# Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



# Parliamentary Record
# Debates and Questions



Wednesday 16 October 2024

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

## VISITOR
## Samara Laverty

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I recognise a special person in the gallery—Samara Laverty. Welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

## MOTION
## Suspension of Standing Orders – Bill Management October Sittings

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended which would otherwise prevent:

1. The passage of the following through all stages in the October meetings of the Assembly:

   (a) Bail Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 4

   (b) Police Administration Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 5

   (c) Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 2

   (d) Liquor Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 3

   (e) Sentencing Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 1.

2. The introduction of the above Bills having precedence over other notices.

3. The debate on the second reading of the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 4, and the Police Administration Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 5, to be taken cognately and the Bills to have precedence over all other business after Question Time today, with the Speaker to put the question on the second reading of each Bill separately at the conclusion of the debate.

4. Government Business having precedence over General Business today.

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I understand that the CLP government has provided some information on the upcoming legislation but has not provided as much detail as we would expect from the government. The concern we have about the urgency is that one of the briefings offered to the opposition and the crossbench earlier this week was without any Bill in hard copy.

We struggled to understand the intention of the amendment. We had a verbal briefing; we thank the public servants for providing it. Lack of detail is something that the former CLP opposition used to criticise the former Labor government about. The CLP is doing exactly what it did not want for four years in opposition, which is jamming through key legislation on urgency.

There are 11 new members elected to the Legislative Assembly. It is important to recognise and understand not just the process of parliament but true transparency. To do our jobs as parliamentarians we need to see legislation, scrutinise it and make sure it provides the best outcome and positive impact for Territorians.

We are concerned that we have not seen a copy of some of the legislation being introduced or the intended amendments. That is highly concerning. Territorians should look at this. If this is the first step of a new CLP government, the members of which were always talking about transparency and accountability, not to start the first term of government with accountability and transparency—which is what we are all here for.

We were elected by the 25 electorates in the Northern Territory to represent Territorians to ensure that this Assembly provides opportunity for the best legislation, the best regulation, to inform the policy and programs of government for Territorians' best interest.

We are concerned that some of the urgent legislation brought before the House has not been provided to the opposition or crossbench. Talk about looking in the mirror! The CLP talked a big talk before the election and

rubbished Labor when it was in government for not being transparent or accountable. Now the CLP is doing the same thing that it said it did not want in a government. I acknowledge the CLP said that it would go through a process in these sittings to provide some of the legislation on urgency; we do not dispute that. We understand that Territorians expect this. But it is about understanding the process, particularly for our new members—including the new CLP members—and the backbenchers who are not privy to anything in the CLP Cabinet.

The process of parliament is to ensure accountability for all members, not just for government, because it has to be passed by members. We need to look at legislation, make informed decisions and represent our electorates to ensure that Territorians have the best laws possible. We will not get that outcome based on us not seeing any of the legislation. We have seen one piece out of five, but four Bills will go through on urgency, and the Labor opposition and the crossbenchers have not seen them. That is a big concern.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I recognise that Samara is here. I thank her for being here.

I am a new member to this Chamber, like so many people. I was happy that yesterday the tone and commitment from the government was about making sure we bring accountability and integrity to the government. As the Opposition Leader said, this is serious business, and I take this job seriously. Every person in this Chamber has the same mandate, which is to make good laws for the Northern Territory. To do that we need to see what they are. We have seen one of these laws, and we will be asked to consider them, understand their potential impacts, ask questions, debate them and propose amendments if we can, without having seen them.

I do not feel like that is what I was elected to do. We need to be able to do our job properly. I understand the desire for swift action. I am a person of action too, but it has to be the right action. We have to do it wisely. I cannot do the job I have been elected to do and take seriously if there is no time to go through the process. From what I understand the rules are not made up; the rules are there because that is what makes good government. I have grave concerns about suspending standing orders to pass these Bills on urgency.

**Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, we heard yesterday from the Chief Minister that the CLP wants to improve parliamentary processes. I commend them for announcing the reintroduction of scrutiny committees; that is a good move. That announcement starts to feel much less sincere when we hear that you want to scrap the rules and force us to vote on something we have not seen. That is intensely undemocratic and concerning.

I do not know the people who have been in this Chamber for the last term or two, but the new members I was in parliamentary school with, where we learnt about due process and how to make laws best for Territorians—yesterday I heard everyone speak about standing with conviction, acting in the best interest of the Territory and acting and leading with values. I do not understand how that can sit with suspending the rules that exist for a reason. We cannot do our job without looking at what is being put before us.

I want the government to think about that, and I want to hear how the government feels about this. It is intensely undemocratic. We cannot be expected to do our job. It also shows a disrespect to this side of the Chamber. If we cannot see what we are voting on, how are we supposed to do our job?

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that the government has put forward this motion on urgency. I feel disappointed by the new government. We stood in this place yesterday and talked about the willingness to do politics differently and to work together on good legislation. We said that we would not be an opposition for opposition's sake; we would consider legislation that would have the best impact to transform the lives of people in the Northern Territory.

Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro criticised the 14th Assembly and the Northern Territory Government of that time for doing exactly what this government is doing today, which is rushing legislation through without allowing the Assembly the time to consider it.

There are new members of this Assembly who have not had the opportunity to work through that process. We were offered a briefing on Monday, to which the government was late and unable to provide a hard copy of the legislation and of what was being proposed. We were told in the briefings that the government would be removing accountability and that statutory requirements of the Ombudsman to continue independent oversight were being removed. We were told the government was removing the ability for the Northern Territory Police minister to bring a report to parliament on how the legislation was working.

It is disingenuous that a new government—which campaigned on transparency, integrity and accountability—has not afforded any chance to the Independents, the Greens and the Labor opposition to consider that report. I had hoped this was an opportunity for change and for us to all work together.

I acknowledge there were times when the Labor government rushed stuff through on urgency. I do not deny that, and I am not trying to recreate history. I suggest that the CLP learn from our mistakes and do things differently rather than rushing stuff through, because this legislation will have significant impacts on all Territorians. Asking members to agree to something that they have not had the opportunity to see the fine print on is incredibly disingenuous.

The CLP ridiculed the former government for not having ministers attend briefings to answer policy and political questions, yet on Monday we were not given the opportunity to have a minister of this new government present at the briefings. They have forgotten what they said in opposition and are now trying to recreate history; that is disingenuous. I ask that we use this as an opportunity to move forward in a way that ensures the democratic rights of all Territorians are enabled and that we have time to work through this legislation.

I acknowledge that the government has a mandate to do several things, but that does not come at the cost of elected members having the mandate to look at the legislation and consider the consequences of that legislation. I acknowledge that several things will come before the House today. It is important for us to have the opportunity to look at those.

I acknowledge the past. I ask the CLP to learn from the past and afford members of this Assembly the opportunity to have a thorough look at the legislation, because we have not had a chance to go through clauses. We were just told in good faith what would be in the proposed legislation.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business)(in reply):** Madam Speaker, I thank the members who spoke on the motion.

These laws were flagged during the election campaign, and we have spoken about introducing the laws a number of times over the many weeks leading up to this first parliament. When it comes to the legislation today, particularly the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill and the Police Administration Amendment Bill, all members in parliament have already been briefed about that legislation …

**Ms Uibo:** But we did not see the legislation, Member for Barkly, and you know that. It is disingenuous for you to say that.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** That briefing has …

**Ms Uibo** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Stop interjecting, Opposition Leader.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** That briefing already occurred in regard to Declan's law—the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill and the Police Administration Amendment Bill.

The purpose of suspending standing orders is to deliver the second reading speech. Regarding the liquor legislation, the sentencing legislation and the Criminal Code, the Bills and explanatory statements will be tabled. There will then be an opportunity for every member of the House to examine them. As the government we will provide briefings for that legislation.

Regarding the order of business, our intention is to bring on Declan's law, and the opposition has already been briefed. Over the next couple of weeks further legislation will be brought on for debate. In the interim we will conduct briefings with all members to ensure any concerns or questions can be raised.

We said that we would bring these laws to parliament; that is what we are doing. We have given them urgent priority. The electorates have been telling us for several months—even years—that these laws need to be changed. This delivers on our commitment to the people of the Northern Territory; it is the commitment we offered them and the commitment they voted for.

We have been open and transparent about our intention, and we listened to the members speak. We spoke yesterday about the introduction of a scrutiny committee. We have been open and transparent. We are

bringing back scrutiny. There will be briefs on all that legislation, and there will be an opportunity for all members to look at the legislation beyond Declan's law.

The Assembly divided:

| Ayes 17 | Noes 7 |
|---|---|
| Ms Boothby | Mr Brown |
| Mr Burgoyne | J Davis |
| Ms Cahill | Mr Guyula |
| Mrs Carlson | Mx McNamara |
| Mr Charls | Mr Paech |
| Mr Edgington | Ms Uibo |
| Mrs Finocchiaro | Mr Young |
| Mrs Hersey | |
| Mr Howe | |
| Mr Kerle | |
| Mr Mackay | |
| Mr Maley | |
| Mr O'Gallagher | |
| Mr Patel | |
| Dr Rahman | |
| Mr Yan | |
| Mrs Zio | |

Motion agreed to.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**
**Refer Legislation to Scrutiny Committee**

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I move to suspend so much of standing orders so as to refer legislation to the scrutiny committee that was established yesterday.

As we have heard there is a lot of intention in the new parliament to make laws properly. Part of that is to re-establish a scrutiny committee. The concerns about rushing through this legislation has been expressed. Yesterday the government committed to this, so I ask it to hold to that commitment and put this new law through the process the government said that it would follow.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I support the motion put forward by the new Member for Johnston. Transparency, accountability and integrity are incredibly important. The CLP campaigned on that.

**Mr Maley:** That is a bit rich coming from you.

**Mr PAECH:** They are interjecting now. I pick up on the interjection by the Deputy Chief Minister.

This is important. If the government is serious about maintaining its position of being a government of openness, integrity and accountability, it will enable this legislation to be referred to a scrutiny committee to look at the intention and any areas of potential unintended consequences that the legislation may pose. We support that. It sends a message to all parliamentarians and everyone in the wider community that this parliament has the opportunity to look at legislation in a thorough, holistic manner.

**Mr YOUNG (Daly):** Madam Speaker, I support the motion put forward by the member to bring this legislation to a scrutiny committee. We acknowledge that scrutiny committees were gotten rid of in the last term of government, but we want to see them come back. We seriously believe …

**Mr Maley:** Are you serious? Shame.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Deputy Chief Minister continues to interject on the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Clearly he is allergic to accountability and transparency.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I did not hear that interjection. If you could all be nice to each other on the second day of this Assembly it might be in everyone's favour.

**Mr YOUNG:** I pick up on the interjection by the Deputy Chief Minister and acknowledge that at that time I was not an elected member. I raised that just to make that point.

Ultimately, we want to ensure there is good scrutiny of legislation. I acknowledge the Chief Minister for bringing back scrutiny committees. However, we want to ensure the right processes are put in place so that members and peak bodies can look at legislation so that there are no unintended consequences. We want to ensure we understand the impact this legislation will have on people on the ground. We want to ensure there is integrity in the parliament. For our new Independent, Greens and CLP members this is an opportunity for good practice of parliament to ensure our democratic rights are upheld.

**Madam SPEAKER:** For clarification, we are debating a motion to suspend standing orders to debate sending this to a scrutiny committee.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, we acknowledge this motion, but our motion was originally put and has been decided. We moved a motion to suspend standing orders to move legislation through this morning; that was agreed to by the Assembly. I move that the question be put.

Motion agreed to.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The question is that the standing orders be suspended.

The Assembly divided:

| Ayes 7 | Noes 17 |
|---|---|
| Mr Brown | Ms Boothby |
| J Davis | Mr Burgoyne |
| Mr Guyula | Ms Cahill |
| Mx McNamara | Mrs Carlson |
| Mr Paech | Mr Charls |
| Ms Uibo | Mr Edgington |
| Mr Young | 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.

**BAIL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 4**

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police):** Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 4.

Bill read a first time.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

In the Northern Territory violent offences by youths and adults have been an ongoing problem, leaving many Territorians afraid to leave their homes. Some have even decided that the Territory is no longer a safe place to live and have moved interstate.

From July 2023 to June 2024 adults were charged with offences on 9,974 occasions. Of these, 1,188 (12%) involved offences allegedly committed by adults while on bail. In the same period youths were charged with offences on 1,411 occasions. Of these, 743 (53%) involved offences allegedly committed by youths on bail. These statistics reveal the story of the sorry state of crime in the Territory. The propensity of some to commit further offences while on bail is unacceptable and reflects the urgent need for these bail reforms.

In the wake of Declan Laverty's murder in March 2023 by an offender on bail for an offence that involved serious violence and included the use of a knife, this government then made an election commitment to reform the *Bail Act 1982.* We committed to target those accused of repeat offending and those accused of committing another offence while on bail, to expand electronic monitoring on bail and to reinstate the breach of bail conditions offence for youths.

I acknowledge the presence of Samara Laverty in the gallery, the mother of Declan Laverty. Samara has had to endure what no parent, loved one, family or friend should ever have to go through. Despite the tragic loss of her son, she has stood up for the last 19 months and led a courageous fight to reform the Territory's legal system so that no other family has to go through what she will go through for the rest of her life. I thank Samara for working with us and being so brave, courageous, determined and tenacious, because I do not think anyone could put themselves in her shoes. The fact that, despite that tragedy, you stood up and we are here today delivering on our commitment of Declan's law speaks volumes about the person you are, Samara. We are very proud to deliver this critically important reform to the Northern Territory. We thank you for joining us to witness it.

We as a government have committed to keeping Territorians safe by ensuring a person accused of a repeat serious offence faces a presumption against bail.

The purpose of this Bill is to streamline and strengthen the *Bail Act* and to implement our specific election commitments relating to bail; namely:

- to make a presumption against bail for all serious violence offences, regardless of whether a weapon of any kind is used or threatened to be used during the alleged offence. That includes offensive weapons such as cars, rocks, smashed bottles and golf clubs

- to introduce a presumption against bail for alleged repeat offenders, including those who are accused of reoffending while on bail

- to reinstate the breach of bail condition offence for youths

- to require electronic monitoring if an alleged repeat offender is granted bail or is accused of reoffending while on bail.

Meaningful and decisive bail reform is being made by this government. The Territory community has spoken overwhelmingly and we as a government have listened. To that end, the key reforms effected in this Bill are, firstly, expanding the presumption against bail for alleged repeat serious offenders and accused persons who are on bail for a serious offence.

More specifically, clause 5(3) of the Bill inserts a new presumption against bail in section 7A(1) of the Act. The new section 7A(1)(dea) will further target alleged repeat offenders so that a person who is accused of a prescribed offence or serious offence and who has been convicted of two or more prescribed or serious offences within the preceding two years will now face a presumption against bail.

Clauses 5(1) and (2) of the Bill expand the presumption against bail in relation to a person who is accused of committing a serious offence while on bail for another serious offence.

Clause 5(4) of the Bill amends the presumption against bail at section 7A(1)(e) of the Act so that it applies to all serious violence offences regardless of whether any type of weapon is used during the alleged commission of the offence. This will also capture alleged serious violence offences involving offensive weapons such as rocks, smashed bottles and golf clubs that are used as a weapon.

Secondly, we are introducing mandatory electronic monitoring provisions to ensure people are monitored if they are released into the community. More specifically, new subsection (2AA) at clause 10 of the Bill provides that an authorised member or court must, in granting bail to a person accused of an offence mentioned in section 7A(1)(de), (dea) or (df), impose a condition requiring the person to enter into a conduct agreement containing an electronic monitoring provision.

If the authorised member or court determines that an electronic monitoring provision is not practicable they must impose a provision requiring the person to reside at supported bail accommodation. If the authorised member or the court determines that it is also not practicable the authorised member or court must require the person to reside at a specific place.

The effect of these provisions means that a person cannot be granted bail by a court if they are accused of a repeat serious offence or they are accused of committing another serious offence whilst on bail unless, where practicable, they have an electronic monitoring condition.

I emphasise that the purpose of the mandatory electronic monitoring or residence conditions effected by this Bill is not punitive. The mandatory electronic monitoring and/or residence conditions are intended to facilitate the attendance of the person at court and to monitor their compliance with their bail conditions for the purposes of community safety.

The government acknowledges that in relation to bail individuals concerned are entitled to and have the benefit of the presumption of innocence.

Thirdly, we are rationalising the processes for bail so that they apply to both adults and youths accused of an offence in the same way. Specifically, clauses 5(1) and (2) of the Bill expand the presumption against bail in the Act at section 7A(1)(de) so that the presumption against bail applies to youths and adults and will also now apply to both serious offences and prescribed offences.

Clause 5(6) of the Bill omits section 7A(2B) of the Act, which specifically dealt with youths accused of an offence. The effect of this is that section 7A applies to both youths and adults.

Clauses 6, 8 and 13 of the Bill repeal sections 7B, 8A and 38AA from the Act. Those provisions currently establish the bail presumption and serious breach of bail regime that apply to youths.

Clause 11 of the Bill omits section 37B(4) of the Act. This will mean that youths will once again be subjected to the breach of bail condition offence.

The overall effect of these amendments will mean that there will be a single bail process for adults and youths.

The need for this reform is urgent. As such, this Bill is scheduled to be debated on urgency at these sittings and will be brought back on today.

The introduction of this Bill makes it clear that the many voices of the Northern Territory community who want to see a reduction in crime have been heard and have been actioned by this government.

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

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

**POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 5**

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police):** Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Police Administration Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 5.

Bill read a first time.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill amends the *Police Administration Act 1978* to simplify and broaden powers for police to use handheld scanners to detect and deter knife crime in public places, on public transport vehicles and in schools. I would like to note also that this forms the second part of Declan's law, which we will debate in cognate later today.

Weapon-associated violence is prevalent across the Northern Territory. It was an election commitment of this government to tackle crime by equipping our police with better powers to deal with knife offending. This Bill achieves that aim by simplifying and broadening police powers to have and use handheld scanners.

Handheld scanner powers, colloquially known as wanding powers, are found in Part VII, Division 1C of the *Police Administration Act 1978*. These powers are proactive and public safety focused to allow police to conduct wanding operations in public places or on buses or ferries for the purpose of detecting or deterring the unlawful possession of weapons.

Wanding powers allow police to require any person to stop and submit to a non-invasive scan with a handheld scanner. If the scanner indicates metal, police can require the person to produce the item causing the positive indication and submit to re-scanning. Any weapon located as a result of a scan may be seized or destroyed. These powers are separate from other powers police have to stop and search a person where certain circumstances are met.

In order to use these powers a handheld scanner authority must be in place for the relevant location. Currently, a handheld scanner authority can only be issued for a high-risk area that has been declared under the *Liquor Act 2019*, a public transport facility or—if issued by the commissioner personally—for a location where the commissioner suspects that an offence with a firearm, prohibited weapon or controlled weapon has been committed in the last 12 hours or will be committed in the next 12 hours.

This Bill will simplify the power for police to issue a handheld scanner authority by doing the following.

Any member of or above the rank of senior sergeant will be authorised to approve an authority. These members are the police force's operational leaders for their respective geographical areas, and this change will allow superintendents and other executive leadership members to maintain their focus on strategic issues and improvement.

The threshold test required to issue a handheld scanner authority will be simplified. Police will be able to issue a handheld scanner authority for any location or for a specified public transport route. This will allow police to use the powers anywhere in the Northern Territory as needed.

The period during which a handheld scanner authority may be enforced is presently limited to 12 hours. This period will be increased to up to 72 hours, which will allow better capacity to conduct planned operations, particularly public safety operations over a weekend.

Wanding powers will be permitted for use in school grounds. This amendment will require police and schools to work together but allows the flexibility for our police to conduct wanding within school grounds if necessary to ensure our schools are safe places for students and staff.

This Bill also eliminates unnecessary administrative burdens by removing the requirement to publish notice of authorities on the police website within two months of being issued and will simplify the annual reporting requirements.

The Bill also deletes the requirements for the Ombudsman to conduct a statutory review of wanding powers after the two-year anniversary of their commencement. The Ombudsman already has the power to investigate police conduct on their own motion or upon receiving a complaint, including a power to enter premises and inspect documents which are applicable to investigations into police conduct. The statutory review is an additional unfunded burden on government which the legislation presently requires regardless of whether there are any concerns in relation to police conduct. Removing this obligation allows our government to focus resources where they are needed.

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

**Ms Uibo (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

**CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 2**

**Mr MALEY (Corrections):** Madam Speaker, I present a Bill entitled Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 2.

Bill read a first time.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 12 years to 10 years of age and to introduce two new criminal offences of ramraiding, and posting and boasting.

All three amendments make changes to the *Criminal Code Act 1983*. These amendments form part of the Northern Territory Government's key 2024 election commitments to make immediate changes to reduce crime and improve community safety in all our communities.

The minimum age of criminal responsibility in the Northern Territory is currently 12 years of age. The Northern Territory Government campaigned on reforms to lower the age of criminal responsibility and was elected with a mandate to do so. These amendments lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 10, therefore ensuring that 10-year-olds will face criminal consequences for committing crimes and ensure the appropriate rehabilitation to provide them an opportunity to turn their young lives around.

These amendments also remove annotation requirements for expunged records and repeal the offence of unlawful disclosure of expunged records. Records for charges and convictions committed by 10 and 11-year-olds which were expunged on 1 August 2023 will remain expunged, but expungement will not apply to future offences committed by 10 or 11-year-olds.

It is intended that from the date of commencement any child aged 10 years or older, who is alleged to have committed a crime may be charged by police, and there will be a record of that charge. By lowering the age the Northern Territory Government intends to ensure that if you do the wrong thing there will be appropriate consequences.

There is currently no specific ramraiding offence in the Northern Territory. Instead, offenders are generally charged under a combination of property, theft or burglary offences in the Criminal Code. The Northern Territory will be the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce a specific ramraiding offence.

It is intended that by creating a specific standalone property offence of ramraiding, this conduct will be more clearly captured and will target instances where a person driving a motor vehicle intentionally uses it to cause damage to property. Examples of property may include a police or personal vehicle or boat; any building, house, business; or other real or personal property such as fences, roller doors, bollards et cetera.

Ramraid offending, particularly against our hardworking Territorians, is a key issue affecting public security and wellbeing, as well as commercial and local businesses in the Northern Territory.

The new offence will apply to the driver of the motor vehicle. Existing common-purpose and joint commission laws mean that accomplices can also be charged by police where appropriate. A maximum penalty of 10 years will apply, in line with other similar offences such as aggravated driving, property damage, theft and burglary. This means charges will be capable of being brought against the offender in either the Local or Supreme Court.

At present there is no offence in the Northern Territory that relates to the conduct of posting and boasting. This new offence introduced by these amendments will target the trend of posting videos and images of offending online and on social media platforms where the posting is motivated by a desire to boast or glorify the conduct, encourage others to engage in similar offending or increase an offender's notoriety.

Seeing this material can be re-traumatising for victims and generate feelings of insecurity within our community, resulting in an increased perception by the public of crime and feeling unsafe.

The purpose of post-and-boast laws is to provide law enforcement authorities with a mechanism to target the inciting of antisocial and often criminal behaviour.

The offence will include exceptions to allow for posts for a genuine purpose, such as scientific, academic, educational, artistic or journalistic purposes. This means that social media posts that are intended to raise awareness about crime, not to glorify it—such as the Facebook group 'Action for Alice'—will not be captured by this new offence, nor would NT Police campaigns which denounce offending behaviour. Likewise, the offence would not apply to a news report published by a journalist in a professional capacity.

The maximum penalty for this new post-and-boast offence is two years' imprisonment. This is consistent with similar laws in other jurisdictions.

These amendments are a vital part of the government's strategy to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique lifestyle.

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

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

## VISITORS
## Taminmin College

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from Taminmin College, accompanied by their teacher. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you all.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

## LIQUOR LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL
## Serial 3

**Mr EDGINGTON (Alcohol Policy):** Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Liquor Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2024.

Bill read a first time.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Alcohol Policy):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to provide police with better powers to deal with public drinking in order to reduce crime. Crime reduction is one of the key pillars of the Northern Territory Government's plan to rebuild the Territory.

This Bill seeks to create a new offence to provide an additional tool to police to be able to address and deter antisocial behaviour that is often present where alcohol is consumed. This Bill is also intended to clarify and support existing police powers to authorise the issuing of infringement notices for offences in an interim alcohol protected area and to create additional pathways onto the Banned Drinker Register.

Consuming alcohol in a public place enlivens police powers under section 171 of the *Liquor Act 2019* to search a person, seize and dispose of the liquor and issue a banned drinker order for a minimum period of seven days.

In regard to the new public drinking offence—section 171A—it will now be an offence under the *Liquor Act 2019* to drink alcohol in a prohibited public place if the person is also engaging in conduct that causes a nuisance to other people in, or within the vicinity of, a public place. The definition of a 'public place' includes any public place or vehicle at a public place in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine, Palmerston, Tennant Creek, the Darwin Waterfront, any public place within two kilometres of a licensed venue or any other place prescribed by regulation or by a local council. The maximum penalty for the new offence will be five penalty units.

The offence is one of strict liability, meaning that conduct alone is sufficient to make the person culpable. It will be a defence for a person to establish that they had permission from the owner or occupier of the public place to be drinking at that place.

The new offence will also be an infringement notice offence. This will allow an inspector or police officer to issue on-the-spot infringement notices for people in contravention of the offence. This creates an additional mechanism for police to deal with problem drinkers whilst reducing the burden on the courts for low-level offending. The prescribed penalty for the new infringement notice offence will be one penalty unit.

In regard to interim alcohol protected areas, this Bill makes a liquor offence in an interim alcohol protected area—section 170B of the *Liquor Act 2019*—an infringement notice offence. Currently, offences in general restricted areas and special restricted areas are infringement notice offences, but offences in interim alcohol protected areas are not. The amendments ensure consistency of policing powers for the same types of conduct across different areas. The prescribed penalty for the infringement notice offence will be two penalty units.

The provisions relating to interim alcohol protected areas in the *Liquor Act 2019* are scheduled to be repealed on 28 February 2027. To ensure consistency the amendments in the Bill relating to interim alcohol protected areas will be repealed immediately after the repeal of section 170B of the *Liquor Act 2019*.

There will be additional pathways to the BDR. This Bill makes an infringement notice issued under section 171A or section 170B of the *Liquor Act 2019* an alcohol-related infringement notice. This creates additional triggers for the issue of a banned drinker order as an alcohol-related infringement notice and is the basis for which the police must issue a seven-day BDO, a BDO extension or a first police BDO. If a person is issued with a BDO they are prohibited from purchasing, possessing or consuming alcohol for the period in which the order is in force.

The Bill may increase the number of persons with harmful drinking practices being placed on the Banned Drinker Register. It may also provide some relief in regard to supply measures while this government works to address the underlying causes of alcohol misuse in the Territory and tackles the root causes of crime. This includes re-establishing mandatory alcohol rehabilitation to ensure that problem drinkers get the help they need for their addiction.

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

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

**SENTENCING AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 1**

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Sentencing Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 1.

Bill read a first time.

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

The purpose of this Bill is to introduce mandatory sentencing for the offence of assaulting a worker and amend mandatory sentences for assaults on police and emergency workers in recognition of the special vulnerability of our community's first responders. These amendments are made to give effect to the new government's election commitment.

We the CLP are doing as we said we would. We are delivering on our promises to keep Territorians safe—within the first week of sittings.

The CLP government is strengthening assault laws for all workers, including police and emergency workers. The previous Labor government failed to protect Territorians and the community has backed the new CLP government by saying 'enough is enough'. We are tackling Labor's crime crisis to ensure Territorians live and work in safety with the knowledge that such conduct will attract serious consequences.

The eight years of Labor watering down the laws and not listening to the damning results, year after year, of the Northern Territory Police Association's survey led to 299 police officers being assaulted between July last year and March this year. These numbers are completely unacceptable. That is why we are strengthening the laws. In addition, this year alone, to deal with the skyrocketing levels of crime, police overtime was up by 7%.

Besides the pain and suffering our police must endure with these assaults and the exhaustion they feel working such long and strained additional hours, it also comes with a financial cost to the taxpayer of $15m. These funds could be better allocated towards the wellbeing of our police officers or ensuring that we can attract and retain the hardworking men and women in blue.

Territorians are right to expect our newly elected government to deliver law reforms, putting the rights of Territorian workers, including police and emergency workers who are doing the right thing, above offenders who are doing the wrong thing. The CLP was very clear in our election platform that community safety was the number one priority. We make no apologies for bringing in law reform to ensure people feel safe and that Territorians can go to work with the knowledge that if someone assaults them while they are going about their duties, they will face the full force of the law. This is what we have been elected to do.

This Bill amends mandatory sentencing provisions in the *Sentencing Act 1995*. Clauses 6 and 7 of the Bill make the substantive amendments to provide for mandatory sentencing for the offence of assault on a worker as an offence against section 188A of the Criminal Code and the offence of assault on a police or emergency

worker as an offence against section 189A of the Criminal Code. A worker is someone working in the performance of their duties—that is, carrying out employment-related activities in a lawful capacity, whether as an employee, as a trainee, as a volunteer or self-employed.

For assaults on workers, clause 6 of the Bill introduces a new section 78DAA in the *Sentencing Act* that means offenders who are found guilty of assault on a worker, contravening section 188A of the Criminal Code, are subject to two mandatory sentence options.

In the case of an offender who has a prior conviction for an offence of violence and causes their victim physical harm, the offender will be subject to a sentence of actual imprisonment. As the court is required to impose a term of actual imprisonment, the court must record a conviction against the offender and sentence the offender to a term of imprisonment.

If the offender does not have a prior conviction, then the court must impose a sentence of a community correction order. A community correction order allows a mandatory condition to be made that requires the offender to participate in an approved program such as a community work order. The Bill retains judicial discretion as to whether a conviction should be recorded or not when a community correction order is imposed.

For assault on police and emergency workers there are existing mandatory sentencing provisions in the *Sentencing Act* so that:

- if there is physical harm caused, a weapon is used and the offender has prior convictions for violence offences, then a mandatory minimum of 12 months' actual imprisonment applies

- if there is physical harm caused, a mandatory minimum sentence of three months' actual imprisonment applies

- if there is no harm but the offender has prior convictions for violence offences, a term of actual imprisonment must be imposed.

Clause 7 of the Bill amends the mandatory sentencing that applies to an assault on police and emergency workers. The Bill builds upon the existing provisions and, in recognition of the frontline positions of first responders, inserts two new mandatory sentence provisions that apply in sentencing an offender who assaults a police or emergency worker if there is harm caused and the circumstances of the offence involve spitting, which is an offence under section 189A(2)(ab) of the Criminal Code.

Spitting is often involved in assaults on police and emergency workers, and the government condemns this behaviour against our frontline officers who are trying to promote public peace and respond to emergencies.

Police and emergency workers put their own safety at risk each time they attend work. The risks of exposure to communicable disease when spat on are high and cause stress and trauma for those workers. This type of conduct against our frontline workers is downright unacceptable. To ensure the safety of those workers is prioritised, a mandatory minimum sentence of three months' actual imprisonment applies. This is through the insertion of new section 78DA(3A) in the *Sentencing Act* through clause 7(2) of the Bill. As there is no requirement for prior offending, it will apply to first-time offenders.

In addition, clause 7(3) of the Bill amends section 78DA(4) in the *Sentencing Act* that provides that if no other mandatory sentencing applies to an offender found guilty of an assault on a police or emergency worker, the court must make a community correction order. This is similar to the requirement for a community correction order in sentencing for an assault on a worker; however, it will apply even if no harm is caused by the offender when assaulting the police or emergency worker. It will also apply to a first-time offender.

Clause 9 of the Bill provides for transitional provisions to preserve the operation of the existing mandatory sentencing provisions for all offences committed prior to enactment. Only conduct that occurs wholly after the enactment of this Bill will be subject to the new mandatory sentences. The Bill will commence following assent by the Administrator.

I thank the Attorney-General's Department for all its hard work in developing this Bill.

The CLP government is committed to protecting workers from violent attacks by introducing minimum mandatory sentencing for cowardly assaults on police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus drivers and taxidrivers, and any other NT worker who is undertaking work in accordance with their duties.

There will be a new minimum mandatory sentence for assaults on frontline workers, like police and ambos, and for assaulting anyone while at work. This includes spitting—like I have gone through—on our frontline workers, triggering a three-month minimum mandatory sentence.

Spitting on, punching, kicking or biting police and Territory workers should result in a mandatory minimum sentence; it is not a get-out-of-jail-free card. We are committed to bringing through these reforms to ensure that our workers feel safe while they are at work.

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

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

**MOTION**
**Appointment of Committees**

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, we moved to adopt the sessional orders yesterday, and today I move the establishment of the committees.

I will first talk briefly about the establishment of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. The Legislative Scrutiny Committee has had a bit of discussion throughout the media. There were concerns that we would not have one, but as I move through today I will speak about it and nominate the other committees and who will be our representatives on them.

The membership of the scrutiny committee will comprise three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member. The functions of the scrutiny committee shall be to inquire into and report on any Bill referred to it by the Assembly, whether the Assembly should pass or amend the Bill and whether it has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, including whether the Bill:

(a) makes rights and liberties, or obligations, dependent on administrative power only if the power is sufficiently defined and subject to appropriate review

(b) is consistent with principles of natural justice

(c) allows the delegation of administrative power only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons

(d) does not reverse the onus of proof in criminal proceedings without adequate justification

(e) confers power to enter premises, and search for or seize documents or other property, only with a warrant issued by a judge or other judicial officer

(f) provides appropriate protection against self-incrimination

(g) does not adversely affect rights and liberties, or impose obligations, retrospectively

(h) does not confer immunity from proceeding or prosecution without adequate justification

(i) provides for the compulsory acquisition of property only with fair compensation

(j) has sufficient regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition

(k) is unambiguous and drafted in a sufficiently clear and precise way.

It will consider whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of parliament, including whether the Bill:

(a) allows the delegation of legislative power only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons

(b) sufficiently subjects the exercise of a delegated legislative power to the scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly

(c) authorises the amendment of an Act only by another Act.

The committee will also provide an annual report of its activities to the Assembly.

The operation of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee is laid out in the sessional orders, but I will highlight the committee's role.

After the first reading of a Bill, other than an Appropriation Bill, the member in charge of the Bill is to immediately move either a motion referring the Bill to the scrutiny committee for report by a particular date; that the Bill be declared to be urgent; or that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for the first Assembly meeting after 28 days have elapsed. The mover and any other member may speak to this motion for up to five minutes and then the question is to be put. The motion may be amended but if the motion, with or without an amendment, is defeated, the Bill shall proceed no further.

If the Bill is declared to be urgent, the member in charge of the Bill shall move that the Bill be now read a second time or that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for a later hour.

After the first reading of an annual Appropriation Bill, a minister may move that the Bill be read a second time.

The Legislative Scrutiny Committee's report on a referred Bill may recommend whether to pass the Bill. It may recommend amendments to the Bill that are relevant to the subject matter of the Bill. The committee must table its report on the Bill by the date set by the Assembly for report. The Assembly may by motion change the date set for a report on a Bill.

Following the tabling of a report on a Bill or expiry of the date for report, the second reading of the Bill will be set down on the notice paper as an order of the day or the member in charge of the Bill may move without notice that the Bill be now read a second time. A motion to take notice of or adopt the report cannot be moved.

The member in charge of the Bill may also immediately table a government response to any proposed revision of the Bill where the government has been made aware of the proposed recommendations.

The scrutiny committee provides an opportunity for the scrutiny of legislation and reporting to the Assembly in advance of a second reading debate with some consequential amendment to the process of passage of a Bill to allow for the additional scrutiny where conducted. The Member for Nightcliff was interested in this. The government sees this committee as a sensible way for the Assembly, when it wishes to do so, to hear evidence, receive submissions and make recommendations on legislation for the benefit of the Assembly and its consideration of legislation.

Yesterday I indicated that the Whips and the crossbench members should make their nominations to the Speaker on committee membership. However, for the purpose of today, I am pleased to announce the following government members will be part of these committees. For PAC, the Chair will be …

**Ms Uibo:** They have to vote on the Chair, don't they, Member for Barkly?

**Mr EDGINGTON:** Sorry; I misread that.

**Ms Uibo:** Jumping the gun a bit, Member for Barkly.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** The government members on the committees are as follows:

- For PAC, it will be the Members for Drysdale, Fannie Bay and Karama.
- For the LCAC, it will be the Members for Wanguri, Fong Lim and Blain.
- Regarding the Standing Orders Committee, I will be on that as the Leader of Government Business, as will the Members for Goyder and Blain.
- Regarding the House Committee, it will be the Members for Fannie Bay, Fong Lim and Casuarina.
- The Privileges and Members' Interests Committees will have the Deputy Chief Minister, me as the Leader of Government Business and the Member for Goyder.
- Regarding the Standing Committee on the ICAC, the government members will be the Members for Drysdale, Wanguri and Casuarina.

- The Legislative Scrutiny Committee will have the Members for Goyder, Wanguri and Drysdale.

Madam Speaker, we look forward to establishing these committees and ask that the opposition and the crossbench nominate their members to you, as the Speaker, in due course.

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I saw you listening intently because committees are a big part of the scrutiny process for legislation in this place. I thank the government for outlining its intentions for the committees. It is an important part of the process.

It is great that there are no huge surprises. We thank the government for mostly staying with convention for the numbers on those committees. The Labor opposition appreciates that.

I note that the Member for Barkly, as the Leader of Government Business, said that it is for the benefit of legislation in the parliament. That is important because it goes to the point of why the committee process is so critical in the Legislative Assembly's processes.

It probably does not mean a lot to the general public—the Territorians who voted for us to represent them. They probably wonder what a committee is and why it is important. They probably do not understand how critical it is to scrutinise, unpick and analyse the legislation that is brought before the parliament. Some committees are about the physical and process operations of parliament; that is important. I encourage new members of parliament, whether they are in the CLP government or on the crossbench, to be part of that process because it gives you a deeper understanding of how this place works and the decisions made.

We heard this morning about some of the changes the government is going against in its first fortnight of sittings, which is to take away the scrutiny process for legislation in the timely fashion that is normally afforded to all members so that they can do their jobs as parliamentarians. We had that debate, so I will move on.

I am interested in the government's consideration of the new process—I thank the Chief Minister for being up-front about this—whereby the government is bringing back the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. That is great, and the Labor opposition welcomes that.

This is about scrutinising legislation, so why does the government need to dominate that committee? There are three government members on it. Government members are part—I hope they are—of the process of formulating legislation, whether they are a backbencher or a minister, so why would the government need to have the numbers on that committee to scrutinise its own legislation?

It would be great to have a balance of three and three, including us in opposition. We would love to see six members on that committee, including three from the government if it feels it is necessary to do so. We are happy to put up one from the opposition, but it would be great to see two from the Independents and the crossbench, recognising that the new Member for Nightcliff is a member of a political party. In the spirit of doing things differently and turning over a new leaf with this Legislative Assembly, it would be great for the government to consider having two positions based on parties—Labor and the Greens—and one for the Independents.

That would be a good step forward, despite the processes being unravelled this morning. It would be good if the new CLP government undertook to do that because it would show a true spirit of accountability and that the government looks forward to legislation being scrutinised in a transparent process.

The general public may not have an interest in that, but it is pertinent for a Member of the Legislative Assembly to look into legislation at a deep level and analyse it. I would welcome the government being open to that. I have not spoken to the crossbench members or the Independents about this.

We heard from the Member for Barkly that the makeup of the other committees is as follows:

- The Standing Orders Committee has three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member.

- The Committee of Privileges has three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member. I do not have a problem with that.

- The House Committee has the Speaker, of course—it is important that she be on that committee—as well as three government members and one opposition member.

- For new members, the Public Accounts Committee is the committee that drives the process of Estimates. Traditionally the government tends to have the numbers on that committee, so I will not make a fuss about that. It has three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member.

- The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee has three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member. I am also comfortable with that one from the opposition's perspective.

- The Standing Committee on the ICAC was a formal process adopted by a previous Legislative Assembly. We are comfortable with that and obviously the CLP is because it has not changed the membership.

We warmly welcome the Chief Minister and the new CLP government installing the Legislative Scrutiny Committee process to allow a deeper and more thorough look at legislation. However, we acknowledge that the CLP has notified on urgency five pieces of legislation for this fortnight of sittings, the first sitting of the 15th Legislative Assembly that the CLP will govern. It has walked away from that due process.

It is interesting that the new Member for Johnston moved a motion to see whether the legislation put on urgency in this fortnight of sittings can in retrospect be referred in any way, shape or form to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. Unfortunately, that was voted down by the CLP government. It has the numbers, and I respect that.

I know how it works in this place, but given we are talking about moving forward and doing the job we have been elected to do, it would be fantastic to see the Leader of Government Business's willingness and openness to look at expanding the Legislative Scrutiny Committee membership to six members. It sounds as though the government has a big agenda and will be putting forward lots of legislation. That is unlike the 2012 CLP government, which I think spent two weeks of sittings without considering a piece of legislation. You have moved away from the previous CLP governments of that time, so well done on that.

We welcome the ability to create another layer of scrutiny. We are keen to work with the government and the crossbench, as we have said time and again over the last couple of weeks.

Madam Speaker, with your history and expertise in parliament, you realise that committees are important. It can be overwhelming for our new members. I remember I was a little overwhelmed in understanding the committee process. The amazing Legislative Assembly staff will help guide this process and ensure that members, new and old, have everything at their fingertips. The staff work extremely hard to make sure we can do our jobs to the best of our ability.

The process allows for the smooth formulation of legislation, reform, amendments and regulations so that those pieces of paper are not just words but have a meaningful impact on the Territorians we represent across the 25 electorates. The committee process enables us to have a better understanding of how that impact happens.

When there is no urgent legislation—as the CLP government has brought forward in this October sittings—members will have time to reflect, consult, bring in expertise and thoroughly analyse legislation and regulations and their impact on the Territory. It is an informed process with reports.

So our new CLP backbenchers understand, you can provide an order of dissent in a report. Madam Speaker, you have done that quite a few times in your many years in parliament, whether you have been in government or as a strong Independent. You can put in a report of dissent; you do not have to follow the party line. If something is important to your electorate and the reason that you represent those Territorians, you may consider doing that through the committee process. You can talk to your minders about that.

Please remember part of the process of being a member of parliament is to create the best legislation possible. From my previous eight years I understand that as a backbencher you are not always privy to the Cabinet process. It is tricky if your Cabinet does not communicate its intentions for legislation, so sometimes the committee process might be your first proper insight into what legislation looks like and how it works at a practical level outside this building in the real world.

I have a formal letter that will respond to you, Madam Speaker, but the nominations on behalf of the Labor opposition are as follows:

- Standing Orders Committee—the Member for Arafura

- Privileges Committee—me as the Member for Arnhem

- House Committee—the Member for Daly
- Public Accounts Committee—the Member for Arafura
- Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee—the Member for Daly
- Standing Committee on the ICAC—me as the Member for Arnhem
- Legislative Scrutiny Committee—the Member for Gwoja.

We will put that to you formally, Madam Speaker, as per the motion.

We look forward to working with all parliamentarians in the Legislative Assembly to ensure we have the best time and opportunity to scrutinise and analyse legislation and do our jobs to represent the diverse electorates that we are privileged to represent in this parliament. The Labor opposition has promised to do our best to hold the CLP government to account and to allow the best legislative outcomes to have a positive impact for Territorians, which is what they deserve.

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**DISTINGUISHED VISITOR**
**Willem Westra van Holthe**

**Madam SPEAKER:** I acknowledge former Northern Territory minister and Member for Katherine, Willem Westra van Holthe, in the gallery.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I support what the Leader of the Opposition outlined in regard to the makeup of the committees and balancing them across the parliament.

The crossbench has not had an opportunity to talk about who we want on each committee. When do we need to do that?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The Leader of Government Business might be able to answer that.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** Madam Speaker, it would be fair to say that I do not anticipate the committees meeting this week, but by close of business tomorrow.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for bringing this important motion to the House to discuss the formation and makeup of those committees. The Labor opposition will participate in all those committees. We will participate in the future formation of the Estimates Committee to ensure that we continue to hold the government to account on its election promises and deliverables.

It is important to raise concerns about what appears to be smoke and mirrors. If a government is brought into power on openness, accountability and transparency, it would appear that is smoke and mirrors if it will pick and choose what it is open, transparent and accountable on. The government has brought in on urgency five Bills that will not be scrutinised through the committee process. It will not enable the committee to determine the need for public hearings or consultation with experts, constituents and communities in regard to particular clauses.

Leader of Government Business, there is no point having a committee if you will simply pass legislation. That is what we are seeing today. The government backbenchers have their heads down when we talk about the CLP's failures already in transparency, accountability and openness, because they are uncomfortable that their new government is ignoring their conversations and election commitments. You can see the smiles on their faces, because they know that what their government is doing is wrong because it is not open, transparent and accountable.

The government had the opportunity, as we heard yesterday, to do things differently. Doing things differently means changing the makeup of committees. We heard the Leader of Government Business has a slippery tongue; he slipped up this morning. The Leader of Government Business has already chosen the Chairs of the committees. We already know that the Chair positions will be filled with government members. CLP members criticised the former government for having government members chair these committees.

The scrutiny committee will be made up of a majority of government members. Government members scrutinising government is not transparent, accountable or honouring integrity.

**Mr Maley:** That is the one you scrapped; I remember.

**Mr PAECH:** I pick up on the interjection from the Deputy Chief Minister. He cannot handle the truth or being criticised for not being open, transparent and accountable because he does not know how to tell the truth. He told people during the election campaign that the CLP had a plan for Corrections. On Katie Woolf last week—the show government members refused to go on this week because they are too busy, but you will see them outside this building early every day—he said, 'We do not have a plan'. The government members are breaking their promises already.

**Mr Maley:** You had eight years, and you wrecked it.

**Mr PAECH:** I pick up on the interjection again. He cannot handle the truth.

**Mr Maley:** You trashed it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Cease the interjections.

**Mr PAECH:** Yesterday we all agreed as a parliament that we wanted to drive positive change for the people of the Northern Territory. I acknowledge the past, as it is important to do so, but looking to the future I made the commitment yesterday to do things differently and to work differently. It would be an incredible sign for the government to say that it does not need a government member to be the Chair of a committee because it is not afraid of allowing the parliament to scrutinise legislation and the procedures of the House.

This government said, 'We have a Legislative Scrutiny Committee, but we will dominate and control it. We will have government scrutinising government.' For all the new members, this means you will be told by Big Brother, the CLP Cabinet, what you can and cannot do and what you can and cannot agree on. That is not good government. It is not being transparent and accountable. You had an opportunity to be bold and do things differently, yet you chose to ignore that. You heard the Leader of the Opposition provide an option to extend the membership to six members, including Territory Labor, the opposition; the Australian Greens, represented by the Member for Nightcliff; and an Independent member. That is three government and three non-government members, enabling robust debate in parliament and having an even balance of power on the committees. That is what this parliament should be about.

From the slippery tongue of the Leader of Government Business, we know that the government members have already made up their minds. They have chosen the problem backbenchers in their own team to keep them busy, because they are worried. The Chief Minister is worried that the Members for Port Darwin and Barkly will roll her. She has loaded them up with the hardest portfolios of government because it is in the CLP's DNA to get rid of its Chief Ministers early. When they see a threat, they load them up. She has loaded up the Member for Barkly—poor bugger—and the new Member for Port Darwin who, as I hear from the CLP members, is the great future Chief Minister and really confident and positive. We will wait and see what happens.

Three government members on a scrutiny committee of limited membership is not open, transparent and accountable. Picking and choosing media this week is not open, transparent and accountable.

**Mr Maley:** That is rubbish. We were on *The Week That Was*.

**Mr PAECH:** We heard *The Week That Was*, and we heard you had to grovel.

**Ms Uibo:** You have no plan; that is what we heard, Member for Nelson.

**Mr Maley:** You are talking rubbish.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Cease the interjections, please.

**Mr PAECH:** We heard the Member for Nelson last Friday trying to navigate his mistakes. During the election he said, 'We have a plan', to win those votes. Then when pushed on *The Week That Was* …

**Mr Maley:** You are talking rubbish. You know it. You cannot even lie straight in bed.

**Mr PAECH:** I pick up on that interjection. Matt Cunningham from *Sky News* is talking rubbish, apparently.

**Mr YOUNG:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; interjections across the floor. It is clearly coming from the Deputy Chief Minister, and I ask that he stops interjecting. I am trying to hear the debate, and unfortunately I cannot.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I take your point. Cease the interjections, everyone.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; relevance. We are talking about committees. *The Week That Was* has no relevance to what we are discussing, so I ask that the Member for Gwoja be brought back on subject.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Let us keep it relevant with no interjections, thank you.

**Mr PAECH:** I will be sure to let Katie Woolf know that *The Week That Was* has no relevance.

We are already getting unsolicited invitations from CLP staff to come to briefings without any legislation. What will these committees look like? Government is ramming this through. It is sending invitations so that the Chief Minister can roll it out and look deadly by saying, 'We offered a briefing'. However, it was this morning, when parliament had just started, that she offered a briefing for the legislation that is coming up today.

We will participate in all these committees because it is important. This government we are staring at claimed to come in on a range of issues, including transparency, accountability and integrity, yet we are seeing that it will pick and choose the legislation it wants to be transparent and accountable on.

It is rushing through five pieces of legislation from which it is removing mechanisms for transparency and accountability. We heard from the Chief Minister this morning that the government will remove the statutory integrity measures for the Ombudsman to look at the legislation. It will remove the provision that the Police minister must table a report in this parliament.

We do not even get the opportunity to discuss that at a committee level because the government is picking and choosing what it will do and what it will send to a committee. I guarantee that the only inquiries that will get up in this parliament will be the inquiries chosen by the government. I highlight this issue because when the CLP members were in opposition they said that they would do things differently, be more inclusive and participate more.

I look forward to the Members for Johnston, Mulka and Nightcliff bringing forward ideas for inquiries and having support from the government to do them—or will it continue to pick and choose what it supports in the interests of transparency and accountability? It has been proven today that the government is not interested in that; it is all smoke and mirrors and about winning the popularity contest. I guarantee there will be a post—it is probably out now—about the government being open, transparent and accountable, yet it voted this morning …

**Mr Maley:** If you have a crystal ball, just give me the lotto numbers.

**Mr PAECH:** I pick up on that interjection. The Deputy Chief Minister cannot handle himself and is not open and transparent. You only have to look at what he has said already. Transparency and accountability does not exist with him.

This is important. I look forward to participating on the new scrutiny committee that the Chief Minister has brought forward. I ask that consideration be given to an additional membership position to allow for a Labor opposition member, the Australian Greens representative and an Independent member to participate on it. I look forward to the government proving me wrong and showing it can do so by doing that.

I look forward to seeing who will be the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of these committees. I acknowledge that the Member for Araluen was Deputy Chair of one committee in the last parliament. I was more than happy to support that nomination. I look forward to supporting crossbench representation for those committee Chairs in the future.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business)(in reply):** Madam Speaker, the government is being open and transparent, which is why we are bringing back the scrutiny committee.

As a reminder, Labor came to government in 2016 saying that it would be transparent and open to the public and its constituents, but in 2020 the four members of the Labor Party on the other side scrapped the scrutiny committee. Therefore, it is hard to accept …

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Stop the interjections, please.

**Mr YOUNG:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 46; I ask the Member for Barkly to retract what he said.

**Madam SPEAKER:** What did he say?

**Mr YOUNG:** He is misleading the parliament; I clearly was not here at the time.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is not a point of order. Let us keep this civil. Stop the interjections and let the minister continue.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** I remind the new members who may not know the history that the Labor government scrapped the Legislation Scrutiny Committee in 2020.

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 46; correcting the record. The Member for Daly was not a member until 2021.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is not a point of order. Introducing new information into a point of order is disorderly.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** It seems they are concerned that the truth is coming out about their failure to establish the Legislative Scrutiny Committee in 2020. This government is re-establishing the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. We have outlined the committee's membership.

We suspended standing orders and will debate legislation as we move forward over the next two weeks. We were given a big agenda by Territorians to bring this legislation forward. That is what we are doing today, and we will be debating it over the next couple of weeks.

The opposition put forward the idea that an additional member should be on the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. At this stage we are happy to have those conversations outside parliament, and we will continue to have those conversations with the opposition and the crossbench as we move through the 15th Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Under Standing Order 46, while there is no business before the Assembly, I move a motion to increase the scrutiny committee membership to six members, with one opposition member, one other political party member and one Independent member. That will make it six members.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Gwoja, you cannot just move a motion. You must first suspend standing orders.

**Mr PAECH:** I seek leave to suspend standing orders.

Leave not granted.

**BAIL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 4**
**and**
**POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 5**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries):** Madam Speaker, as the opposition failed to jump up at this time—those opposite were too busy fighting amongst themselves—it is up to the government to lead this debate. The opposition members are so unorganised that they could not even get the jump on such an important issue. This shows how incompetent the opposition is …

**Ms Uibo:** How embarrassing for you to go against convention—disrespectful to this parliament, Member for Nelson!

**Madam SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, you are interjecting while the minister has the call. Give him some respect, and allow him to speak.

**Mr MALEY:** It shows how incompetent the opposition is that it cannot get this right. These people had the power of government for eight years, and they put us in this crime crisis because they could not organise themselves. Today is another classic example of the failure they are. They failed Territorians and this place. They are a disgrace.

Today is the turning point when we will show Territorians what a disgrace the opposition is. Those opposite cannot get organised to debate such an important topic as crime, which they caused. Today is a classic example of how they have failed to act.

They failed to protect Territorians, and it is a shame that we are at this point because people are hurting. Ms Laverty is here today because her son died.

**J DAVIS:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! The minister's speech is not in any way adding to the debate.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr MALEY:** It shows that those opposite have no control or plan. They never had a plan, and they failed Territorians.

Today is a turning point, and 24 August was a turning point. The Territorians and public servants who are listening know that the CLP government has their backs. We will protect Territorians. We will make the Territory a safe place to live, work and play. We will rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle because that is what Territorians have asked us to do. There was a clear mandate on 24 August because the Labor members who failed today—which is an embarrassment for them—embarrassed themselves every day they were in power. That has led us to the point where the CLP government has a mandate to make the Territory a safer place, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

We will get on with the job because that is what we have been charged to do by the Territorians who voted for us. We will make the Territory a safe place. Today we introduced laws on urgency because it is important to keep the Territory safe.

People should be able to be in their place of work and know that they will get home that night and see their parents, brothers and sisters, but Labor caused so much chaos over the eight years it had control that people are literally dying the streets. It failed Territorians.

The CLP government makes no apologies for the swift and decisive action we are taking. We will make the Territory a safer place.

This crisis situation needs a crisis solution because the Labor government at the time failed Territorians. We are here to fix the crime crisis. We have to do it on urgency because the previous Labor government watered down the law and took away police powers bit by bit, here and there.

Now we have to bear the brunt of it. Territorians are being assaulted in their own homes. People are being stabbed and are dying. If it was not so serious it would be a laughable matter, but this is serious because the family and friends of people who have died are affected for life. I do not know whether any of your friends have been assaulted seriously and ended up in hospital. Ms Laverty's son passed away. I feel for her.

This is a serious matter caused by Labor. We are here to fix it. We will do it today on urgency because that is what Territorians have demanded we do. We will make sure that the Territory is a safer place.

The CLP government has to clean up the mess left by the previous Labor government. We will tackle those issues head-on. We make no apology for pushing through this legislation on urgency because we want to make the Territory a safer place so that people can go home and watch television, or do whatever they want, and know that their house will not be broken into and their car will not be stolen.

People will know that when they go to work the next day their business will be there. They want to make some money. Across the Northern Territory people in small businesses have gone to work and had to spend the day cleaning up, losing trade for that day. What about the staff who go to work and are traumatised?

People with knives are coming into bottle shops, service stations, homes and schools. It happens walking down the street. It is just not on. That is why the CLP government will take swift action to make sure that we deal with this problem because the former Labor government failed Territorians.

I acknowledge the courage it has taken for Ms Laverty to be here. I commend her bravery in coming here and sharing her story with us and other Territorians. I get a bit emotional about this because it could be any of us. In fact, my family was confronted by a person with a knife. I know how it affected my wife. She was going to the shop to buy the children lunch and was confronted by a knife-wielding maniac. How do you think that feels? How do you think your family feels? Try telling your 14-year-old daughter, 'I could not get lunch today because I would have been stabbed'. It is embarrassing.

We all live here and were elected by Territorians to make the Territory a safer place. I was born here; my family has been here for a long time, like many people in this Chamber. The Territory is worth fighting for and that is what the CLP government is doing. I intend to do whatever I can to make the Territory a safer place, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle because the Territory is worth fighting for.

The CLP government is proud to deliver this reform on behalf of Territorians because they have asked us to fix the crime crisis caused by the incompetent Labor government. Labor members are so incompetent that they cannot even work out how this place runs. They missed the jump. Was it because they do not think crime is serious or that it will just go away? Crime will not go away unless something is done about it. That is what the CLP, led by Lia Finocchiaro, will do. We are here to fix the Territory and make it a safer place.

Declan's law will deal with bail. We will increase the presumption against bail for youths. If a youth commits a serious offence, they will have the presumption of no bail. Presumption of no bail is a technical term. It will put the offenders on the back foot. They will have to go to court and be asked why they should go back out into the community. They had their chance; why should they get another one? Instead of offenders being bailed, going out the door and coming back again, we will make sure the offender faces consequences for their actions. It will start the first time they walk into court. They will have to prove to the court why they should get bail. We have to break that assumption. It will be on them and their legal team to show the courts why they should get bail.

This is serious; people are dying on the streets because the former Labor government caused the crisis that we are here to fix. We are doing it today because it is important to let offenders know that there will be a consequence for their actions. It needs to be done. At the moment there is a revolving door; people get bail repeatedly. We will stop that with a presumption against bail. We will not catch everyone because people can break that presumption if their circumstances are right. We will send the message to offenders that if they commit a crime there will be a consequence for it, starting with when they walk in the door of the court.

I will talk about second-time violent offenders. If a person commits an offence for the second time in two years they will get a presumption against bail. This means if they get away with it once, the second time they will be remanded in custody unless there are exceptions about electronic monitoring and some other things. It will put those offenders on the back foot to start with.

We will make the Territory a safer place. We will tell people that if they go out in the Territory, no matter where they are—Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy or Wombungi Station—and break the law, there will be a consequence. That will start when they go to court with the presumption against bail to make the Territory safer place.

We are not just making this up. We have not had a little powwow—which it seems Labor does and still gets it wrong—and said, 'Let us do something just to do something'. We are doing this because Territorians have told me over the last four years—some of the new members heard it on the campaign trail—that the primary issue they are concerned about is keeping the Territory, the community and their homes safe.

Yesterday I heard that your home is not your castle; it is now your fortress. It is disgraceful that people cannot go home to a safe place unless they turn it into a fortress. In Alice Springs the Labor government's idea was not to fix the crime but to strengthen the windows. It was to put in tougher windows ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, we will pause your speech there. You can continue after Question Time.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

## NOTICES

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I will move that the 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.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I will move that the Assembly:

- recognises the importance of safeguarding the Territory environment for future generations and in support of our Territory lifestyle

- reaffirms support for the critical environmental protections the former Labor government put in place, including contemporary *Environment Protection Act* best-practice regulation for the environmental impacts of mining, the 'Climate Change Response: Towards 2050' policy and the Territory Water Plan

- commits to not undermining, watering down or changing our strong legislative and regulatory regime of environmental protections.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I will move that the Assembly calls on the CLP government to:

- commit to the full implementation of the $4bn Aboriginal remote housing program

- guarantee that the target of a minimum of 2,700 houses built over 10 years is met

- commit that no amendments will be made to this agreement without the full support of the Joint Steering Committee for Remote Housing Northern Territory.

## QUESTION TIME

**Madam SPEAKER:** We are about to launch into our first Question Time of the 15th Assembly. I ask you all to be polite, well-mannered and controlled and to listen to the answers in silence. Let us start off on a positive note.

### Crime – First 100 Days of Government

**Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER**

You promised Territorians that you will reduce crime. On 13 August this year you told Katie Woolf on Mix 104.9 FM radio that Territorians would see crime fixed within the first 100 days of a CLP government. You are now at 49 days of your CLP government. You have made it clear to people that they need to be responsible for their actions and that there is need for stronger consequences.

Will you take responsibility and accountability? Will you resign if you do not uphold your promise to Territorians and fix crime in 100 days, by 6 December this year?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be taking my first question as Chief Minister as part of our new government elected seven weeks ago.

We took a serious commitment to Territorians to reduce crime. That is why we are in parliament today. I am proud that in just seven weeks we have worked tirelessly to develop our reducing-crime package. That package of legislation is what we took to the election. It delivers on those commitments to have stronger laws for our police in relation to knife crime and to have Declan's law, which we will debate later this evening, in regard to bail reform. It deals with minimum mandatory sentencing for assaults on workers, better powers for

police to deal with alcohol, lowering the age of criminal responsibility, and posting-and-boasting and ramraid legislation.

In all our commentary over a long time, not just on 13 August, we clearly said to Territorians that community safety is number one. It has to be, because nothing else good can come from a community that does not have the basics right. When people are trading with their shop doors locked and people feel too unsafe to go to the shops or are not sure whether their car will even be there when they get back, it impedes our community from achieving the success that we know it can have.

No government in any jurisdiction around the world can ever have zero crime. If they do, it is a credit to them. It is not an unrealistic pursuit we are trying to achieve. We know that crime has escalated profoundly over the last eight years of a Labor government that lost its way. I recognise the Opposition Leader's strength to say as much yesterday. Clearly, Labor understands that a message has been sent. Equally, we understand that a message has been sent to us.

Our promises are firm. We start this fortnight in parliament by passing the laws that we said we would in the first sittings. We are delivering on that commitment. We wholeheartedly know that these laws will make a difference. It is just the start. I have been clear about that.

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was: Chief Minister, will you take responsibility and resign within the first 100 days if you have not fixed crime by 6 December?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I do not think any Territorian would expect whatever your definition of 'fixed crime' is by that timeframe. Within 100 days we will have passed the reducing-crime package and have had the November sittings of parliament.

Our police have been out on the street more than ever before and are supported by a government that backs them. We are not afraid to make Territorians safe. That is what we are working on every day.

**Crime Reduction Legislation – Drysdale Electorate**

**Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER**

Crime is the number one issue in my community. Residents in Drysdale have had enough of the law putting the rights of offenders above their rights as victims of crime. How will the government's reducing-crime legislation improve the lives of Territorians and the people of Drysdale?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, that is a fantastic question from a committed local member of parliament who is determined to see the people of Drysdale live in a safer community. Having been the Member for Drysdale in years gone by, I appreciate that community. It is a community that I grew up in and went to school in. I understand it well.

People intrinsically want to know that a government will be there and have their backs. A government's responsibility and job is to provide the environment in which people can live their lives in the way they choose and in the best interests of their family. That is what we are seeking to do.

By developing our reducing-crime package to deliver on our commitments that we took to the election, just seven weeks ago, Territorians can have confidence in our government that we will deliver on what we promised we would do.

The reducing-crime package speaks to more than just the laws, which will, importantly, give police better powers to deal with problem drinking, public drinking and problem drunks, which will frontload the work that our police have to do to stop crime happening later in the day and put the rights of victims first. It protects our key emergency workers and, in fact, any Territory worker, particularly if they are being spat on in the face. It has a range of other measures, including dealing with ramraiding. We continue to see stolen vehicles being used as weapons, deliberately targeting our police, which I condemn in the strongest possible terms.

The good people of Drysdale, Gunn, Driver, Gray and the Palmerston CBD want to know whether we are giving the police all the tools available to us to allow them to do their job. The answer is yes, starting with this reducing-crime package. I have said clearly that this will not be the silver bullet to what has been eight years of a weakened system by a Labor government that turned its back on community safety, but it starts that change, and it starts today.

I am proud to have a team of 17 CLP members in this parliament who are committed to that cause, because the Territory can be a better, safer place. Our police must be supported, which is why I met with the Police Commissioner on the first day of government. That Sunday I looked him in the eyes and said, 'Commissioner, my government will do whatever it takes to back your police and make our community safe'.

This reducing-crime package is part of a bigger suite of reform that we will have to undertake over the next four years. I am proud that work has started today, just seven weeks into a brand-new government. We have shown through our actions, not just our words, that we will deliver on what we said we would deliver and be true to our commitments and promises to the Territorians who depend on us for change.

**Bail Laws – Reporting**

**Mr PAECH to ATTORNEY-GENERAL**

The government has stated its credibility on fixing crime but is refusing to offer any metric on how it will measure the success or failures of its crime laws. Given your government's commitment to fixing crime and running a transparent and accountable government, will you commit to monthly reports on the effects of your bail laws?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the CLP government is proud of the reforms we are bringing to this parliament. We were elected on a platform to reduce crime. We have seen record escalating crime across the Territory, no matter where you live. The statistics speak for themselves, whether it is property crime, car theft, domestic violence, business break-ins, assaults on our workers or anyone for that matter; it is horrendous.

The CLP will continue to publish the crime statistics that are published every month, I think in the third week of the month, so Territorians will be able to see what is happening with the crime statistics and whether there is an improvement.

It is clear that already, on the first day after the election when the Chief Minister met with the Police Commissioner, a line has been drawn in the sand about what was expected from our hardworking police. That shift has already been felt throughout the community. The fact that we have police officers who may have traditionally been …

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked the Attorney-General a direct question: will they publish the monthly statistics of the changes of their bail laws, not the crime statistics?

**Madam SPEAKER:** She is answering that.

**Mr PAECH:** It is not the crime stats, but their changes. It is a direct question that requires a simple answer.

**Madam SPEAKER:** She has plenty of time to answer.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I am answering the question because that information is well and truly public, Member for Gwoja. It always has been well and truly public. Those crime statistics had been rising under your watch.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance again. The bail laws have not changed, so you cannot release statistics on the changes. I am not sure she knows how government works.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is not a point of order, Member for Gwoja; you are debating the issue. Let the minister answer the question.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** In the short time I have left to speak, I will go through a couple of the stats with you. From July 2023 to June 2024 adults were charged with offences 9,974 times. Of these, 1,188—or 12%—involved offences allegedly committed by adults on bail. In one month's time, two months' time, 12 months' time and four years' time you will be able to use that figure to measure what happened from our bail changes.

We took this commitment to the election. Territorians resoundingly told us that they wanted change, which is why we are bringing these laws forward. We make no apologies for bringing in these laws to make our community safe.

I acknowledge Nathan Finn from the Northern Territory Police Association, who is in the gallery.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! With 17 seconds remaining on the clock, will the Attorney-General commit to being open and transparent and release the monthly statistics after the changes to their bail laws?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Police Association was one of the stakeholders that wanted bail reform, so of course the statistics will be released. You will see them first thing. I thank the Police Association for continuing to engage with officers.

**Change for Territorians**

**Mrs ZIO to CHIEF MINISTER**

On 24 August 2024 Territorians voted for change. Can you update the Assembly on how the new CLP government will deliver change for Territorians?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, speaking of change, not only did Territorians give the CLP a mandate to deliver reform on reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle, but in the seat of Fannie Bay we have seen change with a CLP local member after 29 years of successive Labor members. The change could not be more prominent than in a seat like Fannie Bay, where we saw Labor fail to deliver for any Territorian, let alone people who traditionally support that side of politics.

It showed us that much work needs to be done. The mess that the Territory is in is not lost on any of us. Every day we are uncovering more of Labor's mess and mistakes. We are now working to fix that and forge a way forward for all Territorians. Part of that is in processes like those this fortnight when we will deliver our reducing-crime package to give our police the powers they need to support the important reform that we will continue to work through over the next four years.

It is bigger than crime, although crime is that centrepiece, because, as I said, nothing else good can come—you cannot have a strong community or a strong economy—if law and order is out of control. However, we can do two things at once, and I know that the Member for Fannie Bay understands that. We have not seen that for a long time. Whilst we do the important work of empowering our police and getting on with the job that Territorians have a right to expect us to deliver on—in fact, it is our obligation to do that work we committed to which is why we will do so and why we are here—we are also taking important steps to rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle.

That includes the Territory Coordinator legislation, which is a big reform. We will put out an exposure draft for consultation to make sure that we have the model right. We need to fast-track investment in the Territory. We are also putting together the approvals fast-track taskforce, made up of people from the private sector so that they can advise us, without fear or favour, on the legislation that is making it so tough to do business.

Part of that is also making sure that we deliver on our payroll tax commitment. It is a huge commitment to make the Territory the most competitive place for payroll tax in this country. Do you know why we are doing that? It is because we understand that we have to do everything we can to make the Territory a more competitive place to live, work and invest. That is why we are backing small business by ensuring that small businesses will no longer pay payroll tax and that everyone will receive important payroll tax relief to focus on employing our trainees and apprentices.

There is much work to do, and I look forward to taking that journey with the Member for Fannie Bay and the rest of the team as we rebuild the Territory.

**Prevention of Domestic Violence – Funding**

**J DAVIS to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Seven women have been killed since June this year, three of whom were killed since the start of this month. When will we see the $180m that the government has committed to spend on family, sexual and domestic violence prevention? When will see the details of how it will be spent? Can you guarantee that this is new money since the election, as promised?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that what we are seeing in our community and the higher number of women we are losing to domestic violence is utterly unacceptable. It is a tragedy that we must stop.

The work that is being done by the department in this area is comprehensive. In the first instance, we have put together an assessment plan to look at what is happening in that environment. We will take real and practical steps to look at how we stop violence before it starts because, as we know, by the time we end up with the loss of another life, we have already lost that battle.

There was an 81% increase in domestic violence in the past eight years. We cannot allow that to continue, so we will be investing in the specialist domestic and family violence court, which relates to support services in Alice Springs and includes programs to support people in prison and the community to take accountability for their crimes. We are looking at how we can intervene in the cycle of violence that results in these horrendous acts against the vulnerable in our community, because we need to acknowledge that we are talking about not only women victims of domestic violence but also a range of people who are impacted by domestic violence, not the least of whom are children.

We will ensure that the Commonwealth investment is progressed. We are fortunate to have funding coming forward in early 2025 that will enable us to look more comprehensively at services we can put in place to support people who are fleeing domestic violence situations.

We have a strong approach to looking at how we will spend the new funds we have committed to. The team I am working with in the department on the prevention of domestic violence has already done an extraordinary amount of work in a short space of time.

This is a crisis in our community. Those opposite did not do their job well or properly to protect the victims of domestic violence over the last eight years.

We will work with critical …

**J DAVIS:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I am wondering when we might see that. My question was about whether this is new money as promised.

**Ms CAHILL:** As already stated, we have new funding. Yes, it is in the pipeline. Obviously, getting things in place from scratch is a lot of work.

**Government Transparency**

**Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER**

None of the legislation you are introducing on urgency this sittings will be examined by the parliament's new scrutiny committee, which you have established. Given your commitment to fixing crime and running a transparent and accountable government, will you commit to continuing regular monthly reporting of police and crime statistics?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, we have brought back the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, which the previous Labor government—which you were part of, Opposition Leader—scrapped in 2020. For the last four years in this parliament there has been no secondary mechanism for review of legislation in a bipartisan way. We are proud to bring that back, just like we have doubled the amount of time in parliament to debate petitions.

We recognise that access to the parliament is for everyone. It is about making sure members of parliament have the opportunity on behalf of their community to do what is right by their constituents, particularly with petitions. Barely any petitions came back to parliament under the former Labor government, because it wanted to constrict and control every dissenting voice in the Territory. What ended up happening was people dissented from the Labor government, and that is why we are here.

We are proud to have the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, on top of other measures. For example, I mentioned that in a lot of cases we will move to frontloading consultation on Bills. When we embark on introducing mandatory alcohol treatment and reforming local community government councils under Minister Edgington, there will be extensive, months upon months, public consultation in which everyone can be

involved. There are many layers to the scrutiny we seek to provide. A good government needs a good, strong opposition, and scrutiny is important to us.

The reason these laws—as the reducing-crime package—are being passed on urgency over the next two weeks is clear. These are well-ventilated and articulated laws that we have either debated in parliament before, brought to the parliament or maintained a firm position on. For example, we have tried before to pass minimum mandatory sentencing and bail reform legislation in parliament, only to be voted down and have it rejected.

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Chief Minister, will you commit to the monthly reporting on police and crime statistics?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** There was a broad lead-up to that, but, yes, of course. The usual crime statistics that we see on the website will continue to be published as they have in the past. There is no issue; I am not sure why anyone would think that would be any different from how it was in the past. I have answered that component.

The legislation before us has been well articulated and ventilated over a number of years; none of it is a brand-new concept. We took it to the election and Territorians resoundingly returned 17 seats to the CLP government to deliver this change. We will move forward with this important reform because it has had ample scrutiny. We look forward to future Bills going to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee.

## Prisons – Capacity

**Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS**

Our prisons are at maximum capacity, and police watch houses are under strain from the overflow of prisoners. This is despite the former Labor government promising that they would be empty. Can you outline the significant work done by the new CLP government to address this issue?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this is important. I know that the Member for Wanguri has been out strong and hard in the community and talking to frontline workers about building safer communities and restoring our lifestyle. This is all part of that because we need to ensure that there will be consequences for offenders' crimes.

For eight long years Labor neglected the Corrections system. As the Chief Minister mentioned, we have been in power for a short period and we are finding all these little surprises coming out of the woodwork. We say, 'That's worse than we than thought. That's a mistake. Money has been spent where it should not have been spent.' We want to try to fix that. It seems that the Labor members neglected the Corrections system because they thought they knew what was best, rather than listening to Territorians, particularly, victims of crime.

Our prisons are full and overflowing into watch houses but not because Labor was tough on crime; in fact, it was quite the opposite. Labor's poor policy and laws made crime rates skyrocket across the Northern Territory.

Earlier this year the then Minister for Police, the former Member for Fannie Bay, told Mix that Corrections would have more beds and capacity and the police would have their watch houses back by mid-this year. That time has come and gone, and the watch houses are overflowing. Close to 140 Corrections prisoners are being held in police watch houses across the Northern Territory. That affects the police trying to do their job. The police's job is to keep us safe by finding the criminals and putting them in jail, making sure there is a consequence for their actions. Instead, police must deal with this overcrowding in their watch houses. That affects not only the police but also the offenders, who have to go into overcrowded watch houses and be processed where there are too many people. That is not to mention the police in the watch house needing to deal with many people being placed in a small cell that has not been designed for it. What would happen if there was a medical incident and police had to rush in there?

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I believe that the Member for Wanguri, the minister's teammate, wanted to know what the plan is.

**Madam SPEAKER:** He is answering the question.

**Mr MALEY:** I can tell you what our plan is not; it is not to waste money and spend more than $60m on a youth justice centre that is two years' late. We will not do that. We will not spend $3m on a Cavenagh Street shade structure …

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Stop interjecting.

**Mr MALEY:** We will not spend hundreds and thousands of dollars on moving a bus stop and then moving it back.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Wanguri asked a legitimate question about the government's plan. We know that jailing is failing because the Corrections minister said it himself.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The minister is answering the question.

**Mr MALEY:** We will have two new prisons and 'sentenced to a skill'. We will make community service compulsory. We will ensure that there are behaviour change programs for prisoners to rehabilitate them and make them better people.

**Age of Criminal Responsibility**

**Mr PAECH to CHIEF MINISTER**

You say that you are not listening to experts, commentators or anyone else when it comes to your new crime laws; you are listening only to Territorians. If this is what you base your mandate on to implement these new laws, why did you not front the hundreds of Territorians voicing their concerns about lowering the age of criminal responsibility this morning at the front of Parliament House? Why have you ignored Territory victims of crime calling out your poor policy? Why do you refuse to listen to Territorians who took the time out of their day to come to Parliament House to have their voices heard, when your government will allegedly listen to every Territorian?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I have been clear—I am glad the Member for Gwoja has been listening—and I will say it again in case anyone missed it. I say to the people who want to be political commentators or throw stones at our government on the issues we took to the election and promised Territorians we would deliver—which we now are—be part of the solution not part of the problem.

I deeply respect the fact that people took time out of their day and stood out the front of Parliament House, as they are perfectly entitled to do. It is an important part of democracy. They did what they felt was right, and I have tremendous respect for that; however, we will not waiver, pander or fail to deliver on our commitments. We have been explicit on that.

The age of criminal responsibility is one of the issues we have been clear on for years. When it was first talked about, we said that we do not support it. We fought Labor on it in parliament—you were there, Member for Gwoja—and we have been clear that we would lower the age if we were elected, which is what we are doing. We are simply returning the law to its previous form; that is, it is the judge's discretion to determine what they do with a 10 to 12-year-old offender, noting that *doli incapax* is still available to courts.

We are not afraid of this because of an important reason: why should a 10 or 11-year-old offender be ignored by the system and deprived of an opportunity to change their life? When we get to the heart of this issue, this is what we are talking about. If an 11-year-old is committing terrible crimes—this is not stealing a loaf of bread because they are hungry; it is stealing your car and ramming it at police, spitting, violent break and enters and serious crime—why should police have to ignore that 11-year-old? Why should there be no mechanism for authorities to think, 'Hang on a second. Something is not right here. Something has gone on in this child's life for them to end up undertaking this serious crime'? No child is born a criminal. No 10 or 11-year-old wakes up and steals a car to use as a weapon, but we are seeing a failure in the system over a long period.

**Mr PAECH:** A point of order, Madam Speaker!

**Madam SPEAKER:** It better be good, because she is answering the question.

**Mr PAECH:** It will be good. Standing Order 110; relevance. Chief Minister, thank you for your reply. Part of the question, though, is why did …

**Madam SPEAKER:** The Chief Minister has been answering the question.

**Mr PAECH:** Why did no members of your government have the courage to step outside and see the people?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Take your seat. She has been answering the question.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The child protection system has been broken by a Labor government over eight years. If you think about it, these 10 and 11-year-old kids committing crimes for their entire life have known only a failed Labor government system. We will not be afraid to draw a line in the sand, put people's right to be safe first and intervene early in these kids' lives to turn it around.

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## VISITORS
## Foundations of Public Sector Governance Course Participants

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the OCPE Foundations of Public Sector Governance course participants. Welcome to parliament, on behalf of honourable members.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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## Crime Reduction Legislation – Alcohol Policy

**Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for ALCOHOL POLICY**

There have been two alleged murders, along with a third near-fatal serious assault, in my electorate in seven weeks. I note that you and I laid condolence flowers at the scene of one victim last weekend. Alcohol-related domestic violence is out of control. The rivers of grog are flowing.

How will the government's reducing-crime package fix the failings of the former Labor government, which let booze flow into communities and town camps without any plan to tackle alcohol supply and abuse when the Stronger Futures legislation lapsed in July 2022?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this is an important question. I acknowledge the horror of the Member for Karama's constituents. I spent time at Malak and the Karama shops talking to constituents who have experienced the widespread alcohol abuse and resultant domestic violence in that electorate. The people in that area I spoke to are fed up with the effects of alcohol and the antisocial behaviour.

With two deaths and a third near-fatal DV assault in Karama in the past two months, my heart goes out to the families and friends of the deceased and all the neighbours in that area. The entire community has faced extraordinary circumstances.

The hard truth is that the former Labor government failed Territorians miserably. I can attest to the damage that the flow of grog back into our town camps and remote communities after the sunsetting of the Stronger Futures legislation caused, and continues to cause, across my electorate and the Northern Territory. The inaction of the Labor government in protecting Territorians is outrageous. With no plan or supports in place, the Labor government took an irresponsible position that ultimately contributed to the crime crisis we continue to experience across the Northern Territory.

Labor's failure to act contributed to an immediate and alarming increase in domestic violence and alcohol-related harm. In Alice Springs, just days after the Stronger Futures legislation lapsed, police reported 54 incidents of domestic violence over a 48-hour period. It will be no surprise to the Members for Braitling, Namatjira and you, Madam Speaker, as the Member for Araluen, that there was a 96.7% increase in alcohol-involved domestic violence assaults in Alice Springs in the year ending November 2022 compared with 2019. That is an extraordinary increase.

In September 2022, two months after the sunset of the Stronger Futures legislation, one in 27 people in Alice Springs alone experienced alcohol-related assault. Let us not forget …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Karama asked about the rivers of grog flowing. The CLP wants to scrap the minimum floor price. Is that not allowing easy access to cheap grog?

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is disorderly to introduce new information when you are making a point of order.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** It was the Member for Gwoja and Labor who let the Stronger Futures legislation lapse, which caused the crime and domestic violence.

We will bring in a range of policy about alcohol and bring back alcohol management plans that the government committed to as part of the Riley report.

**Education – Funding**

**Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING**

Will this government end effective enrolment funding immediately? Will we see a significant increase in funding for our underfunded remote schools at the beginning of 2025? How much will their budgets increase? Is this government committed to bilingual and two-way programs in community-controlled schools?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the CLP government will be honouring the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement that was signed by the previous Labor government in July. We have no qualms with that. We will not go back on that agreement. There will be reviews of that program to ensure its effectiveness, but the agreement remains firm. To clear that up—the Opposition Leader asked about it yesterday—we will be 100% honouring that agreement.

While honouring that agreement, in education we will not be afraid to hold parents to account. We know that education first and foremost is important in a child's life, so parents need to make sure that their children go to school. We will build on the school-based police program. We will bring back truancy officers, which was scrapped by the previous Labor government. We will unashamedly hold people to account to make sure their children go to school.

The funding agreement is to make sure there is equitable education throughout the Territory, so we will be 100% honouring that agreement. We will work with the families who potentially do not make sure their children go to school. We will work with truancy officers and families on the inhibiting factors that they may cross in getting their child to school.

We know that kids are our future and we have a strong focus on education. We took to the election a strong focus on education, increasing school attendance, boosting literacy and numeracy by going back to basics and retaining and attracting exceptional teachers. That is something …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The Member for Mulka also asked about bilingual education. Will the CLP government support that?

**Mrs HERSEY:** Yes. I was getting to the fact that we are honouring that agreement, but I will continue to go on and say that our focus on education …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Not the bilateral agreement, the bilingual programs.

**Madam SPEAKER:** You gave her four seconds to respond.

**Mrs HERSEY:** As the Minister for Education and Training, I am focused on increasing attendance, boosting literacy and numeracy, and that goes into the regions and in remote schools. We are getting back to basics. We are focused on retaining and attracting exceptional teachers and making sure that …

**Mr YOUNG:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question from the Member for Mulka was clear. It was about whether you would support bilingual education.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Please let the minister finish her speech; she has six seconds.

**Mrs HERSEY:** The question was also about the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, which I said that we would honour. We want to make sure that we …

**Madam SPEAKER:** Your time has run out.

## Tourism – Crime Impact

**Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY**

Seven weeks ago at the election the CLP received an overwhelming mandate from voters to reduce crime and rebuild our economy. Can you update the Assembly on how Labor's crime crisis has impacted tourism in the Northern Territory and what work the new CLP government is doing to bring visitors back to our amazing destination?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder is passionate about our tourism industry and understands the important role our parks and wildlife play in attracting visitors from all over the world.

We have wonderful tourism products, experiences and attractions across the Northern Territory, but crime has turned visitors away. It is a stark reality that we face after eight years of Labor and its watering down of our laws, letting repeat and violent offenders back on the streets. You can understand the impact of that simply by listening to tour operators and businesses on the ground.

I went to Alice Springs last weekend and spoke with tourism business owners who are bearing the brunt of crime in their town. Whilst speaking with a local caravan park operator I was confronted as he broke into tears in front of me, describing the situation of him and his wife working tirelessly around the clock with no financial option to employ staff due to the lack of customers. Every caravan park operator I met had the same story; they were 30% to 50% down compared with last year, and last year was already 40% down. This decline is unacceptable. I am worried that we will lose our true Territory tourism icons if it continues.

For the year ending June 2024, domestic visitation in the NT was down by 6.7% compared with the previous year. Holiday visitors are down by 8.2%. Visitor nights have plummeted by 15%. This also reflects in visitor expenditure, which has dropped by 5.4%. Spending by holiday visitors is down by 9%. The length of stay is shorter and the average spend per holiday visitor has declined. We have to do better.

The CLP has a plan. Together, we are committed to turning around these figures. We will rebuild our economy and restore the NT's reputation as a safe and must-visit destination. The CLP government's reducing-crime package of legislation is a critical step towards this, by empowering our police to intervene early and by stopping the revolving door of bail. This will help rebuild travellers' confidence to come back to the Territory. Restoring that confidence is key to boosting tourism and our regions and supporting our local businesses.

I am proud to lead our department and, critically, am proud of our new government which has brought together all the areas responsible for driving visitation.

## Chief Minister – Chief of Staff

**Mx McNAMARA to CHIEF MINISTER**

Your Chief of Staff, Alex Bruce, just three weeks ago was the CEO of Hospitality NT, the most powerful and visible alcohol lobby group in the Territory. The alcohol lobby's main goal is to maximise profits and, therefore, alcohol sales for the alcohol industry. Alcohol is a large contributor to and driver of domestic violence and other crimes. We just had a question on the rivers of grog from the Member for Karama, who might also be interested in the answer to this.

Can you tell us if, and for how long, Mr Bruce has been involved in developing your alcohol policies? How will you ensure that any existing or future alcohol policy will be made in the best interests of Territorians and not the alcohol industry?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I can assure the people of Nightcliff and all Territorians that the CLP government is always making decisions in the best interests of all Territorians, which is why tackling alcohol is such an important part of our plan going forward. It is why we have legislation—we had the second reading speech this morning, which has been circulated—to make sure that our police have the powers they need to intervene early.

Public drinking and problem drunks have been a huge issue that Labor continued to ignore. It means that things are escalating later in the course of the day into the evening. A lot of restaurants and shops have been broken into because people are seeking to get their fix.

**Mx McNAMARA:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; relevance. I am asking you directly about your Chief of Staff and how you will make sure there is no conflict of interest and whether he will be involved in any alcohol policy.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The Chief Minister has been talking for a short time. Cut her some slack.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Member for Nightcliff, although I appreciate your interest in my staff I can assure you that all of us are working hard for the betterment of the Northern Territory.

Alcohol Policy sits with Minister Edgington. As someone who has been a police officer—a senior public servant—he is acutely aware of what happens in our regions. Under his leadership, alcohol management is a key part of our plan going forward.

This is about looking at our system and asking, 'Where is it going right? Where is it going wrong?' For example, when the Opposition Leader raised the minimum floor price, it turned people onto hard spirits. There is more glass in our parks and on our footpaths. It is unsafe for our children. People are drinking a bottle of rum instead of a bottle of wine, and we are seeing worse outcomes.

Changing the laws and giving police those powers is a first step. We are also extremely focused on more alcohol rehabilitation. Particularly over the last year, I spent time with a lot of the service providers, visiting their facilities to see how we can enhance …

**Mx McNAMARA:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I am asking whether and for how long Mr Bruce has been involved in developing your alcohol policy. That is what I want to know.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, it is your call.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Although it is entirely improper to speak about individual staff, what I will say is that he started on Monday.

**Mr HOWE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 109; hypothetical matters. I see that as a hypothetical question.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Let the Chief Minister answer the question. We are getting lost in frivolous points of order.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** My Chief of Staff started on Monday; I welcome Alex to the team. He has an incredible background in a range of areas, not just that industry—as do all staff, bringing their own individual perspectives to their new roles.

We are focused on changing how we do business in the Territory. That is why there is a new government. We are not interested in the status quo or programs or policies that Labor had. We are focused on delivering for the future. With the rates of family and domestic violence and the number of call-outs to police, our system is at breaking point. That is why tackling crime and alcohol-fuelled violence is a strong commitment and are of focus for us. There is legislation before parliament to deal with this issue because we are committed to driving down the high rates of alcohol-fuelled harm.

## Crime Reduction Legislation – Businesses

**Mr PATEL to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS**

Territory businesses have been paying the cost of rising crime, thanks to eight years of the previous Labor government. Can you explain to the Assembly how the new CLP government's reducing-crime legislation helps businesses across the NT?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, in the Member for Casuarina's previous career as a business owner, he was personally impacted by the high levels of crime in our community, so I understand it is close to his heart to hear how our

government will be fixing the problems that were left to us by those opposite because of their failure to address the growing crisis in this area over the past eight years.

On the doorstep owners of small and large businesses repeatedly said that the impact of crime has made it almost impossible for some of them to continue their businesses. The work that has started here today is an opportunity for those businesses to be assured that our priority is to protect them, not the alleged offenders, as the victims of crime. We will work to strengthen the laws, not the windows.

We have clearly seen over the past decade how businesses have been impacted and how victims of crime have held the responsibility of dealing with those crimes. We hear repeatedly from shop and business owners that they spend hours every day on cleaning up their premises due to antisocial behaviour and the impact of alcohol in our community. We will work on addressing the root causes of those crimes. We will make sure there are consequences for the actions perpetrators choose to take when they impact on our business community.

We often see CCTV footage of alleged offenders wearing ankle monitors. One of the questions we often see on social media is: how can these alleged offenders who are on bail be allowed to come back time and again to impact on our business community?

One of the direct impacts of the legislation we have introduced today will be if it is seen on CCTV that an alleged offender is wearing an ankle monitor, it will be the last time that business sees that alleged offender until they present to court to answer the allegations made against them for their first and subsequent crime.

We will focus on growing businesses in our community, and we cannot do that unless we address the issues of crime that have impacted our community. We will work with our businesses to give them every opportunity to make their businesses successful. The legislation we are looking at today and next week will clearly demonstrate our commitment to deliver on our promise to reduce crime and build our economy.

**Prisons – Plan**

**Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS**

Before the election the Chief Minister unveiled a 10-point prison plan as part of the CLP's promise to make the Territory safer. Last Friday, 11 October, on *The Week That Was* segment on Mix 104.9 FM, you said that the government does not have a plan to deal with the expected increase in prisoner numbers on your watch or to support their rehabilitation to reduce reoffending.

Will you be up-front with Territorians and admit that your government will only be locking up more people and that you do not have a plan for preventing or reducing crime and reoffending?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this is a great question because what we are doing in the first few months of our new term of government is fixing the Labor government's mess. The former Attorney-General failed to build prisons. He did not want to lock up anyone. He wanted them out on the street—as my colleague said—to commit more offences.

I have seen video footage of people breaking into someone's house wearing an ankle bracelet. These people were committing crimes when they were already on bail. For some reason, the former Labor government thought it was okay to allow these people to break into homes and businesses.

Remember, if someone breaks into a business it is about not only the damage they do when they break in—which is normally thousands of dollars' worth because the glass is broken—but also the business owner has to clean up the mess, treat their staff who have been victims of crime and lose trade while they fix it. Importantly, they also lose the tourist numbers because people do not want to visit because they have to see all the crime. They say, 'I will not stop in the Territory'. I have heard stories of people driving through the Territory pulling into outback places to get fuel to keep going so that they do not have to stop in Tennant Creek or Alice Springs.

The CLP has a plan to fix that. As soon as we got into power, the Chief Minister and I spoke to the Corrections Commissioner, and we started working on that plan immediately. Within two weeks we worked out what we can do. We have asked the commissioner to turn things upside down. We have come up with a plan …

**Ms Uibo:** What is it?

**Mr MALEY:** We will announce that plan when we are ready. That plan includes prisons for women in Darwin and Alice Springs.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Calm down!

**Mr MALEY:** It includes having prisons to get the women out of the men's prisons into a prison where they cannot be catcalled or abused and do not have to see the people who inflict crime on them as they go along.

The second thing …

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Stop interjecting. I know it is exciting, but let the minister answer the question in silence.

**Mr MALEY:** We will build two new work camps—one in Holtze and one in Katherine—for the criminals who have done their time in order to rehabilitate them to go back into the community.

One of the main things we will focus on is giving these criminals an opportunity to make a better life for themselves so that they do not commit crime and go back into the jail system. Under Labor's watch, 75% of criminals were repeat offenders because the Labor government put them in jail and forgot about them. They said, 'See you later; deal with your problem.' We want to fix that by giving these people an opportunity to make a better life for themselves and make an impact on the community in a positive way.

We intend to do that through our 'sentenced to a skill' program which will provide the courts an opportunity to give these offenders a job or skill to come out of jail a better person. That is what it is about. We want to rehabilitate these people. We want to ensure there are mandatory drug, alcohol and behaviour programs for the offenders who commit domestic violence and go to jail so that they come out better people. We all know just putting someone in jail does not help.

## Crime Reduction Legislation – Government Assets

**Mr KERLE to MINISTER for CORPORATE and DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT**

A few weeks ago, after the school holidays, I had the pleasure of going to some schools in my electorate to deliver sandwiches that the Rotary Club had prepared for disadvantaged students. Unfortunately, while I was visiting the schools, I found that a few of them had been broken into over the holidays and vandalised.

Can you explain how the new CLP government's reducing-crime legislation will better protect government assets and buildings and save Territory taxpayers' money?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it does not matter whether it is a government asset or a private asset or building; any crime is unacceptable. We have seen crime increasing over the last eight years of Labor government. We need to ensure that government assets and the businesses we represent are safe going forward.

Far too often vehicles are being stolen and used in ram raids on government assets and buildings, and businesses throughout the community. The Green Well Building in my home town of Alice Springs has been in the media recently for all the wrong reasons. On 23 September 22 vehicles were damaged. The next day four more vehicles were damaged and four days later 10 vehicles were damaged.

Often when the public hear of this vandalism people say, 'Well, it is government money'. However, that government money comes from Territorian taxpayers. Therefore, it does not matter whether an offence has occurred against a business or a government property; we need to ensure that there is law reform to address this behaviour. I am glad to be a part of the CLP government that is ensuring those law reforms occur, whether it be the ramraid legislation that will come on for debate over the next two weeks or bail reform.

In my electorate of Braitling the Sadadeen servo recently has been targeted a number of times. I have visited the people affected and spoken to them about those issues. They had to reinforce and put in bollards as a result of repeated ram raids.

In one instance government cars were stolen and smashed into a local shopping centre, the Coles complex. Half-a-million dollars' damage was caused when a vehicle collided with that building and the local Pizza Hut was unable to operate or open the front door for weeks whilst it underwent extensive repairs and renovation.

It is clear that the cost to Territorians from the laws not having been strengthened over the last eight years needs to change. Over the next two weeks this CLP government will ensure that those laws are reformed and strengthened so that everyone in the community is safer. Regardless of whether government assets are damaged or are being used to damage other businesses in the community, it is important that this behaviour stops and that the reforms we are bringing into parliament come to pass.

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

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the President of the Northern Territory Police Association, Nathan Finn. We earlier acknowledged Willem Westra van Holthe, who is a former NT minister. The Member for Solomon had been upstairs; I apologise for not acknowledging him at the time.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

## BAIL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
## Serial 4
## and
## POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL
## Serial 5

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries):** Madam Speaker, I continue my contribution and I have settled down now. I understand that the Labor government made a mistake, and I accept that this is our first time.

Today is a turning point. The Territory has put up with crime, and now is the opportunity to fix it. We are rushing through this legislation on urgency because the people of the Territory have asked us to do so. In August 2024 the people voted for change. That is what they want, and we will give it to them. Our job is to make the Territory a safer place.

Before the break I spoke about bail and our presumption against bail, so I will now go into the second part which gives police more power to deal with wanding. We want to ensure that the police have all the tools to keep Territorians safe.

We heard that the current wanding legislation was hard to implement and confusing. We have listened to the experts to make it easier to detect people carrying knives and edged weapons. We are broadening the police power to enable them to carry wands (detectors) and use them. This will meet the community expectation.

We are in a crisis situation where countless Territorians are either victims of crime themselves or know someone who has been. I am sure lots of people in the Chamber are within one of those categories. As I said before the break, it has affected my family. Many of my friends have become victims of crime or know someone who has.

The impact of that is not only on our families; people are leaving the Territory because of it. People say that they have had enough, pack up and leave. That creates a vacuum because those people's friends and family members who are still here say, 'Gee, little Johnny has gone. What will I do next?' That leads to them having a conversation about whether they should also go because the Territory is not a safe place.

The Territory is not a safe place solely because the former Labor government dropped the ball for the last eight years. It tinkered at the edges, made laws softer and favoured the offender over the victim. The former Labor government took power away from police, constraining them. One commentator said that the former Labor government put the police in handcuffs because police could not do their job to keep us safe. Labor members failed with the rivers-of-grog experiment, which opened up crime and domestic violence across the Northern Territory. We want to fix that.

Giving the police more power to do their job and keep the Territory safe is part of the mandate we were given by the election result in August. We want people to understand that it is not okay to carry knives or edged weapons and if they do there is a chance the police will catch them and deal with them, as they should. To fix Labor's crime crisis we need to ensure that the Territory is safe and the police have the power to make it so.

We have been in power for seven weeks and are already delivering our election promises. We are debating Declan's law to ensure that people do not go through the tragedy Ms Laverty did. Her son went to work and did not come home. It would be a terrible feeling. We need to make sure that Territorians are protected, and to do that we need to strengthen the law.

Before the election we promised to take urgent action. In the first week of sittings of the 15th Assembly making the Territory a safer place to live and do business and for tourists to spend their money. We know that Darwin and the Northern Territory relies a lot on tourism. If tourists do not come—I heard the Member for Brennan talk about the numbers being 30% down, which was 40% down last year so that is 70% down over the last two years—these businesses struggle to continue to keep their doors open.

The former Labor government caused a crime crisis over the last eight years. Territorians expect us to fix it. It is what Territorians deserve, and that is what we will deliver.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the contribution made by the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister.

Territory Labor and other non-government members were afforded the opportunity to see these proposed amendments only this week. The Chief Minister had many things to say about transparency, integrity and accountability when she was in opposition. It seems that she does not hold herself to the same standard as she expects of others and has only provided the first pieces of legislation of her government to the Labor opposition and crossbench for consideration in a short period.

Territorians deserve every day to be safe at home, at work and in the community. We have been deeply saddened, angered and frustrated by unacceptable and tragic acts of violence in our community. On behalf of the Territory Labor team, I extend my condolences to Samara Laverty, who has joined us, and all Territorians who have lost a loved one due to a violent or serious offence. It is unacceptable. In the Territory we all grieve the loss of a loved one as a result of a tragic act of violence.

People in our community doing the wrong thing, particularly those who use violence against others, should be held accountable for their actions; there is no doubt about it. However, punitive measures alone will not make our communities safer. Without a corresponding focus on breaking the cycle of offending, rehabilitation and diversion, we run the risk of further entrenching people in a life of criminal behaviour. Ultimately, this makes our community less safe.

Crime does not happen in a vacuum; for many people it is the end result of a life of poverty, disadvantage and trauma. It is a complex matter that will not be addressed simply by locking up more people. So far the only answer the CLP has is to lock up more people.

As with all complex matters, the devil is in the detail. We know from the past few weeks' newspaper headlines that there are concerning details in this Bill that members of the community deserve to be aware of so that they fully appreciate the potential consequences of what is proposed.

Under these amendments, it will be a criminal offence if a young person breaches bail. This means that if they are home a few minutes late and breach their curfew, they will be charged with a new criminal offence. Rather than being put through a diversion program or being supported to get back on track, they potentially face a harrowing list of new criminal offences for minor breaches of bail that will see them face longer jail sentences. This is setting them up to fail and become career criminals. It is a purely punitive measure that will ultimately make our communities less safe. It flies in the face of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory recommendations which made it clear that locking up children will further entrench them in a life of crime.

The new presumption against bail amendments will see first-time offenders sent straight to jail. It removes police discretion to give bail for low-level offences—for example, an 18-year-old out on the town for the first time who finds themselves caught up in a disagreement in a pub. Young people make mistakes. They should face consequences for doing the wrong thing, but our system should allow them the opportunity to make

amends and access services that put them on the right track rather than give them an immediate jail term without the opportunity for bail.

We all know that the Chief Minister is concerned about domestic and family violence. She did not have much to say about it in opposition, but since becoming Chief Minister she has acknowledged that it is one of the greatest, most pressing, distressing and heartbreaking problems we face in the Northern Territory. She has not acknowledged that it is her proposed amendments that put at risk of being sent to jail the vulnerable women who have had to defend themselves against a violent partner.

Women's legal services across the Territory tell us that this is an all-too-common scenario whereby women who fight back against a domestic violence perpetrator end up arrested. Under these changes, they will be denied bail. Under the Chief Minister's proposed amendments, police will not have the discretion to give a woman in this situation bail and to put her in contact with critical support services for her and her children. There is every likelihood that she will end up straight in jail and her children in the child protection system. This is potentially a tragic outcome of these proposed laws and one the community deserves to be aware of.

The former Labor government introduced strong bail laws, including a presumption against bail for serious violent offences. We made these changes on the advice from police and other frontline justice agencies through the Bail and Weapons Offences Review Taskforce we established. The taskforce explicitly said that further amendments to the *Bail Act* would not make the community safer, because they would not act as a deterrent and prevent crime.

I recommend that the new members opposite read the bail taskforce report. We released it publicly. It clearly states that further bail laws will not make our community safer. That taskforce, made up of police and other frontline agency representatives, carefully considered the evidence and was clear that further amendments, such as those the CLP government has put before the House, will make our communities less safe.

We are deeply concerned that we have heard nothing from the CLP about measures that will stop crime before it happens or prevent it from reoccurring. The only measures it has put on offer are punitive ones that will do nothing but put more people in jail. We are concerned that the CLP has no plan to manage the inevitable increase in prisoner numbers that will flow from its proposed new laws.

The Corrections minister has said twice since the election that there is no plan. In Question Time he reaffirmed that by saying that the government is working on a plan. This is in stark contrast to the Chief Minister's comments made when she was in opposition, when she stood out the front of Holtze and revealed a 10-point prison plan. This pre-election plan included a number of measures aimed at stopping the cycle of crime and getting our kids on a better path. Since coming to government, CLP members have changed their tune, with the new Corrections minister saying more than once that beyond locking up people, they do not have a plan.

What are the measures that the government is proposing to rehabilitate offenders or get kids on a better path? We hear silence. Where will the additional prisoners be housed? Where will the additional Corrections staff come from? What is the plan for obtaining additional electronic monitoring devices and ensuring that Community Corrections has the resources to monitor the increased number of people on bail? How does the government intend to measure the effectiveness of these changes? How will the government make sure the courts and legal services have the resources they need to meet the increased demand these laws will create?

Legal Aid already has to cut services, denying people the basic right to legal representation, with the government saying that it is not its problem. I can assure those opposite that it is their issue to deal with. They are in government, and they cannot pass the buck on this matter that will become increasingly pressing and watch. They cannot expect others to take responsibility but not seem to think they need to take responsibility for anything themselves.

The overall impact of the Country Liberal Party's plan for bail changes will result in more people before the courts, in prison, on remand and being monitored electronically. An already stretched justice system will buckle.

We heard the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General talk about tackling the root causes of crime, but we are yet to hear the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General name one root cause. So far it is just a two-word slogan that they like to throw around in their Facebook posts and media releases. Changing bail laws is not addressing root causes. Lowering the age of criminal responsibility and locking up 10-year-olds in prison is not addressing root causes. Creating new offences that are already covered off in the statute book so that the government can sound tough on crime is not addressing root causes.

The former Territory Labor government strengthened bail laws and delivered record investment into our hardworking police force so that police had more resources available to keep the community safe. We also knew we could not legislate or arrest our way out of the challenges we face as a community. That was backed up by multiple Police Commissioners.

There is a lot more to reducing crime than filling our prisons; prevention is key. Focusing on crime prevention will address the complex issues we face. We want to stop crime where it starts, by investing in things that keep people away from the criminal justice system and productively engaged in our community. That means keeping kids in school and getting people into jobs and investing in our hardworking frontline workers, including our police, the courts, the DPP, legal services, domestic and family violence services, women's legal services and other victim support services. This is where Labor focused its efforts and investment whilst in government.

To break the cycle of reoffending we need smarter approaches which focus on addressing the underlying reasons for contact with the criminal justice system. People often end up in jail after the child protection, disability, education and health systems have failed them. Poverty, disadvantage, homelessness, structural racism and discrimination and undiagnosed and untreated health conditions are all drivers of incarceration. The more of these factors a person experiences, the more likely they are to end up back in jail.

Evidence-based approaches and empowering self-determination and local decision-making are the greatest tools we have to reduce offending. That is why programs such as the Labor government's Alternative to Custody Life Skills Camp in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) is so important.

The Life Skills Camp is a residential rehabilitation facility for Aboriginal women that is based on cultural values and leadership to address the needs of Aboriginal women in contact with the justice system. The program includes trauma and grief counselling, training and employment opportunities and post-release housing services. The Life Skills Camp provides an alternative option to prison for Aboriginal women identified as at risk of reoffending.

The program is genuinely changing lives. Women are reconnecting with family; engaging in training and employment opportunities; living in secure housing, for some of them for the first time; addressing health and wellbeing needs; building their self-esteem; and making positive contributions to the community through community service and employment opportunities. Hearing firsthand the stories of women who have completed or are participating in the program powerfully demonstrates the importance of these initiatives.

Some people will be greatly affected by the CLP's proposed bail amendments, such as women who are suffering domestic and family violence. Safe, secure and stable accommodation is often an issue for people in contact with the criminal justice system. The former Labor government invested $14m to establish the Territory's first adult bail supported accommodation. Those facilities are in Alice Springs and Darwin and continue to be supported by the Salvation Army. They are incredibly important programs. Housing is an issue that needs to be considered as a social determinant of justice.

This program sees people referred by the courts who are assessed as suitable for undertaking behaviour change programs and addressing the reasons that contribute to their offending. Programs like this can help people comply with bail conditions and get them back on the right track.

We invested $24m for new offender programs to stop people being caught in the revolving door at the prison gate and increased community resourcing for Community Corrections to monitor new enforced Corrections orders.

All the evidence shows us that these measures will prevent crime and make our community safer. These are the solutions that Territory Labor backs.

We also need to look beyond the criminal justice system. Smarter justice for a safer Territory means investing in people, not new prisons. Simply locking up more people is not the answer. To truly turn the tide on our incarceration rates, we need to:

- continue to focus on addressing the social determinants of justice by investing in health, education and housing

- tackle the foundational causes of crime and antisocial behaviour

- invest in policies, programs and initiatives to lift our people out of poverty and disadvantage, allowing them to live their lives with dignity and purpose

- continue to invest in building strong, healthy communities across the Northern Territory where kids are thriving in schools and people are working to contribute positively to their community.

This is the path to safer communities. I strongly urge the CLP government to stay on that course because this is how you address the root causes of crime and antisocial behaviour.

It is incredibly important to acknowledge that although the new government talks about these bail changes stopping instances that have happened from happening again the future, it is not its position to say. Let me be clear: we are talking about a presumption which is the rules, set of guidelines or foundations for people who present to the court. It is suggested to the judiciary that when considering these factors it needs to start from a position of not giving that person bail. It does not stop people from getting bail.

We can talk all we want about stopping people from being on the streets, but the role of the judiciary is to consider the elements of risk to the community and that individual's arrangements, such as whether they have secure housing or a support network. What we are talking about today does not remove bail. Bail will still be an option that the court will consider. The defence or the prosecution will argue to the court about whether to proceed further with that.

The CLP can talk about stopping people getting bail, but it is not. It is bringing in a provision to recommend to the judiciary that one of the foundations, guiding principles or rules says that people start from a position of not being recommended for bail. However, the ultimate consideration remains with the judiciary because the bail provisions will continue.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important debate. I acknowledge that there are people with us today as part of this important debate.

I encourage the Country Liberal government to consider the ongoing future of the first Northern Territory supported bail accommodation for adults. Mechanisms have been in place for some time for supported bail accommodation for children. When I was the Northern Territory Attorney-General I made the decision to bring in adult supported bail accommodation. It has been a successful program. I ask the new Attorney-General to consider that. Look at the implications, the positive success rate and the reduction in breach of bail conditions for a range of people because they have had a secure accommodation option.

I thank the Salvation Army which is contracted to provide those services in Alice Springs and Darwin. It is an incredibly important program that we should continue well into the future because housing is one of the social determinants.

I am thankful that the Education minister, Minister Hersey, recommitted today to keeping that financial investment in the Territory because one of the best ways to overcome crime and disadvantage is through education. Education can change lives. We know that when people do not have access to those elements it is incredibly hard.

This week is Anti-Poverty Week. We know that a large amount of crime and antisocial behaviour in our community is a direct result of everyday Territorians living below the poverty line. I am not saying in any way, shape or form that we should excuse the unacceptable behaviour and crime that has been committed, but it should be a consideration for the future that we work on as a parliament.

This is an important debate. I thank honourable members for listening to my contribution without interjection. I look forward to future conversations about this important issue.

I reiterate that these changes will be considered only once a crime has been committed. By the time we get to talk about bail, a crime has already been committed. We need to do the work at the front end to address the root causes of crime and antisocial behaviour. We need to invest in the social determinants to overcome those challenges. When we do that we will see a decline in Indigenous incarceration and incarceration in general.

I am concerned that these changes fly in the face of the bipartisan Aboriginal Justice Agreement. It is hard to understand how this decision complements the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which mandates reducing Indigenous incarceration and looks to address those aspects through law reform. I am worried because raising

the age of criminal responsibility was part of that; lowering the age of criminal responsibility is not part of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, nor is bringing in punitive bail measures and considerations after the fact.

Attorney-General, I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you at a later date working together, in a bipartisan nature, to honour the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and any crime prevention mechanism to address crime before it starts.

To all the new Members of the Legislative Assembly who have not had the opportunity to get to Alice Springs and particularly those in government, when you go there for your central council meetings, please check out the alternative-to-custody facility in Alice Springs because it is the type of arrangement that we need more of across the Northern Territory.

It is interesting that we are talking about bail changes and potentially remanding more people in custody when the Corrections minister and the Treasurer have been on the public record saying that jailing is failing. They are continuing to perpetuate those failures and are allowing them to grow bigger.

This is incredibly important. I acknowledge that it will be debated and passage of the legislation is sought today. I am disappointed that we have not had more time to talk about it, but I accept that this will result in an outcome today.

Having been the Attorney-General, I am interested to hear from the current Attorney-General about her agency's forecast of the number of people who will potentially be affected by this. From the start I make it clear that it is a projection, so it is hard to understand or ascertain that. I acknowledge that, but if you look at the historical data of individuals who have or have not been given bail, you can begin to understand. Those projections will have been done because you will need to predict any additional increase in resourcing, staff training and accommodation space in the correctional centres. I am interested to hear whether the Attorney-General is willing to share those forecasts.

It is important to remind all honourable members that the separation of power remains and that the judiciary will ultimately remain the decision-maker in whether to grant someone bail. Today is about simply having a conversation. The CLP has not removed bail; it has brought in the presumption which now creates the foundations—those pillars or guidelines—for the judiciary to start from a position of no bail, but the judge will still consider bail when they hear about the person's exceptional circumstances or the circumstances of the prison environment.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to make my contribution on Declan's law.

I acknowledge Samara Laverty, who is here today. Like many of us in the Chamber when I heard the terrible news about what had happened at Jingili, I was horrified. Later I found out that we have a friend in common. My first job was working at Sizzler restaurant many years ago. One of the people I worked with there went to Cairns and ended up becoming good friends with Samara. She was posting stuff on her Facebook about the personal impact, and that made it all the more real.

Declan's law is about meeting community expectations on bail for repeat and violent offenders as well as increasing police powers to prevent dangerous assaults before they occur. The Member for Gwoja rightly said that young people should have access to programs to get them back on the right track. What he never talks about is the responsibility of government to keep the community safe and provide a deterrent to potential offenders before the offending occurs.

I will share a few stories from my electorate and my recent experiences. The babysitter for our family works at Casuarina. She told us a few months ago that while working at Casuarina she would not let the young shop assistants go to the toilet by themselves because they were at risk of being assaulted. She regularly saw kids carrying knives walking around Casuarina shopping centre. I asked how she knew that; she told me that the knives are poking out of their pants. They are not hiding them; they are proud to carry them. I know that the Member for Casuarina is passionate about making Casuarina shopping centre the safe and welcoming place that it used to be.

I went there to have a haircut to check it out. The Member for Katherine would know that hairdressers know everything that is going on because they talk to everyone and everyone talks to them. The hairdresser blew my socks off with horrifying stories. She was a caregiver for a young autistic boy and was one of the few people he allowed to touch him to give him a haircut. Walking out to the bus station he was assaulted by youths. They were identified by CCTV. Police did an amazing job, picked them up, charged them with assault, bailed them, and the next day they were back walking around Casuarina. Imagine the trauma for this poor

young autistic boy who has been assaulted and is trying to rebuild his confidence when he goes to Casuarina and sees the same people who assaulted him, breaching their bail conditions.

When those opposite—the former Attorney-General and his government—removed breach of bail as an offence for youths, they put the police in handcuffs. They removed the ability of police to enforce bail conditions. When I was doorknocking in my electorate, police told me that the removal of breach of bail as an offence meant that they were unable to effectively enforce bail conditions on young offenders. In theory they could, but then what was the consequence? They had to prepare a brief and go through a lot of paperwork, while they have priority one issues, other assaults and domestic violence going on, all for what effectively became an administrative matter under the previous government.

This is sub judice, so I do not want to go into it too much, but the recent stabbings in Parap—the alleged offender in that case was on bail. That is a case where Declan's law would come in.

While I was doorknocking during the campaign, this story stuck with me. A constituent was telling me about a time they were broken into. They rang the police, who got there quickly and caught the offender. The police conveyed the offender to the Palmerston Police Station and said, 'Come up and make a statement and we'll get it all done'. The offender was laughing at the victims, saying, 'Ha-ha, I'll be out of there before you are'. I could not believe it. The constituent went to the police station and made a statement. As they were driving home, there was the offender walking along the street. It was true; they were out of the police station before the victim.

I come back to the Member for Gwoja's speech. I have heard him speak a lot about the rights of offenders and putting people on the right track. His government had eight years to provide the programs that would put on the right track the young people who were going off the track. The evidence is that the rate of crime and youth crime have only gone up. Labor failed to deliver what it says is a key responsibility of government.

I am proud to be a member of a government that is determined to meet community expectations and strengthen laws to keep the community safe and address the root causes of offending, instead of just talking about it.

**Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, she has just left the Chamber, but I acknowledge that Samara was here. I am incredibly sorry for her loss; it is devastating. My thoughts are always with her during this debate.

Victims of crime and violence deserve to have their voices heard. They deserve well thought-out legislation based on our best evidence so that they get the outcomes that are best for them and society as a whole, but I am afraid that is not what is happening here.

I must stress that I got a copy of this Bill at lunchtime. I cannot go back to my constituents to assure them that I have read through and evaluated it or sought advice from experts. You are not allowing me to do this; you are forcing me to vote on something I saw for the first time a couple of hours ago. This is not how you get good legislation.

There is ample evidence from Australia and around the world that money spent on early intervention and addressing the causes of crime and poverty has a much greater effect on reducing crime than just locking up people.

These amendments will significantly increase the number of people on remand in the NT. Our prisons do not have the capacity for this surge in remandees. Forty-one per cent of our prisoners are on remand; they have not been sentenced yet. We are clogging up our system. Why are we not funding the courts to get through this backlog? Many people who work in Corrections have told me privately that this will be a disaster and they are concerned.

The fact that 41% of our prison population has been denied bail makes it clear to me that the denial of bail does not reduce offending; otherwise, we would be seeing the effects of this already. Over-reliance on prisons will only make our community less safe because they are the worst places to change people's behaviour or circumstances. Unfortunately, they are the best places to entrench disadvantage and more crime. Evidence from the Territory and worldwide has shown us that the longer a person spends in the prison system the more it increases their recidivism, and we have the highest rates of recidivism in the country already.

Let us think about this for a moment. The impact is more people in prisons, which are already full. Then they receive no rehabilitation and are further brutalised in the prison system, before being released with no support, and the cycle continues. It is madness. No-one is any safer.

I heard the CLP using terms like 'addressing the root causes of crime', but we have been given no evidence as to what that means.

This Bill makes breach of bail an offence for young people. The Don Dale royal commission explicitly recommended at 25.19 that children should not be subjected to an offence for breach of bail. While we continue to expand the criminalisation of young people, lowering the age and creating new offences for them, there are no new services being created for young people. Young people will face more prison without access to services that address the underlying causes of offending. The CLP is letting children fall through the cracks, deliberately it seems, and then punishing them for doing so. This is unconscionable.

Further to this, by removing police and judicial discretion to give bail for low-level offending this Bill will also clog up the courts immediately. I cannot stress this enough: our prisons and watch houses are full. Where will these people go? Can the CLP outline the extra resourcing that the government will provide to our courts and legal services to ensure that this will be addressed?

In relation to the Police Administration Amendment Bill there was a review of a police wanding trial in Queensland that found that there was no evidence yet that wanding deterred any knife carrying and led to a reduction in violent or other crime.

Therefore, it seems that yet again we are seeing a kneejerk response from the CLP government that will increase the cost to taxpayers, waste police time and not have any positive impact on the community.

I note that in the Knife Crime Reduction Strategy, released by the NTG last year, the key finding stated:

> *Domestic and family violence is strongly associated with adult knife offending in the NT, with almost half of knife-related incidents involving domestic and family violence.*

Where is the focus on how to reduce knife crime in domestic violence incidents? Wanding will not do this. Why is there never a focus on domestic violence in these crime responses at the start? It always seems to be an afterthought or a mention or a wringing of hands to say how terrible things are. Four women died in the last seven weeks. Where is the urgent response from the CLP government for these women?

I am also deeply concerned about the expansion of police powers to allow police to wand in schools. To be clear this means—or seems to mean, as yet again we have had almost no look at the legislation—that every student in every school from preschool to Year 12 can be wanded by the police without the presence of their parents or carers and for children aged 10 and over to potentially be charged with a criminal offence if they refuse to comply.

I note that the Australian Education Union has raised concerns about how principals will be protected when a student's usual right to privacy is denied and the way in which this may change the role that teachers play, as they need to be seen by their students as educators and not law enforcers.

I ask the CLP whether the Australian Education Union or the Independent Education Union, as the representative bodies of public and private school teachers and principals, were consulted when making this legislation.

For marginalised students who already have difficulty coming to school, this has the potential to further alienate them from their school environments.

Again, I refer to the Knife Crime Reduction Strategy, released by the NTG last year, which stated:

> *Young people make up a small number of knife-related offences.*

Why are schools now included in the area of focus?

**Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment):** Madam Speaker, I support this Bill.

I acknowledge Samara Laverty in the Chamber and thank her for her conviction and steadfast resolve to see this through. I have witnessed the courage that Samara Laverty brings us to ensure that what happened to her son does not happen to anyone else's son, daughter, brother, sister, husband, wife or other relative.

For far too long, members of the public have become victims due to laws that have not been up to community standards. We have seen the trauma caused due to violent offenders being allowed to be out in public time and again. Today we say, 'No more'.

Today we stand shoulder to shoulder with victims and their families to ensure that serious violent offenders start with a presumption against bail. The courts will be sent a clear message regarding what the CLP government and the community expects. They are the people who have put us here and they expect that the rights of victims and innocent people in the community are put above the rights of offenders to be bailed.

I will never forget Shane Powell, a worker in Alice Springs who lost his life when a stolen motor vehicle ran a red light, crashing into Shane and inevitably leading to his death. I sat down with Shane's family shortly after his passing and will never forget the resolve of his mother, Raelene, to ensure her son's passing was not in vain.

Today in this Chamber with Samara Laverty, another mother who has lost her son, I am proud to say that I will be supporting this Bill—Declan's law—to ensure that others do not have to go through what Raelene or Samara have been through.

I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this law into the Chamber and moving it on urgency. Enough time has gone by without these protections in place. I, for one, do not want another life lost due to delay.

**Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, this is an important set of Bills.

Declan Laverty was killed in March 2023. As many of you will be aware, I returned to the Northern Territory only a year ago, despite having grown up here. I remember that I was in the UK on the day when Declan Laverty passed. I bring that up because it is useful to have a sense of perspective on the significance of knife crime and the threat it poses to a polity with some sort of international vantage. Statistics from the UK Office for National Statistics in the year ending that same March—2023—indicate that 41% of all the homicides in England and Wales were knife related. That is 244 out of 590 such offences at that time.

Knife crime is deadly. I do not want to diminish that statement, but 'deadly' in this context means exactly that. The Deputy Chief Minister spoke to the fact that there has been a discernible impact on the Northern Territory population because of our crime predicament. There are disincentives to be here. It could have been debated once upon a time as to whether it was cause or effect, but now the evidence is much clearer that people are disincentivised from wanting to come to the Northern Territory to live, work and stay, let alone play here, because of the state of social dysfunction. Crime and antisocial conduct is high on the list of matters that we must address as a result.

This government has a mandate insofar as any government can have a mandate to deal with these issues. We went to the election making it clear that we were committed to the idea of reducing crime. There are many ways to reduce crime, but one thing we have done is commit to listening to the people and our police in that context as well. We know there is a deterrent effect to being able to put these measures in place.

These issues matter across the board in the Territory too. Some of my colleagues—the Members for Drysdale and Blain—have readily been able to point to examples of incidents of crime when people who have been out on bail have reoffended. I represent a different type of electorate. However, even in the relative affluence of a place like Stuart Park, as recently as 23 September there were aggravated robberies with edged weapons when multiple people were threatened and businesses affected. Crime genuinely has a discernible economic impact, but it is its social impact that we are here to address in the first instance.

Emergency measures, the suspension of standing orders and this body of legislation that this government has put forward today are warranted in my opinion because they provide a cohesive package of disincentives for people to offend.

With respect to some of the statements made earlier by the opposition, the insinuation that those of us on the backbench of the government are not aware of what our Cabinet or colleagues are suggesting is simply fallacious. We are not only aware of the detail but also supportive of the totality of the packages that are being put forward, because we recognise collectively that there must be a cohesive strategy for how to reduce crime.

That begins with the stabilisation of the patient, if I can put it that way. The Northern Territory economically, as you will hear me say many times in this House, is a patient bleeding out on the table at the moment, but that is also the case socioeconomically and, indeed, socially in many regards. The first priority at this point

is to stabilise the patient. Then we can discuss the rehabilitation of the patient and think about how to encourage the patient to cease to be a patient.

There has been an enormous amount of focus from those who have spoken so far on what more will be done to address the root causes of crime. Oddly, that has been juxtaposed with a fair, in some ways, critique that adequate time may not have been given to all those in this House to assess what has been put before them. You cannot have it both ways. How much more detail would you like? At this point, we are putting forward an initial set of measures to stabilise the patient. I am confident that this government will put forward a package of measures to rehabilitate the patient and, as we consistently maintained throughout our election campaign, address the root causes of crime.

Handheld scanners and the expansion of their use is, indeed, a judicious measure at this juncture. To broaden the number and type of police members who can wand and the circumstances under which they may do so is not an abrogation of civil liberties, in my opinion. To provide for more locations and longer patrol periods in which to wand is also not an abrogation of civil liberties. We are seeking to create a deterrent effect. The important thing to understand about the deterrent effect is that there will also be a placebo effect of these measures. The deterrence will be for repeat offending, of course, but our earnest hope on this side is that the deterrence will also be for initial offending in time.

The Member for Gwoja spoke eloquently about his concerns in regard to a number of aspects of this Bill. He raised the Bail and Weapons Offences Review Taskforce July 2023 report, which I have read. It is one of many such examinations of the consequences of bail reform. I draw all members' attention to a range of other reports, particularly those commissioned by the Australian Law Reform Commission over some 20 years in this space plus other jurisdictional reviews, which provide a more nuanced take on the merits and demerits of presumptions of bail in different contexts. Notably, there are all manner of different opinions about the presumption in favour of denying bail when it comes to matters of family and domestic violence. That is a common theme and concern that has come up across the Chamber today in a range of ways.

The key is to find a way to strike the right balance. I do not believe in my heart of hearts that these are draconian measures and that they are ill conceived. Without wanting to attempt to score a cheap political point, the Member for Gwoja articulated it best for us in that regard: this does not do away with judicial discretion. This does not prevent bail being provided when the judiciary feels it is appropriate. It re-examines the roles of the judiciary and the legislature and the balance in between. As legislators we have an obligation to serve our constituents and to reflect the needs of the people. Right now, the patient is bleeding out and that is why stabilisation measures are required, necessary and prudent at this time.

The root causes of crime, and dealing with them holistically, are legitimate matters to be addressed. I reiterate that this government is committed to addressing the root causes of crime. In the current context, the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill and the Police Administration Amendment Bill strike the right balance and provide us with an opportunity and mechanisms to enable our police force to better do its job and our judiciary to have a wider set of options in relation to how to reduce crime.

The Attorney-General has clearly articulated the scope of the measures that are under consideration. On the basis of the clarity of the changes that we are making, I do not believe that it is unreasonable for all members of the opposition to reflect upon these changes and make judicious assessments about the merits of supporting this legislation.

If we are seeking to be bipartisan in our efforts, rather than providing opposition for opposition's sake, I challenge the opposition members, as they challenged me as a backbencher, not to express dissent but to express support for what is a common good—the reduction of crime in the Northern Territory, with a view to stabilising our economy and restoring lifestyle to our polity.

On that basis, I am pleased to speak in support of these Bills and commend them to the House.

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the family and friends of Declan Laverty in the Chamber. My condolences go out to you again. I met with you just then and said hello. I understand why you are here today fighting for change. I support the fight for change with you. I also want to see change, but I cannot support this Bill. I believe that these actions will cause ongoing harm to the Northern Territory community.

In 2018 the Victorian Government responded to a violent attack known as the Bourke Street tragedy. It amended its bail laws in a similar way to how the CLP is amending the NT laws today. The evidence since this time has shown that there have been many unintended consequences from these changes. This was highlighted in a coronial inquiry into the death in custody of a First Nations woman.

As a result of these bail laws, in 2020 Ms Veronica Nelson, a Gunditjmara, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman, was taken into custody for stealing. She was refused bail and died in custody. Coroner Simon McGregor described the bail laws as a complete disaster. He stated:

> *I find that the Bail Act has a discriminatory impact on First Nations people resulting in grossly disproportionate rates of remand in custody, the most egregious of which affect alleged offenders who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.*

Following this coronial inquiry, the Victorian Government introduced legislation to make it easier for people to be granted bail because it was clear that the strict bail laws were causing considerable harm, and in this case it contributed to the death of Ms Nelson.

I am concerned that we will see similar problems in the NT. I do not believe we need to go through this process. It has been known for a long time that the more people are locked up the more harm is caused. This was the finding of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991. If we want to reduce deaths and harm in custody we must look for pathways that support and rehabilitate people so that they can move into a healthy and positive lifestyle, but I can see clearly that this Bill does not do this.

The expansion of section 7A, as outlined in this Bill, is where we will see the same problems from Victoria unfolding in the NT. Section 7A creates a presumption against bail for any serious violent offence. This includes high-level and low-level offences. It does not matter whether there was any prior offending; it could be a first-time offence. It also does not matter whether a weapon was involved. This applies to children and adults. It creates the same situation that I discussed earlier from Victoria.

Ms Nelson was not granted bail. She was a vulnerable Aboriginal woman who needed help and she was placed in jail where she died a sad, painful and lonely death without family or loved ones around her.

There is a number of low-level offences such as theft and going armed in public that will now have a presumption against bail if the person has been convicted of two low-level offences in the past two years or is on bail for a low-level offence.

Theft is a low-level prescribed offence. Other examples of low-level crimes include entering a building with an intention to commit an offence, even if no offence occurs; driving a vehicle without consent; damage to property; and arson.

Throughout this Bill I can see the removal of sections of the current law that allow for a presumption in favour of youth bail. Currently, there is a presumption in favour of bail for youths because children should not be in jail; they should be at home. If home is not safe, they should be somewhere that is. We all know that jail is not a safe, nurturing place.

A presumption against bail most greatly impacts the most vulnerable people in a community. These are people who do not have homes or family nearby or whose family's cultural makeup is not easily understood by a balanda court. These people may not have strong English language skills, and they may not have funds to pay for a private lawyer. These are the people who cannot make a clear case for bail because they do not have the resources. Overwhelmingly these are Aboriginal people.

I note that the removal of section 37B(4) from the current law will be damaging for young people. Currently, a young person who breaches bail may be placed on remand, but through this Bill a breach of bail will become an offence. This creates significant complications for young people. Breaches of bail often occur when a young person is late for a curfew imposed by their bail conditions. Perhaps they have missed a bus home or their family has been unable to give them a lift. Being late will become an offence, creating a growing mountain of problems for the child.

The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory has a specific recommendation that states that breaches of bail for young people should not be an offence. They can lose their right to bail, but it should not be a crime. Given that the demographic of people who are detained in the youth justice is almost always Aboriginal people, we know that these changes to the youth bail laws will impact Aboriginal children and families of the NT.

In 2019 the Closing the Gap Agreement was established. The Northern Territory Government is a party to that agreement. In 2022 the Aboriginal Justice Agreement was signed by both major parties in the NT—this government as well. These agreements commit to reducing the incarceration of First Nations people, but this

Bill and the five Bills that the CLP wants passed in this parliament sitting will significantly increase the incarceration of First Nations adults and children.

The NT already locks up almost four times more children than the next highest jurisdiction in Australia, and this government will jail more First Nations adults and children than ever before by passing these Bills.

As a senior Yolngu leader, I can say that this is not what we want for our people. We want to see community-led solutions, and I have said that over and again like a broken record. I speak for many other elders when I say those words—not just Yolngu people but people from across the Northern Territory. We are sick and tired of being ignored by government after government. These are our people who you are locking up. We want to be part of the solution for looking after our people and helping to bring safety to all our communities.

I strongly believe that people who are committing crimes should be held to account. This is not a new idea for First Nations people. Our traditional law has always sought justice for victims. We have the *Makarrata* system of justice that allows a victim to be heard and an offender to be punished. It is a restorative justice process that brings healing for the whole community. It allows an offender to face their behaviour and try to undo the harm that has been done, and creates an opportunity to begin again with no criminal record.

We have these systems as part of our justice institution. It is not payback. It is a lawful process of restorative justice that brings *Magaya rom* (harmony). When I see the CLP answers to crime in these Bills, I can see that this does not restore justice and bring harmony; it simply puts people in jail.

When we put people in jail they are taken from family and country and told that they are no good. They are put into a jail cell shared with up to 18 prisoners and no air conditioning. I understand that people can stay in these cells for 23 hours a day, with the possibility of rolling lockdowns due to staff shortages so that they cannot get outside for many days.

In this environment people feel abandoned and angry with the system, and they start to create a new family of criminals. We see the transition of people into jailbirds. When they come out of jail all they do is say, 'I am a jailbird. I can go and reoffend again.' In jail they lose their own culture and adopt a new criminal culture. This does not create a safer community for everyone. It creates greater issues. We must be addressing the underlying issues—my favourite statement I have always made—of these problems if we are to see real change.

This new government does not have any First Nations members in the Chamber, yet the Bills it will pass on urgency will overwhelmingly impact Aboriginal people. Safety is an issue for everyone, but the solutions to these problems should be talked through with First Nations leaders.

We are on Larrakia land, and this government does its business on Larrakia land. Have the Larrakia people been consulted about solutions for their people? Have other nations been consulted for the best solutions for our people? Do not tell us what is right for us; come and work with us together.

This Bill and all five Bills being debated on urgency are a sad and disappointing way to start the new term of parliament. I will not be supporting these Bills. I urge the government to reconsider this process and adjourn the debate so that more consideration can be given to creating better laws to break the cycle of ongoing harm by addressing the underlying issues.

**Mr HOWE (Drysdale):** Madam Speaker, I will first address Samara Laverty: thank you for being here today and for your incredible efforts in what you have done since Declan's death. You represent many victims in the Northern Territory. It takes immense courage and will, especially considering the grief I cannot imagine you have experienced. The people of Drysdale thank you.

I start with an act of goodwill to the crossbench. There have been a lot of concerns about pushing this through on urgency. I want this. If I could have had it last week I would have.

To give you an idea of what it is like in my electorate, after we finished in this Chamber yesterday, from about 10 pm to 12.30 am I addressed a number of issues that had occurred in Gray. These were constituents' complaints. For instance, Krissi in Gray sent in her police reports because at the house next to her four men who were from out of town were sharpening knives in the backyard. That is the reality of what is happening on the ground in my electorate.

Four men who do not live here are in town and sharpening knives, which is why we are pushing this on urgency and why I was glad to cross the Chamber and push that this get done. Tonight my wife and daughters

will likely go to shops. There will be mothers, fathers and children from across the electorate who will go to Coles in Oasis, Coles at the Palmerston Shopping Centre or Target. My fear is: where are those men with the knives? I want them off the streets as fast as possible. If that means pushing this legislation through on urgency, I will back that and stand by the decision.

There are many victims throughout my electorate. I will address three stories that I thought of today. If this Bill had been passed 12 months earlier it could have caused a lot less trauma for these three women. A great-grandmother in Gray last year awoke in her room to a man with a knife. He spent 15 minutes in her bedroom as he robbed her. A nurse was also robbed at knifepoint in her home. A pregnant mother was robbed at the Driver shops with a knife held to her eight-month pregnant belly.

This is the reality of life on the ground in Drysdale and why I wholeheartedly back this Bill to give police the additional powers they need to make our community safer. The outcome of this will mean that parents and seniors alike can enjoy the Palmerston Markets, with less fear of there being edged weapons when at a family outing. They can attend the shops.

Parents are concerned about their children using the buses and being shown knives and threatened. This is why we need this Bill and why we need it now.

Those on my team know that I am not someone who would quickly jump at anything that would restrict civil liberties, which were all the questions I had about this Bill during the briefings. I am more than happy to support these Bills. I asked about the worst-case scenario. If someone loses bail and is innocent of the crime—let us say that they were misidentified—they have recourse in the civil courts, so I am happy justice can be served in that situation. On the topic of civil liberties, I also remain steadfast in supporting this Bill.

Overall, the people of Drysdale want this. They are not asking for it; they are demanding it. I am steadfast in my support for this being dealt with on urgency. I understand the concerns of those opposite; however, the safety of my electorate's citizens comes first. I will not apologise for that.

I support the Bills.

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I support the bail and police administration amendments relating to knife crime, which we proudly call Declan's law.

I acknowledge the presence of Samara Laverty, who is here after a gruelling emotional fight to pursue justice for the stabbing death of her son, Declan Laverty. I thank you, Samara, for your ongoing courage while you live on without your beautiful boy. I know nothing that is said or done in this House will bring Declan back; I just hope this law named in his honour means that you know how much support you have from Territorians. We support you and your family, especially Bridget.

Territorians and most Australians know that Declan Laverty was killed by his attacker with a knife while at work. Everyday Territorians jumped into action against the laws at the time and pleaded in many ways for the former Labor government to make serious changes to ensure Declan's death was not in vain. Thousands of Territorians who had never attended a rally or protest in their lives assembled together as one on the steps of Parliament House, pushing for change.

More than 26,000 people signed a petition organised by Samara, calling for changes to laws to make people safe. Samara believed then, as she does now, that if the bail laws were tougher, putting the rights of victims above the rights of offenders, her beloved son would be alive today.

After Declan's death the former Labor government conducted an urgent bail review that took five months to announce. When it was completed there were no changes to the bail laws. Let us remember that 10,000 of the 26,000 signatures on that petition came after the former Chief Minister Natasha Fyles announced that she would not amend the *Bail Act*. People at that time were rightly angry.

Unlike Labor's position of not dealing with serious violent offenders and repeat offenders over the eight years that it governed, the CLP has been clear about the changes that we want for the Territory. Declan's law will ensure that serious violent offenders, regardless of whether a weapon was used, start with a position of no bail on their first offence. These important bail reforms target serial offenders who repeatedly put the community at risk, and makes them accountable for their crimes.

The knife crime amendments in the Bill include police being able to use wands in more public places, not just high-risk areas, including public transport and schools. They will also increase the duration of the authorised use of wands in a public place from 12 hours to 72 hours.

Territorians are right to expect that our newly elected government will deliver law reforms, putting the rights of Territorians who are doing the right thing above offenders who are doing the wrong thing. The CLP was clear in its election platform that community safety was its number one priority.

Wherever I went in the community, people asked me about Declan's law and I spoke to them about it. The overwhelming response was, 'Just get this done. Please win this election. Please push through these laws.' Everywhere I went that is what people wanted a CLP government to do.

The horrendous stories we heard from my colleague the Member for Drysdale about his electorate in the last 24 hours are exactly why we are putting through this legislation on urgency. We do not want any more victims of these horrendous crimes that have plagued the Territory for far too long, due to inaction over eight years. We make no apologies for bringing in law reform to ensure that people are safe. This is what we have been elected to do, and we are doing it.

Samara, I cannot imagine how difficult it must be for you to sit here and listen to all of us. I know that today has been gruelling. I hope that Declan is somewhere out there, rapping out of tune, just for you, saying how proud he is of his mum. You have found the strength that I am sure you never imagined needing to find. It is an honour to be part of a CLP government that is bringing about this much-needed change with the bail laws known as Declan's law. I cannot change what happened in the past, but I want you to know, on behalf of Territorians, that Declan's life lives on in all of us.

I commend these Bills to the House.

**Mr EDGINGTON (Health):** Madam Speaker, it has come to my attention that there was a small wording error in the explanatory statement for the Police Administration Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 5. The Bill is accurate, and I now table a correct version of the explanatory statement for members.

The purpose of this Bill is to streamline and strengthen the *Bail Act* and to implement our specific election commitments relating to bail; namely:

- to make a presumption against bail for all serious violence offences, regardless of whether a weapon of any kind is used or threatened to be used during the alleged offence, including offensive weapons such as cars, rocks, smashed bottles and golf clubs

- to introduce a presumption against bail for alleged repeat offenders, including those accused of reoffending while on bail

- to reinstate the breach of bail condition offence for youths

- to require electronic monitoring if any alleged repeat offender is granted bail or is accused of reoffending while on bail.

We have introduced Declan's law into parliament, as shocking new figures highlight the need for major bail reform in the Northern Territory. This morning the Chief Minister revealed that more than half of the offences committed by youths in a 12-month period in the Northern Territory were committed by youths on bail.

From July 2023 to June 2024 adults were charged with offences 9,974 times, of these 1,188 (12%) involved offences allegedly committed by adults on bail. What is most disturbing about these statistics is that the youths were charged with offences 1,411 times during this period. Of those times, 743—a staggering 53%—involved offences allegedly committed by youths on bail. I do not know about you, Madam Speaker, but this sends chills down my spine. In total, 1,931 offences were committed by youth and adults on bail, which is an average of more than 37 offences per week. That is 1,931 offences which could have been prevented if the former Labor government had stronger bail laws.

Under Declan's law, there will be a presumption against bail for youth and adult serious violent offenders regardless of whether a weapon was involved.

I acknowledge Samara Laverty who is with us today. Samara's son was murdered at work at the hands of someone out on bail for violent offending. Let us not forget that; it is why we are here.

Community safety is our government's number one priority. Territorians have given us a clear job and we are getting on with it today. The figures show just how much the Labor government let down Territorians and we will continue on our promise to deliver in the first sittings of this parliament.

I will go through what the amendments mean. The bail amendments will remove the existing requirement for use or threatened use of a weapon in order for there to be a presumption against bail. They expand the presumption against bail to include 10 to 17-year-olds. Examples of a serious violence offence include threats to kill, recklessly endangering life, assault offences and sexual offences. Any breach of bail will be an offence. The legislation will also reinstate breach of bail as an offence for youths. By doing this we are bringing back provisions that were taken away by Labor.

There will be a presumption against bail for anyone found guilty of two or more serious offences in the previous two years and those that are alleged to have committed a serious offence while on bail for a serious offence. Examples of a serious offence include possessing a dangerous drug, escaping lawful custody and stealing. The Bill introduces mandatory electronic monitoring for repeat serious offenders who are granted bail, previously this was not a mandatory condition for the court to impose.

Although there is a presumption against bail it does not mean that bail will be refused on every occasion. It will be up to the defendant to demonstrate why they should get bail and rebut the presumption against bail. The opposition has not clearly explained how these particular offences will be dealt with.

The Bill regarding knife crime will simplify and broaden the powers for police to use handheld scanners to detect and deter knife crime in public places, on public transport and in schools. The knife crime amendments include a simpler approval process for the use of handheld scanners, known as wands. Police will be able to use wands in more public places, not just high-risk areas, including on public transport and in schools.

The duration of the authorised use of a wand in a public place will increase from 12 hours to 72 hours. This will give the police more flexibility for how they can use the wands. That authority will be put into the hands of officers of the rank of senior sergeant or above. From my experience in the police force, senior sergeants are at that operational level, where they are a lot closer to crime and antisocial behaviour. Therefore, in my view this change to give the authority to a senior sergeant is more in line with what happens in an operational sense in policing, and I support that.

In listening to some of the speakers today we were reminded that we are signatories to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. Yes, we are. We have supported the Aboriginal Justice Agreement since it was released in August 2021. Without rehashing the history, it was not until 2022 that the CLP was given an opportunity to sign the agreement. There was a lot of bickering and accusations made about the CLP not signing the agreement. It is great for the Labor Party to criticise us about the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, but the reality is that the government forgot to put a signature block on the document so that we could sign it. We eventually signed it; we asked for that.

It was interesting to listen to the Member for Mulka and some of the speakers talk about focusing on early intervention and prevention. We are talking about bail and wanding laws, but things keep coming up about early intervention and prevention.

I will briefly talk about some things that have changed over the years because there are many new members who may not be across the history of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and law and justice committees, which are often spoken about to bring that place-based approach to dealing with matters in communities, young people, offending and a range of community safety issues.

It is important that we look at the history of law and justice committees. The law and justice committees started in 1995, under the CLP government, and we had the Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy. When it came in, that strategy commenced in Ali Curung. It was initially brought in at Ali Curung, Lajamanu and Yuendumu.

When we trace the history of what has been going on in Aboriginal communities, it is interesting to hear those opposite talking about crime and early intervention and prevention, and place-based opportunities to deal with crime because in 2005 it was the Labor Party that scrapped the law and justice strategy that was working effectively in Ali Curung, Yuendumu and Lajamanu. A lot of this is highlighted in the Little Children are Sacred report, which was published in 2007.

I will reiterate some of the words from the Little Children are Sacred report, because the inquiry looked into the place-based initiatives under the Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy. It said:

> *The Inquiry found it difficult to ascertain precisely why the ALJS had ceased. Of particular concern to the Inquiry was that it appeared to have ceased without any notice, any independent evaluation of its success or otherwise, or any consultation with the communities concerned. Whatever the reason, the result has been further disempowerment and disillusionment for those communities.*

In fact, there is a quote in the Little Children are Sacred report by a Warlpiri male elder. It said:

> *When the Law and Justice Committee fell over it broke people's spirits, disempowered them further and brought shame in the eyes of the community.*

When we talk about those place-based approaches we often hear Labor members talking about early intervention and prevention—which I support and always have—but the Labor Party continues to forget that it scrapped the law and justice strategy that was operating between 1997 and 2005 in communities such as Ali Curung, Yuendumu and Lajamanu. I have been told that the strategy was also operating quite well in the Tiwi Islands. The report said:

> *The overwhelming weight of evidence received by the Inquiry is that the ALJS was working well, was embraced by the community, was on target to deliver many positive outcomes and was wanted in many other communities.*

That is a bit of history about the law and justice strategy.

Basically, one of the key actions of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement is to establish law and justice committees. The government has established—do not quote me on this—about five or six committees, or it might even be fewer than that, in the Northern Territory where Aboriginal people living in those communities have been empowered to look at some of these issues involving crime and young people and can now participate in Community Courts. That is a small number.

We are now in 2024 and the Aboriginal Justice Agreement still has not been fully implemented. The former Labor government basically sat on its hands and did not implement the key actions under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The Aboriginal Law and Justice Strategy was scrapped in 2005, so the Labor government pushed us back nearly 19 years. We are 19 years behind where we should be in working with young people, working with Aboriginal people, dealing with crime and dealing with community safety issues in those communities.

What I am getting at is that on coming into government we are faced with a situation of failure by the Labor government over the last 19 years. This is why we need to bring in this legislation now. We have been elected to do that by the people of the Northern Territory. They want us to make change and elected us to do so. That is what we will do.

When it comes to those place-based approaches and early intervention and prevention, we have not given up and will be focused on that at the same time. However, we need immediate changes to the bail laws and to the *Police Administration Act* to give the police the power and the authority they need to prevent knife crime in the Northern Territory.

Labor members give all these excuses, saying that this law is apparently too heavy handed, yet over the last 19 years they have had every opportunity to focus on law and justice committees in communities and they have not done so. That is why we are in this situation.

I support this legislation.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, these are personal and emotional issues. I live around the corner from the place where Samara's son Declan was killed, and I have children the same age.

I have been lucky enough to talk with Samara. Like all of us in this Chamber, Samara, my heart is with you in your great loss and I stand with you in saying that this must never happen again.

However, as I discussed with Samara, my concern with these laws is that we have not had time to do our job properly and make good law. These are highly complex changes that need to be considered properly. We do not know what the unintended consequences of these laws might be and whether these laws will have the intended consequences to make us all safe and ensure that there are no more deaths like Declan's and many others.

As you have heard in this Chamber, we have been able to look at this Bill only in the last couple of days and received a briefing at which many of our concerns and questions could not be answered. This is the most serious business we are talking about. I do not take it lightly and do not believe that anyone in this Chamber takes it lightly. To be asked to vote on this law without being given time to do our job properly is not respectful to Samara, Declan and all those who are affected and harmed by violent crime. It makes me wonder what I am doing in this Chamber.

We have received no information about the resource implications of this law and how they might be addressed. This morning the Chief Minister said that more than 1,000 adults and almost 800 young people could be impacted by this new law. We also heard the Minister for Corrections say that the prisons and watch houses are overflowing. We know that people are sleeping on the floor in watch houses. Where will these people be held?

The Member for Mulka shared examples with us of the tragic harm that holding someone on remand can do and the huge extra impact that these laws will have on our most on vulnerable people.

We are using technical terms. When someone is remanded in custody or released on bail, it does not mean that they are guilty; it means that they are waiting for a trial. In our justice system people can wait sometimes years for a trial, at a huge cost to our community, our economy, the individual and their family. We face a crisis in our legal system, whereby increasing numbers of people risk being unrepresented and in prison awaiting trial. This Bill greatly increases the potential for people to be held in prison when they are not guilty.

It was wonderful to hear Minister Edgington's commitment to place-based community approaches to justice and to law and justice groups. I greatly look forward to the expansion of on-country justice approaches under this government. As we heard also from the Member for Mulka, that is what we need to do to start fixing stuff.

I also note that the NT Government has committed publicly to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and it was good to hear Minister Edgington recommit to that today. However, I cannot see how this new law aligns with the commitments to the AJA.

I heard the Chief Minister say that the government is not interested in listening to experts, but in listening to people. As Gerry Wood—who many of you will know well as someone who held the government to account as an Independent for almost 20 years—said to me, 'Your job, the job of people in parliament, is to listen to the community but then lead with wisdom, courage and what we know will work'. I urge the government to look at the evidence and listen to the experts as well as the community. Look at the whole story and ensure that this process will not cost Territorians, send the justice system into further crisis and potentially leave us all less safe than before.

I am here with all of you, my colleagues, to make good law. I heard what the Member for Drysdale said about the level of fear and violence in his community and his belief in the need for urgency. I understand that this is urgent. I said in this Chamber yesterday that I believe in acting when action needs to be taken, but it must be the right action. I am here with all of you to make sure that deaths like Declan's never happen again. I cannot be confident that this Bill does this, and given that I cannot support it.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table a statement from the Member for Mulka.

Leave granted.

**J DAVIS:** The Member for Mulka has asked if I could add:

'The increase of police powers for wanding is not appropriate on Aboriginal country. Increased powers should be given to elders and leaders to work with police, but we do not want to see an increase in police powers on Aboriginal country. Expanding these wanding powers to all parts of the Northern Territory and into schools needs more discussion, negotiation and community consultation. This is not an issue with the police officers themselves; it is an issue with the system that continues to disempower our communities and ignore our authority on our country.'

**Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay):** Madam Speaker, I will speak on the CLP's agenda to amend the *Bail Act*.

If any of the members of the opposition were in the room when I delivered my maiden speech yesterday, they would have heard that I am a listener. As I listened to the Member for Gwoja, I was blown away by his self-professed knowledge about how to fix the crime, the poverty and the state of the Northern Territory.

I could not help but wonder where the previous Labor government was and why we are in this situation, given that Labor clearly has all the answers.

I also found it interesting that the Member for Gwoja, now that he is in opposition, is interested in working across the bench and is keen on meeting with the Attorney-General with the intent of collaborative and informative sharing. Where has that interest in collaboration been for the last four years, Member for Gwoja? As a person with a long history in the education sector it is nice to see that you are learning a new skill.

I am proud to be a part of the government that introduced Declan's law into the Northern Territory parliament this week. My friend recently showed a picture to me when she travelled to Darwin from Adelaide for a holiday. She went to Casuarina Square and was walking behind a child who was holding a knife that was about 40 centimetres long. She asked, 'Where have I come to?'

This legislation represents a significant step forward in our commitment to enhancing community safety. Declan's law—named in memory of Declan Laverty—addresses key concerns that many in our community have expressed about bail reform and public safety.

Declan Laverty was a 20-year-old student who tragically lot his life while working at the Airport Tavern BWS bottle shop in Darwin's northern suburbs in March 2023. Declan was stabbed five times by a repeat offender who was out on bail at that time. The man charged with Declan's murder was found guilty after an eight-day trial in the Northern Territory Supreme Court. In his final moments, Declan sent text messages to his parents, Samara Laverty and Damian Crook, telling them that he loved them.

Declan's death sparked widespread community outrage and led to a rally of more than 4,000 people in Darwin calling for better bail laws. Declan's death has become a catalyst for legal reform in the Northern Territory, and Declan's law aims to tighten bail conditions and increase community safety.

Declan's mother, Samara, who is in the Chamber, has become a vocal advocate for stricter bail laws and community safety measures in the wake of her son's death. I commend you for your courage. I do not know whether I could do it.

The introduction of Declan's law will mean:

- a stronger presumption against bail for serious violent offenders, helping to keep potentially dangerous individuals off our streets

- enhanced protection for local businesses, including our bottle shops and retail stores, by making it harder for repeat offenders to get bail

- increased safety measures in our schools and on public transport with new wanding powers for police to detect weapons; as a person with a long history in the education sector who has worked in schools, I know that our schools will appreciate this support

- greater accountability for youth offenders by reinstating breach of bail as an offence for those under 18

- mandatory electronic monitoring for repeat offenders granted bail, providing an extra layer of security for our neighbourhoods.

These measures respond directly to the concerns of many Fannie Bay residents who have shared with me their feelings about not feeling safe in their homes, their businesses or their places of work they go to every day and the public spaces they like to enjoy.

Although we recognise that addressing crime requires a multifaceted approach, Declan's law is an important step in demonstrating our commitment to community safety. We believe that these reforms will contribute to a safer Northern Territory.

As a representative of not only the Fannie Bay electorate but also the Northern Territory, I am committed to ensuring that the implementation of Declan's law serves the best interests of our community while maintaining a fair and just legal system.

**Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri):** Madam Speaker, I also acknowledge Samara Laverty here today. As the newly elected Member for Wanguri, I am proud to stand with the government to support these amendments under

Declan's law. I support Samara Laverty, who has advocated for the last 19 months for changes to the law to protect Territorians, which includes the residents of the Wanguri electorate.

Many families in the electorate voiced their concerns that the previous legislation did not provide the confidence to move around Wanguri and the Territory in a safe manner. The electorate used to be a safe place to live, work, raise families and retire. Many long-term Territorians have made the decision in the last few years to move from the Territory they love, and we can no longer accept this to be normal. We can no longer accept that we must change our daily habits and now have to ask before leaving our homes, 'Will I be safe? How do I do this safely?'

The residents of Wanguri want to be safe. The amendments to legislation speak to what the voters want. We went to this election with a platform of reducing crime, rebuilding our economic and restoring our lifestyle. The first message was to reduce the crime, and these amendments will provide my community the assurance that we as the elected government listened and are acting on those concerns.

Only last Tuesday in the suburb of Muirhead, an offender was roaming at night with a weapon. By that afternoon, a distraught couple had walked into my electorate office in regard to this incident and voiced their concerns about offenders such as this after also reporting it to the police. This couple are with Defence and are now considering a request to be transferred out of Darwin earlier, as they no longer feel safe. We need our Defence families here. It is a growing concern when families with Defence rotations no longer want to be here.

This is just one recent event in the electorate, but over the last few years there have been hundreds of similar stories, many of them were not even reported.

I stand by this government and support Samara Laverty as well as all the workers in the Wanguri electorate in introducing these amendments. My election result shows that the majority of my constituents want to live in a safe neighbourhood, work and raise their families here and hopefully stay and retire peacefully. I was fortunate to have this when I was growing up in the Territory, and anyone who lives here or who wants to move here deserves to live and work safely.

I am committed to the Wanguri community, and I support these amendments.

**Mr YAN (Treasurer):** Madam Speaker, I will speak on this all-important legislative change for the Territory. I acknowledge Samara Laverty in the Chamber.

Many people yesterday spoke in this House about courage, and the courage that Samara Laverty has shown in the 18 months since Declan's tragic death is to be commended. She has fought for her son—for justice for her child. That shows great courage.

On the steps of Parliament House in the weeks and months after Declan's passing thousands of people stood up to push and shout for change in the Northern Territory. We stood alongside them while they were advocating for that change.

We brought legislation to this House to try to make those all-important changes to protect Territorians from violent offences and knife offences. We put forward good, simple legislation that would make those all-important changes to keep Territorians safe. The Labor Party did not agree with those changes. It modified them and implemented something else that did not meet community expectations and did not go far enough to protect Territorians.

The former Labor government did not listen to the people who were out the front of Parliament House in 2023. We were out there listening to them, and they are the people who have made that change. We see that with 17 members sitting here as the CLP government. We were listening to the people of the Territory's cries for help and their cries to be safe in our community.

We have brought this legislation to the House to make our community safe and to put the rights of the people of the Northern Territory above the rights of offenders.

These changes will make breach of bail an offence again for youths as well as adults. There will be a presumption against bail for those who commit violent offences. If you choose to commit a violent offence, the law will be tougher for you now. You will not just get to walk out the door; you will have to prove to the judge that you deserve to be back in the community, whereas before it was the other way around. The prosecution had to try to prove why you should not be able to walk out the door. I am glad to see that turning around.

If you commit an offence, it is not your right to go back into the community straightaway; you need to prove to the people of the Territory, the members of our communities, that you should be allowed to come back and that you will not commit further offences. If you manage to make it back into the community, there will be caveats. There will be electronic monitoring and reporting, and that will further protect Territorians.

We are making changes to the wanding provisions. We have all seen in the past 12 to 18 months the increase in the number of violent offences with people carrying knives. We have heard from many members in the Chamber about those experiences. It is becoming an all-too-common occurrence.

Labor introduced wanding off the back of Declan's death, but made it so difficult that it was hard for police to implement it. Again, we are bringing changes to this House to give police the power, opportunity and flexibility to be proactive in using technology to prevent future instances of knife crime. That simple legislation will protect all Territorians and give police the flexibility and capability to be proactive in dealing with the effects of knife crime.

We must deal with knife crime as a priority. You only have to look at what has taken place over the past weeks, with a person with a pair of scissors on a bus stabbing people and a tragic death because of a domestic violence incident involving a knife. This has been allowed to fester and is becoming the norm in our community. It must stop.

I thank Samara for coming today. It takes courage to do that; thank you.

**Mr PATEL (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak about Declan's law, a crucial step forward in making our community safer. The CLP introduced this legislation in response to the shocking reality that over half of youth crimes in the past year were committed by offenders on bail. These are the crimes that should never happen, and this law aims to prevent them.

Declan's law ensures that there will be a presumption against bail for serious violent offenders, both youths and adults, regardless of whether a weapon is involved. We heard from Samara Laverty, Declan's mother, who tragically lost her son due to someone out on bail for violent offences. I acknowledge Samara Laverty for having the bravery and courage to be here. I feel for you. We are taking action to make sure no other family has to go through such pain.

This legislation brings back breach of bail as an offence for all ages and introduces mandatory electronic monitoring for repeat serious offenders. This will help us to keep a close eye on those who pose a risk to our community. Declan's law is a turning point for our community and shows our commitment to protecting Territorians and ensuring a safer future for everyone. We are delivering on our promise to make the Territory a place where families, businesses and communities feel safe once again.

I have been working in the Casuarina electorate for almost six years, seven days a week. This means a lot for Casuarina residents. I have witnessed Coles Liquorland being robbed on a daily basis with a screwdriver. Underage kids threaten staff, who cannot touch them because of the kids' age, as they grab three or four alcohol bottles and carry them under their arms.

My question to all of us is: we can make laws not to sell alcohol to minors, but are we afraid to change and intervene earlier when we can save their lives through education and training before they end up as adults who are in jail due to the behaviours we are trying to prevent?

Coles needed to spend thousands of dollars on digital cabinets to secure all the expensive alcohol. It had to upgrade the sliding doors at the front where the security staff are threatened daily. What does this mean to the business? It leads to high staff turnover and training, which are the biggest expenses for business.

Another example is Intersport, which was robbed at scissors-point just a couple of weeks ago. The manager called me and said that his staff were traumatised and feel insecure at work.

It does not stop there, with many more stories to discuss and many more that are not reported.

Why we are afraid to change? These changes will help in public transport facilities like the Casuarina bus exchange. High-traffic zones will be safer, reducing the likelihood of violent crimes. Residents will feel more secure commuting or going about their daily activities in Casuarina. I can assure you that Casuarina will benefit from this strategic policing model, as it allows law enforcement to respond quickly and efficiently to potential threats, thereby ensuring the community is a safe place to live and work.

I look forward to being a part of the Finocchiaro government bringing this change to make the Northern Territory safe again. During my campaign I heard from Casuarina residents about the importance of these Bills. I support these changes.

**Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the presence of Samara Laverty in this Chamber. I mentioned in my maiden speech yesterday that two murders in Darwin—those of Declan and Sifat—influenced my decision to take the path which led to my place in this Chamber.

I support this Bill and have had the opportunity to review this Bill in detail. It will strengthen police to take action to prevent edged-weapon crime before it happens. It also gives an opportunity for the police force to have the confidence that the government is backing it. Police will have the tools that they want in their kit to ensure the community is safe.

This was an election commitment that CLP team members campaigned on in all 25 electorates in the Northern Territory. This is not a new thing for anyone in this Chamber. Many discussions were had with many candidates throughout the campaign. We informed the Northern Territory that we would introduce this in our first sitting of parliament, as we are now. I am hearing that there are many concerns that there is no opportunity for discussion, but this is the opportunity to discuss it, and there were opportunities before. Most people of the Northern Territory were aware that this would come in during the first sitting of parliament. We will go into the detail as well.

During my election campaign I doorknocked and letter dropped this information, and I had the opportunity to talk to many residents in Sanderson, who were supportive. The common response from the community was that something needs to be done differently.

The community was deeply concerned about the age of the children who are on the streets after hours and during school hours. Their main concern was why these children were not supported and looked after. No member of this parliament would let their children hang out at night, especially if they are under or around the age of 10, so there is something wrong when that happens; someone is not doing their job properly.

On top of that, when it comes to behavioural learning theory—many members talked about development best practice—it is when these behaviours are accepted that it becomes normalised, especially when children are growing and looking up to others.

When these children are hanging out together and some have an edged weapon, it becomes common practice that they think they can do these things. As my colleague the Member for Casuarina pointed out, this is happening to businesses. These children, even though they know it is not right, are still doing it because they know there is no consequence.

We need to change that and support those children, because they are the future of this country. We want those children to be one of the members in this parliament; we want to support them. It is not about 'jailing is failing'; it is about giving the right message. No-one is saying that we want to lock up all the underage children; rather, we want to provide the right support.

When it comes to the knife strategy and edged weapons, we want to support the police to do their job.

I have experience of working in the emergency department at Royal Darwin Hospital as a mental health clinician. I worked shifts along with other emergency department clinicians, nurses, doctors and members of the support staff. Given these things are happening in the community, one of their major concerns was when it would happen to them, especially considering that when intoxicated patients come in they are not in the right state of mind to make decisions.

I have worked in alcohol mandatory treatment, so I understand that when people are intoxicated the behaviour they display is totally different from their behaviour when they are sober. We may see a really aggressive person on arrival, but the next day that person will be completely normal. That means we need to support them and to have strategies to address the issues.

Another allegation made in this Chamber was that Larrakia elders were not consulted about these changes. Helen Secretary, a Larrakia elder, was the CLP's Nightcliff candidate and part of the team when we announced this policy. There may be different opinions among those in this Chamber, but we need to value individual opinions.

We campaigned on this. In Darwin and Palmerston, we hold all the seats except for Nightcliff and Johnston. When we announced the policy and had discussions, this was one of the common things that candidates were asked about before the election. People in the electorate wanted to get a date on when this would happen, which is why we said that it would be in the first sitting of parliament. As you are aware, sometimes people in the community have little trust in politicians. That is why the people in Sanderson were interested to know specifically when it would happen. I communicated with the team and was told that it would be in the first sitting of parliament.

I am happy to support this Bill because I am the elected Member for Sanderson whom the majority—I am not saying that it was everyone—of people supported in a democratic process and they want this change.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama):** Madam Speaker, like everyone else I extend my condolence and sympathies to Samara. I have young adult children, but I will not pretend to say that I can imagine the grief you have gone through. However, I sympathise with it. All I can think about is that the spirit of Declan lives on. His spirit is influencing all of us to make lives better so that we do not go through the same mistakes. That is the reason why these laws are coming in, particularly Declan's law. It is part of Declan's legacy.

We want to protect everyone else. I have young workers in Karama, working in similar industries, such as at the Karama bottle shop. That bottle shop has been subjected to a number of raids and people coming in with edged weapons. I do not want those young workers suffering the same fate as Declan. We need to do something now.

We went to the electorate with the CLP plan. I took it all the way around Karama, to every street three times. One of the biggest questions people asked was: what will you do? People raised the issue of the catch-and-release bail system that seems to be operating, whereby people come and go and are out the next day reoffending. That aggravated a lot of residents in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon.

I could tell people that we, as the united disciplined CLP team, have said:

*Week 1 of Parliament we will …*

We did not say 'we will introduce' but 'we will':

*Stop the revolving door of bail by making all serious violent offenders, with or without a weapon, start with a position of no bail*

*Make breach of bail an offence*

We also talked about minimum mandatory sentencing for assaulting frontline workers, introducing ramraid legislation, giving police powers to address public drinking in non-exempt areas and lowering the age of criminal responsibility so that offenders do not fall through the cracks.

I endorse what the Member for Sanderson said: we are not about locking up children; we are trying to protect children. We want to get to them early …

**Mr Paech:** Rubbish!

**Mr O'GALLAGHER:** Thank you, Member for Gwoja. I notice you had uninterrupted conversation, so I would appreciate it if you would give the same respect.

Having said that, I also understand that the normal practice is scrutiny. We are introducing scrutiny committees. However, this commitment was made to the electorate. That electorate gave us permission to introduce this on urgency. People wanted us to introduce it on urgency and for it to be delivered this week.

When the Leader of the Opposition was first appointed I heard her speak on a number of radio programs. She justifiably said, 'We will hold the CLP to account to deliver their plan'. That is exactly what I want you to do, Leader of the Opposition. We will deliver our plan. We have given a commitment to the electorate, and we must do it.

In Karama there have been a number of violent deaths with edged weapons. We need to get onto this. We are all here to protect children; we all want that.

This is Declan's legacy. Declan's spirit motivates us to deliver this, and I commend the Bill.

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge, as my colleagues in this Chamber and those opposite have done, the presence of Samara Laverty. I cannot imagine the turmoil and pain you are going through. I commend you for your courage and bravery in pursuing this issue and seeing it come to a head.

I was fortunate enough to cross paths with young Declan when he worked at the bottle shop. I will not pretend I was a close friend, but he would always smile and give a wave. He was a bubbly personality who would brighten your day when you came across him.

I was devastated, like most Territorians, to read about the circumstances of that evening and what happened to him.

I am happy to be part of the team that is delivering this legislation to make sure the pain and suffering the Laverty family and greater Darwin community has experienced is less likely to come to pass again. Reinstating breach of bail as an offence is an important part of teaching people, especially young people, that actions have consequences and that the hall pass of the revolving door of bail is going away.

Thank you again, Samara, for your presence today.

**Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I speak on the reducing-crime package that we campaigned on for the election and which Territorians have given us a clear mandate to deliver. We make no apologies for delivering on that plan. This is what Territorians expect, and community safety is a key focus of this CLP government led by Lia Finocchiaro.

I acknowledge Samara's presence in parliament. She has been a fierce advocate following the death of her son Declan at only 19 years of age.

I support this suite of legislation being brought forward on urgency. This legislation is urgent due to the lack of accountability by the previous Labor government, which has brought us to the crime crisis that Territorians are living with every day.

This is the reason I will not give up and will fight every day to see offenders start on the backfoot, with a presumption of no bail. This is in stark contrast to the previous Labor government under which perpetrators received bail, which is in fact how the person was out in the community in the first place and able to stab Declan.

Under Declan's law, there will be a presumption against bail for youth and adult serious violent offenders regardless of whether a weapon is involved. Any beach of bail will also be an offence.

Samara's son Declan, as we all know, was murdered while at work and at the hands of someone out on bail for violent offending. I take my hat off to Samara who has been a powerful and courageous voice for change, despite the devastating and tragic loss of her son. This has left a family's lives irrevocably changed.

With Declan's law, breach of bail will become an offence for all and electronic monitoring will be mandatory for the few repeat serious offenders who are still granted bail.

Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, I will speak of an incident in Katherine last year when a schoolteacher had his house broken into and a knife held to his throat. This would have been terrifying for him. Where you should be safe, in your own home, he had his house broken into, a knife held to his throat and his car stolen. I am sure that this story, which went across my community, does not send a good message to other people wanting to move to the regions. In fact, that teacher, whom we needed in our community, packed his gear and moved back to Darwin.

Almost every day I hear stories about a service station or another business in my community that is under threat from youths attending and holding it up with knives or machetes. We have had our fair share of that in the last week. This is terrifying. It is not normal; we should not think it is normal, and we should never treat it as normal. It is far from normal. Anyone would think we are in a huge capital city but, no, we are in a sleepy little town which I call the centre of the universe—Katherine.

Yesterday, the owner of the BP service station rang me and left a distraught message on my answering machine about his incident. I have spoken to him about this and he is desperate for help given what has happened to his business. He called out to me in desperation for support. The last three nights, he tells me, he has had break-ins at his business, leaving him out of pocket. He has Crimsafe on the front of his business, he has Perspex all around the counter and he has a locked door behind his attendants, yet people broke in

through a window and came in via another area, which obviously was not secured. Honestly, this place is like Fort Knox at night-time.

That leaves his staff feeling vulnerable. The only thing they can do is get out of the way. The tills are stolen, goods are stolen, the place is left a mess and he is left to foot the bill. This is not acceptable, let alone that the staff feel terrified to be at work. He has more than one person on in the evenings. It is not viable for a business to have a heap of people on in the evening. He has two staff on, but he said that six people are coming in with knives and machetes. The oldest, he thinks, is probably 18.

I would want to be confronted with this in a business. Incidents like this and many others are the reasons we are delivering our plan to reduce crime across the Territory.

The Member for Nightcliff spoke of concerns about wanding in schools. I can assure you, Member for Nightcliff, this will not be a random effort from the principal or teachers in a school environment. The principal must, first of all, have a reasonable suspicion that an offence involving a weapon is likely to be committed; or, within the last six months, an armed or violent offence has been committed; or more than one weapon offence has been committed.

Teachers and students have a right to feel safe in a school environment, and our message is clear: weapons have no place in schools. This is why the CLP's reducing-crime package, including Declan's law, will ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Territory school students, staff and visitors. It is not about blanket wanding. This is part of our new legislation which gives principals the ability to call police for backup when they suspect a child has an edged weapon.

This new legislation will act as a deterrent and send a strong message that there will be consequences for their actions. This is about expanding on the policies and procedures. It is to be a backup to give principals another tool in their pocket to keep safe the students in their care and the teachers. There is no place for edged weapons in a school environment. I make no apologies for keeping our students and teachers safe.

**Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations):** Madam Speaker, I thank Samara Laverty for everything she has done to fight for the memory of her child. As a parent, I do not know whether I would have had the courage to do what she has done if I had found myself in her situation. The people of the Territory owe you a great debt of thanks and gratitude for the effort you have put in. The Territory children of the future also owe you a debt of deep gratitude for the work you have done.

We are here to make sure that no other parent has to go through what Samara Laverty has gone through. She lost her child because a violent offender was out on bail.

Those on the other side would have us believe that they have not had the time to properly consider what the legislation before the House, Declan's law, intends to achieve. What they have neglected to acknowledge is that the CLP, when in opposition, started fighting to change bail laws to a presumption against bail for repeat violent offenders in 2021. The then Gunner Labor government shut down those efforts and instead introduced a watered-down bail reform package that did nothing to protect our community against violent repeat offenders.

Let me say that again: in 2021 the CLP in opposition tried to make our community safer by amending bail laws so that repeat violent offenders were not bailed. Samara lost her son Declan to an attack by a violent repeat offender on bail in March 2023.

We cannot let this happen again. Our community has sent a clear message that we must not let this happen again, and that is why I commend this legislation to the House.

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I speak on the cognate Bills, in particular as the shadow minister for Police.

Every Territorian deserves the right to be safe. We acknowledge the concerns that our communities across the Northern Territory have voiced about the use of knives and other edged weapons. It is unacceptable. We know that adding a knife or a weapon into a heightened situation is likely to lead to a tragic outcome, and we have seen that occur too often across the Northern Territory.

This is not just an issue for the Territory, though; jurisdictions across our country and around the world continue to unfortunately grapple with this.

I too acknowledge Ms Samara Laverty who is in the Chamber. Thank you, Samara, for your strength in the journey you have been on. As many colleagues have said, I cannot image the grief, but you have been constructive in being able to hold your son's legacy and use it for the betterment of Territorians. We thank you for your strength.

We also acknowledge the strength of other families who do not have a strong voice such as that of Ms Laverty for the loss of their family members or friends and the tragedy they may have experienced in the NT.

I respond to concerns from those in government about some of the work that was done by the former Labor government. Last year we amended the legislation on urgency to allow Northern Territory Police to conduct controlled searches for knives and other weapons with handheld scanners, more commonly known as wands. Our former Labor government amended this legislation as part of a range of measures to make communities safer. The areas we focused on included:

- urgently introducing a new presumption against bail for serious violent offences, including those with a prohibited or controlled weapon
- passing trespass laws that gave businesses greater certainty about issuing trespass orders
- introducing comprehensive reforms to address alcohol-related harm
- introducing new enforced Corrections orders and enforced behaviour change programs to break the cycle of reoffending
- establishing bail support accommodation to ensure that people comply with their bail conditions and to prevent reoffending
- delivering record investment into new programs that focus on breaking the cycle of reoffending and to try to prevent crime before it starts, including new vocational education training programs across our prisons and work camps.

With the introduction of scanning—better known as wanding—powers, our former Territory Labor government made sure that important checks and balances were in place so that those powers could not be used to discriminate against or inappropriately target vulnerable Territorians, such as low-income earners, rough sleepers, children and young people, and could not be misused as the legislation was experienced for the first time in the Territory. We did this because we believe that our Territory community expects us to guard against unchecked power in any legislation.

Labor's wanding legislation included the following safeguards:

- The use of powers provided to NT Police were monitored by the Northern Territory Ombudsman, with the Northern Territory Police required to share reports with the community every month, as well undertaking an annual reporting process.
- The Ombudsman of the Northern Territory was also to conduct a two-year review of the legislation to provide a report to the Minister for Police, which would also be tabled in this Legislative Assembly.
- The use of powers in a declared high-risk area (HRA) required a written authority by the Northern Territory Police at the rank of commander or above; or a member of a rank of senior sergeant or superintendent, but this must be approved in writing by the Northern Territory Police Commissioner.
- The authority for the use of these powers within a suspected offence area could be given only by the Northern Territory Police Commissioner.
- The maximum timeframe that any authority could be in place was 12 hours, rather than the 72 hours proposed in the CLP's amendments.

The Member for Namatjira said that the wanding legislation brought in by the former Territory Labor government was too difficult for police to use. I am not sure where he got that information or whether he made that assumption or he believes it is true without checking his facts. However, I know that our Northern Territory Police Force is highly competent and agile. Police are used to changes to the laws and regulations made by parliament, and they act swiftly to improve procedures, making sure that officers are highly skilled and trained to deal with changes to legislation. I did not hear anything of the sort that the Member for

Namatjira claimed in his contribution. I would love to hear where the Member for Namatjira got that information and how it has been articulated to him as a minister in the CLP government.

Given this was brand-new legislation for the Northern Territory, our former Labor government recognised it was important that these measures had oversight mechanisms to build in safety, accountability and transparency for how these new powers would be used by our hardworking police.

This new CLP government does not seem to think that this level of accountability is required. It thinks that there does not need to be transparency of these powers, and the extension of the HRAs does not exist. They are all over the Northern Territory.

On Monday the CLP offered the Labor opposition and the crossbench a briefing on the amendments that would come before the House this week without providing any hard copies of the intended Bill and its amendments. For the Police Administration Amendment Bill changes we received a short verbal briefing, and we thank the public servants for their work on this. As we understand, work was still being done on the legislation.

We have been asked many times over the last couple of weeks whether we will support these changes to the *Police Administration Act*. We openly said that we would love to see the detail which is when we would be able to make an informed decision, not just as an opposition but as local members on behalf of Territorians. Unfortunately, we were not afforded that process to see the amendment Bill that is now before us.

In regard to the first processes of the cognate Bills, we saw the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill. We thank the CLP government for providing a hard copy of that at 4 pm on Monday. We saw the explanatory statement only yesterday, which was a big ceremonial day for everyone. That came in via email at 9.16 pm on 15 October. I am a night-bird, so I stay up late and read things at night. I was still awake to be able to read that. Then it was sent through the formal process of the Legislative Assembly, with the DLA staff sending out the explanatory statement officially by email at 10.44 am today.

We acknowledge that there was an open and vocal commitment from the CLP government for urgency. That is not news to us, but we have been asked by community members, our constituents and interested stakeholders whether we will support the CLP legislation. We told them that we are keen to see the detail so that we can make an informed decision.

To give the House and the new CLP members an idea of when we have seen the detail, we saw one piece of legislation on Monday and were verbally briefed on another; that is a highly unusual process. We understand why the CLP did that, but—I am echoing what the crossbench has already said—for new members, it would be overwhelming to understand the processes, especially if they are being done backwards in parliament, and do the research to make an informed contribution to an important debate.

Being unable to see the amendments to the PAA until today meant there was a bit of a balancing act in order to develop an informed contribution. We learnt in the verbal briefing on Monday—which we also saw later when we got the legislation—that the CLP government has ripped out all of the former government's checks and balances. I hope that the Chief Minister can address that in her wrap-up because we want to be able to explain to Territorians why those checks and balances have been removed. With the expansion of powers in the legislation, we do not think those checks and balances should have been removed. Chief Minister, it would be good to understand the reasoning behind that change so that we can tell our communities why there is no longer an Ombudsman-mandated review built into the legislation, which is still quite new.

We continue to express our concerns that the amendments hand police brand-new powers that are extensive. We know the reasons outlined by the CLP, and we are not disputing the community sentiment, but the community deserves assurance that the powers will be used appropriately. We know the police work hard, but they can also be under stress, so we want them to be supported with checks and balances. We believe the removal of these checks and balances from the legislation is unnecessary. Why would you need to remove that if there is nothing to hide? We are keen to understand that.

It is particularly concerning given that the Police Administration Amendment Bill expands police powers to allow wanding in schools. The approval of the relevant school principal is required, as we understand from the verbal briefing provided on Monday, but this is a significant expansion of power that could see primary-age schoolchildren scanned, or wanded, without the knowledge of their parents, carers or guardians. We want to understand why the CLP has deemed it necessary to focus on primary school students. Chief Minister, we would appreciate commentary in your wrap-up about that element of the legislation and to give parents, carers and guardians across the Northern Territory assurances that their children will not be

wanded without their knowledge. A lot of people want that explained, so please take that into consideration, Chief Minister.

We also want to understand the accountability that the CLP government will provide to the community on this. Parents, carers and guardians will want to know if their children are being wanded at their school. As a newly schooling parent, with my daughter now in preschool, I want to know what the process is, if wanding was to occur at my child's school.

The Bill expands the delegation for who can authorise the use of scanners or wands. Under the laws passed by our previous Labor government, the Northern Territory Police Commissioner—the highest level of the Northern Territory Police Force—needed to provide this approval and authority. Written approval had to be received every time handheld scanners were used in an authorised location such as the high-risk areas we spoke of earlier.

The CLP's amendments to the police legislation downgrade the rank of who can access and authorise scanners/wands. The rank of senior sergeant will be needed to authorise the use of wands. From the verbal briefing we received on Monday we learned that there will be about 150 people across the Northern Territory who can authorise this, whereas before it was at the highest level with the Police Commissioner.

There will be no requirement to report this, which is our biggest pain point. If there is no reporting mechanism, how will we know what is being used and whether it is being used in the correct way? We want an explanation from the CLP government about that because the levels previously required were the Police minister, Police Commissioner and Ombudsman, with processes built in. If the CLP government was to keep it as a strong piece of legislation—we understand the reasons for expanding it—the checks and balances could have been left in. We do not see why they have to be removed.

It would also provide the Police minister in future, if they chose to, a report to show what is and is not working well, which would enable them to support our police force and ensure we are getting good outcomes and improved community safety. The CLP government missed the opportunity to provide that to all members of parliament in a review to be mandated by the Ombudsman, being an independent officer.

The Territory Labor opposition prioritises community safety, and we want to work constructively with the CLP government. When we were in government we wanted those checks and balances in the new wanding laws to create an opportunity for the community to see what was working. We will be unable to see that with those mechanisms removed.

The Labor opposition believes that those checks and balances must be afforded to protect our police and anyone in a position of power in our community so that Territorians maintain confidence in our police force. Now that those powers of authorisation will be diluted, we want to ensure that we will not see discrimination, harassment or abuse towards community members.

We support the community safety measures, but we want reporting and review processes built in as safeguards. That leads to what the CLP promised it would do at the Territory election, which was to be transparent and accountable, particularly when it comes to new legislation.

The Labor opposition expects that the community will be provided with open data on how the new bail laws are used and how they are improving community safety. We will continue to call for this on behalf of Territorians.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police)(in reply):** Madam Speaker, I thank all members who contributed to the debate because it is a significant moment in our history when we start to turn the tide on how we approach law and order across the Territory.

I start by thanking, as so many have, Samara Laverty for being here.

Now that this debate has concluded, we move into the final stages of this legislation. This is a significant moment. To the Members for Gwoja, Blain, Nightcliff, Braitling, Fong Lim, Mulka, Drysdale, Brennan, Fannie Bay, Wanguri, Namatjira, Johnston, Barkly, Katherine, Port Darwin and Casuarina—I hope I have not missed anyone—thank you. Each of you shared the perspective from your community on why we are here today. Although some of you may vote against this legislation, you have had the important opportunity to participate and be part of this change.

The Opposition Leader raised a few questions, as did other members.

I assure the community and members in this House that the complicated way in which Labor structured the authorisation made it prohibitive for police. It was lengthy and inflexible, and it meant it could not be deployed as operationally as something like that should be. Therefore, in consultation with police, we have given that authorising power to a senior sergeant, who is a high-ranking police officer; they hold a much more operational oversight role than the ranks above them. We have given our senior sergeants that power and opportunity because they can be much more in touch with the intelligence on the ground from our officers.

This is why we have also changed the category and the criteria for which a senior sergeant can approve it. This also means that our superintendents and those officers above that senior sergeant rank can continue to focus on the high-level strategic oversight that they are providing at the time, rather than being bogged down in highly operational decision-making. We have done that deliberately, but with the safeguard that it is not a probationary constable who can make this call. If our police on the ground have this intelligence, they must feed that up, and that intelligence has to be assessed by a senior sergeant.

Checks and balances are important in any system, but where they are just a check and balance for check and balance's sake, it becomes red tape and burdensome on our police. We seek to remove the mandated Ombudsman review at the two-year point that Labor had in the first iteration of this legislation, because the Ombudsman has powers to review all the time. It is a duplication in effort; it forces the Ombudsman to do a review when at any point in time they could do one if they wanted. The review that Labor put in place is not additionally resourced, so not only is the Ombudsman compelled to do it but also the Ombudsman's office has not been provided with resources to undertake that review.

We thought it was much more practical for the people on the ground to make that decision—that is, the Ombudsman—because complaints against police go to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman receives complaints about wanding, they will have cause to take a closer look. That flexibility and jurisdiction rests with the Ombudsman. We have not deprived the Ombudsman of review capability; we have just taken away the mandated timeframe review, assuming that the Ombudsman will exercise their duties as they see fit, which is entirely appropriate.

When it comes to the regular reporting, the original legislation Labor brought in had a high administrative burden on our police. It required the publication of notices every two months on a website with various details, and a lot of those details were unable to be captured by the electronic systems police have. This meant we had police officers manually counting paperwork and files just to report on a website every two months. I do not think there is any value in police reporting every two months about every time, place, type of knife and whatever else it might be on the website.

A better place for reporting is in the existing structure of the annual report, where plenty of information is provided. Police will still be required to report in the annual report on the number of times they have held a wanding operation and issued a handheld scanner authority and the areas for which they have issued that handheld scanner authority. It is about streamlining processes and keeping our police out on the beat, rather than being back in the office crunching data and undertaking onerous roles that are superfluous to the immediate task at hand.

A lot has been said about this, and I do not seek to go over every member's contribution except to say that we are happy to go into consideration in detail and answer members' questions clause by clause.

I thank my team, Samara and all the Territorians who have fought so hard for this. I thank the thousands of people who rallied out the front of Parliament House the day after Declan was killed. People stood there who in their wildest dreams would never have dragged themselves to Parliament House in the middle of the day to stand in the sun in silence, terrified about their future. They brought their children along and stood there in solemn silence, with the greatest uncertainty I have ever seen in the Territory.

Thank you to those brave people who came forward and stood up for what they believe is right, to the 26,000 people who signed Samara's petition and to Samara, who for 19 months has fought tirelessly for change. Despite the tragic loss of her son and the unrelenting grief, she has been a force and a presence in the Northern Territory, and a vehicle for change.

On the back of that, we took our plan to the election. Territorians resoundingly voted for that change, and we are here, just seven weeks later, making it a reality. I am proud to lead a team that has been able to do that for our community, the Laverty family, Declan and the future of the Territory.

I commend the Bills to the House.

**BAIL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 4**

**Madam SPEAKER:** We have concluded the cognate debate, so from now we will deal with the Bills separately.

The question is that the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 4, be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

**Consideration in detail**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, welcome to the first consideration in detail. I hope you give us a bit of grace, as we are all learning. Having said that, I refer to a couple of items in standing orders. First of all, as part of Standing Order 152, I note:

*(1) A bill will be considered in the following order:*

*(a) clauses, as printed and proposed clauses, in their numerical order*

I will not go through everything else.

I remind all members of Standing Order 155: Discussion Confined to Question. It states:

*The discussion is confined to the clause or amendment being considered in detail.*

This is not your big debate. We have had that debate. This is going through the legislation in detail and seeing whether members can improve it, or whatever, in terms of the wording and the intent. I ask that you follow that spirit.

Clauses 1 to 3, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 4:

**J DAVIS:** Subclause (2) refers to supported bail accommodation. Can you provide a list of supported bail accommodation places and how many there are?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** They are Foundation Road, Holtze; Gap Road, Alice Springs; and Peko Road, Tennant Creek.

**J DAVIS:** What is the capacity of those places?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** We do not have the bedspace for them. Needless to say, these are the supported bail accommodation facilities that Labor put in place.

**J DAVIS:** Are there no numbers of beds available at this point?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Not now, Member for Johnston. I can get them to you, just not as part of this process. Would you like that?

**J DAVIS:** Yes, please.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

**J DAVIS:** How many people are currently held on remand?

**Mr MALEY:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 155; that is not confined to the operation of the clause.

**J DAVIS:** Is it not?

**Mr MALEY:** We are talking about the operation of the clause. How many people are on remand now does not relate to how it will work.

**J DAVIS:** We are talking about how it will work, so does the department have projections of how many people this will affect?

**Mr MALEY:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 155; relevance. We are talking about how this clause works and the effect it will have, not what it will have in the future.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Johnston, I remind you that the questions must relate directly to the clause.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I can answer the question partially. As at 30 September 2024, there were 2,315 adult prisoners across the Territory, including in police watch houses, which is a significant issue. Of those, 55% (1,263) were sentenced, and 45% (1,052) were on remand.

**J DAVIS:** My question in relation to the implementation of this Bill is about the resource implications of it. I do not whether someone in the House can help me with this. Can I ask it as part of this process?

**Mr MALEY:** The answer is probably no, but if the Chief Minister wants to be flexible she can.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I suppose it depends on your question.

**J DAVIS:** We are in clause 5, which I understand is the clause that will expand the number of people affected by this Bill. How many people will that potentially be? Are there projected costs of the resource implications?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I provided you the figures as at 30 September, so that gives you an idea of how many people are on remand at any one time. Obviously, that goes up and down depending on the court process. The reality with our legislation is that there is no fixed way to calculate it because it is up to judges' discretion. Although we are putting in place a much stronger test, which is a deliberate design as we want there to be a stronger threshold for the courts, at the end of the day the judge still has the discretion to bail someone. Therefore, it will depend on the judiciary and the matters being presented before them.

**J DAVIS:** If this law is put in place, we do not know what the numbers will be, but there is a potential range. Has there been consideration of how that will work, given we heard from the Minister for Corrections that watch houses and prisons are full? Where will these people go? Where will the resources come from?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The point is that we are hopeful that people who should not be on our streets are remanded. We have a prison system bursting at the seams, which is why we are doing a lot of work with Corrections. We look forward to announcing our plan for Corrections for the whole Territory, which we think we will be able to do in the not-too-distant future. That will provide a greater opportunity for Territorians to understand how we will meet what we anticipate for capacity.

At the end of the day, the one principle that remains true, no matter how full our prisons are, is that we will not stand for people who are a danger to our community being out on the streets. The reality for us is that we have to make it work. We believe our plan for Corrections will more than adequately accommodate any surge in demand as a result of these laws.

**J DAVIS:** When will we know that plan?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Soon.

There is also the electronic monitoring component to the legislation, so if a judge does not remand someone in custody they can have that person electronically monitored or ask them to reside in a specific place, which means they will not be taking up a prison bed.

**J DAVIS:** Has there been costing of the additional resource implications of the electronic monitoring? Can you share that?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I do not have the costings on me, but Police have undertaken that process. Police has a private contract—I think it is with Buddi—so it would be arrangements has made through that.

In terms of when this legislation will commence, the knife crime component will be in a matter of weeks, perhaps one or two weeks, but the bail component will be early January. By then our Corrections plan will have kicked in, so we have built in that contingency.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

**J DAVIS:** Is this Bill in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? I understand we are a signatory to that.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The changing of bail has happened—I am trying to think when Labor brought that in, maybe four or five years ago—and what we have seen is an escalation in crime across the Northern Territory, so this is of great concern.

**Mr PAECH:** The Member for Johnston is asking whether the Bill has been tested for its compatibility with human rights, which has been the standard legislative process.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** All legislation goes through a number of lenses and part of that is whether it impinges on people's rights, which is to your point, Member for Johnston. We have considered any impingement on rights and, equally, the benefit of the right for people to be safe. We have taken the view that it is rational and proportionate to achieving our objectives.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

The Assembly divided:

| Ayes 17 | Noes 7 |
|---|---|
| Ms Boothby | Mr Brown |
| Mr Burgoyne | J Davis |
| Ms Cahill | Mr Guyula |
| Mrs Carlson | Mx McNamara |
| Mr Charls | Mr Paech |
| Mr Edgington | Ms Uibo |
| Mrs Finocchiaro | Mr Young |
| Mrs Hersey | |
| Mr Howe | |
| Mr Kerle | |
| Mr Mackay | |
| Mr Maley | |
| Mr O'Gallagher | |
| Mr Patel | |
| Dr Rahman | |
| Mr Yan | |
| Mrs Zio | |

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

**POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 5**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Madam SPEAKER:** We will now finish consideration of the Police Administration Amendment Bill 2024. The question is that the Bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police)(by leave):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Madam Speaker, I have an answer to the question asked by the Member for Johnston. I do not know whether it is appropriate to put it on the record now. I was asked a question during consideration in detail on the Bail Legislation Amendment Bill about supported bail accommodation. There are 30 places in Darwin, 32 in Alice Springs and five in Goyder with quite significant additional capacity to purchase more beds.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, I put on the record officially my thanks to the communities across the Arnhem electorate. This will be my third term serving as the Member for Arnhem, and it is a privilege and an honour that I do not take lightly. I know it will be a bit different serving in opposition as the local member; however, I reassure my Arnhem constituents that I will continue the work to advocate for the fourth-largest electorate in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. It has expanded; I used to know the exact square kilometres off the top of my head, and I am learning the new square kilometres. I gained some beautiful homelands in the northern part of the Arnhem electorate through the redistribution of the Mulka electorate. I look forward to getting to know that new part of the electorate over the next four years.

I already know some of the key areas of concern for those homelands, which is access to good infrastructure, ensuring there is a strong and supportive …

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Arnhem, please take your seat. Can the people standing up the back talking keep your voices down or maybe move your discussion to outside the Chamber? It is too noisy.

**Ms UIBO:** Madam Speaker, thank you; I appreciate that.

A key area is making sure that our bilingual schools in homelands are supported by the CLP government. I know the Member for Mulka asked a question about that today. He is a fierce advocate for bilingual education. Making sure that legacy continues under the new CLP government will be important for those homelands that are new to the Arnhem electorate. I will be advocating strongly to get support and further funding and resources, should that be required, for those homeland schools.

Most of those small homelands are in the region of the Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation, which is an Aboriginal medical service that delivers healthcare provisions to those homelands. The closest hub for those homelands is the hospital in Nhulunbuy. It is a Northern Territory Government hospital, so I look forward to advocating and working with the new Minister for Health.

Work was happening on aeromedical emergency evacuations for that region in East Arnhem. A lot of those homelands do not have sealed airstrips, which can obviously create a lot more stress and uncertainty in our amazing Wet Season about the ability to be airlifted out of those homelands. The current provider of aeromedical emergency retrieval is CareFlight, and I know the tender is due for renewal or a procurement process soon, so it will be interesting to see what happens. I will be writing to our new Minister for Health to see when that outcome will be determined.

There is some great work—the Member for Mulka advocated for it in the past and continues to do so—about what could work and be an efficient use of resources for aeromedical retrievals for the homelands that do not have sealed airstrips, which basically is every homeland in that northern part of the Arnhem electorate. As the member inheriting those beautiful parts of the Territory in my electorate boundary, I will be advocating for that.

I will continue the work that we started under the Labor government to try to ensure that some of our larger remote communities in particular have access to a community morgue. Something I was pushing while in government and will continue to advocate for now in opposition is for the Gapuwiyak community. It is a community of nearly 1,000 people, and it does not have a morgue. It is a large community that services many beautiful homelands in the East Arnhem region. Unfortunately, the cost to fly a body out of Gapuwiyak community to Nhulunbuy or Darwin can be in excess of $3,000 one way. Then repatriating the body for

funeral and ceremonial purposes means that it can be a $6,000 return trip for a body in and out of the community when a loved one dies.

It is distressing. Unfortunately, a lot of family money and money that comes through the external supports like shop royalties or the Northern Land Council is used on those retrievals and the repatriation of bodies to communities or homelands. I will continue to advocate for that, as I have done for the last eight years, particularly for the Gapuwiyak community. I look forward to an update from the new minister on the infrastructure for a remote morgue in that community.

Some other communities have received remote morgues over the last year which has made a huge difference to families by not needing to send their deceased loved ones out of their community. It can be even more tricky, unfortunately, for people in that pocket of the Northern Territory when the hardworking staff in the Nhulunbuy hospital need to refuse a body coming into the Nhulunbuy morgue, which is often full, so the body has to go to Darwin which then costs a lot more money.

I vow to continue to advocate for those areas, and I reassure my new constituents in Arnhem that I will have that focus. Those issues have been ongoing for a long time, but I will continue putting pressure on our federal Labor colleagues in the lead-up to the federal election—whenever that is decided by the Prime Minister—so that we can try to get done the much-needed work that is overdue in the Northern Territory in that area. It is hard for many families to deal with, and we could relieve some of the stress, anxiety and financial burden of a loved one's body being removed from and repatriated to a community or homeland.

It has been several weeks since the Northern Territory election. It took a few weeks to emotionally and physically recover. Fellow bush members go through a huge and exhausting process of travelling around our electorates many times as either candidates or local members to ensure that we are chosen and supported by people in our electorates to become their local representative.

Thank you to the communities in the Arnhem electorate. Not many people know, even though I say it all the time, that RAAF Base Tindal outside of Katherine is part of my electorate. It is one of our largest Defence bases and the home of the F-35 Lightning II, the fastest Air Force fighter jet we have. Tindal is close to Katherine, which is where I live and where the electorate office is based.

Some of the amazing communities in my electorate include Manyallaluk, Barunga, Wugularr, Bulman and Weemol, Gapuwiyak and the new homelands I mentioned. Along the Roper I have the Mataranka township, Jilkminggan, Minyerri, Ngukurr, Urapunga and Numbulwar. Going across to the beautiful Groote Eylandt archipelago, I have Bickerton Island and the Milyakburra community, as well as the township of Alyangula on Groote Eylandt, Umbakumba and Angurugu. I cannot forget Numbulwar; that is my mother's home community which I get to represent in this place, which is extra special.

I give a big thank you to all the people who committed their time, efforts and financial support for the Arnhem electorate. It costs about $20,000 to $30,000 to do a bush electorate campaign. I am fortunate to be supported by not necessarily the Labor Party but those who believe in the work that Labor does or believe in me as a person and the values that I hold as a local member and Territorian. Thank you to all who believed in me and supported me.

I give a big thank you to my campaign manager, Melina Davidson, who took personal time off to run my campaign and campaign with me. She was here yesterday to see the result of the hard work, blood, sweat and tears that we experienced in the campaign and the coordination that she did.

To my 82-year-old dad—we gave him a rest; he did not take on the campaign manager role this year, but he was at almost every booth with me—thank you, Mick Uibo. He and my mum are a huge reason I am here; they instilled in me such a strong value of justice and equity. Education has been the key theme that has led my life and my family's lives. Thank you to all of my family, especially my husband and kids. I did not see them for 12 days, so it was quite emotional when I got to see them on the last day. Luckily, we got to celebrate a good win.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama):** Madam Speaker, I put on record that it has been a hard-fought election campaign. I acknowledge every candidate who stood for election, regardless of whether they were successful. It is part of our democracy and I believe that everyone who stands comes with the right intentions to serve the Northern Territory. We might have different policies and programs, but our intention is right; we are all out to serve.

In my electorate I pay respect to the former MLA for Karama, Ngaree Ah Kit, and to the Independent candidate, Justine Glover, who ran. I wish them all the best for the future. For all candidates, whether they won or lost, I wish them all the best.

**Mr BROWN (Arafura):** Madam Speaker, I thank many great people who helped me return to this place. For me being the Member for Arafura is the biggest honour I have ever had in my life. All of us know how difficult it is to run for office. No-one does it alone. There are many people to thank, and I will try to acknowledge them tonight.

First, to my electorate team in Moil—Alan, Gawin and Baden, with the addition of Patrick—thank you for your work. I add Ebony Costa—the late Lawrence Costa's wife—who was my campaign manager. She did magnificent work. She is a seasoned campaigner. Even this election it was tough getting out into the bush.

Thank you to my family from Maningrida and Tiwi Islands. After long conversations, they backed me to run again. It is a bit different having my posters around the place because of the cultural taboo. Thank you to my partner, Jessie, and her sisters, Jacqueline and Sharna, who were steadfast; our niece, Toni; my two brothers-in-law, Garth and Phil; and my clan groups who have adopted me at Maningrida, the Djibena and Gorrong-Gorrong families.

Thank you to my family for letting me do this. I know it is different and challenging, but I am up for it knowing you are supporting me. In a discussion with me before I ran, my partner said, 'No matter which way this election goes, we want you to be in there because we don't trust anybody else'. She works at the cultural hub at Maningrida and a lot of women, men and youths go there and talk to her about it.

To my Tiwi Islands Takaringuwi tribe, which is the mullet, thank you for your support. This is the second-biggest tribe in the Tiwi Islands, so I have a lot of support there.

Finally, thank you to all of my colleagues, past and present, who have been a powerful support for me. I thank Selena and Chansey for their leadership and Dheran for stepping up. For me and Dheran, this is our first full election, as we came in through by-elections. I acknowledge my colleagues who have gone. There are a few of them, so I will not name them all; I will message them. Thank you to Mr Costa. I will carry on his legacy.

Without the people I have thanked in this speech, I would not be here today.

**Mr PAECH (Gwoja):** Madam Speaker, I highlight that this is Anti-Poverty Week. It is an important reminder for us as legislators. Anti-Poverty Week is a week to raise awareness across the Territory and country about people who continue to live in abject poverty.

When we talk about and define poverty, it is about not only people having scarcity of money but also vulnerable people being unable to save for wealth or to develop or sustain a reasonable quality of life. This is incredibly important because when we talk about addressing poverty, we need to know what that means.

People who live below the poverty line lack the ability to access quality housing, education services, clothing, medical services and medical equipment as needed. Anti-Poverty Week enables us to stop and reflect on that and look at strong campaigns, like Raise the Rate, which is a national campaign that calls on the Commonwealth Government to raise the JobKeeper minimum rate to $82 per day to ensure that people can be lifted above the poverty line.

As we hear time and again, a large number of Territorians are living below the poverty line. They do not live in only one particular area or region; they live across the Northern Territory.

People who live below the poverty line often have complex needs and challenges that they cannot address because they are forced to make tough decisions with the limited resources they have. This is an important week to stop and reflect, acknowledge that and work together on ideas and concepts about how we can make life easier and better for people.

I am sure many of us have constituents who come to us to link up with other support services. Tonight is also an important opportunity to acknowledge those services across the Northern Territory. I give a big shout-out to the Northern Territory Council of Social Service and all the social services organisations across the Northern Territory. They do an incredible job, particularly in my home town of Alice Springs. I acknowledge Foodbank, which provides a quality service in Central Australia for vulnerable families who are tight on cash and need assistance to feed themselves and their families. I also acknowledge all the Territorians who find

it in their hearts to regularly donate to worthy causes and help vulnerable women and families across the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.