenty Highway, as part of the Outback Way corridor
- $127.9m for Northern Territory national network roads
- $112.4m for Buntine Highway upgrades
- $80m for remote and regional roads
- $80m for Tanami Road upgrades
- $71.6m for the Tiger Brennan Drive and Berrimah Road intersection
- $66.8m for Kakadu National Park roads
- $51.8m for upgrades to Tiwi roads
- $77.7m for construction of the new marine facility at Mandorah
- $60m upgrades to Port Keats Road.

I thank the Treasurer for keeping me updated on the progress of the new marine facility and all the milestones that it has met. I am proud as the local member to have been able to advocate to have that up and running within two years.

At the last sittings members from Port Keats handed me a petition which stated the importance of the road for economic growth in their region. I will read out that petition, because it is important to this debate:

> *… the urgent need to upgrade Port Keats Road, which serves more than 2,000 people in the Thamarrurr Region.*
>
> *This road, connecting Wadeye, Palumpa, and nearby Homelands, is vital for the region's liveability, mobility and economy. However, the road in its current stale is unusable for 4 to 6 months of every year …*

This is due to the Wet Season. I continue:

> *… This isolates communities, raises living costs beyond affordability, hinders access to essential services and prohibits economic development.*
>
> *The Commonwealth government has committed most of the funds needed to undertake this important project. Without funding and commitment from the Northern Territory Government the opportunity to improve the lives of the people living and working in the Thamarrurr Region will be lost.*

This is important infrastructure for the Thamarrurr region to ensure safety for our surrounding communities; kids from homelands can access school all year round, including during the Wet Season; and people from the region have access to health facilities. A lot of people from those homelands do not have health facilities or services within their community, so they have to travel 50 kilometres or so to get to a health facility. During the Wet Season, those roads are cut off.

We are starting to see local economies pop up in that region. I am sure many people in the Chamber have seen articles on the oyster farming happening there with the traditional fish traps. People are being a part of that on their homelands. To get that product to market, we need the roads upgraded.

I will quote from *Hansard*, so I do not get it wrong. It was disappointing that the minister in Question Time said:

> *To them I say sorry that the Labor government failed you and that your local member has trudged you here today to find answers for something he already knows …*

We know that Thamarrurr Development Corporation emailed the minister's office—sent a letter, I believe—and did not get a response, not even an acknowledgement. TDC and some of the traditional owners called me because they were concerned. They were following the previous budget, and that money had been allocated from the federal government at the time.

I put the question to the minister, which he put on notice. Nothing—crickets. We received nothing from the minister. I think the following Question Time in early December I put another question to the minister because I gave him the benefit of the doubt. I understand that ministers are busy and have big agendas. I put another question to the Chief Minister because the minister was away in Canberra for his ministerial responsibilities. She said that she would also put that question on notice, and I did not get a response. The only information we had at the time from the minister was nothing—silence.

It was not my fault or the fault of people from Wadeye to come in and do that petition, because they had not received an answer from the minister. If he had just given the answer, we would not have had to go through that process and put a petition to parliament. However, I thank the minister because in his response he said that money is committed. We still have not had an answer for when that will start, but the minister came back and said that money is still committed for Port Keats Road.

These important transport investments ensure that key freight roads connect agriculture from our outputs to other transport hubs. It provides a reliable and safe road network, especially during the Wet Season; provides improved access for high-capacity vehicles; and facilitates other economic opportunities, especially tourism.

Territory Labor is proud to have invested in roads and to lay bitumen to get the Territory connected and keep it connected. However, with 36,000 kilometres of the Territory's road unsealed and vulnerable to seasonal floods, we know that there is much more to do, and we call on this government to continue to invest in roads. It is not just Port Keats Road that we need for economic development opportunities and for people to have access to jobs, education and safety. It is for all Territorians, no matter where they live. Whether they are in the city or the bush, it is important that people have access to opportunities like anyone here in Darwin.

Last night the Albanese government handed down its budget containing $7.2bn for Territorians. Of that, $2.8bn was allocated over the next 10 years to continue upgrading and sealing the region's road networks.

That is $1.8bn through the infrastructure investment program from 2025–26 to 2028–29, and $2.8bn over 10 years.

We welcome the Albanese government's allocation of more than $200m for the duplication of Stuart Highway between Darwin and Katherine. The completion of this project will be transformational for residents and visitors to Darwin and Katherine, making travel between Darwin and Katherine safer and more enjoyable. I know that the Leader of the Opposition—I would hope that the Member for Katherine can—agrees with that statement.

The Albanese government continues to provide funding for road and rail projects across the Northern Territory. It is fantastic to see the Albanese Labor government continuing its commitment to ensuring the sustainability and growth of our remote communities and regional centres by investing in our road infrastructure.

On this side of the House we believe it is fundamental to invest in infrastructure that meets the health, education and safety needs of Territorians. Good health infrastructure is a cornerstone to ensuring that Territorians can access the high-quality healthcare they need. A healthy Territory means a healthy economy. That is why Territory Labor committed to funding health infrastructure projects, which we spoke about last night.

In Darwin we committed $107m to upgrade Royal Darwin Hospital and deliver additional clinical spaces, a new modular multipurpose facility and a mental health stabilisation assessment and referral area. Funding also included the expansion of the mental health inpatient unit and upgrades to the forensic mortuary, pathology and bereavement facility. There is a $12m investment to deliver more health facilities to help ease hospital pressures, including the planning and early works for a new 120-bed aged-care facility in Palmerston. It was good to hear the Chief Minister speak about our investment on ABC radio Darwin earlier this month and that it will be delivered.

In Alice Springs $33.7m has been allocated for upgrades at Alice Springs Hospital, including $26.9m for the new ambulatory care centre; $6.8m to develop a new hybrid operating theatre; and stage 3 emergency electrical upgrades.

Across the regions we invested $33.2m to upgrade central sterilisation services in hospitals. We invested $20m to construct a new health centre in Borroloola, which includes a fit-for-purpose consulting room, emergency bays, dental facilities and much more. That project is close to the Member for Barkly, who has been advocating for it. I hope that as shadow Health minister I will get an invitation to the opening, Member for Barkly. I see his head nodding, so I will take that as a yes. Thank you, I will wait for the invitation to go there with you. We know how much the Member for Barkly loves selfies. I would love to get in a photo with you. Maybe we could get one of those selfies together, and it would make it on your page.

There is $20m to continue the upgrade of the fire safety systems at Gove District Hospital; $20m for a new healthcare centre and morgue in Gunbalanya, benefiting the local community, which the Member for Arafura continues to watch closely; and $1.3m for the staff accommodation block at Tennant Creek Hospital.

I outlined last night that our ability to participate in the economy, have a social life and enjoy the Territory lifestyle all rely on being able to access effective, reliable and efficient health services when we need them. We delivered a number of infrastructure projects to ensure Territorians can access those services.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move an extension of time for the Member for Daly to continue his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr YOUNG: We can look to the delivery of Palmerston Regional Hospital, which the CLP could not deliver; the PET scanner at Royal Darwin Hospital; the expansion of the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre with an additional 12 chemotherapy chairs, expanded diagnosis and treatment services, with the Commonwealth; the Gove District Hospital CT scanners; the Katherine Hospital CT scanners; the expanded renal dialysis units in Darwin, Alice Springs and remote communities; and investment in remote health clinic infrastructure at Gapuwiyak, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Robinson River and Umbakumba.

Territory Labor's commitment to healthcare remains unwavering. We look forward to witnessing the positive impact our health infrastructure investment will have across the Territory and the benefits it will bring to Territory families.

Last night the Albanese Labor government continued its unwavering support for healthcare and hospitals in the Northern Territory. The investment in bulk-billing is estimated to result in an additional 168,000 bulk-billed GP visits each year in the NT alone. With 80 practices moving to bulk-bill all patients, residents will save between $444 and $677 per year when they visit a GP. There will be an additional Medicare urgent care clinic in Darwin, bringing the total number to nine in the Territory. The extension of the National Health Reform Agreement will see the NT receive an additional $51m from the Commonwealth for a total federal funding contribution of $600m, which is a 30% increase compared with 2024–25. That is investing in Territory health, Territorians and the Territory economy.

Education changes lives. It is the key tool to drive every young person forward, and nurtures critical thinkers, problem-solvers and lifelong learners who contribute positively to their community and the overall Territory economy.

Budget 2024 invests $72.2m to upgrade schools and education facilities across the Territory to support improved student outcomes. We see not only the benefit from short-term infrastructure jobs but also the long-term dividends to our economy. These investments include:

- $9.2m for new preschool facilities at Parap Primary School
- $3.2m for the redevelopment of Richardson Park to provide access to Ludmilla Primary School
- $1.6m for upgrades to the administration block at Leanyer Primary School
- $1.2m for the roof replacement at Wulagi Primary School
- $14.8m for the Katherine High School science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics centre
- $4.4m for upgrades at Yuendumu School
- $3.4m for Homeland Learning Centre upgrades
- $2m for the Energy Smart Schools Program, including improving building energy efficiency and rooftop solar systems
- $1.5m for upgrades to secondary school facilities at Yirrkala School to support improved physical learning environments and education facilities.

Investing in good education infrastructure which caters to all forms of learning unlocks the different pathways Territory kids need to get the job they want and deserve.

The new Charles Darwin University CBD campus, which opened late last year, is something that the Territory Labor team is proud to have delivered in conjunction with the federal Labor government. This education investment is for local Territorians and international students, who bring many benefits to our community. International students strengthen our cultural, social and economic ties. They bring valuable skills to our workforce, which boosts the Territory economy.

Most of you know that I was not born in the Territory, but I have very strong connections to the place after being here for close to 14 years. It has gone by quickly. I chose to live here because it is a beautiful and magical place, which I think we can all agree on. I love the lifestyle here and getting out camping and fishing, like most people in the Chamber.

The Territory has much to offer locals and visitors alike. The tourism sector is an important economic driver for the Territory, contributing millions to our economy every year and directly employing thousands of Territorians. That is why Territory Labor understands the importance of investing in our tourism infrastructure and growing the overall industry.

In the 2024 budget we invested $68.4m to continue supporting tourism, including $13m over three years for the Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme to fund passenger rebates and airport out-of-hours opening costs; $12.8m for targeted tourism business events and international education marketing; $3m to support tourism recovery in international markets; $3m for the Visitor Experience Enhancement Program; and $1.9m for Aboriginal tourism industry development activities.

In Central Australia we invested $10.8m for Alice Springs parks and tourism infrastructure upgrades; $5.6m towards the continual works for a new multi-day walking track at Watarrka National Park; $4.4m for the Tourism Central Australia information centre; $3.5m for strategic planning and works at the National Road Transport Museum and Wall of Fame; and $2.7m to enhance the visitor experience at the Alice Springs Desert Park.

In the Barkly Labor invested $8.9m in tourism to generate jobs and economic opportunities. This included $1.9m for the creation of a new visitor experience in Tennant Creek, which will include gold rush and ore mining interpretive displays. There is $7m for the Tennant Creek art and cultural centre extension, providing a new artist studio; upgraded gallery, performance and storage spaces; and immersive audiovisual displays and experiences that share history, stories, arts and culture.

In East Arnhem Land $9m was invested in the final package of works for the Gunyangara Tourism Precinct project which will enable more visitors to explore the region's natural beauty and rich cultural history.

These 2024 budget commitments for tourism infrastructure are again on top of what has been delivered by the Territory Labor government. Some of the tourism infrastructure programs we delivered were the screen industry funding program; the Million Dollar Road Trip; increased investment in Central Australia tourism and Top End tourism; Roadhouse to Recovery grants; Aboriginal tourism grants; unlocking Aboriginal tourism development funding; upgrades to the Alice Springs and Katherine Visitor Information Centres; upgrades to the Bitter Springs hot springs; visitor experience enhancement grants; and the Territory Tourism Discount Scheme.

We know how much COVID-19 impacted our visitation numbers, with further impacts from the heightened cost-of-living crisis and international competition. That does not mean we should step back from investing in our tourism infrastructure and improving on our unique and iconic landscapes which make the Territory a tourism destination for so many.

Delivering enabling infrastructure requires working in close partnership with the private sector, local government and the Australian Government. In addition to infrastructure, we must invest in emerging industries to kickstart growth, including the data industry, the renewable energy industry and even the space industry.

We also invested in agribusiness, horticulture, aquaculture and the pastoral industry. It is an enormous pipeline of work from the Territory Labor government that I have just outlined. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this motion.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, for the political fiends at home who are tuning in, we are discussing, on General Business day, a motion brought forward by Labor to acknowledge the outstanding work of the private sector, and I will speak about that because we love our private sector. However, I have deep concerns about the part of the motion that commends the 2024–25 NT infrastructure program for its significant contributions to building a better Territory, fostering economic development and improving the quality of life for all Territorians.

We have just heard the opposition give a long shopping list of where money has been spent. Our job in this place is to direct and lead the Territory. Any department can crack out …

A member interjecting.

Mr HOWE: I have grave concerns about the infrastructure program and where it has left the people of the Northern Territory. It is constituents like mine who hold the $50,000 debt over their heads, so I will speak to the real cost of the mismanagement of the former government.

In our private lives we cannot go around signing contracts that we cannot afford. A bank will simply not lend you the money to buy a house that you cannot afford, and there are plenty of checks in that process to stop it from happening. If you cannot afford something you have signed up to, in about three months the institution will come and take that asset, which generally is your home. You will lose your home because you cannot pay the bills. On an individual level the train comes off the tracks very quickly.

If we go up a level to a business, the same thing applies; in fact, the stakes get higher. I come from the private sector as a business owner. There are lines of credit, and the timeline can go a bit longer. You might be able to keep the train on the tracks for six to 18 months, but it will come off. In this country the punishment for it coming off—that is, trading while insolvent—is up to 15 years in prison. We recognise through the

Parliament of Australia that it is such a crime to trade while insolvent that we will send you to prison for 15 years.

However, when we go up a level to government it seems that the rules do not apply. There is no similar set of standards for a Cabinet or parliament that will trade essentially while insolvent as we see with the 2024–25 infrastructure bill. There was $5bn—an astronomical amount of money—and how it was to be paid for I have no idea. It is a ludicrous sum. To pay it would have meant that for everyone in the Northern Territory you could double the $50,000—because the government would have needed to borrow it—and future generations would have had immense pain that would last for a long time.

This budget motion today is a ploy by the Labor Party to try to come up with some fictitious idea that the CLP will cut things. As the Member for Fannie Bay said, you cannot cut what does not exist. You cannot just throw things on a page and say, 'This is what we will deliver. Yes, there is no money for it, but it is coming.'

It goes a step further. The crime is greater than that because a large number of contracts were signed before the election. Now the people of the Northern Territory are in a contractual arrangement with contracts we cannot afford, yet there is no punishment for those in the Cabinet who made those decisions.

The lesson for all of us in this Chamber is that we have a real moral duty in how we exercise our budgets and fiscal responsibilities. If an individual—a family—can lose their home, if a businessperson can spend 15 years in prison, why is it that the former government believed it could do it? That is what has occurred.

The problem we saw at the end was a rapid firing of projects in a hope that—I am not quite sure, so I will not speak to what the hope was. I assume it was to gain confidence in the economy to try to sell to voters that everything was all right and a huge infrastructure spend was coming, but I will not speak for the former government. There are the flow-on effects of that as well. I cannot imagine what working at the department must have been like when people were getting rapid-fire projects to announce and deliver coming down range at them.

When this happens we see the problems of poor planning and design, which flow on to tenders. The tendering process becomes a mess, and that has a huge impact on private business. I know what it is like to tender for a project. When the project is not well designed it is horrible. What are you pricing to? You do not know what the costs will be because it is not all there. What does that open us up to? Variations, because time was not given for adequate planning and design and the contractors were not given an adequate brief on what they were to do. We have huge overspends because of those variations, which we then have to borrow more for, and then we have more interest. It becomes a vicious cascading cycle.

The part of the motion that I definitely agree with is supporting our private sector. I sincerely hope it is clear across the Chamber that the one thing that needs to grow in the NT is the private sector. There has been huge growth in the public sector, but the horse that drives the machinery of government is the private sector. The private sector creates productivity and the goods and services that we tax. If we take anything from today in a bipartisan approach it is that, yes, we need private sector development and growth. That should be a good sign to the entire private sector that this House, I hope in its entirety, is there to do whatever we can to build that.

Government attempts at intervention in the economy have destroyed it. I have a large problem with the idea that government-backed major projects are a ticket to success and a saving grace. They are not, for myriad reasons. A major reason is that banking on these single-contract major projects has a narrow benefit. One head contractor will win the job. He will have preferred contractors he normally works with, so the number of people in that chain becomes small, especially in the construction industry, and myriad other businesses do not get any love from that. It is poor economics. Probably any Year 10 economics student in the Northern Territory could explain that government funding an entire industry is a ticket to failure. It is not how it works.

Here is another lesson: government takes and then it gives back, but it takes first. It must take. Government takes in the way of taxes. Whenever you hear, 'Government is giving you this and government is giving you that', remember that it is taken from you first, which adds further weight to our responsibility to make moral fiscal decisions. We did not make the money; the people of the Northern Territory made the money. Our GST revenue comes from our brethren and sisters in other jurisdictions; they made the money. Therefore, we must allocate it responsibly. We cannot trick the people that we somehow magically came up with it, because we did not. It was taken from them first and then we, as the decision-makers, decide how it should be allocated. It is not a bad system, but if those decision-makers are not doing it correctly and responsibly it becomes very bad.

I argue that our role is to invest money in a way that makes a strong healthy environment in which the private sector can grow. It is not to deliver single projects in the hope that they will generate X number of jobs for one year and a handful of jobs thereafter, all on government money. We need to create an environment and then step back and let the private sector grow. If we have a profit incentive so that people will take their own risks I believe that entrepreneurs will do the heavy lifting in the economy in a profit-driven way. That is what I want to see. With that I want to see the high wages, and that is where there is a place for regulation in the free market. I want the people of Drysdale to benefit from the private sector growth that we want to create.

I turn to the budget. Budgets are not just plans; they are moral documents. If I have any message today it is that a budget is a moral document; it is the allocation of resources that have been taken from the people and redistributed in a way that is meant to maximise the benefit for the people. Robbing our children and grandchildren is not a moral way to conduct budgets. That is the reality of this budget.

If you have $5bn and have allocated $300m, you need to borrow. Who are you borrowing from? Every school-age child in the Northern Territory because they will be paying it off in the multitude of ways in which government can recoup its money. That is in either taxes or lost opportunity because we now cannot invest that future money in hospitals or education. Something has to give; it cannot just be give, give, give. Territorians are now acutely aware of that. I stand firmly on the grounds that I cannot support this because at its core that would mean I support robbing my own children of a future they could have. I will not support any budget that will rob my children and the children of Drysdale at Gray and Driver Primary Schools and Palmerston Senior College. I simply will not do it.

There were opportunities along the way. We have been delayed. The moratorium on fracking is a prime example of how we delayed what could have been. We could be discussing what we will do with the extra revenue streams that have been granted and the influx of workers. We could be debating where new schools need to be built or which hospitals need more funding. These would be good things to debate, but we have inherited an economic foundation that was built on sand, and it has cracked. That is what our government is left to build with, and we will. No-one in this Chamber took this job thinking it would be easy; I definitely accept that is those opposite as well. We knew stepping into this that it would be extremely difficult, and the economic front is a big part of that.

There was misplaced infrastructure as well. We saw the development of the police station in Nightcliff—why would you build a police station and not man it with police? It beggars belief, but that is the kind of wasteful spending that led us to having $50,000 of debt on the head of every man, woman and child. That is what we have to deal with in the Northern Territory. You can see that these kind of things were political decisions, and it goes back to the moral idea of what a budget is. These political decisions were just to capture short-term votes, but it has been at the cost of generations to come.

There is a great economic consequence. I have spoken about the debt. We have ballooning annual interest. The numbers get so big that they kind of get lost when you are talking about $10bn, $11bn or $12bn. That is a loan, like anyone has on their home. We are paying interest, and it is rapidly growing. That is all money we cannot spend because we are repaying debt. It will keep growing. It is another burden our government has been left with, but we will carry that burden because we must. The people of the Northern Territory did not put us in this Chamber to have it easy; they put us in here to fix the job and get it done. That is exactly what we will do.

We are trying to grow investor confidence. We do not want to see people leaving the Northern Territory anymore. When you have population decline, who do you think leaves? It is those who can afford to, your professionals, highly skilled workers and those with capital. Developers and builders go and take their money somewhere else. The professionals go and take their skills somewhere else. We are left poorer, and our human capital has been crushed. We are losing everyone carrying wealth; they are taking it somewhere else. Everyone who has highly needed skills is taking them somewhere else. We are left holding the handbasket because of the terrible mismanagement of money.

Money does not sound sexy to talk about, but the fact is that it underpins everything we do—all the social good everyone in this Chamber wants to do. That is undeniable. I think where the party lines split is on the idea and knowledge that it all takes money, and it takes fiscal responsibility to deliver.

Mr BROWN: 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 HOWE: I thank my fellow veteran in the Chamber who always has a veteran's back.

What will we give to the Northern Territory? We must exercise discipline. We must focus on real outcomes so that we know every dollar spent will deliver economic and social benefit, just as the Member for Fong Lim spoke of eloquently. Those dollars must have real benefit.

We want infrastructure that supports our population and its growth. We want to get those who left to come back, and we want new capital, both in the form of wealth and human capital, to come to the Northern Territory because that is how we will improve our education and health systems.

Whilst we are talking of all these dollars, you know who suffers: it is teachers who are burning out. They have ever-growing class sizes because of poor fiscal management, and now we cannot afford more teachers. I do not want that for any Territory school. I want the smallest class sizes in the country. I want teachers to feel that when they go to work they are not just trying to manage 30 students; they are going into the classroom and teaching. I want nurses not to be burning out because of poor fiscal management. Under the previous government they had to increase their patient load. We do not want that for nurses and patients. This will lead to more nurses burning out and to a higher turnover. These are all real-world impacts of poor fiscal management.

You are seeing a major shift—a fundamental shift in the Northern Territory—and for some that is deeply uncomfortable, because the way we are doing business is changing to focus on people first. Some might not like it and some will attack us, as has already happened. Groups will get angry. There is a fundamental shift in this government and how we will manage fiscal responsibility. We take the moral weight of the budget seriously. We are unapologetic, as am I, about putting people at the centre of the budget because unless we have real economic growth people will continue to suffer. That suffering will only grow, and we must stop it.

Ultimately, we are here to serve the people and the families of the Northern Territory. If we can create the environment where citizens feel free to start private sector enterprise, they will do the heavy lifting. As they do it they will create more goods and services. This will give Territorians more choice in every aspect of their lives. More choice is more freedom. This is the impact of a healthy private sector free market economy. It is exactly what our government aims to turn around. Without a drastic change in course the Northern Territory was a sinking ship. Our government will do whatever it takes to get that ship afloat and sailing again.

Whilst I applaud our private sector, I cannot accept the 2024–25 infrastructure budget for the pain and suffering it is causing now and will cause for many years to come through the lack of opportunity, interest rates on debt and the long burden and pain it has brought to many families in the Northern Territory.

My message to the private sector is that I want you to work and work hard because it is you who will raise the economy. There is real purpose to the work you do, even if you do not see it. It does not matter what job you do, the fact is that your private sector work will grow the economy. The labour you do every day will pave the way for future generations through education, healthcare—it drives it all. To anyone in the country who is looking to where you can make a start, it is in the Northern Territory because you have a government that will back you to the hilt. We do not just want you to work; we demand it.

We want strong economic growth so that we can deliver for the people. We will deliver moral budgets, and we are paving a new future for the Northern Territory.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, looking at the motion I acknowledge the outstanding work done by the private sector in developing projects in the Northern Territory and commend it on the work it does. The remainder of the motion is to commend the 2024–25 Northern Territory infrastructure program. It is difficult to accept the program put forward by Labor in 2024–25; in fact, it has been extremely difficult to accept any infrastructure program put forward by Labor over the last eight years.

For a number of years we heard Labor talk about a record infrastructure program. It seems to be the mantra that comes out every year at budget time. I have sat in this House for four years and listened to Labor present infrastructure programs. Last year Labor said that it was a record infrastructure program. I do not have the figures in front of me, but it was between $4bn and $5bn. I will have to ask the Member for Nelson how many zeros that is. The reality is that Labor has not left money to fund any of it. As the Treasurer said, $313m is in the infrastructure program. Labor can talk about record infrastructure programs, but the reality is that there is no cash to support them. Unfortunately, Territorians have been misled by Labor.

Territorians watched as Labor made announcement after announcement over the last eight years. I will speak about some of the promises that have never been delivered in the Barkly. I often talk about how it was rare

to see a shovel in the ground under the previous Labor government. I can talk about a number of projects that were promised in the Barkly over the last eight years, but were never delivered by Labor.

Mr Maley: I will go and put the kettle on.

Mr EDGINGTON: Have a cup of tea while you listen in, Member for Nelson.

Labor delivered an infrastructure program riddled with significant shortfalls. Cash allocations could not keep up with the projects it started, putting us in a position whereby contractual obligations could potentially go unmet. Projects had budgets spiralling out of control. An example is Tiger Brennan Drive, which blew out by more than $100m under Labor. The original budget was about $62m.

I will give examples of projects that were promised by Labor. Some were delivered way over budget in the past eight years. The ship lift was estimated to be about $100m when it was originally put forward; under Labor the cost of delivering it is well over $500m. I spoke about the overpass on Tiger Brennan Drive; it started off at $60m, and Labor committed us to an overall cost of $164m. Labor committed us to $145m for the Darwin Civic and State Square redevelopment. I have spoken about the $12.7m that was, in my view, wasted on a police station in Nightcliff. It is essentially an unmanned police station that opens between 8 am and 4.21 pm Monday to Friday.

Who could forget the $35m paid out to youth offenders?

Mr Maley: Secret.

Mr EDGINGTON: It was a secret payout; that is right.

There was the $12m grandstand at the Fannie Bay racecourse and a $14m overspend on Garramilla Boulevard.

Who could forget the $432,000 to move a bus stop from Cavenagh Street to Smith Street, then back again? That is another example of the wasteful spending of the former Labor government.

The budget blowout on the underground/aboveground car park at Parliament House was $7m.

We heard about the unshaded structure on Cavenagh Street that cost $2.7m. We talk about growing the economy, but Labor could not even grow a vine on that unshaded structure, let alone the economy, so what hope did we have under Labor? We are spending roughly $80,000 a year—it might be close to $100,000—just to maintain the shadeless structure on Cavenagh Street.

Yesterday I spoke about the $4.3m consultancy contract into the COVID response, which ended up with ICAC. I think it started off at $700,000 and grew into a $4.3m consultancy contract.

There was the $2m overspend on the Myilly Point playground and the $1m overspend on the demolition of the Chan building.

The Labor government spent $220,000 on a renewables target report, which was made public after an FOI request with every page redacted, so I do not know what that says.

It always concerns me that the former Labor government spent $40,000 advertising Boundless Possible, a failed marketing exercise. The last time I saw Boundless Possible was when it was advertised on a rocket being launched out of Queensland in November 2018. It is an example of more waste from the former Labor government.

I am sure the Member for Nelson will remember the $5,000 Christmas tree. After its first Chief Minister—there were three—Michael Gunner told everyone that we were reining in spending across the board, within a week Labor was spending $5,000 to rent a Christmas tree.

What concerned me with all this reckless spending was the lack of investment in the Barkly and other parts of the Northern Territory. I remind members that in this significant period of reckless spending Labor took us from a $1.8bn debt to an $11bn debt.

What was not delivered? We heard those opposite today talk about all the infrastructure that Labor apparently delivered, but in Borroloola it must be close to five years since the former Labor government committed $3.5m for a 30-lot subdivision. Not one shovel has hit the ground for that project over the last five years. The

CLP has made a commitment to build the new health clinic at Borroloola because Labor failed to deliver that essential infrastructure.

Labor failed Borroloola because it did not focus on the bush to deliver essential services such as health, education and community safety through policing. That was through the lack of investment and the amount of waste going on in the projects that I have just rattled off.

I have spoken many times about kidney disease. It is a crisis across the Northern Territory. I remind the House that on 26 April 2022 Labor, through its failed federal members—it must have been Marion Scrymgour who promised 30 renal clinics for the Territory. Thirty renal clinics would make a significant difference to many of the remote communities where people need renal dialysis. Families often have to travel long distances for renal dialysis treatment. That has a significant impact on communities because it is not just the patient who needs to travel; patients need family support when they travel. We are seeing significant travel and disruption in remote communities because of Labor's failure to invest. That commitment—it is a month away from being three years ago—to build 30 renal clinics was another failure.

At the same time a commitment was made to invest in 500 Aboriginal health workers. That commitment was never delivered as well. Even more importantly, just like kidney disease, Labor promised to double the funding to treat rheumatic heart disease. Again it was never seen.

These are the hollow commitments that have been made by Labor over many years. For 19 out of the last 23 years the Northern Territory had a Labor government and all we have ended up with is overspends and money being wasted on projects while critical services have just been ignored.

The Member for Daly talked about roads. For four years in this House I have spoken about roads. It concerns me that there is an investment of $200m in the federal budget to upgrade some of the road between Katherine and Darwin, yet the federal government is investing $7.2bn in the Bruce Highway in Queensland.

The people in my electorate continue to suffer because of the poor quality of roads. The Stuart Highway has been closed a number of times over the last couple of years because of weather events. I remember the Member for Nelson coming across a massive washout 45 kilometres south of Tennant Creek. If I had a ladder I would need to have given it to him to get out of that hole; that is how deep it was. As we went through it was left as virtually gravel. That was just one part of the Stuart Highway that had been cut.

The Barkly Highway was cut last year as well, with no further investment to lift the highway to make it more resilient to these weather events. The bush members opposite know as well as I do the condition of roads out bush, but they had eight years to fix them. Eight years is a long time for pastoralists, tourists, locals and businesspeople to be travelling those roads.

Think of the damage being caused to trucks and other vehicles. Just a few years ago I reported that I had lost two sets of numberplates travelling in my electorate because the corrugations on the roads are substantial. My rear numberplate fell off at least twice while I was travelling those roads.

That is a small example, but think about pastoralists trying to manoeuvre their trucks through some of these roads. They just cannot get through them. Think about the locals who are living in the communities. People often say to me, 'How come there are so many abandoned cars when you go to a community?' Do you know what it is? The quality of the roads that the locals drive on is actually destroying their vehicles. That is because of the neglect and failure of Labor to invest in our roads over the last eight years. We have significant problems with roads across the Barkly.

Let us look at some of the opportunities for tourists to come to the Northern Territory. I have spoken about Wollogorang Road between Queensland and Borroloola. For four years while Labor was in government I called for upgrades to the Wearyan, Foelsche and Fletcher river crossings because they are impassable at various times of the year.

Georgina River near Lake Nash might be flooded as we speak—I saw some photos of flooding—but there has been no investment to put in bridges to lift those roads so that traffic can get in and out of those remote areas.

The former Labor government had an opportunity to invest in schools in my electorate and failed to do so. I have often described Alekarenge School as the worst school in Australia; that is how bad it was left by Labor. The Mungkarta school and Newcastle Waters School were ignored by the Labor government. The staggering part about this is that those schools were left in a state of disrepair at the same time we saw

school attendance drop to 46%. I think there is a correlation between the standard of the schools that Labor left behind and the attendance rate. I have often said that I would not even go to Alekarenge School; that is how bad its condition is.

Mr Paech: You will get fined now, if you do not.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Member for Gwoja was a part of the government that had an opportunity to step in and do something for the bush and the Barkly, but of course he did not. He did not even step in to make a change to some of our most critical services—education, health and community safety.

I have not even spoken about Alpurrurulam Police Station, which the Labor government closed in February 2018. Labor not only closed the police station but also forgot to tell the community that it was closing it. One day the police station was open and the next day it was closed, and the community was asking where the police were. Unfortunately—I think I was Mayor of the Barkly Regional Council back then—we were left to tell the community members that Labor had failed them by closing the doors of the police station. At the same time Labor was busy investing $12.7m in the Nightcliff Police Station.

It is disgraceful that on one hand Labor closed a bush police station …

Mr HOWE: 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 EDGINGTON: I thank the Member for Gwoja for supporting that.

One day Labor closed the Alpurrurulam Police Station, and the next day it invested $12.7m in a police station that is not needed at Nightcliff. That is an example of the infrastructure program Labor was running.

I have spoken about these before. There was $3.175m promised for accommodation for health staff in Tennant Creek four or five years ago, but not one shovel has hit the ground.

Last night I spoke about the work Bushfires NT has been doing in Tenant Creek. It was never spoken about much, but Labor scrapped two positions in Bushfires NT in Tennant Creek in 2020. That was the attitude of the Labor government—scrapping two key positions and wondering why we were facing a uphill battle to deal with an emergency with bushfires in the Barkly.

There was $5.5m for a youth justice facility, promised on 13 April 2019. I am thankful that we are in government because we will finish that project. Labor dragged its feet for four years.

I could probably talk for another hour about the failures of the Labor government, but I will quickly say that we are taking steps to rebuild the economy. I am proud to remind the Assembly that we are implementing the Rebuilding the Economy: Northern Territory Economic Strategy. We are doing the work needed to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our Territory lifestyle. I will leave it there because there is probably too much that I need to say with little time to do it.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, rather than focus on the failures of the 2024–25 Northern Territory infrastructure program I will address the first part of the motion, which is that we acknowledge the outstanding work done by private sector in developing a portfolio of projects valued at over $57bn, spanning critical sectors such as minerals and resources, digital innovation, renewable energy and agribusiness.

I am a bit of a dreamer, and I would love to know what would have happened if we were in power four years ago with this CLP government that is keen to welcome private investment into the Territory, put our hand out to the world and the rest of Australia to say, ‘We are open for business; we are happy to work with you and want you to invest.’

This is the year of action. In the last seven days we passed two Bills that will significantly improve business confidence in the Territory.

Ms Uibo: Where was your legislation today?

Mr MACKAY: I note the interjection from the Member for Arnhem. I support the acknowledgement of the outstanding work done by the private sector; I just think it could have been more if the Territory government was supportive of that investment from day dot.

We passed the Territory Coordinator legislation and the Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill. We are making sure that businesses that want to invest in the Territory have the confidence that when a decision is made that decision is final, and we can see the money coming in.

We know that without our resources sector, agribusiness and pastoralists—I will even pay credit to the renewable energy hubs; I just wish they were switched on under the Labor government.

A tremendous number of people want to invest in the Territory; we are the gateway to Asia. We welcome investment and the opportunity for people in the Territory to be a part of the workforce that brings projects to life within and outside the public sector.

Through the decisions we make in this Chamber we let businesses around the world, the Territory and the rest of Australia know that we are open for business, willing to work with them and it is the vibe of the place. If we had the CEO of major corporations sitting in the gallery looking down, they would be thinking, 'Oh my god; it has changed. We have some hope in the Territory once again.'

I will quickly touch on one thing that goes under the radar. Amongst all the public servants there are those Territorians who work to facilitate change. For eight years these public servants have been hamstrung by a Labor government that would not let them do their jobs and bring investment to the Territory.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the …

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have seconds.

Ms UIBO: I move that the question be put.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 17
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the people in the gallery, and I will read out a letter on their behalf. The letter is in regard to mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers. It is signed by more than 170 frontline workers. I share this message on their behalf.

These workers are deeply concerned, and rightly so, about this government's misguided approach to workplace safety. These workers are angry that their legitimate safety concerns are being used as a pretext to expand incarceration through mandatory sentencing laws. These workers know from experience that the number of assaults on frontline workers will not be reduced by mandatory sentencing; in fact, these laws will only worsen the social issues that drive crime.

They raise a crucial question: why were the unions representing these workers not consulted before this legislation was introduced? The answer is clear—it is not actually about safety.

In 2021 the NT Law Reform Committee reaffirmed what evidence consistently shows, that mandatory sentencing exacerbates social issues that lead to crime. This Bill is not about protecting workers; it is about locking up more people, and it does not seek meaningful change.

Frontline workers are the very people who operate under the crushing strain that mandatory sentencing places on our Corrections system, which is already in crisis. Despite this, frontline workers and their unions were shut out of the decision-making process before the CLP introduced these laws. These laws claim to protect frontline workers, but frontline workers are now telling us that they can no longer ethically report assaults. Why? Because under mandatory sentencing laws their reports could lead to the imprisonment of some of society's most vulnerable individuals.

Mandatory sentencing is not good policy, and it does not reduce crime. It only adds more strain to our prison system, which we know is already on the brink of collapse. The CLP approach to the safety issues in our community is consistently not evidence based, and this is another example of that. These workers are understandably upset. I implore this parliament to listen to the people you are supposedly creating laws for and stand with frontline workers who are working for all of us every day.

I will now read the open letter:

To the Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro, and all incumbent CLP MLAs,

We the undersigned are frontline workers who do not support mandatory sentencing for assaults against frontline workers, and reject the CLP Government's attempt to use our workplace circumstances to push their agenda to increase criminalisation and incarceration rates.

We deserve to feel safe at work, and ought to be consulted about how best to achieve this. None of our unions including UWU NT, ANMF NT, AEU NT, or AMA were made aware of this law, despite its supposed purpose being to improve workplace safety. We are advocates of evidence-based policy making, and we note that the view of the NT Government's own Law Reform Committee (2021) is that mandatory sentencing does not lead to a reduction in offending behaviours. This means this punitive policy will not make frontline workers safer. We do not feel safer under these laws, rather we feel that they conflict with the fundamental ethics of our professions.

Those who assault frontline workers may be experiencing acute mental illness or some form of poor impulse control, often related to history of trauma. We are employed to try and support many of these people when their capacity to consider how current actions can impact future consequences is impaired. All of our EBAs contain clauses that refer to advocating for the safety of our clients. Given the current prison system is unsafe for children and adults and those experiencing acute medical conditions, including psychiatric disorders, it would conflict with our code of ethics to report these incidents knowing they could result in the imprisonment of many of our most vulnerable clients.

Our current prison system does not work to deter crime, nor does it support offenders to prevent recurrence of offending, as evidenced by the Territory's reoffending rate being the highest in the country at 58.2% reimprisonment within 2 years of release (Australian Productivity Commission, 2023). Mandatory sentencing will punish individuals without regard for their specific circumstances by removing sentencing options from the courts, and deprives offenders of access to family, culture and positive role-models. Indeed, the NT Law Reform Committee (2021) is of the opinion that mandatory sentencing could make the community less safe in the long term and efforts would be better spent addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour.

There are ways to improve workplace safety that do not criminalise mental illness and social disadvantage, and as frontline workers, we strongly object to the CLP Government's creation of minimum mandatory sentencing terms for assaults against frontline workers.

The NT Government should repeal these bad laws and work in good faith with unions to develop evidence-based policies that will actually keep frontline workers safe.

It is signed by A Abrakasa, public health worker; Ace Goddard, librarian; Ace Leeson, social worker; Addie, teacher; Adjunct Professor Annie Whybourne, paediatrician; Alastair Scott, senior schoolteacher; Alexander Matthews, emergency doctor; Alexandra Tyler, doctor; Alison Mapleson, speech pathologist and music therapist; Ameliya O'Leary, registered nurse; Andi Wyatt, GP; Andrew Rankin, emergency physician; Andrew Wallace, paediatric registrar; Anna, education; Anna Smith, youth justice mentor; anonymous art worker; anonymous community worker; Antony Sinni, tenancy and social security lawyer; Ashley Jewson, paediatric registrar; Asta Hill, lawyer; Barbara Molanus, registered nurse; Beatrice Webb, doctor; BJ Mayer, general practitioner; Blair, osteopath; Brandon, retail; Brendon Southi, doctor; Brittany Haywood-Brown, bartender; Caitlin Buralli, library support officer; Cam, electrician; Cameron, electrician; Carmel Lawrence, volunteer worker; Catherine Boyd, paediatrician; Catherine Greene, retired; Catrina Sturmberg, medical doctor; Chris Kuhl, mental health recovery worker; Christine Sanderson, doctor; Clare Haynes, registered nurse; Clare Horsfall, senior manager, youth justice programs; Daniella de Koster-Hill, teacher; Dawyte Hart-O'Neill, community advocate; Dr Adelaide Dennis, medical doctor; Dr Emma Tucker, medical practitioner; Dr Kerrie Jones, emergency specialist; Dr Laura Wood, GP; Dr Raelene Martins, rural generalist; Dr Rosie Murphy, paediatrician; Dr Sarah Dorrington, psychiatrist; Dr Sophie Collins, emergency and remote medicine doctor; Dr Thomas Atkinson, general practitioner; Eliza Solomon, occupational therapist; Elizabeth Albiston, AOD case worker; Ella Gustin-Craig, midwife and nurse; Ella Moyses, midwife/RN; Emma Fitzsimons, medical practitioner GP; Emma Kelly, doctor; Fiona Alessi, social worker; Fiona MacDonald, medical practitioner; Fiona McNaughton, social worker and behaviour support practitioner; Gemma Crocetti, teacher; Georgia, education; Georgina Campbell, public servant; Gia Crocetti, domestic and family violence specialist practitioner; Hanna Nagel, registered emergency nurse; Hannah Willis, administration; Hilary Tyler, doctor; Holly J, registered nurse; Hugo Wells, retail; Indi Moran, nurse; Isaac Keeler, disability support worker; Issie McBeth Jephcott, physiotherapist; Jacob Fajzullin, teacher; Jana Pretorius, doctor; Jane Karmouche, GP; Jean Norris, RGT; Jemma Whittaker, teacher; Jens Cheung, software engineer; Joanna von Moger, nurse; Jodie Clarkson, interpreter trainer—I have lost my last page.

There are 170 names. Apologies for anyone's names I did not read out. I seek leave to table this letter.

Leave granted.

J DAVIS: I express my heartfelt thanks on behalf of all of us in the Chamber and in the Northern Territory for the incredible work that our frontline workers do every day. I want them to know that we are behind them.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, domestic and family violence has been spoken about in this Chamber today. I speak on the need for our community to demand greater action on domestic and family violence. It is an issue that affects individuals, families and entire communities. Overcoming it requires collaboration, commitment and a deep respect for the voices of those most affected.

The hardworking people in the domestic violence sector, alongside the courageous victim–survivors, play a pivotal role in tackling this crisis. Their tireless advocacy and frontline experience have shown us the path forward. However, we continue to hear their call for additional resources to meet the growing demand for support in our communities.

We need a government that not just acknowledges the problem but also actively listens to the solutions. The sector has the data, the expertise and the lived experience to know where the resources are most needed. It is critical that we let the sector and the DV victim–survivors shape the way forward. This is not about politics; it is about delivering real meaningful change for those who need it most.

We also must be crystal clear and have our eyes wide open when it comes to the statistics. Every statistic is a woman. Every statistic is a life that has been lost. As more women feel safe to report domestic violence the numbers will increase. This should be seen not as a failure but as an important step in lifting the stigma that has attached itself to women for so many years. When women find the courage to seek help and our systems become more accessible, they should not be discouraged. We should not be playing games with statistics.

I have said it before and I will say it again: we need to do everything we can to ensure that women feel safe, supported and empowered to report domestic violence. We must encourage it, not use it as a political football or a measure to score points.

To make long-lasting change we need a comprehensive approach and needs-based funding that prioritises the most vulnerable. We need more alternative-to-custody programs, not more prisons. This includes safe

houses and therapeutic programs and initiatives that address the root causes of violent behaviour, like men's behaviour change programs. These successful programs are being delivered in the Northern Territory by the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group and CatholicCare. We must also improve information-sharing services to create safety nets that do not let vulnerable people fall through the cracks.

Domestic and family violence is not inevitable. Together we must work with the sector and be guided by the sector and the voices of survivors. We can work together for a future free from violence where every individual feels free, safe, valued and respected.

We all must ensure that the actions reflect the seriousness of this issue. We have heard time and again that the government is working on a plan. We do not need a plan. We need to listen to the experts in the domestic and family violence sector and the victim–survivors. The whole community came together and did an important piece of work. ICRO did the important work to shape the future and pave the way. That requires the simple action of funding.

I dispute the claims that are continually made that the sector does not need more money and that it needs to be smarter about spending money. That is untrue. As time goes on and vulnerable women feel safer to report domestic, family and sexual violence the stats will increase because people are comfortable to report it and the system is working. Women's shelters like the Women's Safety Services of Central Australia need additional resources. We need more men's behaviour change programs rolled out across the Territory. We need more safe houses in remote Aboriginal communities.

We need more alternative-to-custody programs. I urge members of this parliament who have not been to the women's life skills camp in Alice Springs to see firsthand the importance of that program. It is not a prison; it is a program that involves residential on-country services that tackle and overcome issues, provide rehabilitation and work to help people get their lives on track and their health checked. It helps people to understand and identify their behaviours.

Investment in successful programs like Girls Can Boys Can is important. These programs talk about overcoming and challenging behaviours so that people can understand what is and is not okay. These are important measures that we should see more of.

The Member for Johnston asked important questions about those programs and the co-responder model. We are told that they are being rolled out and then we are told by the people on the front line that they have not received a single cent to do the co-responder model in Darwin and Palmerston. These are important programs and the way in which we can address domestic, family and sexual violence in our community.

We cannot just be there for the days the rallies are on; we must be there 365 days a year to call out the bad behaviour. When we call out the bad behaviour of men, we must stand strong and not be ashamed to do so. It is simple: the best way to overcome domestic, family and sexual violence is for men to stop killing women. It cannot be any simpler. We cannot say, 'I'm not one of the bad ones'; no-one is saying that. If we do not have male role models standing up and calling out bad behaviour, we will not see the issues change and a lessening of the horrific rates of women and children in the Northern Territory dying.

Since July last year 11 women have been murdered by their loved ones, and a number of them are my family. I am sick and tired of coming into this bloody place and hearing people talk about them like they are just a number. They are women; they are loved; they are gone. We come in here and we talk endlessly, but the time for talk is well over; the time for investment is now. I offered to get on a plane to Canberra with the Chief Minister to get additional investment for Territory women through a bipartisan approach. Instead, that offer was ignored.

Eleven women have been murdered in the Northern Territory since July last year. The fact that the rest of this country is not recognising that as an appalling statistic is disgusting. The whole country should be ashamed. There are 249,000 people in the Northern Territory, and 11 women have been killed since July last year. Horrifically, four women have been murdered since the start of this year.

We hold rallies and vigils and we honour, commemorate and remember them, but we are not putting any additional investment into stopping it from happening in the first place. That is the biggest problem.

I remind people that when you are throwing around statistics, you are throwing around people. They are lives that have been lost. The statistics will potentially get worse because people may be more comfortable to finally come forward, once they see that government is investing in resources. You cannot just walk in and say it is an absolute failure that crime statistics are up when it comes to DV, or reportable offences, because

sometimes in those cases, people have been comfortable to finally say, ‘Enough is enough. I need help from a service or government.’

Do not just think about the statistics as way to pointscore. That is on both sides; I am not saying that one side is guilty and the other is not. We all need to be mindful when we are talking about statistics that we are talking about people and the experiences that people have been through. It is incredibly important that we do not lose sight of that. As the statistics get worse because people feel comfortable to say, ‘Enough is enough’, let us not use that against them or perpetuate the stigma that is attached to women in our community when they finally come forward.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, over the last month a lot of us have enjoyed engaging in several events that celebrate our diversity, and I thought that was worth reflecting upon briefly tonight.

On 14 February we had a huge interfaith reception next door, which was a celebration of the NT’s multi-faith communities. There were 60-odd groups represented and it was a huge tapestry of the world all in one room.

It was a privilege to be the emcee, on behalf of the Chief Minister, and to introduce the guest speaker, Imam Adama Konda, who I grew up with. He is a man from Burkina Faso, of all places. Try to find that on a map. He was one of many multi-faith leaders who spoke well and very kindly on that day, including Bishop Charles Gauci, Father Christos Tsoraklidis, Mr Gurkkal and Dr Edwin Joseph, the multicultural president. There was great wisdom shared from all of them.

There are several other events I could go through in the same vein. I will not go through them all forensically, because I want to draw attention to the bigger picture. There were a couple of things that I think we all delighted in. People have been celebrating a number of things to do with Ramadan, which this year neatly coincides with Lent, making it easier for people across the spectrum to all suffer in silence together, exercise self-restraint and be mindful of trying to do good.

On 9 March many of my colleagues and I—in fact, many of us in this room, across parties—were at the United Muslims of Northern Territory Interfaith Iftar event at the Hilton, which was lovely. I ate my fill that night. Likewise, just this weekend we were at the Islamic Society of Darwin Grand Iftar in Casuarina, which was a lovely celebration. It was lovely to see so many people of different faiths all breaking bread together.

There have been so many different Holi events that I do not know which one to pick, but everyone has delighted in being able to play Holi, throw the colours around, get out there and get mucky. For anyone who has been wondering, the reason I am not there is that I am allergic to half the dyes. I found out the hard way several times over. I am no longer allowed to get coloured in colours; I will turn out in hives. It was a phenomenal opportunity for everyone to come together, particularly to celebrate our growing Nepalese community which is now shooting up the ranks as one of the most numerous ethnic groups represented in the Northern Territory.

Last week, on 19 March, we had a massive Harmony Day celebration outside. Everybody was resplendent in orange. On 21 March, on Harmony Day itself, a number of you will have attended different things across the Territory. I was lucky enough to go to the ARRCS (Australian Regional and Remote Community Services) group, which had a little gathering. It was fantastic to celebrate Harmony Day with other people.

The thing that binds all this together—this is the point I want to make—is we are not a multicultural nation by accident; there is something underlying all of this. Behind all the costumes, colour, food and saying how wonderful diversity is, lies effort. It is worth remembering that because it is not something we should take for granted.

Our First Nations people are the original inhabitants who provided multicultural experiences in many ways, engaging with people across shores. For 65,000 years ATSI people have sustained many cultures and more than 250 languages on this continent. If we fast-forward to the post-World War II era, from 1945 to 2024 we welcomed 7.5 million immigrants, which included almost one million of them as refugees and people in humanitarian need. More than half of the Australian population was born overseas or has at least one parent who was born overseas and 5.5 million Australians speak a language other than English at home. They are the foundations of the diversity in this Chamber. It is worth remembering that we go back a long way in that regard.

It was not until 1973 that the White Australia policy was removed, which was not that long ago. Think about what that was—a policy that excluded non-European immigration. During that period immigrants were expected to leave their cultures and languages behind. Forget your Laksa Festival; it was a different time.

In the 1960s and 1970s we started to move forward and question whether that was necessary, and wanted to be a more inclusive country, probably from 1973 onwards. Al Grassby, the Immigration minister in the Whitlam government, was the first person to release a paper called 'A multi-cultural society for the future'. It presented a bold vision of a society that embraced cultural difference while fostering unity, and marks the beginning of our formal recognition of multiculturalism as a strength of our society.

In 1975 at a ceremony proclaiming the *Racial Discrimination Act* in Parliament House, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam first referred to Australia as a multicultural society. He was supported in the speeches that surrounded that by the Leader of the Opposition at the time.

In 1977 we had the Ethnic Affairs Council advise the Fraser government. It recommended a public policy, finally, on multiculturalism in its report, Australia as a Multicultural Society. In 1978 the Fraser government implemented the first official national multicultural policy. That was only 45 years ago. It is not that long that we have had multiculturalism. That is the reality of it. That was in accordance with the recommendations of the Galbally report.

In 1979 we had an Act of parliament establishing the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs. In 1986 that was repealed by the Hawke government, but then replaced in 1987 by the Office of Multicultural Affairs which was created in the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to give it proper weight and gravitas and to recognise that multiculturalism belonged as a central concern of government within its central agency.

In 1989 the Hawke government produced the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, which had bipartisan support. In 1996 the OMA (Office of Multicultural Affairs) was absorbed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs under the Howard government. The Howard government, likewise, launched its report in 1999, Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness.

I will not cover the period between 2000 and the present day—the last 25 years—because it is not necessary in the sense that there have been some policy shifts, but basically there has been bipartisan support for multiculturalism across Australia over that time. However, there have been challenges, and multiculturalism has been threatened at times. We live in tumultuous times and a time of global turmoil and instability, fragmentation and politics being driven to extremes on both edges. We live in relative harmony here, and we take it for granted to a large extent.

It is great that we have the Chung Wah Society with the lions, the Laksa Festival and the events that we have, but do not forget these were all hard-fought and won gains. It would not take much to erode them. It does not take much for social fragmentation to occur. When people are economically and socially stressed—which I think it is fair to say they are in the Northern Territory now—that is when stuff kicks off.

It is important that we, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, fight for multiculturalism. It is not just a word; it is an ethic, and it deserves being fought for in my opinion. The point I make is that it is also a policy commitment, which is why I gave that exhaustive documented history, if you like. The policy was also hard-fought and won over time, and it requires attention, nurturing and a genuine ongoing commitment to ensure that it does not crumble in our face.

I was lucky when I first went to the UK to study for my PhD to work for a gentleman called Professor Ceri Peach. The late Emeritus Professor Guthlac Ceri Klaus Peach was a professor of social geography and an adviser to numerous British governments over a long time about British white people and Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus getting along and not getting along. This was a guy who advised government on social cohesion and what ends up happening if you do not put in place the right policy settings and you do not defend those rights. He wrote extensively about race riots as well.

I had a long time to think about these issues under his tutelage. I learnt a lot. At the time I sort of resented it thinking, 'I come from multicultural paradise; I do not need to know any of this', but it turns out that it is useful to know because some of what is going on in the Northern Territory now makes me worry about how durable our multicultural polity really is.

He offered me a cautionary note at the time about fighting for multiculturalism, and I offer that to the House now as well. The UK, which is every bit as diverse as here, does not have nearly the same unified front when it comes to multiculturalism. Bear in mind that Prime Minister David Cameron declared in 2011 that state multiculturalism was a failure in the UK. I never want to see that happen in the Northern Territory. I think it is important that we fight for multiculturalism and remember how much value it gives us. I will wrap up on that point.

I am excited that Stuart Park Primary School has extended its multicultural celebrations, and on Friday I will be at its Harmony Day Assembly Spectacular. Long live our commitment to multiculturalism in Australia.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for that speech on multiculturalism; it was quite enjoyable.

First I will quickly put on the record that while the Member for Johnston was reading the open letter from 170 frontline workers, some of whom were here, there was a fair amount of scoffing and sniggering from some members on the other side. Here is a tip for free: it is not a good look to ridicule or dismiss frontline workers when they happen to disagree with your government. I just wanted to put that on *Hansard*. It was witnessed by a few of us.

Now I will give a happy, fluffy adjournment speech on the latest happenings in my wonderful electorate of Nightcliff.

The iconic local festival Seabreeze is back from 9 to 11 May. The best foreshore in town will be blessed with three fantastic days and nights of music, art, food and culture. This festival is entirely reliant on donations and sponsorships, and I am proud to announce that I am sponsoring the festival with a $5,000 donation.

Members: Hear, hear!

K McNAMARA: It is from the electorate allowance, not my personal bank account; let us be honest.

The Seabreeze Festival is incredibly important for our young and emerging artists, as they get a chance to play alongside some of Darwin's more established and well-loved acts.

I will also be judging the sandcastle competition which is a big responsibility, and I look forward to it.

Nightcliff Primary School had its pottery art showcase on Tuesday afternoon and today. I was sad to miss it due to Assembly sittings, but I am glad to support Nightcliff Primary School in its fundraisers. Well done to all the young artists. A special shout-out to my eldest, who has a pottery mug in the show. I am sorry I could not be there, but I am excited to see what you made when I get home.

Last Friday I had the immense honour of being the guest speaker at the Mary Moylan Social Worker of the Year Award. Many of our frontline workers are social workers. This award honours the memory of Mary Moylan, a dedicated and inspiring NT social worker. Congratulations to the winner, Dr Christine Fejo-King, and to all the nominees. It was incredibly well deserved. It was an evening of networking and celebration that acknowledged all nominees and the dedication and inspiring contributions of social workers to the Northern Territory.

I am grateful for all the incredible work that social workers do across the NT. In my electorate I have been heartened to see the work of Mission Australia's team. Their work in Litchfield Court has demonstrated the critical role of social work in fostering resilience and empowering communities whilst also ensuring social equity in the face of structural and immediate challenges. A big shout-out to the Mission Australia group mob and all the other social workers in the Nightcliff electorate.

As I reflect on the work of social workers I keep coming back to the idea of this social safety net we have. When I think about a net I think of all the woven threads held together at each intersection by a knot. Someone told me this analogy was a bit cringe, but I will go with it anyway. These knots I see as the social workers; they hold everything together. They connect the strands and they connect people to the fundamentals—safe housing, protection from domestic violence, education, nourishing food and finding purpose in people's lives. Thank you, social workers, for being the knots that hold the whole net together.

Over the weekend I had the chance to attend a citizenship ceremony as a guest of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory. It was exciting, as it was the first time I had been to something like this. It was a beautiful time of celebration and reminded me that the diversity of our nation and communities is one of our utmost strengths.

At the ceremony I bumped into some of my old neighbours who used to live in Nightcliff. Unfortunately, Palmerston has them now, so it was a loss to Nightcliff. Amit and Mona are from India. On the weekend Amit, Mona and their seven-year-old received their Australian citizenship. Congratulations to Amit, Mona and Kriv and everyone else at the ceremony.

On Sunday I had the opportunity to present the Best On Field awards for the under-12s, under-14s and under-16s at Nightcliff Football Club. I supply their weekly voucher prizes from local restaurant Patty Shack Burger Bar. Honestly, it has the best burgers in town. If you have not been to that one—it is really good.

Nightcliff Football Club had a fantastic season. Almost every team made it to the final. I do not know whether anyone saw the women's premier league game grand final. It was a bloody ripper. We lost—just—but it was a great game. Well done to all the players, and special thanks to all the parents and volunteers who make the club what it is.

It is a gift to have an electorate allowance to support the local community. I am proud to be a sponsor of the football club, alongside the Nightcliff Tigers Netball Club, Mindil Aces Football Club and the Dolphin Swimming Club, amongst others.

Last month I used some of these funds to support the NT Athletics barbecue, the Variety charity and the Miriam Rose Foundation National Reconciliation Week trivia night, which is on Thursday 29 May at the Darwin Trailer Boat Club. I have also been able to support one of our local high school students so that she can represent the NT in the under-17 National Netball Championships in Sydney in April.

At our office we provide food vouchers to those who come into our office who are struggling to feed themselves and their families. I want to work hard to be a lifeline in my community and ensure that no-one falls through the cracks.

I shout out to the Coconut Grove Seniors club which holds its monthly bingo on the third Sunday of every month. I come by on those Sundays with the tea and bikkies and some vouchers for door prizes …

Ms Uibo: Lovely.

K McNAMARA: Thank you.

It is a great club. Its only source of revenue is from the hire of the Coconut Grove Seniors Community Hall, so it would be remiss of me not to do a shout out. It is only $40 an hour. It is a beautiful hall, so get in touch with the Coconut Grove Seniors if you are looking for a venue.

My office ran our inaugural Nightcliff photography competition at the start of this year. I was blown away by the entries. People got into it. Congratulations to Amanda for first prize, Becca got second and Sarah got third prize. They won vouchers to some awesome local businesses. We ended up with a public vote because it was far too hard for me to choose, and I did not want that responsibility. The public voted, and they were the winners; do not come back at me.

I give enormous thanks to my electorate staff: Eliza, my electorate officer; Harri, my assistant electorate officer; and the volunteers who have given their time to helping us in the office, Imogen, Lucy, Di, Grusha, Carolina and Stefan. They are all so gracious with their time and empathetic to all the different people who come through our door needing help. I also give a huge thank you to all the volunteers who help deliver the newsletters. It is a team effort, and I am confident that I have probably one of the most wonderful teams there is. Thank you to all my staff and everyone. See you back in the electorate this week.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.