# Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



# Parliamentary Record
# Debates and Questions



Thursday 7 May 2026

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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE
### Chief Minister

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today for personal reasons.

Leave granted.

### Member for Braitling

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Braitling be granted leave of absence from the Chamber today for ministerial business.

Leave granted.

## ABSENCE OF CHIEF MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR LANDS, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

**Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I advise the Assembly that during Question Time today, the Deputy Chief Minister will take questions on the Chief Minister's portfolios, and I will take questions on Minister Burgoyne's portfolios.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE
### Member for Gwoja

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Gwoja be granted leave of absence today.

Leave granted.

## PAIRING ARRANGEMENT
### Members for Spillett and Gwoja

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, a pairing arrangement has been submitted to the Table Office for the Member for Spillett and the Member for Gwoja for today. Pursuant to Sessional Order 2, this arrangement will be recorded in any division lists in the Minutes of Proceedings and the *Parliamentary Record*.

## CONDOLENCE MOTION
### Hon Loraine Braham

**Madam SPEAKER:** I draw the attention of honourable members to the passing of Mrs Loraine Braham, former Member for Braitling and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to the family and friends of Loraine in the gallery today, Michelle and her husband, David, and Michelle's granddaughter, Sam. Thank you for making the effort to come today from Adelaide.

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

**Mr MALEY (Deputy Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly expresses its condolences to the family and friends of Ms Loraine Braham.

I acknowledge members of Loraine's family in the gallery, who join us from Adelaide: Michelle, Sam and David. Thank you for coming.

During Loraine's life she was so much to so many; she contributed to the Northern Territory in many different ways. Loraine was a teacher, a principal, a local councillor, a hardworking local member, a pioneer and a trailblazer.

Loraine was the first Central Australian female member of parliament, the first female Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and the first woman from Central Australia to hold a ministry.

Above all, Loraine was dedicated to her family. Loraine was a devoted wife to her late husband, Graeme, in a partnership that endured for more than 40 years, before Graeme's untimely passing in 2003.

She was a proud mother to Michelle; and to Peter, who sadly passed away in 2023; grandmother to Samatha, Leah, Kasey and Finn; and great-grandmother to Samantha's children, Lachlan and Sophie.

Loraine was born in Bendigo on 21 August 1938, to Bill and Josie Mitchell. She was raised in a hardworking middle-class family, the middle child of five—Shirley, Bill, Loraine, Ray and Gary.

Loraine spent much of her early childhood in and out of hospital and that shaped her courage. Michelle said, 'I'm not sure her family expected much of her, perhaps just hoped that she would work and walk normally one day. Early on she developed a gait and a quiet determination to keep going. We often joked about how she was; even when it was to her detriment, she powered through. Loraine was a bright student, matriculating early at 16 years old.'

The young Loraine experienced the Second World War, not just through her father who fought in New Guinea, and her uncle, who was a prisoner of war, but through the effects of rationing and moving in with her grandparents for the remainder of the war years. Loraine later recalled, 'I vaguely remember my father leaving us—his young wife with three very young children. I remember the heartache it caused.'

Throughout her schooling Loraine was primarily exposed to female peers and teachers. Loraine said in her maiden speech to parliament:

> *Thus, it was to me a complete surprise when, on taking up my first teaching post, I first encountered discrimination.*

This was in the late 1950s and 1960s. She experienced pay discrimination, and soon after when she was married, she was forced to resign. She said:

> *Is it any wonder that I strongly support the principles of equal opportunity?*

Loraine and her late husband, Graeme, arrived in Alice Springs in 1962 when the population was roughly 2,500 and the Territory was teaching South Australian education. They settled in the Red Centre and raised a family, and after nine years Loraine returned to teaching.

Loraine taught at Braitling Primary School and later became principal. She was the first principal of Sadadeen school, and many Central Australians remember her from when they were students themselves or as parents of students.

Loraine remained a true believer in the value of education and knowledge. She put her years of training to good use, encouraging young and old to continually learn. Loraine worked her way up through the ranks becoming a superintendent within the Department of Education.

Loraine's love for and dedication to the Red Centre was unwavering, giving back whenever she could, always involved and always wanting to preserve the good and improve where necessary.

In 1988 Loraine became an alderman—as they were known back then—on the Alice Springs Town Council, a position she obtained with the belief that she could reflect the voices of families and the community. As her daughter, Michelle, said, 'One of the values mum believed in strongly was that we all deserve to be heard, to have a voice and that people should be able to participate in decision-making that affected their lives and wellbeing.'

Loraine was certainly not shy about living her values and having a greater voice. She vied for the seat of Braitling in 1994 to replace the then retiring Roger Vale. Loraine's enthusiasm for more women in politics was undeniable. She said:

> *There is no doubt in my mind that increased participation in politics can help to improve social, economic, legal and cultural conditions for women.*

Loraine implored more women to have a go, and she offered this advice in her maiden speech:

> *I commend to them the 3 Cs - courage, commitment and communication. Courage to take a risk and have a go, commitment that will give them the determination and passion needed and communication to get their message across.*

Even at the early stage of her political career, she gave wise advice to those from all sides to follow her in politics. She inspired many women across the public service, politics and business, but she was determined not to be stereotyped as wanting to pursue women-only matters.

Loraine set out to equally represent her constituency, and her passion for Central Australia was always present. She was passionate in her support for Alice Springs, the electorate of Braitling and in many other issues close to her heart.

As a member of parliament Loraine is remembered fondly for her considered and practical approach to parliamentary debate. As Speaker of the House she made her mark not just for introducing the sin-bin, but for being Speaker from 1997 until 1999 and again from 2001 to 2005.

At the first ever sittings in Alice Springs, held to celebrate the 25th anniversary of self-government, Loraine told parliament:

> *We are Centralians and, although we are Centralians, we are also proud to be Territorians. We need to bear in mind that the Territory parliament is for everyone—every Territorian—not just for the people who can access it very quickly in Darwin.*

Throughout her life, Loraine championed Alice Springs and Central Australia, from the construction of the Convention Centre to her passionate support of the then Alice–Darwin railway project. In 2000 she proudly escorted Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip on their visit to Alice Springs Desert Park to meet school students first in their fields and many locals.

Loraine retired from politics on 12 June 2008, but that did not slow her down from contributing to her beloved community. Loraine supported the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, was on the Hartley Street School committee, attended Probus meetings on a regular basis, and was involved with National Seniors and U3A at the 50+ club.

Her former electorate officer and good friend, Robyn Van Dok, remembers Loraine as, 'a good Centralian resident helping where she could'—attending events, lending a hand at fundraisers and being a voice of experience, knowledge and local media. Loraine's contributions and character are best expressed by her daughter, Michelle, who said, 'Mum was, at her heart, a Territorian and a proud Centralian. The Northern Territory shaped her life, her character and the opportunities she gave in return through service, leadership and countless acts of quiet generosity, many of which never became known beyond the people she helped.'

Loraine will be dearly missed by her family and friends. Thank you for letting us pay tribute today to Loraine, a true Territorian, albeit born somewhere else, who lived and fulfilled her service to Central Australia and the wider Northern Territory. May she rest in peace.

**Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Territory women have played a powerful role in our community and our Northern Territory parliament since self-government. Loraine Braham was one such woman, whose contribution to our community is indelible and enduring.

Trailblazer, pioneer, forthright, fierce, decent—these are all descriptions that remain the legacy of Ms Braham. Like so many Australians from southern states, Ms Braham was drawn to the Territory by work and the promise of opportunity.

I do not know how long Ms Braham intended to stay in the Territory when she first arrived with her husband, Graeme, but I doubt she pictured herself as the first female member of the Northern Territory parliament from Central Australia, or the first woman to be elected as the Speaker of the NT parliament when she first arrived. I doubt she intended to fall in love with Alice Springs so much that she saw out the rest of her days in Central Australia.

Her story is so much like many other Territorians who came for an opportunity and stayed for a lifetime. The beauty and uniqueness of this place gets into your bones and does not let go. I think it is fair to say that Ms Braham and I have come from very different political standpoints, but it is interesting to reflect on our similar trajectory into politics from teaching and a love of education.

While I undertook my studies in Brisbane, Ms Braham trained as a teacher in Melbourne, where she married Graeme. They had a brief stint opal mining in South Australia before heading north to Alice Springs, where Ms Braham took on her first teaching role at the Braitling Primary School. She later became principal at Braitling, then the first principal at Sadadeen Primary School in 1983. These were critical roles where she no doubt honed her leadership skills and fostered an even greater love for Central Australia.

Ms Braham always gave so much of herself to her community and her public life. That passion and sense of service saw her first enter the political fray as an alderman of the Alice Springs Town Council in 1988.

Ms Braham's deep love for the Alice Springs community was what drove her to enter public life on a different level. She carried that care and compassion with her when she ran for and won the seat of Braitling in 1994. Ms Braham went on to become a Cabinet minister, taking on a number of portfolios, including Housing, Local Government, Aboriginal Development and—suitably—Central Australia.

In her role as Minister for Central Australia she was involved in negotiations for the construction of the Adelaide–Darwin railway, oversaw the Alice in 10 urban renewable projects and successfully advocated for the construction of the Alice Springs Convention Centre.

Although I did not cross paths with Ms Braham personally, what is clear was her strength; she was an independent thinker who always put her community first.

Ms Braham held her seat until 2008. It is fair to say that her time in parliament would have had its tumultuous moments, particularly when the CLP did not preselect her in 2000. This saw Ms Braham serve out the rest of her parliamentary career as an Independent—a position she seemed to have enjoyed and highly valued.

One of Ms Braham's career highlights was serving with distinction as the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. In her farewell speech to the NT Parliament, Ms Braham reflected on what an honour it was to represent the Northern Territory on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). Ms Braham said her trips to meet with Speakers from other Commonwealth jurisdictions always left her with a deep appreciation of how fortunate we are to live in this beautiful place we call home, the Northern Territory.

During her time as Speaker Ms Braham pioneered what we call, as the Deputy Chief Minister said, the sin-bin, allowing her to evict fellow parliamentarians from the Chamber for one hour rather than a whole day. What a useful option that has proven to be. I am sure every Speaker and Deputy Speaker may agree, and I am sure that the Member for Araluen, our current Speaker, would agree that it is a useful tool.

Although no current member of the Northern Territory parliament was here during Ms Braham's time, I am sure many of you remember her legacy and her time in parliament, particularly taking parliament to Alice Springs, which she strongly advocated for. It was certainly an undertaking to hold parliament there, but I know how strongly she felt about taking democracy to her people of Central Australia. I have heard the Member for Gwoja say, 'Bring back parliament to Alice Springs' quite a few times over the last 10 years.

Throughout her career Ms Braham remained a staunch supporter of schools and an advocate for teachers, principals and the staff who make up the education community. Ms Braham never wavered from that support, and as an educator I thank her for that work. As I said earlier, I feel a strong connection with the former Member for Braitling, although our paths rarely crossed. The strong passion for schools, teachers and education that drives and guides me through my career clearly remained a huge driver for Ms Braham in her esteemed career in this parliament.

I am not sure whether there is something special in the Alice Springs water to produce such strong, independent-minded women as Ms Braham, who represented her community with fierce love and advocacy. What I do know is that Ms Braham was an individual who will be remembered for her integrity, decency and contributions to the entire Northern Territory. To put it in Ms Braham's own words, she lived a fruitful and full life.

Vale, Ms Braham. We hope you rest in peace.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it is once again an honour to talk about Loraine Braham, the former Member for Braitling, former minister and the former Speaker of the House.

I was looking through the booklet from her State Memorial service held on 23 April. There is a stack of photos of Loraine surrounded by blokes: male members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Loraine was

a feature; she was one of the few women of this Assembly during her time, and she held her own. She was incredible.

When I think about Loraine, my thoughts are from before I became a member of parliament. In the early days of my becoming an elected member, I used to look at Loraine Braham in awe. She impressed and terrified me. She was someone I totally looked up to, as she was a leader of the Alice Springs community.

There is a photo in this booklet of the Queen's visit to Alice Springs in 2000. I remember it clearly because the Queen was wearing a beautiful soft-lime suit with a matching hat, and I was impressed, as she looked beautiful. The official car, with the Queen, drove through the Todd Mall and they pulled up outside the Flynn church. The Queen stepped out of the car, and Loraine was there to meet her. The photo is of that occasion. My husband and I were standing in the crowd with our son Harry, who was on Craig's shoulders, looking at the Queen and Loraine Braham. That memory will always stick in my mind.

Loraine was always there throughout my time in Alice Springs; she has only just left us. She was a woman for whom I had enormous respect, before I even knew her. She was a standout, always committed to our community. She went everywhere and was involved in everything. She was one of our elected representatives, both on council and then within the Assembly.

There are some people who, when they walk into a room, change it, not because they demand attention or because they seek it, but because of the quiet authority they carry. They give a sense of, 'here is someone who knows who she is, what she stands for and what she came to do'. Loraine was always one of those people.

I stand here today acutely aware of what I, our community, this parliament and every woman who has come after her in public life, owe her. Before any of us could follow a path Loraine had to build it, which she did. These photos are proof of that. She paved the way for women and men to aspire, achieve and take on leadership roles—like she did for many years.

She came to Alice Springs, as has been mentioned, not as a politician but as a teacher. She reached the pinnacle of her career as an educator. She opened the Sadadeen Primary School in 1983 and was the first headmaster, which is incredible. I have had a lot to do with Sadadeen, as it used to be in my electorate. Loraine was there to greet the first kids who came through the door. She was also headmistress of the Braitling Primary School for many years.

It is interesting that we all come to politics in different ways and at different times of our lives. Loraine came into parliament as a professional woman at the height of her career with all that breadth of knowledge and experience. Usually, during that stage of history, women had to do that. They did not get anywhere easily. You had to prove yourself and demonstrate that you were more than worthy. Women crawled; they did not get up and run like the men did, generally speaking, in those days. We do not have to do that as much now. Loraine proved herself as a capable, competent, professional woman and then entered politics. That is interesting to reflect on.

Fortunately, these days people enter politics with little to no experience in a professional area or even substantially in a work area. That is the nature of politics; we come from all different backgrounds, and that is embraced now. In those days it was not. Loraine was a woman who had to prove herself worthy, and she got there; she got her toe in the door.

She first entered council in 1988 and was there until 1994. That is where she learned the craft of being a politician. I did that too, I entered politics as an alderman, and I used to say that during that time I developed my bulletproof vest. I think there is a lot to be said for that sort of track or route into the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. The Member for Nightcliff talked about that last night too. How is your bulletproof vest going on day 3?

Loraine did not race into politics and the top job; she did it incrementally. That was the sign of the times.

She was the first woman from Central Australia to sit in this Assembly. That was in 1994; as I said at the memorial service, to me that seems like a couple of years ago. I know that it was not, but it seems in recent history that things started to change. Loraine was a trailblazer; you can use all those sorts of words, but she actually was the first woman from Central Australia. That would have been such a heavy weight for her in so many different ways—leaving her family, like we all do, and coming to Darwin to do a lot of the business that she had to undertake, not to mention the burden of the glass ceiling and the limitations that were put on women in 1994 and before then.

She was a trailblazer, and I have been fortunate enough to walk some of the same ground she has walked, to represent Alice Springs on council and in this parliament and to sit in the Speaker's chair. I will tell you with great honesty that every time I have done so, I have been aware that Loraine was the first person from Central Australia to do that.

She was the first female Speaker of the Northern Territory, and other women have been since. She executed her role with great authority and distinction. As I said in my speech at the memorial service, Loraine was no show pony. She was not a show-off; she did not do things to attract attention. She was genuine and direct. She treated her role as a business and always kept in mind that she was serving the community. She was the epitome of what a public servant should be.

She served as Speaker twice. I do not know whether anyone else has done that. To come in and out of that role twice, from 1997 to 1999 and again from 2001 to 2005, reflects that people wanted her back and respected her, and that she did a good job. She presided with fairness; she was not partisan in the Chair. She was firm when she needed to be. Those who sat in this Chamber during that time will tell you that she could bring order to a rowdy house with nothing more than a look, which is something that I am working on. She treated people with respect and fairness.

When Loraine was disendorsed by the Country Liberal Party in 2000 in circumstances that I think were highly controversial, perhaps questionable, she faced a choice; she could have left, gone back to teaching or done something different, but she did not. She remained focused on her career and commitment to her community of Alice Springs and seat of Braitling. It was a sign of her loyalty, focus and intention toward doing what she needed to do. She had an independent spirit and refused to let politics get in the way of what she wanted to be—a loyal public servant to her people.

I wanted to say something about Loraine as a woman in public life. She was not loud about her authority; she used her power and position with great measure and integrity. People could see that. She inspired people—men and women, but I think she always inspired young women and girls because of how successful, kind and compassionate she was.

I valued my relationship with Loraine; I looked up to her. We got to know each other and became friends. When I became an Independent in 2015 that triggered something in common. She would pop in to see me at my office regularly for her business. She was involved in lots of community groups. She came in to do printing, and we assisted her with lots of different roles that she had in different groups, which was beyond politics.

She also came in to chat with me, which I loved. I wanted her to tell me what to do, advise and help me at times, but that was not Loraine. She was measured in what she said, but she communicated enough to show that she cared and was interested in what I was doing and how I was going.

Loraine's life knew deep personal loss. She lost her beloved husband Graeme in 2003. I remember that clearly; it was just before I became an alderman on council, and I remember thinking about how difficult that was for her when she was Speaker—losing her husband in full public exposure. She carried herself with extraordinary strength and dignity throughout that time.

I asked Michelle or Robyn—who was her electorate officer for many years—a few weeks ago when I saw her, 'Did your mother take time off during that period?' The answer was, 'No, not much'. She took little time off during that period, grieving her husband so publicly. We all know how hard that can be. Loraine was focused; she pushed through, prioritised her work and got on with it, like many of us do in hard times.

Graeme was the man who had shared her great adventure north—they travelled up to Alice Springs all those years ago in the 1960s—and who supported every step of her public life. She carried his absence with quiet strength for the rest of her life.

In May 2023 Loraine lost her son, which was heartbreaking for her and the family. Peter's passing was terrible for Loraine. Peter's daughter, Samantha, is here today.

We had a lot in common in a bizarre way.

In her later years Loraine was troubled by a decision on whether to stay in Alice Springs or go to Adelaide to be with her family. One of the last conversations I had with her was her asking, 'What do I do? I love Alice Springs. Alice Springs is my home, and I have lived here forever.'—she had for more than 60 years—'I want to be with Michelle and the kids, but I want to stay here.' I think a lot of people go through that in

Alice Springs, and a lot of people in the Territory. The kids leave and what do you do? But Loraine stayed in Alice Springs; it was her home. She was a true Centralian.

We were blessed to have Loraine for many reasons, not just for her role in this place—although, not to minimise that either—but her contribution across the Alice Springs community was profound. She was one of us; she served us, and we loved her for it.

To her family, Michelle and all who loved her, please know that the Alice Springs community holds your mother—your grandmother—in the highest esteem. She was a colleague, a leader and a model of what public service at its best should look like. She leaves behind more than a political legacy; she leaves behind a standard, a way of being in this role—committed, fearless, grounded and always facing towards the people she was sent here to serve.

Loraine was a woman of absolute substance. May she rest in peace.

Vale, Loraine Braham.

**Mr YAN (Treasurer):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to acknowledge Loraine's family here with us today, who have travelled up from Adelaide: Michelle, Sam and David.

I pay tribute to the life and service of Loraine Margaret Braham, a pioneering Territorian whose passing at the age of 87 marks the end of a remarkable chapter in the history of this Assembly. We heard that Loraine was a trailblazer in every sense of the word. There were all those firsts for her: the first woman from Central Australia elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly—what an achievement that was—the first woman to serve as Speaker of this House and the first female minister from Central Australia to sit in a Cabinet. Those are some pretty big firsts. Everybody is right; Loraine paved the way for many to have the courage to stand up and become part of this place. Those achievements opened doors for women across the Territory and reshaped what leadership really meant and looked like in the Territory.

Before entering politics, Loraine devoted herself to education and community services. I will always remember that as a kid, the most feared person at school was the principal. Loraine served with distinction as a principal of schools in Central Australia. After moving to Alice Springs in the 1960s, she taught at Braitling and later became principal. In 1983, she became the first headmaster of Sadadeen Primary School.

Her influence as an educator went well beyond the classroom. She shaped generations of young Territorians and strengthened the fabric of our community in Alice Springs. I hear so many stories of adults who met Loraine; she was either their teacher or headmaster, and she remembered all of them.

Like many people, Loraine's entry into public life began with the Alice Springs Town Council. She reflected her strong belief in local service and civic responsibility through that role. In 1994 she was elected to this Assembly as the Member for Braitling. If memory serves me correctly, through the stories I am told, Loraine was in the same electorate office that I am in now. I am not sure, but that is what I have been told. If those walls could talk, there would be some interesting stories.

She made history and brought the voice of Central Australia to this House, informed by a deep local knowledge and lived experience in Alice Springs. In 1997 Loraine again broke new ground when she was elected the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the first woman to ever hold that position. She carried that role with firmness, fairness and dignity, earning respect from members on all sides of the Chamber.

I think the most interesting thing is the sin-bin that Loraine introduced to toss out members for an hour. I sit here and think about where we would currently be as an Assembly with Loraine as the Speaker; how many of us would she have thrown out for an hour? It would be interesting to see.

A few years later, in another first, she entered Cabinet as the first female minister from Central Australia, holding portfolios, including Housing and Aboriginal Development. During her ministerial tenure, she was closely associated with major infrastructure projects. We have heard about the Alice Springs–Darwin Railway and the convention centre in Central Australia. These projects continue to shape the Territory's economic and social development into the future.

Loraine's political career was marked not only by achievement but resilience. In 2001 she faced a significant challenge when she was disendorsed by the CLP. Undeterred, in Loraine's fashion, she stood again and was re-elected as an Independent in that seat. Following that election, the incoming government invited her to

continue as Speaker of the House. That is an extraordinary mark of respect, and that is the respect she commanded across political lines on both sides of the House. She served in that role until 2005.

Those who knew Loraine knew her to be forthright, principled and socially conservative, yet always courteous and respectful in her dealings with others. I have had many discussions with Loraine over the years at the Sunday markets. She was giving me advice—although I think it was more of an instruction—on how we should be doing things. I always treasured those discussions with Loraine; she was a cracker.

She was often underestimated by her opponents—to their own loss—but she possessed a quiet determination and an ability to prevail when it mattered most. Above all, Loraine was a proud Territorian who loved Alice Springs and made it her home for more than 60 years. Her commitment to Central Australia and to the people she served never wavered, and that was clear from the talks we had at the Sunday markets. She was always passionate about the development of Central Australia—what we could be doing, where we should be going and the opportunities that existed for us.

On behalf of this Assembly, I extend our deepest condolences to Michelle, the family and all those who mourn her passing. Loraine's legacy will endure in the institutions she helped to shape, the barriers she broke down and the many lives that she touched through her education, leadership and service to the Territory.

May Loraine rest in peace.

Motion agreed to.

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

**Madam SPEAKER:** Our dear, Loraine Braham. May she rest in peace.

I thank honourable members for their contributions to this motion. The Assembly will suspend for morning tea with family and friends.

The Assembly suspended.

**APPROPRIATION (2026–2027) BILL**
**Serial 63**
**TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 64**

Continued from 6 May 2026.

**Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture):** Madam Speaker, I continue my speech from yesterday.

We are investing more than $135m in the 2026–27 budget to support disability services and programs in the Northern Territory. About one in eight Territorians, approximately 31,800 people, live with disability. More than half (51.4%) of NDIS participants in the Northern Territory are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared with 7.9% nationally.

The Northern Territory Government funds about one-third of NDIS costs in the Northern Territory, a contribution of about $125m each year, and is committed to making the NDIS work well for Territorians with disability. This includes supporting NDIS participants to access their plan and ensuring more choice of providers.

Our government is committed to improving the lives of all Territorians living with disability. The 10-year Northern Territory Disability Strategy sets out how we will meet our vision for an inclusive Territory where people with disability are valued, respected and can contribute to community no matter where they live. The strategy guides our approach to the development and delivery of services, policies and programs for people with disability. We look forward to releasing the second action plan 2025–29 under the strategy this year, signifying our government's ongoing commitment to better support and improve the lives of Territorians with disability.

Work continues with other Northern Territory Government agencies and our state, territory and Australian Government colleagues to progress a large and complex reform agenda. This includes responding to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, the review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the implementation of foundational supports in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Government signed the Thriving Kids bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth in February 2026, securing $34m in joint funding over five years to deliver Thriving Kids in the Northern Territory. When it comes to that agreement, $20m is the investment from the Northern Territory Government and $14m is from the feds, with another $6m from the feds that they are keeping for the national initiative, which we are yet to find out more information on.

Thriving Kids will support children up to the age of eight years with developmental delay and/or autism who have low-to-moderate support needs, as well as their families, carers and kin, by providing earlier access to quality supports. Early support can improve children's development and long-term outcomes. The first services of the program will commence on 1 October 2026, as per the current plan. Services will progressively expand across the Territory, with full rollout by 1 January 2028.

Some of the challenges we face are Commonwealth changes coming to the NDIS that we are yet to get further information on. That impacts some of our work, because we cannot plan things in advance without having the full information from the Commonwealth—especially with its recent announcement that 160,000 of the almost 760,000 people under the NDIS scheme will be removed by 2030. Concerns have been raised by many in our community and the disability sector, and we are waiting to get further information from the Commonwealth. We are working with all state and territory ministers to get that information and provide joint advocacy for people with disability across Australia.

Children aged eight years and under with permanent and significant disability, developmental delay and/or autism who have substantially reduced functional capacity or high-support needs will continue to be supported through the NDIS.

We continue to coordinate with and support the Northern Territory Disability Advisory Committee to provide vital advice and feedback to me as the Minister for Disability on key issues impacting Territorians with disability. The committee also oversees and monitors the implementation of the strategy and associated action plans. The committee membership reflects the diversity of people from across the Territory, including people with lived experience of physical, intellectual and psychosocial disability.

I look forward to hosting the Northern Territory Disability Inclusion Awards on 25 September this year. The awards provide a wonderful opportunity to recognise and celebrate exceptional individuals, organisations, businesses and programs dedicated to improving lives of people with disability and fostering inclusion across the Northern Territory.

In the Youth, Seniors and Equality portfolio, we continue to invest in programs and services which celebrate, recognise and create opportunities for young people, women, men, seniors and LGBTQAI+ communities to be heard and actively engaged in the community.

For seniors in 2026–27 we will see the development of a new Seniors strategy that will be aligned to our work priorities of restoring the Territory lifestyle, rebuilding the economy and reducing crime. Our government is committed to strengthening awareness and prevention of older persons' abuse and improving the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all senior Territorians. We will continue to fund grant programs totalling more than $300,000 to support initiatives that combat older persons' abuse, including recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and services and events to help educate, prevent and respond to older persons' abuse.

In 2026–27 we will provide $69,000 in Seniors Month grant funding to organisations so they can celebrate our seniors. We will continue to work with COTA NT to develop and distribute the Seniors Month calendar across the Territory.

Our government will continue to support the Minister's Advisory Council for Senior Territorians, and I look forward to more advice on seniors' issues from members who bring skills, knowledge and experience to this important advisory forum. Recognising this important service, we will continue to provide funding of more than $255,000 per annum to COTA NT until 2028–29 for it to deliver peak body services, activities promoting healthy ageing and events, such as Grandparents Day.

COTA NT also manages the Northern Territory Seniors Card program on behalf of the Northern Territory Government, overseeing membership administration and business partnerships so seniors can be provided every opportunity to save on cost-of-living expenses.

The Northern Territory Government is continuing to support members of the NT Concession Scheme and the Seniors Recognition Scheme facing critical cost-of-living pressures. The NT Concession Scheme provides eligible members with concessions on a range of essential goods and services to assist with living

expenses. As of 31 March 2026 there were 16,464 Northern Territory Concession Scheme members. As of 31 March 2026, there were 18,202 NT Seniors Recognition Scheme members, representing 74% of eligible senior Territorians. That is $7.7m put directly back into our local economy. This is practical support that eases pressure on hip pockets, supports local businesses, backs our valued seniors and helps protect the Territory lifestyle we all know, value and love. In 2026–27 the NT Concession and Recognition Unit will continue to increase membership to ensure all eligible Territorians are aware of and accessing these schemes.

I move to the Youth portfolio. Supporting and celebrating young people is a part of our Finocchiaro CLP government's commitment to restoring our unique Territory lifestyle, building vibrant and connected communities where young people feel valued and confident about their future.

Through the Northern Territory Youth Strategy 2023–2033 we seek to build safer, healthier and more connected communities for young people. The Youth Round Table and NT Youth Week will continue as flagship initiatives aimed at empowering NT young people, giving them the ability to influence and advise government regarding issues that are important to them or impact their lives.

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**VISITORS**
**MacKillop Catholic College**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Years 10 and 11 Legal Studies students from MacKillop Catholic College accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr CHARLS:** The Youth portfolio and Youth Round Table is an area that I enjoy as part of my role. Young people provide genuine feedback, with no filter, which I can take back to my colleagues. We want to hear about what matters to them.

The Regional Youth Services program invests more than $8.5m for core after-hours youth services, youth activities during school holidays, prosocial youth activities and support services in Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Darwin, Palmerston and East Arnhem.

We will finalise the building of the Northern Suburbs Youth Hub at Leanyer Recreation precinct in the next year. The purpose-built facility will provide engaging spaces for young people and their families to gather, undertake activities and access services. This will be the permanent location for the youth hub, which is currently operating as SHAK from Sanderson High School.

We are developing a new gender equality strategy for the Northern Territory and have recently completed comprehensive consultations. Through the strategy this government will seek to break down barriers that limit opportunity, challenge the drivers of gender-based violence and build a Northern Territory where respect and equality are the norm.

Through community grants and sponsorships, we are investing $884,600 in programs and activities that seek to address gender inequalities experienced by Territorians and support work that improves health and wellbeing, engagement in community, economic security and participation in leadership opportunities for everyone. This includes our Men's Places Grants, gender equity general grants and the minister for Equality scholarships that support higher education and TAFE students to achieve their academic aspirations. We will continue to provide annual funding to support the important work of the Northern Territory Working Women's Centre.

Within my Sport portfolio, 2025–26 was a huge year for sports in the Northern Territory and in 2026–27 we will build on this. Our government had a budget allocation of $4.23m for 2025–26 to support regional and remote communities in delivering community-focused sport and recreation activities, emphasising local workforce development and community-driven programming. The department has further invested $7.7m in support of our peak sporting bodies, industry support organisations and active recreation program organisations to strengthen the industry, support participation and ensure vibrant community sport and active recreation can take place in a safe and inclusive manner.

Funding to peak sporting bodies supported the participation of 43,812 full active members; 39,667 program participants; 57,549 school program participants; and 85,751 event participants across the 16 regions of

Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Barkly, Central Desert, West Arnhem, East Arnhem, Gove, Groote, Katherine, MacDonnell, Roper Gulf, Tennant Creek, Tiwi Islands, Vic Daly and West Daly.

Of the 43,812 full active members, a total of 13,893 across peak sporting bodies were identified as from a diverse background, including 10,726 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants; 2,769 people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and 398 participants with physical or intellectual disability.

Our government is currently preparing for Supercars, NRL and AFL matches, international cricket and MXGP Motocross championships. Aren't we all looking forward to the return of the Test cricket to the Northern Territory in August 2026, after 23 long years?

The Tracy Village Sporting Precinct redevelopment master plan has been completed and approved by the Tracy Village Social and Sports Club and peak sporting bodies that are members of the project control group. Our CLP government is supporting the project through a $3m election commitment. I also thank the members for Casuarina and Wanguri for taking this as a joint election commitment and making sure we deliver that to the community.

As at 31 March 2026, 18,033 urban Sport and 3,788 Learn to Swim vouchers have been redeemed, representing an investment of $2.2m in cost-of-living support to families. That money goes back into the pockets of families struggling with the cost of living. A total of 315 urban Sport Voucher and 15 Learn to Swim activity providers support the redemption of vouchers in the regions of Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine, Litchfield and Nhulunbuy.

The NT Sports Academy Open Futures Program as at 31 March 2026 has supported 389 athletes. This includes 269 athletes in Greater Darwin, 34 in Alice Springs, 33 in Katherine and 53 in Nhulunbuy. Futures 2 and Futures 2032 programs have supported 40 talent identified able-bodied athletes. This includes 31 athletes in Greater Darwin and nine in the Alice Springs region.

Nine nationally categorised athletes are supported across a number of sports. The all abilities program continues to support 140 athletes living with disability. This includes 81 athletes in the Greater Darwin region and 59 in the Alice Springs region. The para Futures 2 and the Futures 2032 programs have supported a further 27 talent identified athletes living with disability. This includes 22 in greater Darwin, four in Alice Springs and one in Katherine.

Moving to arts and culture, I am privileged to be Minister for Arts with leadership responsibility for a strong and vibrant arts and creative sector. In 2026–27 this government will invest $38.5m to grow and develop the Territory's arts and creative sectors and connect communities to the Territory's unique stories and history through our libraries and archived collections.

Our CLP government will continue to invest $8m through the Arts Grants Program to activate arts and cultural activities that support thriving communities enriched by vibrant arts, culture and creativity to restore our Territory lifestyle. We are providing long-term support and stability for 30 leading arts organisations, with $25m invested over five-year agreements that commenced from January 2025 to develop our creative and cultural economy and support community participation in the arts.

This government continues to celebrate and grow the creative talent of the Northern Territory through the annual Meeting of Arts Professionals business essentials conference and showcases excellence at the NT Performing Arts Awards. The 2026 NT Performing Arts Awards will see the introduction of the Ted Egan Regional Award, recognising excellence in regional and remote performing arts practice.

As a Centralian, I am sure you are excited about this, Madam Speaker. I had the opportunity to go to his house and meet with his wife, Nerys, and share this information. She was very excited and had her granddaughter with her. It was a privilege to visit Nerys Evans in Alice Springs, and I think this award is great recognition of a person who loved the Northern Territory so much.

I look forward to launching the inaugural five-year action plan of the NT Arts Strategy 2034 in June this year. It is a roadmap designed to guide and energise the Northern Territory's arts and creative industries using practical actions that grow the arts, support jobs and inspire the Territory. The five-year action plan contributes directly to key Northern Territory Government priorities:

- restoring the Territory lifestyle by increasing regional access and participation in arts and culture to foster social inclusion and strengthen health, wellbeing and education outcomes through creative engagement

- rebuilding the economy through expanding the employment and leadership pathways in the creative industries, growing the local creative economy and supporting complementary industries such as tourism

- reducing crime by expanding access to arts participation for marginalised and at-risk communities—particularly young people—to build identity, belonging and resilience through creative expression.

This year I will establish a ministerial advisory committee for Arts. This committee will provide strategic and reasonably informed advice on issues, opportunities and challenges affecting the Northern Territory's arts, culture and creative industries. The committee supports implementation of the Northern Territory Arts Strategy 2034. Membership will consist of up to 12 members, including six leading arts organisations and six community members appointed by the Minister for Arts.

In 2025–26 the Northern Territory Government invested $10.7m to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, which was an increase of $2.5m from the previous year. This funding supports MAGNT to activate its seven facilities across Darwin and Central Australia and engage Territorians in our rich historical, cultural and scientific collections. We continue to fund the Araluen Art Centre, which operates as the cultural visual and performing arts hub in Alice Springs.

During 2025–26 Araluen hosted 13 visual arts exhibitions, including the biannual Alice Prize and Desert Mob exhibitions. During 2026–27 Araluen plans on hosting 14 visual arts exhibitions, including the Vincent Lingiari Art Award curated by the First Nations Warumungu and Luritja curator, Kelli Cole. This annual prize is initiated by Desart and supported by the Central Land Council. The prize will be on display at Araluen while Desert Mob is in the Araluen galleries during September and October 2026.

In 2025–26 the Northern Territory Government continued to support the $30.45m Arts Trail Gallery Extension Program, and the completion of the $10m upgrade to the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Cultural Centre in Tennant Creek. The centre reopened to the public in April 2026 and the official opening celebration is planned for 9 July 2026. Upgrades have been completed in Katherine, Gunbalanya and Gapuwiyak, supporting arts and cultural activity and enhancing cultural tourism in our regions.

Budget 2026–27 provides $4m to complete the design and construction of upgrades to the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala and the Maningrida Arts and Culture centre and museum to support strong culture and art practises that can be shared with visitors and the wider community.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr CHARLS:** Library & Archives NT is the premier public research library and archival organisation of the Northern Territory, dedicated to connection with communities and being a trusted steward of Territory history. In addition to providing services to the public through three facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs, Library & Archives provides support to 31 public libraries across the Northern Territory, including 48 community wi-fi services across remote and regional areas. The 2026–27 budget is investing $11m in Library & Archives NT.

I will reflect on the $20m community infrastructure improvement announcements made yesterday. This is exciting; it will continue to improve our lifestyle by supporting community sport recreation and cultural infrastructure in Darwin and Palmerston. This funding will deliver important upgrades to urban parks, playgrounds and footpaths, making them safer and more accessible. Improvements to community halls and sporting facilities will help boost youth engagement.

The multi-phase rollout will support several venues with sports said to benefit—AFL, cricket, soccer, hockey, rugby league and rugby union—as well as public spaces. This investment highlights the CLP government's commitment to provide certainty for local clubs and community groups, ensuring reliable, high-quality spaces for every Territorian to live happier and healthier lives.

This budget is about just that—everyday Territorians. It is about making life easier now while building a stronger future for the Territory. We know cost pressures are real; families are feeling it, seniors are watching every dollar, and households are making tough choices. That is why this budget delivers more than $290m in concession subsidies and targeted household support—practical help where it is needed most.

Across my portfolios that support is already being felt. Through our Sports and Learn to Swim vouchers we are putting money back into family budgets, with over $2.2m in direct support helping more than 18,000 Northern Territorians stay active, connected and engaged.

Through the Seniors Recognition Scheme more than 18,000 seniors are receiving direct support, with $7.7m flowing back into our local economy. This is practical support, helping with power bills, groceries and everyday costs.

This budget is about more than relief; it is about safer communities, stronger services and a Territory lifestyle worth protecting. It continues our investment in community safety because when people feel safe families thrive, businesses grow and communities move forward. It invests in the services Territorians rely on—health, education, sport, arts and community infrastructure. It does so responsibly, restoring discipline to the Territory's finances while continuing to invest where it matters most.

This budget backs Territorians; it supports households, strengthens communities and builds confidence in the future. When we invest in people we strengthen the Territory; that is exactly what this budget does.

**Mr GUYULA (Mulka):** Madam Speaker, as the Member for Mulka, I look at every budget through the lens of remote and regional communities. How does this budget connect to the country out there and to the people of the bush? Is this another Darwin-based budget or does it share the spending across all areas of the Northern Territory? Does it address the highest needs in our communities, does this budget listen to all people of the Northern Territory?

Then I also apply the Closing the Gap agreement. I ask which parts of this budget reflect priority reform number one; this is the most important part of the Closing the Gap agreement because it focuses on partnership and shared decision-making. Which part of this budget shows funding going into areas that have been negotiated through partnership and shared decision-making? Is this another budget that says, 'No, we think we know what is best for you'? Or is this a budget that shows spending on community-led solutions?

I then ask whether the budget supports the goals of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. Is this a budget that will reduce incarceration rates? Is this a budget that will bring positive change for Aboriginal people of the NT, or will it bring more heartache?

When I apply these questions to this budget it is not surprising that I am disappointed. As the Treasurer said, 'this is a law-and-order budget'. It continues to build jails and focus on punitive punishments—the same as the last budget—and there are a lot of things that this budget fails to deliver. When I look at the remote area regions, I cannot see increased spending for the region of Mulka. However, I can see revoted infrastructure works for the Central Arnhem Highway, the Galiwinku aerodrome, the Gove District Hospital and the Nhulunbuy cyclone shelter?

I understand that some consultation has begun relating to work on the Central Arnhem Highway and Ramingining Link Road, which is important and much-needed work. I hope that means these roads will see significant work during this Dry Season because that work has been very slow.

I cannot see new or increased spending of cost-of-living relief in this budget. Back-to-School and sports vouchers are not new schemes. We need more relief in remote communities, where fuel prices are up to $4.40 a litre, and all our food, air travel and essential items increased in price due to freight and fuel costs. Airnorth added a fuel levy to every ticket due to these rising costs. What does this budget provide to help with these rising costs?

I have also raised the issue of emergency patient retrieval for north-east Arnhem Land over many years and many budgets. Our homelands have hundreds of people living in them as permanent residents. These homelands often require a single-engine plane or a helicopter for emergency patient retrievals, and this is mostly not available, as CareFlight aircrafts are based in Darwin.

There are many low-cost solutions in the region, and I hope the Health minister has addressed this critical problem somewhere in this budget.

We also need to see Health infrastructure upgrades to government-owned buildings in our remote regions. Run-down clinics desperately need to be upgraded. The town of Nhulunbuy needs government support to ensure that residents of Gove have access to general practice doctors. This government needs to be doing more to support the region as it transitions away from mining. I cannot see anything clearly in this budget dedicated to the transition.

Some people were upset when I said that the government has blood on its hands in relation to deaths in north-east Arnhem Land communities. In that moment, I felt enormous grief and frustration because of the loss of my *gaminyarr* (my grandson, through kinship terms). Truth remains that while somebody chose to enter a fight, made the decision personally and will be held accountable for it, they still belong to a community that is completely under-resourced to manage the significant issues that arise. Poverty, drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues, physical health issues, constant and ongoing grief from early deaths, overcrowding, disempowerment of elders and lack of training and pathway options are some of the underlying issues we need resources to address.

The *NT News* quoted the Chief Minister stating:

*The Law and Justice Group was present in the community at the time …*

This was at the time that my *gaminyarr* passed away in Milingimbi. The Chief Minister was mistaken, as Milingimbi does not have a law and justice group. Galiwinku, where another young man was killed a few months ago, also does not have a law and justice group. None of the communities in Gove have law and justice group.

Despite a government commitment to 20 law and justice groups by 2027, there are only five law and justice groups in the NT. We are fortunate to have a law and justice group in Ramingining, but the commitment from this government to the existing five groups is weak.

I met with the Attorney-General in March, after the death of a man in Galiwinku, asking for her genuine support of law and justice groups in all communities. Clearly, that plea for support has been ignored. Other Aboriginal leaders and I tell her that these groups are needed and are important for our communities to stop the fighting, violence and deaths. It is time for the Attorney-General and the government to listen and to trust that we know what is best for our communities. This is how governments will close the gap.

Many years ago I started asking for resources for community-led solutions, peacekeepers and *raypirri* camps in our homeland towns. Imagine what communities would look like today if governments had listened and employed elders and leaders as daily peacekeepers, working with the community using all the resources they need to get the job done. These solutions proposed to protect our people are dismissed and ignored and, instead, we see government solutions that more jails be built.

The current budget does not provide solutions for Aboriginal communities. Rather, it is a budget that supports creating a prison industry in urban centres—increasing jobs, economy, housing and population in Darwin. Darwin will be the Defence force, security guard, police, and prison officer capital of Australia with guns on buses and in public housing. This punitive focus creates an industry that grows when there is crime.

Commonwealth dollars for Aboriginal disadvantage should be going to Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal-led programs. We should be growing our capacity to solve problems faced in communities. Instead, this money is being put into punitive measures in urban centres.

We need to see investment in early intervention like *raypirri* camps on country.

We also need to see more alternatives to custody like the community-led healing centre in Groote. There is $3.1m in this budget dedicated to Groote. It is not much compared to the spends that will happen in urban centres—$525m for infrastructure in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine. This money could have been used to create programs like the Groote Eylandt healing centre across many large communities, bringing employment, responsibility and success to remote towns.

The record $1.73bn spend for law and order could have easily included funding for more law and justice groups, alternatives to custody facilities and peacekeepers—all within our remote communities—keeping people on country and boosting local employment and projects.

It is not complicated; it is about working in partnership with Aboriginal communities. Come sit with us and create a plan with elders so that we can solve problems.

One key solution to problems we are seeing is to invest in homelands. We must use the $4bn from the Remote Housing agreement for new housing in homeland towns and hub communities. We have homelands with schools, health clinics and several houses that are run down and extremely overcrowded, leaving families to decide who must move away from country to new dysfunctional subdivisions in the bigger hub towns, without any of the protection of their country.

Homelands are the safest camps and places for our people to live. Permanent residency in homelands brings higher school attendance; improved physical, mental and spiritual health; capacity for economic independence; and an ability to live off the land.

Every year that I have been in parliament, the NT Government has committed approximately $40m to homeland towns. It is hardly anything once the money is divided between hundreds of existing homeland towns; it is like chicken feed. Not once have the homeland grants been adjusted to match inflation. Forty million dollars in 2016 bought a lot more than what $40m buys today. The real value of these grants has not been maintained, placing extraordinary pressure on homeland providers and residents.

A critical mistake was made by the NT Government in 2015, and this error needs to be corrected in 2026. Both levels of government need to come together and correct the gross negligence of the Giles–Abbott deal of $155m for our homelands. On that day, all homeland residents were tossed aside; there was no care for the people or the land. The policy was designed to close homeland towns, and the agreement should never have been made. All members of this parliament need to fix this problem. Labor members in this Chamber need to work with this CLP government to bring the federal Labor government back to our homelands.

The budget papers do not have enough details, but there are many questions for Estimates. Remote health funding is reduced. Homeland and town camp funding is reduced. Is there more money for ranger grants? Will bilingual education continue to have the targeted funding that it needs?

It looks like the Aboriginal Interpreter Service has seen an increase in funding, which is good if that is the case.

**Mr PATEL:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time be granted to the Member for Mulka.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr GUYULA:** In the Chamber I have heard much discussion about the number of extreme weather events, but I see no focus on measures to address climate change. When the land speaks, like it did this year, it means it is time to listen, focus on renewables and look after the country before it is too late.

When I look at this budget I can see there is good spending for the NT, but the spending is happening in the wrong places. This is a budget that will create more problems in the long term, because it is failing to get funding to the right places and people for long-term change. This budget is failing everyone because without partnership and shared decision-making, the government cannot create safer communities and everyone will suffer. We are already seeing this outcome.

**Madam SPEAKER:** We are a few minutes away from midday, so unless you have a burning desire to speak for 60 seconds, Member for Daly?

**Mr YOUNG (Daly):** Madam Speaker, why not get it going? The Member for Drysdale has been hanging out for this so I will speak for a minute in reply to the CLP's 2026–27 budget.

As many people have recognised in the House today and over the last few days, it is the responsibility of the government to ensure funding is allocated to the right areas. The lack of funding to our bush, regional and rural communities has been quite disappointing.

I picked up in one of the budget books, in the 2026–27 Regional Overview, some projects have already been done. One of those is the Mandorah marine facilities, for which I was proud to advocate for when I was first elected in 2021. I am not sure why the Treasurer would put that in the budget when it has already been done. I had the privilege of opening the Mandorah Jetty. Unfortunately, the Treasurer could not open the jetty.

It was one of the exciting projects that many people from Wagait Beach and Belyuen were looking forward to because it was about safe transport to Darwin.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is 12 o'clock, Member for Daly. You can continue your speech after Question Time.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

## QUESTION TIME

### Strike Force Trident

**Ms UIBO to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER**

Your government's decision to move the specialist property and youth crime unit, Stike Force Trident, out of Casuarina has been described by police officers as detrimental. Local residents and business owners I have spoken with agree. With crime rates on the rise in Palmerston, can you confirm whether this was a deliberate move to strip resources out of Strike Force Trident and put officers on other jobs, rather than focusing on property and youth crime?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this budget includes a record $1.73bn on crime. The previous Labor government neglected Territorians. That is why they are in opposition and we are in government.

We are here to protect Territorians. We will do what we can to support Police and make sure it supports Territorians. Supporting Territorians and reducing crime is what we intend to do; it is our number one commitment. For example, Territory-wide, house break-ins are down by 23%, commercial break-ins are down by 26% and assaults are down by 8%. I can speak about Alice Springs, where commercial break-ins are down by 40% and assaults are down by 21%. We are committed to making sure Territorians are safe, and reducing crime is our number one priority.

In relation to moving things around within the police force, that is an operational matter. I want to make sure police listening know that we support them. We have their backs, and we will do what we can to work with them to keep the community safe.

It does not matter where people are in the Northern Territory—Darwin, the rural area or the land of opportunity. We will make sure community safety is the number one priority. We are funding Police. We are dealing with new recruits as much as we can; there have been many new recruits. I have been to many of their swearing-in ceremonies and spoken to them. They look forward to going out into the community—their community, because that is where their families live and their children go to school—to make sure it is safe and secure.

To answer your question, we are supporting Police. Police staff are doing what they do. It is operational and a matter for them. We want to fund the police departments, make sure they are supported and have their backs.

### Katherine Work Camp – CDU Partnership

**Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS**

The Northern Territory Government has committed to expanding community-support work programs and is establishing a new 198-bed work camp at Katherine in partnership with Charles Darwin University at the Katherine Rural Campus.

Are you aware of any other prison operations being co-located with a university to focus on education, skills and pathways for employment in Australia? Can you update the Assembly on how this new facility will support rehabilitation, improve community safety and keep Territorians safe?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder knows how important it is for rehabilitation programs to break that cycle of reoffending.

I am pleased to announce that this is the first time in Australia that a university focusing on rehabilitation, training and reintegration has joined up with a prison work camp to provide training for these open-rated and low-rated prisoners to reintegrate into the community. That means prisoners who have come to the end of their sentences have gone through the classification program before they go into the community.

For example, after the Katherine flood we had work parties cleaning up and doing their bit for the community. That happened in Alice Springs as well. The Member for Karama knows about the work parties helping pensioners and people unable to look after their lawns. They were helping and giving back to the community.

Another good thing about this program is it allows prisoners to clean up graffiti and mess, giving back to the community.

We are committed. We have roughly 20 prisoners there, and that will expand. By the end of March 2027 we will have an almost 200-bed work camp.

This is focused on rehabilitation. I am not sure how many times I have stood here and talked about rehabilitation. The media says, 'Lock them up. Don't worry; throw away the key.' That is not what we will do. We will not put people in watch houses and throw away the key. I stress that we are focusing on rehabilitation, training and skills to reintegrate these people back into the community.

Some people are criminals. Some people make a mistake. Previously, as a defence lawyer, I met people who had one too many beers and did something silly; they made a mistake and went to jail. They paid their debt to the community and came out the other side as better people.

We want to offer training services to people who are in jail and have been detained. That is what the partnership with CDU is about. CDU has people come in to show prisoners how to help with cows and grow things. That is day-to-day life—getting up and having structure.

Some people in detention have never had structure and what we consider a normal life; they had whatever was in their community. We are here to help break the cycle of reoffending. This is a great pathway forward, working with CDU to offer rehabilitation and training to stop the cycle.

## Territory Coordinator

**Ms UIBO to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER**

You have spent more than $27m of taxpayers' money on the Territory Coordinator's office. Nearly two years on, Territorians are struggling to see any tangible results from that investment. At a time when the Territory economy is stagnating and you are failing to get infrastructure projects out the door, can you outline exactly what your government's Territory Coordinator has achieved, and how many Territory jobs have been created as a direct result of the $27m?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this is a true own goal if I have ever seen one.

The Territory Coordinator is fixing Labor's mess in relation to the ship lift. It is a debacle. Yesterday, the Member for Drysdale touched on how much of a debacle that project is. We could not get out of the agreement, as it was signed. We got advice and looked at the contracts, but we had to proceed.

We will put the Territory Coordinator in control of the marine parks area to make that project work. The Labor government completely stuffed it up. It was a waste of Territory taxpayers' money. We found out through the PAC that there was no business case. Who would spend more than $1bn without a business case? The Labor Party would. It does not care about government spending. When Labor came into office, debt was about $1.8bn; Labor put debt up to almost $12bn within eight years.

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question was not about the former Labor government, it was specifically about the budget and the $27m for the Territory Coordinator's office. What has that gotten Territorians so far?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, you have plenty of time. Please continue and remain relevant.

**Mr MALEY:** I am answering the question. The Territory Coordinator is fixing the Labor government's mess, which includes the ship lift. I was explaining that because, unfortunately, the Labor Party members have forgotten or are trying to rewrite history. This is their mistake, and we are fixing it. I thank the Territory Coordinator for helping to make the best of that project.

The marine facility will be a good project, creating local jobs and local businesses. Supply chains will come from it. The Territory Coordinator is looking at that area and moving the project along to ensure that we do not continue to waste …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; conciseness. How many Territory jobs have been created with that $27m?

**Madam SPEAKER:** He still has a third of his speech to go, so you have time.

**Mr MALEY:** This is about ensuring the marine process area project, near the ship lift and around the Darwin Harbour, gets up and running to create jobs. There is a lot of work to be done because the previously failed Labor government did nothing. It signed up to this $1.8bn deal with no plan or ideas on how to make the Territory better.

We are getting that project up and running. It will create Territory jobs, and people can expand their businesses. The payroll tax threshold was increased from $1.5m to $2.5m to allow local businesses to expand and service the ships and boats that are lifted out of the water, put on the hardstand and then pushed around.

**Ms Uibo:** One job? Two jobs? Three? How many?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader!

## Child Protection Measures

**Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES**

Territorians expect that vulnerable children and families will be supported by an accountable, transparent and safety-focused system. Recent matters have highlighted serious challenges within the Department of Children and Families and the need for strong action to restore confidence and improve outcomes. Can the minister update the Assembly on what steps the government is taking to respond to these issues, strengthen accountability within the department and ensure vulnerable children and families receive the care, support and protection they deserve?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, Kumanjayi Little Baby's family asked Territorians to wear her favourite colour today in honour of her life. I am pleased to see members taking that on board; a lot of people are wearing pink today. It is important to remember that, at the heart of these issues, there are young, vulnerable children. It is not a political issue; it is an issue that requires a firm focus on child safety.

I thank the Member for Lingiari who said yesterday:

> *We need to stop thinking that these little ones can stay in the same at-risk environment …*
>
> *We're seeing young kids, whether they're Aboriginal or not Aboriginal, who are vulnerable and at risk in the Northern Territory fall through the gaps, and we've seen it for many years.*

That simply cannot happen.

It is clear from revelations over the last 48 hours that processes within the Department of Children and Families have failed. I requested an immediate investigation into how those processes were executed. On the back of that, the department stood down three employees—one from the workplace entirely, and two from their acting leadership roles. The investigation is ongoing.

It is important to get to the bottom of this because every child in our community matters and deserves to be safe. We need to do things right and make sure our processes work. I have requested an external independent review of the department to see if we can do things better. We want to make sure these workers have the resources needed and that they understand what their obligations are. I initiated a reform process so that we can put children's safety front and centre.

I am flabbergasted that safety is not mentioned in our current child protection legislation principles, which outline the care that children should be receiving. Safety is at the core of everything we should be doing and yet it is not even mentioned.

We are all obligated to work together on elevating safety and putting every child in a place where they are protected. I am committed to doing that.

**Budget 2026–27 – Climate Change**

**Mr SMELT to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER**

Despite climate change posing a direct threat to Territory communities, infrastructure, industry and the environment, there is effectively no reference to climate change in the budget papers. There is also no real funding directed toward reducing the impact of a changing climate or adaptation measures.

Does the CLP government accept that climate change is happening and, if so, why is there no serious climate response in this budget?

**Mr MACKAY:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 109; questions should not ask ministers for an expression of opinion. Part of the question, at the end, was asking for an opinion.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I do not think that is an opinion but a policy position. Deputy Chief Minister, answer the question if you care to.

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, global patterns of climate are changing across the world. Some places are getting hotter, some colder, and some places are getting more rain and some places less. Our climate change position aligns with our decisions and policies on rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

Every decision we make is about addressing our most important priority of crime—which is not relevant today, we have already spoken about that—and growing and rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle. If we have climate change, it affects us; this year we had a big Wet Season. We are intertwining that with our decisions.

We want to make sure that businesses can come to the Territory to make money, employ Territorians and start supply chains—it has that indirect effect. If someone moves here to work and brings their family—the husband may work in the gas industry, and the wife may be a teacher or a hairdresser.

They may also have children and one or two vehicles; the vehicles will be fixed by mechanics, and they will shop at Casuarina or Coolalinga Central. Everything we do is to make sure that the Northern Territory is a liveable place because we want people to come here.

We talk about restoring our lifestyle—the Northern Territory outdoors. Whether it is riding desert racing bikes or buggies in Alice Springs, fishing in Big Rivers or going out in our beautiful harbour, all of our decisions are about restoring our lifestyle.

To answer your question directly, yes, everything we do on this side of the Chamber is about lifestyle and rebuilding the economy, which is why we protect our economy and environment. If Minister Burgoyne was here, he would love to have a say because the environment is important. The cattle industry needs grass for their cows to eat and to get to the port for live exports. It is all about lifestyle.

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question specifically asked why there is no climate response in the budget.

**Mr MALEY:** I tried to answer that question. Everything we do is about lifestyle and the climate. We are about to spend $100m on flood mitigation. That money will go into the economy to make roads better in the land of opportunity.

**Ms Uibo:** That is all reactive; we are asking what is proactive.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader!

**Mr MALEY:** This is about lifestyle because climate patterns are changing across the world. We cannot sit back and do nothing; we need to make sure we live and breathe it to ensure …

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, your time has expired.

**Budget 2026–27 – Homeowner Grants**

**Mr PATEL to TREASURER**

The construction industry is the backbone of the Territory economy, employing tradespeople, apprentices and suppliers across the Territory. None of that activity happens unless Territorians can get into the market in the first place. One of the greatest barriers to home ownership is saving the deposit, and that can feel impossible for young Territorians starting out.

Can you outline what the 2026 budget does to support Territorians who want to build a new home and take advantage of the most generous homebuilder grants in the country?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina understands the need for people to get into the housing market; there are plenty of people in his electorate who are building new homes. How are they building them? Because we have provided some of the most generous first homeowner grants in the country.

The CLP is the party of home ownership. Our grants are the most generous in the nation. There is a $50,000 HomeGrown grant for new home builders and a $30,000 FreshStart grant for people who have built a home but want to get back into the market or downsize.

**Ms Uibo:** What happened to the established home grant? That was the most successful.

**Mr YAN:** We are seeing the fruits of those labours.

**Ms Uibo:** Eight hundred people took that up.

**Mr Edgington:** Why don't you support new housing?

**Mr YAN:** We have extended the grants in this budget to 2027.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Pause, please, Treasurer.

I will not put up with interjections across the Chamber. Opposition Leader and Leader of Government Business, if you want to go outside and have a conversation, please, feel free.

**Mr Maley:** You will get put in the sin-bin.

**Mr YAN:** Yes, like the former Speaker—in the sin-bin.

Our homeowner grants have been extended to 2027 in this budget. We are considering extending to 2028 and beyond because we are seeing what that does to our economy. New homes are being built, and people are putting down roots in the Territory. Not just that, we are also seeing the dollars flow through our economy.

Under Labor, home ownership and building—private home construction—flatlined. It went down by 88%. I think the Member for Drysdale said that one in three construction jobs were lost under the previous government; we are turning that around. Home ownership is good for the economy, and grants are good for the construction industry.

We have had over 500 HomeGrown and FreshStart grants processed, which is over $217m of activity rolling through our economy across the Territory. That is real money. That is jobs, tradies in work and apprenticeships created; all the people who they buy stuff from will then get a bite of the cherry. We are improving our economy and helping people get their own homes in the Territory.

That is what we are about. We want people to move here, put down roots, build a home and start a family. We want them to get jobs in the Territory because that grows our economy and will drive the Territory into the future. Those on the other side of the Chamber forgot to do that in their eight years of government. Housing construction dipped by 88%. We have turned that around and now have some of the strongest housing markets in the country, and we are proud of it.

**Mr Howe:** The industry will not forget one in three. That is one in three jobs lost in construction.

**Ms Uibo:** How is Kilgariff going?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Silence, please.

## Gender-affirming Healthcare

**Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER referred to MINISTER for HEALTH**

This budget contains no funding dedicated to gender-affirming healthcare for transgender young people, at a time when Territorians are calling for greater support and access to healthcare. Can you explain why there is no funding in the budget for this critical healthcare for some of the most vulnerable young people in our community?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, that question is squarely in the Health realm, so I will pass to the Health minister to answer.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say that Health has a record budget of $2.56bn. The previous Health minister, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, racked up $300m in debt over many years. I give a shout-out to our health services, because our nurses, doctors and midwives are working on the front line. We have specialist people who deal with gender-affirming issues.

We made a policy decision last year that puberty blockers would not be available to young people under the age of 18; we made that very clear. I am not sure where the Member for Daly is coming from with this question, but whilst puberty blockers will not be available, support for young people going through those gender issues has been there and always will be. To come here today and ask about specific funding is nothing more than political grandstanding.

That is what this is about. They are not interested in health; they are interested in political grandstanding. That is all he is trying to do today. He is not interested in the budget, health or the great work that our frontline workers do. He wants to make political statements in hopes that the media latch on; that is all he is doing today.

The policy issue is clear. There is an overall budget of $2.56bn, which is a massive increase across the board. We have a range of services working with young and older people. Our policy is very clear on gender-affirming care.

## Parks – Upgrades

**Mr PATEL to MINISTER for PARKS and WILDLIFE**

Territorians know that parks are at the heart of the unique Territory lifestyle. The Finocchiaro CLP government has made a landmark $10m commitment to upgrade infrastructure and access to our parks. I am excited for Casuarina Coastal Reserve and what it means for the reserve. This is also off the back of securing Silkwood last year, which is the single biggest expansion to the Territory's parks estate in a generation.

How does the $10m investment project restore our unique Territory lifestyle, which Labor failed to prioritise for Territorians for nearly a decade?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I will get to Casuarina Coastal Reserve soon. Nothing speaks to the everyday Territorian like a family loading up their car to head out to our beautiful national parks. They might go for a day trip and have a swim or they might stay for a few days.

We have been out and about in our national parks over the past 18 months, seeing the neglect that they have endured under eight years of Labor. It is a disgrace. I was at Charles Darwin National Park only last week. I went to put sausages on the barbecue there, which Labor installed. It did not even heat up. I could not cook the sausages. I thought then that we need to do work in these parks.

**Ms Uibo:** It is your department. It has been yours for two years.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader!

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I am proud to stand here as the Minister for Parks and Wildlife and the minister for Tourism and say that we are investing $10m …

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Silence! There is too much rabble coming from the opposition ranks; I can hardly hear the answer.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The Leader of the Opposition is upset because she used to be the Parks and Wildlife minister, and she destroyed the joint.

We invested a landmark $10m into national parks; that will cover a range of parks. Casuarina Coastal Reserve will get a footpath, which is exciting. The Charles Darwin, Berry Springs, Nitmiluk and West MacDonnell parks are all receiving new barbecues; people can go to these parks and cook sausages as a family.

There are central region upgrades, including a new walking path at Kings Canyon and a bike path at Simpsons Gap. There are new roads going in at Limestone Gorge for the four-wheel drive enthusiasts. Silkwood was an amazing purchase by this government; we are protecting that 30,000 hectares of land which we secured for taxpayers to enjoy.

We have millions of visitors to our parks every year, that is why they are such a unique part of our lifestyle. There were 3.36 million visitors last year, which is amazing. That directly reflects our Northern Territory Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 for growing our economy and increasing the number of visitors. Parks are a unique part of the Territorian lifestyle and attract tourists who want to get out and look around.

We are backing our parks; they will no longer sit under a neglected, underfunded and under-resourced department. We are giving people the tools to make our parks our best asset and bring in visitors from all over the world. We already have global attention; the *New York Times* said that the Top End was the number one place to visit in Australia. We are taking that to the bank and will rebuild our economy with our parks.

## Corrections – Workplace Culture

**Mr BROWN to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS**

The recent People Matter Survey revealed that Corrections recorded some of the worst bullying and workplace culture results of anywhere in the Northern Territory Public Sector. As the responsible minister, do you accept responsibility for these results? Do you acknowledge that this toxic workplace culture may reflect your leadership?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this may be the Question Time for own goals because it has to be accepted that when we came into office just under two years ago, Corrections was a mess. I have been banging on about how the infrastructure was underfunded to such a point that the Labor government put prisoners in watch houses. They were not just there overnight for operational reasons; it was for extended periods.

What have we done to fix it? We realised there was a chronic shortage of infrastructure and staff issues across the Northern Territory, not just in Darwin and Alice Springs, so we prepared a master plan. That plan has led to more than 1,000 extra beds in the Corrections estate so far.

There is more work to be done. In this budget there is $15m for another male and female prison at Holtze. We made a commitment to Territorians that Holtze would be our prison precinct. We are working towards that; it is a big job, but we are progressing.

Regarding the staff shortages, we have recruited more than 200 new Corrections staff. We also had G4S, a private company, come in to help transfer prisoners. That allows prison officers to go back behind the wire to look after prisoners and offer them more rehabilitation and training so that they can rejoin the community as better people. That goes back to our goal of a better Territory lifestyle; we will rebuild the economy and reduce crime.

The previous government put people into watch houses; that did not reduce crime.

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question was specifically about the recent People Matter Survey and the government response.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It was. Please make it relevant.

**Mr MALEY:** Culture does not develop overnight. We did not come in on 24 August 2024 and—bang!—the culture in Corrections went downhill. It was on a downhill slide under the previous Labor government. Culture takes time to turn around; we are turning it around. We are putting things in place to make sure that Corrections officers are supported.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Silence! Minister, continue.

**Mr MALEY:** I thought you were about to put someone in the sin-bin.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It was a quick silence.

**Mr MALEY:** Let me go back to what I was saying: culture does not develop overnight, it takes time.

We are supporting prison officers; they do a great job. Corrections is now its own agency, and we are supporting and funding it because we know that it does important work for the Territory.

**Budget 2026–27 – Concessions and Subsidies**

**Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for PEOPLE, SPORT and CULTURE**

The 2026 budget is a responsible budget after years of fiscal mismanagement under the previous Labor government. While Territorians were feeling the pinch, Labor continued to govern by media release, announcing vanity projects and failing to deliver basic needs. Can you outline how concessions and subsidies are supporting Territorians of all ages, including those living in my electorate of Karama, to enjoy the Territory lifestyle we know and love?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Finocchiaro CLP government has delivered its second budget, and I am proud to say that it is delivering real, practical, cost-of-living measures for Territorians.

Yesterday the Chief Minister, and on Tuesday the Treasurer, clearly outlined that we are investing $290m in cost-of-living measures through concessions, subsidies and targeted household support.

I will specifically talk about my department, which is mainly responsible for the NT Concession Scheme and other vouchers. The department is putting about $14m directly into the hands of Territorians through different measures supporting families and seniors.

The $550 prepaid card for seniors was increased from $500 in 2024. That is a real incentive for seniors, who are waiting for their prepaid cards so that they can plan and spend that money. It helps with power bills, groceries and many other things.

Regarding electricity and water concessions, we are giving back millions of dollars to Territorians to ensure there are real cost-of-living measures. Through the Seniors Recognition Scheme about 18,202 seniors, which is 74% of eligible seniors living in the Territory, receive that support. This financial year we spent more than $2.2m giving back to families who want to utilise Learn to Swim and Sport Vouchers. More than 20,000 Sport Vouchers and 4,000 Learn to Swim Vouchers have been redeemed recently.

I want to touch on what the Leader of the Opposition misled the Assembly and the public about. I quote from her speech yesterday:

> *… the CLP is not telling Territorians that it has frozen all those payments.*

It is in *Hansard*.

There are sports clubs reaching out to my office asking whether they need to make arrangements because the CLP is freezing this payment. The Leader of the Opposition provided this incorrect information.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr CHARLS:** You can go check the *Hansard* and look at your words because that is what happened; the sports clubs are contacting us about that.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Silence!

**Mr CHARLS:** This information that the CLP is freezing payments is incorrect, so I want to correct the record. We are not stopping anything; we are making sure that we support Territorians with cost-of-living measures.

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**VISITORS**
**Member for Johnston's Family**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the Member for Johnston's mother, Dina, and her partner, Kit. Welcome to Parliament House.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Budget 2026–27 – Housing Design**

**Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Dr Simon Quilty has outlined that the current NTG housing design will become a significant legacy problem because the houses are not designed for a hot climate and create significant health issues for residents. What is the government doing in this budget to fix these design issues so that we are not increasing the significant housing problems we already have?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, there are a number of programs in place, particularly ones that deliver remote housing and upgrades in homelands.

We have a $4bn agreement. That is managed through the Joint Steering Committee, which is represented by the four land councils, the Australian Government, the Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal Housing NT. There is a lot of work that goes on regarding the $4bn. I know from talking to the Minister for Housing Construction and for Logistics and Infrastructure that there is a lot of work regarding housing design and location. All options for housing are being looked into and have been for quite some time.

The issue you raise is whether those houses are suitable. We are talking about a longstanding issue in the Northern Territory. That is why there is a $4bn agreement …

**Ms Uibo:** Thanks to Labor.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** … and we are working with the federal government. You only have to go back to the eight years under Labor to see …

**Ms Uibo:** Thanks for the $4bn.

**Mr EDGINGTON:** … that there has been a number of houses rolled out since we came to government.

**Ms Uibo:** You took all of those selfies with them.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader!

**Mr EDGINGTON:** Housing design options are constantly being worked through by the Joint Steering Committee to ensure that the best available product is being delivered for remote communities.

The current funding arrangement with the federal government does not allow for new houses to be built in homelands. I had discussions with the federal government about that, but at the moment that money is only to upgrade the houses already built in homelands. I have put on the record many times that the funding to upgrade these houses has essentially, for a number of years, been used to upgraded tin sheds. Member for Mulka, you would have seen—I have seen it across the Northern Territory—that many homeland homes are getting beyond economic repair. They were never built to withstand cold, hot or humid weather—those sorts of things. That work needs to be followed through.

The Joint Steering Committee is looking at all available options when it comes to the delivery of housing in remote areas. Everybody at the table is having a say, and we will continue to do that work.

**Driver Primary School – Kiss-and-Go**

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

I welcome the gentlemen in the press gallery. May I entice them to spread the good word of Drysdale far and wide.

Families in my electorate of Drysdale have long raised concerns about congestion and safety around Driver Primary School, particularly during the busy pick-up periods on Driver Avenue. Parents, students and local residents want a practical solution to make the school run safer, smoother and less stressfully, to such an extent that it was my first local infrastructure promise to the people of Drysdale. Can you update the Assembly on the progress of the kiss-and-go at Driver Primary School?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is extremely passionate about Drysdale and about education in his electorate and across the Territory.

We have a record budget of $1.73bn, which is $65m up from last year. That is fantastic because we value education across the Territory.

I visited the kiss-and-go with the Member for Drysdale and the school's leaders last year. We got a tour through the school and saw the congestion that happens in that area. That project is underway; we have been watching that progress. I commend the Member for Drysdale on his advocacy and commitment to his election promise.

It came in under budget; I commend the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure and the minister for that. It is a difficult department to manage, with a lot of work across the Territory. It does not get many good things or positive information. That is a positive thing; the kiss-and-go came in under budget at $1.25m against the original allocation of $1.5m. That is fantastic …

**Mr Yan:** And we put up some shade structures.

**Mrs HERSEY:** That is right. The minister reminds me that there was leftover money, so the school not only has a fantastic kiss-and-go where children can safely be let out away from traffic, but also has some shade for the Wet Season.

It is a fantastic kiss-and-go area. I commend the member for his strong advocacy, DLI for working efficiently on the project and the school's principal, Danielle Hall, who worked with the Education department and DLI to make the process run smoothly.

I thank the Member for Drysdale and DLI for such a great project. The children at Driver Primary School now have a safe area where parents can drop them off. I look forward to seeing more of those commitments come to fruition.

**Public Sector – Administrator Budget**

**Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER**

Last year your government directed agencies across the Northern Territory Public Sector to find $20m in savings. Yesterday your CLP colleague, the Member for Fong Lim, stated:

*You cannot have 265,000 people and 27,000 public servants with productivity that is this low; it is not feasible or realistic.*

At a time when frontline services are under pressure and Territorians are being asked to do more with less, how do you justify blowing an extra $3.4m on the Administrator at exclusive protocol parties, and do you share the Member for Fong Lim's statement on cutting the public service?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this is the Question Time for own goals if I have ever seen it. Is this really Labor member saying that they do not support public servants? Is that what the guts of the question is, how they do not support the work that public servants do? That is ridiculous.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Cease interjecting.

**Mr MALEY:** The Labor members are showing their true colours, saying that they do not support the work that public servants do. We on this side of the House …

**Mr Edgington:** They even froze their wages.

**Mr MALEY:** They froze their wages!

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The minister will be heard in silence.

**Mr MALEY:** As I was saying, it just goes to show that Labor members do not support public servants.

They do a great job in the Territory. I know many public servants, I have been one—all of us in the Assembly are public servants. More importantly, we are talking about the people who go to work in the mornings across the Northern Territory, in Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek who do a wonderful job.

We support the work they do. Ours is a responsible budget; it makes sure we do what we say, unlike the previous Labor government, which put things on the program list and—the minister for Infrastructure would be able to …

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question specifically asked about the extra $3.4m to the Administrator's office and protocol.

**Madam SPEAKER:** You have added information there.

**Ms UIBO:** No, that was part of the question.

**Mr Young:** That was in the question.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Was that in the question?

**Mr Young:** Yes.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Okay. My mistake. It was a pretty big question.

**Ms Uibo:** We do our homework.

**Mr MALEY:** It is clear that Labor does not support our democracy. The Administrator is how our democracy works. We are a Commonwealth, and he does a great job. On many occasions we have been to functions.

In fact, I think …

**Ms Uibo:** Why $3.4m extra? Give it to Alekarenge School.

**Mr MALEY:** … you could say that this Administrator has been out in the Territory more …

**Mr EDGINGTON:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; all we have had all afternoon is constant interjections from the Opposition Leader.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I think we have had constant interjections from all around. We only have a few minutes left; it is time the minister be heard in silence.

**Mr MALEY:** I will make this short and sharp. We support public servants. The Administrator is doing a great job. He travels more than any Administrator that I have known. He is out meeting people; he has been to Katherine, the Daly and Alice Springs. We support the Commonwealth, and the Administrator has my full support and that of our government.

## Budget 2026–27 – Major Events

**Mr KERLE to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS**

I acknowledge the handsome young gentlemen in the press gallery. You are welcome to come out to Drysdale and Blain any time.

Territorians know that events are a big part of what makes our lifestyle so unique. People in Palmerston love the events that are put on there. They play a critical role in supporting local jobs, businesses and our regions. You have just announced the $2m major event funding boost to strengthen the Territory events pipeline on top of the $1.5m for the Event Funding Program. Can you update the Assembly on how this will deliver on the Visitor Economy Strategy 2032 whilst protecting the unique lifestyle Territorians know and love?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain is right; people, not only in Palmerston but across the Territory, love our events. They are part of our unique Territory lifestyle.

A couple of weeks ago the Dolphins and Penrith Panthers played at TIO Stadium …

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Oh yes, up the Phins.

There were 13,000 people who attended that game. It was a record crowd for the NRL in the Territory.

Territorians loved the Dolphins. The game was incredible; the media was there reporting on it live all night.

Filling the stadium is just part of the story; the Dolphins spent a week prior to the game visiting communities and regions. They went to a school in Katherine and spoke with students. The Dolphins' stories about that visit were incredible; they inspired our young people. They visited the Palmerston Raiders, in the Member for Blain's electorate, teaching young rugby league players a few skills and being role models to aspire to.

The record crowd filled not only the stadium but also our hotels, pubs, clubs and beyond. Many people travelled here with the Dolphins, as well as all their supporters. The Dolphins said that they went to Buley Rockhole the day before and spoke to a Penrith fan who had flown to the Territory from Sydney to watch the game and visit Litchfield. That is amazing, and this is exactly why we are backing our events with an extra $2m.

There was also a record crowd at Parrtjima in Alice Springs; we made some changes that made it great. People are visiting Alice Springs, which is fantastic to see. We will keep backing that.

Compare that with what it was like under Labor.

The Alice Springs Masters Games is another major event. That is coming up in October, and we are determined to make it a success. Labor walked away from it; it did not care about the games and even cancelled it at one stage. Eventually it was brought back; we had to save it. It was on life support when we first came to government. We will make that great because we back the Alice Springs Masters Games for the people of Central Australia.

This adds to our visitor economy. We want to grow that to $3bn, which is huge. It is a big stretch, but we will do it because we have events, parks and global attention for all the right reasons. There is a lot of interest,

momentum and new investment coming to the Territory. There is a lot of business confidence; people in Cavenagh Street and on the Esplanade are investing, including refurbishing hotels, which is a good sign for the Northern Territory.

## School Attendance

**Mr BROWN to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER referred to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING**

In today's *NT News* the minister for Education admitted that she has failed to lift school attendance. For weeks she has tried to hide the latest school attendance data, and we now know why. On her watch, attendance has dropped across every region. So far, she has wasted well over $20m on the failed truancy approach that is sending attendance backwards. You all love to say that your government is outcome focused, but based on these poor outcomes is it time that you rethought your punitive approach?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I can see the strategy that the Labor government is trying to throw …

**Ms Uibo:** Labor government—great; we will take that. Happy to swap sides.

**Mr MALEY:** … that we are a not a united team and do not know what is going on. That is how the Labor government worked, and that is why Labor is in opposition. We do not even know who the real leader is; there might be one in the back row, but we are not sure. Those opposite are not a united team. On this side, we work together, talk to each other …

**Ms Uibo:** Do you really? That is interesting.

**Mr MALEY:** … and know what is going on. We are a team, and we are here for the Northern Territory.

**Ms Uibo:** Then answer the question for your failing team member.

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

**Mr MALEY:** We are here to do three things: make sure the community is safe; rebuild the economy; and restore our Territory lifestyle. That is what we are about.

This question is directed at the minister for Education. We were just with truancy officers in the mall today because we get out in the community, unlike Labor members who were probably hiding in their air-conditioned offices.

I will pass to the minister for Education, and she can talk about the conversation she was having with the truancy officers today.

**Mrs HERSEY:** Earlier I said that $1.73bn is for Education—an increase of $65.3m. We value our students and children across the Territory.

I did not say that this was not working. We acknowledge that with this extra funding comes the expectation of extra results. We want to make sure that by the end of this year, the intensive support roll—which is a roll the previous Labor government hid a lot of kids under; shame on it. We came to government almost two years ago when the Territory had the poorest literacy, numeracy and attendance rates in the nation.

As the Minister for Education and Training, I am making sure that money is going where it is needed most. We have added attendance officers, engagement officers and counsellors back into schools, not at the Mitchell Centre like the previous government. We have psychologists, police constables and Aboriginal liaison officers in schools as well.

We need community solutions; it is not just one-size-fits-all. Principals, teachers, frontline workers, extra-assistance teachers and even the person that you meet when you first walk into the school—every one of them is responsible for getting children to school. Everyone needs to work together. The attendance team is working with parents and carers, making sure they get their children to school. We want to make sure those kids get an education.

**Budget 2026–27 – Community Infrastructure**

**Mr HOWE to MINISTER for PEOPLE, SPORT and CULTURE**

The 2026 budget includes a significant investment in community infrastructure across Darwin and Palmerston to help Territorians enjoy our unique Territory lifestyle. I know from personal advocacy in my electorate and across Palmerston that a focus on community infrastructure is one of the keys to restoring our lifestyle—a clear commitment from the Finocchiaro CLP government.

Can you provide the Assembly with an update regarding this significant investment?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be part of this CLP team that is delivering for the Territory. I thank Minister Edgington for his wonderful work this year, assisting me and other ministers to deliver on the many election commitments we have made. All of the members from Darwin and Palmerston are excited because this government is delivering their election commitments.

Some recent things we have delivered include the lights at Freds Pass, which the Members for Nelson and Goyder are excited about; $500,000 for the lights upgrade at the Larrakia Park stadium for soccer and Football NT; and more than $1.3m for the changeroom upgrade at DXC Arena, which has not been upgraded since it was built 30 years ago. Many facilities in the Territory had not received an upgrade or further investment for many decades. We know what happened during those decades; there was pure negligence during that time.

We listened to the community before and after the election. When we went into the election, all members from this side had election commitments. We further discussed—I think there were areas where the numbers we came to were right. Those numbers were clearly given. There are certain commitments where we want more investment. That is what we are doing because we listened to the community.

I will not announce all the projects here, but what will happen over the next few weeks—because I have been told by the members that the community wants to be part of this announcement. It is a community-driven announcement because community members shared it with other individuals. This government will involve the communities that work behind each member of the CLP government in Darwin and Palmerston to make sure we deliver those commitments.

The lifestyle strategy is important. We are providing facilities for young Territorians and families to train in. There are safety measures like the footpath, CCTV and many other things that we are working together with the local councils on.

That is proof that this budget is for everyday Territorians. We are delivering that for Territorians who want to work with this government and receive the benefits.

**Corrections Infrastructure Master Plan**

**Mr SMELT to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS**

Your own budget papers make it clear that there is no business case for your Corrections infrastructure plan and no final cost attached to it. This is despite Treasury warning that Corrections' spending poses a growing long-term risk to the Territory's finances. Given Territorians are being asked to carry the burden of this spending for decades to come, will you finally be up-front with Territorians and tell them what the true final cost of the CLP's prison expansion plan will be?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, these own goals are unbelievable. Given that the Member for Nightcliff has not been here for long, he does not know the history of how the Labor government failed the Territory on infrastructure and planning for the prison and regarding crime making the Territory unsafe.

For his benefit I will run through some crime figures that are reducing, because that is what this government is doing; we are making the Territory a safer place. It does not matter where you are. For example, in Darwin and greater Palmerston, house break-ins are down by 42%. I will get to your question, I am first giving you a history lesson on how bad the Labor government was and what we are doing to fix it. We are focusing on

making the Territory a safer place. Commercial break-ins in Palmerston and Darwin are down by 40%; robbery is down by 14%; Alice Springs house break-ins are down by 31%; commercial break-ins are down by 40%; assaults, including DV, are down by 21%. While I am talking about DV, under the previous Labor government it increased by 83%—we got it down.

We are making the Territory a safer place. We are investing in Corrections and have increased the budget to $525m to make sure that we can house prisoners in places designed for them, unlike the Labor government which put them in watch houses.

We have some Corrections experience on this side of the Chamber; the Member for Namatjira knows about Corrections. We know how important it is to offer rehabilitation services that reintegrate people into the community. That is why our master plan is so important. We are spending money to increase beds—more than a thousand beds in the last two years—to keep the community safer. We are working hard to make sure that all these prison infrastructures …

**Mr SMELT:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. We want to know what the true final cost is.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That is part of your question, yes. Relevance, minister.

**Mr MALEY:** The true final cost—it is an ongoing project. We cannot fix the prison infrastructure overnight because it was a failure; the Labor government left it in chaos. I feel sorry for some of the detainees who were put into these facilities. This master plan will continue to work. For example, we will spend $34m in this budget in Katherine to employ 200 workers to make the community a safer place. We will make sure that the work parties are available for people in and around Katherine. There will be another work camp at Holtze …

**Mrs Hersey:** I have been working with the council.

**Mr MALEY:** You have been working with the council.

That is the $200m. This is about community safety. We are also spending money in Alice Springs. Do not get me started on the 96-bed facility that the Labor government stuffed up. We are working hard to focus on community safety. We have increased the budget …

**Madam SPEAKER:** Your time has expired, minister.

## Vaccination Program

**Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for HEALTH**

The Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to helping Territorians live healthier and happier lives. We are focused on improving health outcomes for Territorians and making it easier for people to access essential vaccinations like the flu shot. Vaccination is vital in keeping Territorians healthy, reducing serious illness and protecting people in remote and regional communities. Strong uptake of these vaccines is vital to keeping communities safe and reducing pressure on our health system.

This government is delivering practical measures that improve health outcomes and provide cost-of-living relief to Territorians through a range of vaccination programs. Can you update Territorians on these programs and how they are improving community health across the Northern Territory?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri, who is the Assistant Minister for Health, is just as focused on this as I am. In 2026 there have already been 530 cases of influenza, mainly in the Top End, Katherine and East Arnhem regions. It has already led to 65 reported hospitalisations.

Flu season is here. I got my flu shot at Casuarina a couple of weeks ago. It is important that all Territorians take notice of the flu season and get the flu vaccination. They are available at GPs, pharmacies and health clinics out bush. I encourage everybody to get their flu shot. It helps protect you and other people in the community.

As of 25 April, there have been 87 cases of diphtheria. The most effective way to prevent infection is through vaccination. Adults are recommended to have a diphtheria vaccine booster every 10 years. There are

87 diphtheria cases that we know of. The only way to prevent it is to get the vaccination; I encourage everybody. The vaccination is free and routine for people under the age of 20 and free for pregnant women.

The meningococcal B vaccine was a CLP election and we are delivering. This is another cost-of-living measure. Families were previously paying approximately $130 to $180 per vaccine, with infants under two requiring three doses and adolescents requiring two doses. That cost-of-living measure has saved families money on the meningococcal vaccine.

This the legacy of Skylar, aged two, who passed away from meningococcal B in 2017. I commend the work of her parents, Sally and Ash Lawrence, who advocated from the word go. I am pleased to say that this election commitment is being delivered. So far, we have had roughly 18,000 young people vaccinated.

I ask everybody to please get your flu, meningococcal and diphtheria vaccinations.

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

## SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
## Candlelight Vigil – Kumanjayi Little Baby

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I remind you that from 6 pm there will be a candlelight vigil for Kumanjayi Little Baby in front of Parliament House. Attendees are asked to wear pink and bring a candle. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends during this time.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

## APPROPRIATION (2026–2027) BILL
## Serial 63
## TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
## Serial 64

Continue from earlier this day.

**Mr YOUNG (Daly):** Madam Speaker, I pick up from where I left off. The Member for Drysdale has been waiting in anticipation over the lunchbreak for this budget reply.

I found it interesting that one of the budget books had a Labor project that had been funded, delivered and opened. Maybe the Treasurer felt a little guilt that he could not officially open Mandorah Jetty, so he put it back in his budget book to try to claim it as his own win, which I find quite concerning. He is trying to thicken up that budget book for himself.

I do not know where the Treasurer was at the time when we opened the new Mandorah marine facility. I organised the opening of that. I even sent the Treasurer an invitation to that opening. Many constituents from Belyuen and Wagait Beach raised concerns that the government would not do an official opening for the Mandorah jetty.

It makes it a lot safer for people to travel. At Mandorah's old jetty, the swell of the waves would bang up against the ferry which would then bang up against the jetty. It made getting onto the ferry quite dangerous, especially for children and the elderly. I am surprised there were no serious injuries or even worse—which I will not say in this Chamber.

It is something I am proud to have delivered. I am proud that the Treasurer has recognised a project that the Labor government delivered. I thank the Treasurer for putting that on page 29 of the Budget and Regional Overview to recognise the hard work of the Labor government in ensuring that project was delivered for all residents of the Cox Peninsula from Wagait Beach to Belyuen. Thank you, Treasurer, for recognising our hard work in your budget book.

I say to everyone, come to Wagait Beach; it is a beautiful place. We have the community-run Cox Country Club which is open from Thursdays to Sundays. They usually have live bands during the week. It is just around the corner from my house, so reach out and I can walk down to meet you there. I will happily show you around. It is a beautiful little club and a wonderful community to be a part of and live in.

I am proud of the new jetty because it provides more reliability for the ferry service that goes across the harbour. It means reliable business for the Cox Country Club, because previously the cancelling of ferries would impact the number of customers. Thank you again, Treasurer, for recognising the work of the Labor government.

Overall, this budget was disappointing. It lacks any real vision, compassion or commitment to addressing the most pressing issues in our community.

I now have the honour of holding the shadow portfolio for Aboriginal Affairs. We want better outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. It is one of our central pillars as the Labor opposition—I have Labor government in my head; it is what the Deputy Chief Minister kept saying during Question Time. We understand that the future of the Northern Territory is tied directly to the wellbeing of Aboriginal Territorians. We see better outcomes for not just Aboriginal communities but all Territorians when Aboriginal people are respected, governments work in true partnership with communities and solutions are led by those with lived experience.

Sadly, the CLP government does not value the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio in the same way, and that was made abundantly clear in its budget.

I pick up on the Aboriginal Affairs minister waving the NT Aboriginal Affairs Framework. In one of the six …

**Mr Edgington:** You should pick it up and read it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Silence, please.

**Mr YOUNG:** I have read it, do not worry. I have it for you.

He said:

> *Strengthening relationships with land councils, Aboriginal organisations, Traditional Owners and local government to progress shared economic priorities.*

Do you know what the issue was? There was no consultation with Aboriginal people, Aboriginal organisations or Aboriginal land councils when it came to the development of the Aboriginal Affairs Framework. There was no consultation with organisations, so trust has already been broken with Aboriginal organisations. They have publicly condemned the CLP government because it did not work in partnership to develop this new Aboriginal Affairs Framework.

In the budget there is no money allocated to the framework, just like there is no money allocated for the de-amalgamation of local governments across the Northern Territory, which was a key election promise from this CLP government.

All I hear now is crickets from the Aboriginal Affairs minister. He knows that his Cabinet colleagues do not support him. I have had many conversations with him, and I know that he is trying, but unfortunately the rest of his Cabinet do not care about him. That is a real shame because who misses out at the end of the day? Aboriginal Territorians miss out, which means that all Territorians miss out.

I would like to see his Cabinet colleagues support him when he announces important frameworks, but more importantly, I would like to see them working with Aboriginal organisations and land councils, as they stated they would do with the Aboriginal Affairs Framework and which they have not done yet. People and organisations are sceptical, and the trust has already been broken.

It is disrespectful that the CLP government has neglected to invest in Aboriginal Territorians, who make up about one-third of the Northern Territory's population. This government has completely forgotten Aboriginal Territorians. We have not seen any investment in self-determination when it comes to things like funding the Blue Mud Bay Implementation Action Plan, and there has been limited progress on local decision-making, despite both being critical to Aboriginal economic partnership and community control.

It is concerning that there is no mention in this framework of transitioning services to Aboriginal community control. When the people are making decisions on our behalf, we will get better outcomes. There is not one mention in the framework …

**Mr Edgington:** Don't you understand empowering communities?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Barkly.

**Mr YOUNG:** There is no mention in the framework of transitioning over to Aboriginal community control. I am proud to have used our local decision-making agreements, when we were in government, to transition many services over to Aboriginal community control, including the establishment of the Mulyung Aboriginal Corporation in the homeland of Emu Point. That is what real partnership looks like. That is what working with Aboriginal people looks like—not just words and motherhood statements that get put out by the CLP, but genuine partnerships with traditional owners who live and work on their country. It has taken a few years to get that agreement up and understand the priorities of the traditional owners of the Emu Point community; I have mentioned that many times.

I even invited the Aboriginal Affairs minister to visit that community. I am more than happy to take him there, and I hope he takes up my offer one day, because this should continue. This agreement expires, I believe, in June 2026; it is coming up at the end of the financial year. I know the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs could embed it into the framework, and I hope it is something he takes up. This agreement was done over many years with the Northern Territory Labor government and traditional owners of Emu Point. The traditional owners tell me that it is something they want to continue.

I hope the Aboriginal Affairs minister takes up that offer and continues this agreement; otherwise, it will go back to square one and have to start all over again. It is something that the Aboriginal Affairs minister could take on, and I encourage him to do so. I am more than happy to take him to sit down with the traditional owners to ensure the implementation of some of the priorities the community has asked for.

One of the priorities we talked about was housing in communities. I have spoken many times in this House about how Cabinet members went to the Thamarrurr region when I was elected in 2021. I told them, 'We also need to go to the homelands in that region'. One of the homelands we went to was Emu Point. We could see that there had been no upgrades, repairs or maintenance to any of the houses since the early 1990s. There were no new builds in that community since the early 1990s. With that agreement we repaired all the houses and developed an understanding of the need for new builds for the Emu Point community. There were four new houses built at Emu Point homeland.

I spoke to the minister yesterday about homelands, particularly looking at how we can get more funding for housing on homelands rather than only larger communities. Most people I talk to in Wadeye want to be out on their homelands. The Aboriginal Affairs minister understands this because he is a bush member. We should all be advocating for ways to get services, good housing and improved education on homelands.

We get great outcomes on our homelands. I am sure that the minister for Education can help me out—Emu Point had good school attendance; that is something she could look at. It was up by over 90% when I last looked at the data. That is one of the good outcomes we want to see, and it is something you get when you work in partnership with Aboriginal people.

I will not go into the details of the Mulyung Aboriginal Corporation Local Decision Making Agreement because I have spoken about it many times before.

Another thing I found concerning is that there is no funding for the Gunbalanya Health Centre. That funding was taken off and then put back on, and now it has been taken off again. I want to understand why no funding has been allocated for the Gunbalanya Health Centre. We should all have access to a good universal healthcare system; we can all agree that everyone has the right to a good nurse and doctor, especially kids so that they can get to school. I was shocked that the clinic was not on the radar of the Health and Aboriginal Affairs minister. However, as I said, it is probably his Cabinet that is not supporting him in that space.

Another one in the Barkly that the local member will have to explain to his community is why there were cuts to Alekarenge School. Many residents in that community will ask that question when we look at school attendance. We need safety and good infrastructure in our schools. It is disappointing that there were cuts to Alekarenge School.

During the 2024 campaign, the CLP government was spruiking ranger grants. Rangers are one of the biggest employment opportunities in Aboriginal communities. They go out on country, care for it and look after the biodiversity. The CLP government made a false promise to Aboriginal Territorians because they cut the funding for ranger grants, which is a shame.

We have seen the CLP government weaken the Sacred Sites Act. They also reduced funding to the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, which risks undermining cultural protection and creating uncertainty

for communities and development. It goes against the Aboriginal Affairs strategy that the minister has put out to work in partnership with Aboriginal organisations. We heard time and again that there was no consultation on weaking the Sacred Sites Act or ensuring the cultural protection of sacred sites in the Northern Territory.

We need to ensure that the budget is for all Territorians. CLP government members have been spruiking that it is for everyday Territorians—I think that is the language they are using. When we look at the finer details there is no funding for rural and remote areas. They have cut funding to rural and remote areas, and I have gone through that.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr YOUNG:** They are all up in arms about it. We once again see cuts and a lack of support for people affected by floods.

It was great that the minister for flood recovery finally went to the Daly River region; it took her only a month since the water receded. I think the Chief Minister went two weeks later after a bit of media pressure.

You can all sit there are shake your heads, but I have been in and out. I have spoken to constituents and can say that …

**Mrs Hersey:** It is your electorate.

**Mr YOUNG:** … they are completely unhappy with this government.

I hear the Member for Katherine call out saying, 'It is your electorate'. Of course, it is my electorate; I go out there.

Her party is in government and has the authority on funding allocation decisions. It took her kicking and screaming to come see what occurred. She did not even have the decency to call the local member, so if we want to talk about politicising it, you guys politicised it because you were incapable of keeping the local member informed.

My constituents know that, and they have given me the right to ask questions of the government. This is people's livelihoods; it is affecting businesses along Wooliana Road. The fact that we had to call a meeting with Woolianna residents to get the Chief Minister there is a shame on this government.

The ADF was called in to Katherine, which is great, and that is what we want—a quick response to ensure cleanup happens quickly—yet when it came to the people of the Daly electorate there was silence. There is still silence, and no-one is calling out because they know the truth.

There are still people cleaning up businesses around Wooliana Road, and this government has not provided support to get it done as quickly as possible. They are small businesses and pastoralists; I have spoken to many of them in the Douglas Daly region. All they want is a quick response from this government to request ADF assistance with cleanup. The ADF exists to give a hand to everyday Australians—all Australians. That did not happen; this government did not put in a request.

I thank all who spoke on this.

**Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Treasurer for the 2026–27 budget, a budget for everyday Territorians. This budget is about putting money where it is needed most, making life easier and continuing to clean up Labor's debt mess.

Last year's budget got things moving. This year, in our year of growth, action and certainty, we are backing that momentum. There are no flashy promises, but we are delivering what we said we would and are staying focused on what matters most.

When we are facing fiscal challenges in an uncertain world, coupled with a nationwide cost-of-living crisis, Territorians expect our government to spend within our means, just as households need to do. The Treasurer has shown responsibility with careful management and sensible spending whilst also planning for long-term growth. This budget gives families confidence, businesses certainty and communities security. We all need that. We must act responsibly as we build on the foundations of our Finocchiaro CLP government's first budget and continue to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our beautiful Territory lifestyle.

This year has a record education budget of $1.73bn, an increase of $65.3m from last year's budget. This is a record spend because to rebuild our economy, we must back and educate our next generation. We are rebuilding our economy through a targeted and strategic investment in vocational education and training.

In 2026–27 we are committing $30.2m to apprenticeships and traineeships alone. This investment is already delivering results, supporting more than 4,480 apprentices and trainees across 141 qualifications and 47 registered training organisations through our User Choice Funding model.

Under our Finocchiaro CLP government, funded placements for apprentices and trainees have increased by 3.8%, with an additional 164 apprentices in training in 2025. This is real growth delivering real opportunities and strengthening workforces. We will not take our foot off the throttle.

Starting a trade comes with up-front costs. That is why we are providing workwear and work gear assistance of up to $900 for first-year apprentices. This is practical, targeted cost-of-living support that removes barriers to entry and helps more Territorians take up a trade.

We are also backing employers through our accommodation support scheme, recognising the critical role they play in training the next generation. With $1.4m we are assisting apprentices and trainees who need to travel to attend trade school, ensuring that distance is not a barrier to opportunity. This delivers real cost-of-living relief, such as for Polly and Craig Hohn from Hohns Sheet Metal in Katherine who send their tradies to trade school in Darwin.

Through the Key Apprenticeship Program, we are supporting those entering the construction industry with up to $10,000 on completion of their trade, paid in annual instalments of $2,000. At the same time, we are supporting employers with $5,000 in the first 13 months to help cover the cost of mentoring and training young apprentices.

As a former tradie and small business owner, I believe there has never been a better time to take on an apprentice. Apprentices play a central role in rebuilding our economy. Tradies are the backbone of economic growth because they construct essential infrastructure, support small businesses and boost employment. Their work impacts nearly every sector—construction, oil and gas, mining and Defence. We need more tradies.

According to the latest report from the Powering Skills Organisation, a Jobs and Skills Council, we are short by 3,900 electricians for 2030. We need to get Territory kids into apprenticeships and traineeships with targeted investment in VET, VET coordinators in schools and by liaising with businesses in the community. We need to boost VET training.

We are steadfast in our commitment to ensure Territorians have access to skills training in the Territory, which is why we are investing $43.35m in our public providers, CDU and Batchelor, and $29.79m in private providers to deliver vocational education and training courses across more than 200 qualifications to more than 14,000 students. This will strengthen the NT workforce across all sectors of the economy. It allows us to collaborate with businesses like Intract and McMahon's Services that partnered with SEDA College and HIA to deliver Cert II in Construction Pathways, which has the largest cohort in Australia.

We are strengthening VET in-school offerings and bolstering school-based apprenticeships and traineeships with our skills plan, which is to be released soon. This plan looks at the learner and provides a successful pathway from school to an apprenticeship or traineeship to lifelong learning.

We are committed to our trade training centres, with the delivery of Sanderson High School, Centralian Secondary School in Alice Springs and the relocation of the Katherine Trades Training Centre which will be a game changer for tradies and businesses in the Big Rivers region.

There was no emphasis or plan under Labor, just more spending with poor VET completion rates. The NCVER apprenticeship completion data shows that completions were 54.3% under a previous CLP government compared with Labor's shameful 11.8%. No wonder there is a tradie deficit. We have a lot of work to do. As a previous tradie, I am putting a spotlight on this area and backing our apprentices and trainees to rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

No child should leave school without moving into a job or further study, and our government is committed to breaking down barriers that hinder students from doing so. In our skills and training plan we will build the capacity and capability of our students. We will bring back work experience and provide job-ready classes, giving kids the fundamentals of work life such as getting a tax file number, USI number, bank account,

white card and first-aid certificate. These things are necessary for employment, and we will implement them in our schools.

Our government is committed to having VET coordinators and industry partners in schools, supporting students with real career study and apprenticeship guidance. Our economy relies on our tradies, and we are backing them every inch of the way.

Education remains a cornerstone of our plan to restore our lifestyle and create safer communities. School attendance continues to be a key priority, with 24 school attendance officers funded and deployed across regional and remote communities. Improving attendance is critical to reducing crime, breaking cycles of disadvantage and ensuring children receive the education they need to build a better future.

At its heart this budget is about fairness, and few things are more fundamental to fairness than ensuring every child can read, write and work with numbers confidently. That is why we have committed $13.7m to lift literacy and numeracy outcomes. This is not just an education measure; it is a social and economic investment in the future of our communities. Once a child masters these foundational skills, they are not only better equipped for school but also for life.

I picked up on the Opposition Leader's contribution yesterday when she said that I should hang my head in shame over the education budget. I said yesterday that I am proud to stand here as the first minister in a long time without a degree in education. I have come from a VET background, and I have considerable education in that area. Those of you who have been to a hairdresser know that they are not only hairdressers, but also counsellors, psychologists and mentors—everything. Having been a hairdresser for 35 years and having run my own business for 25 years, I am well equipped for this role; I just do not have an education degree. I have a degree in life skills, which is far more important.

The extra boost of $65.3m in the Education budget is to show our commitment to education, making sure that children are the cornerstone of everything we do to get the Territory back on track.

There is an increase of 102 assistant teachers, 97 classroom teachers and 11 senior teachers. There are 46 vacancies for classroom teachers across the Territory, but last year there were 117. That number has also improved upon 2024.

Our Boosting Literacy and Numeracy Plan reflects a clear political choice to back evidence over ideology and to focus on what works. It is a system-wide reform designed to deliver consistency, accountability and results across every Northern Territory Government school. It recognises that equity must be at the centre of policy, especially for students in remote communities, who have too often been left behind by fragmented approaches from the previous Labor government.

This reform is grounded in the explicit teaching approach, which is proven to support strong learning outcomes and give teachers the support they need to break down complex ideas into clear, manageable steps.

I have seen this explicit teaching approach, and it is an 'I do, we do, you do'. No-one feels like they are failing the class. The teachers give the answer, the children repeat it and then they all say it together. It is about everyone learning together at the same pace; children who are less confident and children who are very confident all do it together. There is no shameful experience, and no-one has to put their hand up; it is a great way to become a lifelong learner.

This model builds confidence and independence in students. It restores confidence in classrooms and ensures that every student, regardless of postcode, has access to high-quality teaching. We began this work in Darwin, including professional development led by Dr Lorraine Hammond, at the start of the year and in Alice Springs at the start of last term, equipping teachers with practical tools to drive improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes.

That is what responsible, reform-driven government looks like—making deliberate choices to lift standards, restore accountability and deliver equity. Every child, no matter where they live, deserves access to education and the opportunity to succeed in it. Our CLP Finocchiaro government is committed to making sure every Territory child leaves school with the skills needed to get a job and have a bright future. We want to see a better future for all children.

We are also delivering practical programs that make a real difference in everyday life, such as a $3m investment into the swimming in schools program. Yesterday the Member for Arafura spoke about his

concerns that schools were paying for these programs out of their budget; that is not the case. I think Warruwi was one of the schools and Minjilang was the other. The department is paying for the swimming lessons.

Remote schools can tie swimming lessons in with an excursion to town. Last year students from remote schools in the Barkly visited Tennant Creek to do their lessons, then had a swimming carnival afterward.

These programs make sure schools are not doing things the same way as before; we need to change the status quo and work things a little differently.

They provide cost-of-living relief for parents through free, life-changing swimming lessons. Last year the Member for Braitling mentioned a child had saved another child from drowning in a backyard pool. We cannot put a figure on a life; even if only one life is saved, that $3m investment each year is well worth it. I was previously a swim instructor; it is amazing to see the joy on children's faces when they come in not knowing how to swim and leave knowing how to swim by the end of their one or two-week block, even if only for five metres. It truly is amazing.

In 2025 almost 18,000 students completed swimming and water safety lessons. That is 18,000 more students than under the previous Labor government. This is not just an Education initiative; it is a cost-of-living measure supporting families across urban, regional and remote areas. It equips children with essential life skills; I have spoken about the children who have saved other children's lives thanks to water safety and swimming. We continue to deliver on our election commitments.

Last week I announced the proposed plans for our $110m investment in the Palmerston Secondary Special Education School. It will provide a state-of-the-art learning environment for students with additional needs, and I am proud to confirm that construction will commence later this year. The facility will include 25 classrooms across five teaching blocks, a pool, a multipurpose hall and a range of outdoor play and sensory spaces. It will also feature specialist learning areas, including music, home economics, technology, arts, horticulture and an onsite farm—all under a CLP Finocchiaro government.

The school will include a mini supermarket and cafe to create real-world opportunities for students to develop job-ready skills through VET pathways, undertaking qualifications and developing skills in retail, business and hospitality. We are backing every child to succeed, regardless of the challenges they may face, and ensuring that they have access to high-quality education in a supportive environment.

As part of our broader secondary reforms, we are investing $9.5m to upgrade and modernise science facilities at Driver and Rosebery campuses. This will enable the delivery of a contemporary secondary science curriculum and ensure our students learn in facilities that match the best in the country.

Our CLP government is serious about ensuring that every child is in school and about dismantling barriers for families through cost-of-living relief; that is why our government has delivered $8.61m to government and non-government schools. We are supporting families with the $200 Back-to-School voucher which assists with essential costs, including uniforms and materials.

Last year we received feedback from families on the $200 Back-to-School voucher. We have since extended it to be used up until the end of term three. Not only do families have an extension of time for that voucher, but if one child does not need to use their voucher to the full extent and they have a sibling who does, parents can use that money across their children. That could not happen before, which seems crazy. If one child does not need the full $200, they can use it on the other.

This year the Back-to-School voucher scheme expanded to include geographically isolated children who attend boarding school interstate. Our government supports hardworking, geographically isolated families to meet costs associated with interstate boarding by providing $700,000 in financial assistance.

We cannot have a great education system without high-quality teachers. Our government is backing teachers with Teach Local scholarships, which provide $80,000 to NT residents completing initial teacher education degrees, and the attractive Teach Up North incentives, which encourage interstate students in their final year of university to complete their final placement in an NT Government school.

As a government committed to quality education outcomes, we do not forget to grow our own. That is why we are supporting Aboriginal NT residents to study a Bachelor of Teaching or Master of Teaching and are providing total scholarships of $210,000 to assist with the cost of study. In addition to this, we have our Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program, which is provided through CDU and Batchelor

Institute with $2.5m in funding to support educators to attain formal qualifications, just like Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, who in 1975 became the first Aboriginal teacher in the NT.

Aboriginal teachers are role models in our communities; they are changing lives for the better. I have been to many schools that teach bilingual education and have seen team teaching working. It is important that we get these kids to school and support them to stay in school.

You cannot be what you cannot see. For those children, having an Aboriginal educator in front of them may inspire them; they may think that is something they can do in the future.

Early childhood programs deliver lifelong benefits, including accelerating brain development, improving school readiness and strengthening literacy and numeracy outcomes. Children who access quality early learning are more likely to succeed at school and beyond. Investing in early childhood programs is linked to reducing crime and disadvantage; that is why we are investing in our early childhood workforce.

We are delivering targeted scholarships of up to $5,000 per year over five years for Certificate III and Diploma qualifications in early childhood education, strengthening pathways into critical sectors. We are actively supporting workforce growth to meet rising demand with dedicated funding for additional educators. We have committed an investment of $130,000 to deliver those scholarships and back the future of our workforce.

Quality care starts with quality educators, and we are setting high expectations through our Safe Start, Strong Futures plan. Unlike Labor, we have set clear, measurable targets and are delivering on them.

We have increased compliance and education capacity within the regulator, QECNT, with five additional officers to ensure all 235 early childhood services meet or exceed National Quality Standard quality area 2 for health and safety by June this year. When you focus on clear expectations and support, you can achieve a quality outcome.

We set an ambitious target of 85% for all services to meet or exceed the seven National Quality Standards. I am pleased to report that we have already surpassed that and are now working toward a revised target of 90% by the end of 2026.

This is in stark contrast to Labor, which failed to enforce the national law and, in the eight years it was in government, did not penalise a single service provider. That failure left children at risk and families without confidence in the system. The national law and penalties exist to assure and safeguard children, and we will make no apologies for putting our littlest Territorians and their families first. We will not make the same mistake, and providers must do better.

We are delivering cost-of-living relief for families, with a $5.98m investment in early childhood services to support affordability, maintain high-quality care and reduce out-of-pocket childcare fees that get passed onto families.

We are leading a nationwide conversation on safety, advocating for a review of national pool fencing standards to address risks of strangulation or children becoming trapped. We will continue to push for stronger protections because when it comes to children’s safety, there can be no compromise.

We must take a moment to reflect on Ebony Thompson and hold her and her parents, Jade and Floyd, in our thoughts. No family should ever have to endure the grief and lifelong consequences of a loss caused by poor practice. That is why our government is taking a stand and advocating for stronger standards, greater accountability and a system that puts children’s safety first—so that no parent has to walk this path again.

We are holding QECNT accountable, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to undertake important assessments and ratings under the national law and conduct ongoing compliance checks.

We are making targeted investments in remote communities where they are needed most. In Ali Curung, we are investing $3.5m to expand Families as First Teachers, expand preschool services and upgrade administration facilities; these were election commitments. I note the minister gave a shout-out to the principal, Chris, and the dedicated staff of Alekarenge School. Chris and his team do a fantastic job.

I will address some of the points that the Opposition Leader and the Deputy Opposition Leader raised about Alekarenge School. Under Labor, there was approximately an $8.7m commitment to Alekarenge; I want to know why they did not deliver it. Labor was in power for eight years. That is not something that just came on

all of a sudden in the last two years. Labor was in government for eight years and did not commit anything to Alekarenge; in fact, it failed Alekarenge School.

We worked with DLI. The minister and I went to the school; the minister has been there many times. We looked to see what that school needs. We looked at the FaFT and early childhood areas and the admin buildings, then came back and worked out what the school needed rather than just saying, 'Okay, well this is how much we are going to spend. Let's spend it.' When we came to government there was no money, and we had a ballooning debt. It is about fiscal responsibility and only spending money where you need it; you do not need to waste money. I spoke during Question Time about the savings we made on the Driver kiss-and-go.

We went to Alekarenge and had a look around, and DLI has done some assessments; we came back with a revised cost of $3.5m. That will fund an administration upgrade, preschool services and Families as First Teachers. We continue to invest in the school and in education outcomes across the Territory.

We are investing $14.2m into the Families as First Teachers program across 26 sites, ensuring children in remote and very remote communities have access to quality early learning. These programs provide the foundation for lifelong learning and ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed.

This Wet Season has tested the Territory in ways few could anticipate. We were confronted with seven separate weather events that were unprecedented in scale and intensity. Those separate weather events—I think about 8% of the population was affected from Darwin to Alice Springs. It was amazing; in my 36 years of living in Katherine I have never experienced a Wet Season like it.

In the face of that challenge our response must be more than reactive; it must be deliberate, forward-looking and grounded in responsibility. Future-proofing the Territory is not optional; it is a core priority of the Finocchiaro CLP government. That is why we established the $100m flood recovery fund. This is about more than repairing damage; it is about building resilience. It will restore critical roads and bridges, deliver flood mitigation works and invest in infrastructure designed to withstand the conditions we know will occur again.

We must look at building back better where we can. For too long, communities like Nauiyu have borne the brunt of repeated flooding without a clear path forward. After years of delay, we are committing $500,000 to the Nauiyu Future Plan, taking the first steps toward relocating the Nauiyu/Daly River community to higher ground. I was there last week to look at that site; there is power and water there. Other planners were looking at the area this week. It is about liaising with the traditional owners and people of Nauiyu, with government officials and town planners getting together—which happened earlier this week—and working out a plan to move forward.

There is no point rebuilding in the same place where it has flooded time and again. That $500,000 is to plan for the future of the town and keep people safe on higher ground. Families have been forced to leave their homes twice in a matter of weeks.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mrs HERSEY:** The plan provides certainty, dignity and the ability for people to remain connected to country whilst planning responsibly for the future.

We are also strengthening how we prepare for and respond to emergencies. A $2.5m investment in early warning technology, including a dedicated mobile app, will ensure Territorians receive timely alerts about floods, fires and cyclones. We are more than doubling our emergency surveillance drone capability, expanding our reach into remote areas and giving communities critical time to act.

In Katherine and Alice Springs, we are investing nearly $9m in flood mitigation and drainage works. These are practical measures that will make a real difference when water levels rise again, because we know they will. I have previously spoken about the flood mitigation works in Katherine. The floodgates were built for a one-in-20-year flood level, and you could see how well they worked through that flood. The flood in March was higher than in 2006, and they were only built for that one-in-20-year flood level. Some of that work will look at how we can raise that to combat the next flood.

We are investing $600,000 through the Jawoyn Association to begin detailed design work on the Maud Creek bridge. This is the first step toward restoring year-round access to Nitmiluk National Park for the Jodetluk

community and residents on the Nitmiluk side of Maud Creek, reconnecting communities and supporting local economies.

To support recovery more broadly, a $30.5m roads package has been fast-tracked through the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure, ensuring that rebuilding efforts are not delayed by process when communities need action.

We must be honest; we have not seen the last of these extreme weather events. Evacuations are disruptive, distressing and costly, but doing nothing would be far more costly in the long run. Planning for the future is not just prudent; it is essential. As the minister responsible for the fund, I have stood alongside communities across the Territory from Katherine and Alice Springs to Mataranka, Batchelor, Beswick, Nauiyu and Palumpa (Nganmarriyanga). I have heard firsthand the challenges people are facing, and I want to assure them that recovery will take time, but they will not be left behind.

This is what responsible government looks like—working in partnership with the Commonwealth, listening to communities and delivering the investments needed to rebuild stronger, safer and more resilient than before. This budget reflects a government focused on delivery, committed to reform and determined to rebuild the economy, restore our lifestyle and secure a better future for all Territorians.

This budget is a budget for everyday Territorians. I thank and commend the Treasurer for this budget.

**Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Treasurer's Appropriation Bill, a budget that is responsible, disciplined and focused on delivering real outcomes for Territorians, particularly for the people of Wanguri and the northern suburbs.

This is a budget delivered in challenging and uncertain times; Territorians face rising costs, businesses are navigating global instability and families are making difficult decisions every day about how they manage their household budgets. We are not immune to global pressures, whether it is high fuel prices, supply chain disruptions or inflationary pressures; what sets this budget apart is that it meets those challenges head-on without losing control of the Territory's finances. It restores stability and drives economic growth—we came from the bottom and now rank fourth—in a way that is responsible, sustainable and focused on the long term.

For far too long the Northern Territory lived beyond its means. We had years of escalating deficits, years of climbing debt and years when borrowing became the difficult solution, not a last resort. Borrowing was not used to build infrastructure or create opportunities; it was used to fund day-to-day government operations. That is not sustainable.

This budget marks a clear turning point; there is a return to operating surpluses across the forward estimates, a reduction in debt and a move away from borrowing to pay wages. That is fundamental. When a government is borrowing to keep the lights on, it is not planning for the future; it is mortgaging it. This government is restoring discipline; that matters not only today, but also for the long-term prosperity of the Territory.

Debt can sometimes feel abstract, but it is not. Every Territorian understands how borrowing works. When you go to a bank and take out a loan, it comes with obligations; it must be paid back and with interest.

When borrowing is used to buy a home, start a business or invest in something that grows your future, that is responsible. When borrowing is used to fund everyday expenses and there is no plan or discipline, it becomes dangerous. Interest does not stop; it compounds over time and begins to crowd out everything else.

That is what we saw with the Territory—a debt blowout followed by increasing interest payments. That money could have gone to frontline services but was instead redirected to service debt. Every Territorian knows what happens if that continues; if you keep maxing out a credit card, eventually the bank steps in and forecloses. Governments are not households, but the principle is the same; you cannot continue on an unsustainable path without consequences. Had we continued down that road, the consequences would have been severe—reduced services, investment and confidence in our economy. That is what was happening.

This government has made a clear choice to stop the bleeding and restore control. For the first time in a long time, Territorians feel the pressure easing. They can feel that the noose around their neck is loosening.

Fiscal discipline alone is not enough. You cannot cut your way out of debt; you must grow your way out. That is what the budget does. The Territory's economy is forecast to grow, with gross state product increasing by 5.8% in 2026–27. That growth is driven by increased exports, energy production and strategic industry investment.

The Territory is uniquely positioned to benefit from global conditions. As outlined in the Northern Territory Economy paper, high global energy prices, while challenging, can also drive increased investment and income for the Territory. This government understands that, and we are backing our strengths—energy, mining, agriculture, Defence and tourism—because when these sectors grow, the entire Territory benefits. It means more jobs, opportunities and confidence.

Budgets are not just about big numbers; they are about local outcomes. This budget delivers for Wanguri. This is backed by $4.25bn in infrastructure programs to support jobs and growth across the Territory, including the people of Wanguri who work around the Territory. These investments matter locally; they create local jobs, support local businesses and strengthen our community.

One of the most important measures of my electorate is the extension of the $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant to 30 September 2027. The other day I heard from a young gentleman struggling to move out of his parents' home with his deposit. Extending that gives him another year to back himself and save more money so that he has more equity in a home. It is practical and gives extra time for families to save. They can plan better and feel financially stable.

That extra year makes a difference in whether they enter the housing market or miss out. It allows families to consolidate equity and build security; that is what home ownership in the Territory is about. We want security, stability and foundations for homes. We want people to stay in the Territory, particularly the young generation, instead of leaving for the interstate market.

If we are serious about rebuilding the Territory we must be serious about investing in people. The Northern Suburbs Youth Hub initiative announced by the Minister for Youth, Seniors and Equality is a step forward. We need early intervention to provide young people with mentorship, education pathways, mental health support, employment opportunities and, most importantly, a sense of direction.

I thank my neighbouring electorate members as well—the Members for Casuarina, Sanderson and Karama. As the northern suburbs team, we understand that the northern suburbs and Darwin area youths require this youth hub to make better choices. We want to empower the next generation. I thank them for their support with that. I was proud to announce the youth hub, which will be in my electorate, with the minister a couple of weeks ago. We look forward to finally putting a shovel in the dirt. When we get things right, we reduce pressure across the entire system.

Investment in youth connects directly to something else that defines Territorians—our sporting culture and community lifestyle. Another announcement by the minister for Sport was the $3m invested into Tracy Village. I thank the Member for Casuarina, who joined me in this combined election commitment because we understood that the government was limited in funds and resources this term. We collaboratively decided that a joint investment for the northern suburbs would be best for Territorians.

The minister announced that the $3m would be used to upgrade the facilities at Tracy Village. Tracy Village is not just a facility; it is a community hub, a place where families gather and where young people play sports such as football, cricket, basketball and soccer. Soccer is the biggest winner in stage one, so we look forward to that team having their own facilities. This investment will upgrade the sporting club and ensure the space continues to serve our growing community.

Sport plays a vital role because it builds health, discipline and connection, and it keeps our young people engaged and on track.

Community safety is a priority in Wanguri. This budget delivers a record $1.7bn investment into law and order; it delivers more police officers, more boots on the ground and greater visibility in our suburbs, meeting the expectations we took to the election to reduce crime.

Enforcement is not enough. That is why we are investing in prevention through the youth hub, sports and community programs—because every young person we keep on track is one less entering the justice system. That is balance.

The people of Wanguri are feeling real cost-of-living pressures. This budget delivers over $290m in targeted relief. Yes, some of the initiatives are continued from Labor, but how great is it that we are continuing them so that people who are invested in the Territory remain in the Territory …

**Mr Charls:** It was started by the CLP a long time ago.

**Mrs CARLSON:** There you go, people—fun fact.

It is an honour that one of the cost-of-living initiatives was not only an election commitment, but also a tribute. Sally and Ash Lawrence are constituents in my electorate. They lost their beautiful daughter, Skylar, to meningococcal disease. There are no words that can fully capture their loss, but what they have done since that extraordinary time in their life is turned grief into advocacy. They fought so that no other family would have to endure what they did. Because of their advocacy, this government has continued to fund the meningococcal B vaccination program.

It was great to hear the Minister for Health in Question Time say that 18,000 young people have taken up that vaccination. That is 18,000 more lives we continue to have in the Territory.

This budget restores discipline, grows the economy, supports families and invests in our youth. It strengthens communities and delivers for Wanguri. It is responsible, focused and working.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege to support the Treasurer's 2026–27 budget. On behalf of our whole team, it is a fantastic budget.

I congratulate the Treasurer and our whole team on bringing forward a fiscally responsible budget. As the Member for Wanguri said, it delivers for everyday Territorians, not just for narrow, sectional interests.

In listening to previous speeches on this Bill from other members of the Assembly, there are a couple of key comments that I fully agree with and wish to discuss. First, yes, it is now the responsibility of our CLP government to own the ongoing development and implementation of the Territory's budget. We do not shirk from that; we take it on board.

I know the Member for Johnston and others alluded to this—budgets are ultimately about choice and where we decide to put our priorities; those decisions have to be made. I agree that budgets are about choice; we have to make choices and justify them.

Our CLP government takes ownership of this and our previous budget, and we are proud to do so. This second budget delivers on phase 2 of our plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique lifestyle, as we promised Territorians at the last election. I am not sure what alternative policy universe the Labor Party and crossbench members are living in, especially when the Leader of the Opposition and her Labor colleagues—including the new Member for Nightcliff—have the temerity to parrot that we have no plan.

My god, it is unbelievable. I do not know how many times I have to show them our plan, which was endorsed by an overwhelming number of electorates in the 2024 election—17 out of 25, to be precise; we like to be precise around here. As a reminder, our first budget tackled Labor's time-limited programs and funding cliffs, project cost blowouts, broken promises and unsafe streets. As the Treasurer said, in just 18 months we have turned the books, the economy and our collective futures around for the better.

Here are some facts that the Member for Nightcliff should note before continuing to recite the spin of his Labor Party comrades. For the first time in as long as many of us can remember, the government infrastructure program is fully funded. That is a concept those opposite do not seem to understand—fully funded; they cannot seem to grasp it. We will continue trying to educate them; that is our role. Maybe, Treasurer, we should offer them budget 101 courses, but I would advise you to use pictures, as I do not think their basic understanding of maths and finance is good enough for them to read the budget papers. We might have to do a bit of education on that.

This 2026–27 budget delivers a $4.25bn infrastructure program to build roads, housing, schools, police facilities and economic opportunity across the Territory—I wish the Member for Daly was here, but he is not—including 59% of this year's program allocated to our important remote and regional areas. This includes funding for projects in the electorates of members opposite, such as Daly. For example, quoting from the Treasurer's speech, this funding includes $278m for Tanami Road sealing and upgrades; $240m for highway upgrades and flood resilience; $201m for Central Arnhem Road; $133m for Outback Way; and $608m for remote housing, land servicing and essential services across the Territory. There you go.

What is pleasing about this budget, especially for the residents in my electorate of Karama, is that it is true to our commitment to reduce crime. It invests a record $1.73bn in police, courts and Corrections. We will

continue to put victims and community safety, including vulnerable children, ahead of offenders, and we will redouble our efforts to deliver our crime reduction strategy.

Residents in my electorate of Karama welcomed the announcement that this budget supports the rollout of a brand-new 212-strong police public safety officer workforce, backed by an additional $48m over four years and $15.8m ongoing funding. The workforce will provide visible patrols in public places such as the Karama and Malak shopping centres and public housing complexes to reduce antisocial and criminal behaviour.

This is our initiative. I am waiting for someone from the opposition to say that this is a Labor Party initiative we are copying. Labor has never done this. This is a CLP initiative, and it is our choice. Let me repeat: our CLP government proudly owns this budget.

I agree with the Member for Johnston and others that budgets are ultimately about choice and where we decide to put our priorities. Unlike those opposite, our choice is to stay true to our election commitment and reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore the Territory lifestyle.

We also choose to deliver a fiscally responsible budget that delivers an operating surplus in our general government sector. It means that for the first time since 2022–23, the Territory will not be borrowing money to pay wages. We have put away the credit card and are now paying our own way. What a responsible way to do things, because let's not forget, the money we are spending is not yours or mine; it is Territorians' money. We have to look after their money, be respectful and not waste it.

Unlike those opposite, we unashamedly choose to support our private sector and encourage private sector investment. We have all our key industry sectors, and we are creating a business environment that allows our local private sector businesses to thrive and employ more Territorians. That is what we are looking into for growth.

This is for the benefit of the Member for Nightcliff. He might need to be aware that his crossbench colleague the Member for Johnston chooses not to back our private sector as she is on record saying, and I quote from *Hansard*:

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

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Quiet, please.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER:** Unbelievable. I am just quoting.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Let the Member for Karama speak.

**Mr O'GALLAGHER:** I listened to everyone in silence, but they cannot seem to extend the same courtesy.

When I heard your speech yesterday—this is for the Member for Nightcliff—I was concerned that you share the same views. You conveyed that you wanted a much bigger government spend without any ideas as to how this was to be funded. Fiscal responsibility seems to be a non-consideration in your proposal, and we choose otherwise.

While I am speaking about the Member for Nightcliff, being nice and gentle to him, we must be honest. How can I not refer to his and the Labor Party's policy backflip to suddenly not support the Lee Point development after eight years of support? This has sent a shockwave of uncertainty to investors and created a total lack of trust in the Labor Party's economic credentials. They will be grateful that the CLP is in government because we are certain. We have given them certainty that we are right behind them; we want them to grow and thrive, and we believe in them.

It only diminishes the Labor Party's credibility when you call for more housing in the Territory, then fight against the opportunity to deliver 800 extra homes—shame. Do not come to me saying that we need more housing, then go and knock off an opportunity to develop 800 houses. Your priorities are all wrong.

Despite the confused bleatings of the opposition and crossbench, our government owns responsibility for delivering this fiscally responsible budget. We are proud to deliver on our commitments to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. We are committed to locking in growth, certainty and security. Many residents of my electorate urge our government to stay the course; we will stay the course. We have made a good start, and we acknowledge that we have a lot more work to do.

I recall a wonderful question put forward during Question Time by the Member for Arafura to the Treasurer. It asked whether the government would fund the Member for Karama's election commitments of providing $500,000 towards the development of the Darwin City Council's multigenerational regional park facility at Malak Oval and $200,000 to support a grant application by the Holy Family parish to develop a multifunctional hall for the community.

That was one of the best questions I have ever heard. I almost thought I had written it and given him my own Dorothy Dixer, but I did not. I give him full credit because I thought it was a great question. The Treasurer said, 'Yes, we will fund it'. The details still have to be worked through, but I now know that those two election commitments are funded within the budget. That is wonderful. We will work out the timing with everything else and so on.

When we make election commitments—including in our plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore lifestyle—we own them and stay with them. All our members advocate for their own electoral commitments, as we should, but we do not put them up willy-nilly; we go there directly. This government accepts that when we make a commitment, the people should trust their MLA to come to them and advocate for it. You may not get it when you want it, but that does not matter; we are all committed to it.

I thank the Treasurer, commend the Bill and thank all of my colleagues.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, this is a budget for everyday Territorians, but before I dive into that, I have a few reflections on some of the contributions so far.

Member for Nightcliff, just a word of advice; you sit behind the Opposition Leader, so when she is delivering her speech, you are directly in frame. Be careful and look attentive. If you were to do something, like roll your eyes as she talks about things that you know are not true from your time in DIPL, be sure to control your face, and do not let it show. It is often getting filmed, and she would like to put it on social media, but she does not want to have you in frame with those expressions. Make sure to keep your composure.

We met one of your constituents at lunchtime today, who was concerned about antisocial behaviour in public housing because the last member was not interested. He has not seen you around yet, so he came to us. Do not worry because we are working on it. From your contribution, I heard your robust support for public housing, so I take that as a vote of confidence for more public housing in Nightcliff. I am happy to back you and write you a support letter; just show us the vacant land, and we will organise to build more public housing in Nightcliff. That would be a great win for you and your constituents.

The contributions of the Labor members remind me of an old joke: why do bank robbers rob banks? Because that is where the money is. They do not seem to understand that governments do not have their own money, nor do they go out and earn money. It is not like a household or a small business where you earn money and then spend it on whatever you like. The only money that the government has is taxpayers' money. Yes, it is true that in the Territory 70% of taxpayer's money comes from those living in Western Australia, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. Nevertheless, it is taxpayers' money, and we need to be careful stewards of it.

They seem to think that the role of government spending is to stimulate, but it is not. The role of government is to perform the functions of government. The number one priority is keeping people safe. The second priority is running the courts so that we have an orderly execution of justice and processing of contract, which means businesses can engage in contracts, buying and selling, forming partnerships and transacting. The correct role of government is to set out the rules of the game, lay out the lines and act as the umpire; the rest of the time it must get out of the way and let people transact.

If you have people who want to engage in business, let them; it is a profit and loss system. The profit incentivises risk-taking, and the loss creates aversion and brings sensibility. That system works quite well when it is not interfered with.

In the Member for Gwoja's contribution he was pushing for a water tax. If he did not have double standards he would have none at all. Given the profligacy of Labor government members and their inability to grapple with budget constraints, in the back of their minds they must have thought that if they swung a third term and

the budget started getting out of control, and if the feds did not bail them out, they could always bring in a land tax. Their mates in Victoria did that.

**Mrs Carlson:** Pay mind to that.

**Mrs Zio:** No, we do not want that.

**Mr KERLE:** Yes, we do not want a land tax in the Territory.

**Mr Yan:** We will bring no land tax in.

**Mr KERLE:** No land tax here. That would be an admission of failure, just as the Victorian Labor government has failed. Hopefully, a Liberal government will start cleaning up the mess later this year.

They talked about taking on debt to stimulate the economy. That is crazy. The only good debt is debt to build infrastructure that will pay a return. There was some debt taken on in the history of the NT to build a railway. If we build beef and gas roads, railways to help transportation, wharves and infrastructure, that is good debt because it helps the economy and will pay a dividend to Territorians for decades to come. Infrastructure has a long life span.

The former government took on debt to build vanity projects. Apparently the former Chief Minister and Member for Fannie Bay, according to media reporting, walked a proposal in to Cabinet under his arm for the Turf Club. We love the Turf Club—not me, but a lot of Territorians love to go to the races and have a flutter. I have been there; it is popular. I do not get excited, but a lot of Territorians do and I respect that. Was it $10m or $12m of taxpayers' dollars? His former chief of staff said, 'This is the letter you need to send us'. Every time those opposite lecture us—if they did not have double standards, they would have no standards at all.

I could go on, but I have a limited amount of time. Some of those opposite are living in the land of make believe. Their contributions suggest that you can let criminal offenders out onto the streets, close the jails and youth detention centres and think, 'I will take all that money and spend it on social programs. Then all these violent criminals that we have just released onto the streets will magically transform into law-abiding citizens, sit in the shade of a tree and sing *Kumbaya*.' I do not know what planet these people are living on.

There is a reason the prison population is where it is and why we had to invest in Corrections. Even the previous government, which was loath to lock up any criminals, ended up having to jam the Corrections system full of people. It overflowed and the previous government still refused to invest in it, so they stuck everyone into police watch houses and made them completely unfit for purpose.

That will not occur under this government; we believe in sensible investment and taking a measured approach. We will not be closing youth detention centres or prisons and reallocating that money to fantasies. We live in the real world where people who commit criminal offences and are found guilty by the judiciary after the appropriate legal process will face consequences. Part of that could include detention in a jail, which is appropriate.

The number one thing that those on the other side always leave out is that they worry about putting the rights of criminals first. What about the rights of victims and the community? We will always keep the government's responsibility to keep the community safe front of mind. That is what this budget delivers—a sensible budget for the everyday Territorian, focused on keeping the community safe and implementing foundations to recover and rebuild.

We touched on public housing this week; we had the petition on Tuesday. The number of public housing assets that get damaged and sometimes destroyed beyond economic recovery by tenants who do not respect the property, their neighbours—I apologise, I forgot to mention that it is often visitors; it is not necessarily the tenants. But we all have a role to play.

Some properties are so badly damaged that they require $60,000, $70,000 or $100,000 worth of renovations. Some of them are beyond economic repair. For every 10 houses that sustain damage to that level, we could build another house.

In my electorate of Blain alone, over the last five years, the number of properties that have been forced to sit empty for six, eight or 12 months at a time because of damage caused by the tenants, visitors or whoever—we could have built so much more public housing.

We need public housing in the Territory; we have a lot of disadvantaged people and long waitlists. The public policy coming from two governments, over the last 15 years, has resulted in the destruction of a lot of public housing, including Kurringal Flats, Shiers Street in the Narrows and Davoren Circuit in my electorate of Blain. There is Musgrave Crescent in Coconut Grove, where a large number of units were knocked down.

A large amount of public housing has been demolished and rebuilt for other purposes and has not been replaced. Those tenants were tipped out into the Karama, Blain and Drysdale electorates, with little thought given to long-term consequences.

We need sensible investment in public housing. That will not happen if we have people destroying property with no regard for it.

I will be positive now. I thank the Treasurer for this sensible and considered budget. It was criticised for not having a signature centrepiece or vision. When I heard that, all I could think of was *Utopia* and Rhonda saying, 'Where is the vision? I want to launch something. Don't worry about actually building or delivering. I want to have a launch.' But no, this is a sensible budget. Whatever we promise, we deliver.

We will not have a $5bn or $6bn infrastructure program that exists in fantasy land. We have a solid infrastructure program that is funded. The things on there will get done. For the electorate of Blain, I am happy to announce, things will get done.

To the Palmerston Rugby Union Crocs, you will be getting your lights. I committed to getting those lights, and that is happening. I look forward to making a formal announcement and starting work on that in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Palmerston Raiders, your bore is happening. They use a lot of water; they have two large fields and a lot of grass, and they are currently on town water. They were paying in the order of $30,000 to $40,000 a year in water, then Power and Water rang and said, 'Sorry guys, we realised you're on an old plan that has not existed for a while. I am sorry to say that your water bill is about to double.' Last year they started paying $70,000 to $80,000 a year, which was a big hit to a completely volunteer-run, amazing local club in Palmerston.

That bore is in the budget, and once it is in place it will be solar powered—go solar energy. They will only be paying to run the sprinklers, which they already pay for in their electricity bill. They will not pay for town water.

When we came to government we were faced with funding cliffs everywhere in the budget—things that had to be funded but were hidden by not extending contracts. That included things like the milk run—the plane that goes up and down the highway, ferrying public servants like police, social workers and others to important jobs. That contract was running out at the end of 2024, and there was no renewal for it in the budget. Things had been hidden off the budget and projects were out of control—that has been resolved.

This is not a budget where we are hiding things in corners, putting the rats and mice in the back of the cupboard; what is there is there. This is a sensible budget for everyday Territorians. We have reduced the deficit from 22% of the budget, which—I do not know the number—would be on the order of $1bn or more, down to 4%. In the forward estimates we see that we will start paying down the debt.

The golden rule of public accounting, if you want a polity that will last the test of time, is that government expenditure should grow more slowly than private sector expenditure. If the private sector is growing more quickly than the public sector, then the public sector will always have a revenue base from which to fund its operations, and it will never face fiscal insolvency, which is the worst thing that can happen.

It took eight years to get into the budget black hole that we found when we came to government. We will not fix that debt overnight, but by keeping a tight handle on costs at the same time as growing the economy, we can start to pay down the lost eight years.

I commend this budget to the Assembly.

**Mr PATEL (Casuarina):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the 2026 budget, and I reject that this budget has no reason.

What we heard from the Opposition Leader was not a serious alternative; it was not a plan or roadmap. It was the same old Labor speech: blame the CLP; ignore Labor's record; pretend the last eight years did not happen; and hope Territorians forget who created the mess.

Territorians have not forgotten the crime; debt; delays; projects announced, reannounced and revoted but not properly delivered; businesses left struggling; families feeling unsafe; and the workers, shop owners, tradies, teachers, nurses, police and everyday Territorians who carried the cost of Labor's failures.

Labor had eight years to manage the budget, reduce crime, build houses and infrastructure, grow the economy and create confidence. After eight years, what did Labor leave for us? Debt, delay and decline. This budget is different. It is a budget for everyday Territorians. It reduces crime, rebuilds the economy and restores the Territorian lifestyle.

It is not a fantasy budget; it is not a budget for glossy announcements with no funding behind them. It is a responsible budget that is honest and deals with reality.

I acknowledge the Treasurer, Hon Bill Yan MLA, for bringing a disciplined, practical and responsible budget. I acknowledge the leadership of Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro and every Cabinet minister working across Police, Health, Education, Housing, Infrastructure, Business, Tourism, Corrections, Children and Families, Multicultural Affairs, Parks, Sports, Energy and regional development.

This is a team Territorian budget; it is the Finocchiaro CLP government budget, and it puts the Territory first. That is why I say that this budget is for everyday Territorians. It is written for not only economists and accountants but also the parent trying to get children to school, the nurse finishing a late shift at Royal Darwin Hospital, the police officer on the street at night, the teacher in the classroom, the apprentice buying tools, the senior watching the power bill and the small business owner wondering when the customers will come through the door.

A good budget must do two things at the same time: it must help people today, and it must protect tomorrow. Labor forgot that second part; this government is doing both. The total spending in this budget for the non-financial public sector, including net capital investment, is $12.78bn in 2026–27. The total revenue is $10.7bn. That means every dollar must be treated carefully, work hard and go where it matters most. That is why this budget puts the largest spend into frontline services.

Health is about 20% of total expenditure and is funded with about $2.6bn. Education makes up about 14% of total expenditure at $1.7bn, including $1bn for government schools, $352m for non-government education and $121m for training and higher education. Public order and safety makes up about 14% of total expenditure, with more than $1.7bn to make our communities safer, including $654m for police. Housing and community amenities makes up about 14%, with $1.8bn to support urban and remote housing and help Territorians enter the housing market. Economic affairs makes up about 14%, with $1.8bn to support a stronger economic future. Social protection makes up about 7%, with $832m to support safer and more resilient communities. Transport makes up about 7% and the infrastructure program includes over $2bn for roads and transport projects. On top of that, the capital works program has $4.3bn to invest in infrastructure across the Territory.

When Labor says that this budget has no plan, I say, 'Look at where the money is going'. It is going to Health, Education, Police, housing, roads, flood recovery, jobs and economic growth. That is not a budget without reason; it is a budget for everyday Territorians.

Let us compare the record. In 2016–17 net debt was about $2.7bn and the fiscal deficit was $794m. In 2017–18 Labor's budget showed the net debt-to-revenue ratio rising from 58% to 87% by 2020–21. In 2018–19 Labor delivered a general government operating deficit of $603m, a non-financial public sector deficit of about $1.2bn and net debt of $4.5bn. In 2019–20 the net debt was projected at $6.2bn, with the net debt-to-revenue ratio rising from 93% to 114%. In 2020–21 net debt was projected at $8.4bn, rising to $12bn by 2023–24. The net debt-to-revenue ratio was projected to rise from 132% to 179%. In 2021–22 net debt was forecast at $9bn with the ratio at 122% rising to 166% by 2024–25. In 2022–23 net debt was $8.71bn with a ratio of 115%. In 2023–24 net debt was $9.23bn with a ratio of 113%, and the fiscal deficit was $1.13bn. In Labor's 2024–25 budget net debt was $11.05bn with a net debt-to-revenue ratio of 126%, and the fiscal deficit reached $1.59bn.

That is a record. The deficit continued to grow, projects were delayed, confidence was damaged and Territorians paid the price.

This 2026 budget changes the direction. It shows a $95m general government operating surplus in 2025–26. We finally have hope with this government. The budget shows the temporary operating deficit at $42m in 2026–27 and a return to surplus from 2027–28. It shows the fiscal balance improving from a $1.06bn deficit in 2026–27 to a small deficit of only $5m by 2029–30. It shows net debt of $12.56bn in 2026–27. Importantly,

net debt is now projected to be about $1.17bn lower by 2029–30 than was projected in the 2025 budget. That is responsible management, budget repair and a government that is getting the Territory back on track.

Debt is not just a number in a budget paper. I commend the Member for Wanguri for using her financial skills to explain it, using the example of when a person borrows money for a home loan and what they are earning; that was the best example.

I want to explain it in simple language. If a family earns $100,000 a year, they can manage a reasonable home loan. They can pay their mortgage, buy groceries, pay school costs, put fuel in the car and plan for the future. If the family keeps borrowing, without increasing their income, repayments get heavier, the interest bill becomes bigger, credit cards get maxed out and banks start asking questions. Suddenly, there is less money for their children, school, sports, emergencies and the future.

The government is no different. Good debt builds roads, schools, hospitals, police stations, houses and infrastructure. It grows the economy. Bad debt pays the day-to-day bills with borrowed money. Bad debt uses a credit card to pay the mortgage every month. That is not a plan; that is a warning sign.

This budget is responsible because it gets the operating budget under control whilst still investing in the services Territorians need.

Labor members say that there is no cost-of-living relief in this budget. That is incorrect. This budget delivers more than $290m in concessions, subsidies and targeted household support. That includes $225m in power and water concessions and subsidies, Back-to-School vouchers, sports vouchers, Learn to Swim vouchers, free swimming lessons, support for seniors, support for apprentices, free TAFE and vocational training for eligible Territorians, home ownership support and fuel relief measures to help reduce pressure at the bowser.

Labor can dismiss this if it likes, but for parents paying school costs, it matters. It matters for seniors watching every dollar, families keeping children in sport, households paying power bills and first-year apprentices getting started. In my electorate of Casuarina families know that every dollar counts. Groceries, power bills, sports and school costs are expensive; they add up.

This budget gives practical help when families feel the pressure. Because this budget is for everyday Territorians, local examples matter. In Casuarina it means safer shopping centres and car parks and stronger support for small businesses. It means that schools, families and community facilities are part of the plan. It means health, hospital access and local safety remain front and centre. It means lifestyle, parks, roads and community amenities matter. It means housing, transport and young families building their future. It means lifestyle, planning and access to the natural environment we love. That is what people want from the budget; they want to see themselves in it. They want to know that it will make their daily lives better.

Crime affects everything in our lives. It affects the cost of living, small business, tourism and investment. It affects whether families stay in the Territory, whether seniors feel confident to go out of an afternoon and whether children can enjoy the lifestyle we love. That is why this budget invests more than $1.7bn into public order and safety, including $654m for police. It supports our police, courts, Corrections and community safety. It supports victims. It includes $262m for new and upgraded Corrections infrastructure, including new work camps in Darwin and Katherine. No-one celebrates more prison beds, but the government must protect the community, manage offenders properly and support real rehabilitation.

This government is dealing with reality. I personally know what it means when staff feel unsafe and customers choose what time they shop. I know what it means when families ask whether it is safe to go somewhere, where to park and if they can bring their kids. That should not be normal in the Northern Territory. This budget is about making our communities safe again.

Health is also front and centre; this budget invests about $2.6bn in health services. That includes an increase of hospital beds, improved ambulance services, aeromedical retrieval services, hospital equipment and stronger frontline care. It includes ongoing funding to open and operate the new 32-bed multipurpose modular ward at Royal Darwin Hospital. It supports St John Ambulance and frontline emergency care. When someone calls 000, they need to know that help is coming. That is not political; that is basic and critical—a life and death choice.

For people in Casuarina, Royal Darwin Hospital is not just a building; it is where families go when their lives become serious. This budget backs that service and the workers who deliver it.

Education is the key to the Territory's future, as I have repeated many times in this Chamber. This budget invests $1.7bn into education; I am proud of that. It supports our schools, students, families, training and the future of our workforce.

When I visit Dripstone middle school, Nakara Primary School, Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School and Henbury School in my electorate, I see the future of the Territory. I see hardworking teachers, committed parents and students with talent, kindness and potential. Those children deserve safe streets, strong schools, training pathways, jobs, homes and a Territory where they can build their future. That is what this budget is about, and I am proud that we are investing in education.

Infrastructure must be real; we have a lot of challenges in the Northern Territory. Labor support was too often about announcements—announce a project, put it in a booklet, tell the community it is coming but do not properly fund it, then accuse the next government of cutting it when they clean up the books.

This government is putting forward a funded and deliverable capital works program. The 2026-27 capital works program is $4.3bn. It includes over $2bn for roads and transport, $100m for the flood recovery fund and $30.5m for the road repair package. It includes investment in housing, schools, health facilities, Police infrastructure, Corrections infrastructure, water infrastructure and economic-enabling infrastructure.

Infrastructure is not just concrete and asphalt; it is safety, access, jobs, opportunity and lifestyle. In my electorate of Casuarina, infrastructure means local roads around Dripstone middle school; safety on Tiwi Gardens Road; better access around Rockland Drive and Royal Darwin Hospital; transport connections between Muirhead and Lyons; and safer bus stops, lighting and local amenities. That is why infrastructure matters to everyday Territorians.

Housing is economic policy. If people cannot find a home, they cannot stay. If workers cannot find a home, businesses cannot grow. If families cannot build a future here, the Territory loses people. This budget invests $1.8bn to support urban and remote housing and extends the HomeGrown Territory and FreshStart New Home grants to 30 September 2027. We just heard the Treasurer say that it might be extended until 2028, which I am looking forward to. I thank him for that announcement.

More homes means more families can stay in the Territory, more workers can come and business can grow. It means more confidence in the Territory. It matters to young families building their future in Lyons and Muirhead. It matters to Nakara and Tiwi residents who want safe, liveable suburbs. It matters to people in Brinkin and Lee Point, who value lifestyle and good planning. The Territory cannot grow without housing.

This budget backs the economy and supports mining; energy; construction; tourism; Defence-related industry; agriculture; small businesses; international education; migration and workforce; advanced manufacturing; and marine industry. It backs the Northern Marine Complex, the Darwin ship lift, land release, water infrastructure, trade and investment.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr PATEL:** These are not slogans; these are foundations for jobs. Territory GSP is forecast to grow by 5.8% in 2026–27 driven by Ichthys and Darwin LNG operating at, or near, full capacity. Growth means jobs, confidence and more capacity to fund services.

The contrast is clear: Labor left debt, and the CLP government is restoring discipline. Labor left delay, and the CLP is delivering funded infrastructure. Labor left decline, and the CLP is rebuilding confidence in the Territory. Labor normalised crime, and the CLP is putting community safety first. Labor made announcements, and the CLP is focused on delivering.

For everyday Territorians this budget means practicality. It means help with bills, stronger schools, better health services, more police, more housing opportunities, safer communities and better infrastructure. It means that small businesses can have more confidence in the Territory, and families can get back to enjoying the Territory lifestyle. This is a budget for people who work hard, raise families, run businesses, teach children, care for patients, protect the community and build the Territory.

Labor had eight years, which is a long time; it had its chance and failed. Now, the Finocchiaro CLP government is getting on with the job. We are reducing crime, rebuilding the economy, restoring the Territory

lifestyle and cleaning up Labor's mess. We are delivering practical relief, real infrastructure, jobs and a stronger future.

I thank the Treasurer for his disciplined work on this budget. I thank the Chief Minister and every Cabinet minister for their leadership and focus on this budget.

This budget is not about politics for politics' sake; it is about the Territory, families and the future. I support the 2026–27 budget, the Treasurer and the Finocchiaro CLP government.

I reject Labor's attempt to rewrite history. The only failed budget that the Territory should condemn is Labor's eight-year legacy of debt, delay and decline.

This budget is about discipline, delivery, safety, growth, families and the future.

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 40, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

**CRIMINAL PROCEDURE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**
**Serial 58**

Continued from 18 March 2026.

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

**Mr YOUNG (Daly):** Madam Speaker, we all want a justice system in the Territory that works—one that is fair, efficient and reduces harm in our communities.

Labor supports practical steps that help our courts and legal services manage their growing workload, but let me be clear: these changes are being made because the system is under real strain. That strain did not happen by accident.

While there are some positive amendments to criminal procedures under this Bill, what we are seeing are bandaid solutions. They might help move matters along faster, but they do not address the deeper issues driving crime, over-incarceration or pressure on the courts.

You cannot legislate your way out of a system under pressure without investing in the people, services and communities that hold it together. Right now the CLP is focused on reactive, punitive responses without the planning or support to match.

This legislation does not reduce crime, make our community safer, strengthen the legal workforce or improve long-term outcomes for victims or offenders. If anything, there is a real risk that it increases complexities, delays and pressures on a system already stretched. The CLP has failed to work with the community, experts and frontline services time and again to implement meaningful reform that will prevent harm or crime from occurring in the first place. The CLP has failed to increase funding, resourcing or support for legal services managing increased prisoner populations or persons before the courts.

This Bill shows the CLP's disinterest in transparency and accountability. Key stakeholders were not given enough time to properly scrutinise legislation that has real consequences for Territorians. It is unclear whether the working groups' advice was adequately reflected, given the number of submissions that recommended amendments to the final Bill. That is not how good law is made.

The NT Anti-Discrimination Commission has warned against rushed lawmaking and risks to fundamental rights. It said:

> *Parliamentary scrutiny is not a procedural formality or nicety, it is a core safeguard of the rule of law, ensuring that legislation is properly tested, proportionate, and consistent with fundamental rights.*

Legal Aid and NAAJA raised real, practical concerns from increased delays and complexities to the risk that vulnerable clients, particularly Aboriginal Territorians, will be disadvantaged by a greater reliance on video link appearances.

The Territory Labor opposition holds two major concerns with this Bill.

We are concerned with clauses 6 and 26; in the absence of proper consultation with the relevant community sector, we oppose the proposal to join charges relating to domestic and family violence matters. It is our understanding that prosecutors already have the ability to join charges, and the extra step outlined in these amendments is necessary.

The DFSV sector has not been afforded an adequate opportunity to comment on the unintended consequences of grouping DFSV victim or offender hearings together.

Aligned with NAAJA's submission to the legal scrutiny committee, we recommend removing clauses 6 and 26 that deal with joinder of charges on the basis that current legislation and practice already provide sufficient options, and these amendments may result in unintended risk or delay for clients and proceedings.

Legal Aid, in its submission, went on to say:

> *Legal Aid NT anticipates that the practical implementation of the bill will result in:*
>
> *(a) Longer listings being required to accommodate evidence in relation to separate allegations as well as complex legal submissions*
>
> *(b) Increased complexity of Local Court proceedings*
>
> *(c) Delay in domestic violence allegations being heard (to accommodate lengthy listings)*
>
> *(d) Successful appeals resulting in complainants having to give evidence again*
>
> *(e) Additional workload for legal aid lawyers, to ensure that their clients receive a fair hearing according to law*

We are also concerned with clause 37 in relation to the resumption of the use of audiovisual link for detained defendants. Territory Labor believes section 49EB may result in disadvantage to some clients and that the current Bill requires strengthened safeguards for these clients.

NAAJA, in its submission, provided:

> *… some of our Aboriginal clients are disadvantaged in AVL appearances as English is often a second language, clients may experience hearing impairments (and NT Correctional centres do not provide hearing loops for prisoners appearing in court via AVL), may have an acquired brain injury, mental health challenges and cognitive impairments.*

Legal Aid argued in its submission:

> *The Court (with input from defence counsel) is best placed to determine the occasions when AVL appearances are the most effective and efficient means of an accused person appearing before the Court.*
>
> *It is our common experience that clients report not hearing or not understanding what a judge said over a video-link;* 'what did that Judge say?*'.*
>
> *…*
>
> *Face-to-face communication is the most effective form of legal conference. Effective face--to-face communication enables trust to be established between a legal representative and their client and aids in early progression of a person's legal matter. Face to face communication is even more important when the content of the legal proceeding is of a personal and or sensitive nature and when one of the people involved in the communication already faces barriers to effective communication: language, hearing, cognition, mental illness, drug use etc. Effective communication results in more efficient use of a legal practitioner's time and the efficient conduct of court proceedings.*

For clause 37, regarding circumstances where a person must appear in person before the court, Territory Labor believes there are additional circumstances that can be included in the list set out in section 49EB(5) to ensure clients are not disadvantaged throughout the various stages of legal proceedings.

For example, when a client submits a plea for their matter or seeks a bail application, NAAJA submitted:

*Where a defendant has experience of one of these factors … this can severely compromise a defendant's comprehension of sentencing orders and their understanding on release. This can have the flow on effect that where a person is not physically present in court to participate fully, they may miss important information relevant to their conditions of release or sentencing/ bail …*

*By limiting people's participation in person in their sentencing, bail and plea hearings a false economy is perpetuated where the person being sentenced or applying for bail is at risk of not understanding their obligations or the impact of their offending, increasing the risk of breach of orders and recidivism.*

Territory Labor is concerned that this Bill may, in some respects, have the opposite effect of what it intends to achieve in terms of relieving an administrative burden and streamlining processes. Law Society NT has been clear that procedural tweaks alone will not fix a system under pressure. We need proper investment in courts; legal services; alternatives to custody such as supported bail accommodation, diversion and rehabilitation programs; health support services; and legislative reforms that reduce the number of persons in custody while addressing behaviours. Without complementary investment in such areas, there is a real risk that any procedural efficiency gained will be overcome by the volume of matters passing through the court and have little measurable improvement in outcomes for persons on remand or victims of crime.

Territory Labor backs frontline services, legal professionals and community organisations that are doing the hard work every day. We will continue to advocate for proper funding, evidence-based programs and reforms that are shaped with, not imposed on, the community because if we want lasting change, we will have to deal with the cause of crime, not just the consequences.

**Mr KERLE (Blain):** Madam Speaker, I support this Bill. I do not have a long contribution, but it is an important one all the same.

I pick up on a few comments from the Member for Daly. He said that Territory Labor wants to focus on the causes of crime and not just the consequences; experience has shown it does neither. It throws money at programs and points to things, but we never saw traction on addressing the root causes of crime over its horrifically long eight years. We only saw increases in crime, offenders, victims of crime and domestic violence—81% over eight years.

I was reading an article the other day; there was a quote from Adam Giles' debate with the former Member for Fannie Bay Michael Gunner in the lead-up to the 2016 election. He was lambasted for it at the time; he said that if Territory Labor was elected, the result would be more women getting bashed by men. Sadly, that turned out to be the case, but there is a new cop on the beat, and this cop is out and about, enforcing the law.

I am not a lawyer. I have read through this and tried to understand it as best I can. There are a lot of technicalities, so I will defer to the boffins in the Attorney-General's Department.

In my previous life I did support work for the justice system. I often saw offenders who had dozens of cases running simultaneously, civil and criminal. When dealing with a youth offender, particularly under the previous Labor government, there could be up to 20 or 25 criminal case files running at the same time with multiple civil domestic violence cases.

We did our darndest in the technology space to try get the systems to schedule all cases, so that when an alleged offender was brought before a judge, the judge had the full picture of their offending. We wanted to ensure that they were aware of all the pending case files—the original matter that had brought this person before the courts, breaches of bail, subsequent offending, offending against loved ones and family members and any DVOs. It is quite a bit of work. I fully support any tools that allow the criminal justice system to join those charges together.

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

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I said in my dissenting report to the scrutiny committee that there are many aspects of the Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 that I support. We are all aware of the real and significant strain that the Territory's justice system is under, and any reforms that reduce unnecessary burdens on courts, practitioners and defendants are welcomed. Most of this Bill is good law. It was developed through some consultation with the sector, which I greatly value, and I support the law in the main.

The scrutiny committee process was raised by many submitters in relation to this Bill and many other Bills; there was once again a totally inadequate timeframe for people with concerns to participate in the process.

Despite that, the secretariat did an incredible job, as did the people on the committee. I think the whole parliament should be extremely grateful for the work that they do, which is designed to strengthen our lawmaking. I am sure everyone has read those reports and taken onboard what is in them. They do a good job, Member for Blain, of explaining the complexities in this Bill in plain language and what concerns there might be.

One thing that the whole-of-committee report recommended was that a post-implementation review be conducted after 12 months to assess the impact of proposed section 49EB, which I will talk about later. That is the section in relation to using audiovisual links for court hearings. I am interested to hear from the minister whether that recommendation will be accepted.

Most of this Bill is good law, but I do not think that most of it is the standard that this Assembly should aim for; evidence before the committee identified provisions that could potentially harm people rather than serve our justice system—specifically, and in the vast majority, vulnerable Aboriginal Territorians in custody who are already navigating a system that places enormous demands on them.

Having done the work in the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, there are two aspects of this Bill that require change or removal to ensure this law is sound and will achieve its aim. I do not think they go against the purpose of the Bill in any way.

The Member for Daly also referenced this; the first is the joinder presumption in clauses 6 and 26. I understand the intent of this. We are told it is about trying to reduce the number of times a victim–survivor must attend court and relive their experience, and that is generally in everybody's interest. The committee received evidence that as currently drafted, these clauses create procedural problems that will produce the opposite outcome—potentially more delays, disputes, appeals, stress and distress for victims.

The specific concern raised was that clause 26 does not appear to require the prosecution to make any application before the presumption of joinder, so hearing the cases together takes effect. This creates a real risk of confusion and procedural unfairness because defendants may not have adequate notice of which charges will be held together and on what basis. The committee put this question to the department; the response was that the presumption is rebuttable and the court retains discretion. With all due respect, that is not an answer to the question. A rebuttable presumption is not a substitute for a clear procedural framework that gives defendants notice of the case against them.

The other thing to point out is that existing law, specifically section 51 of the LCCP Act, together with the Criminal Code and the Uniform Evidence Act, already provide adequate provision for joinder charges. In practice many domestic violence matters are already heard together by consent, so it is difficult to see what problems clauses 6 and 26 solve and at what cost.

The Bill already introduces a new section 51A that says that separate charges may be heard and determined together if an application is made. It acknowledges that as a fair and appropriate way for important decisions like this to be made.

The second provision, about which the most serious concerns were raised, is clause 37. This clause creates a presumption that detained defendants must appear by audiovisual link for most court appearances in summary proceedings. There are some exceptions—the first appearance hearings and preliminary examinations—but bail applications and guilty pleas are not among them. There is a reason that matters and why the gap between the policy intent of this provision and the practical reality in the Northern Territory is so significant.

The scrutiny committee heard from organisations with direct frontline experience representing people in custody; they recommended bail applications and guilty pleas be added to the list of mandatory in-person appearances. The recommendations were grounded in direct evidence of how AVL appearances affect defendants with communication difficulties; people for whom English is a second, third, fourth or fifth language; people with hearing impairment; and people with acquired brain injury, cognitive impairment or mental health challenges. NAAJA told the committee that NT Corrections centres do not provide hearing loops for prisoners appearing by AVL. All of these factors individually, or in combination, can severely limit a person's ability to hear, understand and meaningfully participate in what is happening in that courtroom.

Anyone with real experience working in the Territory justice system—but not only in the Territory justice system—can understand this viscerally. The practical reality of using AVL in the Territory is not the same as someone in a courtroom in Sydney. The reality of connecting to remote communities is far worse than the policy framework anticipates. We are not talking about someone sitting in a modern facility with reliable

high-speed internet, a clear screen and a quiet room; we are talking about people appearing from correctional centres and watch houses where technology is unreliable, connections drop out, audio cuts in and out and there is often no privacy whatsoever.

We are talking about a person trying to participate in one of the most important legal moments of their life—a bail hearing or guilty plea—through a pixelated screen in a room that may be shared with other detainees, with a Corrections officer present, speaking to a lawyer they may have met once, if they are lucky, over a phone line that is often barely audible. For defendants from remote communities, the challenges are compounded at every level. Many of these communities have ongoing, well-documented telecommunications problems; connections that are slow, intermittent or simply go down; phone lines that drop out mid-sentence; and infrastructure that is years behind what urban Territorians take for granted. We heard earlier this year in parliament that Wadeye had no telecommunications for six weeks.

When that happens in the middle of a bail hearing, what is the protocol? Does the hearing pause? Does the defendant lose their chance to be heard? Does the court proceed regardless? These are not hypothetical questions; they are the lived reality of remote Territory justice, and this Bill does not address any of them.

There is also the question of privacy or, rather, the absence of it. A defendant consulting with their lawyer before a bail hearing needs to be able to speak freely. That is a fundamental requirement of legal representation. AVL appearances from custody frequently occur in spaces that are not private; where other detainees can hear; Corrections staff are present; and the conditions make genuine, confidential legal consultation effectively impossible.

You cannot instruct your lawyer properly if you cannot speak freely or if other communication barriers mean there are gaps in comprehension on both sides. If you cannot instruct your lawyer, your right to legal representation becomes nominal, not real.

We cannot design a justice system for the Northern Territory as though its population communicates and experiences the world in the same way as a defendant appearing by video link from a modern southern remand centre. The Territory is just not that, which is precisely the point. If we are legislating to improve the justice system, we have an obligation to legislate in a way that will actually achieve that aim—not in theory or a well-resourced well-connected ideal scenario but in practice, in this jurisdiction and for the people who move through it.

When the committee put these concerns to the department the response was that risk would be managed through the court's discretion to direct in-person attendance. When asked about resourcing, the department advised that adequate financial investment is a matter for budgetary processes. This amounts to an acknowledgement that adequate facilities are not guaranteed.

Precisely because of what I have just outlined this is too important to say, 'We will figure it out later'. The court's discretion is permissive, not mandatory. There is no legislative trigger requiring the court to assess whether AVL is appropriate for a particular defendant before proceeding with a bail or plea hearing. The safeguard relies on relevant information already being before the court, which may not be the case at the remand stage.

What does this mean? A bail application determines whether a person goes home or stays in custody. It can be one of the most consequential hearings a detained person ever faces. A defendant who cannot properly hear the proceedings cannot fully understand what is being said and cannot meaningfully participate in their bail hearing. This is not an abstract procedural concern; it is a real and practical barrier to justice.

A guilty plea is a decisive and irreversible legal act. It extinguishes a person's right to a trial and determines the entire course of the proceedings that follow. The idea that a person, young person, person with FASD or cognitive impairment, or person with limited English might enter a guilty plea via AVL without fully understanding what they are agreeing to is not a theoretical risk.

Submitters made a broader systemic point that when defendants do not fully understand their sentencing orders or bail conditions, because they cannot properly participate in their hearing, they are more likely to breach those conditions, return to custody and reoffend. As NAAJA put it, 'This is a false economy'. The short-term efficiency gains are undermined by downstream harms that cost the system, the community and all of us more in the long run.

I want to be clear that I am not arguing against AVL. There are many court appearances where AVL is appropriate, practical and efficient and could support access to justice. I support its use in those contexts,

but bail applications and guilty pleas are different in kind, not just in degree. They are the moments in the justice system that most require a defendant to be present and heard and to genuinely understand what is happening to them.

I have given notice that I will oppose clauses 6 and 26 in relation to joinder provisions. I will propose an amendment to clause 37 to add bail applications and guilty pleas to the list of mandatory in-person appearances. We need to ensure that the commencement of AVL provisions is subject to a ministerial declaration for adequate facilities, including hearing loop technology, and that it is fully operational at NT correctional centres used for court appearances.

The committee recommended a review. I look forward to the minister's response to that, however testing of whether a law will work must happen before it is passed. A post-implementation review after 12 months will just tell us what harm has been done, not undo it.

Community safety is about more than what happens inside a courtroom; it is about whether the people who go through our justice system emerge from it understanding their obligations, rights and what is expected of them. If we pass a law that makes it harder for detained defendants to meaningfully participate in bail hearings and enter guilty pleas, we are not making our community safer; we are making it harder for people to meet the obligations that flow from those hearings, and we are increasing the risk that they may end up back in custody. I know that is not the outcome anyone in this Chamber wants.

The concerns raised in submissions to the scrutiny committee are serious and grounded in direct frontline experience of the NT justice system. I do not believe that they were adequately answered by the department.

The objectives in the amendment are targeted, proportionate and will work to make this a stronger Bill that can deliver on its stated purpose of swift and effective justice.

**Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay):** Madam Speaker, the Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 is not some dry technical tweak; it is a long-overdue correction to a court system that has been too slow, too bureaucratic and often too focused on process rather than outcomes.

For eight long years Labor presided over delays, backlogs and a system that seemed designed to frustrate victims, defendants and the community rather than serve them. This Bill changes that. It is about making the justice system faster, fairer and fit for the 21st century Northern Territory, once again reinforcing that the only thing going backwards is Labor's record. Under Labor, too many cases sat in limbo; too many victims were forced to relive their trauma; and too many police officers, prosecutors and court staff were bogged down by outdated procedures and unnecessary appearances. The result was a justice system that felt broken, slow and unfair.

This Bill begins by setting a clear sunset for procrastination. Clause 2 provides that the Act starts on a date set by gazette notice, but if not started earlier, it automatically commences at that time. This simple clause prevents an old Labor-style tactic of indefinite delay. Governments cannot sit on meaningful reform forever because the law will come into force, and the system will modernise whether the naysayers like it or not.

Clause 3 is a formal statement that this Part amends the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act 1928.* It is a housekeeping provision, but it matters because it signals that this is a deliberate, surgical reform. It is not a side note; it is a central change to how Local Court criminal procedure works.

Clause 4 amends the form of warrant provision so that a person arrested under a warrant must be brought before the court only if bail is refused or excluded. That means that if the police arrest somebody, they can lawfully grant bail and release that person with a court date without the need to drag them through the system immediately. A simple example is: a person is arrested under a warrant, the police assess risk and potentially grant bail and then that person goes home with a clear date to appear. The benefit is clear: fewer unnecessary court appearances; less strain on police, courts and Corrections; and more time to focus on the real risks. Labor previously treated every arrest and warrant as a trip to court, regardless of risk or complexity. This clause is about being smart, not soft. It recognises that not every case needs to consume court time at the first step.

Clause 5 introduces a new power under section 21 of the *Local Court Act*. The court can now endorse a warrant to specifically exclude police bail. In other words, for serious offenders where the court would like to retain tight control, the warrant can specify 'no bail'. For example, a repeat domestic violence offender is arrested and the warrant is marked 'no bail', so police must detain them until the court decides. This gives the court the last word on high-risk offenders whilst still allowing police to grant bail where risk is low.

Clause 8 replaces sections 59 and 60 of the *Local Court Act* to clarify that if police grant bail after an arrest under a warrant, that person does not need to be brought before the court immediately. The result is a more efficient use of police, court and Corrections resources, which Labor never seriously considered when it was busy stacking the system with red tape.

Clause 9 replaces the old, inflexible pre-hearing requirement of section 60AC with a new flexible regime, so that pre-hearing procedures apply broadly, but with practical wiggle room. That means that rules can cover most cases, whilst still allowing judges and practitioners to adapt where it makes sense, especially in remote areas.

Section 60AP, which will be removed, is another example of unnecessary waste. It requires the prosecution and defence to formally confirm that they are ready for a hearing. Now that box-ticking requirement will be gone. That is not a small change; it is a direct attack on the kind of bureaucratic rituals that Labor elevated over substance.

Clause 6 amends Section 51 of the *Local Court Act* and ensures the court's power to separate charges must take into account the new domestic violence joinder rule. In practice, that means multiple domestic violence incidents involving the same parties are far more likely to be heard together, rather than splintered across separate hearings. The benefit is twofold: greater efficiency for the system and less trauma for victims who no longer have to relive their experience multiple times.

Clause 7 is a double-pronged change. New section 51A gives the court a general power to hear charges from separate complaints together, while section 52 is amended so that the six-month limitation period for making a complaint does not apply if the defendant agrees. For example, parties negotiate a lesser charge after the original time limit has passed and the defendant consents, so the resolution can still proceed. The purpose is to encourage early negotiation and resolution of cases, not to bury them in a technical defect.

Clauses 20 and 21 extend the same logic to higher level charges. Section 101A is amended so that the domestic violence joinder rule applies to information-type documents. New section 101B gives the court power to combine charges on separate informations. If someone faces multiple files arising from the same pattern of offending, the court can merge them into one proceeding. That is not a gimmick; it is a practical step to reduce duplication, speed up trials and protect victim–witnesses from re-traumatisation.

Clause 10 amends section 60AI to require the court to set a directions hearing at least four weeks after the first mention if there is no guilty plea. This simple change ensures that every case has a clear planning date with structured case management rather than drift. The court is no longer invited to sit back and hope the case will sort itself out; it is obliged to front-load planning so that trials are properly prepared, not thrown together at the last minute as Labor often allowed.

Clause 11 amends section 60AL to give the prosecution or defence the right to apply for an additional mention or hearing. This is not some radical shift; it is a recognition of the practical reality that lawyers need flexibility to resolve issues early, rather than waiting for a rigid timetable that suits bureaucracy more than justice.

Clause 14 amends section 60AT to allow judges to give a sentence indication at any time before the hearing, scrapping the old seven-day restriction. If a defendant wants to know the likely sentence before trial, the judge can tell them.

Clause 15 amends section 60AU so the judge can consider submissions from the prosecution and defence before giving that indication. The result is a fairer and more informed process that encourages guilty pleas and early resolution.

Clause 16 amends section 60AZA so that the same judge who gives a sentence indication can still decide the case if the case proceeds to trial. This avoids the farcical scenario of shuffling judges simply because an indication was given, something that would waste enormous judicial resources and create unnecessary delay.

Clause 17 amends section 64 to confirm that lawyers can formally enter pleas on behalf of their clients. This clause simply reflects everyday practice; defendants give instructions to their lawyers who then stand in court and say 'not guilty' or 'guilty' on their behalf. The Bill tidies up the law so that it matches the real world, rather than forcing a performative, unnecessary step-by-step ritual.

Clause 13 is perhaps one of the most quietly important reforms. It introduces section 60ARA which allows bush courts in remote areas to skip certain formal pre-hearing procedures if there is a good reason. Remote courts are held infrequently with limited police and prosecutorial resources.

I have prosecuted in court before, and I understand that this happens. There are limited resources, and it takes a lot of time to get through cases from start to finish. Witnesses are hard to contact. Evidence is hard to secure in advance.

The rule recognises that rigid city-centric procedures often fail the bush. It lets prosecutors and defence lawyers continue with the hearing, even if the technical requirement has not been met in a long time, so long as the results are fair and the rights of the accused are protected. This is a direct rebuke of Labor's one-size-fits-all approach that assumed justice in the Territory looked the same everywhere.

Clauses 36 and 37 amend the *Evidence Act 1939* to create a presumption that witnesses, including detained defendants, can appear by way of video link subject to judicial discretion where fairness requires.

Some critics will claim that this is a threat to fairness, as we have just heard from the Member for Johnston. It is not. The law makes 'appearance' include video link appearances. The presumption simply ensures that the default is efficient use of technology, not the inefficient, costly and often dangerous movement of people across the Territory. It is especially important for remote communities where bringing a witness or defendant to court can mean days of travel, great costs and even no appearance at all. The reform says that technology works, so let us use it.

Clause 39 amends section 194 of the *Evidence (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* so that witness payments can include prepaid travel rather than cash. For example, instead of handing a witness a wad of cash, the court can book a flight or bus ticket. The benefit is simple; it makes attendance easier, more practical and often safer for witnesses, particularly in remote areas.

Clause 25 amends section 120(1)(b) of the *Local Court Act* to increase the value threshold for summary property offences from $50,000 to $100,000. This means an $80,000 theft can now be dealt with summarily in the Local Court rather than automatically going to a higher court. The benefit is clear: it reduces the workload of higher courts and allows matters to be resolved more efficiently in the Local Court, which has greater capacity and shorter wait times.

Clauses 45 and 46 amend the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1990* so that more drug-related offences, including property offences tainted with drug activity, can be dealt with summarily in the Local Court when both parties agree. For example, if a person is charged with possessing tainted property linked to a drug offence—often low-value but with a high theoretical maximum sentence—it can be resolved locally instead of being bounced up to the Supreme Court and then, more often than not, withdrawn. The result is fairer, more efficient handling of cases that reflect the real-world seriousness, not the theoretical maximum penalty.

Clause 48 amends the *Sentencing Act* to repeal section 123A, which previously restricted late guilty pleas. Under the new framework, even a defendant who pleads guilty just before trial can still receive a sentencing discount. The purpose is to encourage resolution at any stage because a resolved case, even a late one, is better than a delayed one. Labor, in contrast, was happy to see cases dragged through the system so long as box-ticking occurred.

Clause 22 amends section 105A of the *Local Court Act* to allow the preliminary examination requirement to be removed under a new provision. This change recognises that a committal hearing may be redundant in some cases. Parties already know the evidence is strong; a full-scale committal wastes time and resources.

Clause 24 introduces new section 106B which allows the Local Court to skip a committal hearing entirely and send the matter straight to the Supreme Court if the defendant accepts the evidence is sufficient and both parties agree. This is a direct response to the Labor-era model in which serious matters were forced to start in the Local Court, then linger for months on the preliminary examination mention list before ever reaching the Supreme Court. Under this reform, the system can cut the queues. The court can say, 'Everyone agrees with the evidence. It is here. Let us move this to the Supreme Court now.' The result is shorter delays, less strain on Local Court resources and a faster resolution for victims and the community.

Clause 23 amends section 105D so that court forms can be approved administratively rather than being set in legislation. This means that as technology and practice evolve, the Territory can update forms online without having to repass the law every time. It seems simple. It is a small-sounding change but a big step towards modern flexible administration, not the slow-moving statute-bound bureaucracy that Labor loved.

Clause 31 introduces new section 80 in the *Bail Act* which clarifies that the new bail rules on warrants apply only to warrants issued after the law commences. Old warrants are still governed by the old rules. This is

a simple, sensible safeguard to ensure fairness and legal certainty. It is the opposite of the Labor approach in which the government often changed the rules mid-game, leaving people uncertain of their rights.

Clauses 33 to 35 of the *Evidence Act* expand the meaning of 'appear' to include appearances via video link, while clauses 36 and 37 entrench the presumption that remote witnesses and detained defendants can appear by way of video, with clear safeguards and judicial discretion where appropriate.

Some will complain that video hearings are inherently unfair, but the facts do not support that. The real issue is equipment and infrastructure, not the technology. The law already allows parties to raise practical concerns. The presumption simply ensures that, as a default, the system is efficient and accessible.

Clause 42 and 43 repeal outdated regulations dealing with forms and transfer them to an online modern framework. Court forms are now handled electronically, not through forgotten regulations buried in dusty rulebooks.

Clause 49 is a technical but important provision. The amending Act repeals itself after commencement. The substantive changes live on in other Acts, but the short-term enabling statute disappears. This is a standard legislative practice, but it reinforces the principle that this Bill is about permanent, structural reform, not a one-off political stunt.

This Bill is about fixing a system that Labor allowed to drift, delay and disappoint. It cuts unnecessary appearances, streamlines committals, encourages early resolution, protects victims and brings our court into the modern world. It is smart, practical and focused on real people, not the bureaucratic inertia of the last Labor government.

I served as a prosecutor for the department of Education and travelled across the Northern Territory appearing in courts. I commend the changes to the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act*. I know it will bring a lot of change to remote courts and assist our police, prosecutors, court systems and judges. When you travel to remote courts there is a cost and time involved; the continuous delays under the previous government's approach of taking something out of court and waiting months to reappear—sometimes on simple charges—delayed the process for everyone.

I agree with the changes and I support the work the Attorney-General and her department has done. They have spoken to the people who do this work and travel to attend these courts. I thank them for the work they have done.

I commend the Criminal Procedure Legislation Amendment Bill to the Assembly.

**Mr MACKAY (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, this is fantastic legislation.

It is important that we understand not just the technical details—I am incredibly grateful to the Member for Fannie Bay for ensuring they are detailed in *Hansard*—but, more broadly, what we are hoping to achieve.

This government inherited a massive crime crisis when we came to power about 18 months ago, and since then we have been working hard to restore law and order in the Territory. We have faced a number of issues, but let us start at the beginning.

When someone does the wrong thing, we need police to arrest them. That is why we invested a record amount of money to make sure we have as many frontline police officers as possible. The current budget—I do not want to anticipate future debate—funds another 150 police officers and police public safety officers. I know Mr Deputy Speaker and people across the Territory are looking forward to seeing those gold-and-white-badged officers out and about, interacting with daily Territorians and helping with smaller issues on the ground.

We have been good, and the police have done an incredible job of catching bad guys in the Northern Territory. I pay my respects to every one of those law officers for doing their part.

The next step is what we are touching on now, so I will come back to it.

The third step is finding somewhere to put the bad people. We have been investing in prisons. We have been getting prisoners out of police watch houses, which the previous government introduced as more than just a temporary holdover. It became quite a long stay for some people in the police watch houses, which are not suited to that kind of accommodation.

Now we are getting on with the job. We are building work camps and partnering with CDU and different organisations to ensure rehabilitation can take place after sentencing. A large problem is that between being locked up for allegedly doing the wrong thing and being found guilty by a court, when the accused are on remand, they cannot access appropriate services and programs. If you want to do a six-month program—maybe you have domestic violence issues—until you have been sentenced and we know you will be in jail for more than six months, you cannot engage with that program.

This important legislation has been built on the work of the TIG-ER Taskforce to get quick resolutions through the courts. It is not about cutting corners; all the normal protections still take place. It makes the process as efficient as possible for people navigating the court system, from the day they are charged to the day they either go to jail or are found not guilty.

I am proud to be part of a government that is looking at every aspect. We are looking at the resources needed to enforce laws that protect Territorians and to house people safely, so that our Corrections staff are not put in harm's way—something the previous government failed to do for a number of years. While the number of people being arrested was going up, they refused to invest in prisons. They wore shirts that said, 'Jailing is failing', but realistically it was their investment in jailing that was failing.

This Bill touches on a number of clauses; I will not go through them one by one—that has already been competently done in this Assembly—but I will highlight some that I am passionate about. One of those is being able to use audiovisual links by default. We live in a beautiful place, and there is more to the Territory than Darwin, Katherine or Alice Springs—there is nothing more beautiful than the rural area, though. Using audiovisual links means that people, no matter where they are, can still front up for court appearances in a controlled manner. The same justice can be applied. That shows the modern world we live in.

During the COVID period, which was different across Australia, restricted travel kept people safe. We became used to Teams, Zoom and the digital videoconferencing of the past. It was an interesting period when we realised that most meetings should be an email. When it came to courts and laws we had to modernise, and this Bill reflects that change.

This Bill also enables a bunch of ways to plead guilty early. Someone has done the wrong thing, they know they have done the wrong thing, the evidence is there, so rather than drag it out with mention after mention and adjournment after adjournment, they can simply plead guilty and still receive a deduction on their total sentence. That applies up to the day before they are due in court.

Rather than dragging somebody who has been victimised in front of a judge and having them relive their experiences, someone who knows they have done the wrong thing can plead guilty up until the last minute. It is the right advice they can receive, and it means victims do not have to relive their experiences. Going to trial is a huge burden on a victim. It involves taking time off work and time away from their family. In some cases it involves travel. It is a tremendous burden. On top of that, victims often have to relive experiences, going through the trauma again, which we do not wish on anyone, but it is the way our court system works.

I support any measure enabling someone who has done the wrong thing and is happy to plead guilty early to do so.

This goes back to the wait times for a case to be heard. Unfortunately, there are only so many judges in the Northern Territory. We are investing. We appointed more judges and are doing everything we can, but there is only a certain number of qualified people who have the privilege to be a judge in the Northern Territory. We are always looking for more, so if any judges with great ideas want to move here, please do. I think we pay them quite well too.

We want to ensure that the court process is as short as possible while making sure the right protections are in place to deliver justice. It gives assurance to the victims, knowing that the quicker someone is found guilty the sooner there will be one less thing for them to stress and worry about. When a person is sentenced, victims are given back time and energy, rather than being anxious about the unknowns, allowing them to focus on the next step. If they know the person is going away for four years, they can have that relief. Victims were waiting up to 18 months for some cases to be heard because wait times blew out majorly under the previous government. That is a long time to wonder what will happen.

It also costs a lot of money, with private lawyers and public defenders with large caseloads to manage. It can add up significantly with a serial number of mentions and adjournments kicking a case down the road. Any mechanism to ensure that when someone has done the wrong thing and been charged, they can admit it and have the correct punishment—going to jail or whatever—is a brilliant step.

The Finocchiaro CLP government does not just look at one aspect on the micro level; we have a holistic vision for reform to ensure that the police on the ground have the support they need, there is somewhere for offenders to go, the Corrections staff have the support they need and Legal Aid lawyers and everyone else involved in the court system have the resources they need to function, ensuring that justice is delivered and not delayed.

This Bill has many clauses and targets a bunch of reforms that I have not touched on, but it is all designed to ensure that justice can be delivered quickly, fairly and without delay.

One impact people do not think about is when a person is charged with something, it has consequences. You may not be guilty. Hypothetically, if you are involved in an incident—an assault or whatnot—and charged, the next day the police will come over and take all your guns off you, as society expects. You have to pay for your guns to be stored until your case is in court. If you have to wait 18 months to two years before your case finally goes to trial and you are found not guilty, your firearms will be restored due to lack of evidence or through the evidence that was presented, but you are on the hook for the $50 per week per gun fee for the entire time.

Even if it is the case that somebody does not plead guilty early because they are not guilty, all the other cases before them where someone has pled guilty results in the court system being able to deal with matters more efficiently, bringing down the time people spend on remand and ensuring that sentencing can happen at an appropriate point or, in fact, a non-guilty verdict can be returned. Not everyone who is charged is guilty. We have the presumption of innocence in this country for a reason. A person must prove beyond reasonable doubt that things have happened.

This is another fantastic box in the large tower we are building to rebuild the Territory and our justice and Corrections systems and give the police the support they need.

I thank every member of the police force, the Corrections workforce and the courts who work hard to make sure that justice is delivered and that keeping Territorians safe remains our priority.

**Mr HOWE (Drysdale):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the members who have contributed to the debate, including the Member for Goyder for his passionate address, and the Attorney-General for the huge reform across her portfolio.

The Attorney-General has placed a real emphasis on bringing the balance of justice back to the system. It has become clear from my time in this Chamber that the word ‘justice’ has different meanings, depending on which side of the Chamber you are on. The sense of justice from those opposite and what had come into the Northern Territory I see as quite morally sick. I say that because I have spoken to victims in Drysdale who endured horrendous crimes and then faced a system that, quite frankly, saw them as an afterthought. They genuinely were; the balance had swayed out of line. The former government put an emphasis on the offender in its prevailing narrative that the offender is the victim. That is what I call the moral sickness that had set in.

As the Member for Goyder outlined, this is one step in the huge reforms our government has taken to re-establish that balance.

When we pass this Bill I will think of a couple of specific individuals in my electorate. One is a young woman I have been speaking with since first coming to office. Horrendous circumstances have seen her in the court system, with her mother who has been a fantastic support to her, trying to fight for justice for her and bring her abuser to justice. I was shocked by the timeframes it takes for a victim of such an horrendous crime to try to find justice, to make sure the individual who committed those crimes gets time behind bars and that she can finally have some sense of closure to the childhood that she was robbed of. Now she is a young woman trying to re-establish herself in the world. When I support legislation like this, it is on behalf of those individuals. It is about restoring the sense of justice in the Northern Territory.

I have the privilege of being on the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, which looked into this Bill. I thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat who did a huge amount of work. We had seven Bills to look at over this period, which is a monumental amount of work. The work of the secretariat staff is outstanding, and I thank them for their support.

I learnt a few interesting things in the inquiry. One was the use of technology in the courtroom. As the conservative that I am, there are some old-fashioned things I like, but I learnt about the real advantage that modern technology can bring to the courts. That was an interesting journey for me. This Bill brings the NT court system into the 21st century. That is a good thing. We have the necessary safeguards in place to

ensure justice continues to be served in our courts. It was interesting to hear about the benefits that modern technology can bring, particularly to vulnerable victims in the courtroom. That is important because it can improve that experience for some people.

We are modernising, coming into the 21st century, thank god. We are a quarter of the way through it. I see this as quite a good thing.

Delays harm victims; it is simple. We have created the justice system we have, and your life as a victim is on hold whilst waiting for the court process to take place or waiting for a guilty verdict. It is shattering when that system continues to delay and you appear in court only for the case to be delayed further. I continually hear about that, so it is good that we are taking genuine steps to improve the efficiencies of our courts.

These are first-step provisions aimed at providing a fast-track committal pathway. The Bill is facilitating early resolution of matters and encouraging early guilty pleas through improvised flexibility when listing matters; guilty pleas entered through counsel; removal of limitation periods where appropriate; sentencing indications; and the expansion of matters which can be heard in the Local Court. It also aims to streamline hearings for related domestic violence matters, which is an important and central thing that everyone in the Chamber knows is a massive problem.

Attempting to ensure we have justice delivered in a timely fashion feeds into that word ‘justice’. The whole experience of the judicial system must be a just one for those who seek to have their offender found guilty of the crime they committed and receive the punishments that fit.

The use of audiovisual link technology—as the Member for Goyder pointed out, we are a huge Northern Territory—provides not only a timelier hearing but also a cheaper hearing for the state. The safeguards ensure that it does not degrade the justice in the court. The technology allows for a more interconnected court process, enabling people all over the Northern Territory to have access. That is a fantastic thing.

Interestingly, the committee made the point that we do not think the technology should be specified, because technology is changing rapidly. The committee believes that we should keep that term broad because we do not know what the future holds in improving technology and audiovisual links. There will be that open discretion in the legislation. It is an important point, which I found interesting through the committee process.

The safeguards improve the courts’ ability to issue warrants for witnesses who do not attend court, which will be welcomed by the Drysdale electorate.

The Bill also provides the NT Police Force with flexibility to manage arrest outcomes for court-ordered warrants; removes and updates obsolete and outdated administrative provisions; and make amendments to align the Act with the relevant legislation.

I commend the Attorney-General for the huge reform agenda. I can assure the Attorney-General that it has been welcomed by the people of Drysdale.

Crime has had and continues to have a huge impact on Drysdale, but we are not victims in Drysdale. We are saying that we have had enough, and we are restoring the balance of the Northern Territory through a strengthened police force, with more officers and PPSOs. The PPSOs will bring huge relief to Drysdale. Heaven knows we need support across public housing and the bus network and in our shopping centres and public spaces. We want those police officers to be armed and to have the necessary powers to start dealing with the crazy levels of antisocial behaviour that have plagued the Northern Territory for too long.

We have invested a record spend of more than $1.7bn. Today we are seeing the Attorney-General ensuring that the system can handle that investment. We are investing in the frontline services to crack down as crimes are committed and the Attorney-General is investing to make sure the system can handle that. At the same time, the Corrections minister is ensuring there is investment in Corrections. We are signalling to the people of the Northern Territory that this government is attacking the entire problem of law and order from the frontline police officers who deal with the crime all the way through the courts and to Corrections. What does this do? This ensures justice is being restored, we will have fewer victims in Drysdale and that victims of crimes will have a faster outcome in the courts, which is important for many reasons. My priority is the victim of the crime and their wellbeing, getting back on their feet and safely enjoying Drysdale.

I thank the Attorney-General and the entire CLP team for the law and order reforms our government is delivering for the people of the Northern Territory.

**Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General)(in reply):** Madam Speaker, I thank the working group for providing its input in making this Bill come to life. There were people from all sorts of different groups, including the Chief Judge and a number of stakeholders who put forward these recommendations to me and the department to have this work done.

I also thank the Legislative Scrutiny Committee members for their detailed report, and I am pleased that the committee recommended the Bill be passed.

The committee also recommended a post-implementation review be conducted after 12 months of operation to assess the impact of proposed section 49EB on detained defendants with communication difficulties and the adequacy of necessary facilities to support the effective use of audiovisual link. I make the point that a number of times the Chief Judge has supported audiovisual links, which is why the working group put forward that recommendation for the legislation.

The Attorney-General's Department is preparing to monitor several legislative amendments and policy initiatives related to the government strategy to reduce crime. That is something we do; it is part and parcel of introducing new policy and legislation. I have asked AGD (Attorney-General's Department) to have regard for the committee's recommendation 2 and ensure that any reviews conducted assess the impact of new section 49EB on detained defendants who have communication difficulties and the adequacy of necessary facilities to support the effective use of audiovisual links.

This Bill makes changes to the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act*, the *Bail Act*, the *Evidence Act*, the *Local Court Act*, the *Misuse of Drugs Act* and the *Sentencing Act*. It is a comprehensive reform package.

I thank everyone for their contributions. You highlighted many things about why it is important we make these changes.

There was commentary—it might have been the Member for Daly—about some of the feedback through the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I take all that on board. People said that they did not agree with the working group recommendations regarding different pieces of legislation, but there are a lot of mixed views about this kind of reform. It will not please every person, but I am getting on and doing it. Someone has to do it.

The Act has not been properly looked at for about 100 years, so it is time we look at it and get it done. There will be tweaks along the way, because that is how legislation works.

Even in the report itself—I am trying to remember whether it was NAAJA specifically saying there were concerns, but NAAJA is on the working group. I am not pointing it out for any negative reason; I am just saying that not everyone agrees on everything all of the time. That is okay, and I am all right with that.

I will do the reform, and I will not make apologies for it. I know it will make things better. We will get feedback in 12 months' time or along the way, because I catch up with these stakeholders a lot. I am always in rooms with them. I go to the court to have a look and I speak to the judges and everyone in this system. I hear loud and clear what needs to happen, and I am happy to keep doing that work. I wanted to make that point because it is important.

I have always said that there is always so much work to do. This is almost like the first step of a lot of other steps we will have done in the justice system and courts. The same working group continues to meet, and there will be a lot more work to come.

I thank the Attorney-General's Department for all the work it has done on this. It takes a lot of work to get to bring it to parliament and have it pass.

There are a lot of things I could say, but a lot of things have been said already.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

**Consideration in detail**

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

Clause 6:

**Mr YOUNG:** We want to move an amendment to oppose clause 6. We will not put it to a vote because of the vigil outside, so I will just speak to it and leave it there.

As I stated in my second reading contribution, current legislation and practice already provide sufficient options, and these amendments may result in unintended risk or delays for clients and proceedings. We acknowledge the court retains the general discretion to deal with charges joined or separately and the prosecution retains its ability to join charges. This Bill provides an extra step that is not necessary and could result in additional challenges and potential unintended prejudice during proceedings.

A number of submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee recommended that clause 6 be removed. On that basis, I oppose clause 6.

**J DAVIS:** Can you explain the necessity for this amendment when section 51(1) already provides that the charges for any number of offences may be joined in the same complaint?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The court can separate charges whenever it wants, but now it will be subject to the new presumption.

**J DAVIS:** Can you explain the necessity for it, if the court can already do it?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The DPP indicates it will be of significant practical assistance to police and the prosecution in circumstances where the physical joinder of the charges was a burdensome administrative step.

**J DAVIS:** How does new section 51A interact with proposed section 183B?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** This change cements the power to have the presumption.

**J DAVIS:** You talked about the advice and the work with the Local Court criminal procedure review working group. What advice was received from that group on this particular matter?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The question is not relevant to this clause.

**J DAVIS:** What advice was received on this clause from the working group?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That is not a relevant question to this clause.

**J DAVIS:** Was advice from the working group received on this clause that there could be issues with joinder?

**Mr MALEY:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The question is becoming repetitive. The Attorney-General has answered the question.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will let the Attorney-General decide.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** I will answer. As I alluded to in my summing-up speech, there are opposing and different views across the working group. The DPP indicated that this will be of significant practical assistance to police and the prosecution.

**J DAVIS:** At the risk of being accused of being repetitive, I do not think I have an answer to my question.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Yes, that is right.

**J DAVIS:** That is right; I do not have an answer to my question. Thank you, minister.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** No. It is right that you are being repetitive because I have answered the question.

**J DAVIS:** The DPP recommended it. May there have been other feedback that you are choosing not to share?

**Mr MALEY:** That is not relevant to the clause.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The minister has answered as much as she will.

**J DAVIS:** I support the removal of clause 6 as put by the Member for Daly.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 25, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 26:

**J DAVIS:** Does the amendment still require the prosecution to submit an application to have domestic violence charges heard together?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** No, it does not. Requiring the prosecution to make a formal application before charges can be heard together would reduce the practical benefit of the amendment by adding another procedural step—more delay and court time.

**J DAVIS:** If that is not the case, which I understand from what you just explained, how will the defendant and their legal team understand the case that will be presented against them?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** Through the usual disclosure application. The defence takes their client through the evidence.

**J DAVIS:** If the victim–survivor does not want separate charges joined, does this section provide a process for them to oppose it?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is a 'may', not a 'must', so the DPP could negotiate that.

**Mr YOUNG:** I want to move an amendment to oppose clause 26, but given the vigil we will not put it to a vote. I will just give my explanation.

Following from our position to remove clause 6, current legislation and practice already provide sufficient options and these amendments may result in unintended risk or delay for clients and proceedings. We acknowledge that the court retains the general discretion to deal with charges joined or separately and the prosecution retains the ability to join charges. We believe that this Bill provides an extra step that is not necessary and could result in additional challenges or potential unintended prejudice during proceedings.

A number of submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee recommended that clause 26 be removed. On that basis, we oppose clause 26.

**J DAVIS:** I support that. I also make clear that should circumstances be different and we were not having this consideration in detail while the vigil is happening outside, I would call a division on this because it is important that people show where they stand on this issue. However, given the circumstances, I will not.

Clause 26 agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 36, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 37:

**Mr YOUNG:** I move amendment 1 to clause 37.

I understand that it has been circulated, so I will not read it out.

The Bill in its current form does not adequately capture the safeguards required for vulnerable, often Aboriginal, Territorians moving through the justice system or accessing legal representation. There are a number of complexities relying on the use of AVL for detained defendants who may have a disability, may not use English as a first language, may have mental health concerns or may face other barriers to effective use of this communication mechanism. In these circumstances, we seek to amend proposed sections 49EB(2)(b) and (5)(c) to expand the circumstances where defendants are required to appear in person and to articulate the circumstances where the courts must pay particular attention when removing the presumption for the use of AVL in certain circumstances.

As stated previously, we will not put the amendment to a vote.

Amendment not agreed to.

**Mr YOUNG:** I move amendment 4 to clause 37.

Again, I will not put it to a vote. I understand you all have the paper that has been circulated.

**J DAVIS:** I support the amendment, as I outlined clearly in my speech. I have a similar amendment that I will not move because it is covered by the Member for Daly's amendment.

Bail applications and guilty pleas are serious pleas, and we need to ensure when people interact with the legal system that justice can be done. It serves them, the legal system and all of us into the future because we need to know they understand the plea they are entering into.

The minister said that there might be some tweaks along the way. I do not understand why they cannot be done now when it is clear they will not change the intent of the Bill. This amendment can still increase the efficiency of our legal system and, in fact, will do so in a better way than the Bill does because it will not give us problems down the track.

I note for the record my support for the amendment. We will not call a division.

Amendment not agreed to.

**J DAVIS:** What assessments have been made of the impact of AVL on fairness for defendants in custody?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** To clarify, fairness requires that the court can already direct an in-person appearance.

**J DAVIS:** What assessments have been made of the impact of AVL?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** The courts are already using AVL.

**J DAVIS:** Yes, but not with a presumption, which is what this amendment creates.

What proportion of people in custody experience hearing loss, cognitive difficulties, English as a second or third or fourth language, or mental health challenges?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That question is not relevant to the clause.

**J DAVIS:** Are hearing loops available in correctional facilities for people participating in court processes?

**Ms BOOTHBY:** That question is not relevant to the clause.

**J DAVIS:** The clause is in relation to using AVL; is that correct? I am asking how the clause will be implemented, so I do not understand why it is not relevant.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** You are asking me for figures that are not relevant to this clause.

**J DAVIS:** I am asking how it will be operational. I am asking whether there are hearing loops available in correctional facilities where people will be required to use AVL.

**Ms BOOTHBY:** It is not relevant to the clause because none of that changes; we already use AVL in those circumstances.

Clause 37 agreed to.

Clauses 38 to 49, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Schedule, by leave, agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

## PAPER TABLED
## Independent Commissioner Against Corruption General Report

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption General Report, May 2026.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

**Mrs HERSEY (Katherine):** Madam Speaker, I update the Assembly and put on the record my recent visit to the flood-impacted communities of Nauiyu and Palumpa (Nganmarriyanga), where I travelled last week as minister for flood recovery, to hear directly from residents about their recovery.

On Friday I travelled to the community of Nauiyu and looked over the proposed site for the new community. Our government has committed $500,000 towards the Nauiyu future plan from the $100m flood recovery fund. This site is well located on higher ground, with existing power and water. Town planners, relevant officials and community members were there this week having a look over it.

In Nauiyu I met with long-term resident Councillor Andy McTaggart to discuss the future plan, flood recovery and how he is going with the cleanup and devastation to his house. I conveyed my thoughts, as going through this three times myself, I know firsthand the toll it takes on you.

We had a look at the Merrepen Arts Centre. I know the damage will be felt deeply by the community. I have many fabrics from Merrepen, as I am sure others in this House have over the years. There was overwhelming devastation inside with the flood mud over everything—the beautiful fabrics and the screens and tiles used for printing. I hope some of them can be salvaged. The devastation inside was incredible.

Further out on Wooliana Road, I met with Kerri at the Banyan Farm. Gosh, I honestly did not even know where to start. There was devastation from the sand that went through that place. They had removed mountains of sand already. Even between the cabins—I cannot think of the name, not backhoe, the little digger things people use—there was sand a metre deep that had to be removed. I said to her, 'I think I would have just cried and walked away'. It was horrific; I could not believe it. They had to deal with getting all the sand out of the pool area, and that sand was considerably deep as well. The sand that the river put in their entertaining area was unbelievable. If you have been through a flood—I know that from 1998—the way the river moves and drops the sediment and sand in areas makes you think how nature is incredible and powerful.

Kerri showed me the back of the Banyan Farm where 30 metres of the riverbank had been eroded. The big trees that were holding it up were down in the water. An amazing amount of water must have gone through that place.

She was extremely grateful for the many people who came to help out—tourists who came for the Barra Nationals, retired people who hitched up their caravans and came up from down south and people who came in their cars. They came to help them without being asked and without expecting anything; they were just there with their caravans helping out, cleaning up the place, using machinery or whatever. The beauty is that there is no-one out there and they probably get to fish at the end of the day; that is their bonus. I am sure they are grateful for that. Their generosity did not go unnoticed.

Further down the road I caught up with Stuart and Marni from the Daly River Barra Resort. People from both these businesses have worked with incredible resilience to restore their operations and prepare for the influx of tourists brought in by the famous Barra Nationals. Just like Kerri, Stuart and Marni had so much sand dumped on their camping grounds that it will take an incredible amount of time and effort to remove it. The power poles that you see in caravan parks sit at my waist height. You could see them just sticking out the top of the sand. It truly is remarkable.

In people's hay paddocks there is so much sand that they will not even be able to till it back into the soil. I do not know how they will plant anything there for a long time.

Stu was getting the cabins cleaned up and painted to be able to rent them again. He said they have some business coming up, so that is a good thing, albeit on a smaller scale. Stu is normally inundated with people going on his fishing tours at this time of the year, but they have not eventuated so far. It will be extremely

difficult for Stu and Marni to get back on their feet with a shortened season. I told him that maybe in a few weeks I will go back to catch up with them and see how they are going.

The resilience of these businesspeople is incredible. It is people like Stu, Marni, Kerri and others who have businesses who are the backbone of the Northern Territory.

I was glad to see urgent repairs underway on Wooliana Road where it is incredibly eroded. This is part of our government's $30.5m fast-track roads funding. The road will eventually need to be redirected from the riverbank, which is a bigger job, but the grader was working to get it open and ready for tourists. The erosion and scouring out of that road is incredible.

I visited St Francis Xavier Catholic School and give a big shout-out to Bishop Gauci, CEO Paul Greaves and especially Principal Peter Baldry, who drove from Darwin and showed us the heartbreaking scale of the flood impact on the school.

Despite these challenges in the community of Nauiyu, it was good to see community members pressure cleaning their driveways, cleaning their homes and getting on with it. There were many contractors when we were there. It was great to see so many workers from VTG rubbish removal contractors, FRM Refrigeration and the NTEX crew doing cleanups and refurbishment activities. Repairs are underway at Outback Stores, with Michael and his team hoping to open by mid to late May.

We travelled Port Keats Road, which I am pleased to say has been allocated $89m in our government's budget for repairs, before arriving in Palumpa. I told Minister Yan that, as well as that $89m for repairs, considerable erosion on the road also needs to be sorted out.

We travelled over some of the most scenic bushland and river crossings. At the mighty Moyle River, we stopped and tasted the sweet and beautiful water. I wish I had my bathers. It was a beautiful day and the water in that river was crystal clear, flowing fast and sweet to drink.

Despite the immense challenges the community of Palumpa (Nganmarriyanga) has faced over the last several months, people are bouncing back with incredible resilience. It was great to put on a community barbecue with a difference. The difference being that we used the boot of a car as a table and served up snags to the community.

Contrary to what the Member for Daly stated earlier in the day, that the residents were not happy, I got quite a different story.

**Mr Young:** I did not say that.

**Mrs HERSEY:** It was lovely to meet …

**Mr YOUNG:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; the Member for Katherine has made a personal reflection on me. I did not state that residents were unhappy to be back in Palumpa. I ask her to retract. I did not state that in my speech; you can go back through *Hansard*.

**Mrs HERSEY:** I am pretty sure we will not go back over *Hansard*, but he did say something like that.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Take a seat, Member for Daly.

Member for Katherine, what did you say?

**Mrs HERSEY:** I said, 'Contrary to what the Member for Daly stated earlier in the day, that the residents were not happy, I got quite a different story'.

**Mr YOUNG:** I did not say that in my speech today, so she is misleading. It is untrue, so I am asking her to retract. It is a personal reflection on me.

**Madam SPEAKER:** There is no point of order about misleading.

**Mr YOUNG:** It is a personal reflection. Under Standing Order 31, I ask her to retract.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is probably easier at this point to retract that.

**Mrs HERSEY:** I retract where I said, 'Contrary to what the Member for Daly stated earlier in the day, that the residents were not happy, I got quite a different story'.

**Mr Young:** Thank you.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Katherine.

**Mrs HERSEY:** I heard the Member for Daly comment, but we will not go there.

What I can tell you is that it was lovely to be in that community. I have not been out that way before. It truly is a beautiful part of the world.

It was lovely to meet Warren Wodidj, the traditional owner, and his sister Mary, along with other members and children who were all so excited to be back in their own homes. As of last Friday morning, all evacuees accommodated at the Batchelor Outdoor Education Centre were brought home, with staff reporting whooping cheers as they touched down on home soil. Around the barbecue, we were talking to some of the members and kids. They were so excited to be home. They could have a fire out the front of their own place, and had all the new stuff they received for a bit of a refurb of their homes. It was great to have a conversation with them and listen to their stories. During our community barbecue, I saw firsthand how happy people were to be back on country.

I visited the fully stocked self-efficacy community store run by local Indigenous cultural recovery adviser, Warren Wodidj. I thank him for the great work he has done in representing his community and with our government.

During my visit I also met nurse Tilly Todhunter who is doing an exceptional job in the new clinic space. The health clinic had been flooded considerably—about waist high. As you would expect when floodwater comes through, everything was tipped upside down, all their records and everything; it was a mess.

Honestly, it is terrible when you have been through a flood. The stench of that flood mud stays with you forever.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Katherine, your time has expired.

**Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, on 16 April it was my delight to attend an event at the AANT Centre which, for once, was not an art event but an environment event. It was the Darwin Harbour report launch, an inaugural event. I have a copy of the presentation, which is worth tabling. I seek leave to table it.

Leave granted.

**Dr RAHMAN:** The report highlights the incredible nature that is on our doorstep, and its findings were enlightening. It suggested, amongst other things, that our harbour is comparable in fish diversity with the renowned Ningaloo Reef.

Most Territorians and I think all parliamentarians in this place value the biodiversity of Darwin Harbour and the unparalleled Territory lifestyle that our harbour is supporting. It was encouraging to be at that event to see representatives of the government, crossbench and opposition—albeit the newest member of the opposition—in attendance, plus many hundreds of others.

Darwin Harbour is undoubtedly a precious community asset. I have memories as a child of throwing a line with my Uncle Naz in the harbour back when it was a rickety set of structures. None of us want for its wanton destruction; we all have to recognise that we have a shared interest in protecting it. It teems with abundant wildlife, has phenomenal biodiversity and is an important gathering place for the community.

I reinforce that I think genuinely there is a shared commitment in this House to preserving and protecting that asset, notwithstanding our different perspectives and prescriptions for improving our economic prospects in the NT. That will be an ongoing debate, so it is important that we talk about the environment and economic development, even when it involves things as contentious as the gas industry and extractive industries, all in the same space respectfully.

Speaking of respect, I thank Dr Kirsty Howey, Executive Director of Environment Centre NT, who invited me to the event. She was an extremely gracious host. It was a real surprise that the first thing I found out when I met her was I knew her brother really well at university. I cannot think of a more gentle giant statesman than

Hugh Howey, who I went to university with and is now a schoolteacher and was always a better wicketkeeper than me, even all those years ago. Dr Howey and I had robust but respectful discussions about the future of the Northern Territory, development, the value of the harbour and how we might sustainably pursue development in the Northern Territory.

The mainstays of the program were four presenters who delivered phenomenal lectures. Dr Ben Fitzpatrick, environmental scientist and Director of Oceanwise, gave a great presentation which helped me learn much more about Darwin Harbour. I am not an ecologist or biodiversity specialist; frankly, I do not know a lot about fish, birds and coastlines. It was enlightening to learn a tonne of new information that was up to date in that regard. Darwin has 3,200 square kilometres of estuary. It is one of the world's least disturbed and most biodiverse coastlines and is shaped by powerful macro tides and monsoonal freshwater flows. There is a complex mosaic of habitats and all the pictures associated with the presentation were enlightening to see, such as all the mangrove species. We have 36 of 50 of the mangrove species globally, and nearly one-third of the area is covered by highly productive tidal flats.

Going through the flora and fauna side of it—I am not sure whether sponge species are flora or fauna—there were discussions of the rich filter-feeding communities, including 800 sponge species. There was talk of 2,500 species of crustaceans, molluscs and marine worms; 500-plus species of fish, including the sawfish which is endangered; marine reptiles; crocs; turtles; sea snakes; dugongs; and coastal dolphins.

It was a fascinating lecture and unexpected in some ways. I went with an open mind. I wanted to see what I might learn and what the event might be like, given it was the first time something of this type has been launched. I was not disappointed in the slightest.

I do not have a copy of the report on me, otherwise I would have sought to table that as well. I tabled the presentation that was given on the day, and it may be of value to other members in the House to look through it.

Dr Amanda Lilleyman, who is a migratory shorebird expert and co-convenor of Birdlife Top End, also spoke. It was interesting to learn about all the birds in the Northern Territory and all the places they are. Some of the obvious things you know about and some of the less obvious ones you do not, so it was enlightening.

There was Thor Jensen, who is a longstanding community campaigner at the Australian Marine Conservation Society. Quite frankly, sawfish always scared me. I did not know much about them other than they look terrifying. When you learn more about all these things, it is fascinating.

Perhaps no-one was more fascinating and interesting to me, and more of a surprise package, than Donna Jackson, a Larrakia woman with expertise in ethnobiology, guided bush tucker walks, local history and environment and whatnot. She had some interesting thoughts. She is not necessarily the kind of person I would have come across every day to have a lot of these conversations. Towards the end of her lecture, she started talking about, of all things, Hegelian dialectic, which are not two words I thought I would hear outside of a university context anytime soon. It was a moment reminiscent for me of high-end, interesting common room talks in prestigious universities that I have been blessed to occasion on from time to time.

It was a great event. I am pleased to have been there and seen other members of the Assembly there as well, albeit maybe not as many as we see at the footy. Once again, I implore all of you to sometimes diversify your portfolio of event attendance. Frankly, I could probably afford to go to the footy a bit more often. In saying that, it would be lovely …

**Mr Kerle:** There is a Raiders home game on Saturday.

**Dr RAHMAN:** That is true. I take the interjection. I will be representing the minister at the orchestra and the Chorale concert, Member for Blain; otherwise, I would be at the footy.

I am committed to lifelong learning. Given the importance of natural assets in the Northern Territory, I was pleased to learn more about our rivers, fish and birds. Let me be blunt about this event, momentarily: it was not an activist rally or what a lot of people feared or thought or might have presupposed if you did not go there. It was not a series of people beating up on you, trying to shove their ideology down your throat. It was nothing like that at all; it was a fascinating, rational, instructive set of scientific information, basically a set of great lectures.

In my opinion we need way more of exactly that on tough topics, and respectful debates to accompany them. If we do not have those conversations, all we do is fling mud with imperfect information. I sincerely believe

that the government I am a part of wants to fix problems. It has a plan for how to do it. I want to be a part of that plan working out. If it does not work out, other people will have a go again.

In the meantime, we have to at least, not just inside the Chamber but also outside, have the same tone of discussion about stuff. We cannot be mean to each other in here and then nice outside or vice versa. There has to be a common standard on information sharing, otherwise we will never move forward; this will just be performative.

My ideological disposition may not have been in alignment with some of the people in the room that day. Having said that, I saw a wide diversity of people there—I say to members of the government—including past CLP presidents who happened to be around who also care about the environment. I know a lot of people were invited …

**Mrs Zio:** I was invited; I just could not go.

**Dr RAHMAN:** I am sure plenty of people could not be there for good reasons. I take that point as well, Member for Fannie Bay; it is a fair point to make. We are all busy.

Smart, calm, sensible discussions were had that day about nature-based tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, recreational use of the harbour, coastal protection, nursery habitats, water quality and much more. It is important that we learn how to disagree agreeably, to maintain respect and rapport whilst holding opposing views, and focus on connection rather than always winning.

I thank Dr Howey for the invitation and everyone involved in hosting what I thought was an exceptional event. I hope to see more colleagues at similar events, with a view to us all working together with common purpose and information in making decisions to balance our environmental and economic responsibilities and priorities for the Northern Territory.

**J DAVIS (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I find myself agreeing with the Member for Fong Lim again. It was a wonderful and enlightening evening. I agree that we can do things much better when we actually listen to and learn from each other.

I rise to speak about someone who people in this Chamber may not be familiar with, Vaiben Louis Solomon, despite the fact that one of the Northern Territory's two federal electorates is named after him. I was reminded of his remarkable and complicated story this week when I briefly attended an event at Brown's Mart honouring his legacy, hosted by Luke Gosling, the current Member for Solomon, and attended by representatives of the federal parliament, of the local and national Jewish community and from across the Darwin community.

When I moved to my home in Millner, nearly 30 years ago, I noticed the street next door was called Solomon Street. It stood out to me because it is clearly a Jewish name in a suburb where almost all the street names are Anglo–Christian, although, importantly, there are streets named after prominent Chinese Territorians, including Chin, Leung, Cheong and Tong Luck. The Place Names Register simply describes Solomon as a councillor of the early district council of Palmerston in 1874, but he was much more than that.

Dubbed 'Mr Everything', because there were few pursuits he would not try, he came to the Territory from Adelaide as a gold prospector, ran his brother's business then opened his own, invested in mining and pearling, owned and edited the *Northern Territory Times* and *Gazette* and built Solomon's Emporium—the historic building we now know as Brown's Mart—which he ran as a general store for the then city of Palmerston. Legend has it that he did some of the carpentry himself. He was also a shipping and insurance agent; a builder; an auctioneer; an author of books about sport, the Western Australian Goldfields and the Northern Territory; and, briefly, the Honorary Vice-Consul for the Netherlands.

As an Independent MLA trying to keep across an endless number of issues and portfolios, I have to admit that I found what he was doing strangely reassuring. It would be useful to have some of his energy.

When the Northern Territory gained representation in the South Australian Parliament, Solomon became the Territory's representative in 1890. Apparently, he campaigned by pushing himself from Darwin to Katherine on a railway trolley—and we all complain about doorknocking in the Build-Up. While urging economic development of the Territory, particularly the completion of the Transcontinental Railway between Adelaide and Palmerston in the 1890s—it took us a while to get there—he also campaigned for better regulation of the mining industry. I am on board with him on that.

Like many historical figures, his story is deeply complicated. He also advocated for the exclusion of Chinese and Asian migrants, and history has shown that he was profoundly wrong on that issue. Darwin's multicultural history stands as a stark reminder of that.

He was also on the wrong side of history when South Australia debated whether women should have the right to vote and stand for parliament. He opposed those reforms, filibustering to try to stop them getting through and arguing that women should remain focused on domestic duties. Thankfully, those reforms passed anyway, making South Australia the first place in the world to grant women both the right to vote and to stand for office.

In the South Australian Parliament he also briefly became Premier, for seven days, giving rise to the nickname 'Sudden Solomon'.

He served in the first federal parliament after Federation and participated in constitutional conventions that helped shape the foundations of modern Australia. He was a strong advocate for Westminster parliamentary traditions and bicameral parliaments. I strongly suspect he would have had strong views about the Northern Territory having self-government but only one Chamber and no House of review.

Like many entrepreneurs and politicians, he experienced spectacular successes and major failures, but he kept returning to public life and debate. He was described as a forceful and witty debater; a dramatic performer; a staunch advocate of intercolonial free trade; and a dynamic, prominent and popular citizen of Palmerston.

After a stint in federal parliament he was again returned as the Northern Territory's representative for the South Australian House of Assembly. The Member for Gwoja says that he has a large electorate, but I reckon that beats it. Always a determined advocate for the Territory, Solomon supported its transfer from South Australia to the Commonwealth.

He was very much representative of the times he lived in and, no doubt, if he was here today, he and I would not agree on many matters. However, it is important that we do not flatten historical figures into heroes or villains because people are shaped by the times they live in, including the contradictions of those times. What I take from Solomon's story is not that we should celebrate every view he held—far from it—but that the Territory has always been shaped by people from many cultures, backgrounds and faiths, often with conflicting ideas about what this place should be. Diversity is not new here; it is foundational to who we are. It also reminds me that communities are never monolithic; sharing a culture or faith with someone does not mean sharing all the same values or politics.

Solomon died of cancer in Adelaide on 20 October 1908 and is buried in the Adelaide cemetery, but a plaque that was unveiled at the event last night will now be on the doors at Brown's Mart and will commemorate his unique contribution to the Northern Territory.

His descendants and many other members of his extended family continue to contribute to public life in Australia and the Northern Territory across politics, sport, law, health, arts and many other fields. I am reliably informed that High Court Justice James Edelman and actor Heath Ledger are Solomon family, among others.

At the event, speakers noted that our story is one that is shaped by people of many backgrounds, and knowing this helps us understand who we and who we can be. I was grateful to learn more about him and be there.

Moving from Jewish characters to Christian festivals, I will quickly talk about our Easter egg hunt. Last year we had—for the first time—our version of the Easter egg hunt. It was a legacy that I inherited from the former Member for Johnston. Soon after I started my job, people came to the office saying, 'I hope you will still do the Easter egg hunt'.

Eleanor from Millner sent me a letter saying, 'I am Eleanor, and I live around the corner. I am seven. I just want to tell you I have good friends, but they are all grown-ups. I think it is important that we have the Easter egg hunt. Can you do it still? PS I love you.'

I was happy to tell Eleanor that, yes, of course we will do an Easter egg hunt. Last year we decided to do it a little differently. We partnered with local organisations Birdlife Top End and Rapid Creek Landcare to create a native bird scavenger hunt. We had amazing birds drawn by the then 13-year-old Atticus, hidden in the trees throughout the glorious Water Gardens, which I reckon is the jewel of Darwin. When we did the event last year the turnout was overwhelmingly unexpected; we had to do a run for extra eggs in the middle of it because we ran out. We were much better prepared this year, but the numbers exceeded our expectations.

We were also lucky this year to be joined by members of the wonderful Jingili school council, who did a fundraising barbecue. It was great to have the Water Gardens at sunset full of families and community members sharing dinner and Easter eggs together.

I give a huge thankyou to the many volunteers who helped make it happen, Kathy, Nicki, Lisa, Vicki, Fernanda, Fiona, Amanda, Esther, Ian, Nina, Indiana, Emma, Teddy and Sara. We never could have put on that huge event without all these people.

Events like that remind me how lucky I am to have this job, how much I love my amazing community and how wonderful it is to bring people together in different ways to keep building community and connections and celebrate the wonderful place that the Northern Territory is.

**Mr SMELT (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, I thank the staff and parent community of Nightcliff High School.

It has already been a huge year for the school community, as this is the first year of transitioning into becoming a high school. A power of work is occurring in the background the make this happen. Year 10 has been added to the school, and Years 11 and 12 will follow over the next two years. This is a big change for our local community, and I am committed to assisting the school to ensure that the transition is a success.

Last month I accepted the great offer of joining the school council in my capacity as the Member for Nightcliff. I am proud to be joining a committed group of parents and teachers who are willing to provide their expertise and experience to ensure the growth of the school. I look forward to providing support and advocacy and connecting the schools with organisations and people who can help the school achieve its vision of being committed to excellence in education.

In addition to transforming into a high school, earlier this year the gym and library were stood up to support flood evacuees. At short notice the school team reorganised classes, turned over the gym to be operated as accommodation and repurposed the library as a pop-up school. These changes were carefully supported by the incredible Nightcliff High School Principal, Mrs K, and her staff. Thank you for going out of your way to ensure that our Nightcliff community could support flood evacuees, our fellow Territorians, and continue to operate as a school. I also thank the parents, students and broader school community for your patience and support during those three weeks.

There are lots more great plans and ideas for the future direction of the school. I look forward to advocating for the Nightcliff High School community and working with the government to see these ideas come to life.

I thank school council Chair, Geoff Barber, and principal, Mrs K, for your work, dedication and enthusiasm for our school community.

**Mr PATEL (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, I celebrate the achievements, contributions and community spirit of individual students, schools, sporting clubs and local businesses across my electorate.

First, I recognise the accomplishments of students from Dripstone Secondary College. Kendra, a Year 9 student, recently competed at the BMX nationals in Shepparton and delivered an outstanding performance. Her dedication and hard work paid off in the best possible way, with Kendra officially qualifying to represent Australia at the UCI BMX Racing World Championships in Brisbane this July. We wish her every success on the world stage.

I also congratulate Adam, a Year 10 student from Dripstone, who will represent Australia and the Northern Territory at the WPA Junior Heyball World Championships in Oslo this June. This is a huge achievement for Adam, and highlights his talent, discipline and commitment.

I extend my congratulations to Henbury School's appointed school captains, Chloe and Jacob, in Term 1. Leadership roles such as these are an important opportunity to shape school culture and support fellow students.

Henbury students also recently enjoyed a special visit from players from the NRL Dolphins ahead of their participation in the interschool rugby gala day at Marrara Stadium. That would have been an exciting experience for the students and no doubt inspired many young athletes at the school.

I am excited to talk about the strong collaboration between Dripstone Secondary College and Charles Darwin University. Year 10 science students recently took part in an engaging hands-on session delivered by the CDU health academy. Students explored important topics, such as accessing government services through

MyGov and understanding the health impacts of smoking and vaping. A standout activity was constructing respiratory models to better understand lung function. That is exactly the type of innovative, practical and real-world learning that helps our young people connect classroom lessons with life beyond school. A big thankyou to the CDU health academy for delivering an informative and important session for the students.

Additionally, a group of Year 9 and Year 10 students had the opportunity to visit CDU and explore future pathways in health and medical careers. From touring the university library to engaging with the oral health, nursing and medical academies, students gained valuable insights into higher education and hands-on experience with advanced learning tools such as simulation equipment. These experiences are vital in helping young Territorians see what their futures can look like.

Turning to sport, I commend Casuarina Football Club on its fantastic season. The club continues to go from strength to strength with multiple wins and strong representation at elite levels.

Four junior players, Kieron Piper, Kingston Casimiro, Lachlan Gallacher and Darius Krajsek, were selected to represent the Northern Territory at the 2026 Emerging Socceroos Championships in Sydney.

Equally impressive is the selection of three juniors girls, Ameliah Howard, Kyeesha Pluto and Merietta, who represented the Territory at the CommBank Emerging Matildas Championships in Melbourne.

These are proud moments for not only the players and their families but also the whole Casuarina community.

I acknowledge this season's Players of the Match, Julie Shugg, Quinlan Tran, Chloe Pearson, Jeremy Lai, Bradley Douglas, Chrysa Prodromou and Marley Austin. Your performance and sportsmanship set a high standard for others to follow.

I congratulate all recipients of the Northern Territory Young Achiever Awards. In particular, I acknowledge Peter Susanto, a valued friend of our Casuarina office who was awarded the FCD Health Young Achiever in Health Award and named the 2026 Northern Territory Young Achiever of the Year. Peter's dedication to the community is truly inspiring, and we are incredibly proud of his achievements.

I also congratulate Nithya Romeshika Yamasinghe, recipient of the Charles Darwin University International Student Award. As a Master of Information Technology graduate and through her leadership roles within the student community, Nithya exemplifies excellence, service and contribution.

In our local business community, I warmly welcome Gear Hub NT to Casuarina Village. Congratulations to Shobe Khan Muhhamad on opening his new store, which offers computer and phone repairs at extremely competitive rates while also focusing on educating the community. As an opening promotion, Shobe is offering 20% off all repairs. His vision is to build a future tech hub in Darwin—the next Silicon Valley, hopefully. That is a big vision, and I wish him all the best. I encourage our community to get behind Shobe's business and support his vision.

I also congratulate Casuarina business owner Nicky Clark, owner of Darwin Laundries, on the opening of her sixth laundromat, which is in Humpty Doo. Nicky's commitment to providing high-quality, energy-efficient and customer-focused service is commendable. I also acknowledge her work with Darwin Outdoor Cinemas which has been a wonderful contributor to community events, including our successful movie night last year. We look forward to working together again in the upcoming July school holidays, Nicky.

I thank the Chief Minister and Minister Cahill for joining me recently at Casuarina Square to meet with local businesses. These conversations are invaluable in understanding the priorities, pressures and opportunities within our community's business hub.

It is clear that across our electorate, from classrooms to sporting fields and from community service to local enterprise, there is no shortage of talent, dedication and community pride. These are the stories that show the strength of Casuarina. These are the people who make our community proud. These are the achievements that deserve to be recognised in this Assembly. I am proud to recognise them tonight.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.