

Legislative Assembly
of the Northern Territory

Draft Daily Hansard

Tuesday 20 October 2026

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Minyerri School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students and teachers from Minyerri School as part of their week at the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Child Protection in the Northern Territory

Ms CAHILL (Child Protection): Madam Speaker, I deliver a ministerial report on Child Protection in the Northern Territory notified on 19 October 2026.

I speak to the final report of the Independent Review into the Conduct of the Department of Children and Families. This report exists because of a little girl. Her family has asked that we call her Kumanjayi Little Baby. She was five years old. Her life was taken in Alice Springs in April this year.

I am wearing pink today, her favourite colour, in her memory. She was a sweet little five-year-old girl who deserved better.

I acknowledge her family—her mother, her brother—and her community in Central Australia. Nothing in this report or anything said in this place will lessen your loss. I am so sorry.

Reading this report was confronting. Parts of it are heartbreaking. Kumanjayi Little Baby's family was known to the department before she was born. Her mother was assaulted at least twice while she was pregnant with her. When she was 17 weeks old a safety plan was put in place that relied on adults from the family's network to keep her safe. The review found no evidence that police or background checks were done on any of them. It was later established that one of those adults had a long and violent criminal history, including five counts of threat to kill. These were the adults trusted to keep a baby safe. How can something as basic as checking they are safe to be around children not be standard practice?

This was not a one-off. The review found that departmental policy and procedure did not include routinely checking the background or police history of anyone nominated in any safety plan.

On 4 August 2022 following an assault on her mother, a report was made that Kumanjayi Little Baby had been struck to the head. She was 16 months old. The departmental assessment rated her safety at two out of 10 and found no signs of safety. That matter remained open until 21 March 2023, with the only outcome recorded a reference to a Strengthening Families case.

For 229 days the case remained open with no tangible improved outcome for Kumanjayi Little Baby in spite of a further assessment done in January 2023, which noted her vulnerability and an increasing level of concern.

Disappointingly, the review found no domestic and family violence informed risk assessment was carried out in spite of the escalating pattern of violence that she was being exposed to. In short, the system in place did not support recognition of the risk this placed Kumanjayi Little Baby in.

Of greatest concern was her mother was left, in the review's words, 'effectively responsible for protecting her children while experiencing violence herself'.

The law gives child protection officers the power to apply for a domestic violence order to protect a child. Inexplicably, the review found that exercising that power is not part of departmental practice.

In her five short years, the department received at least 16 notifications involving her; two of those occurred whilst her mother was pregnant with her. Every one of them involved domestic and family violence. Despite all those notifications, the department never applied for an order to protect her.

More broadly, the review found this was not the only area where departmental policy, procedure and practice did not align with legislation. A review of her file found 24 points provided for in legislation where the

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department could have stepped in. That did not occur, one can only presume, due to the focus and policy of the previous Labor government not supporting them to do so.

We will never know whether stronger use of the powers available under the law would have allowed the department to step in earlier and change the trajectory of her life. Whether she might have been somewhere safe that cool autumn night in April, not at a town camp after dark. What we do know is the review revealed a department struggling with policy framework that had drifted from its legislative intent.

That is no longer the case, this government's legislative reform, the Every Child Matters Bill, has made it clear. The department's first obligation is to keep children safe irrespective of their background. Under the previous Labor government, that obligation was lost sight of. A child's culture mattered but it can never come before safety.

Sadly, Kumanjayi Little Baby's story is not an isolated one. Since becoming minister I repeatedly raised concerns with the leadership of the department about the application of legislation in assessing whether a child was at risk of harm. Those concerns arose from my review of multiple briefs of children who had been taken into care. Each of those briefs was heart-wrenching. Children exposed to situations that no child should ever have to witness, not once or even twice but multiple times.

As I reviewed the history of these children, disturbingly, I found a recurrent pattern. Serious gaps between what the law required of the department and how that law was applied—gaps in policy, in process, and most critically, gaps in how risk to children was being assessed. In file after file, I found children with notification after notification after notification., thirty, forty, sixty, eighty.

Every notification representing someone who picked up the phone, or sat down and filled in a report, to say, 'I am worried about this little one', and far too often nothing changed. Those children did not stop needing protection when the calls went unanswered. Many of them had to grow up far too fast. Some grew up angry at a world that had let them down, and too many of them are now in our youth justice system.

These are kids who never got the care and protection they deserved, from a system that was meant to keep them safe. The outcome of the review confirms my concerns and lays them bare. It found no overarching framework that clearly sets out the department's statutory child protection role and how its policies, practice frameworks and risk tools support it.

It found the relationship between the department's legal responsibilities, its operating model and its main practice approach is not sufficiently clear. It found the department's response to children at risk is predominantly reactive and it found the department's structure and operating arrangements have not kept pace with what is needed on the ground.

It gave a voice to frontline staff empowering them to raise their concerns over a lack in executive leadership. The review is clear that what happened to Kumanjayi Little Baby cannot be seen as one case management failure. It points to systemic shortcomings across the department and calls for a system-wide reset of child protection in the Territory.

It is important to place on the record that this report makes no adverse findings against any individual staff or frontline staff more generally. Child protection workers do one of the hardest jobs there is, often in remote places and with insufficient resources, carrying things home with them that most of us will never have to.

The review heard from them. Many of its recommendations are about supporting them better through recruitment, supervision, training and leaders who turn up in the regions. I thank them for their work.

The Territory has been here before, however, and so has the nation. In 1997, the 'Bringing them Home' report made 54 recommendations; in 2007, the Little Children are Sacred report made 97 recommendations; and in 2010 the Board of Inquiry into the Child Protection System made 147 recommendations. That is almost 300 recommendations from three major inquiries alone.

Then there are the coronial findings. Most notably in 2008 Coroner Greg Cavenagh was damning about the dysfunctional nature of the child protection system in the Territory, following what he described as the appalling and needless death of 12-year-old Deborah Melville, placed in the care of her aunt by the then Department of Health and Families in spite of multiple red flags. In another inquiry he found a seven-week-old baby probably would not have died from starvation in the back of a car in 2005 if the department had acted properly. In these reports, a total of 14 recommendations were made, eight of which required legislative changes.

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In addition, there are the reports of previous Children's Commissioners. For example, in 2018 the then Children's Commissioner, Colleen Gwynne, made 14 recommendations after identifying serious failures in the child protection system in relation to an assault on a two-year-old girl in Tennant Creek.

After almost three decades of reports, the situation has not improved. Report after report has been accepted, filed and forgotten. While the reports have piled up, generations of Territory kids have missed out on the childhood they deserved: happy memories, going to bed with food in their belly and knowing they were safe and loved.

With this mountain of reports and recommendations, we have to ask why there has been no change. Put simply, Labor governments repeatedly put ideology first resulting in at-risk children remaining in unsafe homes. I said it previously, but it bears repeating: a child's culture matters but it can never come before safety.

This is not a situation that only impacts the Territory, the fact is child protection systems across this country are in crisis. Successive Labor governments across our entire nation have similarly put so-called progressive beliefs ahead of child safety.

I will not stand here and table another report so it can sit on a shelf. This government has already shown it is not afraid to make hard changes to keep Territory children safe. The Every Child Matters Bill reforms were built on a simple principle: every child's safety must be treated the same, regardless of their background or culture.

For that, we were condemned. The Commonwealth minister, Hon Tanya Plibersek and child protection ministers from every other state and territory, except Queensland, lined up against us. Not one of them asked for a briefing first. I thank the Honourable Amanda Camm, Queensland's Minister for Child Safety, for having the courage to stand with us. She understands that what works in a southern capital does not always work in remote Queensland or the Northern Territory. The Finocchiaro CLP government will not be shamed out of protecting children. We did not shy away from that fight and we will not shy away from this one.

The review makes 45 recommendations. Among them:

- an immediate audit of every current safety plan in the Territory, including police and intelligence checks on the adults' children are relying on
- mandatory, documented background checks on any adult given a protective role in a safety plan from now on
- a single risk assessment framework that treats domestic and family violence as a core risk to a child, not background
- clear guidance so child protection officers routinely consider seeking a domestic violence order to protect a child
- an independent evaluation of Signs of Safety, which has been the department's main practice model since 2019 yet has never been evaluated
- a targeted review of the department's structure to move resources to the frontline, and clear accountability for performance from the executive down.

The government accepts all 45 recommendations.

These recommendations will be implemented and the parliament will be told how we are tracking.

I thank Karen Webb APM and Greg Shanahan PSM for their work on this review. They have been thorough and frank and did not pull any punches. The Territory will be better for it.

This report gives us the pathway for the reform this system needs. It tells us plainly what is broken and what it will take to fix it. I am determined to fix this system and make our most vulnerable children safer. Next to raising my own children, it is the most important thing I will ever do.

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Kumanjayi Little Baby should be finishing her first year of school, counting down to Christmas and getting ready for the school holidays. We owe her more than a report. We owe her change and I intend to see it through.

Madam Speaker, I table the report.

I move that the report be noted.

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17	Noes 7
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr McGrath
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Mr Smelt
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; debate adjourned.

LANDS AND PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RED TAPE REDUCTION) BILL
Serial 77

Continued from 26 August 2026.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, like the stakeholders who made submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, we support any measures that genuinely reduce unnecessary or duplicative regulatory burden for local businesses. We hear loud and clear from businesses and industry that regulatory requirements can be experience frustrating, costly and time-consuming. We get it.

We live in an increasingly complex world. Protections for our community, workers and environment need to be balanced with the need for businesses to grow and flourish. Businesses and industry are dealing with multiple levels of government, each with their own roles and responsibilities. The layers of law and regulations they need to adhere to can become incredibly onerous. Good laws matter. They protect important rights, establish a baseline of order and provide certainty for the community and businesses alike. However, I can understand why for businesses it can sometimes feel like playing a game of footy where the rules keep changing and new rules are added after every quarter.

The CLP government's efforts to reduce red tape are in principle admirable. It sought advice from a group of eminent Territorians with considerable lived experience and developed a series of proposed red-tape reductions. Where things have gone awry is in the execution.

As I said, some aspects of this Bill are sensible and workable and we will support those changes, but there are other aspects that are simply unsupportable because they failed the fundamental test of this Bill. The purpose is in the name—red-tape reduction—but in some cases these amendments do the opposite.

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The changes we cannot support raise four key concerns. They water down transparency and rigour in planning, development and place naming; remove the statutory role of councils in planning, development and place naming; diminish the voices of Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal Territorians; and in some cases create unintended consequences that could add administrative steps, documentation, delays, costs and regulatory uncertainty for certifiers, builders, consultants and building owners.

Some of the proposed changes in this Bill demonstrate that the minister has failed to consult and understand the practical consequences of the legislation he has introduced. That is particularly concerning because he appears not to have consulted with industry about many of these changes. I will go through a few of the stakeholders' key concerns.

Clause 69 removes the statutory entitlement of councils to appear before the consent authority when they have made a submission on a development application. Effectively, whether a hearing occurs and who gets to participate becomes discretionary rather than mandatory. The consequence is that local knowledge about traffic, drainage, services, amenity and other impacts may simply not be heard by decision-makers. As anyone in business knows, uninformed decisions are usually bad decisions. That is not a criticism of members of the consent authority; it is recognition that decision-makers cannot always be expected to understand every little local implication of a proposal without hearing directly from those who know the area and are affected by the changes.

Aboriginal stakeholders are equally concerned about this change, particularly its impact on transparency and procedural fairness. Aboriginal Investment NT, an organisation charged with furthering the economic development of Aboriginal communities and creating economic opportunity for Aboriginal Territorians, made this point clearly in its submission to the scrutiny committee:

> *For Aboriginal organisations and communities, a written submission may not always be sufficient to convey:*
>
> - *cultural knowledge;*
> - *local community impacts;*
> - *Traditional Owner perspectives;*
> - *the significance of particular places or areas; or*
> - *the potential economic consequences of a proposal.*
>
> *The ability to provide evidence orally, through an appropriate representative or interpreter, and to respond to issues raised by a development proposal can therefore be particularly important.*

AINT also told the committee:

> *Efficiency should be achieved through better administration, not by silencing affected people or removing scrutiny.*

That is the fundamental issue at debate: reducing red tape should never mean reducing scrutiny.

There are similar concerns with provisions aimed at reducing scrutiny of Planning Scheme amendments and exceptional development permits. In effect, these changes could allow significant developments—potentially an LNG facility or a new apartment development—to proceed through an exceptional development permit without public notice, submissions, consultation or hearings. Public exhibition is an important way for Territorians to know what significant development is proposed for their neighbourhood or town. That is not over-regulation; it is fundamental right to be informed and have your say on major development.

The Bill also removes requirements to notify relevant councils or other submitters when no hearing will be held on a Planning Scheme amendment. It allows councils or other submitters to be prevented from responding and gives decision-makers the ability to selectively invite people to appear at hearings. Not every submission warrants a formal hearing—we accept that—but this Bill goes much further. It removes notice, response and reconsideration rights. It replaces a submitter's right attend a hearing with selective invitations. The result is fewer opportunities for public and local government scrutiny of planning proposals that may have significant consequences for communities, infrastructure and land use.

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The Bill also removes consultation on the naming of roads, parks and other public places. Placenames matter. They reflect who we are as a community; allow us to celebrate our history, culture and identity; and recognise Territorians who have made great contributions to our community. Removing the voices of councils, Aboriginal people and other key stakeholders about decisions on the naming of roads, streets, trails, parks and gardens is another example of this government extinguishing community voices.

It is also difficult to see how this reduces the regulatory burden for local business. I look forward to the minister explaining exactly who benefits from this change and what red tape it removes. We know that it removes the views of local councils that have strong connections to local history, culture and community identity.

It also fails to explicitly provide for Aboriginal cultural authority over Aboriginal language names, names proposed for Aboriginal land or names concerning places of cultural significance to Aboriginal Territorians. When considered alongside the range of legislative changes this government has passed over the past two years affecting Aboriginal interests, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is a broader pattern of removing legislative safeguards and diminishing the rights and voices of Aboriginal Territorians.

Taken on their own, some of these amendments may appear minor—a bit of tinkering around the edges in the name of streamlining. However, what we are hearing from Territorians, including councils and Aboriginal bodies, is concern about the cumulative impact of the CLP government's changes to our legislative framework and the gradual chipping away at their ability to influence or have a voice in critical decisions that impact their lives and the lives of Territorians they represent. There is concern about the way decision-making power is being slowly but surely centralised and placed in the hands of the few. It is deliberate and insidious.

the CLP's approach is to support the interests of a few at the expense of the many. Ultimately, this approach weakens our democratic system. It disempowers many Territorians. Ultimately, it makes for poor policy. It will achieve the opposite of what the CLP claims as red tape reduction. It will create more uncertainty, confusion, delay and erode confidence in our system. Stakeholders are asking the government to work with them to reduce red tape, not against them. It is a reasonable request.

Turning to the building amendments, there are a number of changes that have the potential to introduce additional administrative burden, delays, cost blow-outs and regulatory uncertainty for the construction sector. This is the polar opposite of what this Bill is supposed to achieve. We will be testing these concerns through consideration in detail.

Like many people in the building sector, we are concerned that the minister has not done his homework on some of these changes. More importantly, he does not appear to have tested them with industry or considered how they will work in practice. Poorly designed regulations do not just create paperwork; it creates delays and costs for businesses and ultimately for Territory consumers. If the government is serious about cutting red tape it should be listening to people who operate under these laws.

Parts of this Bill are sensible and should be supported but other parts are further examples of Minister Burgoyne confusing cutting red tape with cutting Territorians out. The minister is proposing changes that councils, Aboriginal organisations and industry are telling us it will not reduce red tape. They will reduce scrutiny, transparency and, in some cases, they create more work, more delays and costs.

The minister needs to explain who he consulted before developing this bill, what problems he is actually trying to solve and how these changes will reduce, not increase, regulatory burden, because in some instances it is not even clear what problem the minister is trying to fix. Instead, he appears to be creating new problems for the people and businesses he claims he is trying to help, that is, poor policy and poor execution. While we will support the sensible parts of this Bill, we will not support changes that reduce informed decision-making in planning processes, silence the voices of Territorians, diminish the role of councils and Aboriginal stakeholders or create more red tape delays and costs.

The government should take these concerns seriously, because cutting red tape should mean better regulation, not less accountability. It should mean making government easier to deal with, not making it harder for Territorians to have a say, and it should not mean cutting Territorians out.

Mr YAN: (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I support this bill because the Territory's economic future depends on our ability to turn opportunity into investment and jobs into lasting prosperity and that is what growth, certainty and security means in practice. These priorities guide our budget it and guide the changes we are making to help people invest, build and do business in the Territory.

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As Treasurer, I see the budget and these reforms as connected. Our spending decisions support the economy, while our laws and approval processes help determine how we effectively that investment can be delivered.

The Territory has substantial opportunities in resources, energy, tourism and agriculture. We also face economic challenges that require practical action. We have a small population spread across a vast area and businesses face long supply chains, substantial transport costs and the challenge of securing skilled workers.

Building infrastructure and delivering services across the Territory is also very expensive. We compete with larger states for investment and for workers and the families we need to grow our communities. Those conditions influence whether a project stacks up, whether a business expands and whether a family decides to stay here in the Territory and put down roots.

They also shape the choices we make in our budget. We must provide essential services, maintain infrastructure and support development across a large and diverse Territory from a comparably small economic base that makes growing the economy central to our financial future.

A stronger economy means more opportunities for Territorians to earn a living, build a business and support their family. It also helps strengthen the revenue base supporting our public services. The budget has an important role in that task. Public investment supports construction, provides essential infrastructure and helps create the conditions for further development.

We also need private businesses to invest their own money, employ people and create opportunities that continue beyond individual government projects. That is why improving the way government operates is part of responsible budget management and development.

Every unnecessary delay can add to the cost of development. Every unclear requirement can make planning even harder. Every avoidable administrative step takes time and resources from applicants and government alike. In a place where businesses already face the cost and distance of a smaller market, we must pay attention to the costs that government can influence. This Bill does that.

The Territory also needs a broader and more consistent flow of investment. Major projects create substantial opportunities, but their construction phases eventually finish. Local businesses need work beyond that point. As Treasurer, I want major investment to be accompanied by housing construction, business expansion and opportunities for smaller Territory firms. That gives builders, sparkies, suppliers and other businesses a better basis for retaining staff, training apprentices and investing in equipment. The budget contributes to that activity through public investment. These reforms complement that spending by improving the conditions for private development.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your conversations outside the Chamber or to the back.

Mr YAN: Consider the reduction in the ministerial decision-making timeframe for Planning Scheme amendment requests from 90 days to 30 days. That removes 60 days from that stage of the process. While an applicant waits, finance costs can accumulate, quotes can expire and contractors need to organise their next job. A clearer timetable helps applicants plan their finance, contracts and delivery. The community will retain the same time to review Planning Scheme amendments and proposals and make submissions. Government is taking responsibility for the time it takes to make its own decision. That is a practical contribution to certainty.

The other planning and place-naming changes follow the same principle—clearer responsibilities, appropriate delegation and simpler processes for routine matters.

These are everyday improvements that can make the Territory a more dependable place to invest. Housing shows why our budget and regulatory reforms need to work together. Growing our workforce requires places for people to live. Employers need to recruit staff. Workers need somewhere suitable to bring their families. Existing Territorians need opportunities to buy, build or move as their circumstances change. Housing is part of the productivity capacity of our economy.

The budget must consider the infrastructure and services needed to support growing communities. The planning system must also be capable of considering suitable developmental efficiency. This Bill helps by

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improving the process for considering land rezoning proposals. Homes will still require serviced land, finance and builders, and that demand will increase. Faster decisions help address one part of that wider task.

'Security' also has an economic meaning. For a family, a home may represent years of savings. For a business, its premises may be essential to its income and future. People need confidence in those investments.

The Bill provides a workable certification pathway for older buildings constructed when approvals were not required, including buildings used by the public. That pathway includes structural and fire safety requirements. It also allows building certifiers to seek a Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service report at the completion of works before occupancy certification. Identifying problems before people move in can prevent costly disruption and rectification at a later stage. Clear standards and workable certification help protect people and the long-term usefulness of our buildings.

Our budget requires careful responsible choices. We must balance immediate service pressures with investment in the Territory's future. We must also ensure public money is used effectively. Better administration supports that responsibility. When routine matters can be handled efficiently, government can direct more attention toward complex applications, significant risk and decisions requiring specialist expertise. For applicants, that can mean less time navigating processes. For governments, it means making better use of available staff and resources.

The economic challenges facing the Territory require sustained work across infrastructure, housing, skills and investment. Our budget is central to that work. This Bill supports it by improving the systems through which development is considered and buildings are certified; growth through jobs, investment and creating better conditions in the Territory; certainty through clearer rules and timely decisions; and security through safeguards that protect people and their investments.

As Treasurer, I support these reforms because a stronger economy and a sustainable budget depend on practical decisions that help the Territory move forward.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I support another brilliant red tape-reduction Bill brought by the Finocchiaro CLP government.

This Bill is an important part of our work that has been ongoing since we hit the ground running about reducing the red tape and ensuring that development can occur in the Northern Territory without overburdensome administration timelines.

This Bill protects the ability of the community to be consulted and for people to have a say. It speeds up those timelines to prevent delay after delay, which has seen numerous projects across the last decade where a proponent has an idea, the land and a proposal which might go up for consultation in February, then cannot proceed until the end of the Dry Season in the Top End.

I was in Alice Springs a couple of months ago talking to someone about how they go with the Wet Season when construction stops, and they informed me that they do not have the Wet Season like we do in the Top End. I learned a bit about geography. It is great to see construction can continue during the summer months in Alice Springs, but in the Top End, when the rain comes, the work stops. Sometimes the work continues and goes on and on, and they have to redo the same bit of road multiple times.

The changes in this Bill will help the Territory continue to develop. It will help make sure that timelines are kept to and even simple things, like the placenames process—you may remember from your time on council, Madam Speaker; I do not know how it was back in your day, but when the previous Labor government was in power, the developer would make a recommendation, it would go to get endorsed by the council, it went to the Place Names Committee and it would come back and say, 'No, we do not want these names. We want some other names.' Then it would go back to the developer who put in another proposal to the council, and that process can take six or seven months sometimes. It is an endless loop of feedback.

This allows low-risk naming to take place outside of that long tedious process where we are waiting months for council to ratify a decision, then a month or so for the Place Names Committee to get back. It is allowing people to get on with the job of naming our roads, streets and parks and ensuring that development can continue so that blocks can be titled and addresses can be given out. I wholeheartedly support the changes in this Bill to fix that mess.

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We heard also about the changes regarding when fire inspections are conducted and when they can do checks to make sure the buildings are fire compliant before the end of the construction period, which makes sure that work does not have to be unnecessarily repeated when it could have easily been avoided.

I wholeheartedly support this Bill, and I commend it to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnson): Madam Speaker, reducing red tape, cutting useless paperwork and speeding up approvals is good for the community and the Territory. Where this Bill removes double handling and cleans up old administrative bottlenecks, I support it.

We need a planning and building system that works efficiently, gives people clear answers and avoids unnecessary delays. Cutting red tape must not mean cutting out the community, local councils or basic safety checks. We should not have to choose between efficient approvals and a fair process and with a few practical amendments, this Bill can achieve both.

I have heard from other government members in this Chamber that these kinds of conversations and safeguards are just operational details. Consultation should be left to internal departmental guidelines and debating these matters in parliament is a waste of time and resources. I disagree.

One of our fundamental responsibilities in this Chamber is to make laws that protect Territorians and when the law removes a statutory right and leaves the matter open to departmental policy, that is not simply an administrative change. It changes the level of protection that the law provides to the community. Departmental guidelines can be changed without coming back to this parliament or being subject to the same public scrutiny as legislation.

That matters when the decisions affect public assets, cultural authority and the rights of people who otherwise may have little opportunity to be heard. Their involvement is not an unnecessary administrative burden. It helps ensure decisions are informed, practical, respectful, and that they work for the people and places affected. It is worth taking the time to get these laws right.

In this Bill, under the proposed changes to the *Place Names Act*, routine roads, laneways and local parks. could be named through a new streamline process involving the surveyor-general. I support faster decisions on straightforward proposals and there is no reason simple applications should be held up by months of unnecessary bureaucracy. We heard the Member for Goyder give us a description of things being passed backwards and forwards, but place names are not always straightforward. They can carry cultural, linguistic and historical significance that may not be obvious to someone who is not familiar with the area.

During committee briefings, the department confirmed that the proposed fast-track process does not include any statutory requirement to consult traditional owners or land councils about local place names. We heard in submissions that this was problematic. Aboriginal Investment NT said that seeking input from First Nations community is not red tape but a practical way to ensure that cultural authority, local history and correct language spellings are respected from the outset.

The organisation told the scrutiny committee, AINT does not accept that statutory notice, exhibition, consultation and hearing rights are merely red tape. These processes are often the only practical means by which Aboriginal people can identify and explain impacts on country waters, culture, communities and economic interests. it also warned that administrative guidelines are no substitute for protections in the legislation itself, and I agree with that principle.

I will be moving an amendment to address that—a straightforward amendment that where a proposed place name involves Aboriginal land, traditional language or First Nations history, the relevant land council, traditional owners or people with cultural authorities should be asked for input. It is not about preventing decisions from being made but making sure the right people are consulted before those decisions are finalised.

There is another gap that was identified through the scrutiny committee process in the proposed place naming changes. Local councils inherit responsibility for public subdivision roads, parks and stormwater infrastructure, which means they also inherit the ongoing maintenance costs and responsibilities associated with those assets. Yet under the new place naming rules, where private road owners get a statutory right to agree to a road name, local councils inheriting public roads get no formal say.

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Litchfield Council raised this concern in its submission, saying that the result is that a road vested in Litchfield Council may be named or renamed without council's agreement, while a privately owned road may not. Council, as the owner of the asset, would have less statutory standing than a private landowner. Council also made clear that its involvement in these decisions is not simply an administrative burden but allows the council to understand and manage the practical consequences for its municipality.

I will also be moving an amendment on this which is a simple way forward without creating any unnecessary delays. It will basically say that the local council must be asked about a proposed public road name. If it agrees, the proposal can proceed, but if it objects or does not respond within 30 business days, the proposal goes to the independent Place Names Committee for a review. This provides a clear timeframe, avoids indefinite delays and ensures there is an independent process when there is disagreement. It is a practical balance between efficiency and accountability.

The Bill also provides local councils with the opportunity to attend and speak at Planning Commission public hearings, which is sensible. The same opportunity should be available to representative Aboriginal organisations that have lodged submissions on those proposals. For Aboriginal organisations and communities, a written submission may not always be sufficient to convey cultural knowledge, local community impacts, traditional owner perspectives or the significance of particular places. This is an important consideration. Some matters are difficult to explain fully in writing, particularly when cultural knowledge and the significance of country or the impacts on a community need to be understood in context. If a public hearing is held, both local councils and representative Aboriginal organisations that have lodged submissions should have the opportunity to speak to those submissions.

This is about ensuring that people and organisations with relevant knowledge and concerns have a fair opportunity to put their case. Better-informed decisions are far more likely to stand the test of time and prevent any conflict in the future.

Finally, I address the exemption for temporary event marquees from occupancy certification requirements. I understand the intention. Community events and festivals should not be held up by unnecessary paperwork. We live in the Northern Territory where cyclones and severe winds are a reality, as we have seen over recent weeks. Temporary structures can present serious risks if they are not properly designed, secured and installed.

A large commercial marquee holding thousands of people is not the same as a small temporary shelter at a community event. We should not remove basic safety checks without considering the consequences. For large commercial event structures—including those holding more than 1,000 people—there should be appropriate engineering assessment of wind loading and tie-downs. That is a proportionate safeguard. It does not mean every small community event needs to navigate a complicated approval process; it means where large numbers of people gather under temporary structures basic structural safety must remain a priority.

I support the main objectives of this Bill. I support reducing unnecessary red tape, removing duplication and making planning and building approvals more efficient. I also strongly believe that good legislation must also protect public assets, respect cultural authority, provide fair opportunities for people to be heard and maintain appropriate safety standards. I will move amendments to that effect when we get to consideration in detail.

As Aboriginal Investment NT put it, efficiency should be achieved through better administration, not by silencing affected people or removing scrutiny.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all members who contributed to the debate, the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for its consideration of the Bill and those who made submissions. I also thank the Member for Arafura for taking the opportunity to receive a briefing on the Bill, unlike the Member for Nightcliff who perhaps needs to do his homework. I also acknowledge the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for its consideration of the Bill and thank the stakeholders who engaged with the committee process and provided submissions.

Upon its introduction the Bill was referred to the Legislative Security Committee. On 7 October 2026 the committee published its report, Inquiry into the Lands and Planning Legislation Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2026.

The report made 11 recommendations. The first recommendation was that the Legislative Assembly pass the Bill with the proposed amendments set out in the other five recommendations. This recommendation was

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noted. I have accepted three recommendations. An Assembly amendment schedule has been prepared that addresses these recommendations.

Specifically, recommendation 2 was raised as a concern in a number of submissions to the committee. In clarification of the protections against self-incrimination, the committee recommended the insertion of the word 'civil or' before 'criminal' in proposed sections 25H(4), 33(4) and 34E(4) of the *Building Act*.

This recommendation was not considered to sufficiently extend protections in line with the policy intent. The Assembly amendment drafted clarifies that immunity applies to any proceedings except for a proceeding against the person for professional misconduct under the Act or a proceeding for an offence against the Act.

Recommendation 7 addresses a typographical error that was not identified during drafting of the Bill. I appreciate the work done to ensure that this is all rectified during this process.

Recommendation 9 addresses the necessary consequential amendments missed during drafting. If this Assembly amendment is not made, the changes made through the Bill will enable the minister to consider whether an exceptional development permit is not so significant as to require public exhibition cannot be enacted.

The scrutiny committee made a number of other recommendations, specifically 3, 4, 5 and 6, which relate to minor improvements to the Building Regulations. Assembly amendments are not proposed for these recommendations. The committee's recommendations will be considered as part of the implementation prior to changes commencing through new regulations.

Recommendations 8, 10 and 11 relate to changes to the Northern Territory Planning Commission and Development Consent Authority meeting and hearing processes and response timeframes for enforcement notices. The committee recommended that the Bill be amended to retain the existing mandate to invite local government councils to meetings and hearings if they make a submission and for a longer timeframe to be provided for responses to enforcement notices. As these recommendations are inconsistent with the intent of the Bill, they have not been accepted.

This Bill amends the lands, planning and building legislation to deliver on the government's commitments under the Rebuilding the Economy strategy to reduce red tape by applying a risk-based regulatory approach, improve certainty in decision-making and reduce approval timeframes.

The Bill responds to recommendations from the Ombudsman NT investigation report, 'Can we fix it? Building certification in the NT'. The Bill also responds directly to feedback from industry stakeholders to increase efficiency and effectiveness in regulatory processes by removing lengthy and outdated processes.

This Bill amends the *Building Act 1993*, the Building Regulations 1993, the *Place Names Act 1967*, the *Planning Act 1999* and the *Valuation of Land Act 1963*. It repeals the Valuation of Land Regulations 1981. I will talk to the separate legislation amendments, starting with the *Building Act*.

The *Building Act* and regulations provide for the establishment of technical standards for buildings; the registration of building practitioners; and the regulation of building matters to ensure that buildings are safe, structurally sound and suitable for use.

First and foremost, the Bill fixes a long-term issue with certain buildings being unable to obtain occupancy certification even if the building is safe to use.

The amendments in the Bill also allow building certifiers to request a report from the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service before occupational certification is granted. An issue raised in the Ombudsman's investigation was the reportedly high proportion of buildings requiring fire safety rectification work after they were occupied. The changes will allow for any fire safety issues to be identified and addressed before a building is occupied. This does not apply to all buildings, but it is especially important for high-risk buildings such as hospitals, aged-care facilities and high-rise apartments. The involvement of the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service early in the building process ensures that any fire safety issues found during construction can be more readily and cost-effectively resolved compared with rectification work after the building is occupied.

This Bill also introduces a requirement for prescribed inspection certificates to be issued by a building certifier within 14 days of an inspection completed for residential building work. Some industry stakeholders have raised concerns that this requirement will increase costs or slow building activity. The government does not

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share that view. This amendment is not about creating additional red tape. It will ensure people building a home are better protected and important regulatory documents are given within a reasonable time after an inspection is completed. A 14-day requirement establishes a clear and fair expectation while supporting confidence in the building approval process.

I will talk briefly about the proposed change for the Director of Building Control to initiate an investigation. This change modernises the legislation and supports proactive monitoring of building work. The current process is reactive and relies on formal complaints being submitted. This change will allow the director to establish the facts and address potential risks before they escalate.

Most builders, plumbers and other practitioners act professionally, take pride in their work and do the right thing by their clients. An investigation into their work does not mean they have done anything wrong. If no breach is identified, no further action is required. However, when serious breaches or deliberate noncompliance is identified, particularly when it may place homeowners or the community at risk, Territorians rightly expect the regulator to respond appropriately.

Other minor amendments introduce a more flexible and risk-based approach to occupancy certification for buildings, temporary structures and places used for public assembly. This will make compliance easier and more practical for industry, while ensuring public safety remains paramount. These changes will give building practitioners options for compliance and Territorians assurance that the building they occupy meets national structural and fire safety requirements.

The current Act provides a single assessment pathway for all place-naming submissions regardless of their complexity or level of community interest. This means that straightforward submissions are subject to the same assessment processes as submissions with significant cultural or community importance. The amendments apply a risk-based approach that is proportionate to the level of risk and complexity of the submissions to be considered.

Most submissions relate to new roads, neighbourhood parks and new subdivisions. These are generally straightforward in nature and do not affect any existing residence. Applying a streamlined assessment process will reduce unnecessary administration and support more timely decision-making.

More significant submissions, such as requests relating to naming locality, suburbs, geographical features, public infrastructure and places of public or historic interest, will continue to be considered by the Place Names Committee. The committee's role is not being removed. These reforms allow the committee to focus its expertise on matters that require greater consideration and community engagement.

Importantly, the Bill does not change existing consultation requirements for Aboriginal placenames or names on Aboriginal land. Consultation with traditional owners and relevant language groups will continue in accordance with established policy and practice.

Commemorative naming is naming a place after someone who has passed away. This will always require the views of the family. All the descendants of the person to be commemorated are sought. This applies to both low-risk and complex submissions.

These amendments streamline decision-making for straightforward matters while ensuring places of cultural, historical and community significance continue to receive appropriate oversight and consultation.

The *Planning Act* establishes the legal framework to facilitate planning for the orderly use and development of land across the Territory. It governs the functions and powers of two independent statutory bodies, being the Development Consent Authority and the Northern Territory Planning Commission, and establishes compliance and enforcement powers and pathways, the conventions of the Act.

The amendments propose new statutory delegation powers for the Planning Commission to enable its powers and functions to be delegated to the chairperson or other members. The role of the commission is not altered through these changes; rather, they provide more flexibility in how it decides to carry out its work. This is a significant process enhancement for the commission and will improve efficiency in its roles under the Act.

The amendments in the Bill make changes to public hearing and meeting processes of the Development Consent Authority and Planning Commission, providing greater alignment in processes so that the community and industry know what to expect. The changes also provide more flexibility so that meetings and public hearings can be held only when they meaningfully contribute to the process.

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Other amendments extend the standard terms of appointment for Planning Commission and Development Consent Authority members from two years to four years. This reduces the administrative burden of frequent appointments, ensures continuity in leadership and better aligns the appointment period with longer-term projects that the Planning Commission leads.

Other amendments target improved efficiency and remove unnecessary red tape whilst ensuring adequate limits are maintained. These include changes to the exceptional development permit process, which include providing greater flexibility for decision-makers to determine when an application warrants public exhibition in a consistent way that other similar decisions are already made under the Act. At the same time, clarifying what an exceptional development permit application may be used for further strengthens the Act's operation.

In addition, ministerial decision timeframes for Planning Scheme amendments will be reduced from 90 days to a more contemporary 30-day period. This will streamline the Planning Scheme amendment process in particular without changing how notification about these applications is provided to the community or how submissions are received and considered.

The *Valuation of Land Act* sets out the rules for how land in the Northern Territory is officially valued. The values are mainly used by local councils to work out council rates under the Act. Landowners and councils receive information about the unimproved capital value of their land. This is the value of the land without any buildings or improvements. Landowners receive this advice every three years with their notice of valuation.

The Bill makes some minor amendments to this Act to modernise the legislation and improve administrative efficiency. A key change to the Act is to clarify requirements for the service of notices to allow for notices to be sent by email. The amendments also clarify provisions relating to the service of notices to ensure legislative timeframes are applied consistently and with greater certainty.

The Bill also amends the Act to specify a fee for obtaining certified copies of entries in the valuation roll and states this fee as revenue units rather than a dollar value, consistent with other legislation. The fee is currently specified in the regulations. By including it in the Act, the regulations can be repealed.

Together, these are practical and sensible changes that modernise the Act, reduce unnecessary administrative burden and support more efficient service delivery while maintaining existing valuation processes and protections for landowners.

This Bill supports the government's commitment to rebuilding the economy through practical regulatory reform that improves certainty, reduces unnecessary red tape and supports housing and development across the Territory. It addresses longstanding issues with building certification that have been left for too long. It aligns with the government's broader priorities under the Rebuilding the Economy strategy and the Restoring the Territory Lifestyle strategy.

The amendments I have outlined are targeted practical reforms that modernise legislation, streamline administrative processes and improve the efficiency of regulatory decision-making. Together, these changes will support more timely service delivery; reduce costs for the community, industry and government; and ensure our regulatory frameworks remain fit for purpose.

I again acknowledge the contributions of everyone who spoke in this debate; the members of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee; the stakeholders who contributed to the scrutiny process; the staff in the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel who, as always, have done an exceptional job in preparing the Bill and Assembly amendment schedule; and last, but not least, the officers from the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment who contributed to the development of the Bill.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Assembly will consider the Lands and Planning Legislation Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2026, Serial 77, together with amendment schedule 77GOV circulated by the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment; amendment schedule 77OPP circulated by the Member for Nightcliff; and amendment schedule 77IND circulated by the Member for Johnston.

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There is a number of amendments to the same clauses, so I have a script that is the natural order of proceedings that I will follow.

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, considered together and agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr SMELT: Can you outline why you are making this change and what you want to achieve with these changes to clause 6?

Mr BURGOYNE: This clause inserts the words 'at the request of the Minister' in section 11(1)(a) to specify that a function of the advisory committee is to advise the minister on the administration of the Act at the request of the minister. The advisory committee is formed with members appointed by the minister. This change clarifies that the function of the advisory committee is to respond to matters determined by the minister.

Mr SMELT: That sounds like the explanatory statement. Can you tell us why you are making this change and what do you want to achieve by it?

Mr EDGINGTON: You can read the explanatory statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please do not interrupt. I will let the minister decide.

Mr BURGOYNE: I feel as though I have explained why we are making it.

Mr SMELT: What are the benefits of this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: This removes the duplication in the role and functions of the director, increasing efficiency in administration. The committee is a ministerial advisory group that is paid by government and should be focused on the matters and interests of the minister, rather than be a forum for groups to lobby the minister on their key interests.

Mr SMELT: In developing this change, who did you consult?

Mr BURGOYNE: I am sure this question will be asked throughout the process today. The changes that we are making through this legislation have gone through a range of different stakeholders. We have spoken at length about the processes that our government has done, including going out to industry to get its recommendations that have informed our legislative changes. We will continue to listen to industry and implement legislation that is formed on advice from industry.

Mr SMELT: Did you seek the advice of the advisory council in developing this recommendation?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mr SMELT: How will the advisory committee alert the government to issues of concern if it has been written out of the legislation? How can it provide proactive advice, not just reactive advice?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to remember that stakeholders are always welcome to raise any concerns or issues they may have with the director of the department, thus improving the efficiency of addressing matters experienced by the industry.

Mr SMELT: You have this advisory council, so surely it is there to proactively advise you. Why has this been taken out of the Act?

Mr BURGOYNE: The advisory committee is a committee of government. It should be focused on the priorities of government. We have a range of ways in which anyone in industry can continue to raise their concerns so that they are heard. That is what why we are making these changes.

J DAVIS: Is the advisory committee a part of government or is it independent?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is a ministerial advisory committee. The members are selected by me as minister.

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Mr SMELT: If this will only provide advice regarding the government of the day's agenda, how will you get feedback on things that are not part of your agenda?

Mr BURGOYNE: I state again that stakeholders are always welcome to raise any concerns or issues they may have, either as an individual building practitioner or the representative body, with the director of the department. That is not changing. There is a number of ways in which they can raise their concerns to the director of building who can then raise these issues with the minister.

Mr SMELT: If that is the case, how is this change cutting red tape?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are focusing the Building Advisory Committee's work so that its time is not taken up doing work that the building director can already do.

Mr SMELT: Are organisations, businesses and peak bodies welcome to contact the director anytime that they have an issue or a concern?

Mr BURGOYNE: I will state again—because the Member for Nightcliff may not be hearing—that stakeholders are always welcome to raise any concerns or issues they may have with the director of the department. This improves the way in which their concerns are to be heard. As the minister, I meet with representative stakeholders regularly.

Mr SMELT: Was an assessment done on the proactive advice provided by the advisory council before making this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: Sorry; I do not understand your question.

Mr SMELT: Was an assessment done on the proactive advice provided by the advisory council before making this change? Was there some sort of risk assessment or other evaluation of the proactive advice before it was removed?

Mr BURGOYNE: I am trying to drill down for you so that you can better understand why I have made these changes.

The Building Advisory Committee has an important job to do. It meets monthly and its work needs to ensure that it is achieving the government of the day's outcomes. The issue that you raised is about stakeholders being able to raise concerns to the minister and that not now being taken up by the advisory committee. Those concerns can be raised through the building director. The important distinction to make is that the Building Advisory Committee will be advising the government on issues that we deem relevant. Any other issues that stakeholders may have can be raised through the building director to the minister.

We are improving efficiencies because we understand the important work that the Building Advisory Committee does. It is a paid committee that meets monthly. We want to ensure that when it meets it focuses on the things it needs to consider.

VISITORS
MacKillop Catholic College

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 8 students from MacKillop Catholic College accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you all.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr SMELT: Was a risk assessment done?

Mr BURGOYNE: I am not sure what you mean by 'risk assessment'.

Mr SMELT: Currently you receive proactive advice from the advisory council. That is being written out of the legislation. Has a risk assessment or some sort of assessment been done to assess whether any issues that previously came to that council will not? Will there be any impacts to the advice that you received from the council as a result of this change?

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Mr BURGOYNE: Without going into further parts of the Bill, as we move through it you will see that the director of building will have further powers to act when issues are raised. This change is occurring to strengthen the building director's response. Any issues can be raised with him directly and brought to my attention.

Mr SMELT: Has no risk assessment been undertaken?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are giving the director of building the necessary tools he needs to respond to issues that are raised, ensuring that we are achieving the said outcome. The Building Advisory Committee was set up to look at specific things. Stakeholders can raise issues with the director or the department and action can be taken.

Mr SMELT: There was no risk assessment, so who requested this change? Who raised this as an issue?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are streamlining the processes so that the Building Advisory Committee is not dealing with day to-day issues. The director of building's position has been strengthened and his ability to make investigations, which will become apparent as we move through this legislation, has been strengthened. We are doing this to ensure that everyone is getting on with the important work that they are required to do.

Mr SMELT: Who requested this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: All the changes that we have made through our legislation are informed by stakeholders, by the industry itself. We are ensuring that there is a direct line of communication through to the minister through to government so that we can act on their concerns.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am conscious that the same question is being repeated a number of times and the minister is giving the same answers. Therefore, I urge you to move on to a different line of questioning.

Mr SMELT: Can you name one stakeholder or peak body that has requested this change?

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! It is clearly repetition; he is asking the same question a different way.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I agree.

Member for Nightcliff, you have asked this question a number of times which is quite fair. The minister keeps responding in the same way. I do not think we are getting too far. I ask you again to move on to a different line of questioning.

Mr SMELT: I put on the record that the Territory Labor opposition does not support this change.

The role of the Building Advisory Committee is to provide guidance to the minister on the administration, operation and impact of the *Building Act*, as well as examine and report back to the minister on specific building-related matters that are referred to it. It comprises representatives from across the building and construction sectors to ensure practical industry perspectives shape regulation and policy. It is an important role that contributes to the effective and safe operation of the building and construction industry.

Inserting 'at the request of the Minister' in section 11(1)(a) narrows the scope of the Building Advisory Committee, hampering it from providing critical advice to the government in a proactive way. Given the complexity of the construction industry, this could mean that the BAC is aware of issues or potential issues that may go unnoticed by decision-makers until they rise to a level of significant public concern. BAC has always played a proactive role in providing advice and guidance to strengthen the building industry. Removing these functions of BAC to a reactive role creates a level of risk for the minister. This is not a streamlining measure; it is a watering down of advice that supports a strong construction industry.

We do not see how this cuts red tape or achieves anything meaningful. As I said, we will not support it.

J DAVIS: This clause, as we have heard, means that the Building Advisory Committee can give advice only at the request of the minister. I think that has been clear.

Mr BURGOYNE: What is being lost throughout debate on this clause is that, as the minister, I can ask the Building Advisory Committee to advise me on the big issues that are happening in the building industry. It

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can write and provide that advice however it likes. I receive advice from the department. In the last two years I cannot remember the Building Advisory Committee feeling the need to write to the minister advising of any issues that I need to be advised of.

It is important to understand that the director of building works closely with the Building Advisory Committee so that issues are dealt with as they are raised, before they need to be raised at a ministerial level. The stakeholders and people who have issues may raise them with the director of building or through the Building Advisory Committee and still have their issues heard by government as any other stakeholder group would. We appreciate the work of the committee.

J DAVIS: I have not quite asked my question yet. Does that mean now the Building Advisory Committee can give you advice only if you explicitly ask for it first?

Mr BURGOYNE: It can continue to advise. It can continue to write me letters. It is at the request of the minister; I can ask them to look into something specific.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 8:

Mr BURGOYNE: I move amendment 1 to clause 8.

This clause inserts new Division 1A to provide for the director to investigate any matter relating to compliance with the Act and the regulations in the carrying out of building work, including the conduct of building practitioners.

Amendment 1 replaces section 25H(4) with a new section 25H(4):

(4) However, the information, answer or document is not admissible in evidence against the person in any proceeding other than:

(a) a proceeding against the person for professional misconduct under this Act; or

(b) a proceeding for an offence against this Act.

The amendment clarifies that immunity applies to any proceedings except for a proceeding against a person for professional misconduct under this Act or a proceeding for an offence against this Act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 9, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr BURGOYNE: I move amendment 2 to clause 10.

This clause amends section 33 to strengthen the provisions to explicitly provide that a person is not excused from providing information that may incriminate or make the person liable for a penalty and to clarify that the information is not admissible in evidence against the person in any criminal proceedings other than a proceeding for an offence against the *Building Act 1993*.

Amendment 2 replaces section 33(4) with a new section 33(4):

(4) However, the information, answer or document is not admissible in evidence against the person in any other proceeding other than a:

(a) a proceeding against the person for professional misconduct under this Act; or

(b) a proceeding for an offence against this Act.

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The amendment clarifies that immunity applies to any proceedings except for a proceeding against the person for professional misconduct under this Act or proceeding for an offence against this Act.

J DAVIS: I support this and the upcoming amendment, and I am grateful to the minister for taking on recommendations as outlined by the scrutiny committee. I put that on the record because it is always great to see that happen.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 11:

Mr BURGOYNE: I move amendment 3 to clause 11.

This clause amends section 34E to strengthen the provisions to explicitly provide that a person is not excused from providing information that may incriminate or make the person liable for a penalty and clarify that the information is not admissible in evidence against the person in any criminal proceedings other than proceeding for an offence against the *Building Act 1993* or a proceeding.

Amendment 3 replaces section 34E(4) with a new section 34E(4):

(4) However, the information, answer or document is not admissible in evidence against the person in any other proceeding other than a:

(a) a proceeding against the person for professional misconduct under this Act; or

(b) a proceeding for an offence against this Act.

The amendment clarifies that immunity applies to any proceedings except for a proceeding against the person for professional misconduct under this Act or proceeding for an offence against this Act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 17, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 18:

Mr SMELT: Can you explain on what basis you made the decision to remove 'in all material respects' from the legislation?

Mr BURGOYNE: This seeks to remove the ambiguity relating to the term 'in all material respects'. Rather than a continued reliance on a policy document that attempts to clarify the meaning of this term, by removing it entirely the amendment seeks to ensure that consumers are better protected by requiring all building work to comply with the *Building Act* and the regulations, which is consistent with legislation in other jurisdictions.

Mr SMELT: Who did you consult with in relation to making that particular change?

Mr BURGOYNE: I said it earlier: I am right; I knew this question was coming today.

Mr SMELT: I am glad you prepared.

Mr BURGOYNE: We continue to speak and listen to all industry stakeholders and representatives. It is how we came to formulate this legislation that we are putting forward.

Mr SMELT: Did that include the building certification industry?

Mr BURGOYNE: We have spoken and listened to a number of institutions that that have been a part of this process.

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Mr SMELT: Can you confirm that the building industry certification industry was consulted?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mr SMELT: What was the feedback it gave on this clause?

Mr BURGOYNE: We will continue to speak and listen to all necessary stakeholders. I will not give a blow-by-blow report of what each person said during this process.

Mr SMELT: Did it support this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: I have answered the question.

Mr SMELT: How will this clause reduce red tape?

Mr BURGOYNE: I will say it again in case the Member for Nightcliff did not listen. We are removing the ambiguity relating to the term 'in all material respects'. Rather than a continued reliance on a policy document that attempts to clarify the meaning of this term, by removing it entirely the amendment seeks to ensure that consumers are better protected by requiring that all building work comply with the *Building Act* and the regulations, which is consistent with legislation in other jurisdictions.

This is an important change and I appreciate that it will give certainty for those in the Northern Territory.

Mr SMELT: That does not sound like moving red tape at all. What benefits are there, such as timely approvals, reduced costs or reduced administrative burden—or any of the red tape examples that you would typically suggest with a change like this? How will that reduce any of those things?

Mr BURGOYNE: Consumer protection is important. We are continuing to protect consumers through the changes that we are making, as well as obviously removing red tape throughout this Bill.

Mr SMELT: In terms of the 14-day inspection period, did you consult with industry on how this particular change will work in practice?

Mr BURGOYNE: The proposed 14-day timeframe responds to identified failures of building certifiers to issue inspection certificates in a timely manner. It is consistent with other timeframes throughout the Act. This provides sufficient time for the certifier to submit the certificate.

Mr SMELT: Is it possible that this reduced timeframe might lead to more failed inspections because people cannot meet that 14-day timeframe?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to outline that if an inspection is done and the work has not been completed to the certifier's standards, obviously it will not pass. That is part of it.

The proposed 14-day timeframe ensures that building certifiers issue those inspection certificates so that work can continue to proceed. That is the important part. We are saying to certifiers, 'Issue those inspection certificates in a timely manner so that work can continue'.

Mr SMELT: What are the consequences if the certifier does not meet that 14-day window?

Mr BURGOYNE: There are penalties in the Act.

Mr SMELT: Is it likely that in order to meet that tighter timeframe there could be pressure on certifiers to make a quicker decision or that it may lead to an increased number of rejections because they cannot meet that timeframe?

Mr BURGOYNE: Once again, let me be clear about what is happening. A certifier is inspecting work. It either passes or it does not, based on, obviously, whether it complies with the Act. The proposed 14-day timeframe ensures that the certifier completes his paperwork, once he has viewed and inspected, in a timely manner so that the rest of the building can continue. That is what it is about.

Mr SMELT: Can you not see that putting a tighter timeframe on issuing these reports may lead to a situation where the certifier may be rushed into providing a quicker response, and it is safer for them to reject it than to pass it?

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Mr BURGOYNE: I hit home with an important clarification: this is an inspection certificate that a certifier does to ensure that the work continues in the manner in which it should. The 14-day timeframe just responds to the fact that if a certifier was to inspect and was happy with everything, but was unable to issue that inspection certificate in a timely manner, the builder would essentially be held up. We are putting a timeframe around it which ensures that they can complete their certificate in a timely manner whilst not putting on added pressure. We are ensuring that everyone can get on with business.

Mr SMELT: I put on the record that the Territory Labor opposition will oppose this clause. We have a number of concerns about this, particularly the 'in all material respects' removal and the 14-day inspection period.

Currently, the phrase 'in all material respects' exists in policy. It is taken to mean that the building certifier must be satisfied that all the important and essential aspects of the building work, at the time of the inspection, were in place and in accordance with the building permit and approved plans. It recognises that the building certifier is not a building site supervisor and cannot oversee all aspects of the building work during construction. Removing 'in all material respects' puts more onus on a building certifier to sight all evidence and documents and will create time delays and additional costs to the consumer. This is a high level of compliance. It will have flow-on effects to other practitioners and will increase red tape, the opposite of what the minister is seeking to achieve.

Building certifiers said that there was no consultation on these changes. This clause should be withdrawn until all practical consequences of its removal have been consulted on and a workable replacement for the materiality threshold is developed.

In terms of the 14 day inspection period, clause 18 inserts at section 63(7):

… and be issued within 14 days after the date of the inspection.

This is problematic when combined with removing the 'in all material respects' because it adds many steps and inputs into the process, so it will be difficult to achieve within the 14-day timeframe and will increase the likelihood that the inspection will be failed due to not meeting the timeframe and, ultimately, the consumer will pay.

It is difficult to understand why the minister has not consulted industry more broadly and in more detail on these changes to understand the practical day-to-day implications and potential unintended consequences of this change. It is difficult to understand what the urgency is with bringing this in without first doing the homework on it. This will potentially cause more damage and delay and should be paused until the background work is done.

Mr BURGOYNE: The proposed amendments are consistent with equivalent legislation in other jurisdictions and will ensure that consumers are better protected. Requirements only relate to inspections for residential building work and do not apply to all building projects. No homeowner wants to find out that part of their completed home is not compliant after a long and costly build. There are six inspection stages which are important points in the building of a home at which a building certifier can be satisfied that the work is compliant with requirements and that further work is safe to proceed.

For those opposite to lecture this side of the House on not understanding how this works is a joke. I worked in this industry. I understand that we are trying to ensure what occurs and give certainty to builders so that once a certifier has been onsite, looked at the work and is happy for it to continue, they can continue in a timely manner. That is important.

I notice those opposite are smiling, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are trying to ensure that we make things easier, progress things and streamline processes so that people can build homes because we know how important it is to deliver on housing here in the Northern Territory.

Clause 18 agreed to.

Clause 19:

Mr SMELT: Exempting temporary structures used for public events such as marquees and shade structures from meeting occupancy certificates puts the onus on councils to ensure those structures are safe. Have you consulted with the Local Government Association of the NT or councils about this change?

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Mr BURGOYNE: It is clear that although we are not requiring it to be certified, if anyone wanted to still have their structure certified, there is nothing stopping them from doing that. It is an important piece that everyone has missed. We know there are temporary structures that are put up for celebrations simply up for a matter of days and then they are taken down, so we do not want to put the highest level of certification on them. However, if someone wanted to ensure that structure was sound, they could get it certified if they wish.

J DAVIS: Can you confirm that there is no limit on crowd capacity or floor size for these exempt marquees? For example, could a commercial tent holding 5,000 people be exempt?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is based on internal structured and tiered seating. If you were to go to a circus, we can understand that it would take time to evacuate everyone from that structure because of the tiered nature of the seating, those structures will continue to require certification. We are trying to simplify it so that simple, temporary structures that are put up do not require certification. If someone wanted to seek certification, they could.

J DAVIS: There is nothing about floor size or capacity, it is only if there is tiered seating?

Mr BURGOYNE: It relates to internal structured or tiered seating.

J DAVIS: There is no statutory requirement that a tent or marquee that could hold 5,000 people in a cyclone zone needs to have appropriate tie-downs. It is up to the people to decide that this would be a good thing to do. Is that right?

Mr BURGOYNE: What we are seeking to do is to not put further burdensome certification issues on people that set up temporary structures. We can put worst case scenarios—as the Member for Johnson is trying to do—but we are trying to streamline and ensure that it is clear, is that temporary structures do not require that certification. If for whatever reason the person erecting it was concerned, they are able to seek that certification.

J DAVIS: Thank you for the clarification. I am not talking about the sausage sizzle down the road putting up a temporary structure. I am talking about the not worse scenario but about things that happen in the Territory all the time—you made reference in your first speech about events that have massive numbers of people. That is a comment and I understand your answer.

Mr SMELT: Drawing on the Member for Johnston on that one. There is no per-head limit, it is only the tiered seating?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is right. The requirement is on tiered seating and internal structures.

Mr SMELT: Back to the first question, have you consulted with LGANT or councils on this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: Whilst you might feel the councils will be impacted particularly by this change, it is important to acknowledge that anyone putting up a temporary structure would have been impacted had it been included. I know that this is the whole purpose of what we are trying to do, which is to exclude specific temporary structures from requiring certification. It will not stop someone seeking certification from such structures to do so if they want. Your argument of, 'Do councils want this?'—they are able to seek certification should they so wish.

Mr SMELT: Has there been any risk assessments or the like done on this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are trying to ensure that those seeking to erect temporary structures do not have a burdensome legislation imposed upon them. Should anyone erecting a temporary structure want to seek certification, they are able to.

Mr SMELT: No-one on this side of the House disagrees with that summary. This is really about what steps have you taken to make sure that you are confident in making this change does not provide unnecessary risk to community? Have you done a safety risk assessment on this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: We would not be implementing legislation if we believed it was going to lead to unsafe conditions; that is the whole purpose. We are trying to ensure that we are putting in legislation that is fit for purpose, and ensures that we are also working with the community so that we are not putting burdensome legislation upon them. If they were to erect a tent or a small shade shelter, they would require certification.

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That is essentially what this boils down to: when we create legislation in this space, the unintended consequences can be that a lot of people are caught up.

I say again to anyone who is listening to the debate today that if people want to ensure that there is still certification required for those larger structures that are temporary of nature, they are able to seek it.

J DAVIS: Was there any consideration given to making explicitly clear that this would not apply to the small things you are talking about, but that there would be a requirement for massive events?

Mr BURGOYNE: This is what it comes down to in definitions when we are defining a temporary structure: something that is temporary in nature that can house people but does not have any tiered seating or engineered structures within it. That is the definition by which we are going and what we are trying to ensure that we are not unintentionally incorporating all small temporary structures into this legislation, because that would be an issue for people outside,

I will say again, we are ensuring, through this process, that if someone wants to seek certification for such a structure they can, but we are not putting a burdensome onus on those who wish to put up a small marquee that they are required to seek certification.

J DAVIS: Understood, minister. Was there any consideration given to enable that to happen exactly as you have said, while still putting protections in place for major events? I am guessing the answer is no,

Mr BURGOYNE: When we are considering legislation, we consider many things throughout the drafting and process. These are things that were quite literally debating now. The whole point of the matter is when you are defining a temporary structure, as is in the legislation, the decision we have to make is do we do we exclude them or include them?

The decision has been made to exclude temporary structures so that those people out in the community who are erecting temporary structures all the time do not require certification. If they were captured and something occurred, they would then be in breach of the legislation. That is an important point to make. We do not want to over-govern and put burdensome legislation in place that seeks everyone who pops up a tent to get it certified.

Our government is ensuring that we have the necessary legislation in place so we can keep people safe, but also streamline these processes. If anyone wanted to seek certification for such a temporary structure they are able to.

J DAVIS: Is there a legislative reason that this clause could not say this excludes temporary structures with a capacity of more than 2,000 people?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are seeking to clarify what is or is not included as part of the Act. I will leave it at that.

Clause 19 agreed to.

Clause 20:

Mr SMELT: Following on from previous clause 18, we do not support this amendment. We reiterate our view that the minister should put this on hold and consult with the industry, the building certified peak body and others in the industry and come back with a better version.

Clause 20 agreed to.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Attack on Dr Helen Haines MP

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the horrific attack on Dr Helen Haines MP, the Member for Indi, yesterday afternoon in Wangaratta in northern Victoria.

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At 3.35 pm yesterday outside of her electorate office, Dr Haines was viscously and deliberately rammed twice by a man driving a vehicle. She had just attended the opening of a dog park where she talked happily with her local community members and constituents.

As a result of the attack, Dr Haines has suffered severe injuries and had lost one of her legs. She remains in a critical condition at the Alfre Hospital in Melbourne as she fights for her life.

Our thoughts and prayers are with her, her loved ones, her colleagues and her constituents in this awful and incomprehensible time.

Territorians and all Australians are shocked and disturbed by this act of violences against the Member for Indi and this assault on our democracy. There is no place for violence in Australia anywhere, anytime, against anyone or in our democracy and its institutions.

The Member for Indi has represented the federal electorate since 2019. She is the model of a good and caring community representative. Working constructively from the crossbench for the betterment of her constituents and the country, she is universally respected and loved by all members on all sides of politics. The outpourings of grief and love over the last day demonstrates this.

Politics in Australia has mostly avoided the violence that has plagued other parts of the world and this disturbing attack shocks all of us. Politicians should be free to do their job in and amongst their communities without intimidation or fear of violence, threats or extremism. Each of us, whether we are parliamentarians, community leaders or everyday citizens, have a responsibility to preserve the respect, peacefulness and decency that has defined our democracy and made our country special for 125 years.

We acknowledge the selfless heroism of Wangaratta barber, Ricky Jefferies and, indeed, all bystanders who supported. Ricky bravely came to the Member for Indi's aid by tackling the offender, disarming him and detaining him until the police arrived.

We thank all our first responders and the healthcare heroes for their calm expertise while caring for the Member for Indi in what were extremely confronting and shocking circumstances.

On behalf of this Assembly and all Territorians, we send our thoughts and prayers to the Member for Indi and her family and wish her a strong recovery from this terrible attack that has changed her life forever.

There are many questions that remain unanswered and we trust in the police to do their important work now to deliver justice.

In the meantime, we send strength and love from the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO (Oppositiion Leader): Madam Speaker, across the Chamber, our Territory Labor team also echo the sentiment from the Chief Minister. This is clearly a shock across the country. Democracy in Australia is something that we defence—rightfully so.

In the Northern Territory we feel the pinch. We know that all of our communities are deeply connected, particularly across the country. We know the sentiment, feelings and our thoughts are all with Dr Haines at this time.

The honour of being a local member and being elected by a community to represent your constituents and fellow Australians is a privilege that all of us carry. Each member across the country carries it in every jurisdiction.

An attack in an incident such as this sends shockwaves through not just the community, but all the colleagues who are elected members as well. Dr Haines is in everybody's thoughts. The process that is under way to ensure that there is justice carried out for this horrific incident.

There is a deep connection with Dr Haines with the Daly electorate. My team, particularly the Member for Daly has met Dr Haines. She is a fierce supporter of the Thamarrurr Youth Indigenous Corporation from Wadeye. The community of Bright hosts young people from Wadeye. Dr Haines is a big supporter of that program.

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The Member for Daly and his constituents are thinking of her and sending their best wishes to Dr Haines and her staff as well. Our staff are fierce supporters of our members and their family members. We are thinking of Dr Haines and all the shock that is happening now, hoping that the carriage of justice is seen to its fulsome effect across the country.

We stand by Dr Haines and thank the Chief Minister for her statement in acknowledging Dr Haines on behalf of the Northern Territory.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I also express my horror at what happened to Dr Haines. I thank the Chief Minister for her statement and the Leader of the Opposition. As people across Australia have said, she is the best of us. She models what it means to be a community driven politician who always acts with integrity and the best for her community and for all Australia. We are all wishing her, those who work with her, and her friends and family the very best.

Personally, she is a great mentor and support to me, so I send that gratitude to her as well.

Madam SPEAKER: On behalf of all members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, I convey our thoughts and prayers to dear Helen Haines, the Independent federal Member for Indi. We wish her a full recovery.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day, I shall present a Bill titled Environment and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, serial 81.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day, I shall present a motion that the Assembly calls on the CLP government to provide additional child protection funding in the midyear budget, consult frontline experts and adequately resource implementation of the Webb-Shanahan review recommendations without overburdening caseworkers.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day, I shall present a motion that the Assembly calls on the CLP government to work with the Commonwealth to expand essential food subsidies to remote communities, improve food storage facilities in housing, and sustainably fund frontline organisations responding to food insecurity across the Territory.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day, I shall present a motion that the Assembly calls on the CLP government to reduce electricity hardship by lowering prepayment meter tariffs, improving access to hardship support, requiring public reporting of involuntary disconnections and expanding concessions to better protect vulnerable households across the Territory.

Child Protection – Under-resourced

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Earlier this year in August, the minister tabled the interim Webb-Shanahan report, which clearly highlighted that child protection is under-resourced. At that time the minister promised to better resource the sector when you were going to propose new law changes around child protection?

If child protection is so important to the minister, where is the additional child protection funding and how can the minister justify spending up to $18m to move 23 people to bachelor rather than a single cent on child protection and when will the minister commit to further funding the child protection reforms that she so much spruiks every single day?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not know how many times I can reiterate to those on the other side the actual cost of transferring the service from Batten Road to Batchelor, before it sinks in. Of course, clearly, they cannot handle the truth. The truth of the matter is it didn't cost $18m or $20m. It cost what I have said every single time—that question has been asked multiple times over the past few days of sitting and that is this. We had a capital expended expenditure budget of $3m which were utilised to set up the facility for the Batchelor residents and we have an operational budget of $6.5m per annum, which is what will be utilised to run the

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service. That is the total of the cost utilised for the service run by the Department of Children and Families with the assistance of Mission Australia for this service. Once and for all, Leader of the Opposition and members of the other side, that is the cost of this service. Anything else that happens on that side is not the responsibility of the Department of Children and Families; that is a matter for other colleagues who may be working in that area. They are the facts.

When it comes to the report which was handed down today, the litany of systemic failures overseen by those on the other side for decades. They should be ashamed that it took an independent review to identify that the frontline workers have not been supported by previous Labor governments. They have been left stranded without the appropriate resources …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; conciseness of answer. The second part of the question was, when will the minister better resource child protection? The minister already stated she will do that.

Ms CAHILL: Those on the other side have failed year after year, report after report—the devastating nature of the systemic failure into the child protection system in the Northern Territory. Today we made a commitment that we would implement all 45 recommendations. We have already commenced the reforms of the Every Child Matters Bill, and we will do a systemic review and make sure that resources, currently available within the department and its budgets, are focused where they belong, which is on frontline workers.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; I ask you to make a ruling on the interjections from the Member for Barkly. He keeps interjecting and I want to hear the answer to the question.

Madam SPEAKER: There was a lot of background noise. I will not point to anyone in particular. I ask that everyone remain silent while the minister gives her answer.

Housing Market – Residential Construction Figures

Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER

Rebuilding our economy, increasing housing supply and having more Territorians achieve the dream of home ownership is essential to restoring the Territory lifestyle. After years of declining residential construction activity under Labor, recent industry figures point to encouraging signs of the new confidence in the Territory's housing market. Residential construction creates opportunities for local builders, tradies and apprenticeships and a strong housing sector has benefits that extend well beyond the homes themselves.

Could you update the House on the latest residential construction figures, what they reveal about the Territory's housing market and how the government is helping more Territorians achieve home ownership?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale, as a former tradie working in the construction industry, understands that when the construction sector is strong, Territorians are strong. It puts food on people's tables, builds the infrastructure that we need now and in the future and is highly important to the Territory's economy.

We are proud to have delivered the highest number of Fidelity Fund certificates in September in the last three years:102 certificates valued at $43m. That is just homes getting built but not everything else. It is timely to remind Territorians that when the Opposition Leader was the Housing minister, she could stand up and claim that she delivered the lowest number of homes on record; the lowest number of Fidelity Fund certificates since records began.

We issued 601 certificates for the 2025–26 year; 627 of our $30,000 and $50,000 home build grants have gone out the door. This represents approximately $252m in residential housing construction. This is changing people's lives.

I had the privilege of meeting Thomas-James Marshall when he got the keys to his brand new home at The Parks estate in Asche. He is the first person in his family to go into home ownership. His grandmother, mother and aunties were so proud, it was incredible.

We need more houses for people because our economy is booming. We have four nation-building projects happening in the Territory and we need houses for people to live in.

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This is unlike Labor, which is so plagued by disunity that it does not support housing construction. Labor members used to support it, but they do not know what they believes in anymore. They do not want to see houses at Lee Point. They do not believe in housing, an onshore gas industry that will drive growth in the Territory and hyper-scaling even though Labor delivered two data centres in the Northern Territory. While Labor flip-flops over policy, our direction is clear: we will rebuild the Territory economy and deliver more houses.

Those opposite also like to talk a lot about what we are doing for rentals. One of the greatest things we can do to ease rental pressure is increase supply. That means more houses. For every person who builds a new home, their old home becomes a rental. That is important to drive down prices so that everyone, no matter where they are in that life journey, can have access to a good home.

We are proud to be delivering this increase for Territorians now and into the future.

Child Protection Review – Child Placement Principle

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

You tabled the report this morning and spent a lot of time talking about culture and the child placement principle, none of which is mentioned in the report. You spoke about previous reports that have been done in the Territory. In any of those reports can you point to where it recommends watering down the child placement principle or culture?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, clearly the truth is not important to those on the other side. Nowhere has that been watered down. Nowhere have the principles to be applied to every child who is at risk been watered down.

The Every Child Matters reform grew out of serious concern about the manner in which child at-risk assessments were being undertaken. That was reinforced by the findings that have been documented in the review done by Karen Webb and Greg Shanahan. It states clearly that for a long time, most notably under the guidance—or lack thereof—of those on the other side, the child protection system has been dismally let down by allowing the policy framework to not meet legislative requirement and not support child protection workers to properly assess what they needed to assess in order to look after children at risk.

Every child deserves to be safe. That is the paramount concern and principle that should be front and centre for every assessment undertaken and nothing should be done in isolation.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked a direct question to the Child Protection minister: in all the reports you referenced this morning where does it say that the child placement principle should have been changed, weakened or watered down?

Madam SPEAKER: You have asked the same question twice.

Ms CAHILL: The report handed down today revealed that the fundamental principle that should be applied to every child is consideration of safety; that any child who is exposed to domestic, family and sexual violence should have that exposure taken into account when their safety is being assessed.

Nowhere have we watered down the application of consideration of a child's background, culture, religion or family support network; that is front and centre for everything that we do. We are applying that to every child. We are not just excluding children from that application; every child will receive the attention and consideration they deserve in making sure that they stay safe and healthy and have the best opportunity to live the best life possible.

Territory Economy – Mining

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

Mining has built the Territory, from the Pine Creek goldrush to the Tanami and MacArthur River today. Mining and minerals make up about 27% of our economy and mineral production hit a record $6.08bn in 2025–26. This translates to Territory jobs and local business spend. Last Thursday KGL Resources made a final investment decision on the Jervois Copper Project—the third major Territory mine to reach final investment

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decision this year. Can you update the Assembly on the momentum in the Territory's resource sector and what projects like Jervois mean for Territory jobs, Territory businesses and Territorians in the long term?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain knows that choosing Territory companies will benefit the Territory. He is a family man and perhaps his children will be able to grow up in the resource sector and get a good apprenticeship and make money.

Last Thursday KGL Resources made its final investment decision for the Jervois copper mine. That is a $439m investment in the Northern Territory, with 350 construction jobs and 550 per year once operational. The first copper is expected in 2028. Jervois will produce about 30,000 tonnes of copper a year.

Under Labor, you could not find a copper when you needed one. Now there are more coppers on the beat and about 30,000 tonnes of it coming out of the ground.

That is not the best part of this story; it is the connection we are seeing that benefits the Territory. KGL has 50 workers onsite now. KGL CEO Stan Strohmayr is a member of a proud Territory family who have worked in the Territory for three generations. I understand his parents met and married in Katherine and his sister is named Katherine; you cannot get much more Territorian than that—maybe other than the Chief Minister who is a third-generation Territorian.

This is about investing in the Northern Territory. KGL is setting up its office in Darwin. KGL will not go somewhere else because it is here for the long term, with 350 jobs. The work is landing here, as we speak. Territory Transportables won a $36m contract to supply the accommodation village. That is 10 years of wages paid, contracts signed and money spent in the Northern Territory.

KGL estimates that it will pay about $380m in royalties over the life of that mine. That pays for the police, education and teachers. What did you get under Labor? You got backflipping with Territory Labor which does not support the gas industry or housing at Lee Point. Under Labor, there was chaos. Labor cannot be trusted to grow the Northern Territory economy, that is for sure.

Core Lithium is back under construction and there is Nolans. I was there a couple of weeks ago. There is Mount Bundy and White Devil in the land of opportunity. This is money flowing into the Northern Territory, with production of $6bn in the last financial year.

That is how we are growing the economy. We are laser focused on rebuilding the economy, reducing crime and restoring our lifestyle.

Children's and Women's Safety

Mrs UIBO to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

Your government has routinely gagged child and family community experts, independent officers and frontline staff from being heard, consulted and involved in child protection reform, policy and legislation. In fact, the Children's Commissioner resigned under your watch. The former Member for Mulka called you out and called your CLP government's actions slow genocide. Why have you used the Webb–Shanahan review to make it seem like your government cares about children's and women's safety when you have closed YiSSA, failed to adequately fund DFSV services and rehabilitate prisoners in our Corrections system?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for a question that clearly demonstrates the lack of understanding from those opposite about what good government looks like.

The bottom line is that the Batten Road facility was not closed. In spite of the misinformation and the failure to tell the truth about what was really happening, we were able to relocate that facility to a new site. There are people staying there who are happy with the service that they are being provided.

This government invested a record ongoing $36m of Territory government funding to deliver domestic, family and sexual violence programs. The only failure in that funding area was the federal government, which significantly decreased funding to not only the Northern Territory but also across the country. Where were

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those opposite when their federal counterparts slashed funding to domestic, family and sexual violence services in the Territory where they are needed most?

We are 100% committed to supporting our community, delivering those services and changing the trajectory of the lives of people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence. We make no apology for deciding to do things differently because to do the same things over and again and expect a different result is the definition of insanity, and that is not something we will buy into. We will continue to fight for a good outcome for all Territorians, support our frontline services and listen to those people who matter: the grandmothers and the people in community who begged us to make changes—we heard them and we have done that—and, most critically, the children.

Independent Review into the Conduct of the Department of Children and Families

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

This morning you tabled the final report of the Webb–Shanahan independent review into the conduct of the Department of Children and Families, which was established following the death of Kumanjayi Little Baby in Alice Springs in April. The review found that the department needs a systemwide reset from how it assesses risk where there is domestic and family violence to how it checks the adults relied on to keep a child safe and the presence of its leadership in our regions. Can you outline what the review found and what it means for keeping all Territorian children safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri, as a mum like myself, has a grave concern about what has been happening to many of our Territory children in this space. She has been working hard in her electorate to support people who are impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence, which was a key finding of what happened with Kumanjayi Little Baby in this review.

The tragic loss of that little one—our hearts go out to the family again. This would have been a difficult day for them, to have that report now handed down and see the outcome of the review that was undertaken.

The review found that there were systemic problems within the Department of Children and Families. It was not found to be the fault of any individual worker or the people who are on the frontline fighting every day for the care and protection of our children. It found that there were concerns about the way in which legislative frameworks had been interpreted and applied; how policies were created and framed; and the environment within which these child protection workers, who worked so hard to look after our kids, were expected to work.

There were 45 recommendations. Most critically, and the most immediate one which we have already enacted was for a review of the Signs of Safety plan, the fundamental tool that was being utilised by frontline child protection staff to try to understand what they could do to keep our children safe. The review found that the Signs of Safety plan implemented in 2019 had never once been evaluated. Most critically nobody who was included in that safety plan was subjected to a review to ensure that they were people who should, indeed, be caring for children. There were no police checks, no working with children clearances—nothing—because that was never required. That happened on the watch of those opposite.

Mr Paech: What about the person who did the crime? You have not even mentioned them.

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

Mr Paech: Don’t pick on the family; pick on the person who did the crime!

EXCLUSION OF MEMBER
Member for Gwoja

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, minister.

Member for Goyder, please leave the Chamber for one hour.

Mr Paech: I will. You are talking about the families; talk about the people who did the crime!

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Madam SPEAKER: In silence!

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The Member for Gwoja continued to talk after you spoke. Clearly that is a breach of the standing orders. The tone of his voice when he left, after you told him to be quiet—he continued to talk.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you for raising that point of order. I will not be naming him, but I will be watching his behaviour closely when he returns.

Ms CAHILL: The report is critical because it clearly articulates what we need to do to create a pathway forward to make sure that we give a better outcome to these children who are so vulnerable within our community. It found that 64% of investigations involved a child who had already been referred in the previous 12 months, which is another sign that there are systemic issues that need to be addressed. We have made the commitment to follow and implement those recommendations, and that is exactly what we will do.

Child Protection Services – Vacancies

Mr SMELT to MINISTER for CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

During Estimates we learned that child protection services have a 25% vacancy rate. Minister, as of today, how many frontline child protection positions are vacant, and how many staff have been diverted to support the $18m Batchelor accommodation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, God bless the Member for Nightcliff. He is new to the Territory and to parliament. He is a refugee from Victoria, where they are also not doing a good job in child protection. I think it is a little bit rich.

We did not spend $18m transferring a service from Batten Road to Batchelor. I know you are an engineer, Member for Nightcliff, so you should be able to do the sums. It is simple: $3m for capital expenditure and an operational budget of $6.5m per annum. That was the entirety of the budget we had to work with, and that is what we have done to deliver that service.

Child protection workers are the backbone of what we do to keep our children safe. Under the previous government, the vacancy rate was 40%. Over the last 12 to 18 months we have worked hard to attract people to that system and to show them that they had an active role to play and that they could expect to achieve positive outcomes for children. That is why the current vacancy rate is about 20%. I encourage the Member for Nightcliff to brush up on his maths and make sure he gets those figures right for next time.

Be assured, this review will help us frame and make sure that we are attracting the best people to the Territory, to these jobs to support our children.

Central Australia – Severe Weather Event

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Last Monday, a severe weather event tore through the heart of Australia. Destructive winds of about 100 kilometres per hour caused an unexpected level of devastation to many families across Alice Springs. Large trees fell, damaging family homes and leaving thousands in the community without power. A storm which lasted minutes caused significant damage, with some homes completely losing their roofs, while others were partially destroyed.

Can you update the Assembly on the events that occurred last week and explain the resilience that Alice Springs showed during this challenging time?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister and this parliament for allowing me to travel home to be with the community whilst we underwent what can only be described as absolute destruction after a one-in-40-year thunderstorm that impacted Alice Springs. The other communities that are important to mention that were affected were Hermannsburg, Wallace Rockhole and Amoonguna on the outskirts of Alice Springs.

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At the height of the outage, after the storm impacted Alice Springs, some 9,000 homes were without power. That is 9,000 families without power for an extended period. It was a team effort across government to ensure we were responding to those people on the ground and getting them connected as soon as possible.

I thank Power and Water crews who travelled from Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek to assist Alice Springs in the recovery effort. As of yesterday, out of the 9,000 homes, just about every single home had been restored; I think there were 12 homes without power. It was a huge effort across the last week to ensure the families were reconnected. We saw SES emergency service crews respond to 125 requests for assistance. It was everything from people who had trees impacted on their homes by falling on their roof and impact on being able to get out of their own driveways in the morning to partially ripped-off rooves. SES tarped those houses because there was additional rainfall, and we made sure those homes were as sound and weatherproof as they could be.

We also stood up a welfare recovery centre. I thank Children and Families for that because it was on their own initiative as we thought, 'How can we make sure the people who are needing assistance had a one-stop shop to go?' The welfare recovery centre that was stood up made sure that people who were eligible for payment could receive the payments. Those who had to throw out all their food and families who were in between pay weeks and had no money to pay for additional food could go there and get Foodbank support so they could feed their families and get through the next service. It was a huge effort.

The biggest thing I want to highlight is that everyone in the community came together. As you walked around Alice Springs people were going from house to house, supporting one another, seeing what could be done to assist others. Residents took up their chainsaws and cleared streets themselves. The Alice Springs Town Council, NT Police, Emergency Services, Power and Water and everyone came together to work for the betterment of the community.

I thank everyone, including the Member for Namatjira and this parliament, for all the support during this time.

Emergency Housing Services

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Minister, one in three people are turned away from emergency housing in Darwin under your government. To make matters worse, you closed YiSSA. What are you doing to guarantee Territorians can access emergency housing in Darwin, particularly those seeking medical care or women and children escaping domestic violence?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, my goodness—there seems to be a deafness occurring on the other side. I am a little bit concerned; we might need to get them all a hearing check. I will say it again: we did not close the service; we relocated the service. The service still exists. The support network still exists.

There are multiple services funded in Darwin to assist people who are struggling with housing. The referrals are being managed to Batchelor in exactly the same way as they were managed before in the Batten Road facility, which I remind those on the other side we had no choice but to leave because the lease ended. There was no potential to extend that lease. We tried to purchase the infrastructure. The owners of the infrastructure were simply not interested in coming to us with a reasonable offer.

In spite of the claims made by Senator McCarthy—which she continues to portray across the community, in spite of the fact that we tabled in this parliament; I would suggest that those on the other side take a moment to read the documents tabled—at no time was there ever an offer made to assist with $6.5m in funding. At no time was there an unconditional offer made for the consideration of $3.5m. At no time did we receive definitive advice that the infrastructure could be purchased for $6.5m with some assistance from the Commonwealth Government with no strings attached. Those are the facts.

I appreciate that it is difficult for those on the other side—they cannot handle the truth—but that is the truth of the matter; that is what is happening.

I will not allow them to disparage the fantastic work done by our frontline workers and people in our not-for-profit sector who work every day to support people in our community who are struggling with homelessness and who deserve to be treated well. Let us face it: they did not make it easy for the residents of Batten Road when they were transferring. They stood there with their cameras, exposing people who were

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in difficult circumstances as they tried to progress to the next phase in their accommodation and life. They without hesitation exploited that, and they should be ashamed.

Ms Uibo: What—talking to people about how their lives are affected?

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, be quiet!

Red Centre – World's Top Experiences

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY

For me, as not only the Member for Fannie Bay in the Top End but also someone who grew up in Alice Springs—I shout out to my friend in the gallery, Jayne McAlister from Alice Springs—I have an appreciation for the incredible experiences and opportunities the Territory has to offer from the Red Centre to the Top End. *Lonely Planet* has named the Red Centre among the world's top 25 experiences—the only Australian experience on the list—for 2027.

Can you update the Assembly and Territorians on how the Finocchiaro CLP government is building on this international recognition to attract more visitors, encourage investment and create jobs for local businesses and communities across Alice Springs and Central Australia, while showcasing the Territory to the world?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay loves Alice Springs. It is the heart of Australia, but I know it is also in her heart.

Welcome to our Alice Springs friends. Thank you for joining us. It is amazing that you could be here.

You are right, we were named in the world's top 25 experiences for 2027 by *Lonely Planet*. That was all to do with the art around Central Australia.

I was there a couple of weeks ago and spent time with some of the incredible people in Central Australia who are promoting this art, one of them being Ric from Yubu Napa who has an amazing gallery and shop. I spent time with the artist in residence, Fabrianne Peterson, from Mount Liebig. She was doing her artwork in front of me, having a good old chat. She told me one of her ambitions for next year is to be a Telstra NATSIAA award winner, which is a fantastic achievement to aim for. Well done to Fabrianne and Ric.

I also saw Anna from Art Tours Australia. Some of you from Central Australia will be familiar Anna. She has a beautiful property, art-inspired tours and accommodation. She is already getting bookings for domestic and international visitors; it is fantastic.

The CLP government backs our tourism industry. We have the NT Experience Fund with $2.6m in government funding, leveraging about $4.1m in private investment across the Territory. That has been used for Desert Mob which secured funding and the co-contribution to 2030 and the fabulous exhibition that is happening in Araluen Arts Centre now.

Destination NT is in Central Australia for the first time. We were in the Top End last year. This year we will be in Alice Springs. That basically brings all the tourism industry and people from interstate to Central Australia to have a weeklong—including the Brolgas at the end of the week—exposure to Central Australia, which is fantastic. That is what the CLP government is doing.

I do not think anybody in Central Australia will not remember what it was like under Labor, when Alice Springs was in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. We were in the national headlines because of crime, antisocial behaviour and the disregard for law and order across Central Australia. It was disgusting.

It is no surprise, because Labor is still divided on this sort of stuff. Think about gas and how those opposite cannot decide whether they are for or against it. Regarding the Lee Point housing, they say, 'No, we are against that', even though they used to support it. Local bookies employ 1,000 people in the Territory; you guys used to back them and now you are backing away from them—disgraceful. Even the hyperscale data centres—Gunner built them in the Top End, but, no, now they do not want them anymore. They keep changing their minds. Territorians do not know what you stand for.

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Child and Family Centres –Operational Date

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

In February 2025 the Commonwealth and NT government signed a partnership agreement committing to up to 12 child and family centres, an increased support for 19 remote women's safe spaces. Which communities will receive these circumstances and how many will be new facilities and when will they be operational?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I need to ask the member if he is talking about just the funding that is available under the federal government's safe family program?

Mr YOUNG: Yes, 12 child and family centres.

Ms CAHILL: I do not have the information on where the progress of those 12 centres. I would be happy to take that on notice and give you an update.

Child and Family Centres – Operational Date – Supplementary Question

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

I appreciate you taking that on notice. The current agreement of $260,000 per year through the Child and Family Community Fund will cease on 31 December for many centres. What is your government doing to ensure these programs will continue to receive funding? The agreement requires services to reapply; is it limited to new programs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, all grant agreements are currently under review to make sure that we are delivering services to where they are needed most. Services that are expiring at the end of the year are all being worked with. There are a number of programs that come into that arena where people have the opportunity to reapply, and they will be assessed. It is an operational matter and not something that, as the minister, I would get involved in. That would be highly inappropriate. Everything is managed through normal procurement processes and all those services will be able to apply to funding that is available for their services as required.

Territory Small Businesses – Latest Business Figures

Dr RAHMAN to TREASURER

Small businesses are the backbone of the Territory economy, creating jobs and training young Territorians and of course supporting our communities. The Finocchiaro CLP government has committed to backing these businesses by reducing payroll tax and giving them more room to grow. Can you update us on how these exemptions are supporting Territory businesses and what the latest business figures tell us about the Territory's current economic momentum?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the electorate of Fong Lim sits on the edge of the City of Darwin, and there are a lot of businesses in the member's electorate.

Behind every small business, of course, there is someone out there taking a risk doing long hours, and they are the people backing the Territory's future. We are backing them, and we did that by changing the payroll tax free threshold and giving them room to grow. From 1 July 2025 we lifted the payroll tax free threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m, which is the highest in the country. That is an extra $1m in annual wages before eligible businesses reach the threshold. That gives them more room to employ, expand and more money to reinvest into their businesses.

We brought relief forward through a six-month waive from 1 January 2025. As at 19 October this year 145 taxpayers have benefited, saving around $1.7m to their businesses. June 2025–26, 900 registered employers with annual wages below $7.5m collectively saved $10.9m through that higher threshold and those deductions.

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We exempted eligible apprentice and trainee wages from 1 July 2025 and between 19 October 2026, 184 businesses declared approximately $62.9m in exempt wages, saving approximately $3.49m. That is money back into Territory businesses and those businesses are being reinvesting back into the workforce. Those rewards for the employers are now being seen in the next generation of Territory workers.

The latest ABS figures show encouraging business momentum. Territory business numbers grew by 3.8% in 2025–26, out of 3.1% national growth. That is 643 more businesses, taking our total to 17,440. The Territory also recorded the highest business entry rate of any state or territory at 18.5%. That happens only when a government helps create those conditions by cutting red tape and green tape and encouraging investment.

Labor left businesses with a $1.5m payroll tax threshold. We lifted that to $2.5m. That is Labor's legacy—gouge businesses any way you can and scare away investment.

We are backing Territory businesses and their ambition. The CLP is delivering for Territorians and Territory businesses that certainty to be able to expand and grow the Territory.

Bootcamp Programs – Central Australia

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Given the government's stated commitment to rehabilitation, will you confirm whether any bootcamp programs will continue to operate in Central Australia after November 2026?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Alice Springs is important to me because it is part of the Territory. I was born here and I am fighting for the Territory, unlike those on the other side who do not know where they come from. They do not know whether they support gas. They are not sure whether they support housing. What I can say is that they support chaos. You cannot trust Labor, that is for sure.

There are bootcamp services run out of Alice Springs from the bail intake facility, which is a place that we built under our master plan. We have a bail support facility for youths so that they can go somewhere safe, and giving the court options. Instead of just putting someone on remand and into custody, the courts can put these young people into a bail-supported facility where they can go to school and get the wraparound services to help them get back on track.

The Labor government deserted the young offenders of Alice Springs. Alice Springs went to chaos; it was out of control.

We have this transfer facility up and running where the bootcamp people come and take these young people on bail to the bootcamp facility. There is a whole range of them. From July last year to August this year, 267 young people attended 62 bootcamps across the Northern Territory. This is about making sure that these young offenders have the opportunity to get a better life, to have a restart in life as they move forward.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question is specific: will you confirm whether any of these bootcamps will be operating after November 2026?

Mr MALEY: The answer is simply yes.

I want to talk about what we are doing. We are offering these young people wraparound services, which is the Labor government did not do. It just left them on the street with nowhere to go. We are giving these young people a better chance in life by having those services.

I have spoken to the people who run the facility and some of the young people there. They tell me that it is a great facility. It is safe. We are talking about safety and children. Safety is a key priority of this government. That is why we moved it up in care and protection, because every Territorian child deserves to be safe. That is our number one priority. That is what this facility and service does. It provides these young offenders somewhere safe with wraparound services, allowing them to make better choices in life and go back into the community a better person. The former Labor government did not do that; all it did was chaos.

Youth Services – Alice Springs

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Mr PATEL to MINISTER for YOUTH, SENIORS and EQUALITY

In the aftermath of the devastation caused by the storms in Alice Springs last week, the community is now bouncing back, including youth services programs. Services such as the Gap Youth and Community Centre play an important role in supporting our young people and families in Central Australia. Can you update the Assembly on the Finocchiaro CLP government's funding commitment to youth services and explain how this investment will support young people in Alice Springs over the coming years?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, my thoughts are with the people of Central Australia because they have been through a number of significant weather events this year, and the most devasting one was a week ago. In fact, I was there days before that incident. The Finocchiaro CLP government is backing the people of Alice Springs under the leadership of our Chief Minister and our local members; the Members for Braitling and Namatjira.

The youth services are getting back on track and have been providing services to the Central Australian community. We are investing in our young people to stay engaged and receive support when it is needed. This support includes practical assistance, meals, transport and community engagement activities. Two key organisations receiving funding are the Brown Street youth centre and the long-running Gap Youth and Community Centre.

I was delighted to join my colleague the Member for Braitling at the Gap youth centre recently, along with CEO Leon Tripp, to announce a nearly $7m over the next five years commitment from the Finocchiaro CLP government to run the services in Alice Springs. This funding will provide long-term certainty for an important local youth service that has been in operation for 49 years. Next year it turns 50, and I look forward to joining my colleagues in Central Australia to celebrate that milestone with the Gap Youth and Community Centre. This investment will help provide youth services in Central Australia, which is important to provide the opportunity for young people to stay engaged and receive support where it is needed. This investment will help maintain services while the centre's original premises undergo a $20m redevelopment.

The government is focused on supporting young people and contributing to safer communities across Central Australia. For the Finocchiaro CLP government, investing in young people is important, no matter whether they are in Alice Springs, Central Australia, the Top End or other parts of the region.

It is my privilege to work with young people under this portfolio through the Youth Round Table, the NT Youth Parliament and the Youth Ambassador programs. We see the strong leaders of tomorrow coming through different programs. I encourage young people to be a part of the important conversations they can have with the members of this parliament who are supporting the community and the Territory.

I thank everyone supporting the youth services programs in Alice Springs; they are doing a good job. There are things that need to be improved which we will continue to work together on over the next few years.

Family and Domestic Violence Sector

Mrs UIBO to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This year at Estimates you said that your department was working out the best approach in regard to the continuation of essential domestic violence policy and advocacy positions which will cease in December this year. Will your CLP government fund these positions from 2 December 2026 so that the sector is not left with without an independent policy, advocacy and coordination role? How will you guarantee that the family violence sector will have a means of engagement with you as the minister specifically, given that your CLP government refused to establish a dedicated domestic violence advocacy peak body?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, clearly it is my day. I appreciate the question because this is an incredibly important area and a lot of work is being done.

Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting, my door is open to all services. I meet regularly with a range of people and attend lots of meetings with different representative groups on this important subject.

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The Opposition Leader referred to a position that was funded through NTCOSS. There has been a review of the efficiency and the efficacy of that position by the department, and I will get that back when it has been completed. I talked to people in the department about what they feel is most critical and what will deliver the best results for people in our community who are living and dealing with domestic, family and sexual violence.

A huge amount of work has been done over the past six months, and there is an announcement pending in the next five weeks which will lay to rest any concerns that the Leader of the Opposition may have in this space. I will welcome having her come and see what that announcement will deliver, but I do not want to pre-empt it because the work being done by the team to deliver what will be an exciting service and collaboration in that space is something they deserve the opportunity to celebrate.

Social Housing – Antisocial Behaviour

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Minister, social housing is an important safety net for Territorians who need it, supporting stable housing, employment and access to essential services, but that safety net cannot come at the expense of other residents' safety.

We inherited Labor's watered-down accountability which allowed tenants to repeatedly threaten neighbours and disregard community standards with little consequence. No Territorian should have to live in fear or put up with repeated antisocial behaviour in their own street.

On behalf of the residents of Karama, Malak and other neighbourhoods, can you update the Assembly on how our government is taking a tougher approach to antisocial behaviour in public housing, including ensuring repeat offenders face real consequences?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama has been relentless since we were elected in August 2024. He has been a strong advocate for his electorate. He has been out talking to all his constituents, knocking on doors and hearing from people on the ground what the issues are in Karama, Malak and those surrounding suburbs in his electorate. I commend the Member for Karama for the work that he is doing.

The Finocchiaro CLP government is continuing to crack down on antisocial behaviour in public housing. We are introducing a clear and consistent policy, which is a three-strike system to hold tenants accountable and keep communities safe. The three-strike system is being rolled out this week under the CLP government's Tenant Accountability Policy Statement.

We have three simple expectations: pay your rent; look after your house; and be a good neighbour. We cannot ask for any more than that. Bringing the three-strike policy will help us to deal with the ongoing issues of antisocial behaviour and those tenants who have been misbehaving and causing chaos amongst their neighbours in some areas. The days of public housing tenants racking up red card demerit points are over; the three-strike system is a simple, easy-to-understand policy.

For minor antisocial behaviour, there will be one strike; for moderate breaches, two strikes; and significant breaches will attract three strikes. That is the point where we will take the action that is needed. Reaching three strikes will lead to action being taken through the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and that can lead to eviction.

Under the previous Labor government we saw a soft approach not only to crime, but when it comes to antisocial behaviour in public housing across the Northern Territory. Our policy includes the use of acceptable behaviour agreements. We want to ensure that every opportunity is given to public housing tenants to do the right thing. However, should they get to three strikes, that is the end of the line. The CLP will take action because other tenants and residents—the neighbours in those communities—are fed up, and we are moving forward to take positive action.

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

LANDS AND PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RED TAPE REDUCTION) BILL
Serial 77

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Continued from earlier this day.

Consideration in detail

Clause 21:

Mr SMELT: Picking up where we were before lunch—removing the 'in all material aspect' of section 72, I reiterate that we do not support this clause and the effect it will have on the certification industry. Once again, we encourage the minister to consult more and investigate some of those potential unintended consequences before persevering with this change.

Mr BURGOYNE: I will say again that this amendment ensures consumers are better protected by requiring all building work to comply with the Act and the regulations. This change is consistent with equivalent legislation in other jurisdictions.

Clause 21 agreed to.

Clause 22:

Mr SMELT: I am keen to understand from the minister regarding this clause opening a certificate existence pathway back to 1 May 2016. Why does this need to be done?

Mr BURGOYNE: The reason this has been done is over a long period of time, unfortunately, some homes throughout the Northern Territory were essentially built without a building permit.

If a builder was to do the wrong thing and build a structure without a building permit, the client—in many cases the homeowner—is essentially left with an uncertified structure on their property. It has been a real frustration in the past. There was no way to give a certificate of compliance after the fact.

Through the certificate of existence, we are enabling those out there who may have structures on their property that are not currently covered under a certificate of compliance to get a certificate of existence. This can be used for things like insurance purposes and other means. It gives them the certainty that their structure is built to comply, and has that certificate, It gives them the certainty going forward that their structure is compliant.

Mr SMELT: I am confused by your answer. You are saying that this certificate gives them a certificate that it complies. Is the whole point not that these buildings do not have a compliance certificate?

Mr BURGOYNE: The issue is that even if homes were built and they comply with the standards, they did not, at the time of building, get a certificate of compliance. They were built and they comply with all the necessary codes. This allows people to go back and, under the technical standards that must be met,—I make that clear; the building still must be seen to be comply—they are able to get a certificate of existence.

Previously, they did not have the certificate of compliance. The have a structure that complies with all the codes and relevant rules. Previously, you could not, after the fact, get a certificate of compliance. Essentially, the structure was there and it did not comply. We are now enabling people, after the fact, to get a certificate of Existence.

Mr SMELT: Thank you for clarifying that, minister. Do you have any idea of how many properties, buildings, homes would be covered by this?

Mr BURGOYNE: We do not have exact numbers because they are outside of the process and the records that would usually happen when you go through a compliance pathway. What has been made clear, over a long period, is that when people go to sell their properties or go through a process where a certificate of compliance is required, they are unable to, after the fact, get a certificate. We are providing a pathway so that those structures that can be proved by a certifier to have been built to the technical standards, can now apply for a certificate of existence and get that into the future.

Mr SMELT: What is the process for someone having their home or structure assessed for one of these certificates of existence?

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Mr BURGOYNE: They would instruct and take on the services of a certifier, who would come out, look at the property and make sure it complied with all the technical standards. The certifier would then compile a report outlining whether it complies and whether it should get a certificate of existence into the future.

Mr SMELT: The certifier has to have a copy of the Ascon drawings, and they have to check that it complied with the technical requirements that were in force at that point in time?

Mr BURGOYNE: I want to clarify once again the process: the certifier compiles a report, which goes to the director of building for a certificate of existence, which will either be granted or not.

Mr SMELT: Does a finalised set of as-constructed drawings need to be provided as part of that process?

Mr BURGOYNE: That will be a decision for the building certifier and the director of building. Through this process, we are trying to affect that as long as the certifier can show and prove that the building complies with the necessary technical standards—to confirm, they can show and confirm that the building complies with the technical standards. We are not saying that they have to have this or that; they must meet certain rules and regulations. As long as the certifier can exhibit that to the director of building, at that point, a certificate of existence can be granted.

Mr SMELT: As-constructed drawings are not a mandatory part of this process. Can you outline some of those rules and regulations that you just mentioned, for example?

Mr BURGOYNE: If there are technical drawings, that is fantastic. If there are no technical drawings, certifiers can provide photographs and other evidence to prove the structure complies with the technical standards.

Mr SMELT: It has been clarified that as-constructed drawings are not a mandatory requirement. You mentioned in your previous answer that there were various rules and regulations that could be shown. How does the certifier provide that in the absence of final drawings?

Mr BURGOYNE: The biggest thing that we are providing through this amendment is to show that the building is safe. If a certifier can show and state that the building is safe and that it complies with the technical standards, it is eligible for a certificate of existence, granted that the director of building allows that to happen. That is the important thing here—stipulating exactly what we may or may not agree with. It is about proving that the building is safe, that it meets the technical standards and it can be occupied. If it meets all those requirements, then it can be granted a certificate of existence.

Mr SMELT: Can you shed some light on whose advice it was to make this change? Did it come from the reducing red tape report? Did it come from some other report or advice?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes. This came out of the November 2024 Ombudsman's NT report. The fact that there was an inability to give a certificate of compliance after the fact is something that has been highlighted to me for years.

Mr SMELT: In terms of this change, this also applies to all building classes, including level 3 and level 4 buildings, like schools and hospitals and the like. Is there a risk that applying this minimum after-the-fact-type process could expose those critical structures to future weather events?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important. The previous process that was being followed was simply exempting buildings from requiring this. We want certifiers to go through, check the safety of the buildings, be able to grant them a certificate of existence and make sure that all the buildings meet the meet the requirements. Once again, I will say that previously there was no ability to give a certificate of compliance after the fact.

Mr SMELT: This is a significant regulatory policy change that requires further consideration. I do not pretend to fully understand all the ins and outs of the building regulations. I am not a building certifier, but they will be left to deal with these changes on a daily basis.

Through the scrutiny committee process, building certifiers have raised a number of concerns about the changes and what is being proposed under this Bill. They point to a lack of clarity around the legal and policy basis for applying this change to all building classes, including the importance of the level 3 and level 4 buildings that I mentioned just before.

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This requires much more consideration and consultation before applying it to this class of building. I once again recommend to the minister that this change needs to be paused until further consultation and assessment is done to understand the implications of these changes.

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to state that whilst there are some certifiers that might be against, there are many that are in favour of these changes. The biggest issue they have is when a client comes to them and essentially says, 'I would like you to certify my existing building', previously they had no ability to do so. When the building has been built to code and meets all the technical standards, it now allows those certifiers to write a report to the Director of Building and be able to give a certificate of existence to those buildings that for whatever reason were not properly applied for previously.

Clause 22, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 23:

Mr SMELT: I reiterate that Territory Labor opposition does not support clause 23 and its connection to the previous sections.

Clause 23 agreed to.

Clause 24:

Mr SMELT: We do not support this clause, the connected clause and the cumulative impact that these changes have on the building certification industry.

Clause 24 agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 27, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 28:

Mr BURGOYNE: I move Amendment 4 to clause 28.

This clause inserts new Part 25 after section 210 to provide for transitional matters with respect to changes for sections 34S 59, 72E, 72F and Schedule 3. Assembly Amendment 4 replaces at proposed section 212(7) and (8) the word 'occupational' with the word 'occupancy'. The Assembly amendment corrects a typographical error made during the drafting of the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 28, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 29 to 39, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 40:

Mr SMELT: I put on the record again that we do not support clause 40 and its connections with the other issues that we have raised, particularly about those level 3 and level 4 buildings.

Clause 40 agreed to.

Clauses 41 to call 50, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 51:

Mr SMELT: How is low risk defined?

Mr BURGOYNE: We have not chosen to define it. We have outlined a number of examples in the explanatory statement, such as the naming of roads. It is not defined in the Bill.

These are terms they used to explain the different pathways and the separation the Bill played. Low-risk place names include roads, neighbourhood parks which are predominantly named in new developments as

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they are constructed. I highlight for the parliament examples of where this has frustrated the whole process. This is where a developer essentially wants to open up new sections of a development and, because of the process that the Member for Goyder outlined earlier in regard to going backwards and forwards over and over again, it did not take place in a timely manner. For those low-risk naming such as streets and parks, we are trying to streamline the process and make it a much quicker process.

Mr SMELT: Who defines low-risk, and what is complex place-naming?

Mr BURGOYNE: It will be policy as part of the placename. To explain it for everyone who is listening, low-risk placenames include roads and neighbourhood parks which are predominantly named in new developments. They will go to the Surveyor-General. The complex placenames, which include geographic or topographic features, mountains, rivers, valleys, suburbs, localities, public cemeteries, public infrastructure and associated transport facilities, will go to the committee. It is about trying to ensure that the committee is not bogged down in the naming of every street or road in a new subdivision. Its important work is researching and going through the complex placenames.

Mr SMELT: You outlined that there is a two-track process: if it is low risk, it goes to the Surveyor-General; if it is complex, it goes to the Place Names Committee. Who makes that decision?

Mr BURGOYNE: Roads and parks go to Surveyor-General. Anything that he deems to be sensitive goes to the Place Names Committee. That is outlined clearly throughout this. I do not know what else to say in regard to that.

Mr SMELT: Are you saying that the Surveyor-General will decide whether it goes through the fast-track low-risk program or whether it goes to the complex process through the committee?

Mr BURGOYNE: If it is a road or a neighbourhood park, it will go to the Surveyor-General. That is written in the legislation. Roads go to the Surveyor-General; if it is more complex, it goes to the committee.

Mr SMELT: Surely, to operationalise this someone will put in some form of an application to somebody and someone will have to make that distinction. Who is that person? Is it the CEO, you or the director?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is laid out in the legislation:

> *(1) Subject to this section, the Surveyor-General may, from time to time as occasion requires, make reports to the Minister containing recommendations in relation to the naming of or the altering of the name of a place specified in 4A(1)(c) or (d).*

The surveyor-general gets the roads, neighbourhood parks and the rest of it goes to the committee as outlined.

Mr SMELT: We are still missing a key point. Someone must receive an application from a developer or somebody and then will have to look at it and make an assessment of whether it is low risk or not. You provided some examples but someone is still going to have to read that form and make a decision. Who is that person?

Mr BURGOYNE: As outlined here today, everything goes to the place names unit. If it is a road or a neighbourhood park, it goes to the surveyor-general. If it is something else, it goes to the committee.

Mr SMELT: The place names unit. We got there in the end. Where does this amendment allow for consultation with Aboriginal people on Indigenous names and Indigenous land?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is not inside the act at all. This is important. It has always been a policy that, regarding those sensitive names or anything that involves Aboriginal names, there consultation occurs. We are not changing or taking anything away. That is important to highlight.

Mr SMELT: Is it reliant on policy for that consultation to occur? Is there nothing in the legislation to mandate it?

Mr BURGOYNE: It has always been the policy—that is important to understand as well—even previous to these changes. It has always been the case and has always been worked through.

Mr SMELT: Can you outline under the policy what the mechanism is for Aboriginal people to be consulted?

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Mr BURGOYNE: The requirements for Aboriginal place names are set out in long standing policy—the Aboriginal place names and dual naming policy— and are supported by the Act which provides for the committee to seek views from any persons it considers appropriate. The Bill does not change this. In consultation, Aboriginal place names will continue to be done on the same basis as it is now. That is important for everyone to understand.

Mr SMELT: In terms of the low-risk process that goes through the surveyor-general, can you outline how that policy would be enacted?

Mr BURGOYNE: If it had anything to do with an Aboriginal name, he would confer to the committee to seek advice and to have that consultation.

J DAVIS: If a name for anything, including a low-risk thing, had anything to do with an Aboriginal name, will it will be referred for consultation?

Mr BURGOYNE: Under the policy, that is what they will do. They will make sure that there is consultation in regard to that.

J DAVIS: If a developer wanted to build a road, park or laneway and use an Aboriginal name, would that be referred for consultation?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, under the policy.

Mr SMELT: Will that be a consultation that the surveyor-general does themselves and their team? Or does it go back to the Place Names Committee and the place names unit runs that consultation?

Mr BURGOYNE: Can you confirm that question?

Mr SMELT: Following on from the Member for Johnston's question earlier, if it is in the low-risk category, does the surveyor-general refer that back to the Place Names Committee for that consultation, or does the surveyor-general undertake that consultation themselves?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is a requirement on the submitter. If I am a developer and I have just submitted a whole range of names and it is deemed through the Surveyor-General that one of those names is an Aboriginal name, it will be incumbent upon that developer to show that he has done the relevant consultation, otherwise the name will not be approved.

Mr SMELT: It will not go back to the place names unit. Will the low-risk process be conducted by the Surveyor-General?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is the committee that has to sign off at the end of the day on those names. There is a process. Once it has deemed that there needs to be consultation and there is a risk involved, once the consultations have been done it ends up going back to the committee.

Mr SMELT: If a developer submits an application and it has an Aboriginal name or title in a low-risk type, if it is a road, park or a laneway, it will be diverted into the complex stream?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mr SMELT: When it is diverted into the complex stream, is that opened up for all stakeholders to consider or will that be a direct targeted consultation with Aboriginal or First Nations groups?

Mr BURGOYNE: In regard to the consultation, the place names unit has dealt with these things over a long period and it will need to make sure that the relevant consultation has occurred before it comes back to the committee.

Mr SMELT: You have clarified a couple of aspects of this, but we feel that is not enough to engage our support for these proposed amendments. We believe that this could be more clearly written into the legislation and not rely on the processes within the department.

Cutting out critical stakeholders, not just Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal organisations but also councils, from naming decisions in areas that they represent or have vested interests creates uncertainty

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and potentially division or mistrust. Territorians and representative bodies deserve to have their say on matters that affect their community , including placenames.

What we name places is something communities and Aboriginal Territorians care about. It reflects the value and the significance of places that people hold dear. People's views should be heard and considered. We do not believe this is streamlining' it is excluding groups that have a valid and important say on these things, including roads, parks and other items deemed to be low risk. We have proposed amendments that we will foreshadow and will be raised.

Mr BURGOYNE: I know you have to read off your script, but once again I say for everyone in the Chamber that we will continue to consult on these names. I have outlined that if it is deemed to be an Aboriginal name or a complex name, due diligence and consultation will be undertaken to ensure that Aboriginal views can be taken into consideration.

Clause 51 agreed to.

Clause 52:

Mr SMELT: Can you give us an example of when consultation on placenames held up a development?

Mr BURGOYNE: Without outlining every time the department had to go backwards and forwards with the developer, the reason we are making these changes is that there have been issues in the past. We are not doing this for no reason. There have been issues regarding names deemed to be sensitive so absolutely, they go backwards and forwards and try to seek the consultation but in some instances, if the name is deemed to be sensitive or the consultation too complex, the name just simply gets dropped and they name it simple things to be able to move on.

We will continue to work and consult with the community on place names. I look forward to the amended legislation hopefully meaning that there is a more streamlined process for developers when naming streets in a development.

Mr SMELT: I am just after an example. Can you give us one project that has been held up by this clause and processed through the place names committee?

Mr BURGOYNE: There have been numerous. I am not going to out one because that will highlight an instance where a developer has tried to do the right thing, go through a long process and not essentially outline the thing. I will not going to pinpoint.

Mr SMELT: Can you give us some background of where this proposal came from? Was it identified in the Saying 'Yes' to Business report? What was the basis for this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: Just clarifying for everyone in the Chamber, we are talking about clause 52, section 9 amended, committee's reports and recommendations. This clause omits section 9(1), replaces it with new section 9(1) to provide for the committee to make reports to the minister related to the landing of places specified in section 4A1, ABDA, EF and G or referred to the committee by the Surveyor-General. The places specified are complex names. I do not think the question is relevant to them.

Mr SMELT: I think it is very relevant. Can you name the report or the document or the stakeholder group where, where did this recommendation come from?

Mr BURGOYNE: As outlined through my opening statement in regard to this—perhaps if you rocked up to get a briefing, you would know, Member for Nightcliff—we are working through legislative changes, which has been provided through us through a range of reports, through stakeholder engagement. We will continue to improve legislation where we see fit to ensure that we are streamlining processes and making it easy for people to do business here in the Northern Territory.

Mr SMELT: Can you name the report?

Mr BURGOYNE: I have just outlined a number of things that we are doing.

Mr SMELT: The minister cannot name the report that it has come from, and I am not sure where or how this is come to pass. As per clause 51, we do not believe that creating different categories of place names will help streamline processes for business. It will just create division. There is no clear basis on how decisions

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on what low risk and what complex will be made. The minister has not been able to provide us with any examples of projects that have been delayed or have made this recommendation necessary, and ultimately it is cutting out key stakeholders and people who deserve to have their say on decisions in their communities. On that basis, I'd like to move amendment number one, Clause 52 at the end to insert Section 9(1B)(b) to omit 'made' and insert 'made; or.

After section 9(1B)(b) insert (c) 'a place that is located on Aboriginal land within the meaning of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth), unless the land council within the meaning of the average *Land rights Northern Territory (Northern Territory) Acts 1976 (*Cth) established in respect of the land on which the place is located agrees to the recommendation being made; or (d) 'a place in the recommendation is to use an Aboriginal word or traditional place name unless the community or language group of Aboriginal persons with traditional responsibility for the place agrees to the recommendation being made. Item number four, section 9(4), definition of interested persons after paragraph (b) insert (ba) 'if the report relates to a place that is of Aboriginal cultural, linguistic or historical significance, the relevant Aboriginal persons, community groups or representative bodies in respect of the place.

I move that amendment is tabled to clarify and establish in legislation the importance of this consultation with First Nations people, with Aboriginal organisations, and that it is not left to the whims of policy or things that can be changed easily at the margins.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 52 agreed to.

Clause 53:

Mr SMELT: Can you explain on what basis this amendment has been made?

Mr BURGOYNE: I will outline exactly what is happening. This is amending sections 10A and 10B or inserting. Section 10A also provides the Surveyor-General to refer a place to the committee to make a report to the minister, as outlined previously. Section 10A includes requirements in line with section 91BA and 94E to apply to the committee for agreement. Consultation to be undertaken before a recommendation is made. It is outlining once again that consultations will be undertaken before a recommendation is made.

Mr SMELT: Can you point to where, in your Saying 'Yes' to Business report, that it recommends streamlining the place-naming process.

Mr BURGOYNE: I have outlined a number of times why we are doing this. I think it is getting a bit tedious now.

Mr SMELT: Have you done an analysis of how much time will be saved for business industry and which businesses and industries that will save time for?

Mr BURGOYNE: I will try and give an example here because I want to be clear about what we are seeking to do. Now, there are developments being made across the Northern Territory and take Northcrest for an example. It is being built on the old Berrimah farm. They have named their streets things like Shorthorn, Hereford—all these relevant street names. Previously, they would have gone to the local council, made sure that everyone was happy with those basic names, go back and ask if everyone was okay or not? We like Shorthom but we do not like Hereford and all the rest of it.

What we are doing with basic street names that can be the recommendation of the Surveyor-General, checks it over and if he is happy, he writes to the minister and it gets approved. We are streamlining the process because the previous process, as has been outlined, time and time again today in this Chamber, was a lengthy one.

Mr SMELT: Again, the Territory Labor opposition is planning to make amendments to this section for the following reasons. This provides for the Surveyor-General to report on the naming of the places directly to the minister without the need for consultation on the low-risk place names, as we have discussed. This effectively cuts out the relevant local governments and potentially Aboriginal Territorians from having a say on the naming of places that are directly relevant to them or within their locality.

This is another change that disempowers key stakeholders that has been dressed up as red tape reduction. These concerns have been raised by multiple stakeholders.

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I move amendment 2 to clause 53, after proposed section 10A(2) to insert:

(2A) The Surveyor-General must not make a recommendation under subsection (1) in relation to naming or altering the name of any of the following places, but may instead refer the place to the Committee under subsection (2):

(a) a place that is located on Aboriginal land, within the meaning of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth);

(b) a place if the recommendation is to use an Aboriginal word or traditional place name;

(c) a place that is of Aboriginal cultural, linguistic or historical significance.

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: Once again, mine is a similar amendment, so I will leave it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have two amendments scheduled. Are you pursuing any of them? There was amendment 3 and amendment 4 we had listed.

J DAVIS: Yes, I am happy to leave them.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 3 to clause 53, after proposed section 10A(4) to insert:

(4A) If the Surveyor-General intends to make a recommendation under subsection (1) in relation to naming or altering the name of a place within a local government area, the Surveyor-General must:

(a) seek the views of the local government council established for the area; and

(b) include those views in the report to the Minister.

I commend the amendment to the Assembly. Being a former councillor, as are you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and the Member for Goyder, I know it is important that the views of the community, through our elected representatives, are heard on these fundamental aspects of governance, including the naming of places. They stay for a long time, so it is incumbent that all those views are heard in making these decisions.

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to understand that if the local council was aware, like many are, that a new development was underway and wanted to make a submission about possible names for that subdivision, there is nothing stopping it from speaking to the developer or the Surveyor-General and putting forward its thoughts in regard to those names.

J DAVIS: The council can put its view, but there is no requirement for that to be taken into account; is that correct?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is important throughout all these processes. People can put in submissions and write to me as minister. It does not have to be taken into consideration but it is, as part of that naming process. It is not written into legislation but if someone writes to anyone and says, 'Have you considered this?' obviously you read it and consider it. It is part of it. We do not have to have it written into legislation.

It is important to say that we are trying to streamline the process so that it does not go backwards and forwards six times on a 'Shorthorn' or a 'Hereford'. We are trying to streamline that process. It is not stopping people from putting forward their views.

J DAVIS: People can put forward their views; I understand that, but there is no requirement that they are taken into account?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is right. Under the legislation is no requirement.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 53 agreed to.

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Clause 54:

Mr SMELT: It is the cumulative impact of all of these amendments that the minister is putting forward. Read together, the above clauses disempower local governments, Aboriginal people and other interested parties from having a say in certain place names, and takes powers away from the Place Names Committee, which was specifically formed for this purpose and puts it in the hands of the Surveyor-General.

This is purportedly for low-risk place names, but there is no clarity on what this means and how it could be bypassed in future consultations on place names. Changes to place naming does not seem to appear anywhere in the Saying 'Yes' to Business report. We do not understand where these changes that come from or the basis for them being named, and they should be placed on hold and reversed.

Mr BURGOYNE: Responding to that, it is important that we understand, as part of this process, there is a local government representative on the Place Names Committee. Everyone is involved throughout this process. We are not shutting anyone out. We are ensuring that we are streamlining processes.

Clause 54 agreed to.

Clause 55:

J DAVIS: Under proposed section 11A(1A), you can delegate approval powers back to the surveyor-general for recommendations made by the surveyor-general. Is that right?

Mr BURGOYNE: I can convey or delegate the powers to the surveyor-general, yes, to name places.

J DAVIS: Does that allow an official to approve their own place name recommendations without any committee oversight?

Mr BURGOYNE: The person putting forward the names puts them forward to the Place Names Committee. They assess and then provide the report to the surveyor-general and then, should the minister choose to delegate their powers to the surveyor-general, they can then approve those names.

J DAVIS: The official can approve their own recommendation?

Mr BURGOYNE: The Place Names Committee does the assessment—I think that is important to delineate; it is not like the surveyor-general is putting up names and approving them themselves. We have a developer who puts forward place names for a for a development. The unit does the work. They are calling it things like 'sunshine' or 'rainbow'—they are seen as low-risk names—therefore the report is given to the surveyor-general, and if the surveyor-general has the delegation of powers, they can approve those names.

J DAVIS: My concern is not for names like 'rainbow' or 'umbrella' or whatever you talked about there.

I move amendment 5, inserting section 11A(1B). Essentially this amendment means that the minister cannot delegate approval powers back to the surveyor-general for any place name on Aboriginal land using the Indigenous word or commemorating an Indigenous person, closing that kind of self-approval loophole where an official approves their own recommendations without any oversight.

I move the amendment, which is to insert:

(1B) Subsections (1) and (1A) do not apply to the Minister's power in relation to the following:

(a) the naming and or altering of the name of a place that is on Aboriginal land, within the meaning of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth);*

(b) the naming or altering of the name of a place using an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander name or place name;

(c) the naming of a place to commemorate an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

Amendment not agreed to.

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Mr BURGOYNE: I move amendment 5 to clause 55. This clause amends section 11A to provide for the minister to delegate powers to both the chairperson of the committee and the Surveyor-General to approve recommendations subject to a report or advice relative to either low-risk or complex place names.

Assembly amendment 5 replaces at section 11A(2)(e) 'year' with 'years.' The Assembly amendment corrects the typographical error made during the drafting of the Bill, which inadvertently referred to 'year' instead of 'years'.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr SMELT: I neglected the Member for Barkly, as another former local government member and Mayor. He must be keeping quiet about that because no-one will fund his de-amalgamation program.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Let us stay focused, please.

Mr SMELT: As with the preceding clauses, we will not be supporting this move as it takes power away from the Place Names Committee and puts it in the hands of a single person without a strong policy basis for making it.

Clause 55, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 56 agreed to.

Clause 57:

Mr SMELT: I reiterate the Territory Labor opposition does not support this cause for all the reasons outlined previously.

Clause 57 agreed to.

Clauses 58 to 60, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 61:

J DAVIS: Can you confirm that under clause 61 if the Planning Commission decides not to hold a public hearing on a planning scheme amendment, it no longer has to notify submitters or give reasons?

Mr BURGOYNE: Under the changed legislation that is correct. If it choses not to hold a hearing it would not, under the current legislation, have to then advise those submitters.

J DAVIS: What is the rationale for that?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is in regards to the time frames. I articulate and make it clear for everyone that if one of those parties responds, the commission must consider any response received. This can add weeks to decision-making time frames, even though the commission is not the decision-maker. The commission's role at this stage of the process is to consider submissions, hold any necessary public hearings and report back to the decision-making on any issues raised during that consultation.

J DAVIS: Can you confirm that this clause makes inviting submitters discretionary, not a right?

Mr BURGOYNE: Could you just specify that last bit?

J DAVIS: If a hearing is held, is inviting submitters discretionary and not a right for submitters to appear?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is discretionary, but if a hearing is held, it is practice to invite those that have made submissions.

J DAVIS: Recommendation eight of the scrutiny committee's report suggested restoring a guaranteed right for councils to be invited to hearings. You referenced that in your speech earlier. I support that recommendation and believe it should be extended to Aboriginal organisations that lodged a submission. Have you considered that recommendation and if you have rejected it, on what basis?

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Mr BURGOYNE: I apologise; I missed the last bit of that question. Throughout these processes there is a local government representative on the Planning Commission. The idea that councils are taken out of this process is, in my view, not accurate. There is still a process for someone from local government to be involved.

J DAVIS: The last part of my question was what was the basis for not accepting the recommendation from the scrutiny committee?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is not the intention of what we are trying to do. We are trying to streamline processes. It is important to try to understand, having worked in the industry in the past, that when you try to get an approval through, it can take anywhere from six to 12 months because of how the current Act is outlined. We are not trying to completely cut people out of the process; we are trying to streamline the process.

That is why in the Act now, it says 'may', because you can imagine if you did not invite one submitter, suddenly the entire process is null and void and you must start again. We are trying to streamline processes so that people can have a say and have their views heard, and we can still get things built in the Territory.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 6 in schedule 77IND to clause 61.

The amendment does exactly what I was just talking about, which ensures that whenever the Planning Commission holds a public hearing on a planning scheme change, it must invite both local government councils and representative Aboriginal organisations.

The amendment reads: Section 22(6) *omit*, *insert*

(6) The Commission must conduct a hearing if:

(a) the Commission receives a submission; and

(b) the Chairperson considers that a hearing would aid the Commission's understanding of issues raised in submissions or provide further useful evidence or information.

I just want to point out for the minister that this is saying if the Commission believes it would be helpful.

Section 22(9) *omit, insert*

(9) If the Commission conducts a hearing, the Commission

(a) must invite any local government council who made a submission to attend the hearing and give evidence; and

(b) must invite any person or body representing the interests of Aboriginal people that made a submission to attend the hearing and give evidence; and

(c) may invite any other person or body who made a submission to attend the hearing and give evidence.

I note the minister said this is standard practice, so I move that come into the legislation.

Amendment not agreed to.

Mr SMELT: Once again, we do not support this proposed amendment by the CLP government. The Member for Johnston raised several very important issues that came out through the scrutiny committee, and we were happy to support her amendment. But once again, the minister is proposing a series of amendments purporting to be about streamlining but actually seeking to cut key stakeholders out of critical decisions that impact them and their communities.

We will not be supporting this or related amendments proposed by the minister, on the basis that these changes will cut out critical stakeholders from decisions impacting their communities and cause unnecessary unintended consequences and mistrust in government processes.

Anyone who makes a submission in relation to a planning scheme amendment or exceptional development permit should be afforded the right to attend a hearing. This is especially the case for councils which have

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critical knowledge about the potential impacts on their community of proposed amendments, especially on essential infrastructure, amenity, traffic and the like.

It is extremely concerning that councils which inherit and maintain roads, drainage, reserves and other infrastructure created by development do not get their voice heard in the decision-making process of the development. These changes show a lack of understanding about the need to factor in traffic, drainage and service impacts. The consequence of these critical elements not being considered will potentially add costs and problems down the track.

Similarly, cutting Aboriginal stakeholders out of planning decisions is incredibly short-sighted and divisive, particularly where a proposal may impact on their land, water, culture or economic interests.

The minister needs to explain who asked for these changes, what the policy basis for the changes is and where they are identified in the *Saying Yes to Business* report—the same themes that we had on a number of clauses this afternoon.

Finally, here is what Aboriginal Investment NT had to say about these changes:

> *Removing notice, response and reconsideration rights and replacing the right of every submitter to attend a hearing with selective invitations materially reduces transparency and procedural fairness. This is particularly significant where a submission raises Aboriginal cultural, community, land, water or economic interests that may not be readily apparent from planning documentation or capable of being fully explained in writing.*
>
> *The loss is difficult to reconcile with the* Planning Act's *existing objectives or appropriate public consultation, an accessible planning system, responsible use of land and water, conservation of places of cultural value and fair and open decision-making.*

Mr BURGOYNE: Responding to that, I highlight the changes are balanced by the additional criteria inserted in section 22(6) to ensure that the commission is satisfied that it has a full understanding of the issues raised in submissions to report on the consultation outcomes to the minister. This includes considering any advice provided by local government and service authorities such as Power and Water and the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure, as well as concerns raised by the community. There is that inserted.

Clause 61 agreed to.

Clause 62:

Mr SMELT: I want to understand in reducing from 90 days to 30 days, what is the improvement that you expect to see out of this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: An improvement in time frames for things to be developed.

Mr SMELT: Can you guarantee every business, submitter and development application that you will meet a 30-day time frame?

Mr BURGOYNE: To confirm it is 30 days from when I get the report from the Planning Commission.

Mr SMELT: You are committing that you will make that change from 90 days to 30 days and you will complete all those approvals within 30 days?

Mr BURGOYNE: This provides for shorter assessment time frames without changing the time that the public is given to consider a planning proposal and make a submission. Yes, it is ensuring that we are doing things more quickly.

Mr SMELT: Will any additional resources—staffing and the like—be provided to help you achieve this shorter time frame?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are continuing to work with the department to make sure that we are removing red tape and improving approvals time frames.

Mr SMELT: You are asking the department to do more work in less time?

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Mr BURGOYNE: I am asking myself to do things more quickly. I assure you I will be.

Mr SMELT: You will be doing that assessment and all that work without any support or input from the department?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is from when I get the report, so the work has been done. Instead of taking 90 days, I will be taking 30 days. I will make sure that I am getting those reports out and that we can get on with developing things for the Northern Territory.

Mr SMELT: When you are doing your work to make your assessment, you do not need to go back to the department and seek clarification or ask questions or do any of that work?

Mr EDGINGTON: Why don't you support the Bill?

Mr BURGOYNE: I will be doing my job. I look forward to approving or not approving within the legislated time.

Mr SMELT: The Territory Labor opposition does not support this clause to reduce the period for the minister to decide an amendment to a planning scheme from 90 days to 30 days. The minister seems to think that he can do it all by himself without any support or input from the department.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, please.

Mr SMELT: The minister has made it clear he will do it all himself in 30 days instead of 90 days without any additional support, resources or staffing. I wish him good luck with that. Again, considered on its own, this amendment supports streamlined processes. However, there are cumulative impacts when considered in the context of the other reductions that have been made for the community, councils and Aboriginal organisations to participate in the process. Despite the best efforts of the minister, this will have an impact by reducing this approval timeframe. We do not support this clause.

Clause 62 agreed to.

Clauses 63 to 65, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 66:

Mr SMELT: Can you outline some examples of exceptional development permits that currently require public exhibition but will no longer under this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: I can provide you with an example. An example of where this change will be of use is for EDPs to allow for changes to an existing development that was previously permitted but has become prohibited through changes in planning policy. This often includes older unit blocks constructed in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in low-density residential zones that were permitted when constructed but have since become prohibited. There are examples of these around the Northern Territory.

Mr SMELT: Are you saying that those low-rise or small developments will no longer be required to go through this statutory public exhibition?

Mr BURGOYNE: Could you just repeat that last bit of the question?

Mr SMELT: Those examples that you just rattled off with low-rise or multi-dwelling developments, will they no longer be required to go through this statutory public exhibition process?

Mr BURGOYNE: I will try to explain it a bit clearer. We have the old unit complex, which was developed many years ago. We are now upgrading and making improvements which would require going through an entire planning process. We are not materially changing it, just upgrading the development to meet current standards, such as making improvements to car parking, private and common property areas or even making more significant internal upgrades. We are, in certain circumstances, just utilising it, so that we do not have to go through an entire planning process for upgrading an old building.

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Mr SMELT: Just clarifying, minister. Right now, that would have to go through the exceptional development process?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, because planning laws have changed since those original buildings were put in place.

Mr SMELT: That is one example, but can you define what a significant application is?

Mr BURGOYNE: I have some examples of how this test is already applied through the legislation, include considering community consultation has already occurred, authorisation from a landowner, council or service authority, the remoteness or isolation of a particular site, limited value in using standard notification, and the minor nature works.

Mr SMELT: That is the criteria for assessing if something is significant or not significant?

Mr BURGOYNE: There are examples of things that are not so significant as to require statutory exhibition.

Mr SMELT: Who will be the decision maker with regards to assessing that threshold test of significant versus not significant?

Mr BURGOYNE: The minister.

Clause 66 agreed to.

New clause 66A:

Mr BURGOYNE: I move amendment 6 to insert new Clause 66A.

This clause amends section 40, which relates to the granting of refusal to grant or the alteration to a proposal and the granting of an exceptional development permit. The key change is to subsection(4), which now expands the ability to grant, refuse or alter a proposal and grant a permit for all types of exceptional development permit applications following a decision at section 39 that they are not so significant as to require exhibition.

Mr SMELT: Clause 66 removes 39(1)(b) to allow exceptional development permit to be granted outside the ordinary planning rules without public notice, submissions, consultation or a hearing. I note that the minister has moved this amendment, but we do not agree with this process and believe it should not be enacted. It is not streamlining, and we do not support it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 66A inserted.

Clause 67, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 68, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 69:

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 5 to clause 69. This is about silencing, not streamlining. It is a significant change that repeals the right to be heard by the consent authority. The new section 51 provides that the consent authority must hold a meeting only if it receives a submission under section 49 and the relevant entity, the minister or DCA, considers a meeting would aid the consent authority's understanding of issues or provide further evidence.

New section 50(2) provides that the consent authority may invite any person or body to make a submission to attend. Councils and Aboriginal stakeholders consider this a removal of their right to be heard rather than a red tape reduction.

Under existing section, an ordinary submitter may—emphasis on 'may'—be invited to give evidence. Council must be invited. Under this Bill, every invitation becomes discretionary.

Further, it does not provide for an Aboriginal interest trigger, notice requirement, reasons requirement or reconsideration process.

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I move amendment to clause 69(1), proposed section 50(1), to omit 'The' and insert 'Subject to subsections (1A) and (1B), the'.

Mr BURGOYNE: Speaking to the Member for Nightcliff's amendments, it is important to note, as part of the Development Consent Authority, there are members of council. What we are seeking to do is, if issues are raised by council through the assessment period, those issues are able to be alleviated so there are no more issues to be looked into. There is currently no requirement to have that public meeting.

'We have garnered submissions, looked at them and dealt with the issues raised; therefore, we want to move forward with the process.'—that is what we are seeking to do through these changes.

Amendment not agreed to.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 6 to clause 69(1). After proposed section 50(1) insert:

(1A) If the consent authority receives a submission from a local government council under section 49(3), the consent authority must hold a meeting and invite a representative of the council to attend the meeting and give evidence.

(1B) If the consent authority receives a submission from an Aboriginal organisation in relation to the interests of Aboriginal people the consent authority must hold a meeting and invite a representative of the organisation to attend the meeting and give evidence.

As I mentioned before, this is critical that Aboriginal organisations and local government authorities have that seat at the table and are able to provide their expertise and recommendations through a proper hearing. The minister is referring to the local government representatives on the Development Consent Authority but, as he would know, those representatives do not go into that room with their council hat on.

They have to look at the requirements of the building, planning application or whatever it is. They cannot sit with their City of Darwin or City of Palmerston hats on, or whatever it may be. They need to be there; they are a member of that panel and they cannot provide decision-making outside of what is presented to them and the laws and regulations they need to apply. They cannot sit with a City of Darwin hat on and direct what would be best for the City of Darwin. I make that point as well.

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: This amendment is in relation to replacing 20 business days with 20 calendar days. Just making sure I am in the right spot.

Mr BURGOYNE: Sorry, Member for Johnston, I believe that is clause 71.

Mr MALEY: Go back one to number 7 on your paper. It is basically identical the one that …

J DAVIS: Sorry, that is similar to the amendment that was just moved. I will leave that.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 7 to clause 69(1). After proposed schedule 50(3), insert:

(3A) If the consent authority intends not to hold a meeting, it must:

(a) notify each person or body who made a submission of that intention and the reasons for it; and

(b) give those persons and bodies a reasonable opportunity to respond to the notice.

(3B) The consent authority must consider any responses given in response to the notice before deciding not to hold a meeting.

This is providing clarity, transparency and feedback to the authorities that makes submissions under this clause and the section of the Act

Mr MACKAY: Speaking to the amendment, it is clear when the Labor Party moved these amendments that they do not understand the intent of this legislation and they would instead add additional red tape. It makes

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no sense. At the beginning of his speech today, the Member for Nightcliff said they support cutting red tape, getting on with the job and making things happen. Then they are trying to add a clause that would be a reasonable opportunity to respond to the notice.

You get the first set of submissions, you decide not to hold a meeting. There is no benefit to holding that meeting. You notify those people, you wait—what?—two weeks, three weeks, six weeks, two months, three years, four days? How long do you wait? Reasonable notice is whatever you think it is.

Then they have to consider those responses to those responses. This clause would add months of delay, which is exactly what we are trying to do by cutting red tape. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition should know more about planning than he has demonstrated in this Chamber today.

If he was an active member of his council—not just posting on Facebook but paying attention to what was going on in council—he would have a much better understanding of this legislation and what we are trying to achieve.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 69 agreed to.

Clause 70, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 71:

Mr SMELT: In reference to this change in the business days, can you outline who you consulted on this particular change?

Mr BURGOYNE: Once again we are ensuring that we are streamlining processes. We are omitting the reference to business days and ensuring that it is calendar days. We are shortening the timeframe and getting on with delivering what NT residents expect from us.

Mr SMELT: Can you say what report it came from or what stakeholders have requested this; who has requested it?

Mr BURGOYNE: What we are talking about is the show cause process. The purpose of this amendment is to bring about prompt action in relation to alleged contraventions under the Act. Due to the nature of land use planning, this prompt action is necessary to avoid worsening noncompliance or significant disruption to the amenity of the area. I think everyone would want to ensure that we are doing this. This can include unauthorised operation of motor repair station or body works in a residential area; industrial-related business operating from a rural premises or unauthorised clearing of sensitive native vegetation. We are getting rid of business days and putting in calendar days so that it will happen quicker, rather than allowing it to continue to occur for a longer period.

J DAVIS: This clause replaces 20 business days with 20 calendar days; is that correct?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

J DAVIS: I note that the scrutiny committee recommended that be amended from 20 business days to 28 days. Was there a reason you chose not to accept that recommendation?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes. The recommendation was not accepted, given that the intent of the change is to bring about more prompt responses to show cause notices.

J DAVIS: I am sure everyone has read the scrutiny committee report. This was something that the scrutiny committee discussed and considered and unanimously agreed. The committee stated:

> *While the Committee acknowledges the importance of prompt enforcement action … it also notes that it is equally important to ensure that an appropriate level of procedural fairness is maintained. As highlighted by submitters, the proposed amendment reduces the show cause response period by approximately a third and is further reduced where a notice is issued ahead of public holidays.*
>
> *Given that government departments generally close down between Christmas and New Year, the Committee is particularly concerned that where show cause notices are issued at this time of year the*

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timeframe within which a person can access planning or legal advice is effectively reduced by another 6 days. As such, the Committee notes that under the proposed amendment the response timeframe has been reduced from 20 business days to 14 business days, and down to 8 business days where the show cause notice takes in the Christmas/New Year period.

The Committee is of the view that a more appropriate balance needs to be struck between prompt enforcement action and procedural fairness. The Committee therefore recommends that the Bill be amended to provide a show cause response period of no less than 28 calendar days.

I am interested in your response to the committee's view that this is a balance between prompt enforcement action and procedural fairness. What would your response be to people who raise this, including people who are living in remote areas and on stations who will potentially have a lot of difficulty in meeting that timeframe?

Mr BURGOYNE: The consent authority must consider any response given by the proponent to the show cause notice before making a decision under section 77. There are provisions that in extenuating circumstances these things can be dealt with appropriately.

J DAVIS: I move my amendment to oppose clause 71 in its entirety.

Mr SMELT: I support the Member for Johnston and the work of the scrutiny committee on this. Although we support prompt enforcement, the key aspect is to get that balance right. The committee did that work, received submissions, considered the evidence and advice and landed on a different number from the minister. Therefore, we support the advice from the scrutiny committee. Changing it to 20 days, rather than 20 business days, reduces procedural fairness for rural and remote people who may not have ready access to planning or legal advice.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 71 agreed to.

Clause 72:

Mr SMELT: Can you explain how this change supports red-tape reduction, given it is about notifying people in writing of reasons and notification when an investigation is refused?

Mr BURGOYNE: This is a significant process enhancement which provides a new enforcement pathway to allow more responsive action in relation to alleged contraventions under the Act. Rather than replacing public reporting, these changes provide a complementary pathway enabling government to bring matters before the consent authority for investigation.

Mr SMELT: What part of that process will be sped up under this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: The department being able to take responsive action rather than having to rely on public reporting. If the department sees something it knows is wrong, it can act upon it.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 8 to clause 72, after proposed section 79AA(4) to insert:

(5) If the consent authority refuses to investigate the alleged contravention under subsection (2)(b), the consent authority must give the authorised officer who referred the matter written notice of the refusal and the reasons for it.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 72 agreed to.

Clause 73, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 74:

Mr SMELT: Can you explain which problem clause 74 seeks to solve?

Mr BURGOYNE: This clause empowers the commission to delegate any of its powers and functions under the Act to the chairperson or another member.

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Mr SMELT: How does this reduce red tape?

Mr BURGOYNE: The Planning Commission obviously has meetings. If there was a decision that needed to occur between those meetings, rather than calling everyone back in, if the Planning Commission delegated the powers to the chairperson or another member, there could be a decision made in regards to their role.

Clause 74 agreed to.

Clauses 75 to 78, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 79:

Mr SMELT: I am just keen to understand with clause 79, what was the legal and policy basis you have used to make this decision to make the changes retrospective?

Mr BURGOYNE: I think what you are trying to get to is that once this legislation is put into place, it will also apply to current applications that are in the process of being processed. So that is why we are doing that, because as we have said, throughout this process, we are trying to streamline processes, make things happen, so for processes halfway through, the legislation will apply to that current process.

Mr SMELT: Commonly legislation would only apply to future or new applications. Why in this instance are you applying it to applications that are already in trade?

Mr BURGOYNE: The transitional arrangements were crafted so that amendments made through the Bill would apply to applications equally subject to the stage of an application that has been reached in the assessment process.

Mr SMELT: I take your answer minister, but I just want to understand why is this being applied? Why is it being applied respectively and not to just new?

Mr BURGOYNE: We want to ensure that we are dealing with applications in a timely manner, so this will apply to current applications and future ones.

Mr SMELT: Can you explain to the House how many matters are currently in this category; for example, the commission has yet to decide whether to hold a hearing or a meeting, or a meeting has not been held yet?

Mr BURGOYNE: No, I do not have those numbers in front of me, and they are not relevant directly to the clause.

Mr SMELT: What notification was given to affected parties for those applications that are currently in the system? What will be the process for identifying those applications and advising them of this change?

Mr BURGOYNE: It will all depend on the stage they are going through. Obviously throughout the planning process there are many backwards and forwards with people that have had processes currently in place so there will likely be processes where there has already been consultation. Obviously it will all depend on the stage at which it is currently going through.

Mr SMELT: Again, where was this change initiated from? Was it from one of those reports? Was it from peak body industry? Can you explain to the House where this change came from?

Mr BURGOYNE: We have said throughout today we are doing this because of direct feedback from industry and stakeholders. We are getting on with delivering faster approval timeframes, which is what we said we would do throughout our years of being in government, and we will continue to deliver legislation that delivers that.

Mr SMELT: The Territory Labor opposition does not support this clause or amendment. The minister has failed to outline the legal and policy basis for making these changes retrospectively. All these existing procedural safeguards and matters already commenced should be preserved rather than shifting the goal post halfway through the process.

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Mr BURGOYNE: You are calling it retrospective, Member for Nightcliff, but what we are doing is if there is currently an application that is being processed, it comes under the current laws that are being passed. It is important to understand that they are transitional arrangements we are talking about.

Mr SMELT: Just to be clear, that is shifting the goal posts if you change a process retrospectively.

Clause 79 agreed to.

Clauses 80 to 86, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (NORTHERN TERRITORY) (NATIONAL UNIFORM LEGISLATION) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 75

Continued from 26 August 2026.

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

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, from the outset, the opposition does not oppose this Bill. We recognise that the Northern Territory has unique electricity systems that require rules tailored to our own circumstances. The National Electricity Rules were developed for the National Electricity Market, which operates across jurisdictions other than Northern Territory and Western Australia.

While the Territory adopted a modified version of those rules in 2016, the automatic application of subsequent national rule changes has created an increasingly complex and unworkable framework for our local electricity systems. This Bill seeks to address that problem by stopping further national rule changes from automatically flowing through the Northern Territory National Electricity Rules, giving the Territory and the Australian Energy Market Commission time to work toward longer-term solutions. That is a sensible step.

While my Territory Labor team can support the objective of this legislation, we cannot ignore the broader context in which it comes before the House. While the CLP government is dealing with the technical rules that govern our electricity system, Territorians are dealing with something more immediate: the rising cost of keeping lights on in their homes and businesses; keeping homes cool in the Top End over the Wet; and keeping homes warm in Central Australia over the winter. On that front, the CLP government has some serious questions to answer.

Under the CLP, Territorians are paying more for electricity but have been left without a plan by the government to give them more affordable and sustainable energy.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. Nothing the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is relevant to this Bill. If we are only reading the headline for the Bill, maybe it is, but it has nothing to do with what is in the Bill.

Madam SPEAKER: She has been speaking for less than two minutes and has potentially 45 minutes to speak. As I said last week, there is plenty of time for her to extrapolate and then bring it in tightly to a tight theme and relevance. We will give her a few more minutes to do so.

Ms UIBO: Whilst the Member for Goyder does not have any interest in Territorians having a lower cost of living when it comes to electricity supply, I am heartened that the Deputy Chief Minister is interested in what I have to say and I thank him. It is appalling that the Member for Goyder has no care or responsibility for or interest in understanding the electricity market in the Northern Territory.

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This is an important Bill, as I have already outlined, and is highly relevant for every Territorian. It is a shame that the Member for Goyder does not see the importance of the electricity market and keeping costs lower for Territorians compared with the rest of the country.

I will not do a 2005 history lesson like the Member for Barkly. I will not indulge in that. We do not hear the Member for Goyder call a point of relevance when not a member of the current parliament was part of the 2005 makeup for any decisions of past governments. It would be great if he applied the same rules in equity and consistency to his own team as much as he likes to scour through the standing orders and show that he is doing a good job as the government Whip ...

Mr Mackay interjecting.

Ms UIBO: I might need that extension of time because I have been distracted by the Member for Goyder, who does not know, care or is interested in anything to do with the electricity market …

Mr Mackay interjecting.

Mr BROWN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; there is a bit of yelling.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Maley: I agree.

Madam SPEAKER: If we are all agreed on that point, we will all be quiet and listen to the Leader of Opposition in silence.

Ms UIBO: I accept your ruling; and a good one it is. How exciting that we are getting excited and sparking interest in electricity. Let us hope that the Member for Goyder learns a thing or two. I doubt that he has read the legislation. He is getting a few tips from his deputy now. I will continue, Madam Speaker; thank you for your good ruling.

We cannot ignore the broader context of the cost of living, particularly when it comes to electricity in the Northern Territory. We have a unique system that is made all the more complex with our small population and big geography.

On that front, we note that Territorians are paying more for electricity. We want to see a plan from the CLP government for more affordable energy sources for the Territory and a transition regarding sustainable energy for the future of the Northern Territory.

At this time last year the Northern Territory parliament passed critical reforms to our electricity system, establishing the Northern Territory Electricity System and Market Operator (NTESMO). These reforms were intended to provide a clear framework for electricity system planning and procurement system control through an independent statutory corporation. The purpose was to strengthen the way our electricity system is managed and to support better long-term outcomes for Territorians. However, legislation alone does not deliver those outcomes. What matters is how these arrangements work in practice, what they cost and, ultimately, who pays the bill.

When we talk about what is underway with the review into the charges of NTESMO, there is a levy when it comes to electricity companies for managing the power grid. How those costs may affect electricity bills over the next five-year period from 2027 to 2032 matters for Territorians, although the Member for Goyder may not think that. Territorians deserve to know what the review finds. It would be great to see the CLP government provide that information and a clear plan about that process.

Territorians deserve to know whether electricity prices are expected to rise during that five-year period I mentioned, what is driving any proposed increases and what steps the CLP government is taking to minimise the impact on households and businesses which people are worried about.

To show the importance of that, we are seeing across the globe citizens revolting against government decisions and a lack of response to lowering the cost of living. We do not want to see extremism like that in Australia, particularly not in the Northern Territory. This is not just faced by Territorians or Australians; it is facing people across the world.

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I ask the minister this—if he can answer in his rap, it would be appreciated. What is the current status of the NTESMO charging review? When will it be completed? When will Territorians be told what it means for their power bills between that five-year period of 2027 to 2032?

It will be interesting to see whether the review identifies additional costs, what action the CLP government will take to ensure those costs are not passed on to Territorians in a big hit—who we know already struggling with cost of living—and will there be any incentives? I know the minister may not be able to answer that right now, but it would be great if the CLP government was thinking about the future and buffering any impact on Territorians in the short, medium and long term.

These are some basic questions. It is about transparency, accountability, and the cost of essential services and delivery in the NT, which we know affects all Territorians. They are relevant given the CLP's decision regarding increasing household electricity prices by 5.3%, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, which is well above the inflation rate. Electricity is not an optional extra for many Territorians and businesses.

The government cannot turn off the electricity to people's homes and expect family life to continue as normal. It cannot turn off electricity to businesses and expect them to run without a reliable power source. We cannot operate essential community of the structure without electricity. It makes up a significant proportion of household budgets, and the increase of 5.3% has a big impact on Territory household budgets.

That is why the minister's response on the NTESMO review matters. Territorians should not have to wait until they open their next power bill to know whether they have to budget their household or business to cover the increasing costs. The Chief Minister has made it clear the Beetaloo gas does not mean cheaper electricity for Territorians, although that is what the CLP was alluding to.

That raises an obvious question, what is the CLP government's plan to deliver affordable electricity over the long term? Where is the plan to reduce exposure of volatile fuel costs? Where is the plan to better make use of the Territory's abundant renewable energy sources? Where is the commitment to give households and industry the certainty that they need to invest in their own energy future?

These are reasonable questions that we have from many Territorians that the Labor opposition speak to. When we consider the CLP government's approach to energy since coming to office, many people have been disappointed.

Let us look at that record to date. During the 2024 election, the CLP promoted a home and business battery scheme that proved very popular, like the Territory Labor scheme before that, demonstrating that Territorians are on board with the transition to household solar and storage. Unfortunately, that promise was short lived and only a few Territorians benefit, despite the level of demand across the NT.

Meanwhile, the CLP government walked back its commitment to double the solar feed-in tariff during peak times and replaced it with a scheme that largely operated in the off-peak times—mostly at night between 6 pm and 9 pm. The benefits to Territorians were minimal and still are. Plain and simple, the CLP lied to voters about its election promise and did not deliver. If the CLP government is serious about helping Territorians reduce their electricity bills, they would be supporting Territorians to access more solar, more batteries and other practical energy-saving measures, just as other jurisdictions across Australia do.

The CLP promised to restore the Territory's lifestyle, and Territorians are entitled to ask how that promise is being fulfilled when electricity costs are placing additional pressures on households, businesses and communities with little regard or relief from the CLP government.

In the last two years under the CLP government, we have not seen a plan regarding boosting reliability for our sustainable, renewable energy market. The CLP wasted no time in scrapping Labor's renewable energy target without articulating a clear alternative of what it would do better.

Currently, only 7% of energy in the Northern Territory comes from renewable sources. For a place with such abundant sun and wind power, it is simply not good enough to have just 7% of our power coming from renewable sources. Renewable energy is critical to sustainability and affordable power in the Territory, but, unfortunately, it is not an overnight solution. It requires planning, investment over time and targets. If the Member for Blain does not understand this, I suggest that he get a briefing from his minister.

Targets provide a framework for planning. They help investors access future opportunities, give industry greater certainty about policy direction and allow households and businesses to make informed decisions about their energy investments and the amount they have to put aside in their budgets. Planning provides

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for a genuine renewables transition at the government level and a basis on which to have funding discussions with the Commonwealth Government, investors and proponents in the Territory and those who want to come to the Territory.

A well-managed transition should bring new generation and storage online in a coordinated way, maintaining reliability, managing costs and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels over time. We need to see an energy policy from the CLP that recognises the Territory's unique circumstances while making the most of the opportunities available to us in this beautiful part of the world.

Meanwhile, Territorians are having to find hundreds of extra dollars each year to cover the power prices that have been invoked by the CLP government. Councils have been whacked with a 30% increase in their power bills, forcing them to decide what services they may need to scrap to cover these extra costs, including community safety measures such as street and park lighting.

Schools needing to keep the lights on are having to find extra money from their budgets that were resourced to spend on their students. Take Tennant Creek Primary School, in the Member for Barkly's electorate, as a prime example. The exorbitant costs and increases—the minister for Education is shaking her head and disagreeing, but we have the figures from Tennant Creek Primary School. If the minister is insinuating that the school is making up figures, maybe it is her job to correct the record.

It was unfathomable that the extra resources for school budgets were expected to pay overhead costs rather than be spent on student resources.

Mr KERLE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35; we are talking about NTESMO and electricity reform, and the Opposition Leader is talking about education.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Can you all be quiet for a minute, please.

We all know a lot of latitude is given to these speeches. You have all given speeches that seem to go off on different tangents. As long as you can tie them in and make them relevant within the long time allocated, they are accepted. Relevance is always important.

Opposition Leader, I am sure you will make these comments as relevant as necessary.

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, always in good faith, I make everything relevant.

I have only done a 2024 history lesson, unlike the Member for Barkly who always talks about 2005, when none of us were even members.

I draw on the point from the Member for Blain. The cost to schools of the electricity overhead is relevant when we are talking about energy planning for current and future Territory needs. We are talking about keeping lights, aircons and heaters on and the cost to every school in the Northern Territory, particularly under the public system.

The changes that were invoked under the CLP government to flick and whack every public school in the Northern Territory with a huge increase in impost and what they had to pay to cover electricity and the daily running is shameful.

That is not even a history lesson, it is a current lesson for the Member for Blain of what his government has done. Maybe he is not sure, unaware or completely has his head buried in the sand about what his government is doing in the real world to the community and schools by passing on those huge bills to schools to pay when, prior to the CLP government, that arrangement did not exist and schools were supported because there were community service obligation arrangement in a similar fashion for schools—which no longer exists because of the CLP and the Minister for Education and Training, the Member for Katherine. There you are in a nutshell, completely relevant.

That is the CLP's legacy so far on power: higher costs for families, businesses, schools and community organisations, with no sustainable energy future plan. We have the opportunity in the Northern Territory to take on the abundance of sunshine that could lead to a bigger process of transition to renewable energy in the Territory. Other jurisdictions on the pathway would probably be jealous of the resources we have in the Northern Territory when it comes to the opportunity to harness renewable energy.

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More planning in that space is needed. Renewable energy is not a dirty word. If the minister for Energy, the Deputy Chief Minister, is keen on looking at those opportunities and keeping costs down lower for the government services that operate, that would be a positive thing. We would be constructive with supporting any kind of process that looks at that, that is fulsome and focuses on the costing arrangements.

Obviously, the rules around electricity market are quite pertinent. Again, the Northern Territory and Western Australia are unique in that sense. We completely agree and recognise that the rest of the country is different. We do not have to see some of those huge spikes in energy costs that some of the other jurisdictions on the east coast see because they have a privatised market. In that sense, we have been able to buffer that process for quite some time.

We are concerned if there is a move towards that process. If that is the CLP's intent, it definitely needs to tell Territorians that is its intent. If it is not, that is great. Please reinforce that it is not its intent. We have seen18% power price increases on the east coast in some jurisdictions because of that privatised market.

A whopping 5.3% on families and businesses in the NT is massive. Thankfully, that is not the worst of it across the country. We need to have more of that process to show what regulations can be put in place, what type of buffers can ensure that Territorians have the least amount of impact experience as a customer when it comes to the cost of electricity and the markets system. We think that that would be a positive.

We are still waiting. We will not hold our breath. It is two years of waiting. We do not want to be waiting another two years holding our breath again. Le us see some action in this space.

Returning to the Bill, our Territory Labor opposition supports it as a sensible and necessary step to ensure that the rules of governing our electricity system remain workable. However, I have those questions which I have outlined, and it would be good to understand from the CLP government what the next steps of the process are. Are there things that can be supported, learned from other jurisdictions, not repeat any of the mistakes of other jurisdictions, et cetera? That there would be a step in the right direction should the CLP government chooses to go that way.

Other questions remain for the minister. What is the timeframe for determining the future framework for the NT National Electricity Rules? That would be good to understand. How will the government ensure the long-term interests of Territory households, businesses and industries are protected?

Supporting this legislation does not mean that we are giving the CLP a free pass in any sense regarding its broader energy policy. We speak to Territorians every day about their concerns, so we know that higher electricity bills need to be looked at.

The CLP government has removed the Territory's renewable energy target, as I mentioned earlier, without providing a clear alternative or replacement for that pathway. I call on the CLP government to set out a credible long-term energy plan that addresses affordability, reliability and investment in renewable energy for the Territory's future.

Territorians should not have to choose between keeping their homes comfortable and running essential equipment and paying for other household bills. Territorians should definitely not be left guessing about what the next five years of electricity prices will look like. That certainty would go a long way for Territorians and businesses.

Territorians should not be expected to accept the removal of renewable energy targets without a clear explanation from the government of what will replace it. What will the government's alternative idea and planning process look like?

Our Labor opposition thinks that this is a test of the CLP government's energy policy and its will and want to do better for everyone across the Territory. What type of announcements can we expect in the next five years? How will it balance the future of gas production here in the Northern Territory? This is a test also of whether the CLP can deliver reliable electricity at a cost that Territorians can afford, provide certainty for Territory households and industry and plan responsibly for the Territory's long-term energy needs.

I reiterate that the Territory Labor opposition supports this legislation; however, I warn the minister that we will be watching closely to ensure these powers are exercised appropriately and are not used to undermine the Territory's transition to renewable energy. We do not think that would be work in good faith by the government. Pausing the adoption of the national regulatory frameworks when they have no practical

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application to the Northern Territory is entirely reasonable, but it is not reasonable to use these powers as another excuse to delay, obstruct or abandon opportunities to integrate renewable energy in the Territory's electricity grid.

Given the CLP's record on renewable energy, we have every reason to be concerned. The CLP government has already introduced solar battery rebates that cannot be accessed when Territorians need them the most; scrapped the Territory's renewable energy targets without putting forward a credible alternative; and backflipped on its commitment to emissions reduction targets. We believe that a deeply concerning pattern has emerged from the CLP government—a government that appears more interested in fighting an ideological war against renewable energy rather than making sensible evidence-based decisions about the Territory's energy future and keeping the cost of living and energy down for Territory businesses, Territorians and Territory industry.

What concerns us is the power contained in this legislation. Decisions about the electricity system should be driven by what delivers the best outcomes for Territorians and not by the CLP's political prejudices. When renewable energy is commercially viable and can reduce costs across the board, improve energy security and sustainability and deliver more affordable electricity for Territory households, businesses and industry, we believe that the CLP government should embrace those opportunities and not stand in their way.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I will speak briefly on this Bill. As a member of the scrutiny committee, I learned a lot about electricity and what this Bill is trying to do. Obviously, electricity is not an abstract policy exercise; it is an essential service. It impacts every Territorian, every household budget, every small business operator and the long-term prosperity of our region.

What I learned during the scrutiny committee process is the huge administrative challenge facing the Department of Mining and Energy, because we do not belong to the interconnected National Electricity Market. We manage three small, isolated grids in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Despite this, under our current setup, national rule changes made in South Australia automatically float into our local rule book almost once a month. We heard that since July 2019, national rules have been updated 120 times, ballooning our local regulations from 1,053 pages to over 1300 pages.

I accept that trying to review and adapt rules designed for massive interstate networks with our small, local team here has created an unmanageable workload. What this Bill does is freeze our local rules as of 31 July 2025 to give breathing space. I accept that as a short-term fix, but there are some things that we need to consider as part of it.

During our public briefing in the scrutiny committee, departmental officials spoke about their desire to move towards cleaner and renewable energy. They acknowledged that just weeks after the proposed 31 July cutoff date, a major national rule package came into effect across Australia, which was specifically designed to make connecting renewable generators and battery storage to the grid faster and cheaper.

The question was raised about why we are disconnecting ourselves from that move towards renewables. The director, Chris Wicks, told the committee that he likes what that is doing, saying on the transcript:

> *It would work; it will make things faster and cheaper.*
>
> *…*
>
> *That was the major shift in everything that is going on inside the NER that was affecting us. That is why it is not being applied.*

The executive director said:

> *… there were aspects of that we wanted to adopt and it would have been beneficial to the NT for both the industry participants but also consumers …*

Instead, we are left with a situation where those beneficial rules are not going to be adopted here in the Northern Territory because the national rule maker declined to write a custom rule for the Territory, which is what we would have needed here.

We heard that when commercial operators including Rimfire Energy, EDL, Eni Australia, and Meritus Capital were consulted by the department, at least two operators explicitly questioned how future beneficial national

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rules would ever be adopted locally. The answer to that was that the department intends to publish a non-binding fact sheet shortly, outlining an interim approach.

The concern is that there is no legal target, no binding timeline, and no legal mechanism in the legislation that says that the government will take on any of these streamlined renewable grid connection rules once it has been determined what would be appropriate for the Territory. A non-binding fact sheet is a non-binding commitment and an internal policy, or a website fact sheet can be changed or ignored at whim.

The department points to a long-term market reform project for 2028, but three years is a lifetime in modern energy development. Promising a fact sheet gives no legal certainty to commercial investors. If we want lower power bills, grid stability, and investment in solar and battery storage—which we all want—we cannot leave beneficial grid improvements sitting on a shelf until 2028.

I acknowledge the work of the scrutiny committee and the committee secretariat, which I note made recommendations in relation to some of the drafting of the Bill. There were several drafting errors, disapplying non-existent rules, missing explanatory notes, formatting oversights, and when these mistakes were put to departmental officials their response was, 'no harm is done', and that these errors could simply be cleaned up later by second secondary regulations.

Passing flawed legislation with a plan to fix it later is, in my view, unacceptable parliamentary practice. Public trust is built on what the law requires and what we vote on in this Chamber, not a law where it is acknowledged has mistakes in it that will be fixed later. I look forward to the minister's response to the recommendations on addressing those drafting issues.

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy)(in reply): Madam Speaker, in giving my closing speech I will address some of the questions and comments from those opposite.

The Leader of the Opposition said that her main goal is to ensure households are protected. We agree on that. To make sure households are protected, do not vote for Albanese. He promised everyone a $275 reduction in their energy bills. Did that happen? No, it did not happen at all.

She spoke about rising costs. Just imagine where we would be if we our gas industry had been flowing two years ago. If the Labor government had not stopped the gas industry for two years, which put us behind by many years, imagine where we would be in relation to electricity now.

We know that for a long time energy in the Northern Territory has come from gas. Gas is used to fire our generators.

We talk about renewables, and I have some figures about that. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition did not mean to mislead the House on purpose. I am sure she has made a mistake, but I will correct what she said about that 7% figure.

What is our plan? It can be said in three words: reliable, affordable and secure electricity. That is what it is all about.

I remind the house that the CSO (community service obligation) helps Territory households pay their bills. That is the government helping Territorian residents pay about $2,000 a year off their electricity bill. I have just spoken to the Treasurer. He told me that we have about the second-cheapest power price per kilowatt in Australia. In two years we have made sure that we have reliable and affordable power.

The Opposition Leader talks about her plan for abundant use of renewables and tariffs. I think the Leader of the Opposition is trying to rewrite history. It was a Labor government that cut tariffs from 18c to 9.8c. Then it cut the battery install scheme from $6,000 to $5,000. When we came into office, we doubled it; the amount of money for batteries went up to $12,000. We delivered that promise to a tee. We spent all the money; promised we would do it and we did. We delivered what we promised.

That takes me to the 7% figure that she spoke about. I have figures from Power and Water. Renewable energy from 1 July to 29 September 2024, when Labor was in power, was 18.6%—that is the renewable energy penetration—and fossil fuels were 78.7%. That was in the last year of Labor's eight years in government, and its target was 50% renewables by 2030. A report was written and every page was redacted. Labor was scared, because it contained information that we would never get to that target. She talked about the target provider framework; that is code for we will never get there. That is how ridiculous Labor was.

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Let me tell you about the renewals report, and I will be clear. From 29 June to 27 September 2026, when we came to office, renewables were up to 25.6%. We had more renewables in the system in two years. Our policy is affordable, reliable, secure electricity. The Labor government had eight years and it got to 18.6% in its little code as a framework. Labor members knew they would never get there and the evidence is they redacted the report on every page except the front and back cover.

Talking about fossil fuels, when Labor was in power, after eight years of its plan, fossil fuels were 78%. With two years of us in government, it was 71%.

As I said at the beginning, the Leader of the Opposition did not intend to mislead parliament, but the figures are there. To refresh people's memories again, eight years of Labor got 18.62% and two years of the CLP got 25.6% in renewable accreditation into the system, with fossil fuels down from 78% to 71%.

Labor members do not like the truth and they flip and flop over there. We know they support gas then they do not support gas. They support housing then they do not support housing. They are going back and forth. We know that they support chaos and misinformation. We do not know what is going on.

I will talk about Labor's history regarding power and energy. I will start with the blackout. In November 2020 gas supply was cut; 49,000 homes had no power under Labor. In February 2024 another 20,000 customers lost power—in the dark at dinner time. In 2023–24 there was an average of 2.6 interruptions, and in Katherine 6.7. That is what happened. Imagine losing power six or seven times a year. That is what happens with Labor chaos.

We are making sure that the energy system is secure. I will now talk about gas. In 2023 the Utilities Commission told the Labor government that investment decisions were needed then. In 2024 these warnings were there. What happened with the gas? Blacktip fell away. It did not happen overnight; it was declining slowly. Labor knew about it. What did it do? Nothing. It did not do anything.

Members interjecting.

Mr MALEY: No, sorry, I might have said something a bit wrong in that. Labor bought expensive gas from INPEX because it put the moratorium on our Beetaloo gas, which has enough gas to power the nation for 200 years.

We know that the Utilities Commission warned the Labor government that 185 megawatts of Channel Island power was due to retire. What did it do? Nothing.

We have increased the penetration of solar and decreased renewables. That is our plan and it is working. Our plan is affordable, reliable, secure and working well.

The Leader of the Opposition asked what is happening and what is the next step with NTESMO. The Utilities Commission is undertaking the 2027 to 2032 system control review. Public consultation closed on 4 August. The Utilities Commission published an initial proposal for feedback on 9 June. Now the Utilities Commission is making draft recommendations. Things are on track in relation to this.

I thank the scrutiny committee and the Member for Johnston. Even though I find a lot of her work is irrelevant and she talks a lot of nonsense, I agree with her. I thank them for doing the work and for their report.

What does this Bill do? It fixes the National Electricity Rules so that they apply to the Territory as of 31 July 2025. The Territory can decide how we move forward. Until now, every change for the national electricity market flowed straight into our rules, and it has been like running a business where the rules keep changing back and forth. We set a line in the sand, and now we can get on with making sure we have affordable, reliable and secure electricity moving forward.

I turn to the features of the Bill. First, it fixes a version. Whenever the national regulation rules and guidelines apply, as enforced from time to time, they will now apply as of 31 July 2025. We are amending that so it is a certain date.

Second, it switches off the national rulemaking for the Northern Territory. Neither the Australian Energy Market Commission or South Australian Energy minister will be able to change our rules.

Third, it fixes 13 AER (Australian Energy Regulator) Guideline instruments as they are at 31 July, so the guidance matches the rules.

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Fourth, it switches off the provisions of the 31–25, the year 2025 rules that do not suit the Northern Territory.

Fifth, it updates key definitions so that the frozen rules can be read correctly.

I note that the opposition and the crossbench said that they will support the Bill. I thank them for that. This is part of the plan of delivering that reliable, affordable and secure energy to the Northern Territory.

One question asked was: why did we pick 31 July 2025? That is when there was a considerable change in the rules. The Australian Electricity Market Commission suggested that date. It wrote to us and said that this is when we think it should be because there is a whole lot of detailed rules after that which do not apply to the Territory. The Leader of the Opposition was right; we have our own system. We are not connected to the market on the east coast which is where these rules are designed. This lets us manage our own electricity market and move forward and make rules and a recommendation so that we could continue NTESMO and rules that suit the Northern Territory and not rely upon interstate rules from the east coast and South Australia making rules for us.

I have answered all the questions that I heard when I made some notes about the contributions today.

A member interjecting.

Mr MALEY: The drafting errors—thank you for that.

We will do those, but they are in regulations. When we fix the regulations we will make those amendments. We accept all the recommendations of the scrutiny committee, and they will come into play when we make the regulations. They are not in the legislation; they are in the regulations. We accept all those recommendations.

Ms Uibo: Not that hard, is it?

Mr MALEY: I am good at it.

Members interjecting.

Mr MALEY: Very good at rewriting history too …

Madam SPEAKER: That is enough banter.

Mr MALEY: To state the truth, we know that those opposite are involved in chaos and are untrustworthy. We try to make sure that the history is history and you cannot go back and change it. I know that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the 7%, but the facts clearly speak for themselves. I think this is great information: renewables were 18.6% when Labor had eight years to get there. We have increased that in two years.

We are concentrating on affordable, reliable, secure power because that is what Territorians deserve.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

PAPERS TABLED

Northern Territory Electoral Commission – 2024 Territory Election Report

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the 2024 Territory election report from the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Public Accounts Committee – Annual Report 2025–26

Mrs ZIO (Deputy Chair of Public Accounts Committee): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I table the Public Accounts Committee's Annual Report 2025–26 and associated minutes of proceedings.

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The primary focus of the Public Accounts Committee over the past 12 months has been responding to inquiry referrals. As detailed in Chapter 3, during the reporting period the committee finalised and reported on three substantial inquiry referrals concerning the Darwin Ship Lift Project; the Indigenous Employment Provisional Sum and the Acacia Digital Patient Record System. These inquiries required extensive examination of complex matters involving public expenditure, government administration and accountability. They demonstrate the important role of the Public Accounts Committee in ensuring that decisions involving resources are subject to rigorous, independent and transparent parliamentary scrutiny.

In accordance with its terms of reference, the committee received four briefings from the Auditor-General regarding his reports to the Legislative Assembly and associated matters. These covered a range of issues, including proposed changes to statutory integrity officers, the audit of the Treasurer's annual financial report, results of agency financial audits, the police information system replacement project, the independence of Australasian auditors-general and the effectiveness of internal audits and audit committees.

Pursuant to Standing Order 121, eight petitions were referred to the committee for consideration as to whether they should be debated in the Assembly. As part of its deliberations, the committee sought advice from the responsible ministers on two occasions and thanks them for their prompt responses. The committee subsequently recommended five petitions for debate in the Assembly.

As noted in chapter 2, two members of the Public Accounts Committee—the Chair, Clinton Howe, and one of the members of the opposition, Manuel Brown—had the privilege of representing the Legislative Assembly at the 18th Biennial Conference of the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees held in Hobart on the 20 and 21 April 2026.

The conference provided a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences with parliamentary colleagues from across Australia and the Pacific and reflect on the important role of public accounts committees in strengthening parliamentary oversight. A particular significance was the recognition of the considerable volume and complexity of the work undertaken by the Northern Territory Public Accounts Committee. Discussions and comparisons with our counterparts demonstrated that the Northern Territory Committee had been one of the busiest public accounts committees in Australia for now two reporting periods in a row.

I was particularly pleased that our inquiry into the Darwin ship lift project was examined as a case study for the ACPAC, demonstrating what a Public Accounts Committee can achieve through rigorous investigation and parliamentary scrutiny. The analysis illustrated that the capacity of the parliamentary committees to examine complex government decisions, scrutinise significant public expenditure and strengthen accountability to the people we represent.

On behalf of the committee, I acknowledge the significant contribution of the secretariat throughout the reporting period. In particular, the ship lift and Acacia inquiries required the examination and analysis of substantial volumes of complex documentary evidence. The professionalism, diligence and quality of work demonstrated by the secretary have been exemplary and instrumental to the committee’s achievements.

I also extend my appreciation to the Auditor-General for his professional assistance and valuable contribution to the committee's work and all of those who provided submissions, attended private briefings or appeared before the committee at public hearings.

Finally, I express my sincere appreciation to my fellow committee members, the Chair, Clinton Howe; Brian O'Gallagher MLA, Member for Karama; Justine Davis MLA, Member for Johnston; Ed Smelt MLA, Member for Nightcliff; and Manuel Brown MLA, Member for Arafura, each of whom served on the community during the reporting period.

I am especially proud of the cooperative and respectful culture we have developed within the committee. Despite the differing political perspectives represented by its membership, our work has been characterised by a constructive engagement, mutual respect and a shared commitment to the proper scrutiny of government. I thank each member for their professionalism, diligence and willingness to work collaboratively in public interest. Effective parliamentary scrutiny is fundamental to responsible government. It is through robust examination and transparency and accountability that we uphold the confidence of the people that we serve.

I am proud of what this committee has achieved together over the reporting period. I pass on my thanks to the Chair, Mr Clinton Howe. Some of the stuff that I just talked about then is because of his leadership as the Chair of that committee.

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I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

Madam SPEAKER: I too thank the hard work of all our parliamentary committees. They do a fabulous job, and it is extremely important work.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Serious and Growing Capacity Crisis in the Health System

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence from the Member for Gwoja as follows:

I propose for discussion this day the following definite matter of public importance: the serious and growing capacity crisis in the Northern Territory health system.

The letter is signed by the Member for Gwoja. Is discussion supported? Discussion is supported.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for supporting this matter of public importance. Health, health delivery and our health system across the Territory are incredibly important. Understanding the growing pressures on our hospitals and frontline workers and the urgent need to plan for the future to deliver a health system that is fit for all Territorians is incredibly important.

There are few responsibilities more important for any government than ensuring that Territorians can access healthcare when they need it. It should not matter whether you live in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy or the bush, everyone should have access to outstanding quality health services. Across 1.3 million square kilometres Territorians rely on our hospitals, remote clinics, Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations, ambulance services, aeromedical services, allied health services and our extraordinary health workforce.

The people who keep our health system running are our doctors, nurses, Aboriginal health practitioners, paramedics, midwives, specialists, allied health professionals, support workers and everyone behind the scenes. They turn up every day under extraordinary pressure, because they care about the people they serve. I acknowledge that the problems our health system face are not the fault of our hardworking health professionals. They are doing everything they can with the systems, infrastructure and resources that are simply not keeping pace with demand.

We need to be prepared to acknowledge that we need a health system to work. Our current system is under enormous pressure. The reality is that our health system is stretched, our hospitals are struggling with capacity, our ambulance services are working under significant pressure, our workforce is exhausted, our infrastructure is ageing and too many Territorians are finding it increasingly difficult to access the care they need.

In Darwin and Palmerston, hospital capacity pressures have repeatedly triggered code yellow responses. That means extraordinary measures to manage demand pressures on available beds, changes to normal operational measures in the hospitals and, at times, the postponement of elective procedures. These are serious operational responses; they are not something we should accept as business as usual.

While code yellows are an important mechanism to manage hospital demand safely, they should also serve as a warning to governments that more needs to be done. Our health system cannot operate indefinitely in crisis management. We need to move beyond responding to the next emergency and start planning for the next generation.

The CLP needs to take responsibility, and I can almost predict that there will be members—probably the Health minister—who will start going back in time. I could go back as well and talk about the time that the CLP dug a hole, said it was building a hospital and filled it back in again. I want to look forward. I want to look at the next 30 years and what our health system could and should look like, because we are here to think about the future.

The CLP has been in government for more than two years and at some point the government of the day needs to take responsibility for the services it is delivering. Nobody is pretending that the Territory's health system was or is perfect. We know that there are challenges and pressures. Health reform requires ongoing work regardless of who occupies the government benches. We do not need to talk about the history; we need

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to talk about the future and what the government is doing, what the opposition is proposing and what Territorians want.

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the interjections and I encourage all members to contribute to this important matter of public importance.

I highlight that in June this year I was fortunate to take on the shadow portfolio for Health and, as a result, I am passionate about this. Never having had the portfolio before, I began meeting with stakeholders across the Territory. Hearing from them firsthand enabled us to develop a health discussion paper, and we have since been inundated with submissions about what needs to be done. There are some stories that we have heard from people talking about the experiences with the healthcare system and what they want to see better.

These are not monumental reforms; they are basic services that should be fixed. Jeremy from Brennan spoke about the heartache he went through watching his wife in the maternity ward, having to bring in their own fan to keep her cool when they were giving birth to her first child. Rhonda spoke about having her delayed elective surgery continually rotated through because of the code yellows. When we talked to Pam in the northern suburb of Nightcliff, she spoke about when she rocked up to the hospital to attend a specialist appointment, but there was no longer any record of her to attend that medical appointment because the systems in place could not cope with the pressure.

We know that there is work that needs to be done in this space and, as I said, health reform requires ongoing work. We know that there has been significant investment rolled out across the Territory in the health system and there will always be the need to do more.

The Alice Springs Ambulatory Care Centre, the Royal Darwin Hospital mental health inpatient unit, the 32-bed modular ward at the Darwin hospital and the Borroloola Health Centre commitments are projects that did not suddenly appear when the CLP came to office. They were initiated and commenced under previous governments. Although the CLP is entitled to open these facilities and acknowledge the benefits they bring, it also needs to be recognised that this work is a result of hardworking public servants.

The 2026–27 budget contains $102m in Hospital and Infrastructure Funds works, including projects initiated by previous governments. The government will point to its $2.62bn health services budget—yes, that is significant expenditure—but the bigger budget does not deliver the healthcare that you think. A record budget is not the same as a health system that has adequate capacity. A record budget means little to a patient who has been waiting hours for an ambulance. It means little to a nurse working another exhausting shift in an overcrowded emergency department. It means little to a family travelling hundreds of kilometres because the care they need is not available closer to home. It means little to a remote community that has been waiting years for a fit-for-purpose health centre to be opened. The measure of success is not how much money a government announces, but whether Territorians can access health services when they need them.

We cannot keep patching up the past. One of the biggest challenges the Northern Territory faces is the condition and capacity of our health infrastructure. Our hospitals are ageing and it is becoming increasingly expensive to maintain. In many cases it is not simply designed to meet the demands of modern healthcare.

Royal Darwin Hospital is a critical part of our health system. It provides services for not only Darwin and Palmerston but also communities across the Top End and beyond. It is a major referral hospital for some of the sickest and most vulnerable Territorians, but we need to ask ourselves a serious question: is the existing hospital infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of the Territory over the next 30 years, or do we need to start planning for a new hospital with a modern health precinct that can meet growing demand?

That is not a question we can keep avoiding. The health infrastructure exposed by the severe weather exposed the pressures on this infrastructure, the need to do better and the need to do more. In Alice Springs we have a hospital that provides critical services across an enormous geographical area. It supports people travelling from Alice Springs across Central Australia and, in some circumstances, across jurisdictional borders, but it too is facing ageing infrastructure, workforce pressures and increasing demand.

We hear from people in local communities that the Territory government this year spent $200m on agency nurses. We have heard from hardworking nurses in the Territory's hospital network who say, 'If this government was willing to listen and work with us and allow us to develop a flexible workplace roster arrangement, we could transition people back into the public service away from agency nursing, away from extreme expenditure'. That $200 million a year or thereabouts in agency-related costs to deliver healthcare

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cannot be ignored. We need to understand how to get people back working in the public service as nurses, doctors and allied health professionals, where they can attract leave entitlements and long service and can deliver that continuity of care.

We have heard from people in the bush who should not have to travel to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine or Darwin to have an X-ray, ultrasound or an arm plastered for a broken bone. These are things we need to consider and invest in.

I raise this as a matter of public importance, but I am not here to start arguments with anyone. I acknowledge that the Health minister is at least a remote member who understands those challenges. We have challenges in the bush where we need to get remote health professionals so that we can open remote community clinics, increase their hours of operation and deliver quality health for people in the remote parts of the Territory.

The Northern Territory is currently the sickest jurisdiction in Australia. We need to reform the Territory's health system to change that trajectory. Whether it is closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage or working with our aged-care facilities across the Territory, we need to do this work. We need to look at building a new hospital in Darwin, absolutely, and in other places like Katherine and Alice Springs. If we do not do that work now, what will it cost us in the future? If we had not built Palmerston hospital when we did, we would be staring at an astronomical amount of money to build it now. By not building a new Darwin hospital now, we will cost Territorians more in the future, because building a new hospital in Darwin is inevitable.

I did a tour of the Territory's hospital network—I am thankful to the Minister for Health, who allowed me to do that and talk to health providers and health professionals who are doing a bloody amazing job in the circumstances that they work in—and it is evident that the government needs to look at how it can invest in and upgrade this infrastructure.

When I went through Royal Darwin Hospital it was in the middle of a code yellow, and I was horrified. There were families with sick people lying in beds in the waiting room of ED. There were people triple-parked in the emergency department.

This is something that we have to work on together, which is why it is a matter of public importance, and why I am not doing the blame game. We all must work on this, lobby for investment and look at how we can deliver a new Royal Darwin Hospital for the Territory.

There are some great places where we can do that. I have been on the record many times encouraging this CLP government to work with the Commonwealth Government to secure the Berrimah barracks site to build a new Royal Darwin Hospital. It is between Darwin and Palmerston and close to aeromedical retrieval services. You could deliver quality services there. The land is huge. It is Commonwealth-owned. Palmerston hospital could be repurposed as a geriatric facility so that aged people could leave hospital and go into a specialist facility. Our federal members have coughed up the cash to look at building facilities for aged care across the Territory, but we need to do that work.

I am not blaming anyone here, but to the people before all of us: who builds a hospital on a floodplain in Katherine? We need to look at this infrastructure. We have seen unprecedented storms, cyclones and floods, and we need to be prepared.

When you talk to people in Katherine, going to get medical services from a shed out at the showgrounds because their hospital is flooded, is not a good answer. It is an interim measure, and we are thankful for the health service providers who did that, but that is not long term. That is not a quality of care. We have heard, by talking to people, that we have the lowest number of Aboriginal health practitioners in the Territory's health system than ever before. That is something that we should be concerned about. We had more Aboriginal health practitioners and liaison officers working in our health networks 25 years ago than we do now.

We need to understand from the CLP what targeted recruitment campaigns, specialist training, incentives and measures they are bringing in to help get more Aboriginal health practitioners …

Mrs Hersey: Attendance at school!

Mr PAECH: Member for Katherine, I welcome you to talk later when it is your turn, but this is important. How do we get more Aboriginal health practitioners into the service to do that work? When you look at Aboriginal medical services across the Territory, they are delivering amazing care. They do not rely on agency nurses like the Northern Territory Government does at that ratio, because of their benefits and entitlements. This is a good opportunity for the Territory government to talk to the medical professionals, like the AMA and the

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midwifery and nursing federation, and do these EBAs, look at working on a flexible workplace arrangement so we can get more people off the agency tap and back to the public service to deliver that outstanding quality of care that they do.

Addressing mental health is a critical issue as well. We need to do more. It is alarming that when you talk to local people in Central Australia, they will tell you that there are less beds in Alice Springs now under the CLP than there were 12 months ago. There has been flooding in Central Australia that has resulted in a number of organisations no longer having the bed capacity to take people on to do that work, whether it is mental health or alcohol and other drugs. We have seen a reduction in the ability to do that.

Across the Territory, people are saying that the wait times are getting longer and that the government is picking and choosing what data it is releasing. We need to see some transformational reform in this space, and I hope that the Health minister can deliver that over his time, because everyone we have spoken to says openly, honestly and clearly that if you can deliver for health in the Territory, you fix everything else. If we have a strong and thriving health system, we have thriving families and communities. We see achievements in health, education and housing. If we invest in health, we are investing in the social determinants which deliver a bigger, better and stronger Territory.

That is what we need to be seeing—the investments rolling out into health that build the health system up, celebrate our amazing workforce and look at investments in those areas that actually help Territorians. We need more services in the bush and in our regional areas such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy. We need more reform in our cities of Darwin and Palmerston.

This has been a journey of which I am thankful to all the Territorians who have spoken with us and told us what they have seen. Many people have raised that, as Aboriginal staff members in the Health department, they do not feel culturally safe, and that is a real concern. When we look at how many Aboriginal people have left the health system because they do not feel like the environment is culturally safe or they are supported, that is a problem. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Territory, when we look at health determinations, is an area that needs significant investment. We need to create places that are culturally appropriate and welcoming so we can deliver comprehensive healthcare for everyone.

This is a huge volume of work. It is incredibly important. I welcome contributions from everyone here tonight. We must get this right. We have to work on how we can secure those investments to deliver critical infrastructure. Whether it is health services, health infrastructure or the health workforce, we need to be doing more.

We can attract staff, but the Territory has a problem retaining staff. How do we look at delivering better entitlements, remote housing for our remote health service workers, wages and conditions that encourage people to stay, access for them to undertake training to grow their skills and infrastructure that makes people want to work in these environments and offer the health services of a comprehensive modern health system?

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing on this matter of public importance. He seems to be the only member over there who is allowed to speak.

The criticism of our health system is akin to an arsonist complaining about the fire. When we look at the history of Labor over the last 20 years we see that it failed to do something about the health system that we see today. In Labor's last budget; it slashed funding for health, with a budget cut of $120m and more than 200 full-time positions were lost. The legacy of Labor’s negligent budget management is all too clear for Territorians. Under Labor, debt grew by 22% per annum, resulting in debt growing from $1.8bn to $9bn by the time it left office. Under Labor, debt grew by roughly $1b per year. Under Labor, the Territory’s debt-to-revenue ratio went from 35% to 116%. Generations of Territorians will be paying off the massive debt that Labor left.

Those opposite have no shame about the mess they left the Territory’s healthcare in. Instead of investing in healthcare infrastructure, Labor chose to prioritise things like a $12m Nightcliff Police Station, as it called that. It preferred to deliver that over the Gunbalanya Health Clinic. There was $12.7m spent on wear and tear at the Howard Springs accommodation facility over healthcare capital equipment. Labor committed a significant amount of money to what it called the Darwin art gallery. It was $100m over the budget. Labor chose youth compensation over nurses’ wages, giving a $35m payout to youth offenders.

It is interesting that the Member for Gwoja spoke about wages and the importance of being able to not only attract nurses to the Northern Territory but also retain them so that we can move away from the agency arrangement.

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The Opposition Leader, who was the former Health minister, admitted that unions have still not forgotten about the wage freeze that Labor implemented for our critical frontline workers like nurses and midwives in our hospitals. Freezing wages and then coming in here today and complaining about the difficulties around attraction and retention is unbelievable.

I quote the *NT News* article of 4 May 2026. Unions NT Secretary Erina Early said:

> *We're still healing, there's still a lot of work to do between the unions and the ALP …*
>
> *…*
>
> *… Opposition leader Selena Uibo acknowledged the 'fractured relationships' between the Labor branches in the NT and the union movement.*

No doubt there are, because regardless of whether they were union members, freezing the wages of our frontline workers was unacceptable.

When it come to funding, the Northern Territory has the lowest hospital Commonwealth contribution rate in the whole of Australia. The hospital Commonwealth rate is a percentage of public hospital funding contributed by the federal government under the hospital agreement. I am advised that while federal Labor has a national target of 42.5% by 2030–2031, the Territory is only receiving 35.1% Commonwealth contribution rate in 2026–2027—the lowest nationally. By 2030–2031, I am advised the Territory is expected to receive even less of the Commonwealth contribution rate; down to 33.9%. This equates to around 3% less than the national average in 2030–2031. We are still paying $200m for things that the Commonwealth Labor government is responsible for.

NT Health spends the Territory dollars because the necessary services and facilities are not being provided by the federal Labor government. I have spoken many times about the $200m shortfall, $95m short in remote primary healthcare, $51m over many years for aeromedical services in the Top End, and $40m for aged care.

I am pleased to say that we have just signed a contract with the Royal Flying Doctor to deliver Top End aeromedical retrievals—$625m over 10 years for the Top End, Big Rivers and East Arnhem. That $625m over 10 years should be funded by the federal government. We have $625m of Territory funding covering the costs of what is generally funded by the federal government. Imagine where $625m could be spent over the next 10 years, if the federal government paid their way.

In 2023 Labor was funding St John Ambulance $36.1m. We have recently doubled that to $68m in the 2026 budget. Labor left our ambulance services stranded with no new contracts since 2016 and no certainty since 2022, with continuous short-term extensions and no certainty from the previous government. We will stop the cycle and give certainty and security to our ambulance services.

Our government has provided St John recently with the $10m support package in the 2026 budget to help increasing demand. This $10m is additional injection of funding while we work our way through with St John to negotiate a new five-year ambulance funding agreement. What impact does that have? The additional funding has helped St John put more ambulance units on the ground and we heard from St John that compared to September last year to now, St John has already achieved the 29% improvement in response times to code 1. Code 1s are those critical incidents where patients are deemed to be the most unwell. St John is already starting to see the positive impacts and are looking to improve on this. We are working with St John at the moment to negotiate a contract moving forward. The key priorities are ensuring ambulance services are sustainable, responsive and fit for the Territory's future needs.

I praise all our frontline ambulance officers, those paramedics and the volunteers you see at things like the Royal Darwin Show, out and about doing all of that work, supporting and providing healthcare on the ground in all those locations. Thank you for the valuable contribution and commitment to safety for the people of the Northern Territory.

In addition to our hospitals receiving the lowest hospital Commonwealth contributions from the federal government, the Territory also has the lowest rate of residential care aged beds. Now aged care is the responsibility of the federal government, yet the Australian Medical Association has published its Aged Care Report card for 2026. It highlights federal Labor's failure to invest in aged care in the Northern Territory. The NT is the only jurisdiction where the number of home packages were lower in 2025 than they were a decade ago. The packages which allow older residents to return home with appropriate support, fell from 1,188 in

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2016 to just 1,085 in 2025, after dipping as low as 640 in 2020. Residential aged care places remained exactly at 559 every year from 2019 to 2025.

Hospital pressures are exacerbated by federal Labor's failure to invest in aged-care and disability places in the NT. I have been advocating continually to the federal minister on the need for more aged-care services and support for Territorians from the federal government, including at the recent Health ministers' meeting. I have said many times that there are up to 80 senior Territorians occupying hospital beds when they should be receiving high-quality dignified aged care. This is costing the Territory government $40m per year, putting further pressure on the health system.

The Member for Gwoja spoke about code yellows. He said he visited the Darwin emergency department. I have done that as well, and I have seen that under pressure during code yellows where there are people everywhere, nurses are working hard on the front line with doctors and Aboriginal health workers. The code yellow is all about access to beds, not because things are busy. When you have 80 aged-care people in our hospitals, that is 10% of available beds throughout the health system in the Northern Territory. It is not just about numbers. The people who are in our hospitals are people's grandmothers, grandfathers, aunties and uncles who should be in proper, dignified, aged-care facilities.

The CLP is delivering more beds, nurses and equipment in our $2.56b NT Health budget. We are bringing on more beds, with $23.95m for the 32-bed ward at Royal Darwin Hospital, with an additional $18.3m towards operational costs. For the 24-bed mental health unit, which is expected to be ready later in the year to start commissioning, we have provided an additional $16m per year towards operational costs and an additional $500,000 to purchase medical equipment. Unlike Labor, we make sure there is a budget to operate new wards.

We are delivering for Tennant Creek with a $5.3m CT scanner to be installed at Tennant Creek Hospital. Barkly residents will be diagnosed and undergo treatment sooner and will not have to travel to Alice Springs and beyond to get scans. This has been going on for many years. The business case is simple: that CT scanner should pay for itself in five years and reduce the number of patients having to travel to Alice Springs for treatment and diagnosis, when that can be done in Tennant Creek.

It was the CLP which planned and designed Palmerston Regional Hospital.

We also increased additional base funding by $100m every year. While our government is locked in to an uplift of $152m for NT hospitals in 2026, we are still getting the lowest contribution of any jurisdiction under the national agreement. The NT is still funding $200m for things that are Commonwealth responsibilities. Aged care, as I said, is $40m per year. We have been paying $51m a year for aeromedical retrieval. Over the next 10 years, $625m is coming out of the Northern Territory budget to deliver what is a federal government responsibility. At the moment, we are $95m short for primary healthcare. Aged care is a Commonwealth responsibility and the Albanese government needs to step up and properly fund the care Territorians need.

The Albanese government needs to stop dragging its feet and get on with delivering the new Palmerston aged-care facility. The Finocchiaro government has already put the land and the essential headworks on the table, including land next to Palmerston Regional Hospital. We have also allocated funding for infrastructure supporting the residential aged-care site adjacent to the Palmerston Regional Hospital.

Our payroll tax reforms have played an important role in supporting charities and not-for-profit organisations like Auscare to operate in the Territory. We have done our part. We need the federal Labor government to step up, stop talking and start building.

The federal Labor government also plans to reintroduce legislation to abolish higher aged-care-based private health insurance rebates for seniors aged 65 and older. After federal Labor's changes were thrown out of the federal parliament by the Coalition and the crossbench, the federal Labor government wants to reintroduce it. Under the Private Health Insurance Amendment (Modernising the Private Health Insurance Rebate) Bill 2026, the federal government plans to cut $3bn over four years from the rebate pool.

The Commonwealth Department of Health analysis released under a freedom of information claim has revealed that 44,000 Australians are expected to drop their cover in 2028–29 as a result of that policy, and that is forecast to rise to a cumulative total of 78,000 people by the following year, almost double. The updated estimates show the impact on policy dropouts could reach nearly double the government's initial projections.

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The NT already has the lowest private health insurance coverage nationally. The Chair of the Council on the Ageing said, 'It is very hard for older seniors to survive with the cost of living, and it is going to add so much extra strain onto already struggling public health systems'. When asked what seniors are saying in relation to these changes and the impact it will have, COTA NT said that a lot of seniors will have to choose whether they keep their health funding going or cut back on other things like food and running their air conditioners during the day.

Research by COTA Australia has found that one in three respondents would cancel or change their private health cover if these cuts go ahead, raising concerns about further pressure on the public health system. On the federal Labor cuts, COTA NT said that older Territorians should not have to sacrifice their access to healthcare to make ends meet. The clear message to Labor is that losing private health cover will mean seniors add extra strain to the struggling hospital system.

Why attack seniors? We have no guarantee the money saved by cancelling this rebate will go into aged-care packages. That is what COTA said. If COTA does not have faith that the federal Labor government will fulfill its promises to apply savings from private health insurance cuts to the aged-care system, how can anyone rely on either federal or NT Labor to look after senior Territorians?

As of 31 December 2025, there are 13,837 people aged over 65 in the Northern Territory with private health insurance. A reduction in the rebate will lead to an estimated annual average increase in policy premiums of up to $255 for 3.2 million Australians over 65.

What is the wider impact of these cuts? It will increase demand on NT public hospitals, inpatient beds, elective surgery waitlists and our emergency departments. Territory hospitals already receive the lowest national Commonwealth contribution rate. The reduction in this rebate is expected to transfer up to $3.2m additional unfunded costs from the Commonwealth to NT public hospitals, which is double the original $1.6m estimate. If people downgrade or drop their private health insurance, it puts more pressure and demand on our NT public hospitals, inpatient beds and elective surgery waitlists.

Federal Labor and those opposite continue to fail Territorians every day when Territorians can least afford it. When Territorians are already struggling with cost of living and rising fuel costs, Labor make it harder to get by. I have written to the federal minister to raise my concerns about the reduction in the private health rebate for those over 65.

Make no mistake, the CLP is putting together our infrastructure plan. Once we have that plan we will fund and deliver the new hospital infrastructure Territorians need now and into the future, after 20 years of Labor ignoring our health infrastructure needs. I am glad to see that the Member for Gwoja supports having an infrastructure plan moving forward. Work is underway with NT Treasury on a health infrastructure master plan, developing a long-term investment plan for hospitals, facilities and health infrastructure for Territorians. It is needed for the next 10, 20 and 30 years. We want a proper Territory-wide plan, and that is why we are doing the rigorous infrastructure analysis, considered alongside the Territory's long-term capital program and fiscal capacity.

No government can build a hospital overnight. The responsible thing to do, which the CLP is doing, is the planning to establish what is required and put the Territory in the strongest possible position to secure the investment needed.

The CLP government is getting on with the job and providing healthcare across the Territory.

I thank our doctors, nurses, Aboriginal health workers and everybody involved in the health system, including the Aboriginal community-controlled sector. They are doing a fantastic job delivering services around the Territory.

We need the federal Labor government to come to the party and provide funding needed to deliver better and proper healthcare for Territorians.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, health is a critical part of our lifestyle. Health services and care is needed to grow our Territory population and community. Health is fundamental to everything, as the Member for Gwoja said earlier. People cannot go to school or work, raise families, play sport or catch up with their families and friends if they are not supported with great healthcare.

It would be fair to say many of us in this chamber experience, on average, better than average health. But all of us, at some point, rely and depend upon our health systems in the Northern Territory. This is not just a

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social support; it is an economic support. We cannot grow our community, population or economy without a strong health system supporting everyone.

This is not just an urban or regional centre issue. Every Territorian deserves access to great healthcare, no matter where they live, to ensure they can enjoy a longer, healthier and more fulfilling life. We believe health services should be delivered close to home, culturally safe and be grounded in respect. There should be strong investment in primary care, prevention and early intervention that will help keep Territorians healthier throughout their life and reduce demand on our health system.

I welcome the contribution from the Health minister, but there are still many major issues to deal with. Blaming the federal government is not the answer. The CLP government currently receives record amount of health funding from the Commonwealth, but still the issues remain. The minister needs to come to grips with the planning, vision and consultation. We welcome those long-term plans as mentioned in our health discussion paper.

This is not a problem that can be solved by blaming the Commonwealth Government or the previous Labor government. The CLP government has been in power for over two years. It is their issues to deal with. We need to see the leadership and investment from the minister and this government.

By way of example, almost every single health infrastructure project on the 2026–27 infrastructure program was from the previous Labor government—the Alice Springs Ambulatory Care Centre, the Mental Health Inpatient Unit, the 32-bed modular ward that just came online and the Borroloola healthcare and morgue which has been delayed.

We were dismayed to see there was only $8m of funding in the budget for new health infrastructure across the entire Territory. Instead, only a matter of months later, we saw the Corrections minister come out with a potential $1bn private prison.

What we need is health beds, not prison beds. That is where the focus should be for the CLP government. That is what the Territory Labor opposition is focused on.

This government has been in power now for two years. They need to take responsibility and do the work to ensure our health system is funded, workers are supported and paid well, and when Territorians go to a clinic or hospital, they know that service will be there when they need it most.

It is in this context that the Territory Labor opposition prepared the health discussion paper led by the Member for Gwoja as the shadow Health minister. This has been two years in the making. As the Member for Gwoja said, we listened to Territorians, peak bodies and health professionals across the Territory from Alice Springs to the Top End, from remote communities to our urban centres. We have done the hard work of getting out there, listening, consulting and compiling that feedback into the document put together by the Member for Gwoja that outlines opportunities for improving our health infrastructure, workforce and services. Our vision is for a Territory health system built on people and communities, with strong hospitals, more healthcare available closer to home, a skilled and supported workforce, strong Aboriginal community-controlled health services and a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

I will take you through a couple of the key aspects raised in that discussion paper. The first chapter was about the health infrastructure. This underpins everything that happens. Without the infrastructure in place we cannot deliver the services, employ many health professionals or support our fellow Territorians. It needs to be fit for purpose and to be there for the long term. One of the key recommendations was having a 10-year health infrastructure plan, looking beyond the funding cycles to 10, 20 and 30 years ahead to see what needs to be done and developing the projects we need in Darwin and regional centres—the minister touched on that.

It is important that this work is underway because the minister is on the record outlining some of the issues that exist with Royal Darwin Hospital. On 25 November 2025 the minister was quoted by the ABC as saying, ‘Literally, the hospital is falling apart around us’. I think many Territorians and healthcare workers would agree with that statement.

On 16 June 2026 the minister was quoted in the *NT News* as saying, ‘Are we building a hospital? I think the short answer is no. We have two-and-a-half years left in our term of government and no hospital could be built in that short timeframe.’ This is disappointing to hear. This is the minister charged with looking after the future of our health infrastructure, and he is quoting parliamentary timelines as the reason for him being unable to get on with that work.

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Other recommendations related to digital and diagnostic infrastructure. It is not only the doors, windows, roofs and footpaths of our infrastructure that are important but also the digital infrastructure that goes with them. I was sitting on the Public Accounts Committee as we finalised the report into Acacia and there were a number of recommendations that I hope the CLP government will take up.

Other items that were canvassed in that section, including having a specific fund for mental health infrastructure. On Sunday I visited the TeamHEALTH facility in my electorate of Nightcliff, and the Member for Barkly was also in attendance to support the relocation of TeamHEALTH from Berrimah to Nightcliff. It is that kind of work which needs to be supported and funded. They do a great job supporting our community and I hope to see a future mental health fund that would support more of that infrastructure.

The second chapter is about the health workforce, and the discussion paper outlines a number of ideas that should be considered in having a 10-year Commonwealth–Territory partnership so that we attract more permanent health professionals. It also looks at improving pay and conditions that recognise the challenging environment we have in the Top End and Central Australia, particularly in our many remote and regional communities that depend on experienced well-trained clinicians.

I also mention the work of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation in the Northern Territory. It is campaigning for better wages and conditions for its members. On this side of the House we support that. All the staff should be well-paid, supported and safe in their workplace.

Another couple of initiatives covered off in that paper included expanding the scope of practice. This is looking at opportunities for paramedics, pharmacists and nurses to provide more services in our community. Some of these opportunities could be at low or nil cost. We need to empower our health professionals so that, with the constrained resources we have, we can get as much help as we can from the people who know our communities best.

It also talked about strengthening Aboriginal health workforce participation, improving Aboriginal representation and providing culturally appropriate workplaces. This is critical. We want all members of our community to be able to visit our clinics and hospitals and be treated by people they know and have an understanding with and are trained to support everyone in our community. We want people to see themselves represented in our health workforce. These initiatives will go to that.

Talking about the third chapter on health services, one of the first critical recommendations in this was looking at taking a whole-of-government approach to health. We can invest more money, recruit more doctors and train more nurses, but if we are not addressing health through all aspects of government and our society, it will not work. Having good health also means strong investment in housing, support for our families and children and support for our education, schools and universities. It is not just about health; we need a broader consideration of and respect for everything that affects the health of Territorians.

Another initiative talks of the preventive health plan and providing at least 5% of the health budget within eight years to be focused on those preventive actions. Ultimately, if we prevent many of the diseases and ailments that occur in our community up-front, or if they do not occur at all, that is ultimately the best way we will have healthier, happier lives and reduce the strain on our emergency departments and our hospitals.

In terms of the health services, we need to be thinking in a more integrated way, looking across our whole society and not just a hospital-centric system. We need to have integration with our workforce, infrastructure and services to ensure that they are all working together to provide Territorians with the best possible healthcare.

As the Member for Gwoja mentioned, in releasing this discussion paper, I was also fortunate to visit Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston Regional Hospital. Palmerston Regional Hospital was a delight to visit. It is new, modern, quiet, relaxed and sitting in an environment with trees and shade. The biggest challenge that Palmerston has, though, is an entire floor in one of the wings is essentially providing aged-care services. We need to get that new aged-care facility built in Palmerston as soon as possible. I encourage the minister to sit down with the feds and work it out. Get that new facility built so that people can be provided care in the most appropriate setting.

The Member for Gwoja and I also went to Royal Darwin Hospital. As mentioned by the shadow Health minister, it is an intense environment, particularly in the emergency department. It is stressful; you can feel the pressure in the air. We could feel the intensity of the situation where every bay is double-bunked, there

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are doctors and nurses running around as fast as they can to do the best possible job. It is not a fit-for-purpose facility. The facilities are old and cramped; it is a difficult place to work in.

The key thing I took away, though, from both hospital visits is the incredible dedication of the nurses, doctors and allied health staff who do the best they possibly can for all Territorians. I thank them for their work in challenging and trying conditions.

I would be delighted if the minister and the CLP government take up some of the recommendations and the initiatives of the health discussion paper. We would welcome it. We would celebrate it because there are so many good ideas in there just waiting to be taken up. There is no need to go out there and do a multimillion-dollar health consultancy. We have done the work here. The Member for Gwoja has done the work and presented this for community. We are compiling all that feedback, and that will form our future policies. It should not be up to the next Labor government to get on with the job of implementing these changes.

On that note, I would just like to thank all the health professionals across our community. So many of them live in my electorate of Nightcliff. I thank them and I commend this discussion paper to the CLP government.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak about significant pressures on the Northern Territory's health system as the Assistant Minister for Health and, importantly, the work being undertaken by the Finocchiaro CLP government to strengthen those services that Territorians depend upon every day. For families in Wanguri, access to quality healthcare is not just an abstract quality discussion; it is not just a discussion paper, folks on the other side.

For families, they want healthcare for their children when their children are unwell. Help is available and what they are asking is when. It is about having confidence in our hospitals and to provide the appropriate treatment that they need. You guys have had eight years and what did you do? It is about ensuring the people living in our regional and remote communities are not forgotten, and simply because of the distances that are involved.

We all know the Territory's health system faces those genuine challenges. Our hospital capacity across the Territory and the workforce availability, our ageing facilities and our ever-increasing demand all require sustained attention. These pressures developed over many years and most of them were during Labor's eight failed years in government.

We cannot undo the decisions of the past, but we can take responsibility—which is what this government is doing—for the decisions being made today, and that is exactly what the CLP government is doing. We are directing significant funding towards hospital operations, expanding clinical facilities, improving medical equipment and developing a longer-term plan for the territory's health infrastructure.

Our objective is straightforward, a stronger, more accessible and better resourced health system for all Territorians. When we examine the challenges confronting our hospitals, we must also consider the financial and infrastructure decisions made by the previous government. Labor had eight years to address the growing demands on our public health services and during that period the need for additional hospital capacity became increasingly evident. So why do a health paper now? Yet when Labor left office, substantial pressures remained. You have seen this.

The CLP government now has identified what it estimates was an annual health funding gap of approximately $300m in the final years of Labor's administration, and that raises an important question about how health services were funded and how future demand was being planned for. Maybe the new Member for Mulka might want to ask his Labor colleagues that question, as I am sure he would have liked better funding for work he was doing in remote communities for better health outcomes for his people.

There are also broader questions about Labor's management of the Territory finances. As you know, the government's net debt rose approximately from $1.97bn to $11bn during Labor's eight years of failed government. That is a significant increase in the Territory’s financial obligations, and it invites scrutiny on the choices made about public spending.

Just consider what earlier and more consistent investment in healthcare infrastructure might that have achieved. Could the Territory have planned for another hospital? I know Madam Speaker would have loved a new hospital in Alice Springs. Could substantial extensions to all our hospitals, including Royal Darwin Hospital, Palmerston Regional Hospital, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and even Gove District Hospital have been considered sooner? Could additional treatment areas, emergency facilities or specialist

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wards have been delivered earlier? Could we have done more to prepare for the healthcare needs of the growing population? Those questions are worth asking.

Labor instead pursued projects, including the $12m Nightcliff Police Station and the Darwin CBD art gallery. Our government has questioned whether those decisions reflected the most pressing needs of all Territorians at a time when essential services were experiencing considerable strain. Of course, no-one is suggesting that the cost of one of those projects alone would have financed a new hospital, but every government must establish priorities and every spending decision should be considered against the services and the infrastructure our community needs most. It is easy to make announcements. The more difficult task is ensuring that investment is properly planned, financially sustainable and capable of delivering long-term benefits.

That is the approach our government is taking. The CLP government has committed a record $2.56bn to NT Health in the 2026 budget, and that represents an increase of $231.8m on the previous year. This is substantial funding directed towards improving the delivery of healthcare across the Territory. It supports hospital services, additional clinical capacity, equipment upgrades and the operational resources required to care for all Territory patients.

Just as importantly, the government has strengthened the Department of Health's ongoing funding base by $100m each year. That recurrent funding is particularly significant, and new facilities cannot deliver their intended benefits unless the staff, equipment and services needed to operate them are also funded.

A newly constructed ward is only part of the answer; it must be supported by qualified nurses, medical practitioners, allied health professionals and the systems required to provide safe treatment. The CLP government is working to ensure that investments in hospital infrastructure are accompanied by the resources needed to put those facilities to use and strengthened ongoing funding. This is a practical response to the capacity pressures facing our hospitals.

Before discussing the individual projects being delivered, I will recognise the remarkable people who form the backbone of our health system. Across the Northern Territory, thousands of healthcare workers devote their professional lives to caring for others. They include nurses, doctors, midwives, Aboriginal health practitioners, paramedics, allied health professionals, patient transport personnel, administration teams, the cleaners even and many other workers whose contributions keep our services operating. Their work deserves recognition not only when the health system is under pressure, but every day. In Darwin and Palmerston our healthcare professionals care for a large number of patients with a wide range of medical needs. At hospitals in Katherine, Gove, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, staff provide essential services to communities spread across enormous distances. In remote areas, healthcare workers often face circumstances that would be difficult to imagine in any major Australian city.

A remote nurse may be responsible for responding to an urgent medical situation many hours from the nearest hospital. An Aboriginal health practitioner may be helping a family manage chronic illness while also providing education, preventive care and culturally appropriate support. A retrieval team may be called upon to transport a critically ill patient across hundreds of kilometres, and these responsibilities require exceptional skill, sound judgement and considerable personal commitment. Many of these professionals work extended hours, including overnight shifts, weekends and public holidays. Some spend lengthy periods away from their families and others work in isolated communities where access to specialist assistance can be limited, yet they continue to provide that care with dedication and compassion.

I particularly recognise Aboriginal health practitioners and Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations. Their understanding of local communities, cultures and language is invaluable in helping people access healthcare and receive appropriate support. They play an essential role in strengthening trust between health services and the people who use them.

Residents of Wanguri regularly rely on the professionalism and kindness of the staff at Royal Darwin Hospital and other local health services. For someone who is frightened or unwell, a reassuring conversation with a nurse can make an enormous difference. For a family facing a medical emergency, the calm professionalism of a doctor or a paramedic can provide much needed confidence. For someone receiving ongoing treatment, the commitment of their healthcare team can make a difficult experience more manageable.

These contributions cannot be measured simply by a budget figure; they reflect the humanity at the heart of their health system. While governments provide funding and infrastructure, it is our healthcare workers that turn those resources into treatment, support and the compassion needed.

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I express my sincere appreciate appreciation to every person working in healthcare across the Northern Territory. Whether you serve in a major hospital, regional health facility or a small remote clinic, your contribution is immensely important.

On behalf of the people of Wanguri, thank you for your professionalism, resilience and the care you provide to Territorians.

My colleague, the Minister for Health originally spoke about the new 32 bed multipurpose ward at Royal Darwin Hospital. RDH has responsibilities extending well beyond the northern suburbs. It receives patients from across the Top End and provides specialist services that are not available in many smaller communities. As a result, pressures at Royal Darwin Hospital can have consequences for patients and healthcare providers throughout the region. The additional ward is intended to improve the hospital's ability to accommodate patients requiring renal bariatric and general medical treatment.

It provides more clinical space and supports efforts to improve the movement of patients through the hospital. Although construction of the project commenced under the Labor government, the CLP has committed the recurrent funding required for this operation. The budget provides $18.3m for that.

No single facility can eliminate all the pressures experienced by a major hospital, but bringing additional staff capacity into operation is a tangible step towards improving that availability for those patients.

The medical retrieval—there is the new facility contract that was awarded to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. I know this is a well received 10-year agreement. The arrangements of ageing aircraft to be replaced with newer aircrafts better suited.

Last year the LAAC committee had a traumatic experience on an ageing aircraft. I commend the government for that new agreement.

The improved ability to operate from the shorter runway of this new fleet will give access to at least eighteen additional airstrips across the Top End. Congratulations to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

This means that east Arnhem, through the cooperation of the toll Aviation, will have access as well. That is a fantastic outcome for the people of east Arnhem.

This investment is about ensuring that distance does not become an unnecessary barrier for urgent medical treatment.

Alongside these immediate investments, the CLP Government is undertaking longer term planning for the Territory's healthcare facilities and work is progressing on a Territory-wide Healthcare Infrastructure Master Plan.

This work is intended to examine the facilities and services required to cover the coming decades. It will need to considered future population needs, conditions of existing hospitals, changing models of healthcare and the financial resources necessary to support new infrastructure.

Major hospital developments require careful preparations, and governments must determine what facilities are needed, where they should be located and how they will be staffed and maintained. Those decisions cannot responsibly be made through announcements alone; they require detailed analysis and realistic understanding of the Territory’s financial capacity. Our government is seeking to establish that. This is important, given the growing demand on our existing hospitals. The Territory needs this health infrastructure and to look beyond the next budget cycles.

The Northern Territory health system faces substantial capacity pressures and addressing them will require the effort the CLP government is delivering. The former government’s financial mismanagement, spending priorities and inappropriate infrastructure planning warrants serious examination. Territorians are also entitled to expect action from this government, which we are doing. That is what we are focused on. We have committed a record $2.56bn to NT Health.

I commend the matter of public importance from the Member for Gwoja, but it is the Finocchiaro CLP government that is doing the work that is required for all Territorians. We will deliver on that promise.

Mr McGRATH (Mulka): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the shadow Minister for Health for bringing this matter of public importance to the Assembly.

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Across my electorate of Mulka, I know personally that good health and healthcare and access to it is vitally important to people living in the Nhulunbuy township, the surrounding communities and many homelands. As a health professional, I strongly and personally believe, along with my Territory Labor colleagues, that every Territorian, both Yolngu and non-Indigenous, deserves access to safe, reliable and high-quality healthcare no matter where they live.

After two years and two budget cycles, those opposite and the Health minister for two years have been unsuccessful in improving the health of Territorians, especially in our regions. From delayed clinics to cut clinics to not investing in new health infrastructure, for a town facing major changes and a mine closure there is nothing. Take it from me, Mr Deputy Speaker: I worked at Yirrkala Clinic where I consulted with my patients in a storeroom. This would and should never happen in your metro standard clinics.

I know the unique challenges of delivering healthcare in the NT—a small population, long distances, extreme climate, workforce shortages, high turnover of local staff and high costs. These are not new problems to remote areas, but they demand a government and a Health minister who has a vision to meet these challenges head on.

We are seeing emergency departments under pressure, with longer wait times and health staff stretched beyond capacity. Every health budget KPI has gone backwards. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians are being flown off country and passing away off country. The CLP says that it is investing in health, but it is not being seen on the ground.

I put on record my thanks to the health staff across my electorate, doctors, nurses, health administration workers, clinic staff and the paramedics—all of them—especially our AHPs (Aboriginal health practitioners). I might add that profession is depleting, due to funding cuts. These healthcare staff take care of us when we are most vulnerable. They are with us at our moment of need. They help educate us and our families about how to stay strong and prevent sickness. That is why prevention and primary care is more cost effective than tertiary care.

I know that across my electorate, healthcare is one of the main concerns. The Mulka electorate is made up of 89.9% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians. We know through the data that the Northern Territory has the lowest life expectancy, which is about 65.6 years for Aboriginal men and around 69.4 years for Aboriginal women. This means Aboriginal Territorians—Yolngu people—need to be at the forefront of healthcare in the community.

Miwatj Aboriginal Corporation, Marthakal Homelands Health Service and Laynhapuy Homelands Health remain vital services that deliver healthcare across the electorate, but they need to be supported properly. This government should be focusing on ensuring that our Aboriginal community-controlled health services are supported in all the ways they can be.

The term cultural safety over cultural awareness has been used loosely by the CLP government. Cultural safety is vital because it is informative to the clinicians. When it comes to the CLP government's thoughts on East Arnhem region regarding health, you do not need to look any further than its spending record on health infrastructure. If East Arnhem residents were to look over the new health infrastructure funding in the 2026 infrastructure program, they would not find anything because, while the Chief Minister talks up a big commitment to the East Arnhem region, it has given no new funding for future health infrastructure. The only health infrastructure upgrades to Nhulunbuy will see is fire remediation works that the former Territory Labor government budgeted for.

This CLP government says it is committed to the region but, at a time of great change, Territory families are worried about the health services they will receive, how they receive it and where.

I acknowledge the new GP service by the Top End Medical Centre in Nhulunbuy, supported by the federal Labor government. I ask the CLP government and the Health minister in particular, will the CLP commit to funding the Nhulunbuy Hospital as of now to keep families in Nhulunbuy township?

These are the questions that people in my electorate are asking. The Gove District Hospital is vital for the region. I will continue to advocate for people in the region to have access to services that provide the same opportunities as in the other urban sectors.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also speak to this definite matter of public importance. I thank the opposition for bringing it to the Chamber today.

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Like other people in this Chamber, I start with thanks to the nurses, doctors, midwives, health workers, remote health workers, paramedics and everyone, from the cleaners to the specialists, who keep our health system running, often against all odds.

I speak as someone who spent more time in our public hospital system than I would have liked. Often for me, sometimes for family and friends, or sometimes for people who need support to get there. Every time I come into contact with the public health system, I have been incredibly impressed by every worker I met for their skill, patience, work in incredibly tough conditions, often with people on their worst days.

I also thank the doctors and nurses who have shared their experiences with me. Their message is clear: that the public health crisis is not just about pressure on beds or long waiting lists, it is about a system struggling to deliver the standard of care that Territorians deserve, and a workforce pushed to its limits in trying to deliver it. We know that behind every waiting list is a person waiting for answers or relief from pain, behind every understaffed ward is a team doing its best with too little, and that these problems are totally connected and reinforce each other.

We have heard many times in this Chamber about double-bunking in RDH emergency department. People arrive there frightened, unwell, injured or in pain. They may need to discuss deeply personal issues, have intimate examinations or hear difficult news, and they should be able to do that with a reasonable degree of privacy. That is a basic expectation of healthcare.

It will be unacceptable as standard practice anywhere else in Australia. This is not about comfort. Doctors have told me that without private space they cannot examine patients properly or gather the information they need. When a patient cannot speak openly, diagnosis and treatment can suffer.

Our healthcare workers understand that emergency departments face surges in demand. They work through it every day. However, extraordinary pressure cannot become an excuse for treating unacceptable conditions as normal.

Another issue that has been raised with me is—we all know this—is how long Territorians wait for specialist appointments and surgery. These delays are not just inconvenient; they change the course of a person's illness. A condition that could have been caught early and managed with planned care can become an emergency. I have heard many stories of people whose treatment has been delayed, and it has ended up shortening their life.

It puts patients at greater risk and adds pressure to emergency departments that are already struggling. Doctors raise this across medical and surgical specialties, including paediatrics and gynaecology. These are people waiting for assessments for their children, a woman waiting for treatment, someone whose pain is getting worse and who cannot work.

The doctors I have spoken with point to one critical factor: that there are not enough senior medical staff. We cannot simply recruit our way out of this. We have to ask why senior clinicians are hard to attract and keep. The answer comes down to funding, working conditions and job satisfaction. One of the most powerful things raised with me is moral injury. Doctors and nurses go into their professions to help people. They know they cannot save everyone, but there is a profound difference between accepting the limits of medicine and repeatedly watching patients get less care than they need because the system lacks the capacity to provide it. When workers repeatedly see preventable delays, inadequate facilities and patients put at risk, the damage builds up. It leads to burnout. Experienced staff leave, the workload on those who stay increases and more of them leave. That is a downward spiral. I am mindful of times when people who work in the public hospital system have rung me and said that part of their work is they took an oath to cause no harm, but they feel like what they are doing, when they send people back to conditions and when they cannot offer them the treatment they need, is actually doing harm.

It is a downward spiral, and it will not be fixed by asking healthcare workers to be more resilient. Territory healthcare workers, doctors and nurses have shown their resilience time and again, but resilience is not unlimited. It cannot replace adequate staffing, working facilities and sustained investment. If we want to keep experienced clinicians, we have to give them a reason to stay, and that means not just listening when they raise concerns about patient safety but acting on them.

Healthcare workers have also raised with me concerns about the electronic systems underpinning our health service. Inefficient systems add to administrative burden and burnout can also put patients at risk. The recent IT outage brought this into sharp focus. When clinicians cannot reach patient records or results, care is

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delayed and staff have to find workarounds while already stretched. The concern is not just that technology sometimes fails; it is whether these systems are reliable, secure and fit for purpose and whether known weaknesses are being fixed. We heard a lot about this in the Acacia inquiry that references have already been made to and about the devastating impact that that had on many people working in our health system. Digital infrastructure is health infrastructure, and it deserves to be treated with the same seriousness as beds and equipment.

If we are serious about improving our health system, we have to look beyond the hospitals. Primary care is one of the most effective tools we have. It keeps people out of hospital and finds problems before they become crises. A UK report into primary healthcare found that for every dollar spent on primary care, $13 was saved in the hospital system. Good primary care is more than treating the problem that brings someone through the door. Someone might see their GP for a medical certificate or a sprained ankle, and that visit is also a chance to check their blood pressure, assess their risk of diabetes, screen for heart disease and update their immunisations. Small interventions repeated time and again make a big difference. That is the difference between primary care and urgent care.

Urgent care centres have a role, but clinicians tell me that the centres in town are delivering a worse service for more money and weakening nearby general practices. If public investment undermines the practices that keep people well, we risk weakening the very network that keeps people out of hospital. The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine's report on urgent care clinics makes this point well.

The challenge is much harder in remote communities. We know staff numbers in remote clinics are limited by housing; a clinic cannot serve a community if it cannot house the people needed to staff it. Remote housing, workforce planning and health service delivery have to be considered together.

All these issues are connected. When primary care is eroded, more people arrive at hospital and they are more sick. When specialist care is delayed, patients need more complex treatment. When emergency departments are overcrowded, dignity and safety suffer. When clinicians work in those conditions for too long, they burn out and leave. When experienced staff leave, we lose capacity, wait times grow and the pressure on those who remain increases.

We cannot fix these issues one at a time. We need to have a coordinated approach from prevention and general practice through to emergency care and specialist treatment. The government must take these concerns seriously and work with clinicians, the AMA, nurses, hospital management, primary care providers and remote communities. It means addressing staff shortages so that we can keep senior clinicians. It means shorter waits for specialists and surgery. It means care and conditions that protect dignity and safety. It means reliable technology, stronger general practice and housing that lets remote clinics attract the workforce they need.

I completely agree with the Member for Gwoja when he said this something that we all need to be working on together. It is not something where we need to be arguing with each other. It is something that for all the people that we represent across the Territory, we have to address together and as a matter of urgency. I do not raise these issues at all to criticise the doctors and nurses working under pressure. I raise them because those workers are telling us exactly what needs to change and that patients cannot afford for those warnings to go unheard.

A health system should be judged by whether people can get the care they need it and whether that care is safe, effective and respectful. Right now, what I am hearing from the people who work in the health system at RDH and across the Territory raises serious questions about whether we are meeting that standard., because behind every statistic is a Territorian who needs care, behind every service is a workforce that needs support to provide it, and we owe both of them better.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will just talk about what I was doing before getting into the parliament and then I will just go through some of these things that we discussed today.

I trained and completed my training as a registered nurse in 2010 and worked in the intensive coronary care unit for a year, then worked in the emergency departments and the alcohol mandatory treatment program in Darwin. I then worked in the mental health unit, then I moved from registered nurse to clinical nurse and to senior assessment clinician with the alcohol and other drug services in the Northern Territory, then as a clinical specialist, clinical nurse consultant team leader, team manager, operations manager and director. I worked in all direct frontline services in the hospital setting.

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The Members for Gwoja and Nightcliff mentioned going to hospital a few times or a couple of times in the last few months. I was going to the Royal Darwin Hospital every single day for many years and have worked on the floor with all the challenges that we are discussing today. This is nothing new and has always been there since I started working in 2015. My last night shift was probably New Year's Eve of 2024, and even though I was working as a director at that time, because of the staffing shortage, I had to step up and provide that service for Territorians.

This timeline indicates who was in the government. It is not about how we reached this point or how we can improve together; we just need to acknowledge some of the facts because what I have seen over the last few months is Territory Labor trying to rewrite the history. It is a phenomenon that here we clearly see that everything was perfect under Labor, but suddenly everything is a problem now, so they are coming up with a solution.

One thing that the Member for Nightcliff mentioned was about the Member for Gwoja working on this for two years and that, effectively, he has most likely saved millions of dollars because we can avoid a consultancy. The expert in the Northern Territory is the Member for Gwoja, according to the Member for Nightcliff, and now we have a plan that we need to enact because it will make savings for the Northern Territory Government. Another contradiction is that the Member for Gwoja said that he was appointed as the shadow minister for Health in May—if I recall that correctly, because I did not take that much notice—but Member for Nightcliff said that he has been working on this for last two years. I do not know who the previous shadow minister for Health was and why the Member for Gwoja was working on this for the last two years if there was another shadow minister. I cannot keep up with the names because there were seven or eight reshuffles in the last 26 months in government.

We see some members of this parliament going to the hospital and talking to people. I acknowledge the concerns of Jeremy, Rhonda and Pam raised by the Member for Gwoja. The concerns are real. It has been happening for a long time.

Madam Speaker, I started with Northern Territory Health when you were the Minister for Health. I did not realise it back then, because I was not checking political things. I checked the dates today and I typed in to search who the Minister for Health was. In fact, you were the Minister for Health at that time. My first job was at the NT Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Program. You championed that legislation. It was great to connect that when I was going through some background checks for this speech.

We are facing a lot of problems. One thing that I point out in particular is the alcohol-related presentations to the hospitals. In the public domain it is available; it is on the NT Health website or whatever website it takes you to when you are type it in. For example, in 2016 the number of alcohol-related presentations to NT hospitals was 9,108. In 2021 it was 12,952. It went up to 14,890 by 2024. In 2025 that 14,890 reduced to 13,084. What change happened during the period from 2024 to 2025? There was a new government, policy change and changes in how the government deals with alcohol in the community in open areas. The police got the power to tip out alcohol. The number of presentations reduced by almost 12% in a year. I look forward to seeing the data for this year. I hope that trend is continuing.

Something we need to talk about are the factors causing all this pressure. We need more beds, bigger hospital and more nurses, but is it achievable? If we decide after this MPI that we want a new hospital, how many years will it take? I believe that the Palmerston hospital took nearly a decade, from planning all the way to completion in 2019. I had the privilege to work in that hospital and in the emergency department for first couple of years. That is what we need to focus on.

Yes, we need a long-term plan. The Chief Minister and the Minister for Health already informed us that there a senior public servant is working in Treasury to ensure that we are working on that plan for Territory hospitals. This government is doing the work.

The opposition is saying that there is an opportunity because, all of a sudden, things are starting to get better. What is the best thing to do? Jump in front of that and try to take the credit saying, 'We are proposing this to the Northern Territory Government. You have to listen to us.' These are the same people who were in government until 26 months ago.

When the current Leader of the Opposition became the Health minister and the Minister for Mental Health, and first visited the Joan Ridley Unit, Cowdy Ward and the mental health inpatient area in the hospital, I was the Director of Acute Services taking her through the hospital and explaining all the challenges we were dealing with every day.

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Every minister gets a Legislative Assembly brief. As the Director of Acute Services and Liquor and Rehabilitation Services, the Legislative Assembly brief for mental health for the Top End region was starting from my computer. That is how it started. It goes all the way up with the problem and gets polished at every level. When I got the same document back with the track changes, I could see all the changes made in between. The problems were getting erased. That was the better solution because you erased the problem from the document, so the problem was gone. That is how things were managed.

However, we have a Minister for Health who goes out to see the challenges, acknowledges the problems and wants to come up with a solution. We want to work with the nurses, doctors and every staff member working there.

Recently we heard a lot from Labor about how wonderful the staff members were, the public servants are, and how much Territory Labor is supporting them. I was a nurse working in the hospital. My wage was frozen between 2019 and 2022 under a previous Labor government. I was a nurse and a member of ANF and the union. ANF is supposed to be non-political even though the current ANF secretary is the president of Unions NT. It conflicting when it comes to a particular thing.

Another important thing that we are currently hearing is about the nurses' EBA about which minister Hersey has been asked a lot of questions by the current opposition. I will go back to my emails because I was a member of ANF. You cannot search about the main problems in 2022.

Their number one problem was that they did not want to have a pay freeze. That was the first task. Now they are talking about a minimum; they will get a 3% offer that was provided by minister Hersey through the OCP, I believe. Then the position was about we needed to uplift our zero percentage. That is the difference. In 2022, the negotiations started from the 0%, whereas now from my understanding is all the public consultation—in fact my wife is a nurse practitioner as well, so I get to know some of the information that she shares about the emails that she is receiving and also the communication that is contradictory.

What the current Labor opposition is saying now and what they used to say four years ago is exactly what we are seeing all the time. They are trying to rewrite history. They want to explain to the Territory how good they are. My colleague, the Member for Wanguri, mentioned to me the other day that one thing they are purposefully doing when they are saying all these wonderful things they are doing, is not saying the word 'Labor'.

They just, they just got like their cockroach, but 'Labor' is not mentioned anyway. They are trying to say to people, 'How wonderful we are, look at us, we are working hard', but they are not even willing to say which party they are representing. That is the difference. Whereas every members here is proud of being part of the CLP Finocchiaro government. We are going back to the community and consulting with people on each different issues saying, 'We are a part of the government, and we want to make change. We are representing the CLP Finocchiaro government and are a strong team of 17.' That is what we are doing on this side.

On the other side, there were seven or eight reshuffles. As I mentioned, I dop not think that Google can track back with even the current AI power how many changes they have made and what were the portfolios for each of the Territory Labor current members. It was seven or eight reshuffles that happened in the last two years.

Going back to the hospital, one of the things we can see, going back to the budget books, is the amount of dollar figure that has changed in allocation to NT Health. Now it is $2.56b. I do not think the previous Labor government, who was working hard for the health workers, ever had a budget anywhere close to that.

We have a Chief Minister who took it to the First Ministers' Cabinet and to the Prime Minister. We did a deal for $1b over five years. That is the difference between us. Yes, the Member for Nightcliff has direct contacts in the federal Cabinet and he will be able to make phone calls and then get a federal minister to stand here and make sure he can oppose the project. We have seen who supports the Member for Nightcliff. That is on one side.

However, when it comes to the benefits for the Territory, there is nothing. They never talked about needing more money. We are seeing all the NDIS reform that is currently happening and that Territorians are impacted. We are not hearing any of that, but we are hearing is that they want the headlines. They want to create and rewrite the history. In fact, as the Member for Gwoja said, let us not talk about the history—because they are worried about their history—and let us focus on the future.

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What is interesting was every member talked about what the previous Labor government did and what is currently in the pathway. They wanted to say only the good things that happened. They believe the good things happened in the past. They want to erase the history, 'Let us talk about the future. We need to build a new hospital'.

Let us talk about the future. We need to build new hospitals and have better facilities. It is a great thing that the 24-bed mental health inpatient unit will be open by end of this year. I was part of the design and the initial consultation as a clinician working there and as part of the clinical leadership team. I am happy I have been part of that history. It will be something that I will visit in the next couple of months.

Yes, it was done by Labor, but we know that many projects were discussed by Labor but nothing was completed. I do not think there will be a single project that Labor started and we stopped. We have not stopped anything. We continue to build whatever it is—it does not matter what Labor was building—and are making sure that we are providing the best opportunities for Territorians.

I thank all the healthcare workers who have been working tirelessly for many decades in the Territory with all the challenges, which are not their fault or the government's. There are many factors that need to be changed, but let us focus on small things that will make a difference, support the healthcare workers and the hospital system and make sure the government and the opposition work together to deliver for Territorians.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, talk, talk, talk. That is what we heard from the Member for Gwoja.

The Member for Gwoja was the Deputy Chief Minister; he sat in Cabinet for more than four years. We have not heard from the Leader of the Opposition. It is fitting that the Member for Gwoja is the shadow Health minister because the leader herself knows that she was not a good Health minister and she should never be the shadow. The Member for Arnhem was a member of Cabinet for six years.

Let me educate our new members. The failed health system that you worked in, Member for Mulka—I appreciate your service; you are somebody who took action—was the failed system that Labor built in the Territory. I recognise that you are the first Yolngu-speaking nurse in that region and I highly commend you for the work that you have done.

We are not talking about the last eight years or decade; since 2001 we had 19 years of Labor government and 19 years of failed investment in healthcare in the Northern Territory. The Member for Nightcliff said that we cannot blame Labor or the Commonwealth; the CLP has been in power for two years and we have to take full responsibility for the state of our health system. The Member for Nightcliff was not here during those years; he was not in the Territory. He is a brand-new Territorian, and I commend his choice to move up here, I just wish he had not.

There were 19 years, from 2001 to 2012 and from 2016 to 2024, and what do we have to show for it? We have a new hospital that the CLP started. Occasionally Labor likes to take credit for the Palmerston hospital, which I note should be called 'Rural Area Hospital' because it is a Litchfield hospital, but on other days Labor will pretend that it is a CLP problem because it blew out the cost and had delays.

The Member for Nightcliff raised how we need to do more to get people out of Palmerston hospital and into aged care, but he will not pick up his phone and call Mark Dreyfus, the former Attorney-General and Cabinet minister in the federal Labor government, who came to his maiden speech—a close family friend, he said—and advocate for Territorians at the federal level. Instead, he went out and met with one of the federal Labor ministers and took them to Lee Point and said that they do not want to build it here; they want to build it in Berrimah. At least he had an idea. We heard from the Member for Gwoja that the same piece of land the Member for Nightcliff is spruiking for new housing is where we should build a new hospital.

Those opposite still do not have a plan. The Member for Gwoja and the Member for Nightcliff went—it was a good buddy movie—and did the health paper and health consultation, but the time for that consultation was when Labor was in government. The time for that consultation was when the Member for Nightcliff was in Victoria and the Member for Gwoja was in Cabinet. The time for that consultation and Labor listening was when the Member for Arnhem was the Health minister. Now they are trying to rewrite history and say that it was the CLP.

We have put record funding into our hospital system. We secured a new agreement with the feds for even more money for our hospitals, and we are still underfunded. When I look at those 19 years of Labor government in the Territory, the worst part is that Labor took our Territory debt from just over $1bn to $12bn. Labor increased our budget by more than $1bn a year for that last run.

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The problem is if you have all the money and you do not care about the credit card debt, why did you not invest in health? Why did you not build a new hospital? You did not care about a $1bn deficit every year. Why not invest in the stuff we need? That is what I do not understand. I am part of a fiscally conservative government. We must make the hard choices, and we are slowly turning the tide around on the Territory economy. But if you're part of a government that doesn't care about the budget, why not build all the cool stuff?

Why not open a new hospital? Why not build Alice Springs a brand-new hospital? Why not replace or move the Katherine Hospital? We know is in the flood zone. Instead, Labor wasted money and they refused to invest in health of all things.

We could go through the long list of what Labor wasted that money on, but I will stick to health and stay relevant to the conversation for the Member for Arnhem.

What I remember especially from those eight years under Labor, are constant code yellows. Not one off, not occasionally when there is excess demand, just a constant status of code yellow. Code yellows are an important tool. When they are needed, they are needed. But under Labor it was status quo. Again, they had the chequebook, they had the credit card out, and they refused to invest.

We have heard Labor say how grateful they are for our hardworking staff, but when I say the same, I genuinely mean it because I appreciate the doctors that look after you when you go to the hospital. I appreciate the surgeons and the cardiologists and the people who look after my father when he gets ill. But what I do not appreciate is this tokenistic talk we hear from Labor members when they say they value healthcare workers so much. That must be why they froze their pay, or why they said, 'Do not worry about it. We have messed up the budget again, spending billions of dollars we do not have. We are not going to pay you more. We are not going increase your wages in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. We are going to spend lots of money on everything except our healthcare workers'. What an utter joke.

I often wonder about the people who were in that government, in that cabinet, or party room, and I have no idea how they look at their record and have any sense of pride. If I was them, I would hang my head in shame. It is such an embarrassing legacy to leave. Year after year underfunding the people who keep us safe, refusing to pay them more because you accidentally played with the credit card too much on all your fun projects. Then to continue to accrue massive debt while saying, 'No, we cannot give a pay rise to the people on our frontline doing the work'.

That is incredibly disappointing. Maybe that is why the Member for Gwoja is the shadow minister now, because the Member for Arnhem knows that she was not a good health minister. I can respect that if that is the case.

Mr Brown interjecting.

Mr MACKAY: I do not plan on ever being the shadow minister for anything, Member for Arafura. I look forward to staying in government for the duration of your career.

Territory debt went from $1.97bn to a staggering $11bn, and they still refused to invest in health. Since coming to government, we have managed to secure an increase in the funding from the Feds—because the Feds do have a role to play, no matter what the Member for Nightcliff says or if he refuses to speak to his close family friends and friends in Canberra about health. We need that funding.

We are still underfunded when it comes to things like the Royal Flying Doctor Services, aero transport, and aged care. The Member for Solomon and the Prime Minister were in Darwin not that long ago spruiking up the $10m for the maternity services at the public hospital. Where is it? We do not have it. They flew up, refused to answer all other questions, and yet they still have not opened their chequebook.

The Australian Government is more than a trillion dollars in debt. They are playing with money like it is not real, and they still will not give the Territory money. They still will not give us $10m. We asked for $35m, and they gave us $10m. We thought, 'At least we are getting $10m', but now they still have not given it to us. We might not see it this year. Maybe in 2035 we might see it. Million after million, they will spend on everything else, but they will not back the Territory healthcare system.

Aged care is a Commonwealth responsibility. We have said, 'All right; we have got the land, so let us build it'. When I go for a drive and head toward town, looking out my window towards the Palmerston hospital, I

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cannot see an aged care facility. I have not found it. I try my best to avoid going toward town, but when I do, it is not there.

It is disappointing to see the federal Labor government plans to reintroduce legislation to abolish higher age based private health insurance rebates for seniors. Our most vulnerable people are people who indeed have the most health needs, when you look at our society. The people who helped build the Territory and Australia and look after us—instead they say, 'You know what? You are good. We do not care about your age based private health insurance rebates; you are on your own.'

I still do not understand it, because, again, Australia is in $1 trillion of federal debt. They are still cutting the money off our seniors. We saw it earlier this year when tried cutting the funding off our veterans and thankfully they did flip flop and backflipped on that one. It just does not make sense.

When we look at the health infrastructure—and this is to the best of my knowledge, so please, if someone can get up and correct me later—every hospital in the Northern Territory was started under a CLP government. Was a single hospital started between 2001 and 2012?

Members interjecting.

Mr MACKAY: The CLP started Palmerston Regional Hospital, Member for Arafura. It got the work started. The Member for Arnhem is clearly interjecting because she forgets that Labor had failed Territorians. She was the health minister that saw the collapse of the health system, a code yellow, after code yellow. I feel for her staff who had to deal with her during that period, because every time the minister, our minister hears a code yellow, he wants to know what is going on. It is clear that the Member for Arnhem did not care. She thought it was status quo. It is all good. They did not invest in the healthcare system. They cut the wages of the people who put their time and effort into making us better.

They did not start the works to develop and build the next hospital that they now claim is an urgent priority. It was an urgent priority two years ago when you were the Health minister.

It has not magically popped up. We all know populations growing. We want to see the Territory grow to 400,000 by 2040 or whatever your plan was. They did not do the work. Now they are in opposition, and perhaps they enjoy being in opposition. They can say whatever they like. They can they can try to rewrite history time and time again, but Territorians know you cannot trust Labor because the last time they were handed the keys and again, the Leader of the Opposition was the Health minister that saw the massive code yellows under the Lawler government, the final years of the Labor government. She wanted to hand the job to the Member for Gwoja. They said, 'You are the new Health minister because I know I cannot speak on it'.

Prove me wrong, Member for Arnhem; there will be four minutes left after I have done speaking. You can get up and try to correct the record all you want, but Territorians know that you were a Health minister and were in Cabinet for six years where Territorians were making decisions. Cabinet was meant to be looking after the future of the Territory and, instead, was involved in so much infighting, it was really difficult to work out who was a minister for what, let alone who was the shadow minister; we are up to rewrite number nine of the shadow ministry. I think the Member for Gwoja will keep Health because he is apparently the only one of you with any cut-through.

I want everyone to remember that those opposite had the credit card. They did not care about the Territory's economic future. They did not invest in health or healthcare workers. They did not consider anything other than their little pet projects. They made announcement after announcement, which somehow, despite spending all the money, they did not have. Then they come to this place two years later and say that it is all terrible because the CLP is in government. You had your chance; you had your time. You were the minister and you are trying to lecture us now. It makes no sense. Territorians see straight through it.

The Member for Nightcliff, the brand-new Territorian, goes on about how we cannot blame the former Labor government or the Commonwealth. We can, because the Territory has been left in a terrible hole financially and in our healthcare system. Year after year there was systematic underinvestment. We are investing in the health system and putting up the money. We are doing record investment in health and in support services …

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Mr MACKAY: There are no extensions.

Madam SPEAKER: There are no extensions.

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Mr Maley: It is so interesting, I want him to be able to continue. It is amazing how truthful and honest he is.

Madam SPEAKER: You are wasting his time, Member for Nelson.

Mr MACKAY: I appreciate the Member for Nelson's enthusiasm for my speech because he knows how important it is to remind Territorians that, despite how much those opposite yell, carry on and go out to the media and put their piece of paper around, they do not care about Territorians. You cannot trust Labor with the keys to the Territory.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this important MPI to the Assembly this evening. I thank all members who have spoken on this important issue regarding the serious and growing capacity crisis in the Northern Territory health system.

First, I give a huge shout-out and thank you to all our doctors, nurses, paramedics, Aboriginal health workers, cleaners and everyone who shows up every day for Territorians who need health support.

I pick up in the previous speech that the Member for Sanderson mentioned that his wife is also a clinical nurse. Is that correct, Member for Sanderson?

Mr Charls: A nurse practitioner.

Mr YOUNG: She is a nurse practitioner. What I found interesting—thanks for clarifying that—when he said that she was a nurse practitioner was that she shared information and emails with the Member for Sanderson. What is concerning about this is the severe conflict of interest that this creates. I hope that the minister is not implying that she is sharing private and confidential information with him, because it was Minister Charls who stated that she is sharing information with him. This is a serious issue and a severe conflict of interest. It questions the ethical boundaries that we see …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The Member for Daly has gone just a little too far. Standing Order 31A: Reflections on Members; these improper motives and personal reflections on other members should be regarded as highly disorderly, Madam Speaker. In this case, the commentary being used by the Member for Daly does not pass the test when it comes to Standing Order 31A.

Ms Uibo: He is repeating what your own minister said.

Madam SPEAKER: I would like to respond without interjections.

The Member for Sanderson said that he shared information with his wife or words to that effect, so I think the Member for Daly is within reasonable grounds in referring to what one of the speakers has said.

I would, however, be respectful of the fact that the Member for Sanderson was talking about his wife. You do not know exactly what he shared; it was not specific or precise in what was shared. Member for Daly, I will give you some latitude around referring to that, but what the Member for Sanderson said was fairly vague. Please continue respectfully.

Mr YOUNG: I want to respond to that. I said that I hope it was not implied. He said that she was sharing emails with the minister. The concern around this is the conflict of interest and the power a minister has within Cabinet. That should always be debated, when he is the one that has shared that information, particularly when it becomes …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 233; the member should be careful with the information he is putting on the record. The Member for Sanderson spoke about emails with his wife. There was no suggestion about work practices or issues around confidentiality. The fact the Member for Sanderson had a conversation with his wife should not be construed by the Member for Daly as some unlawful activity.

Madam SPEAKER: There was no mention of sharing information from Cabinet. You need to move on from this. You have made your point, Member for Daly. The Member for Sanderson has an opportunity to make a personal explanation and clarify exactly what he meant if he is disturbed or offended by the extrapolations made by the Member for Daly.

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Mr YOUNG: I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing forward this motion, particularly in regard to our discussion paper and reforming the Northern Territory health system. It is an important paper. We are looking at a 10-year infrastructure plan and getting feedback from the public. It is part of our job to listen to our constituents and stakeholders to ensure the future of healthcare in the Northern Territory is as best as it can be. This is unlike the Minister for Health who said, 'We only have two-and-a-half years'. We know exactly how the Minister for Health works; he works in electoral cycles.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION
Member for Sanderson

Mr CHARLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 26; I wish to give a personal explanation.

Madam SPEAKER: Can I be clear that, with personal explanations—I know I have alluded to the fact you could give one—it is good practice that it be almost prearranged and you give me the heads-up. Given it is happening tonight and we are at the end of the night, please proceed.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): The context was involvement with the union and the negotiation for the current EBA. Whatever I said in this Chamber should be on *Hansard*. I never said anything about confidentiality. Even what I am referring to is on the OCPE bulletin. I have shared only the current negotiation parameters which are currently available in the public domain. That was discussed.

I specifically said that I was a public servant before, and I could not recall this much noise happening in 2022. I referred that I went back to my email and checked the update provided by ANMFNT in 2022. The number one thing was around wanting to change the pay freeze and start negotiation. There was no information I shared in this Chamber, which has not already been in *Hansard*.

The Member for Daly implied that there was confidential information exchanged. I do not know what other information, but I kindly request it be removed from *Hansard* because it is misrepresentation.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence! There is no response to personal explanations.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I congratulate Lee Perrett, who was awarded the 2026 Palmerston Game Fishing Club Member of the Year. As the club's weighmaster, Lee plays a vital role in keeping the club and in its competitors running smoothly. Much of her work happens quietly behind the scenes, but her dedication, time and contribution make a real difference to the club and its members. Lee's commitment does not stop there. She is also a valued member of the Palmerston Game Fishing Club Committee, has helped with the setup of the Barra Nationals, and is involved in the Corroboree Park Challenge. This award recognises not only the important work that Lee does, but also the commitment and passion she brings to the club across so many of its areas. Congratulations, Lee.

The Royal Australian College of GPs has recognised the Northern Territory's General Practitioners for 2026 across five categories of the NT Fellowship and Awards Ceremony held at Parliament House recently. The awards recognise excellence in patient care, training and supervision, leadership, education, and service to the profession. I am very proud to share that the Palmerston GP Super Clinic located in my electorate of Spillett, won the General Practice of the Year award, recognised for delivering a service that brings together general practice, allied health, and urgent care services, helping patients access a broader range of care in one setting and strengthening local alternatives to hospital-based care.

It was also recognised for its strong commitment to education and training, supporting medical students and GP registrars, and contributing to the development of the Territory's future health workforce. Congratulations to CEO Bernie Cummins and the entire team for this well-deserved award. Palmerston GP Super Clinic will now be considered for the corresponding national RAC GP awards to be announced at the RAC GP National conference in Adelaide in November and I wish them all the very best of luck at that national conference.

World Teachers Day NT Excellence Awards recognise the contribution of the Northern Territory Government's school teachers, specialist teachers, early childhood educators, principals, leaders and

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support staff who make a difference in the lives of our students. This year marks 21 years of recognising and celebrating our outstanding teachers across the Territory and I am proud to congratulate the teachers and staff in my electorate who have been named finalists this year.

Congratulations to Michelle Johnstone from Durack Primary School for being named a finalist for School Based Support Person of the Year. This award celebrates the incredible work of school support staff who go above and beyond to support students, assist educators, and help create a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment. Congratulations, Michelle.

Congratulations to Ben McCasker from Zuccoli Primary School. Ben has been named a finalist for the 2026 Principal of the Year award. Being a school Principal is so much more than leading a school. It is about inspiring teachers, supporting the students, building strong relationships with families, and creating an environment where every young person can succeed. Ben's recognition as a finalist is an opportunity to celebrate his contribution to education and the important roles school leaders play in shaping the future of our children and our communities. Congratulations, Ben on this well-deserved recognition.

I congratulate Rebecca Gardner from Zuccoli Primary School for being named a finalist for the 2026 Leader in Education of the Year award. Strong leaders who drive performance and innovation play an important role in shaping the future of our schools and our communities. They inspire those around them, support teachers and students and help create many opportunities for our young people. Congratulations, Rebecca on this wonderful achievement. I wish all our teachers and staff a happy World Teachers Day and all the best to all finalists for the awards.

Congratulations to Jack McDonald, a Year 10 student at MacKillop Catholic College, who is making headlines for his recent participation in Youth Parliament run by The Y at Parliament House. Jack received an honourable mention for Speaker of the House, which means he was one of the best speakers and debaters as part of this program. Contestants came from across the Territory, and Jack was the youngest competitor, so well done to you Jack.

Jack also recently participated in my Chief Minister's Okinawa Study Tour and shortly he will be doing his Year 10 work experience in my electorate office, and we are looking forward to working with him. It is fantastic to see young Territorians like Jack getting involved, building their leadership skills and making the most of opportunities to learn and contribute to their community.

As proud patron of the Palmerston Probus Club, I am delighted to congratulate them on their 14th anniversary, alongside the Member for Brennan, the Member for Blain and the Member for Drysdale, we donated a lovely cake to help celebrate this milestone at their morning tea, which none of us could be at because it was during parliament, which it has consistently been for 14 years. I do not think I have been to a single birthday, despite being the patron.

I congratulate Sandra Richardson on being named Club Person of the Year. Sandra makes a valuable contribution to the club through her dedication and willingness to go above and beyond for fellow members. As the club’s official photographer, she captures the special moments at events and morning teas, helping preserve the memories and friendships that make Probus such an important part of our community. Sandra also prepares the monthly Palmerston Probus newsletter, making sure members are kept informed about all of the club’s important activities. These contributions may happen behind the scenes, but they all play an important role in bringing members together, maintaining a strong sense of friendship and community, which was what Probus represents. Sandra’s commitment, generosity and ongoing support are greatly valued and I congratulate her on this really well-deserved recognition as Club Person of the Year.

I a m also very proud to congratulate Carmen Simonato on being awarded Life Membership of Palmerston Probus Club in recognition of her outstanding service and dedication to the club and our wider community. Life Membership is a very prestigious honour conferred only rarely on members who have demonstrated exceptional service and support over an extended period. Carmen is a very deserving recipient. Having joined the club six years ago, Carmen quickly became involved, joining Shirley Conlon's on the trade table. She generously contributed fresh fruit and vegetables from her garden, along with dozens of fresh eggs each month. The trade table has raised hundreds of dollars for the benefit of members, and it continues to do so today.

Carmen also took responsibility for the club's monthly raffle and transformed it into an important fundraising opportunity. Drawing on her many friendships and longstanding community connections, she established relationships with organisations and individuals who now regularly donate prizes for fundraising. What began with a single prize each month has grown to often three or more prizes, raising thousands of dollars to help

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subsidise club functions and events. Carmen does not seek recognition for her efforts, although she was deservedly named Member of the Year in 2023.

Her community service extends well beyond Probus. Carmen has spoken of her many years of volunteering at the hospital, caring for patients and maintaining the hospital gardens. She continues to volunteer there as well, three days a week supporting patients and particularly enjoys taking them for walks through the beautiful gardens. Carmen dedicates herself selflessly in so many areas of community life and it is obvious she genuinely cares for others. Her contribution to the Palmerston Progress Club has been exceptional and I congratulate Carmen on receiving this wonderful recognition of life membership of the Palmerston Probus Club.

Last Saturday night I had the privilege of joining Michael Sitzler, Steve Margetic and hundreds of their guests to celebrate 50 years of Sitzler in the Northern Territory. When hundreds of people turn out to celebrate a business, it reflects the relationships it has built and the respect it has earned in the community. Sitzler has grown from its beginning in Central Australia into a nationally recognised construction company employing over 300 people across the country. Earlier this year it was ranked number 10 in Australian Defence magazine's Top 40 Defence contractors list, yet its headquarters remain firmly here in Darwin.

Over five decades, Sitzler has delivered some of the Territory's most significant infrastructure projects, including the Darwin Convention Centre, major hospital and health facility upgrades, roads, bridges, Aboriginal housing and Defence infrastructure. These projects span the length and breadth of the Territory, supporting local jobs and businesses, improving essential services and delivering lasting benefits to our communities.

Sitzler’s achievements were recently recognised here in the Northern Territory at the 2026 Master Builders NT Awards, where they took home three significant honours for its current Defence projects, including the President's Award. These awards recognise the quality and scale of their work. Beyond its commercial successes, Sitzler has also generously supported many local sporting clubs, community organisations and major events through sponsorship and donations. That contribution is important because a strong Territory economy depends on businesses that invest locally, support other Territory businesses and give back to the community that they operate in.

Fifty years in business is a remarkable achievement, and I congratulate Michael, Steve and the entire Sitzler team on this milestone and wish them every success for the next 50 years.

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I have a strong relationship with the mighty Litchfield Bears. I played my junior and senior years with the Litchfield Bears; so did my dad. In fact, the clubhouse is named the John Maley Pavillion after my father.

The Litchfield Bears is a big club in the rural area, and it has been around for a long time. This was a great year for them, and it is good to see the community get behind that club as it gets bigger and bigger. I will run through what happened this year.

The Member for Goyder and I went to the junior and senior presentation and a long list of awards were given out, but I will talk about the premierships they took out this year. The under-13 girls defeated Brothers 12–10; the under-14 boys defeated Raiders 38–nil; the under-17 girls defeated Brothers 10–8; the under-16 boys had two teams, the red and the black—which shows how strong the under-16s are—with the Red Bears taking a win over the Black Bears 21–10; and the under-18 boys defeated Katherine South 34–22. That just goes to show the juniors are really strong. The reserve grade missed out by one point; they had a conversion on full time to win. and they missed the conversion. I am sure the boys are upset about that.

The junior awards were held on 31 August at the clubhouse, where the Bears were crowned the Junior Club of the Year for the fourth consecutive year. That is an incredible achievement and a true reflection of the amazing players, coaches, volunteers, families and supporters who make the Bears the family they are. Congratulations to everyone involved and what an achievement.

The future for Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club is in safe hands with the awards recognising multiple young players. Under-14 Bears player Josh Roberts took home a hat-trick of awards, being named the Highest Point Scorer, Highest Try Scorer and Player of the Year. Congratulations, Josh.

A season of hard work and dedication for Lorenzo Whittnall and Jarvis Pearce paid off. Lorenzo won the Highest Try Scorer award for the under-16 boys and Jarvis was the Highest Point Scorer winner.

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Brylee Akers took home a duo of awards, being named the under-17 girls Player of the Year and getting the Rising Star Award. Congratulations, Brylee. I cannot wait to see what happens for her in 2027.

Lachlan Kiernan was named Volunteer of the Year, a well-deserved award that recognises Lachlan puts in as much time, effort and commitment into supporting the juniors and the club as he does in playing. Volunteers are the grassroots of all clubs and it is good to see young people stepping up.

Bears players were also recognised at the NRL NT Frank Johnson and Gaynor Maggs Awards night in September. Eligh Pomroy took home the Rising Star Award, a fantastic recognition of hard work and determination. Eligh's season was full of big moments on the field, stepping up when his team needed him. If you need more evidence of how good he was, Eligh was also awarded Men's Premiership Highest Try Scorer of the Year.

Sophie Roberts was named the No More Representative Player of the Year, which was fitting recognition of Sophie's outstanding season and her representation of the Bears at the highest level.

Completing the four-peat, the Litchfield Bears were named the John 'Shaddow' Mount Senior Club of the Year. This award recognises everything that goes into building a great senior club—the players, coaches, volunteers, community members and supporters. Winning four years in a row is testament to how much everyone at the Bears gets involved, including all the past and present players.

Legendary Bears players Erin Luchetti, Jade McGimpsey and Kiyanah Toy were named in the NRL Women's Team of the Year. What an incredible achievement, doing the Bears family proud.

Not to be outdone, the NRL Men's Team of the Year also featured three of the Bears' finest. Congratulations to Ben Drayton, Brodie Morcom and Eligh Pomroy for making the team. It is a great honour and well deserved.

This kind of season does not happen by accident; it is a testament to the hard work, commitment and determination of the players, coaches, parents and volunteers.

I attended the Bears junior presentation on 31 August, followed by the senior presentation on 26 September. I give a big shout-out to Jarrad Burgess, someone I know personally, who received a medal for 150 games, and James Beckett, who was honoured with life membership. Both are well-deserved winners.

Many awards were given, and the other winners were as follows. The John Alder Award 2026 Senior Person of the Year went to Therese Buckland; Hayden Lee Memorial 2026 U18s Best Team Person, Eligh Pomroy; Illimo Raquisia Memorial 2026 Reserve Grade Best and Fairest, Thomas Harvey; Troy Baker Memorial 2026 A-Grade Senior Most Valuable Player, Ben Drayton; and Peta Buckman Women in League 2026 Senior Women's Most Valuable Player, Jes Tomes.

Under-18 Awards went to Best and Fairest Player, George Tekopua; Coaches Award, Jake Simpson; Most Improved, Patrick Finn; Best Forward, Robbie Duncan; Best Back, Eligh Pomroy; and Best Defender and Best Player, Sonny Watkinson.

B Grade Awards went to Best and Fairest, Thomas Harvey; Coaches Award, Riley Dane; Most Improved and Best Forward, Matthew Houghagen; Best Back and Best Defender, Kerin Whittnall; and Players' Player, Luke Luchetti.

Women's Awards went to Best and Fairest, Jonte Fitzgerald; Coaches Award, Paige McCourt; Most Improved, Amaya Jeffers; Best Forward, Kirralee Karklin; Best Back, Kiara Rogers; Best Defender, Kiyanah Toy; and Players' Player, Erin Luchetti.

A Grade Awards went to Best and Fairest, Ben Drayton; Coaches Award, Jake Crawley; Most Improved, Ben Mullins; Best Forward, Luke Mahood; Best Back, Eligh Pomroy; and Best Defender and Players' Player, Ben Bannister.

There is a great deal of players there, but that club is a good club, going places as we move forward and winning the Best Club of the Year for those many years for both junior and senior. It shows what a good club that is.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I speak this evening on a solemn note about the Reverend Y Nunggumajbarr from Numbulwar community. Yesterday, the funeral for the late Reverend was

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conducted by the Anglican Bishop of the Northern Territory. Mr Greg Anderson. It was a beautiful funeral honouring the late Reverend's life.

Because of this huge loss of Northern Territory history, I place on the record the eulogy that was in the late Reverend's funeral booklet to share with the House, but also ensure that piece of history is forever sealed in the *Hansard* of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

This eulogy was read by the late Reverend's daughter Mullinwar Hilda Ngalmi:

> *Reverend Yulki Nunggumajbarr was born on her Wuyagiba motherland. Belonging to the Nunggubuyu clans, she grew up immersed in her traditional way of life—learning from the sandhills and the ocean. In 1952, she moved with her parents who helped establish the remote Church Missionary Society (CMS) settlement at Numbulwar (then Rose River). It was there in her early teens that Yulki chose to be baptized, beginning a lifelong, unbroken journey of following the Lord.*
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> *At Numbulwar, Yulki married her late husband, Gurragi, and together they were parents to nine children. She is remembered as a devoted mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. While her children were still young, Yulki felt a powerful calling from Jesus to minister directly to her people, recognizing that her spiritual calling came from God.*
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> *Yulki was a spiritual pioneer who broke historic barriers for Aboriginal women within the Anglican church. She studied theology at Nungalinya College starting in 1974. She was ordained as an Anglican deacon in 2005 and then in 2009 was ordained at Numbulwar as the Northern Territory's first woman Aboriginal priest.*
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> *For over a decade, Reverend Yulki poured her heart into her ministry, serving faithfully across the less resourced churches of Angurugu and Numbulwar before retiring in 2023. She also elevated the voices of her people nationally by serving on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (NATSIAC).*
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> *Beyond her ordained role, Reverend Yulki was a deeply respected senior weaver, prolific artist, and storyteller at the Numbulwar Numburindi Arts Centre. She masterfully bridged her ancient cultural heritage with modern environmental stewardship, famously weaving unique* wulbung *(baskets) out of reclaimed ocean ghost nets. Her art, like her faith, breathed new life into old traditions.*
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> *Reverend Yulki passed away peacefully at the age of 91 at Gove District Hospital. She leaves behind an indelible legacy of grace, resilience, and spiritual leadership. She walked beautifully in two worlds, leaving a pathway of light for future generations of Indigenous Christian leaders.*

For the record, I seek leave to table the eulogy and prayer book from the late Reverend's funeral service.

Leave is granted.

Ms UIBO: What was remarkable about the late Reverend's funeral service yesterday was the recognition of that fusion of the two worlds, working between a Western and a cultural way. Between the Christian faith the late Reverend held very dear, and the modernisation of faith, language, and culture being accepted and fused together.

The funeral service was conducted by Bishop Anderson in the four languages—English, Kriol, Anindilyakwa, and Wubuy—that the late Reverend conducted her services in, depending on where she was and who was in the faithful church service, listening to not just services, but fellowship, right around the Numburindi and Nunggubuyu region, the Anindilyakwa region, and often here in Darwin and other faith gatherings across the country. It was phenomenal to hear Bishop Anderson conduct that service so effortlessly in honour of Reverend Nunggumajbarr, and to see all of the family who attended, the family who were able to watch online, and the connection to other Anglican faith leaders across the Northern Territory, but indeed Australia. The parishioners at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) were also watching online and sent messages.

The Wuyagiba Study Hub, which is the birthplace of the Reverend Nunggumajbarr, ensured that students were represented at the funeral service and paid respects and it was the Wuyagiba Study Hub vehicle that was the final mode of transport to the service from the morgue as well as to the cemetery in Numbulwar.

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I thank the Mercer family, who travelled from Canberra, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane. Four brothers of the first ever missionaries in Numbulwar. The Rose River Mission was started by John and Phyllis Mercer with the local Numburindi people in 1952—the year my mother was born.

Four of the five siblings of the Mercer family, Andrew, Paul, Phil and Evan, were able to travel to Numbulwar for a very powerful uniting history of the Mercer family paying tribute to the late Reverend Nunggumajbarr. The oldest brother, Paul, first arrived in Numbulwar when he was three weeks old. He showed me this brilliant photo of his mother and father, John and Phyllis Mercer, and himself as a baby wrapped in a blanket on the Numbulwar dirt airstrip arriving at three weeks old in 1952. Some amazing history. Thank you to the Mercer family for the opportunity to travel with them, to share some stories and history, and to learn about some of their memories and experiences through their parents. But to also have the utmost respect of that very early connection in 1952 of their parents at the Rose River Mission. Some of the family members and elders who knew and could speak about the great history and connection with the Mercer family are unfortunately long passed. They got to see some other family members of the next two generations, in some cases three and four generations down, kids, grandkids and great grannies, so it was a beautiful service.

Thank you very much to the Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory; to Minister Bundurr Rami who co-authored the service yesterday in Numbulwar; to Minister Susie Ray from St James Anglican Church in Darwin who travelled all the way out; and to all the people who showed respect and travelled from Groote Eylandt, Bickerton Island, Ngukurr, Urapunga, Wuyagiba, Darwin, Katherine and interstate. There was a huge effort to bring people together. Of course, it was a sad occasion, as most funerals are, but there was also this bright light of celebration and honouring the history of the late Reverend Nunggumajbarr.

My personal farewell to her was just three days before she passed away. I was in Nhulunbuy and visited the late Reverend in the hospital, unfortunately, with only few days left to go. Her daughter Rita (inaudible) was the sole and primary carer, and it was devastating having to leave Rita knowing that she would be there to farewell her mum in the next few days.

Thank you to the CareFlight staff who supported the evacuation to Nhulunbuy and the doctors and nursing staff who felt the loss of the late Reverend Nunggumajbarr just as much as the family, in particular Rita, in those final few days. Thank you for the care and the compassion that you all showed in Nhulunbuy. Unfortunately, she was unable to return in time to pass away on country, but she was in good care, as best as possible, with her daughter Rita.

In honour of the late Reverend Nunggumajbarr, may she rest in peace.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving a note for the Member for Daly before his contribution to the MPI. That clearly shows the leadership that we can look forward to and what those opposite are trying to offer as an alternative to the government.

I recognise the people, community organisations, educators, local achievers and recent events that demonstrate why Sanderson is s such a vibrant and connected community.

On 31 August my office hosted another successful Movie Under the Stars event, bringing families together on a beautiful Dry Season evening. Moviegoers enjoyed the family comedy *Kangaroo*, filmed in and around Alice Springs. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate an Australian film showcasing our Territory landscapes and stories. As in 2025, my office partnered with Wagaman Primary School staff and the school council who did the fundraising sausage sizzle at the perfect location at Wagaman Oval. Thank you to Acting Principal Dane Russell for the school's continued support. My office provided zooper doopers and popcorn, both of which proved enormously popular with the children. I thank Darwin Outdoor Cinema Hire for helping the event run smoothly. Thank you to the Wagaman community and all the families who attended.

Each month I host Sanderson seniors morning tea in the community room at my electorate office. We have a wonderful group of regular attendees, including Darryl and Margaret Window; Ellen Creek; Peter Atkinson; Patricia and Butch Melzner; Helen Pitts; Beatrice Dubach; Halyna Schan and John Court; Pacita Wolpers; and Ken Callahan OAM. I am pleased that we continue to welcome new faces each month. These gatherings help seniors socialise, make friends and reconnect, providing a valuable opportunity to feel included and part of their local community.

In September we recognised Legacy Week and welcomed the Member for Fannie Bay along with Legacy NT President Tommi Husband. Mr Husband spoke about Legacy Week and Legacy's wider role supporting veterans' families and those who have lost a loved one who served our country. With a number of veterans regularly attending our morning teas, including Allan Mitchell OAM and Dan Tellam OAM, it was an

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opportunity to reflect on veterans' service and sacrifice and acknowledge the ongoing support provided to their families. Thanks also must go to our remarkable volunteer Helen Poon, who provided spectacular blue Legacy cupcakes complete with logos for all to enjoy.

I look forward to continuing these gatherings and welcoming more Sanderson seniors.

October's morning tea will be pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, raising awareness and funds for research.

Our electorate is fortunate to have dedicated educators, and few exemplify that commitment more than Tom McCall, who recently retired after 41 years of teaching in the Territory. Recent coverage in the *NT News* and *Courier Mail* highlighted Tom's retirement and his remarkable contribution to education. Honoured, respected, humble, professional and dedicated are words used to describe Tom. Having worked with him, I wholeheartedly agree. Tom's commitment to education extends well beyond the classroom. He genuinely cares about his students, their development and the opportunities available to them.

When my office organised our very first Sanderson Day, Tom was instrumental in arranging student volunteers from his school. What impressed me most was how well he understood his students. He knew which students to approach, who would benefit and how to guide and support them while giving them a meaningful opportunity to contribute to their community. This is the mark of an exceptional educator; someone who sees potential in young people and helps them develop the confidence and skills to realise it.

Tom's 41 years of service represent an extraordinary contribution to generations of Territory students. His influence will continue through the lives he has shaped and lessons he has imparted. Congratulations, Tom, on a remarkable career. Thank you for your dedication to Territory education and the Sanderson community. I am certain you will be remembered fondly by your colleagues and students and their families. With World Teachers' Day approaching, it is fitting to celebrate educators such as Tom and recognise the next generation of inspiring teachers and school leaders across our electorate.

I am delighted to acknowledge several Sanderson educators who have been named finalists in their respective Teacher of the Year award categories. Congratulations to Early Childhood Educator of the Year finalist, Rachel Kuhl, Wagaman Primary School; Inclusion Educator of the Year finalist, Jen Cubillo, Wulagi Primary School; Primary Educator of the Year finalists Demi Cubillo, Anula Primary School, and Kerri O'Connell, Wulagi Primary School; School Based Support Person of the Year finalist Amy Ratcliffe, Sanderson High; Secondary Educator of the Year finalist Olivia Billows, Sanderson High School; and Principal of the Year finalist Rob McIntosh.

These nominations are a wonderful recognition of the dedication, professionalism and care these educators bring to their work. Teachers and school leaders do more than deliver a curriculum; they inspire curiosity, build confidence and help young people navigate the challenges of growing up. For many students, a teacher's encouragement can make a lasting difference to their confidence and future aspirations. I congratulate each of these finalists on their achievement and thank them for the contribution they make to our local schools and the wider Territory community.

I also recognise constituents whose sporting achievements show that opportunities to compete and excel can continue throughout our lives.

Firstly, I congratulate Mrs Lou Goriss who has recently returned from the Australian National Women's Masters Hockey Tournament in Adelaide where she represented Victoria White in her age group. Five athletes and one umpire or manager from the NT took part. With insufficient players to field an over-70 Territory team, our representatives joined teams from Victoria, the ACT and South Australia. Although they represented other states and territories on the field, they proudly maintained their connection to the Northern Territory. I was pleased to provide NT flag badges for our local participants to wear on their uniforms, allowing them to proudly display their Territory colours throughout the tournament. Lou's participation reflects a lifelong commitment to sport, fitness and camaraderie. Her achievement reminds us that opportunities to compete and represent our communities can continue throughout our lives. Congratulations, Lou and all the Northern Territory participants who took part in the tournament.

I also acknowledge the 12 Territory athletes preparing for the Special Olympics. James, Warren, Banjo, Adam, Laura, Faradiba and Gabby will represent the NT in basketball, coached by Jason and assisted by Kylie. Ketura, Banjo and Karly will compete in athletics, coached by Lara and assisted by Maria. Jonathan and Donovan will swim, coached by Rose. Jack Cleveland is the head delegate. Together with the Members for Port Darwin, Fannie Bay, Karama, Casuarina and Wanguri, we have provided special Territory-themed

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good luck bags for these athletes as they prepare to represent their electorates and the Northern Territory. We wish every athlete and coach the very best and hope that they enjoy this opportunity to compete, showcase their abilities and make our Territory proud.

As the Member for Sanderson, I am proud to recognise these achievements and grateful for the opportunity to work alongside the people and organisations who make our community stronger.

To everyone who volunteers, teaches, coaches, supports, organises and takes time to connect with their neighbour, thank you. Your contribution matters and helps make Sanderson a community we can all be proud of.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I celebrate the outstanding achievements of students, educators, individuals and businesses across the Port Darwin electorate. It is a privilege to recognise those whose kindness, leadership, dedication and excellence contribute to making our community such a wonderful place.

I congratulate the recipients of my citizenship award from Larrakeyah Primary School, Noah Salmon, for being a caring and positive role model, and Athena Koulianos for welcoming new students, assisting younger children and caring for the environment.

From St Mary's Primary School, congratulations to Nate Noynay, recognised for outstanding citizenship, friendliness and enthusiasm for learning, and Zander Abraham, acknowledged for demonstrating stewardship of creation and community through his environmental awareness and service-minded attitude. These students exemplify kindness, respect and responsibility. I congratulate them wholeheartedly for being great role models for their schools.

On 27 May 2026 approximately 500 industry representatives gathered at Darwin Ski Club for the Hospitality NT Awards for Excellence, celebrating outstanding service, innovation and achievement. I congratulate the businesses in the Port Darwin electorate which were recognised.

Well done to the Cinema Collective, which enjoyed remarkable success receiving five awards, Best Overall Pub/Tavern, Best All Abilities Venue, Best Late Night Venue and Best Marketed Pub, while Patrick Young received the Hospitality Industry Rising Star award, General Division.

The Darwin Services Club, which revitalised the historic Admiralty House on the Esplanade, received four awards, Best Overall Club, Best Club Bar Presentation, Best Redeveloped Club and Best New Venue.

The Hilton Garden Inn received Best Overall Accommodation Hotel and Best Mid-range Accommodation, while Dinushka Goonathilake received the Service Excellence Front of House Award.

Congratulations also to Darwin Distilling Company; its Alice Dry Gin received Best New Local Product.

Well done as well to Pitchana Narithanasarn, Hilton Darwin, awarded Hospitality Industry Rising Star, Accommodation Division; Novotel Darwin CBD, Outstanding Achievement in Training; Lizards Bar and Restaurant, Best TAB Licensed Venue; Hotel Darwin, Best Pub Bar Presentation and Service; MOM Darwin, Best Backpacker Accommodation; Mayberry Darwin, Best Live Music Venue; and Hanky Panky Lounge, Best Small Bar.

These achievements demonstrate the strength of Darwin's hospitality industry, which supports local employment, tourism and suppliers while delivering memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike. Congratulations to every winner, nominee and hardworking team member.

I congratulate recipients of the 2026 Darwin Regional Export and Business Awards, recognising innovation, service and community contribution.

Julie Timms, a Darwin CBD resident and the retail sales and service manager at AANT, received the Outstanding Customer Service Individual Award which reflected her professionalism and dedication. Well done.

GTNT Darwin, located in Wood Street received the Community Event Award for the GTNT Group awards.

The Darwin Convention Centre was named Venue of the Year, recognising its contribution to attracting conferences, exhibitions and major events that showcase Darwin nationally and internationally.

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Thyme Hospitality, located in Smith Street, received Employer of the Year, acknowledging its commitment to creating a positive and supportive workplace.

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association received the Business Summit or Conference Award for its 2026 NTCA Better on Beef Conference, recognising the importance of industry collaboration and knowledge sharing. While the Cattlemen's Association is Territory-wide they have their office in my electorate.

Congratulations to everybody and all the recipients for strengthening Darwin's business community. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, creating employment, supporting local suppliers and contributing to our city's character.

It is great to congratulate members of our electorate who received awards in the 2026 NT Local Business Awards across numerous industries. Congratulations to Ben's Bakehouse, which received the award for bakery/cake business; Diamond Barbers for barber shop; Ocea' Eco Spa for beauty services; Duke's Cafe + Eatery for best cafe; GTNT Group for education service; Bread Boutique for fashion; Paspaley Pearls for jewellery store; Ward Keller, legal services; Pink Chopstix, restaurant; and RFDS Darwin Tourist Facility, tourism services.

That is a great outcome for our Darwin CBD businesses.

The RFDS Darwin Tourist Facility deserves particular recognition for sharing the extraordinary lifesaving history of the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Territory's wartime heritage.

I also extend special congratulations to Pink Chopstix, recognised nationally as the 2026 Australian Women's Small Business Champion in the restaurant category. Receiving both local and national recognition is an exceptional achievement, reflecting the team's passion, determination and entrepreneurial spirit.

To every business recognised, thank you for your dedication and invaluable contribution to Darwin's economy and community.

I especially acknowledge the outstanding educators and education support professionals, from the electorate, who have been named finalists in the 2026 World Teachers' Day NT Education Excellence Awards, with winners to be announced on 30 October.

In the Corporate-based Support Person of the Year category, congratulations to Amalie Anderson and Kylie Murphy, both from Darwin Corporate Office and Anthony Sherwell and his team from Financial Systems and Innovation, Financial Services. Their work provides essential systems, resources and support that enable schools and educators to deliver quality education.

I am particularly delighted to recognise two finalists from Larrakeyah Primary School. Caitlan Ingle has been named a finalist for Primary Educator of the Year, recognising her dedication to inspiring students and supporting their development. Principal, Fathma Mauger has been named a finalist for Principal of the Year, acknowledging her outstanding leadership and ongoing commitment to students, families and the school community. Being named a finalist is itself a significant achievement. I wish them all every success.

I also thank our teachers; principals; education assistants; administrative staff; and support personnel, across the electorate and the Territory is also worth a mention.

These achievements reflect the extraordinary talent, determination and community spirit found throughout the Port Darwin electorate and I am thrilled to recognise them in tonight's adjournment speech.

Dr RAHMAN (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my great pleasure tonight to speak about four fantastic education events I had the opportunity to be a part of recently, in my capacity as assistant minister for Education and Training.

I draw attention to the NT COGSO AGM, which was held on 10 October. COGSO represents all our public educational institutions and this year celebrated their 55th anniversary of advocating for public education. I was there all day for the proceedings, not just to cut a ribbon at the beginning. I learnt a lot through the whole day and they run a really excellent ship and I was delighted with part of it.

There were some fantastic keynote speeches by the eSafety Commission. They gave us a good look at some of the new materials on online safety, which I reckon are worth looking at for everyone here, if you want to

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have a look sometime: ‘Let’s talk about being safe online’. This one is my favourite, ‘Swoosh, Glide and Rule Number 5’. They are excellent resources and eSafety is important, as we know, in the modern day and age and it was great to hear where we are at and COGSO’s participation in that space.

For everyone who is invested in public education—frankly everyone in this House should be—I highly recommend taking a look at the annual report. At the full council meeting procedures there is a lot to learn about the advocacy the COGSO does.

Remember, 32,000 kids are in public education, and there are unique challenges for those kids in the Northern Territory given that some 70% of schools are remote, or very remote, locations and 44% of our population in schools is Indigenous. If that is compared to the 6.8%, the standard nationally, we can understand the scale of challenge. Indeed, 40% of our students that are remote, as compared to 1.8% of them in the rest of the country. There are significant differences.

I thank COGSO President Dr Ruth Mirams who does stellar work. I applaud her and her committee for all the hard work they are doing. I also make mention of Noela Anderson, who passed away recently and was a longstanding COGSO member. There was not a dry eye in the house when everybody brought her up, and the award that is going to be named after her going forward. She has been a real asset. Congratulations to them on their excellent work in capacity building and governance training.

Finally, I shout out to Lisa Spara from Nightcliff High School for her session on physical literacy, which was very engaging, and it was tough work at the end of the day to try to keep everyone up and moving.

The second event I wanted to draw attention to is the 2026 Northern Territory Education and Care Awards, which I was able to attend on 16 October. It was a wonderful event where we recognise and celebrated the exceptional individuals and services that make such a significant contribution to the early learning, development and wellbeing of children across the Northern Territory.

There were 89 nominations this year, up 27% on last year. That recognises just how important this sector is. Child safety has been a big focus for our government over the last year, and it is great to see the sector working with us, and the minister especially, on making sure we do the best we can to provide safe, supportive and enriching environments for every child.

There were five different awards handed out for Outstanding Educator, Outstanding Aboriginal Educator, Outstanding Leader, Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher and Outstanding Education and Care program. I give a shout out to all the finalists because they are all deserving in their own right.

In Outstanding Educator we had Jacinta Stewart from Ludmilla Preschool, Starzia Fowler from Kentish Early Learning Centre in Moulden and Veronica San Mario from Families as First Teachers Program.

As Outstanding Aboriginal educator, we had Amanda Djawarbuma, from Maningrida Preschool. We had Bettina Kenny from Elliott School, Lucy Pedwell from Yarralin Preschool. The Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher, Lauren Brown from Rona Glynn. We had Mary Brock from Bakewell and we had Simone Norris from McFarland and, finally, Outstanding Leader we had Beth O’Brien from Roper Gulf Council, Emily Mitchell from Maningrida and Melissa Keelan from Driver Preschool. On Programs, Driver Preschool, Rona Glynn Preschool and Wadeye Families as First Teachers Programs were all up for Outstanding Education and Care program. Honestly, it was one of the best events I have been to. A lot of these people are not recognised for anything until something goes wrong in our early childhood sector and everybody in that room cared and it was a privilege to be there and share in the event with them. I congratulate all the finalists and the winners.

That event was followed, the following day, by the 12th Little People Big Dreams conference on 17 October and that was taking everyone from the night before and adding another 250 people and having a room packed with 450 odd people. They organised a banger of an event. Child Australia who the NT Government works with did a fantastic job with their team putting on the event. I give a shout out to Tina Holton, the CEO, for the magnificent words in her speech. It is a strong partnership and it is strongly supported by our government and the minister. There was fantastic stuff throughout the day that I wanted to call out there. I am very partial to conferences as a former academic, and I am grateful that there was an opportunity for all of those people to connect with experts and leaders in the early childhood sector, to discuss through presentations and discussions and workshops how to refine teaching practises and inspire fresh approaches to children's learning and development. The award recipients from the night before shouted out who were Lucy Pedwell, Lauren Brown, Beth O'Brien, Starzia Fowler and Rona Glynn Preschool, and rightly so.

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We all reflected on the Safe Start Stronger Futures plan, which was tough for everyone to work on and it is impressive now that we have 92.7% of our services under the national quality standard meeting or exceeding standards; it is a real positive achievement. We are making childcare safer and it is a good thing for everyone and everyone knows that. It was also a great pleasure to launch on that day the new NT Guide to Safe Play, which is an important resource that has been developed in partnership between the Department of Education and Training and Kidsafe NT. We need resources like that to help our early childhood educators do their jobs and do them well.

There were two sessions in that packed program—I would love to shout out about this entire conference program and it is worth looking at all the things that were taught in there. Jessica Staines' keynote 'Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Doors: Creating Early Childhood Spaces Where Every Child Belongs' was wonderful. Everyone got something out of that. It was a pleasure to meet her in person and I hope that I come across her again.

I came back after a packed day to catch as many conference sessions as I could at the end of the day and I especially wanted to catch the session by Leone Cecich on kids and music 'Music, Movement and Regulation: Inclusive Strategies for Early Learners'.

The night before someone said something which really stuck in my head—that what little people remember how you made them feel. People brought up stories of early childhood in that regard and music makes people feel. If you want to improve literacy and numeracy and attendance outcomes, there is strong literature to suggest that investing in music education programs does volumes to get people to have a good start in life. We all know that I am a great advocate for music and music education. That is the drum that I will continue to beat, no pun intended.

It was also wonderful to attend the 47th Beat Festival, for the gazillionth time, at the AANT Centre on 2 September, under the auspices of Principal Bill Gross, who will retire soon. I wish him well. There was beautiful singing, dancing and performing by more than 1,000 kids. It has been 38 years since I got to be on stage for the Beat having done it 10 times myself between 1988 and 1995 or something like that. I brought along my mum, for old time's sake, and she enjoyed it enormously, even though she was a bit raucous.

It is far more than just an opportunity to perform for kids. It helps them build confidence, embrace their creativity, earn resilience and work towards shared goals. We just had the 11th Beat in Katherine and the 15th Beat in Alice Springs. Intergenerational families are now involved with it. I shout out to the Apogee Concert Band in particular for their phenomenal work.

Regarding music education, I am delighted that the Minister for Arts has authorised $150,000 over three years for the Darwin Youth Orchestra. It is a good start, but it is still short. Those guys will have to fundraise with the Centre for Youth and Community Music to get their orchestra up and running. I hope that we can continue to use both stick and carrot to get better educational outcomes in this jurisdiction.

Finally, as many people have noted, 30 October is World Teachers' Day. I look forward to officiating again on behalf of the Education minister. Thank you, minister, for all the opportunities you provide me to participate in these wonderful events. I shout out to Alastair Marshall who does fantastic work at Stuart Park Primary School; I have worked with him on many assemblies. He does all the singing and choral stuff. He is a truly fine teacher who deserves being nominated for Primary School Teacher of the Year.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take the opportunity, as other members have, to acknowledge the amazing contributions of our educators across the Northern Territory. On Friday 30 October we will celebrate World Teachers' Day in the NT. It is a time to come together to celebrate and recognise the excellence, dedication, commitment and passion of teachers across the NT.

Teachers change lives. They work with Territory kids to help them create a pathway for a big, bold and bright future. I thank every Territory teacher for the amazing work that they do every day to deliver excellence in education.

I acknowledge some of the finalists in the World Teachers' Day Awards NT Excellence Awards. I shout out to some people from Gwoja who are finalists for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year, Jannette McCormack from the Alice Springs Language Centre; Norissa Watson, my family from Yuendumu; Rosanna Wilson from Mutitjulu School; Tana Andrews from Areyonga School, who is retiring this year after 40 years working in education and is an amazing woman from the bush who cares about education; and none other than the deadly Wesley Campbell from Yarralin School, who is training to become a teacher so that he can be a leader in his local community at his local school.

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I acknowledge Charlotte Smith at Mutitjulu School for the Early Childhood Educator of the Year.

I acknowledge a champion from the Gwoja electorate, Zoe Richardson from Yarralin School, who is a finalist for Principal of the Year. Zoe is amazing; she keeps that school running tight and positive and delivering quality education outcomes.

I give a shout-out to Anne-Marie Abbott at Wallace Rockhole School who is a finalist for School Based Support Person of the Year and does an amazing job looking after our Territory kids.

To all of our teachers across the Territory, thank you. I recognise and thank the Australian Education Union which is there for our teachers through the good times and the bad. Thank you to the AEU for all the work it does; it is important. To all our Families as First Teachers educators, our early childhood educators, the staff in the department of Education who do an amazing job to support our schools, our teachers assistants and everyone in the education system who helps our schools run positively and effectively and do that work with our kids, thank you so much.

I am not that competitive, but I have the record for the most schools. I reckon it would be a close one with the Member for Barkly. I have more than 23 schools in the electorate of Gwoja and I get out to them all as much as I can. They do an amazing job. Some of them are remote and delivering education can be a challenge.

Happy World Teachers' Day to all our educators. Thank you for the amazing job you do and for being there for our Territory kids. I look forward to seeing you across the Territory as we travel. Recognising the amazing work our educators do is important. I give a huge vote of thanks to all our educators and parents who support the local school, whether that is through the local council or by supporting our teachers. Thank you very much for all that you do.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a lot to get through; let us see how I go.

I congratulate Michelle Petty from Woodroffe Primary School, who has been announced as the NT winner of the Australian Teacher Aide of the Year Awards. Michelle's commitment to the students, families and programs of Woodroffe Primary School is exceptional. We are fortunate to have her contributing so deeply to the success of the school. This is so well deserved. It is great to see our educators winning on the national stage. Congratulations, Michelle.

I congratulate Starzia Fowler from Kentish Early Learning Centre in Moulden. We are incredibly proud of her for taking out the Outstanding Educator Award at the 2026 NT Early Childhood Education and Care Awards. For someone so new to the sector, she is already an inspiration. Her passion, dedication and commitment to achieving positive outcomes for children shines through. She should be incredibly proud of this achievement and the positive impact she is already making in the lives of children and families. This is just the beginning of what we know will be an amazing career ahead of her. Congratulations, Starzia. You are so deserving of this recognition.

I congratulate some educators from the Blain electorate and Palmerston who are finalists in the World Teachers' Day NT Excellence Awards:

- School Based Support Person of the Year—Michelle Petty from Woodroffe Primary School
- Early Childhood Educator of the Year—Grady Redway from Moulden Park Primary School
- Inclusion Educator of the Year—Trudy Casey from Forrest Parade School
- Leader in Education of the Year—Alexandra Wilson from Rosebery Secondary School
- Principal of the Year—Danielle Banicek from Rosebery Primary School and Maisie Floyd from Driver Secondary School.

I have to confess a conflict of interest; that is the school my children go to. All the best, Danielle; I hope you win. I am sure that the Member for Drysdale will also congratulate Maisie, if he has not already done so.

I give a huge congratulations to Bryony Morris from Woodroffe. At the 2026 NT Training Awards on Saturday 19 September, Bryony won VET for Secondary Schools Student of the Year. This is a huge achievement

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and recognition of all the hard work that she puts into everything. Well done to Bryony. I am sure that her mum, dad and the whole family are proud.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I share a few positive stories from my electorate of Casuarina. The stories are about community connections, recognising the people who make a difference and celebrating wonderful local achievements.

First, I will share a story of two happy constituents and one happy dog named Jack. Glenda and Doug Kennedy are a lovely senior couple in my electorate who have visited our office on numerous occasions. During a conversation with my electorate officer Sarah, they mentioned that they were hoping to find a dog to welcome into their home. However, finding the right dog was not simple. They needed a dog with a non-shedding coat to help avoid allergies and of the right size for their home and lifestyle and who would be suitable for them to care for. Sarah promised to keep an eye and ear out.

As luck would have it, our assistant electorate officer Kim soon became aware of a cavoodle needing to be rehomed. Kim immediately thought of Glenda and Doug and reached out to them. Before long, Jack had found his new home with the Kennedys. Glenda and Doug were delighted with their new family member. They even brought Jack into our electorate office to introduce him to the team and show us how happy they were. On a recent visit to their home, it was wonderful to see Jack settled into a loving environment. He was clearly a happy dog, well cared for and enjoying his new life with Glenda and Doug.

Sometimes the work we do in the electorate office involves complex issues and lengthy follow-ups, but every now and then something as simple as connecting the right people can make a real difference to someone's life. In this case, it brought happiness to Glenda and Doug and a loving home to Jack. I thank Sarah and Kim for taking the time to listen and helping make this connection happen. Our office is here to support our community in many different ways and this is a lovely example of how small act can have a big impact. I wish Glenda, Doug and Jack many happy years together.

I acknowledge the finalists in my electorate who have been recognised in the 2026 NT Education and Care Awards. Our teachers, early childhood educators, specialist educators, principals, education leaders and support staff play an incredibly important role in shaping the lives of young Territorians. Every day, they bring patience, knowledge, dedication and enthusiasm to their work. They support children to learn, grow in confidence and develop the skills they need for the future. This work does not always receive the recognition it deserves, which makes these awards an important opportunity to celebrate their contribution.

I congratulate the following finalists from the Casuarina electorate—Mitchell Booth, Nakara Primary School finalist for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year; Lauren Hofmeyer, Henbury School finalist for Inclusion Educator of the Year; Amanda Thomas, Henbury School finalist for Leader in Education of the Year; Bandi Roopa, Dripstone Secondary College finalist for Secondary Educator of the Year; and Teigan McCarty, Henbury School finalist for the Secondary Educator of the Year. Congratulations to all five finalists. Your recognition reflects the important work you do for students, families and the wider community.

The regional and overall winners will be announced at the regional award ceremonies on Friday 30 October 2026. I wish each of them the best of luck, but regardless of the results being recognised among the finalists is already a significant achievement. You should be proud of the difference you make in our community. Thank you for your continued commitment to education and giving young Territorians the best possible opportunities.

I recognise two young people who have become friends and valued volunteers of the Casuarina Electorate Office, Peter and Eva Susanto. Peter and his sister Eva are Darwin-based medical students who share a strong passion for education, community service and helping students succeed. Together, they are the co-founders of Supra Education, an initiative they developed to support students through personalised learning, clear communication, strong tutor–student relationships and tailored academic support. Their work is helping students across Australia and internationally build confidence, improve their academic performance and reach their potential.

I was pleased to hear that Peter and Eva recently featured in Australia's Top 50 Kidpreneurs, which appeared across major News Corp newspapers, including the NT News, the Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun, the Courier Mail and Adelaide's the Advertiser. This is an outstanding achievement and I congratulate them on the recognition they have received.

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It is encouraging to see young Territorians using their skills, knowledge and initiative to build something that benefits others. As they prepare for the 2027 academic year, Peter and Eva are working to expand their educational support and connect with schools to explore opportunities to help more students. Their upcoming programs include online group courses for SACE/NTCET Stage 2 Mathematical Methods and VCE Mathematical Methods Units 3 and 4, both commencing on Saturday 21 November 2026. They will also continue offering private one-on-one tutoring across a range of subjects, online and in person.

What stands out to me is their commitment to making a difference while balancing the demands of their medical studies. They are putting their knowledge and experience to good use and creating opportunities for other students.

Peter and Eva have also generously given their time to support our electorate office and the local community. I thank them for their contribution. Congratulations to you both on this well-deserved recognition. I look forward to seeing Supra Education continue to grow and support students in the Northern Territory and beyond.

In conclusion, these three stories highlight different but equally important parts of our community. Whether it is helping a senior couple welcome a much-loved dog into their home, recognising the educators who guide our children or celebrating young people who are creating opportunities for others, each story reminds us of the value of connection, generosity and community spirit. As the Member for Casuarina, I am proud to recognise the people who make our community a better place.

I love Casuarina.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I reflect on the Nightcliff Tigers Football Club and welcome back footy to Nightcliff Oval for the 2026–27 season. It is an important part of our Nightcliff community. Nightcliff Oval is literally at the centre and at the heart of the Nightcliff electorate.

This year we are lucky enough to have six home games at the Nightcliff community oval for the women's premier league and the men's premier league. We had the first match on Sunday evening and it was a major success for both the women's and men's teams. It was also the opportunity to raise the premiership flag from the previous season as the team ran out onto the field. Congratulations to the men's premier league team for their success last season. The new season is underway—a new challenge, with new teams to beat and welcoming Banks Bulldogs into the premier league competition.

I highlight the enormous amount of work done by all the committee members and volunteers across the club. A special shout-out to the junior vice president. Steph Cockfield, who has the unenviable responsibility of coordinating all of the junior teams. There are hundreds of young kids playing footy. It is her role to marshal them into the teams and recruit team managers and coaches to help get everyone out on the park every week. She does an incredible job. My thanks to her and all the other volunteers.

Another important part of the philosophy at the Nightcliff Tigers Football Club is ensuring that local sport is accessible and that men, women, boys, girls—everyone—has the opportunity to participate and be involved in the club and play sport and enjoy it.

This is important because in the past many of our sporting teams and clubs have not been welcoming places. I am pleased to see that the change has occurred across Darwin and the NT—and at Nightcliff Football Club. One of my constituents came to me with a story about when she was playing junior footy. It was a mixed team that she played with at the time. She was playing at Nightcliff Oval and remembers having to go behind the trees to get changed and some of the other members of the team would laugh at her for having to get changed around the ground. She ended up dropping out of the sport and did not continue playing junior footy. She is a young woman now, but she still remembers that experience. I am pleased to say that a lot has changed over the last decade and the club prides itself on being a welcoming and supportive club.

Another big bit of news this week for the club was the release of the tender for the new change rooms at Nightcliff Oval. This is something I have championed during my time as a City of Darwin councillor. It was a fantastic result a couple of years ago when we were able to secure funding from the Commonwealth through Luke Gosling MP, Member for Solomon, and the federal minister for Sport, Annika Wells. That was a $1.5m contribution to this project. It also had $0.25m from the City of Darwin and $0.25m from AFL NT. This total of $2m had been the culmination of years of advocacy, hard work, developing plans, knocking on doors of businesses and government trying to raise the funds to construct these new change rooms.

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The new change rooms to be constructed at Nightcliff Oval will be fantastic. It will remove the need for the current semi-temporary change rooms attached to the Nightcliff Sports Club. This will provide the welcoming, unisex facilities that have long been needed at Nightcliff Oval. It will set up future generations of Tigers' young men, women, boys and girls to enjoy and play footy for years to come.

Special thanks to all the Nightcliff Tigers committee, the volunteers, the players, president Mark Dodge, treasurer Liz Oliver, past president Graeme Shaw. A particular mention of Steve Glennon, who has been the spiritual leader of this project to get new change rooms at Nightcliff Oval. He has been working for over 10 years on this project.

We are so close to seeing the change rooms come out of the ground. The tender is released. We aim to see that awarded in the new year. Hopefully. We will see construction in readiness for the 2027–28 competition.

Investing in sport is investing in our community. It is not about just fun and participation—although that should always be the goal—it also develops skills around discipline, commitment and teamwork. These are not just skills for fun, they are skills for life. We will raise a terrific generation of people in the electorate of Nightcliff in our community in Darwin and across the Territory where we have strong community sport.

Strong community sport is a founding principle for everything that flows from that. It can support better school attendance, better engagement in the community, healthier lifestyles and grow a fantastic next generation of young Territorians.

In summary, it is a fantastic time to be part of local community sport. I am proud to be the Nightcliff Tigers patron for this season, continuing the tradition of many Members for Nightcliff before. I recognise all the players, supporters, volunteers, sponsors and look forward to a fantastic 2026–27 season.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, tonight I celebrate some of the wonderful people, organisations and schools that make Drysdale such a fantastic place to live.

I wish one of our Drysdale greats, Margaret Piney, a happy 80th birthday. Margaret celebrated this wonderful milestone on 6 October. I could not let the occasion pass without acknowledging it in the House. Margaret is a much-loved member of the Palmerston Probus Club and serves as its welfare officer. Every community needs people like Margaret. She is so often the person making sure someone else feels remembered, included and valued. Whether it is checking in on a fellow member, offering a kind word or simply making sure someone is doing all right, Margaret is always looking out for others.

These acts of kindness might seem small but they can mean the world to someone, particularly our seniors. Margaret, thank you for your compassion, generosity and genuine care you show to those around you. You are a wonderful example of what community spirit is all about, and I hope your 80th birthday was every bit as special as you are.

Speaking of our wonderful seniors, I congratulate the Palmerston Probus Club on celebrating its 14th anniversary on 15 October. Unfortunately, with parliament sittings, I was unable to attend the celebrations, but our wonderful Palmerston team was there to help mark the occasion. Probus is much more than a social club. For many of our seniors it provides friendship, connection, laughter and a sense of belonging. It creates opportunities for people to get out, stay active, share experiences and build lasting friendships. That is something we should never underestimate. As people get older, a supportive network around them becomes increasingly important. Clubs like Probus play an invaluable role in keeping our seniors connected to the community.

I particularly acknowledge the dedicated committee members who work hard to make the club such a welcoming and supportive place. To president John Ainsworth; vice presidents Marilyn Roberts and Jim Wright; secretary, Margaret Wright; and treasurer, Yvonne van der Maas, thank you for your leadership, commitment and generosity.

To every Probus member, congratulations on 14 wonderful years. Your club is a fantastic example of the strength of our Palmerston community. I look forward to seeing it continue to thrive for many years to come.

I also turn my attention to something I am incredibly passionate about; that is, education. I have always believed that there is no greater gift we can give a child than a good education. In Drysdale we are fortunate to have some truly exceptional educators who dedicate themselves to giving our children the best start in life.

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Recently, a number of educators and schools across our electorate received a well-deserved recognition through the Northern Territory Education and Care Awards and the World Teachers' Day Excellence Awards. I congratulate Veronica Ecenarro from Gray Primary School who was recognised as a finalist in the Outstanding Educator category, Veronica's nomination reflects the care, dedication and commitment she brings to supporting our youngest Territorians.

I also congratulate Driver Preschool, which continues to find itself in the spotlight for all the right reasons. This time, the preschool has been recognised for its outstanding education and care program, Nurturing a Child, Safe Culture in Early Childhood Education and Care. Creating an environment where children feel safe, supported and encouraged to learn is fundamental to their development and recognition, and this recognition is a credit to the entire Driver Preschool team.

A special congratulation also goes to Melissa Keelan, who has once again been recognised for her outstanding leadership. Melissa continues to demonstrate the difference strong, passionate leadership can make in early childhood education. It is wonderful to see her efforts acknowledged.

The recognition does not stop there. At Driver Secondary School we have three outstanding individuals who have been recognised through the World Teachers' Day Excellence Awards. Maisie Floyd has been named a finalist for a World Teachers' Day Excellence Award. Miller Perez has been recognised as the Inclusion Educator of the Year category and Chandrina Tidalgo has been nominated for School Based Support Person of the Year.

I congratulate Mr Loughman from Gray Primary School, who has been named a finalist in the Primary Educator of the Year category.

Congratulations to each of these nominees and finalists. Recognition like this does not happen by accident. It comes from the countless hours spent preparing lessons, supporting students, encouraging children who might be struggling, celebrating their achievements and finding ways to help every child reach their potential. Much of that work happens behind the scenes without recognition or fanfare, but it matters to the children whose lives you help shape, the families who place their trust in you and the future of our Territory. As the local member, I could not be prouder to see so many exceptional educators from Drysdale receiving the recognition they deserve.

I give a special shout-out to Gray Primary School, where there has been plenty of excitement recently. I was pleased to be invited to support the school's Colour Fun Run fundraiser. Anyone who has attended one of these events knows that there is nothing quite like seeing a group of excited children running around, covered in colour, having the time of their lives. It is a fantastic way to bring students, families and teachers together while raising funds for the school. I congratulate everyone involved in organising the event and thank the Gray Primary community for continuing to create these wonderful opportunities for our kids.

Gray Primary School was also nominated for the Hot100 Mango Squad School of the Year 2026. On 15 October the Hot100 Mango Squad jumped into a brand-new Mazda CX-5 from Darwin Mazda and made their way to Gray Primary School, bringing along delicious Territory mangoes from Tou's Garden mango farmer. I reckon there are few things more Territory than a school full of excited kids enjoying fresh local mangoes. It was a fantastic opportunity to bring a little extra fun into the school day while celebrating one of the great products the Territory is known for. A big thank you to Hot100, Darwin Mazda and Tou's Garden for getting behind our local schools and putting smiles on our students' faces. Congratulations to Gray Primary School on the nomination.

Tonight's acknowledgements cover everything from an 80th birthday to the Probus anniversary, outstanding teachers and a school full of mangoes, but there is one thing that connects them all—that is, community. It is the people who check in on their neighbours, the volunteers who give their time, the educators who go the extra mile and the local organisations and businesses that get behind our kids. These are the people who make Drysdale special. They remind us that a strong community is not just built through infrastructure, investment or government programs; it is built by the people who care. I am incredibly proud to represent a community with so many people who do exactly that.

To Margaret, our wonderful Probus members, our exceptional educators and everyone who continues to contribute to the spirit of Drysdale, thank you. You are the heart of our community and you deserve to be celebrated.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I congratulate Wade Bryant on his invitation to represent the Northern Territory at the Greg Norman Junior Masters in December in Coolum, Queensland. This is

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a fantastic achievement and well-deserved recognition of his talent and hard work. Wade Bryant is just 12 years of age and has a handicap of 8.9. He is part of Golf NT's Junior Emerging Talent program (JET), which supports the development of junior golfers across the Territory.

Wade has played in many tournaments across the Territory this year. He played in the Humpty Doo Golf Club TeeMates Top End Series event in March where he was runner-up with 37 (+1) .To Wade's parents, Shane and Anica, who dedicate time for Wade to train and the team at the Katherine Country Club who offer support and mentorship, Wade and all the juniors in Katherine are a credit to them all.

Katherine has three more juniors, John Rice, Hunter Pyle and Emmersyn Moran, representing the club in the development program. Their parents and the Katherine golf community are incredibly proud of these four young golfers. I congratulate them on their golfing achievements and look forward to following their journey.

On the last day of September I had the opportunity to attend Katherine Business at Sunset hosted by the Charles Darwin University Faculty of Health at the Katherine Country Club. This was a night to focus on the health opportunities at CDU in Katherine and across the NT. It was a night to network and listen to healthcare providers and leaders.

Professor Dominic Upton from CDU discussed the future of regional health and human services in Katherine. We were lucky to listen to him as he spoke about all the services across the NT, but mainly the services available in Katherine.

It was well attended by members of the community, including our Chamber of Commerce representative, Peter, along with Linda Blackwood, the Chair of the Katherine Chamber. Linda has been an integral part of the Katherine Chamber over many years. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to business support in Katherine.

Another event I recently attended was the Chamber of Commerce Business Awards held at the Katherine Country Club. It was a fantastic evening celebrating our local businesses. I congratulate the award winners:

- Outstanding Customer Service for an Individual—Myah Simmonds from Blue Hole Butchers
- Outstanding Customer Service for Business —New Shanghai Restaurant & Takeaway
- Small Business—Tyson Brook from Casa Del Perro Contracting and Orange County Auctions
- Not-for-profit—Katherine Isolated Children's Service (KICS)
- Outstanding New Start-up—UConnect Coordination
- Community Event—Salsa Fiesta, held by Katherine Physio and the Centre for Movement
- Venue of the Year—Katherine Country Club
- Construction Industry, Supply Chain and Sustainment—The Territorians DCPMC Pty Ltd
- Employee of the Year—Mandavi Thapa from Kentish Family Day Care, and I was pleased Mandavi, Director of Kentish, received this award
- Business Leader of the Year—Ben Hockey, another amazing landscaping and garden business that was instrumental in helping sandbag after the recent flooding, so I give a big shout-out to Ben
- Employer of the Year—Station Mechanical; Linda and Adam Blackwood have an incredible business providing support to many stations across the Territory
- Medium and Large Business—Nutrien Ag Solutions; the girls at Nutrien received the award and Ben Coutts is their leader and they have a fantastic team
- Katherine Big Rivers Business of the Year—Casa del Perro Contracting, which is a credit to Tyson and his work.

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We are lucky to have such great businesses in Katherine, as it is getting more challenging to be in business. I thank all these businesses for going over and above to create a great work environment and for the professionalism in their work. We really are the centre of the universe with these incredible businesses. I thank them and congratulate them on their awards.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I congratulate talented Leanyer resident Georgia Politis on the successful launch of series 2 of her remarkable Divercity Series exhibition.

Georgia is a passionate local photographer who has dedicated more than six years to capture the faces and stories of people who make our Territory such as special place to live. Her latest collection features 52 new portraits, building on the original 48 portraits from series 1, bringing the total to an incredible 100 Territorians whose stories have been captured and celebrated.

What makes this project so special is that it is about more than photography; behind every portrait is a story of someone's journey, experiences, challenges, achievements and connection to the Northern Territory. Some were born and raised here, while others have made the Territory their home more recently, but each of them contributes to the rich diversity and character of our community. Georgia has taken the time to sit with these individuals, listen to their stories, photograph them and share their experiences with the wider community. Remarkably, she has done this at no cost to those participating, with the exhibition itself also being free for the public to enjoy.

I had the pleasure of attending the exhibition opening on Monday 5 October at the AANT Centre in Darwin and was joined by parliamentary colleagues, the Members for Fannie Bay, Blain and Port Darwin as we celebrated Georgia's remarkable achievement.

It was a fantastic occasion with more than 220 people attending the opening night to celebrate Georgia's work and the Territorians featured in the exhibition. It was wonderful to see people from all walks of life coming together, sharing their stories and celebrating what makes our community unique.

I was so impressed by the exhibition that I returned again last week for a private tour with the Member for Sanderson. Having the opportunity to spend more time viewing the portraits and learning about the people behind them only reinforced how special this project is.

I am proud to be part of the Finocchiaro CLP government, which provided a $20,000 grant to support this project. Georgia ensures all local businesses were used for the exhibition, from printing to the mounting of the portraits. This was a worthwhile investment in a talented local artist and a wonderful way to recognise and celebrate truly remarkable Territorians. Our government understands the important role that arts and culture play in bringing communities together, preserving our stories and strengthening our sense of identity. Georgia's Diversity Series is a perfect example of that. It reminds us that we do not have to look far to find extraordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Georgia's achievement is more than impressive when you consider the time, energy and personal commitment she has invested in this project. Over six-and-a-half years she has photographed 100 people and written their stories and created a lasting record of the people and personalities that make Darwin and the Top End so unique.

When you look at the people featured in this collection, you get an appreciation of the incredible individuals who make up our Territory. Among those photographed are Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Jennifer Dowling, Giovanna Webb, Bob Shewring, Estelle Cornell, Annette Bailey, Patrick Salter, Amy Hetherington, Eleanora Matarazzo, Cesarina Gondazzi who was my canteen lady when I attended Rapid Creek Primary School in the early 1980s, Koula Koulakis and the late Dr Albert Foreman, just to name a few.

Those people are from different backgrounds, generations and walks of life, each with their own unique story to tell. Some are well known community leaders, while others are everyday Territorians who have made their own special contribution to the place we call home. That is what I love about this exhibition. It reminds us that every Territorian has a story worth telling and every story contributes to the rich history and identity of our Territory.

Through Georgia's lens these stories will be preserved and celebrated for generations to come. This project has been a labour of love and the response from the community has been outstanding. Since the opening on 5 October, hundreds of visitors have attended the exhibition, including people travelling all the way from Katherine and Adelaide River, as well as tourists and long-time supporters of Georgia's work.

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It is fantastic to see local artists receiving this level of recognition and support. I acknowledge the many local businesses, organisations and individuals who supported Georgia in bringing this exhibition to life. Projects like this do not happen without a great deal of hard work, generosity and community spirit.

I am pleased that Georgia has indicated this is not the end of her Diversity Series. She has plans to continue expanding the project, capturing even more stories and celebrating more Territorians in the years ahead. I look forward to seeing what she achieves in the next series.

For those Territorians who have not yet had an opportunity to view their wonderful exhibition, I strongly encourage them to do so. The exhibition is open at the AANT Centre until this Friday. Make sure you do not miss it. It is a fantastic opportunity to appreciate the talent of a local artist while learning more about the remarkable people, all whom call the Territory home.

I have a copy with me of Georgia's Diversity Series 2 publication, which beautifully captures these portraits and stories. I seek leave to table a copy of the Diversity Series 2 publication.

Leave granted.

Mrs CARLSON: In closing, I congratulate Georgia on another successful exhibition. As a Leanyer resident, Georgia is a local in our community, I am incredibly proud of. Her passion, creativity and dedication have produced something that will have a lasting impact, not just for the 100 people featured, but for their families and communities, and all future generations.

Georgia, thank you for your great work, and congratulations on the success of Diversity Series 2. I wish you every success in the next Diversity Series.

Last night I had the pleasure of attending a special National War Widows Day celebration at Parliament House, hosted by the Minister for Veterans, the Member for Sanderson. It was a wonderful evening, bringing together some truly remarkable women, our lovely war widows, alongside Defence personnel.

When we speak about the sacrifices made in times of war and conflict, we rightly acknowledge the courage, dedication and service of the men and women, but we never forget the sacrifices made for those who remain at home.

There are women who have had held their families together while their loved ones were away serving their country and they raised their families, managed the households and supported our communities. When our servicemen and women return, often carrying the physical and emotional scars of the service, it was their families, particularly their wives and partners, who supported them through this with care and understanding support.

I also acknowledge the work of organisations such as the War Widows Association, Mates for Mates, Veterans Affairs Australia and Legacy NT. They does an outstanding job in supporting widows, veterans and their families. These organisations provide much more than practical assistance. They offer friendship, compassion, connection and a sense of belonging.

I make a special mention to Bonnie Poulter and thank her for her tireless advocacy for war widows in the Territory and for organising a wonderful evening last night.

Last night we had a special celebration at the event. The beautiful war widow, Marjorie Nelson, recently celebrated her 100th birthday. What an incredible achievement. The minister presented Marjorie with a beautiful bunch of flowers and it was a lovely moment to witness. Marjorie looked wonderful. She was looking fabulous at 100. I can only hope that if and when I reach that milestone, I look half as good as she does. She certainly gives us all something to aspire to.

Beyond the flowers, the smiles and the birthday celebrations, the evening was a reminder of something much more important. It reminds us that behind every uniform is a family, behind every deployment is someone waiting at home, and behind every sacrifice is a story that deserves to be told and remembered.

Most importantly, to all our war widows, I thank you for your strength, courage and your sacrifice and the contributions you continue to make to all our communities. To Marjorie, a very happy 100th birthday. May you continue to inspire us all.

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Our war widows have given so much to our country. They at least deserve the very best and always to be cherished and honoured, supported and remembered.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, the Adelaide River Rosella Festival was held on 24 July. I was delighted to be joined by the Members for Katherine and Barkly, and Litchford Councillor Kris Civitarese at the Rosella Festival.

I had a great day at the festival, talking to locals, sharing the beautiful Adelaide River region with tourists and stocking up on delicious homemade jams, chutney, jerky and preserves. I even gave the chilli ice cream a go now know it is not for me.

There was great live entertainment and an array of market stalls. It was an all-round enjoyable day and one that I look forward to each year. Well done to the committee, volunteers and everyone who makes the event a success.

I enjoy heading into the Member for Daly's electorate because it is nice for them to see a member of parliament. It is nice for them to have that opportunity to talk to somebody who works in the Assembly. On 27 September, I was pleased to catch up with the NT Thai Association, this time for their annual general meeting. It was great to see the massive progress on their new clubhouse in Marrara and to hear about the exciting plans for 2027.

I thank the outgoing acting President Tou, Secretary Unchalee and Public Officer Kieron. The Association has thrived under your guidance. Congratulations to incoming President Pom Wipaporn, Vice President Vilaipron Wegener and Chom Mazzola. Thank you for stepping up to continue the fantastic achievements of the association. I look forward to the Thai Festival and all that comes with it.

On the Saturday 8 August, the Darwin and Rural Poultry Club held a H5N1 avian influenza bird flu information session. I thank the club for being proactive in this space and for assisting with educating the community to be alert and prepared. This is a great little club. It is active in the community, holding sale days, how to dress a chicken workshops, fundraising BBQs and rooster processing workshops. They are always welcoming and happy to share their vast knowledge.

I also give a shout out to Maddy and Kaitlin, two fantastic young leaders in the northern beef industry. Maddy and Kaitlin were the brains behind Pace for a Purpose, an epic 52-kilometre run from Tipperary Station to the Adelaide River Pub to raise money for the Dolly's Dream Foundation. People a lot fitter than me ran with Maddy and Kaitlin for moral support, while many others were there at the end ready to cheer them over the finish line. More than $11,000 was raised. Super effort, Maddy and Kaitlin.

I am a proud sponsor of Territory Xtreme Cowboy Racing. This year I attended meet 6 of the 2026 season. For those who do not know, extreme cowboy racing is a timed sport where competitors take on a range of cowboy challenges on horseback that can be described as a mix of dressage and agility courses. Competitors compete in time trials, completing a course that features obstacles such as 90-degree turns, opening and closing gates on horseback, barrel turns and steps. There was some impressive horsemanship and skill on display, and I thoroughly enjoyed spectating. I give a massive shout-out to Fran Ford who does so much for the club to make sure that each meet is a success. Together with a number of my colleagues, I am pleased to sponsor TXCR and look forward to seeing this equine sport continue to grow in popularity.

The Top End Dog Club is proudly bringing sprint dog to the Top End. I went along to the club’s Fast Paws Come and Try session and was impressed at the local dogs trying out this new canine sport. The track is a 50-metre sprint, with the fastest pooch taking out the prize. The club received a Community Benefit Fund grant from the Finocchiaro government. I am proud to be part of a team that supports local clubs to begin, grow and bring new opportunities to the Territory.

Sprint dog is basically a one-dog-at-a-time time trial. There is a run, a little ball goes down and the dogs take off after it. It is for all dogs, not just greyhounds. It is fun to watch the different breeds racing—everything from a pug and a chihuahua to the fast whippets. It is a great club, and I look forward to supporting it again next year.

It has been a big couple of months for the Rural Athletics Centre, with its 26th championship held in August, the 2026 NT Track and Field Championships in September and its presentation evening to celebrate a fantastic season which was held earlier this month. The club had members travel to Townsville to compete at the North Queensland Championships and they all did the Territory proud. Congratulations.

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Rural Athletics is a fantastic club with junior and adult participants who get together at Freds Pass in the rural area to train week-in, week-out, especially through the Dry Season. It is a wholesome welcoming environment. If you are looking to get into a sport where you might get hurt but you can run to your ability or you can try shotput, discus or high jump—all the fun stuff from school athletics—these are your people. Well done to all involved.

The 2026 Turf NT Polocrosse Championships were recently held at Freds Pass Reserve. Much to the dismay of the Member for Nelson, the Noonamah Polocrosse Club came away as the big winners of the A grade, beating the Deputy Chief Minister at his own game. Congratulations to all the players and their talented horses.

The countdown begins for the 2027 Polocrosse Nationals being held at the beautiful Freds Pass Sport and Recreation Reserve next year. I look forward to welcoming hundreds of horses and spectators to god's country.

In September Pony Club Northern Territory hosted the Pony Club Australia National Mounted Games Championships at Freds Pass Sport and Recreation Reserve. Junior and senior riders from across the country competed over two days, with some impressive skills and great horsemanship on display. Well done to everyone involved in pony clubs across the Northern Territory, but I especially give a big shout-out to Noonamah Horse and Pony Club, Litchfield Horse and Pony Club and Darwin Horse and Pony Club. They are all filled with great volunteers who make sure that our young and adult riders have a fantastic time learning horse skills and competing. Well done to all involved.

September has a number of notable days I look forward to acknowledging each year.

The month kicks off with a celebration—Early Childhood Educators' Day on 2 September. The electorate of Goyder is fortunate to have a number of terrific daycare and early learning centres supporting local families. Early childhood educators play an important role in some of the most formative years of a child's life. They often double as an emotional support network for parents navigating a return to their professional lives which can be a challenging period. Thank you to all our early childhood educators across the rural area and the Territory for nurturing our next generation of Territorians.

Later in the month I visited pharmacies across the rural area in celebration of World Pharmacists Day. Pharmacists are often the front line of protection for the health of Territorians. I am proud of our government for expanding the community pharmacy scope of practice program. Territorians value their connection and access to community pharmacists, leaning on them for physical, emotional and mental health support and knowledge.

An example of how a community values their pharmacist was evident when the Humpty Doo Terry White Chemmart changed hands earlier this month. Congratulations to Lauren and Steve on their well-deserved retirement and a huge thank you for all they have done for the community. A warm welcome to Adrian Marshall, Alexis Innes and Darryl Smart, who are committed to continuing the same friendly and reliable service that the rural community has valued for so many years.

The Member for Nelson and I were fortunate to meet Adrian when we visited for World Pharmacist Day. Adrian's care and compassion was evident, and we look forward to working together for the benefit of rural Territorians.

Also in September, over the weekend of 12 and 13 September, the Noonamah Tavern celebrated 60 fabulous years. A birthday celebration befitting the Noonie was held with activities for every age group. Congratulations to Tony and Rebecca for their commitment to this rural institution, a treasured local for many locals. Everyone knows they hold the fantastic Noonamah Rodeo there, which attracts all the townies out to, again, God's country and puts the Territory on display. It is a great pub. I highly recommend their food. It is a great time.

The Bendigo Bank Coolalinga and District's 20th birthday celebration was at the Humpty Doo Golf Club. The community bank turned 20 years old, and I cannot remember a time where they were not there for the rural community. Over the course of their two decades of operations, they have distributed over $2m to recreational and sporting clubs and to health and emergency services across the rural area.

Congratulations to chairman Jan Young and the team at Bendigo Bank Coolalinga and District on their fantastic work supporting the rural community. As the Member for Nelson mentioned in his speech last week, at the 20the birthday celebrations, the Bendigo Bank gave $5,000 to all of the local fire brigades to use on

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whatever they want that can benefit their club and their members. It is good to see that the rural bank investing in the rural area.

It also made a donation to the Doyle family who recently lost their home in Berry Springs due to a fire. I give a massive shout-out to Bendigo Bank and all the volunteer firies across the rural area and the Northern Territory who put their time aside and their lives at risk defending other people's homes. Well done to all of them and congratulations on turning 20, Bendigo Bank.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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