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CONTENTS

VISITORS 4777
Good Shepherd Lutheran College 4777
MOTION 4777
Appointment of Integrity and Ethics Commissioner and Inspector 4777
PIPELINES AND PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT) BILL 4780
Serial 57 4780
VISITORS 4791
Good Shepherd Lutheran College 4791
VISITORS 4799
St John's Catholic College 4799
QUESTION TIME 4799
Bullying Allegations 4799
Defence Week 4800
Department of Children and Families Review 4800
Department of Children and Families Review – Supplementary Question 4801
Budget 2026–27 – Biosecurity 4802
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries – Recruitment 4802
Fuel Supply 4803
NT Public Sector – People Matter Survey 4804
Integrated Events Strategy 4805
Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs – Appointments 4806
Child Protection Information Leak – Investigation 4807
Federal Budget – NDIS Changes 4807
Mobile Phone Connectivity 4808
Minister for Tourism and Hospitality – China Visit 4809
Territory Growth Initiative 4809
Children in Care 4810
Oceania Athletics Championships 4811
PIPELINES AND PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT) BILL 4812
Serial 57 4812
HERITAGE AMENDMENT BILL 4832
Serial 60 4832
MINERAL TITLES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 4849
Serial 56 4849
PAPERS TABLED 4868
Schedule of Government Responses to Committee Reports – May 2026 4868
Quarterly Members' Fuel Transaction Report Quarter 1 – January to March 2026 4868
ADJOURNMENT 4868

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Good Shepherd Lutheran College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5 students from Good Shepherd Lutheran College, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION
Appointment of Integrity and Ethics Commissioner and Inspector

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly recommends the appointment of Mr Peter Shoyer as the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner and Mr Bruce McClintock SC as the Integrity and Ethics Oversight Inspector, pursuant to sections 10(2) and 27(2) of the *Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Act 2025*.

The commissioner will concurrently hold the roles and powers of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, Ombudsman, Information Commissioner and Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner, supported by a new Office of the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner and overseen by the inspector.

This structural reform implements the recommendations of the independent McClintock–Hiley review and is intended to restore public confidence by modernising and consolidating the Northern Territory Integrity Framework.

A national advertising campaign for the role of the commissioner was undertaken. An advisory panel, chaired by Hon Justice Peter Barr and involving the Chief Executive of the Chief Minister's department, Luccio Cercarelli, and Mr Greg Shanahan PSM as panel adviser, assessed the suitability and eligibility of candidates for appointment as the commissioner. The process is consistent with the protocol for the appointment of statutory officers under the Northern Territory Integrity Framework available on the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet's website.

The advisory panel assessed applicants based on the requirements of the position. Following an assessment of the experience, skills and qualifications of all applicants, the advisory panel recommended Mr Peter Shoyer for appointment as commissioner for a term of five years.

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria set out in the *Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Act 2025*, Mr Peter Shoyer is a highly experienced Northern Territory statutory office holder and senior public sector executive with more than three decades of service across administrative law, public accountability, complaints oversight, justice administration and public sector governance.

Mr Shoyer has held several significant independent statutory and executive appointments within the Northern Territory, most notably serving as the Northern Territory Ombudsman from 2012 to 2024 and Information Commissioner from 2018 to 2024. In these roles he led complex complaint review, administrative oversight and public accountability functions across government agencies, Police, Corrections, public administration, privacy and information access matters.

His career demonstrates extensive expertise in administrative law, statutory interpretation, procedural fairness, complaint resolution and public sector accountability frameworks, together with deep knowledge of the Northern Territory legislative and governance environment. Across his tenure as Ombudsman and Information Commissioner, Mr Shoyer oversaw matters relating to police conduct, custodial services, privacy, freedom of information, agency decision-making and service delivery complaints, providing independent review and published recommendations across a broad range of public-facing functions.

In addition to his statutory office experience, Mr Shoyer has held senior executive roles within the Northern Territory Public Sector, including service as executive director at the department of Justice, Registrar-General, Public Trustee and as principal officer of the Northern Territory Judicial Commission.

These roles provide him with substantial experience in organisational leadership, justice administration, legislative reform and system-wide governance functions. Mr Shoyer's professional qualifications and legal standing include a Master of Laws, a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Economics from the University of Queensland, and he has been admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland since 1987. His professional development also includes executive leadership and mediation training, together with extensive continuing education in governance, ethics, administrative law and Ombudsman practice.

The panel undertook due diligence against the eligibility requirements under section 12 of the *Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Act 2025* and was satisfied that Mr Shoyer clearly met the statutory threshold requirements for consideration, including the relevant legal qualifications, professional admission and extensive senior statutory office experience.

The panel noted Mr Shoyer's significant Territory credibility and longstanding familiarity with the legislative, political and administrative context of the Northern Territory, including established relationships across agencies, the justice sector and independent statutory offices. This depth of local knowledge was recognised as a key strength in relation to the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner components of the role.

This motion also proposes recommending the appointment of Mr McClintock to the role of inspector, based on his experience and demonstrated performance during his terms of appointment as the ICAC Inspector. The statutory eligibility requirements of the inspector as well as the functions, powers and responsibilities of the role closely align with those of the ICAC Inspector.

Mr McClintock is nationally well regarded in this field. During his time as the ICAC Inspector he maintained effective statutory oversight of the ICAC in the Northern Territory in accordance with the integrity function of the role.

I recognise the experience and leadership demonstrated by Mr McClintock in his role as the ICAC Inspector and believe that Mr McClintock, as the proposed appointee for the inspector role, will provide critical stability during the infancy of the new Integrity and Ethics Commission.

Mr McClintock has previously been recommended through a panel process for the ICAC Inspector role, which has the same eligibility requirements as the inspector role. As such, the required process has already occurred and this appointment will be recommended to align with the tenure of Mr McClintock's existing contract.

These appointments herald a new era for integrity in the Northern Territory. They will provide consistency, leadership and direction for staff and the integrity office and ensure that Territorians have confidence in independent oversight functions and the future integrity system is designed, resourced and structured for long-term success for the benefit of our democracy and all Territorians.

Yesterday I wrote to the Leader of the Opposition and all the Independent MLAs outlining the protocol, the advisory panel and process that made the recommendations contained in this motion before the Assembly.

I commend Mr Shoyer's and Mr McClintock's appointments as the inaugural Integrity and Ethics Commissioner and Integrity and Ethics Oversight Inspector respectively. I ask that this motion be agreed to by the Assembly, noting that a recommendation to His Honour the Honourable David Connolly, Administrator of the Northern Territory, will be made to make the appointments.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Chief Minister's outlining of the motion.

Of course, I am familiar with the work on the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner. I am a member of the Standing Committee on the ICAC, so I have been following this closely. I have done my homework and research, looking at other jurisdictions' best practice and what could be applied here to improve integrity in the Territory, including those oversight mechanisms.

Thank you, Chief Minister, for outlining those appointments. My only bugbear is that the letter from the Chief Minister came at 1.58 pm yesterday, two minutes before Question Time, which was a bit disingenuous.

The process of appointment is by way of the Assembly. Territory Labor supports Mr Peter Shoyer. We know his extensive history in the Northern Territory and the work he did in his former role as Ombudsman and Information Commissioner. He is well versed in the ways of the Northern Territory, and he will be a strong appointment as he knows not only all the machinations that make the Territory great but also the challenges and what to look for, so he will be well placed.

The Territory Labor opposition also supports the appointment of Mr Bruce McClintock SC as inspector. Mr Bruce McClintock is the ICAC Inspector. I thank the Chief Minister's office for arranging a briefing this morning, with a 15-minute window from 8.45 am to 9 am. Thank you to the chief of staff and Ms Gillian Sharkey from the department, who provided the briefing to us. It was a brief briefing—it took only eight minutes—which was good not to waste anybody's time. Gillian explained that the ICAC Inspector role Mr McClintock currently holds has been lifted and put into the new Integrity and Ethics Oversight Inspector role, and we are comfortable with that.

Mr McClintock has served the Northern Territory well as the ICAC Inspector. He briefs the Standing Committee on the ICAC, which the Member for Casuarina chairs. Mr McClintock is always open, honest, candid and straightforward. He provides good information and intel into quite complex information. I can see the Member for Casuarina is nodding. The Territory Labor opposition supports Mr McClintock being in the similar Integrity and Ethics Oversight Inspector role. We are comfortable with the fact that the same role, duties and responsibilities have been taken from the original ICAC oversight role.

It is a five-year appointment. If Mr McClintock is to continue in the new role under the same framework as the current one that he is leading as oversight inspector, his term would be completed by December 2028. I think that is appropriate, and it means that there is no interference politically when there is a definite term of appointment and expiration.

Territory Labor is comfortable to support the appointments of Mr Peter Shoyer, who will serve the Territory well as the new commissioner, and Mr McClintock, who is well-respected and has a new love for the Territory. Who knows? When he finishes his role maybe he will move to the Territory in retirement—it will be the reverse—and we will have good people come to the Territory to put down their roots.

Mr McClintock is well respected in many roles he has held across Australia, so to have him continuing in an oversight inspector role in the Northern Territory gives me and our Labor team a bit of comfort with the changes. We believe with anything that comes up he will be open in his role and duties to present that to what would then become a standing committee on the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner. That parliamentary committee, I assume, would have a rejig. That would be appropriate, given the changes.

We understand that an interim CEO has been appointed. We heard in today's briefing that is via the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*. There are learnings from the past. ICAC was new legislation in the Northern Territory, so to incorporate those learnings into this new modernised commission is appropriate in that sense. Having the chief executive officer role sit under the PSEMA makes sense to us in being able to remove some of the reporting mechanisms and issues that were, unfortunately, seen previously with the ICAC, when the commissioner was also in charge of human resources and industrial relations.

The Chief Minister is nodding in agreement; we do not often agree, but we are now. This is the week of agreement. Who would have thought parliament has bipartisan support for a good cause?

Having that change will be an improvement, learning from the mistakes of the past.

We had an understanding about the commissioner roles that will be merged. It is important that the Auditor-General role remains independent. The Auditor-General's work is extremely important regarding public responsibility and accountability for taxpayers' dollars. If the structure looks like the model, which should be gazetted in early June—there are a couple of weeks to the interim period, as the Chief Minister said, through the Administrator—and is set out as we understand, we have no issue in letting this motion pass with our support.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I did not have a briefing, but I received the letter from the Chief Minister's office yesterday; thank you.

I acknowledge the appointments. I do not want to make comments about the individuals who have been appointed, but I note that structural concerns remain about this new model being risky and flawed, which I raised when the Bill was tabled and provided feedback from integrity experts across Australia.

As we move forward I hope that those issues will be addressed and managed so that the people of the Northern Territory can have an integrity system and ethics model that they can trust. Those issues included the merging of roles which essentially have different tasks; the concentration of power in one person, which does not happen in any other jurisdiction in Australia; the lack of mechanisms to address built-in conflicts of interest between the different roles; and the loss of statutory power for the people who are now acting commissioners. Those concerns remain.

Like everyone in this Chamber, I am committed to making sure that the Northern Territory has an integrity system that we can trust. There are many issues in the Northern Territory that many people in the community remain concerned about, so we need to ensure that the systems we have in place can meet those concerns.

As I said, this is not about the appointment of individuals, but the structural issues remain. I hope, as we move forward, that concrete mechanisms will be put in place to address those structural issues to make sure that this commission can do the job that it is purportedly set up to do.

Motion agreed to.

PIPELINES AND PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT) BILL
Serial 57

Continued from 18 March 2026.

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

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, this Bill seeks to modernise the Territory's pipeline and petroleum framework. It expands the types of substances that may be transported through licensed pipelines, updates licensing and compliance arrangements and introduces a number of administrative and regulatory changes designed to support future energy projects in the Northern Territory. The Bill also provides a legislative framework for emerging industries, including carbon capture and storage and hydrogen, along with more traditional petroleum activities.

There is no doubt that the Territory has significant opportunities in that space. The NT is uniquely positioned to play a role in future energy markets, including low-emissions technologies, hydrogen production and the broader industrial development opportunities associated with those sectors.

Aspects of this Bill reflect that this has been under consideration for some time, including reforms commenced under our previous Labor government regarding the fit-and-proper person test. There is a legitimate argument that existing legislation has not kept pace with the realities of changing energy markets or the technologies that are emerging globally.

Although the intent of the Bill may be clear, the process surrounding this legislation has once again highlighted a deeper issue with the CLP government's approach to consultation and engagement—or should I say a lack of. Throughout the consideration of this Bill we have seen a CLP government that is far more interested in talking to people who already agree with it rather than engaging genuinely with those who have concerns, differing views or legitimate questions about the impact of these reforms. That is not how governments build trust. This is not how long-term consensus is built for major industrial development in the Northern Territory.

The Territory is a place where projects intersect with Aboriginal land, pastoral land, environmentally sensitive areas and local communities. The Bill presents real issues affecting real people, many of whom still want confidence that development in the Northern Territory can occur responsibly, transparently and with the proper safeguards.

The scrutiny committee process made it clear that a number of stakeholders remain concerned that they were not properly consulted or meaningfully engaged during the development of this legislation. Those concerns were not limited to one issue. Submissions raised questions about land access powers and how they may interact with landholder rights and expectations. Concerns were raised about whether the Bill adequately integrates a culturally appropriate sacred sites process into the legislative framework. Questions were asked about whether the legislation places too much reliance on existing environmental approval frameworks without strengthening safeguards within the Bill. Other concerns related to the expansion of pipeline activities into new industries and whether the community has been adequately brought along in understanding what those changes may mean in practice.

Importantly, many of those concerns were not framed as outright opposition to development itself; rather, they related to the frustration that the CLP government had not taken the time to genuinely listen, build confidence and work collaboratively to resolve issues before introducing this legislation. The Territory Labor opposition believes that matters because projects in the Northern Territory will succeed in the long term only if there is trust in the process from the start—trust that consultation is genuine, concerns are heard respectfully and development will occur with proper oversight and accountability. People need to trust that

governments in the NT are prepared to engage with not only proponents and supporters of projects but also people who hold differing views and concerns. That is good governance.

Too often the CLP government approaches disagreement as something to dismiss rather than something to engage with constructively. There is an increasing sense that if an organisation, a community representative or a stakeholder raises concerns that they will be viewed as an obstacle rather than an important part of the democratic process. We should have conversations, hearings, briefings and submissions to scrutiny committees about how development should occur in the proper way.

The CLP government's approach does not reduce division; it only deepens it. The Territory now has a culture of politics that has constant conflict and is dismissive of anyone who raises concerns and asks questions. This, in turn, will lead to difficulties for the future development of infrastructure. The government needs to be responsible in its approach to consultation and listen to community voices.

Our Territory does not need a government that treats consultation as a box-ticking exercise and values only the voices of those willing to endorse its position without criticism or scrutiny. The reality is that the Northern Territory can pursue economic development while maintaining strong environmental protections, respecting landholder rights and ensuring that traditional owners and local communities are properly engaged with and have a seat at the table. Those things are not mutually exclusive; in fact, achieving long-term investment deepens those relationships. Those settings are critical in the Territory; we all know that. Projects that proceed without trust, transparency or social licence, inevitably create more conflict, uncertainty and division down the track.

This Bill ultimately may pass today, but the broader issue remains unresolved. The CLP government still has significant work to do in rebuilding confidence that it is capable of bringing Territorians together on major development proposals rather than creating unnecessary division about the future of the Territory's economy.

Territorians expect leadership that listens and legislates well. They expect governments to engage seriously with differing perspectives, not to simply dismiss them. Territorians expect a government that understands that consultation is not a barrier to development; it is a part of building development that can endure and succeed over the long term.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I support the Pipelines and Petroleum Legislation Amendment (Industry Development) Bill 2026.

This Bill is about making the Territory a more certain and secure place to invest. Our vision for the Territory is to be the most competitive place to live, work, visit and invest. This is a huge part of making that happen. It aligns strongly with our Rebuilding the Economy strategy because it is about developing new industry in the Territory and the capability to deliver that industry for many generations to come.

The gas industry, particularly the Beetaloo Sub-basin, had challenging times under the previous Labor government which was more interested in pandering to rhetoric and continuing the misinformation about a well-regulated gas industry to suit its own political objective. The problem when you do that is it might work for you politically, as it might have for Territory Labor in the years under Michael Gunner, but it undermines investor confidence in the Territory, takes away opportunities for small business to grow and deprives Territorians of jobs.

You can take the cheap hits and run the political miles, as the previous Labor government did, but we will not walk that path or follow in Labor's footsteps because it is wrong on every level. The misinformation about onshore gas continues to be proliferated by those who would prefer that the lights went off and we all lived in the dark. That is not happening to the Northern Territory because we know that a well-regulated onshore gas industry creates huge opportunities.

This is about delivering certainty so that people know the rules of the game in the Northern Territory and that they will not just shift overnight, like we saw with Labor's moratorium on gas. That set this industry back by a decade. Labor members changed the rules of the game, depending on what side of the bed they got out of in the morning, and people could not invest in the Territory's future for fear of it all being pulled out from under them.

In just 18 months we have fundamentally fixed that mess; we righted that wrong that Labor did to the Territory. We are seeing huge interest in the Territory again, which is what we want, through all the hard work the Deputy Chief Minister has been doing in the energy, gas and mining space and that Minister Cahill has been

doing to re-engage with our Asian neighbours regarding trade, investment, education, opportunities, partnerships and MOUs. We have done a huge amount of work in that space.

The Territory Coordinator—for all the woes those opposite thought it would deliver—has been a signature and flagship centrepiece of our Rebuilding the Economy strategy, which is turning heads. I cannot tell those opposite the number of high-level meetings I have with CEOs, senior Defence officials from the United States and Australia and others who are looking to the Territory because of the Territory Coordinator legislation and, in particular, the Northern Marine Complex, its designation and our focus on ensuring that project is fit for purpose and delivers outcomes for our community.

Those opposite snickered, voted against us and told everyone that the sky would fall down, but do you know what? It did not. The sky is yet to fall down. It is a beautiful overcast day, and we continue doing what we promised Territorians we would do—deliver growth, certainty and security. That is exactly what this does.

Pipelines are an important piece of economic infrastructure. It is one thing to have a gas reserve in the Beetaloo that could power this nation for 200 years, but it is another thing to get that product to market. Pipeline legislation is critical to facilitating that by making sure the rules of the game are clear, concise, easy to follow, easy to enforce, strong enough to protect what needs it and appropriate to allow capital to flow. All of those things are a balance.

This legislation gives confidence to our gas industry that we mean what we say and are backing our words with action, because action is the critical piece to all of this. Long gone are the days of a government standing up, waxing lyrical about any number of projects on a fictitious list or some sort of pipedream. That was the previous Labor government; we do not do that as a government because that is not our job. Our job is to make sure that the rules fit the game, and our game is to grow the Territory, the economy and our population, and to make the Territory competitive, vibrant, a place where people come and stay and generations of Territorians are born, raised and thriving. That is our mission.

This pipeline legislation is critical to that because, amongst other things, it allows for carbon and hydrogen-related products to be transported through pipelines, which is a significant decision, milestone, policy position and implementation by our government. We know that carbon capture and storage presents a huge opportunity for us now and in the future to be nation leading and regionally leading in this space. We must put in place the rules of the game that send the right signals to industry and say, ‘Come to the Territory. You can invest safely here. We have regulated frameworks that will facilitate and support well-regulated disciplined investment.’ That is what this legislation does.

This Bill also makes sure that gas can be transferred through pipelines rather than having to be processed onsite. In the Beetaloo, instead of every proponent needing a processing facility on every patch where they are drilling wells, they can transport gas to a processing facility and process it, which drives down the price and is more efficient. If we can deliver gas more efficiently and put downward pressure on pricing, there will be more investment and more gas.

If the gas is cheaper to produce, guess what? The gas is cheaper to buy. If we have cheaper gas in the Northern Territory, it will take pressure off mums and dads and businesses and will allow us to grow our manufacturing and fabrication sector. All those things that are energy intensive require an energy source that is highly affordable to make the risk and capital expense of the investment stack up prior to getting product to market.

This is significant reform. It generally modernises all components of the Act. This is old legislation and, effectively, technology has well surpassed it. The legislation has had its time, and we have to bring it into the modern era so that it meets the realities of the industry now. That is a critical step.

The Beetaloo presents not only an opportunity for Territorians. People get confused about what Beetaloo means. Some people fixate on royalties; others fixate on the number of jobs. It is both of those things and so much more. It allows us to anchor ourselves and positions us as a critical partner in this country because far too often we are overlooked. We were overlooked in the federal budget a day or two ago; we were basically irrelevant and do not even exist, according to the federal government. It is happy to throw us our maintenance money, but it does not want to see us thrive, prosper and grow into the future. Some of the basics were not delivered in the federal budget, so we know where the federal government stands.

Our job, and what we have focused on, is making sure that the other states and territories understand the value proposition of the Northern Territory because that is where we can leverage real outcomes for our people. The Territory is only a small place with 250,000-odd people. We will never use all the gas that

Beetaloo presents, but we can sure be the source of it for the benefit of others. That is our intrinsic value across a range of propositions, not just gas but also minerals, rare earths—you name it. We have an opportunity to tell this country, 'This is about sovereignty and ensuring national security. This is about energy security. This is something that is ours; it is Australian, and it is Territorian. We can use it to the benefit of all Australians, our allies and our region.'

The dividend from that is the Territory grows because we invest in supporting local business to make the most of the many and varied opportunities. We always say that even the person who supplies the toilet paper wins out of these types of investments; it benefits every part of the chain. By working with the Industry Capability Network we ensure that local businesses are positioned and ready to capture work, whatever it looks like. Whether people are providing pipes, building water tanks or working the drill rigs, we want Territorians to be a part of that story which creates growth and local jobs.

Then there is the capital investment that comes from these players operating in the Territory, the royalties and so on. There is a multiplier effect of significance for Territorians, no matter where they live—not to mention that the gas industry is in the bush; our wealth is in the regions. This creates the opportunity for real jobs in our most remote communities and in our towns. This is genuine jobs on country. It is an opportunity like no other. I know many of the players in Beetaloo have strong engagement with the traditional owners, providing jobs and lots of opportunities on those sites. That will only grow and continue. Think about a place like Elliott: there are huge opportunities to change that town and community.

For us it is about removing barriers, having a sensible regulatory environment, modernising the rules and, above all else, giving certainty as to what the rules of the game are so that people can invest.

For those who hate fossil fuels and the gas industry, you need to take a good hard look in the mirror because, for starters, I bet that half of what you wear, drive, live in and touch every day is a by-product of gas. Putting that aside, the reality is Beetaloo gas has about 2% to 3% carbon compared with offshore gas which is much higher, hovering at just under 20%. We have an enormous resource that not only benefits our community, the rest of our nation, our allies and the region but also is far superior in terms of environmental impact. That is overlooked by the activists' narrative because it does not suit them. They would rather everyone turn the lights off and sit around in the dark. That is not the future.

This represents an enormous opportunity to move this industry forward, exploring all those new opportunities, doubling down on carbon capture and storage and making sure that we have the right environment to do so. We have overlaid this with the most competitive payroll tax regime in the country that supports apprentices and trainees by exempting them from payroll tax, allowing businesses to invest in their people, strengthen their business and make the most of the opportunities that we know are coming for the Northern Territory.

This was a big budget for land release because we want more people to live here for the long haul. We want generational Territorians—people being born, having a great childhood, living a good life, getting a good education and staying here to contribute. To do that we need land. This is not just Darwin and Palmerston focused; there are significant layers of land release across the Northern Territory because the Territory's wealth is in the regions. We must invest in the regions because that is where we want people to live and work on these types of projects.

We unlocked another 4,000 square kilometres of the Beetaloo. I credit the Deputy Chief Minister for that. This significant release allows more players to come into this space, creates certainty and confidence about what is available and enables people to have a go. We want people seeing the opportunity and making the most of it.

This Bill is a key deliverable of the Finocchiaro CLP government's Rebuilding the Economy strategy. It is important to the Territory's future.

We cannot trust a Labor government or any of those opposite to ever deliver this for Territorians now or in the future. Those opposite showed through their actions that they were incapable of realising an opportunity that was staring them in the face.

The CLP government has fixed the mess that Labor left behind. We are delivering certainty. We are focused on our vision for the Territory to be the most competitive place to live, work, visit and invest. We are backing the Territory 100%. We love this place, and we know her full potential. We see the Territory for what she is and her key inherent strengths and attributes. We believe in the Territory for who she is; we are not trying to pretend the Territory is something she is not. This is about getting back to basics on what we can offer this world to the benefit of our people.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly. I look forward at the end of this year to Territorian mums and dads and businesses being powered by Territory gas.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, my contribution to the debate on the pipelines legislation will be brief.

I looked at submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee and saw that all land councils outlined that the Bill should not pass in its current form. The submissions outline the size of the Bill and the inadequate time for public scrutiny and the lack of consultation. In instances when a number of bodies state that they have not had time to understand the implications of large and complex legislation, the government should listen and make time to properly brief people and consult the community.

There are concerns about the transmission of regulated substances. The NLC noted that the introduction of carbon capture and storage and the transmission of new gases and substances in existing and new pipelines expose Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and our lands, waters, sacred sites and cultural heritage to new risks from these untried technologies, without adequate consultation.

There are also concerns about the impact on the environment and landscape. The CLC notes:

> *These changes could see networks of pipelines, roads and other infrastructure corridors between titles, including expanded safety exclusions zones and restricted access areas. Such fragmentation and industrialisation of the landscape will have an impact on traditional owners, for whom the landscape does not exist solely in physical terms—it is also a living cultural system, with ecological, cultural and spiritual values. As well as restricting physical access to land, these amendments risk disrupting cultural and spiritual connections to country.*

There are concerns that the Bill does not include mandatory provisions for sacred sites certificates to be sought before any work is begun. There are concerns about whether this Bill conflicts with the Commonwealth's Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

There are too many questions raised by the land councils and others. There has been inadequate consultation with the people who will be impacted. I cannot support this Bill on these grounds.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support the Pipelines and Petroleum Legislation Amendment (Industry Development) Bill 2026.

This is important legislation that modernises the Territory's pipeline and petroleum framework and positions the Northern Territory to seize the enormous economic opportunities before us. It also takes practical steps to reduce emissions and support global climate action.

At its core, this Bill is about enabling development. It recognises that if we are serious about growing our economy, creating jobs for Territorians and ensuring long-term prosperity, we must have a regulatory system that is fit for purpose and supports investment, reduces unnecessary red tape and provides certainty for industry. That is what this Bill delivers.

The NT sits on world-class gas resources. The Beetaloo Sub-basin has the potential to be one of the world's premier producers of natural gas condensates and other hydrocarbon products. These resources represent one of our greatest economic advantages, but resources alone do not create prosperity; infrastructure and efficient regulation do.

This Bill strengthens the legislative framework that underpins the construction, operation and ongoing use of pipelines, critical infrastructure that connects our gas fields to markets, powers industry and underwrites jobs across the Territory.

The amendments to the *Energy Pipelines Act 1981* modernise its purpose to explicitly provide for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of pipelines for the conveyance of substances.

This Bill also streamlines processes for pipeline permits and licensing, transfers and renewals, compliance and enforcement. At the same time it strengthens regulatory oversight through new pipeline management plans to ensure infrastructure integrity across the full infrastructure life cycle. It also expands compliance powers, including directions and stop-work notices. It clarifies the fit-and-proper person test to ensure we have only responsible operators working on the pipeline.

This is a balanced reform that says to investors the Northern Territory is open for business, but we expect high standards. This balances exactly what gives investors confidence, and confidence drives growth.

Importantly, this Bill looks forward as well as back. One of the most significant reforms is the expansion of what pipelines can carry. When the original *Energy Pipelines Act* was written I am sure that no-one possibly imagined the current world, where carbon capture and sequestration has the potential to be a major industry, as well as the transport of hydrogen. These substances were not catered for in the original Act.

The concept of a regulated substance now includes not only hydrocarbons but also hydrogen and hydrogen carriers and, critically, carbon dioxide. This is not a small change; it is a strategic one. It means our pipeline system can support emerging industries, including hydrogen production and export, and carbon capture and storage. This is how we ensure the Territory is not just participating in the energy transition; we are leading it.

We cannot ignore the reality of the changing global environment, but we must be honest about how we respond. Global energy demand is growing. Gas will continue to play a critical role in energy systems here and abroad, especially as a lower-emissions alternative to coal. The question is not whether we develop our resources, but how we do it responsibly. This Bill provides a key part of that answer.

By enabling pipelines to transport carbon dioxide and other hydrogen carriers, this legislation lays the groundwork for large-scale carbon capture and storage projects. That matters. CCS will allow industries in the NT to capture emissions from industrial processes, transport those emissions safely and store them permanently underground. It means we can continue to develop our gas resources while reducing their environmental footprint. The NT, with its unique geology and proximity to major industrial developments, is uniquely placed to become a leader in this space, but without the right legal framework and the ability to move carbon dioxide via pipeline, those projects cannot proceed. This Bill removes that barrier.

Another key focus of this legislation is certainty and efficiency. This Bill introduces clearer application processes, modernises notification requirements and streamlines decision-making. It also provides for continuation of permits where applications are under construction; more flexible arrangements for retention licences and production licences; and the ability to consolidate or divide licences to support commercial viability. These reforms may sound technical, but they go directly to the heart of investment decisions.

We are not just competing against New South Wales or Queensland; we are competing against Texas, Qatar, Venezuela and countries all over the world. When the companies that make these large infrastructure decisions are deciding where to invest billions of dollars, they look for clear rules, predictable timeframes and confidence that projects can move forward. This Bill delivers that certainty.

Let me be clear: this Bill significantly strengthens compliance and enforcement. It introduces expanded inspector powers, stronger penalties for noncompliance and the ability to issue binding directions and stop unsafe or harmful activities. It also embeds life-cycle responsibility through pipeline management plans, ensuring that infrastructure is properly designed, safely operated and responsibly decommissioned. Importantly, the decision-making frameworks continue to be subject to principles of ecologically sustainable development. This is about doing development properly and responsibly.

This Bill reflects a practical balanced approach. It does not—unlike some in this Chamber might argue or support—deal in ideology; it deals in outcomes. It recognises that the gas industry is critical to our economy, infrastructure is essential to unlocking that opportunity and innovation, like carbon capture and storage, is key to reducing global emissions. This is how we grow the Territory—by backing our strengths, enabling new industries and making smart, forward-looking reforms.

This Bill is about jobs, investment, energy security and responsible management of the Territory environment. It positions us to grow our economy through gas, support emerging industries like hydrogen and play a meaningful role in reducing global emissions through carbon capture and storage.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the work of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee and secretariat on the Pipelines and Petroleum Legislation Amendment (Industry Development) Bill. I acknowledge the 20 submissions received from industry, environmental organisations and the land councils representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the Territory.

As we heard, this Bill amends three separate pieces of legislation: the *Energy Pipelines Act*; the *Petroleum Act*; and the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act*. It introduces an entirely new regulatory framework for carbon

capture and storage in the Territory, expands entry powers for inspectors and changes how retention licences work across the Beetaloo Sub-Basin. It is, by any measure, a substantial and a technically complex piece of legislation, with 122 pages, 89 clauses and four Schedules, significantly amending three Acts.

Despite this, the public was given only one week to respond to it. It was introduced without prior public consultation and was referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee at the same time as six other Bills, with a four-week turnaround window. Although I commend the government's change of heart about referring Bills to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, it must be noted that all these Bills were referred by the same government that had referred only 15 Bills for parliamentary scrutiny in the previous 18 months and then suddenly referred seven all at once. That is not a good way to make use of the scrutiny committee.

As everyone in this Chamber knows, I welcome the return of the scrutiny committee and I believe its work—our work—is to serve all members of parliament by considering Bills against our terms of reference and make recommendations to the Chamber about those Bills. To use it in this way, by running seven complex inquiries concurrently with one week for public submissions on legislation that was never publicly consulted on before introduction, is to do a disservice to the work of the committee and, by extension, this parliament and the people of the Northern Territory. It is a box-ticking exercise and undermines the work we are here to do. The committee exists to review legislation rigorously on behalf of Territorians and that work requires time and genuine engagement. Here it got neither.

The Northern Land Council described this as a missed opportunity to co-design effective legislation. The Tiwi Land Council said that the timeframe prevented it from properly considering the interaction of this Bill with relevant Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislative schemes. The Central Land Council noted that one week does not allow the time needed to consider all the potential implications, particularly for Aboriginal Territorians whose land covers approximately 47% of the Territory's landmass and who are most directly affected by this Bill.

Having worked through the submissions carefully, it is clear that this Bill does not meet the essential criteria the scrutiny committee is tasked with testing. The scrutiny committee terms of reference require us to ask whether the legislation has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, whether entry powers come with appropriate safeguards and whether the Bill has sufficient regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition. On each of these questions the Bill raises concerns.

This Bill allows inspectors to enter Aboriginal land without holding a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act*, not just in a genuine emergency but also when seven days' written notice has been given. The same exemption applies to persons acting under a ministerial or CEO compliance direction. The emergency exemption is not the issue; genuine emergencies require a different framework, and I understand that. The non-emergency access is a different matter entirely. When there is time to give seven days' written notice to a landowner, there is time to apply for a permit; those two things should go together.

Submitters warn that these expanded entry powers create an unacceptable risk of damage to sacred sites and cultural heritage, with no justification provided for why the permit requirement needs to go outside of genuine emergencies. The department's response was that the provisions are consistent with existing defences under Commonwealth legislation, that a person performing functions under Northern Territory law is not committing an offence by entering Aboriginal land. That may be technically correct, but it misses the point entirely.

A permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act* is not red tape; it is a mechanism through which traditional owners exercise real oversight over who comes onto their land and why. When there is time for that oversight to occur, it should. Non-emergency entry onto Aboriginal land must require a permit and a genuine application for one. That does not obstruct the compliance objectives of this Bill; it ensures that rights are respected when there is time to respect them.

It is straightforward to address this, and I will move an amendment stating that where entry is proposed in a non-emergency situation, when there is time to give written notice, there must also be a requirement to hold a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act* or have genuinely applied for one. That would apply to inspectors and persons directed to undertake works under Parts 5B and 5C of the Act. Emergency entry can continue to operate as currently drafted. As I said, this change will do nothing to obstruct the compliance objectives of this Bill; it will simply ensure that traditional owners retain meaningful oversight when there is time for that oversight to occur.

The Schedule also defines affected persons who can seek merits reviews of decisions. That list is confined to applicants, permittees and licensees. Landowners affected by decisions over their land are not included.

Submitters made the point clearly that approaching the courts for judicial review should be the option of last resort. It is slow, expensive and genuinely inaccessible for most Aboriginal communities. More efficient merits reviews should be available to affected landowners, and the Bill should be amended to provide that.

The Bill also makes significant changes to the retention licence framework, allowing licence areas in the Beetaloo Sub-basin to be divided and amalgamated, creating smaller multiple petroleum interest areas to encourage investment and accelerate development. I get the economic rationale, but submitters described what this looks like on the ground—networks of pipelines, roads and infrastructure corridors; expanded exclusion zones; and restricted access areas. They were clear about what this means for traditional owners. We heard this also from the Member for Mulka. The landscape is not only a physical thing; it is a living cultural system. Fragmentation of that landscape risks disrupting cultural and spiritual connections to country that cannot be accounted for in an infrastructure cost–benefit analysis.

The Bill introduces a fit-and-proper person test for pipeline licence applicants, which we should have, but I note that the equivalent test in the *Petroleum Act 1984* is far more comprehensive. Under section 15A of that Act the minister must be satisfied that applicants are of good repute, having regard to character, honesty and integrity. The minister must consider the seriousness of any contraventions and the time since they occurred. Prescribed legislation is listed explicitly.

The test in this Bill does not match that standard. Proposed section 4B(2) makes it explicit that the minister is not required to investigate whether an applicant meets the test; they need to consider only whatever information is placed before them.

The department's response was that requiring proactive investigation would impose an additional administrative burden. Is it not the job of administration to ensure that our laws are working properly so that we have systems and frameworks to have the best people in roles which have decision-making power over decisions that affect the Northern Territory? Using administrative convenience as a reason not to have rigorous vetting for proponents of major high-risk infrastructure in the Northern Territory does all of us a disservice.

The test also does not include past conduct in land access negotiations as a mandatory consideration. How a company has behaved when negotiating access with traditional owners and landholders is directly relevant to whether they are a fit-and-proper person to hold a pipeline licence.

Once again, the fix is not complicated: remove the exemption from investigation under proposed section 4B(2) and amend proposed section 4B(1) to explicitly include past conduct in land access negotiations as a mandatory consideration. That is what a meaningful fit-and-proper person test looks like.

This Bill also creates the Northern Territory's regulatory framework for carbon capture and storage. Submissions describe this industry as having a long history of technical failures elsewhere and little regulatory expertise within the Northern Territory Government to oversee it. The Chief Minister talked about how significant this new way of transporting gas is, and I agree, so let us make sure it is safe for all Territorians.

The world's largest carbon capture and storage project at Chevron's Gorgon facility in Western Australia has repeatedly failed to store the volumes predicted. Globally, all existing carbon capture and storage facilities combined capture less than 1% of fossil fuel emissions, and the safety risks of CO_2 pipelines are specific and serious. CO_2 is heavier than air, which means that if a pipeline ruptures, the CO_2 does not combust; it suffocates people. In 2020 a CO_2 pipeline ruptured in Mississippi and more than 300 residents were evacuated and dozens hospitalised. This is not a theoretical risk.

There are no specific policies guiding the approval of carbon capture and storage in the Northern Territory, and the Bill's pipeline management plan provisions give operators wide latitude to self-select the standards they comply with. There is no requirement to meet any specific codes on construction, operation or monitoring how many emissions escape. This Bill even empowers the minister to decide that a pipeline management plan is not needed at all or exempt a company from having to comply with a pipeline management plan. This could mean that pipelines for methane gas and carbon dioxide may avoid regulatory oversight altogether. Where are the safeguards for transporting gas in our country? Is trading mums' and dads' safety for efficiency a good deal for us in the Territory?

Introducing this technology in the Territory without prior public consultation through a framework that was described in submissions as manifestly inadequate deserves much more scrutiny than one week for submissions allows and deserves a much more robust framework so that we can know we will all be safe.

The Territory has a legitimate interest in developing its resources sector, and industry has a legitimate voice in how that happens. I am not disputing any of that, but I note that this Bill follows a pattern we see across multiple pieces of legislation this sittings. Despite the inadequate timeframe, serious concerns have been raised by organisations with deep expertise and a direct mandate to represent affected Territorians, and they have been met with departmental assurances rather than legislative response, which is just not good enough.

In every issue I have raised—entry to Aboriginal land, merits reviews, sacred site clearances, the fit-and-proper person test and carbon capture and storage safety—this Bill consistently prioritises regulatory streamlining and industry certainty over the rights and safety of Territorians.

Getting mining and petroleum legislation wrong creates uncertainty for investors as well as landowners. A misaligned regulatory framework—one that may conflict with Commonwealth law, render conversions invalid and expose title holders to legal challenges—does not just harm Aboriginal Territorians; it undermines the investment environment the government says that it is trying to build.

The amendments I will move would not prevent this Bill from achieving its stated objectives; they would ensure that working towards those investments will create certainty for everyone and would not ask some people to bear risks and costs that the rest of us would never accept for ourselves.

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the members for speaking. I do not intend to go into a lot of detail now because we will have consideration in detail and will deal with all those questions.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the lack of consultation. We took to the election that we support the gas industry and would rebuild the economy. This Bill went through the normal processes and was not done on urgency; in fact, it went to the scrutiny committee. That is over and above what technically could be done. There were more than 20 submissions, and 14 of those were in support. In the end, the Leader of the Opposition supported the Bill but talked about the lack of consultation.

The Member for Mulka talked about the impact on land and the environment. The pipelines in the Beetaloo Sub-basin have land use agreements. Proponents spend a lot of time and effort on dealing with the traditional owners to make sure the sacred sites and culture are dealt with. The traditional owners give their consent before the work is done. I accept what he is saying, and I accept that the land is a living culture. In the years of negotiation to deal with that, those matters are dealt with, and the traditional owners support the agreement. You cannot just build a pipeline, drill a well, mine or catch a fish on Aboriginal land without a land use—section 19—agreement.

All that work is done up-front, and the relationship with traditional owners continues; it does not stop once the land use agreement has been agreed to. I was at Beetaloo talking with the traditional owners who have jobs and look forward to their children having jobs. There is also training for these jobs on country. The traditional owners I spoke to are happy because they can have a future and stay on country. They get royalty payments, which is great, and, more importantly to them, they have certainty about jobs and training. A lot of work has been done on that.

I am not sure whether the Member for Johnston lives in fairyland or where she comes from. We are here to rebuild the economy. We will work with traditional owners and make decisions for the benefit of the Territory. She spoke about gas pipelines which have been in the Territory for over 40 years. What do you think keeps the lights on in the Northern Territory? What pays for clothes and hairspray? It comes from the gas industry. If you do not support the gas industry, do not go to festivals or use products which the gas industry support. You can fight it and not support it as much as you want, but energy and gas are a part of our lifestyle, and we need to keep up with the times. This Bill modernises the legislation to ensure we have the best regulations.

If we do not get the gas out of the Territory, where will it come from? Activist groups talk about not wanting mining, gas, gold, copper or silver, but where do they think it comes from if it is not coming from a well-regulated environment like the Northern Territory? It comes from places like Russia, South Africa and New Mexico. Do you think they give a stuff about the environment? The answer is no. In Russia people flare gas; they vent it into the atmosphere. If we care about the world environment, we need mining and gas to be well-regulated industries, which is what we are doing in the Northern Territory.

This Bill allows the transmission of regulated substances—carbon dioxide—through pipes. This is an emerging industry, and we want to get it right to make sure that it does not happen offshore somewhere and harm the environment.

The Member for Nightcliff asked me a question about climate change and environment. This is a true example of how we consider that in every decision we make. We know the environment does not just sit over the Northern Territory or Australia; it is worldwide. What happens in China, Russia, South Africa or any other country affects the global climate.

We are trying to do our part to make sure that there is a well-regulated gas industry, a new emerging industry in the Northern Territory.

I could go on, but we will deal with a lot of this in consideration in detail. I am happy to take question about it as we move forward.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

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

Clause 6:

Ms UIBO: Can you outline the process by which gas or other substances will be prescribed as a regulated substance under the regulations? What type of scrutiny and consultation will occur regarding this decision?

Mr MALEY: We will assess it case by case. When industry comes to us with a particular gas, we will assess whether that gas becomes a prescribed gas.

Ms UIBO: Will that assessment be conducted thoroughly and solely by the department, or will there be some type of process and input?

Mr MALEY: It will be by the department.

Ms UIBO: Which specific factors will be considered before prescribing a regulated substance?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case assessment. Depending on what gas it is, there are experts in the department who will assess it.

Ms UIBO: Will there be set criteria, since it is case by case, in relation to public safety, environmental risk, the transport characteristics of the substance and any population base, such as neighbouring communities or landholders?

Mr MALEY: It will be case by case.

Ms UIBO: I will rephrase it. Will there be criteria set by the department to assess it case by case?

Mr MALEY: Yes, in the pipeline management plans.

Ms UIBO: Can you confirm whether they will be individual or set criteria by the department?

Mr MALEY: It will be assessed case by case, depending on what the product is and the proposal. Industry will come to us, and we will assess it.

Ms UIBO: Will those assessments be available in the regulations?

Mr MALEY: It is all part of the proponent's pipeline plan; they propose what they will do, and we assess it based on the department's experts.

Ms UIBO: Is that to allow for new substances and technology to keep up to date?

Mr MALEY: That is right, yes.

Ms UIBO: Does the government intend to seek independent scientific, environmental or technical advice before prescribing additional substances, and will those assessments be made public?

Mr MALEY: No.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 8:

J DAVIS: The fit-and-proper person test lists a range of factors the minister must consider. Can you confirm that past conduct in negotiating land access with traditional owners and landholders is not among them?

Mr MALEY: It is not.

J DAVIS: Could a company that has used coercive or unfair tactics with Aboriginal landowners in the past satisfy this test without that conduct being considered?

Mr MALEY: No, that is not right. Proposed section 4B(1)(a)(vi) says:

… has behaved or is likely to behave in a way that is inconsistent …

J DAVIS: I move amendment 1 to clause 8.

This will add a mandatory consideration to the fit-and-proper person test, as discussed, requiring the minister to have regard to a person's prior conduct in negotiating agreements. How a company has behaved when dealing with people whose land they want to access is not a peripheral consideration; it is arguably the most important one. A company that has used coercive or unfair tactics with landowners, including Aboriginal landowners, in the past is telling us something fundamental about whether they should be trusted with a pipeline licence in the future. This amendment puts that clearly in the legislation where it belongs.

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: You just referenced proposed section 4B(1)(a), but proposed section 4B(2) says that the minister is not required to investigate whether an applicant meets the fit-and-proper person test. Can you confirm that is what the section says?

Mr MALEY: I still have to be satisfied before I make a decision, but I do not have to do an investigation. Provided the minister is satisfied, that is all that needs to happen.

J DAVIS: Can you explain what the steps are to make sure that you are satisfied?

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case scenario.

J DAVIS: Can you name any other jurisdiction where a fit-and-proper person test for high-risk infrastructure explicitly exempts the decision-maker from the obligation to investigate?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

J DAVIS: The clause is about the fit-and-proper person test.

Mr MALEY: You asked me about interstate jurisdictions. That is not relevant to the clause.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 2 to clause 8.

This amendment will omit proposed section 4B(2) because it says that the minister is not required to investigate whether an applicant meets the fit-and-proper person test; they need to consider only whatever information is placed before them. That bar is far too low. The provision introduces a test but removes the obligation to verify whether the test is met. It is out of line with every other jurisdiction. For decisions about who gets to operate major pipeline infrastructure across our land in the Northern Territory, it is not an adequate standard. Removing subsection (2) will mean that the minister must investigate.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 8 agreed to.

VISITORS
Good Shepherd Lutheran College

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5 students from Good Shepherd Lutheran College, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Clause 9, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 10:

Ms UIBO: What practical difference will this clause make? What will be the difference between a prescribed form and an approved form? What will change in terms of notifications for those with interest in land and anyone applying for a permit?

Mr MALEY: A prescribed form is prescribed in legislation and an approved form is approved by the department.

Ms UIBO: Will the approved form have set criteria?

Mr MALEY: It will have to meet the requirements of the Act in relation to how it works, but the work we are doing is to have the form approved by the department, and the department will make sure the form is relevant.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11:

Ms UIBO: Which other Acts or regulatory schemes does the government anticipate will satisfy the fit-and-proper person exemption?

Mr MALEY: The *Environment Protection Act*.

Ms UIBO: Can you outline the comparable standards for the *Environment Protection Act* and how they will apply?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause, but I will answer it. It is the same test.

Ms UIBO: How will the government determine the period for which a previous fit-and-proper person assessment remains valid before a new assessment is required under this Act?

Mr MALEY: It will be drafted in the regulations, but I can say that we are looking at two years.

Ms UIBO: Is there a risk that an applicant could rely on an outdated assessment conducted under another Act—for example, the *Environment Protection Act*—despite significant changes in their corporate conduct, financial position or compliance history since their original assessment?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Does that mean everything will be completed in real time if a new assessment is made?

Mr MALEY: We manage it. This is government in entirety.

Ms UIBO: That is across the different departments.

Will the regulations prescribe minimum standards or criteria that any other Acts with fit-and-proper person tests must meet before an applicant can qualify for an exemption?

Mr MALEY: Those regulations are being developed, but they will identify which is a fit-and-proper person test, and we will be able to prescribe that and mirror it so that it comes as one.

Ms UIBO: Does that mean they could apply for the exemption?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: If an applicant has previously passed a fit-and-proper person test under another Act, will the minister still retain discretion to require fresh assessments when there are concerns about an applicant's recent conduct or their capacity?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Will any consideration be given to the compliance history of related entities, parent companies or directors when determining whether an applicant can rely on exemption from the fit-and-proper person test?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 11 agreed to.

Clauses 12 and 13, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 14:

J DAVIS: Clause 14 amends section 13(5) of the Act to require publication of a notice regarding a pipeline application on the department's website. Submitters pointed out that this falls short of genuine public consultation. Does this require any public consultation?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: Can you outline what the nature of that consultation would be?

Mr MALEY: With landholders and those sorts of people.

J DAVIS: Once a notice has been put in the paper, if a Territorian has concerns about the application is there any mechanism provided for them to be heard?

Mr MALEY: The applicant would have to respond.

J DAVIS: Would the applicant have to respond to concerns?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 14 agreed to.

Clause 15, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 16:

Ms UIBO: What specific factors will you consider when assessing the financial ability of an applicant to carry out activities under the pipeline licence? Will it include the capacity to maintain infrastructure, respond to incidents and meet rehabilitation or decommissioning obligations?

Mr MALEY: It will be on a case-by-case basis and a full picture of their financial situation.

Ms UIBO: What matters will be taken into account when assessing the technical ability of an applicant? Will this include consideration of their operational experience, safety record and compliance history in other jurisdictions?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Will this new section change the way pipeline licence renewals are assessed? Were financial and technical capability considerations previously undertaken?

Mr MALEY: It does not change.

Ms UIBO: Will there be any express requirements under this new legislation, or will it sit within policy?

Mr MALEY: I do not think that is relevant to this clause because it is about the policy behind it. We are happy to take questions on this particular clause.

Ms UIBO: Will there be a requirement for assessment under this legislation?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Does this amendment introduce any new evidentiary requirements for applicants seeking renewal of a pipeline licence?

Mr MALEY: Yes; they will have to put information about their fit-and-proper person status.

Ms UIBO: Will further documentation be expected to demonstrate an applicant's financial and technical capability?

Mr MALEY: It is all part of the application. It will be assessed case by case.

Ms UIBO: Will the minister be able to refuse a renewal when there are concerns about the long-term financial viability of a licensee, even if a pipeline is currently operational?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: How will the government ensure the assessments of technical and financial capability remain ongoing throughout the lifespan of a pipeline licence, rather than being limited to the renewal stage alone?

Mr MALEY: That is not required once you are assessed and are operating your own pipeline.

Ms UIBO: Will there be spot checks by the department in that sense?

Mr MALEY: There will be compliance checks.

Ms UIBO: Will the compliance checks be conducted by the department?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Will independent expert advice be sought when assessing the technical capability of applicants, particularly projects that involve new substances such as hydrogen and carbon dioxide transport?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Will the recommendations to the minister be via the department?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clause 17:

Ms UIBO: Does this make insurance a mandatory condition for every pipeline licence?

Mr MALEY: Yes; it allows the minister to require a pipeline holder to take out and maintain insurance approved by the minister.

Ms UIBO: With the minister's discretion as to whether a licensee is required to take out and maintain an insurance policy, how will that information be collated?

Mr MALEY: It will be assessed as a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Will it be recommended by the department?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: What factors will you consider when deciding whether to impose an insurance condition on a pipeline licence? Are there minimum circumstances where insurance would always be required?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Will that depend on the type of licence?

Mr MALEY: Yes. It will be case by case based on who the applicant is, what sort of licence it is and what they are applying for.

Ms UIBO: Can the minister use their discretion to waive or vary the insurance requirements through the Act?

Mr MALEY: The requirement is that the insurance is approved by the minister.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure the public is not exposed to any additional risks from a licensee?

Mr MALEY: Insurance.

Ms UIBO: If the minister's requirements for varying insurance—would there be a safeguard risk if that is being discretionally removed?

Mr MALEY: There will be overarching continual regulation and compliance.

Ms UIBO: Who enforces that?

Mr MALEY: The department.

Ms UIBO: The explanatory statement refers to insurance arrangements intended to:

> *… insure and indemnify the Minister and the Territory against … claims.*

Are there circumstances in the NT that could indemnify a pipeline licensee against liabilities arising from any of the licensee's works?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case scenario. You are playing a hypothetical. We will have to assess each application on its merits.

Ms UIBO: There could be indemnity of a pipeline licensee, depending on their case-by-case assessment.

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Will the liability for any environmental damage, personal injury or property damage arising from pipeline activities remain the licensee's risk and not be transferred to Territory taxpayers?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: What minimum level of categories of insurance does the government anticipate requiring?

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Are any high-risk activities involving substances such as hydrogen or carbon dioxide anticipated?

Mr MALEY: I do not have a crystal ball.

Ms UIBO: I do not either, unfortunately, but will there be high-risk insurance categories?

Mr MALEY: Again, it will be assessed case by case.

J DAVIS: You are frequently referring to 'case by case'. Can you define 'case by case' and explain how that gives regulatory certainty?

Mr MALEY: 'Case by case' means an applicant applies to us, another applicant applies to us and another applicant applies to us. That is case by case.

J DAVIS: I understand from what you are saying that each case will be assessed individually.

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: Can you explain how that gives regulatory certainty?

Mr MALEY: We will assess it case by case as per the regulations as the law. We will assess each application case by case.

Ms UIBO: How will the government ensure that any insurance policy remains adequate over the life of the project, particularly when risks, project scope or environmental impacts may change over time?

Mr MALEY: It is under the licence conditions.

Ms UIBO: Is that managed by the department?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 17 agreed to.

Clause 18:

Ms UIBO: Can you define what is meant by 'good industry practice' for the purpose of pipeline management? Will that standard be set out in the Act, in the regulations or in guidelines published by the department?

Mr MALEY: It is a general industry term, and it means all the practices which are good and safe.

J DAVIS: Does the department intend to prescribe specific mandatory minimum standards in regulation?

Mr MALEY: Yes; it will be Australian Standard 2885.

Ms UIBO: What specific standard, codes or benchmarks will the government rely on when assessing whether a pipeline has been designed, constructed, operated or decommissioned in accordance with good industry practice?

Mr MALEY: Australian Standard 2885.

Ms UIBO: Will you determine whether a pipeline has been 'appropriately decommissioned'? What objective criteria or rehabilitation outcomes will need to be met before a pipeline can be considered properly decommissioned?

Mr MALEY: The department will consider it on a case-by-case scenario; for example, if there is a pipeline in the ground, would it do more environmental damage to dig it up or leave it there? It will be assessed on that.

Ms UIBO: Will the criteria sit within the department to align their assessments?

Mr MALEY: Yes. As I said, it will be case by case. The department will decide whether the pipeline should be dug up or left there. It may have been grown over and there would be more damage to the environment if it was dug up. It would be assessed on that.

Ms UIBO: This question leads to your answer, but I will make sure it is on the record. With decommissioning assessments, will the long-term environmental risk such as contamination or ongoing monitoring requirements after a pipeline ceases operation be considered?

Mr MALEY: I have already answered that question.

Ms UIBO: Who will provide advice to you on whether a pipeline has been appropriately decommissioned? Will it be the department, independent experts or the pipeline operator?

Mr MALEY: The department.

Ms UIBO: Can a pipeline management plan be approved if it proposes leaving infrastructure in the ground after operation ceases and, if so, what other safeguards exist to ensure that it does not create a future environmental or safety risk?

Mr MALEY: It is part of a big package. There will be consideration of environmental risk—like I said, whether to leave it in the ground or dig it up. It will be case by case, working out what is the best for the area's environment and surroundings.

Ms UIBO: Will this allow modifications or exemptions from the requirements under pipeline management? Can you outline what kind of requirements the government anticipates could be modified or exempted, particularly in regard to decommissioning obligations?

Mr MALEY: We still stick to the Australian Standards for decommissioning pipelines. That is what will be required.

Ms UIBO: Will landholders, traditional owners or affected communities have an opportunity to provide their input before the minister accepts a pipeline management plan or approves exemptions from its requirements?

Mr MALEY: Like I said in my wrapping-up speech, no work can be done on a pipeline without a land use agreement. That will be done at the beginning to make sure there are no surprises for the traditional owners.

Ms UIBO: Would this apply for a pipeline that already has an agreement but is being extended?

Mr MALEY: If the pipeline is outside the land use agreement, there will be another agreement. It depends what the land use agreement was at the beginning. The traditional owners or landowners, whoever they may be, will be consulted.

Ms UIBO: If there is a pipeline for one particular substance, which has a land use agreement, and another substance becomes viable for the proponent, there may be talk about a second pipeline. As there is an existing land use agreement, would there need to be an alteration to that management plan?

Mr MALEY: Again, they would need to look at the land use agreement. We will make sure that we stay within the terms of the land use agreement so that there are no surprises for the traditional owners in the future.

Clause 18 agreed to.

Clause 19, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 20:

Ms UIBO: What criteria will you apply when determining whether a variation, suspension or waiver is 'justified in the circumstances' under this proposed section?

Mr MALEY: This will be case by case, depending on why they need the variation, the circumstances and the land use agreement. As I said with the previous question, we will have to stay within the land use agreements.

Ms UIBO: Can you provide examples of the type of circumstance in which the government anticipates a suspension or waiver and the pipeline licence requirements that may be granted?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Is that no, as in you will not provide an example?

Mr MALEY: No. It is a hypothetical and we do not …

Ms UIBO: You gave me examples of infrastructure sitting in the ground that might be covered over and left in the ground. That is a practical example and helpful in this case.

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

Ms UIBO: With the pipeline licence requirements, is it up to the department what is suitable in terms of suspension or a waiver?

Mr MALEY: Yes. Again, it is assessed. The department provides advice and the minister decides.

Ms UIBO: Can you explain what is meant by 'good pipeline construction and operating practice'? Will that be defined in legislation, regulations or departmental guidelines?

Mr MALEY: That is an industry term that is practised by the industry. It is to make sure everyone understands and give it some flexibility.

Ms UIBO: What objectives, standards, engineering codes or industry benchmarks will the department or you rely on when assessing whether a proposed variation reflects good pipeline construction and operating practices?

Mr MALEY: Australian Standard 2885.

Ms UIBO: Will independent technical or engineering advice be sought when approving a variation, suspension or waiver, particularly when safety, environmental protection or land access arrangements may be affected?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: How will affected landholders and traditional owners assess whether a proposed variation generally reflects good operating practices if they are provided only seven days to comment?

Mr MALEY: The proponent will have to engage with the relevant stakeholders.

Ms UIBO: Will they have to provide advice to the department that they have met the timeframe?

Mr MALEY: I am not sure what you are talking about, but, no, they will not have to, as long as they provide within this. The proponent has to engage with traditional owners, and they can do that at their pace.

Ms UIBO: I was asking about the seven days. If the proponent has something out for comment for seven days, who will ensure that happens? If the information is put out on a Friday, and Saturday and Sunday are misses, you wind your five-day timeframe into that. Who will ensure the ability to assess the operating practice, particularly from the landholders' and TOs' perspective?

Mr MALEY: Seven days is seven days. It will have to be the proponent making sure they are doing the right thing. As long as they comply with the seven days, that is a week.

Ms UIBO: The only concern I raise is whether that is a reasonable timeframe; for example, if it was put out for comment on Christmas Eve, the seven days would have it expire on New Year's Day, when most people are enjoying time with their family. I am just seeing whether there is anything tighter in relation to the oversight of the timeframe of a seven-day comment period.

Mr MALEY: Is that a question or a statement?

Ms UIBO: Both. Okay, so there is no oversight of the seven days.

Can a variation or waiver be approved if it reduces safety or environmental rehabilitation requirements compared with the original pipeline licence conditions?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is a difficult question. It will be case by case as it comes up.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure the power to grant waivers or suspensions is not used to retrospectively approve noncompliance or cost-cutting measures in relation to a pipeline operator?

Mr MALEY: We trust that the public servants will not do the wrong thing and backdate an application. I have good faith that they will do the right thing, because they will not break the law and backdate applications.

Ms UIBO: Will the reasons for approving a variation, suspension or waiver be made publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability in decision-making?

Mr MALEY: No.

Clause 20 agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 23, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 24:

Ms UIBO: What constitutes 'reasonable steps' for a pipeline licensee to identify risks and hazards to pipeline integrity?

Mr MALEY: Reasonable steps will be compliance with their pipeline management plan.

Ms UIBO: How will the government assess whether a licensee has done enough to eliminate the risks or it is 'not reasonably practicable' to eliminate them entirely?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Does the government intend to issue guidance, standards or regulations outlining the expected risk management practices that pipeline operators must follow to comply with this provision?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Will that be provided in the department's guidelines or in regulations?

Mr MALEY: In the guidelines.

Ms UIBO: How will these new duties differ from the obligations that apply to pipeline licensees under the current Act?

Mr MALEY: The duty to maintain the integrity of the pipeline is a new bit, giving more onus on the licensee in proposed section 39(1) and (2).

Ms UIBO: Would that be until the pipeline is decommissioned?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: This clause is modelled on the provisions of the *Petroleum Act 1984*. Did the government review how effectively those provisions operated in practice before extending a similar framework to pipelines?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

Ms UIBO: Has there been a process to inform any changes from the current Act to the new Act?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: What type of risks and hazards does the government specifically anticipate licensees will need to manage in relation to hydrogen, carbon dioxide and other newly regulated substances?

Mr MALEY: Pipeline integrity.

Ms UIBO: Can a licensee rely on commercial considerations when arguing it was not reasonably practicable to eliminate a risk?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: What oversight powers will the regulator have to independently verify that licensees are appropriately identifying and managing risks rather than relying solely on self-reporting by the industry?

Mr MALEY: Internal assessments.

Ms UIBO: Is that by the department?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: The clause has created a defence where the defendant took reasonable steps and exercised due diligence. What evidence will a licensee need to provide to successfully rely on that defence?

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Will there be criteria in the department to guide that?

Mr MALEY: It will be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Does the government consider the existing maximum penalty under the provision remains sufficient, given the potential serious environmental, safety and economic consequences of any pipeline failure?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: How will communities, landholders and traditional owners be informed about identified pipeline risks that may affect their land, water or safety?

Mr MALEY: Through the land use agreement.

Ms UIBO: If a pipeline incident occurs, how will the government determine whether the failure arose from unforeseeable circumstances or a licensee failing to properly identify and manage known risks?

Mr MALEY: It will be case by case.

Clause 24 agreed to.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS
St John's Catholic College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 7 and 12 students from St John's Catholic College, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

QUESTION TIME

Bullying Allegations

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

After burying your head in the sand over serious allegations of bullying concerning the Member for Fong Lim, further allegations have now emerged that staff employed in the electorate office of the Member for Drysdale were directed to undertake party political activities and subjected to bullying in the workplace. What steps have you taken to ensure members of your CLP government and their electorate officers are complying with the requirements that publicly funded staff remain apolitical and are working in a safe and lawful environment …

Mr HOWE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! These allegations, as you would know, Madam Speaker, are with the department. There is a commission that will hear them. This is not the place to discuss them.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Drysdale, with all due respect, it is not up to you to answer the question. The question has been directed to the Chief Minister. That is not a point of order.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I wish I could thank the Opposition Leader for her question about something that contributed to the future growth and development of the Northern Territory. It is the last day of parliament and she has resorted to her go-to area, which is getting in the gutter. It is gutter politics. Her only mode of operating seems to be to tear down other people—public servants, members of parliament and anyone anytime it is getting a little politically difficult for the Opposition Leader. Maybe she is not hitting her KPIs on hitting political points with us, so she goes into the gutter on the last day of parliament.

You should have asked me why the federal Labor government has spectacularly failed to fund the Northern Territory's maternity services, our roads investment or housing in the bush. That is what you should be asking me. In short summary, Opposition Leader, this is a total load of nonsense. I do not accept the premise of your question. Everything you said is irrefutable rubbish, denied and categorically wrong. I will not dignify your question with any more waste of this parliament's time.

Defence Week

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for DEFENCE NT

Welcome to the House, St John's students; it is great to have you here.

Recently, Darwin was host to Defence Week 2026 under the theme of Northern Capability, National Defence. It highlighted the Territory's central role in Australia's Defence posture and brought together Defence industry, allied partners and local businesses to focus on sustainment, logistics, Northern Territory capability and regional security. During the week you set a clear direction for how the Territory can strengthen readiness, support national priorities and grow a capable local Defence industry. Can you update the Assembly on the key achievements of Defence Week and how they advance a strong north and secure Australia through practical partnerships with Defence industry and our allies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Fannie Bay and her community support our Rebuilding the Economy strategy. One of the five pillars in rebuilding the economy after a decade of Labor trashing the Territory to the ground is Defence. Defence is a huge opportunity for the Northern Territory not only to play its role in our sovereign capability and support our forces and allies but also in terms of economic growth and support. As Chief Minister I am also the Defence NT minister because it is a key economic pillar for us and a key deliverable to the community of Fannie Bay. That is why it has so much focus.

Defence Week was held from 27 April to 1 May, and it was an excellent week. Our theme this year was Northern Capability, National Defence. I make it clear, particularly to the young people in the gallery, that a strong north means a secure Australia. I cannot overemphasise that, which is why launching our Defence Strategy as part of Defence Week was so important. It was extremely well received.

The Defence Industry Council has industry bodies that come together and support me with advice about how we tackle this to make sure we deliver for the Territory. They put together this strategy so that we have the private sector and government singing from the same song sheet. We speak with one voice, one point of advocacy and one message to Canberra, the United States, our allies and our region. That focuses on five key areas that the Northern Territory can deliver on. Our strategy aligns beautifully with the Australian Defence strategy regarding maritime sustainment, the Army's littoral pivot that it is making here for the 1st Brigade, northern theatre logistics, northern basing and ranges—ours are exceptional—innovation, testing and evaluation.

It was a great opportunity to make sure we connected with significant Defence leaders. I had meetings with the Chief of Army, General Simon Stuart; Rear Admiral Darren Grogan; and David Hanley and John Chandler, who are the naval shipbuilding and sustainment executives. I also caught up with Lieutenant General Sklenka from the United States Marine Corps for the second time, and Admiral Samuel Paparo, who is an important person in this space and Commander of INDOPACOM.

It has been an incredible opportunity to showcase the Territory and have those important conversations. There is a great focus on the Northern Marine Complex. The fact that we have a Territory Coordinator and a Territory development area puts wind in our sails. It is seen as an asset and an attribute for investing in the Territory, which is exactly what we wanted.

Department of Children and Families Review

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

Last week you announced a wide-ranging review into your department. You said:

> *… we need a truly independent investigation of the department as a whole to make sure we've got the structure right, to make sure we've the focus right, that we've got the right people in the right spot.*

Yesterday you contradicted yourself, saying that the review would cover matters only in relation to Kumanjayi Little Baby. Why have you narrowed the scope of the review and on whose advice?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, one of the things that has become apparent over the last few weeks—and for me, the last 18 months—is that in the child protection space there is so much work to be done to ensure that children are protected and safe and can go home every night to a safe environment, get a good night's sleep, get up in the morning, have a good meal and go to school.

In the course of examining all that work we had the terrible tragedy two weeks ago of the loss of Kumanjayi Little Baby, which highlighted that there were processes in place in the child protection space that appeared not to be working. My commitment is to review all those processes across the department.

When we looked at how we could do this review and make sure it was done quickly so that we could get changes that might be needed in place as fast as possible so that we can be sure every child is safe and we are doing everything we can to provide our children with the best possible environment as they grow into proud strong Territorians, it was apparent that a protracted review would not be possible. In examining what might be needed, it was realised that all of the elements that need to be examined in this particular situation covered off on all the concerns that had been identified in various conversations and consultations that I have been doing over the last year.

There is no question that as this review is undertaken and done swiftly, it will identify where we need to correct our pathway and where we may need to improve our processes. It will tell us what we got right and what we may need to correct. Those decisions and recommendations will ripple through the whole department and ensure that every child in the Northern Territory who may need assistance will get it when they need it and that they will be kept safe and secure in their homes as the first possible option. When that is not possible, we will place them somewhere that they will be safe and secure and their connection to family can be maintained.

Department of Children and Families Review – Supplementary Question

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

You confirmed that you have narrowed the scope. Will the two lead reviewers have any involvement or interaction with Northern Territory correctional services?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I answered the question by saying that the scope has not been narrowed; it has been realised that everything we need to examine can be examined in this one particular environment. As we know, child protection interacts with many other departments—Health, Education, hopefully not Corrections because we are hoping we can get to those children before …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The minister is contradicting herself. Is it a wide-ranging reform into the department or is it specific to the tragic events which have unfolded?

Madam SPEAKER: You have changed that supplementary question somewhat, but the minister can choose whether she answers or not.

Ms CAHILL: I know most of the time the answers given to questions are not what the other side might want to hear.

The reality is we have identified that all the risks we need to examine, all the areas which need to be checked and all the processes which need to be dealt with to make sure they are the right processes. That will be undertaken in examining this particular situation. That will allow us across the department to have everything in place to ensure, as I have said multiple times, children in the Territory are safe.

Budget 2026–27 – Biosecurity

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

Last week the Treasurer outlined the 2026–27 budget. This budget reinforces our commitment to grow the economy, which the good people of Drysdale are keen to see. Agriculture is crucial to the NT. In 2021–22 the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry gave $805m to our economy. Keeping this industry well protected from biosecurity risk is vital. Can you tell the Assembly how this year's budget will strengthen the Northern Territory's defence against exotic pests and diseases and will strengthen livestock compliance and animal welfare?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale understands the importance of the agriculture and fishing industry, because the figures he mentioned going into our economy pay for police, education and the health of Territorians.

We treat this with importance, unlike the previous Labor government which tied up the department of Agriculture at the bottom of a huge department and left it to rot with no oversight. When we came to office, we set Agriculture up in its own department because we understand how important it is.

As the Chief Minister mentioned, agriculture is one of our five pillars to rebuild the economy. We will do that on the back of the cattle and agriculture industry across the Northern Territory. The Treasurer increased the budget for biosecurity because we know how important it is that we make sure that biosecurity is dealt with properly. Lumpy skin disease, foot-and-mouth disease and H5 bird flu are to the north of our borders. In fact, H5 bird flu is everywhere in the world except Australia. We need to do what we can to keep out exotic diseases, and strengthening biosecurity is the way to do that.

This money will establish a dedicated traceability compliance unit, improve the way we do waybills and transport cows. We will increase the focus on emergency animal disease preparedness. If there is an incursion of an exotic disease, we need to act quickly to either contain it or eradicate it in a small area or wherever it may be. If we do nothing and are not ready, it will spread across the Northern Territory and Australia and damage not only our economy but also Australia's economy. It is so important because agriculture is not only cows and farmers but also the supply chains that keep those cows and farmers moving. We are talking about the people who bring in fertiliser, truck drivers, tyre manufacturers and many people who live and work in the Northern Territory. I have been to the Ag department to see its biosecurity trailer that can find out whether there is an incursion and try to trap it.

This is a great announcement for the Northern Territory and the department of Ag because agriculture is important to the Northern Territory and Australia. We continue to get behind and support agriculture because it is a crucial part of our economy.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries – Recruitment

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES

Last week the ICAC tabled a report identifying serious governance concerns in public sector recruitment processes, including failures of conflict-of-interest management, missing declarations and inadequate recruitment controls within the department for which you hold ministerial responsibility. When were you first made aware of these allegations? Did your government receive any prior warnings about systemic weaknesses in senior recruitment practices? Have you sought advice on whether any appointments need to be reviewed to restore public integrity and confidence in the impartiality of the public service?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries because it does a great job to help rebuild the economy.

The report was tabled. I found out when it was tabled that it picked up some minor issues, which will be dealt with. They have been picked up and will be dealt with this year. We are acting, unlike the previous Labor government that hid reports. The Member for Goyder spoke about Operation Jupiter and all those ICAC reports previously that were put under the table. We have read the report and will continue work to make sure that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is aboveboard and ready to go.

We have had structural changes, and the department is now operating better than ever. It has been pulled out of a mega-department where it was left to rot by the previous Labor government.

The department is protecting the Territory, and the biosecurity team is working hard. We talked about fish stock. The Fisheries Compliance Unit has been given $4m over two years. This is how important the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is to this government.

We continue to support the people in the department to make sure that they do what they can to support the Northern Territory.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The second part of the question specifically asked: has the minister sought advice on whether the recruitment practices need to be reviewed to restore integrity in the public service?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call and plenty of time.

Mr MALEY: I have spoken to Jo Hersey, the Minister for Public Service, and we are going through a process. We have done what we needed to do. The merit process is rigorous and aboveboard. We are working hard, because we take it seriously. The OCPE and the department have done a lot to strengthen their processes, and we will continue to do that as we move forward. Protecting public servants is what we do on this side of the House, unlike those on the other side who try to throw them under the bus, do not support them and talk about gutter politics.

We are here to make sure the departments across the Northern Territory work together to make the Territory a better place. We want to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our Territory lifestyle. We cannot do that by ourselves. We on this side of the Chamber need the government departments to work with us and all Territorians to make the Territory a better place. One of the reasons I got into politics was to bring the Territory back to what it was before, because it had failed …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I do not need to hear why the Deputy Chief Minister has entered politics. The specific question, which he has not answered, is: have you sought advice on whether the senior recruitment processes need to be reviewed—yes or no?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, continue.

Mr MALEY: Clearly, the Leader of the Opposition does not like the answer she is hearing. Those opposite throw public servants under the bus. They neglect public servants. We want to make sure that public servants go to work, do their job and go home to their families, because it is about lifestyle and rebuilding the economy, and public servants are a crucial part of that.

I make it clear to anyone in the department of Ag who is listening: I support you. Keep up the good work. I have your back because I appreciate the work you do.

Fuel Supply

Dr RAHMAN to TREASURER

Recent international events put pressure on fuel supplies, driving up the price of oil and making supply uncertain. This has resulted in significantly higher bowser prices for Territorians, including in my electorate of Fong Lim. This is a global problem, but local steps can be taken to ensure that Territorians are shielded from the worst impacts of the Iran war. Can you outline some of these steps; the steps that you and the Finocchiaro CLP government have taken to minimise the impact of these pressures; and what we are doing to ensure the Territory can keep moving?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I think everybody in this Chamber and those in the gallery—our kids—all know the global events that have taken place over the last three to four months and the effect they are having on the Northern Territory. The Member for Fong Lim understands this because he has a mixed and varied electorate with a lot of businesses that use fuel.

We are doing the hard work to make sure the people of the Territory, average mums and dads and business owners, are being treated fairly.

I note the federal government's halving of the excise, and that is welcome for the people of the Territory, because we live with the tyranny of distance. It is a bit different from the southern states; everything we want to do here takes a bit longer, and we have to go a bit further. There are a few more links in our supply chain.

The Northern Territory has contributed $19.7m to that reduction of the fuel excise. That temporary fuel price relief measure is helping business, but we have also immediately taken steps to work with our government departments which contract services to make sure we are looking after our contractors and not unduly causing them issues with this fuel supply shock.

We have taken steps on the retail front by activating the 77-year-old *Price Exploitation Prevention Act 1949*. We have appointed a fuel controller and put retailers on notice to make sure they do not gouge Territorians and take advantage of us at the bowser. We put the price lock legislation in place and made quick changes to ensure retailers can change their price only once a day so that everybody knows the price you see on the board in the morning is the price you will see that night. Retailers can drop their prices—that would be great—but cannot raise them.

We have also taken significant measures to ensure the Territory's fuel supply. We directed Power and Water to hold its maximum fuel holdings in our remote areas to ensure electricity generation into the future should something else happen. We have done that work to make sure we generate power for the bush. We have given instructions to TGen to utilise another three million litres of storage to hold fuel for the people of the Territory, particularly for remote generation.

I table the direction that we have given to Power and Water and TGen to make that happen to not only ensure adequate supply for the people in the bush so that we can keep generating power and they do not suffer but also create a bit of a buffer and a backstop for the people of the Territory should we see any further fuel shocks or issues in the Middle East.

NT Public Sector – People Matter Survey

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

At a time when the Chief Minister continues to show indifference towards bullying allegations involving members of her own backbench, like the Members for Fong Lim and Drysdale, the 2025 NT People Matter Survey reveals deeply troubling results across the Northern Territory public service, with only 51% of employees believing recruitment and promotion decisions are based on merit; more than one-third reporting experiences of bullying, harassment or racism in the workplace; and widespread concerns about burnout, poor leadership and misconduct.

Does your government accept these results are a reflection of how the CLP is governing? What immediate action are you taking to restore confidence in leadership and workplace safety across the public service in your ministerial role?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our CLP government values and backs our public servants every day. They are on the front line working for us and doing a fantastic job.

The Opposition Leader says that there is a lot of bullying going on. I refute that; we have made a lot of improvements in the public service. The People Matter Survey has gone out. There is zero tolerance in relation to bullying in the public service. We recently had Do It For Dolly Day. As the minister for Education, we talk about bullying in the workplace and in schools. It is not acceptable.

Ms Uibo: What are you doing within your government?

Mrs HERSEY: Opposition Leader, if you would like to listen to the answer to your question instead of interjecting, that would be nice.

Ms Uibo: Yes, I am talking about your members.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please!

Mrs HERSEY: There has been a welcome improvement in the participation rate for the People Matter Survey. We know that looking after people's mental health and wellbeing makes them better in the workplace. There

are many places where people can seek advice. There was a lot of reflection in that People Matter Survey; for example, employee burnout remained at 41%, so at least we know we are looking after people in that area and it is not getting worse.

Strength and leadership development initiatives have gone out across the workplace to leaders. There have been leadership development programs to make sure people feel capable in leadership positions. There have been face-to-face leadership programs. I went to a leadership forum in Alice Springs, and there was another in Katherine. I have been to Aboriginal forums where people talk about mental health and wellbeing. Both those forums have been well received.

We will continue to back our public servants, look after their mental health and wellbeing and stamp out bullying in the workplace.

Integrated Events Strategy

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS

From packed AFL crowds at TIO Stadium to the return of BASSINTHEGRASS, it is clear that the Territory is embracing a big year of events. We are excited and look forward to these 2026 events.

Strong events do not happen by accident; they require coordination, investment and clear leadership. Can you update Territorians on how this government is delivering an integrated events strategy that backs our lifestyle, supports our local businesses and grows our visitor economy in our year of growth, certainty and security?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina was at TIO Stadium last Saturday night for the Gold Coast Suns versus St Kilda game. Like a lot of my colleagues the member was high-fiving a lot of the crowd. A lot of the Member for Casuarina's constituents must have been there because I even saw him hug someone at one stage, which is great.

There were 10,600 people packing out TIO Stadium for the Aussie Rules, which is fantastic. It was electrifying. Add to that our local players who were there, Ben Long, Daniel Rioli and Joel Jeffrey. It is exciting for our kids to see those players in the flesh and have a chat to them at our schools. The Suns have been here all week and having a great time. This morning the minister for Education was at TIO Stadium with a bunch of schools, which is fabulous.

It is part of the Sir Doug Nicholls Round. We have another game tomorrow night. I hope to see everyone there. The honorary patron this year is Michael 'Magic' McLean who is a well-known Territorian; he is famous across Australia. It will be a great game. I very much look forward to it.

I have noticed all week—as I am sure everybody who is listening has seen—that these events bring many people to the Northern Territory. Our hotels are full; the mall is buzzing; and restaurants, pubs and clubs are humming. It is fantastic to see. This is a wonderful time of year, so we have to celebrate that.

It is not always easy for Territorians, but we are turning that around. We have done a lot of reform within Tourism and Major Events. By bringing it all together under the one roof, if you come here for a major event such as the AFL, you will probably do other things such as fishing, camping and visiting our beautiful national parks. The Tourism area is promoting all that to our visitors, so we are getting more bang for buck. The changes that our CLP government made has allowed that to happen.

If I was in the tourism industry I would be worried if Labor got back in because already under its changed shadow ministry it has split them out again; it has a shadow minister for events and festivals and a shadow minister for Tourism and Hospitality. I do not see how that makes sense.

Obviously, things are getting better in the Northern Territory because of the way that we are addressing this issue. We back local tourism businesses, events and Territory families who participate.

We have BASSINTHEGRASS on Saturday night; I nearly forgot about that because the football has been so wonderful. I look forward to a fantastic evening; I will be there. There is a bunch of new artists and a couple of oldies for those of us who are not across the new music.

Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs – Appointments

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

You asked the Palmerston Council to nominate a representative to the Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs. Following a formal council decision, it endorsed Councillor Yolanda Kanyai as its representative and Councillor Wayne Bayliss as proxy. After receiving this, you appointed Councillor Bayliss to the role, a fellow member of the Country Liberal Party. Why did you override the decision of an elected local council? Why ask the council to undertake a nomination process at all if you were ultimately prepared to only appoint the person you personally preferred?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, when I came to this portfolio there were only nine members of the Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs. I increased that to 16. Rather than having only South Asian representation I broadened it, and now we have representation from South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific region.

One of the members is an observer; prior to this process it was an observer from LGANT. LGANT used to nominate one person, and I changed that process because I thought we needed to give that opportunity to elected members of the councils to hold the status of an observer. I changed that process and wrote to all the councils in the Northern Territory to ask for a nomination. I received nine nominations. I do not know why Palmerston made two nominations; everywhere else made one.

I went through the structure of the Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, and we had good over-representation of people who are first-generation migrants. When I looked at certain criteria of nominees, I saw a person who is a second-generation migrant who grew up in a non-English-speaking family household, worked in Police for many decades, had all those experiences and has been a Territorian for more than 25 years. I used that criteria.

I do not know how we will target people based on political parties, because I have not heard anything from them about personal political backgrounds. I am focused on delivering the 10-year multicultural affairs strategy, which I am working on with the advisory council.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question specifically asked why the minister ignored the recommendation of the local council.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please! The minister has answered and is still answering the question.

Mr CHARLS: The Opposition Leader, who was a Cabinet member for many years, used the word 'recommendation'. It is about recommending a person for me to make a decision. The council has done its job, and I have done mine. I clearly outlined the reason I have done this.

I am happy and proud of all 16 members of my Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs. I do not look at their backgrounds of where they come from, who they are and their political representation. I am sure there are people with different views on that council. They bring strength, as all members of this Assembly will see once I announce that strategy.

Members interjecting.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the minister is trying to answer the question. There are constant interjections from the other side, and I cannot even hear the minister's response.

Mr Young: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: I have not given you the call. There have been plenty of interjections from both sides, but what is your point of order?

Mr YOUNG: I was making it clear that they do not trust the Palmerston Council's nominations.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order; that is a misuse of a point of order. You are on a warning. We do not do that.

Mr CHARLS: I will finish by saying that Labor continues to do this culture war. Let Labor do that, but on this side we will focus on the people. It does not matter where they come from, they are Territorians, and we work together for a better Territory.

Child Protection Information Leak – Investigation

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Can you advise whether an investigation is underway into the leaking of confidential child protection information to media outlets? Who will undertake this investigation, and will the outcome be made public?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I can tell you we are doing everything in our power to make sure that every child in the Northern Territory is safe and has the ability to grow up in a household that will keep them well fed, protected, at school and on the best pathway to their best possible life. That is at the crux of everything we are doing and have been working on in the Department of Children and Families for the last month.

We have some concerns; we have spoken about that publicly. We are looking to see how we can make sure that we get all our processes right and that what we are doing will give us the best possible results for those children.

In the course of doing that, we will make sure that the information that should be confidential and is confidential will remain so. I cannot make specific comment in that area because I am prohibited by legislation from doing so. I have publicly said that I can neither say yes or no as to whether the information that was reported in the paper is accurate. I will say …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was specific: will there be an investigation?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, please continue.

Ms CAHILL: We will make sure that all our systems are robust and that we can ensure that all children are well cared for, safe and protected. Going forward that will be the paramount concern of everybody involved in the child protection area.

Federal Budget – NDIS Changes

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for DISABILITY

Earlier this week the federal government announced its budget with proposed changes to the NDIS. Yesterday you indicated that you were heading to Canberra next week for an urgent meeting of Disability ministers. Can you outline to Territorians what can be expected from next week's meeting and whether this will include updates on the pending Thriving Kids initiative?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, yesterday I outlined some of the changes the federal government announced, and it has introduced draft legislation this morning with those changes. I reinforce what I said yesterday: with the changes to the NDIS, almost 160,000 people will come off that plan in the next four years. The federal government aims to have budget savings of between $35bn and $37.2bn over the next four years of the NDIS.

One of my key priorities for the Disability ministers' meeting in Canberra next week is to have strong representation for the Northern Territory. I was at the Disability Expo at the Marrara netball stadium this morning. Many people came to me and raised their concerns. No-one has an issue with the changes that will target the sharp practices and fraud practices and increase provider registration. The main concern is about the impact that other changes will have.

For example, the Northern Territory Government has allocated $20m over five years for Thriving Kids and there is $14m from the Commonwealth. We are going through the implementation plan for what this will look like. We need to submit by the end of this month. It is subject to some of the information we will get from the Commonwealth during the ministerial meeting next week.

The Commonwealth wants the services to commence from 1 October 2026, which is only four to five months away. We need a better understanding from the Commonwealth about how that will be, because on top of the $2bn for Thriving Kids, the Commonwealth announced $3bn for additional foundational supports. We need to know more about what it is.

The Territory has unique challenges when it comes to remoteness; the significant representation of people with an Indigenous background, which is 53% compared with the national average of 8%; workforce shortage issues; the highest service delivery cost; and limited access to specialist services. We are different from the eastern states and major cities. When the federal government implements those changes, we need to ensure it is done in a way that reflects how we provide and deliver services in the Northern Territory. My number one priority in Canberra will be saying how it will impact Territorians and how we can make sure we deliver better services to the Territory.

Mobile Phone Connectivity

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for CORPORATE and DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Now, more than ever, I think everyone in this House can agree that access to telecommunications is incredibly important. It is required to access 000 in emergencies, educational resources and telehealth services. This Assembly previously heard the achievements of the combined effort with you and the minister for Education in uplifting connectivity to schools across the Territory, and I commend you both on this tremendous work, which I saw when I was the assistant minister for DCDD.

Can you update the Assembly on the government's latest accomplishments in terms of mobile coverage and who has benefited from your perseverance to improve the lives of Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is important that when we leave the major centres across the Northern Territory, those in remote areas continue to have access to telecommunications.

The Finocchiaro CLP government has partnered with Telstra as part of a $5.8m co-investment program to roll out 4G small cells across the Northern Territory. Twelve remote communities, for the first time ever, will be able to access telecommunications. That is important, because when you live in the middle of nowhere and there is a big flood coming and the roads might be cut, it is pretty handy to get on your phone and work out what is happening and where you can go.

When I was an electrician I used to travel to some of these remote communities. I enjoyed not being connected, but the local people on the ground wanted to access the same services that other everyday Territorians get to enjoy.

There is a number of communities, and I will read out the list because I think some people will enjoy hearing which communities have been connected.

Mr Edgington: What about the Barkly?

Mr BURGOYNE: I hear, 'What about the Barkly?' There are a couple down there, but there is also, in the Namatjira electorate, Bonya and Tobermorey. In East Arnhem there is Garrthalala, Donydji and Rorruwuy—I hope I am saying them all right, Member for Mulka. Looking across the Top End region …

Ms Uibo: That is mine; that is Arnhem. It is Donydji.

Mr BURGOYNE: There we go. Thank you very much; I am being told the correct pronunciation.

Across the Big Rivers region there is Menngen, and in the Barkly area we have Canteen Creek which was recently connected. This is important for the people living in remote areas in the Northern Territory.

Along with that important work, we have also been working with our federal government colleagues, because we get on well, despite what others might say. Recently, $7.5m has been invested in conjunction with the Northern Territory and federal governments and Telstra as part of our Connecting Kakadu program. Minister Boothby and I are excited about this. We want people to get to the iconic places in Kakadu, take a few selfies and let the rest of the world know how amazing the Territory is.

Some people in this Chamber might remember the famous *Crocodile Dundee*. I love the scene where Crocodile Dundee has his stick on a string, calling up people in Arnhem Land. No longer do you need a stick on a string; you will be able to pick up your telecommunications device, take a picture and tell the world how amazing Kakadu and the entire Territory are. It is wonderful that we are investing in telecommunications across the Territory so that people in remote areas can stay connected and those visiting can tell one another how amazing the Territory is.

Minister for Tourism and Hospitality – China Visit

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY

While the Member for Port Darwin was busy redecorating her office, you took a 24-hour $20,000 trip to China and only told Territorians once you returned. How do you justify spending $20,000 on a one-day trip to China when airlines, including China Southern, have cut 45,000 seats to the Territory? What did you achieve out of this secret 24-hour $20,000 trip?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am excited to speak about this trip because it was a long time coming. We were not sure whether it would get off the ground because of the global uncertainty.

I went to China with 15 tourism operators from across the Territory. These operators wanted to go to China. They said, 'Minister, can you please come with us? We understand that when you are in China trying to get tourists to get on a plane and come here, it is all about the relationship between dignitaries.' With the Australian Consul to China, I went to Guangzhou which is the biggest province and closest to the Northern Territory. It is almost like a sister city to us; it is that close. You can fly there with China Southern in about five hours. That is incredible. Even if we get a tiny sliver of the Chinese market, because so many millions of people live there, that would be massive for the Northern Territory. Local tourism operators wanted me to come along, and I did.

The trip was fantastic. It was worth the gruelling fast turnaround to get there and back. In the short time I was there I had several meetings. Between all of us we had 150 meetings with massive tourism companies in China that are looking up packages for the Northern Territory and seeing Uluru, Kakadu and Litchfield and saying that they want to come here. They said, 'What else can we do when we are there? We want to come and have a look.' That is exactly what a Tourism minister should be doing—promoting the Northern Territory.

Territorians well remember what it was like under Labor. Things were going backwards, and tourism was down in the dumps. Our shoulder season was dire; it was awful. Labor is still showing its old ways by splitting portfolios. Instead of having the portfolios of events, festivals, Tourism and Hospitality come together, Labor has split them again. Those opposite are showing Territorians that they have not learned from their failed ways. They are quite happy to see things go to rack and ruin.

I was proud to join our industry representatives in Guangzhou for those important meetings. We have an airline that flies direct to China, and we want to make sure its planes are full. If we do not fill those seats, why would it keep coming here? We need to ensure that we have as many inbound routes as possible for our tourism industry.

Territory Growth Initiative

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

The CLP came to office with a clear mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique Territory lifestyle. Rebuilding our economy is a priority. In July 2025 the Territory Growth Initiative was launched by the Finocchiaro CLP government to provide access to financial support to help establish or expand projects that would contribute to economic development. Can you update the Assembly on how the Territory Growth Initiative is delivering on that commitment, driving new investment, creating local jobs and showcasing the best of the Northern Territory—what is on offer—to the world?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri could not have timed that question better than on the back of the question that was asked of my colleague the minister for Tourism. From her background and the work she

does in her electorate, the Member for Wanguri knows that growing our economy is important because it means we will get jobs, have good infrastructure projects and grow our population.

I am excited to talk about the Territory Growth Initiative. It has a twofold purpose. The first is to support infrastructure programs, which it is doing in conjunction with the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, which is an exciting partnership. The other area—which is the exciting one because this is where the Territorians' everyday lives will be improved and impacted—is our Collaborative Investment Program.

The first investment we made was with the Tasmanian Walking Company for the magnificent Uluru–Kata Tjuta walk. I was thrilled to attend the launch a couple of weeks back with my colleague the Member for Braitling. We drove all the way there, did the thing and drove all the way back, but it was worth it. The $10m concessional loan we invested in that project will come back to the Territory tenfold, and that is what this initiative is about. That company is so passionate about the Northern Territory. It has not only made sure that it has done all the work to include the local population but also built infrastructure that is complementary to the environment. It is stunning. It is a 54-kilometre walk. The facilities the company constructed are beautiful. It is making the most of bush tucker and bush foods and employing local Indigenous community members as tour guides. The feedback from all the people in that community was outstanding. They are so excited about this project.

It goes to show what government can do when it invests in the right spaces. There were poor investment decisions by the previous Labor government, with money thrown good after bad in the past, but we will not do that. We will make sure that every dollar we spend comes back at least tenfold to the Northern Territory. We will provide the best possible experiences for our everyday Territorians. We are incredibly proud of this investment, and it will build future jobs and opportunities for Territorians.

Children in Care

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

Can you confirm the number of children in the care of the department? How many of those children have had or have made a report of abuse in care against their placement or carer, and how many of these reports have been substantiated?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the number of children in care fluctuates. Currently we have about 890 children in care, which is down considerably from the number in the previous year. That is fantastic because it tells us that the focus we should be taking is making sure that children in care stay where they belong which is with their parents and families. That is the first thing that we are focusing on when we have a notification of concern that a child might be being exposed to harm or may not be in a safe place. The team goes in and wraps support around the family to keep it together. The results speak for themselves, given that a significantly lower number of children have been brought into care in this year compared with the previous year.

The work that the child protection team is doing in that area is fantastic. It spends a lot of time coordinating with the department of Education to get these kids back to school. The team works hard to make sure that families are in a safe and supported environment and then it makes sure that …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was: how many of those children in care—of the 890 you mentioned—have had or have made reports of abuse in care against their placement or their carer, and how many have been substantiated?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

Ms CAHILL: As the Member for Gwoja would know, there is a process for people to make known to the department their concerns about children who may be at risk of harm. He would also be aware that many thousands of notifications are made to the department every year. The process looks at whether there is any substance to the concerns raised, because people raise concerns for all sorts of reasons. Some of them are valid, some are misunderstandings and some are things that can be resolved easily, but there is a cohort of notifications received where much more work has to be done. That fluctuates from month to month.

I am pleased to say that we are looking to deal with those complaints and notifications as quickly as possible.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you do not need to repeat your question. Is it relevance?

Mr PAECH: It is relevance. It is a particular question regarding children who have made reports against the carer or the system whilst in the care of the department and how many have been substantiated.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, please continue.

Ms CAHILL: The Member for Gwoja would be aware that many of the operational matters raised in the course of the department's day-to-day operations are questions that are raised at Estimates. If he has those questions, he is more than welcome to ask for specifics then.

Oceania Athletics Championships

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

We know that the Dry Season is here when we see the incredible series of outdoor major events being staged back to back. This weekend, aside from the incredible events we have such as the AFL and BASSINTHEGRASS—I have already purchased tickets for my family to see Port Adelaide versus the Suns tomorrow evening—we will also see a large contingent start to arrive for next week's Oceania Athletics Championships.

Can the minister outline the significance of this event and the benefit it will have for the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama loves the Marrara sporting precinct and hanging around in my electorate which is good.

From 18 to 23 May the Northern Territory will host the Oceania Cup for the first time. Athletes, coaches, officials and delegates from across the Pacific and Oceania region will arrive from today onwards and we will see them on the track in the next few days. We will have representation from 20 Oceania member federations, including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, plus other Pacific nations.

Senior representatives from World Athletics, Oceania Athletics, Australian Athletics and Athletics New Zealand are either already here or will arrive tomorrow. This includes the great Lord Sebastian Coe, the President of World Athletics. One of Britain's greatest athletes, he was an Olympic gold medallist in 1980 and 1984 in the 1,500 metres and held multiple world records in 800 metres, 1,000 metres and 1,600 metres. He was also part of the team which bid for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. That is a profile of people who will be in the Territory this weekend.

I have already updated the Chamber on what this government is doing ahead of Brisbane 2032. We have developed a pathway for Swimming Australia to have its elite athletes train here during the winter. They were here last year and are here now practising in Parap and Casuarina pools. We are looking at how to build on 2032 as well.

This an opportunity for the Northern Territory to showcase that we can host world-class athletes. Ahead of 2032, we can be a place where athletes from around the world can come to train. This is an idea that the government will target ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Olympics because there will be a lot of opportunities.

The eastern seaboard will be busy. That is exactly what Swimming Australia informed us. It wants Darwin as the place it can come to during winter which is the best time in the Top End.

We look forward to informing our Asian neighbours and other countries that this is what we have. I have seen many people going to the Marrara precinct to see that wonderful facility.

We want to showcase the Territory as a sporting destination for athletes to train and practise ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Olympics.

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

PIPELINES AND PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT) BILL
Serial 57

Continued from earlier this day.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 25 and 26, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 27:

Ms UIBO: What matters will you consider when assessing the financial and technical ability of a proposed transferee? Which compliance history or past regulatory breaches will also be taken into account?

Mr MALEY: It will be the same as the fit-and-proper person test.

Ms UIBO: When the government determines whether a transferee is a fit-and-proper person to hold a pipeline licence, will that assessment extend to related entities, directors or parent companies that are associated with the transferee?

Mr MALEY: Yes, it will.

Ms UIBO: Will that be assessed by the department?

Mr MALEY: The department provides advice to me and then I make the decision.

Ms UIBO: Is that under the discretionary powers through this new section?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: The new section requires a notation for a refusal of transfer of licence be entered on the register. Will the reason for the refusal also be made publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability in any decision-making related to the discretionary powers of the minister?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Will nothing be publicly available?

Mr MALEY: No.

Clause 27 agreed to.

Clauses 28 and 29, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 30:

J DAVIS: Proposed section 58V gives inspectors broad inspection and search powers. Do those powers extend to Aboriginal land?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: Do they extend to residential premises?

Mr MALEY: No.

J DAVIS: Could an inspector enter Aboriginal land without a permit?

Mr MALEY: I have answered that question.

J DAVIS: Yes. Can the minister point to any specific safeguard in the Bill that protects traditional owners from those powers being exercised inappropriately?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

J DAVIS: The clause is in relation to powers of entry onto Aboriginal land, so it is directly relevant.

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister claims he has answered the question.

J DAVIS: Proposed section 58ZD allows entry onto Aboriginal land without a permit where seven days' written notice has been given; is that correct?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This is an important part of consideration in detail. The minister needs to stand and make it clear so that the answer is caught on *Hansard* properly. Otherwise, there is a chance it will be missed. When he is answering questions, he needs to stand to appropriately answer those questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, he should maybe stand, but he is giving simple answers of 'yes' and 'no'.

Mr YOUNG: It is to ensure that it is caught on *Hansard* so that it is recorded, so when it is tested in court …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! You are in control here, not the Member for Daly.

Mr YOUNG: It is to ensure that when it is tested in court and they go back through the *Hansard* …

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take advice from the Clerk as to what the protocol is. I take the Member for Daly's point. It is better for Hansard if people stand so that they can turn on the mic, so I ask people to stand in response.

J DAVIS: As noted in submissions, if a notice period is possible a permit application is also possible. Can you explain why the government treats these as alternatives rather than things that should happen together?

Mr MALEY: Licensees can enter if they get a direction from the department.

J DAVIS: Submissions said that there was an unacceptable risk of damage to sacred sites in the way this clause is written. The department's response was that entering Aboriginal land to perform NT law functions is not an offence. Can you explain how avoiding an offence addresses the concerns about physical damage to sacred sites?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

J DAVIS: The permit exemption under 58ZK(2) applies not just to inspectors but to any person acting under a ministerial or CEO compliance direction; is that right?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

J DAVIS: Could a private contractor directed by the minister to undertake works enter Aboriginal land without a permit?

Mr MALEY: Not a private contractor; the licensee.

J DAVIS: Could the minister direct a private contractor under this proposed section?

Mr MALEY: We would direct the licensee.

Ms UIBO: What would constitute reasonable steps and due diligence for the purpose of establishing a defence to noncompliance with a ministerial decision?

Mr MALEY: Noncompliance with a ministerial direction would be an offence. There is no defence for that.

Ms UIBO: What evidence will a licensee be expected to provide in order to successfully rely on the defence if they took reasonable steps and exercised due diligence to prevent the offence?

Mr MALEY: That would be a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Would that be determined by the department or the minister?

Mr MALEY: If you are talking about an offence, it would be the court.

Ms UIBO: Who would refer it? Would it be the department or the minister?

Mr MALEY: The department would prosecute, and it would become the prosecutor. Then the licensee would have their right of reply in the court.

Ms UIBO: Can a licensee still rely on this defence when they are aware of a direction but fail to fully comply due to operational, financial or technical difficulties?

Mr MALEY: That is a hypothetical question. You outlined three different offences, so it is difficult to answer.

Ms UIBO: How will the government distinguish between a genuine attempt to comply with the ministerial direction and a situation where the licensee has simply failed to prioritise their compliance?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Does the existence of this defence risk creating uncertainty for enforcement, particularly when there may be disagreement about what constitutes reasonable conduct?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Will guidance be issued through the department to industry to outline the government's expectations regarding compliance with ministerial directions and the operation of the due diligence defence?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Why has the government chosen to retain this defence in circumstances when a ministerial direction may relate to serious safety, environmental and integrity risks involving a pipeline?

Mr MALEY: It gives the flexibility to the licensee if we prosecute them.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 3 to clause 30.

This amendment replaces proposed section 58V(9) with a provision that explicitly prevents inspectors from entering Aboriginal land without a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act*. This reflects fundamental rights that apply across our legal system. The permit requirement under the *Aboriginal Land Act* exists so that traditional owners know who is coming onto their land and why. This needs to be explicit in the context of the Bill's broad inspection powers to ensure that protection is guaranteed.

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 4 to clause 30.

This amendment omits proposed section 58ZD entirely. That section allows entry onto Aboriginal land without a permit when seven days' written notice had been given. As I said, if there is time to give notice there is time to apply for a permit. The department's response that performing functions under NT law is not a Commonwealth offence is a narrow legal point that misses what the permit system is for. The permit system is about traditional owners knowing who is coming onto their land and having the opportunity to respond. Removing this section means that a non-emergency entry must go through the permit process. Emergency provisions remain untouched.

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 5 to clause 30.

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 6 to clause 30.

This amendment replaces proposed section 58ZK(2)(a) and (b) to create a clear distinction between Aboriginal land and other land. For Aboriginal land a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act* is required. For other land either consent or seven days' written notice is required. The permit exemption in this Bill applies not just to inspectors but to any person acting under a ministerial or CEO compliance direction, including licensees, as the minister advised. If a notice period is possible, a permit application is possible, and this amendment applies that principle consistently to everyone entering Aboriginal land.

Amendment not agreed to.

Ms UIBO: I refer to proposed section 58L, Compliance directions. Can you clarify the distinction between a ministerial direction under section 58J and a compliance direction issued by the CEO under section 58L? In what circumstances would each power be used?

Mr MALEY: The ministerial direction is broad whereas the department's is not as broad; it is narrow.

Ms UIBO: In what circumstances would each power be used?

Mr MALEY: That would be assessed case by case.

Ms UIBO: That is our favourite term this afternoon—case by case.

Are the CEO compliance directions intended to deal primarily with operational compliance matters, whereas ministerial directions are predominantly about policy, particularly safety and public interest?

Mr MALEY: A CEO direction is about compliance with the Act. It is narrow, whereas a ministerial direction is much broader.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure clear accountability and consistency between directions issued by the CEO of the department and directions issued by the minister responsible for the Act?

Mr MALEY: If I have your question right, one direction is from the department and one is from the minister.

Ms UIBO: Is there a process to make sure that those directions do not conflict?

Mr MALEY: The department provides advice which would stop any conflict.

Ms UIBO: This proposed section is about CEO directions. Is there a safety net between the CEO's discretion as the boss of the department and a minister's discretion with the broader policy issues you outlined versus the technical and operational that the CEO is responsible for?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: What are the safeguards?

Mr MALEY: The CEO makes directions about compliance and gives advice to the minister. Any conflict would be dealt with in the department. If the CEO thought they could do it under their delegation, they would do it and the minister would get information to make a ministerial decision. They would not conflict because they came from the same source.

Ms UIBO: The proposed section allows the CEO to direct a person to do something that would otherwise contravene the Act on the advice of the minister. Can you provide examples of when the government anticipates this extraordinary power may be used and why it is being embedded in the Act?

Mr MALEY: That would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: There would obviously have been a warning that it may need to occur at some point, otherwise it would not be put in.

What criteria will you apply before advising the CEO and issuing a direction that effectively authorises conduct that would otherwise be unlawful under the Act without that discretion?

Mr MALEY: There would be discussions between the CEO and the minister's department about that first.

Ms UIBO: Will any directions issued by the CEO be publicly disclosed, particularly when they involve environmental, safety or operational risks affecting landholders or the community?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: How will affected landholders, traditional owners or nearby communities be informed when a compliance direction authorises conduct that would otherwise breach the Act?

Mr MALEY: That would be case by case, depending on who it affected.

Ms UIBO: I refer to proposed section 58M, Effect of compliance direction on need for further authorisation. Why does the government consider it appropriate for a person to be exempt from obtaining separate statutory authorisation when acting under the compliance direction issued under proposed section 58L?

Mr MALEY: This section clarifies that a person is not required to obtain separate statutory authorisation if they have been issued with a compliance direction. If they have been issued with a direction, they must follow it.

Ms UIBO: Would there be only one compliance direction?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case, depending on the situation.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure that bypassing separate authorisation processes does not undermine the environmental, cultural heritage or safety protections that would otherwise apply?

Mr MALEY: That would be a case-by-case scenario too.

Ms UIBO: What types of statutory authorisations may be displaced by this provision? Could this include approvals ordinarily required under environmental or land access legislation?

Mr MALEY: This is hypothetical. It is case by case; we would assess each individual case.

Ms UIBO: Specifically, it was about the types of statutory authorisation; is there anything that links to why this proposed section is being inserted?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case application.

Ms UIBO: If a person acting under a compliance direction causes environmental harm or damage while relying on this exemption, who ultimately bears responsibility? What avenues of accountability remain available?

Mr MALEY: That will be case by case, depending on what the requirement was, what the direction was, what the damage was, how severe the damage was and where the damage was done.

Ms UIBO: I refer to proposed section 58N, Offence to contravene direction. How does a person establish a defence if the compliance direction itself was clear and legally binding to contravening?

Mr MALEY: That would be case by case, depending on the action and what the defence was. It is a hypothetical question.

Ms UIBO: What would constitute the reasonable steps and due diligence for the purposes of the defence under proposed subsection (3), and what evidence would a defendant need to provide to successfully rely on that defence?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case scenario. You would have to give me the full details of the case to answer that question.

Ms UIBO: Can a person rely on the defence when they partially complied with a compliance direction but were unable to fully comply due to operational, technical or financial constraints?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case, depending on the scenario.

Ms UIBO: Does the government consider there is a risk that the availability of this defence could weaken the enforceability of any CEO compliance directions, particularly when urgent safety or environmental situations may arise?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: How will regulators distinguish between a genuine inability to comply with a direction and a deliberate decision not to comply?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Why has the government chosen to include a high-level offence requiring intent or foreseeability and a separate regulatory offence, and in what circumstances would each of these offences be used?

Mr MALEY: Again, you need to give me examples. This is case by case, depending on the scenario, the damage and what occurred. It is a hypothetical question. These proposed sections will protect the environment and make sure things go smoothly. It is difficult to answer any of your questions because this is technical legislation and we need case law and courts to decide. I am happy with your line of questions, but I will have to keep saying it is case by case. How do you defend someone who is speeding? There are a thousand reasons you could be speeding. How do you defend someone who has assaulted a person? There could be lots of reasons; it could be self-defence. Without analysis of exactly what the scenario was leading up to using any of this legislation, it will be difficult for me or anyone to answer those questions, other than to say—I am sorry—that this is a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: I understand that. I am thinking more of the aftermath and how the proposed section will be put into practice.

That question was about the clear decision by the government to include a high-level offence requiring intent. Obviously, there is some type of anticipation, or maybe it is based on what has happened already in the Northern Territory. I was trying to understand a high-level offence requiring intent versus the separate regulatory offence.

Mr MALEY: To answer your question, I would need details. The answer I can give you is it would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Given the significant penalties attached to these offences, will guidance be provided to industry outlining what is expected to satisfy the due diligence defence?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Does the burden rest on the defendant to prove that they exercised due diligence and, if so, why has the government chosen to reverse the evidentiary burden in this way?

Mr MALEY: The defendant always has the burden to prove that they can rely upon a defence.

Ms UIBO: I refer to proposed sections 58P and 58Q which deal with the stop-work notices. What threshold must the CEO meet before issuing a stop-work notice? What constitutes as reasonable grounds for believing that circumstances exist and could justify cancellation or revocation of a permit, licence or a pipeline management plan?

Mr MALEY: Again, this would be a case-by-case scenario, depending on the circumstances.

Ms UIBO: Are there any threshold criteria that the department has outlined already?

Mr MALEY: This is case by case, giving flexibility to the industry.

Ms UIBO: Can you provide examples of the situations where the government anticipates there could be a stop-work notice? What would be issued to prevent or minimise harm to people, workers, property, infrastructure or the environment?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: How long can a stop-work notice remain in effect?

Mr MALEY: It is case by case. The period is determined by the situation, whatever that may be.

Ms UIBO: Is there an ability for a review or appeal rights available to a permit or licence holder regarding the stop-work notice?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure that stop-work notices are used proportionately and not in circumstances where less restrictive compliance measures may be sufficient?

Mr MALEY: This is a discretion. It is a case-by-case scenario. Anyone can use this legislation, like the licensee, and it will be assessed case by case by the CEO or the minister.

Ms UIBO: Will affected landholders, traditional owners or nearby communities be notified when a stop-work notice is issued for activities occurring on or near land?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is case by case, depending on what scenario caused the stop-work permit to be issued.

Ms UIBO: Section 58Q creates significant penalties for contravening the stop-work notice. How can a defendant establish that they took reasonable steps and exercised due diligence to prevent the commission of the offence?

Mr MALEY: It is up to them to do that; it is a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: I refer to proposed Division 4, which deals with the power of inspectors. Who can be appointed as an inspector under proposed section 58R? Does the person have to be an employee of the Northern Territory Government?

Mr MALEY: They have to be a government person.

Ms UIBO: Can the CEO appoint external contractors, consultants or third-party specialists as inspectors and, if so, what safeguard exists to manage conflicts of interest to ensure that there is independence?

Mr MALEY: If we do not have the expertise in-house, they will be accompanied by a government inspector.

Ms UIBO: The second half of that question was about managing conflicts of interest to ensure independence. Are there any safeguards for that?

Mr MALEY: Again, that will be a case-by-case scenario, depending on what the potential conflict of interest is or could be.

Ms UIBO: Does anything prevent an employee, contractor or former employee of a pipeline licensee or related company from being appointed as an inspector under this framework?

Mr MALEY: Provided they are a government employee—so the answer is no.

Ms UIBO: If a person connected to the industry can be appointed as an inspector, how will the government ensure public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of compliance investigations and enforcement activities?

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case scenario, depending on the person.

Ms UIBO: What qualifications, expertise or experience will be required for a person to be appointed as an inspector, given the extensive entry, seizure and investigative powers that are provided under this Division?

Mr MALEY: Engineers with at least 10 years' experience in the industry.

Ms UIBO: Will inspectors receive mandatory training in environmental protection, cultural heritage, Aboriginal land rights and procedural fairness before exercising their powers under this Act?

Mr MALEY: They train for a Certificate IV in Government Investigations.

Ms UIBO: Proposed section 58V gives inspectors broad powers to enter land, seize items, compel answers and operate drones. What oversight mechanisms exist to ensure that these powers are exercised proportionately and appropriately?

Mr MALEY: Again, the inspectors undergo training for a Cert IV in Government Investigations.

Ms UIBO: Can an inspector compel a person to provided their passwords and access to digital systems? Under proposed section 58V, what safeguards exist to protect commercially sensitive or personal information?

Mr MALEY: The inspectors can use their powers if they are acting in accordance with the legislation. They cannot use them for anything else. What they can do is narrow. Provided they are acting within the course of their duties, there is a list of things they can do.

Ms UIBO: Through that training, essentially, they can compel somebody for those examples that were provided, but it would be in the frame of what is within the scope of their qualifications.

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case scenario, depending on what they are investigating.

Ms UIBO: Proposed section 58ZC removes the privilege against self-incrimination. Why does the government consider it necessary to abrogate such a fundamental legal protection in this context?

Mr MALEY: If you read subsection (2), you will see that any information given is not admissible in evidence against them.

Ms UIBO: Although proposed section 58ZC provides direct use immunity, can information obtained from a compelled answer be used in the context of supporting an investigation or prosecution against that person?

Mr MALEY: The proposed section states that information is not admissible in evidence against the person in a civil or criminal proceeding except if they are not truthful in an answer.

Ms UIBO: Proposed section 58ZD allows inspectors to enter Aboriginal land without a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1978*. What consultation occurred with land councils and traditional owners before introducing this power?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: It is part of Division 4, Inspectors, under clause 30. We are on clause 30, so I am not sure where else I could ask about it.

Mr MALEY: I answered the question.

Ms UIBO: No; you said it is not relevant, but it is relevant. Proposed section 58ZD in Division 4, under clause 30, allows inspectors to enter Aboriginal land without a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1978*. What consultation occurred with land councils and traditional owners before introducing this power?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause, but the land councils were briefed on this Bill.

Ms UIBO: They were briefed, not consulted.

What accountability mechanisms apply if an inspector exceeds their powers, acts improperly or causes damage while exercising powers covered under the Act?

Mr MALEY: If an inspector operates outside their powers they will be dealt with under the Public Service Employment Act.

Ms UIBO: Can a person challenge or seek review of a direction issued by an inspector under proposed section 58ZG before penalties for noncompliance can begin to apply?

Mr MALEY: Yes, they can.

Ms UIBO: What constitutes reasonable steps and due diligence for the purposes of the defence to offences under proposed sections 58Z and 58ZH? What evidence would a defendant need to rely on that defence?

Mr MALEY: That would depend on the circumstances. It would be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Does the government anticipate inspectors exercising these powers independently, or will they always be covered under the PSEMA?

Mr MALEY: They will always be covered, provided they are operating within their powers.

Ms UIBO: Will there be specific practices that operate under the direction of the CEO or the minister that could be a risk to compliance matters or will they always operate as a government employee?

Mr MALEY: They operate as a government employee.

Ms UIBO: I refer to proposed Part 5C, Entry to land. How are these entry provisions intended to operate in practice on Aboriginal land, particularly where entry may occur without a permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1978*?

Mr MALEY: Under a direction from the minister or the CEO they can enter land to comply with directions.

Ms UIBO: Is that the directions of the minister or the CEO or both?

Mr MALEY: It is both.

Ms UIBO: What consultation occurred with land councils and traditional owners before introducing the provisions that allow entry onto Aboriginal land without a permit?

Mr MALEY: The land councils were consulted, and they attended the scrutiny committee.

Ms UIBO: Will land councils be informed of a direction that has been issued that may result in entry onto Aboriginal land?

Mr MALEY: It depends on their circumstances; it will be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Is that yes and no?

Mr MALEY: It depends on the circumstances.

Ms UIBO: The proposed section requires notice to be given to the owner or occupier of the land. Can you clarify whether land councils will also receive notice when entry relates to Aboriginal land held under the Aboriginal land rights framework?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: In circumstances when there may be uncertainty about who is the occupier of Aboriginal land for the purpose of giving notice, how will the NT Government ensure that traditional owners and affected communities are properly informed?

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case scenario, depending on where it is and which community. A range of factors will be taken into account.

Ms UIBO: Section 58ZK(7) removes the requirement for an entry permit under the *Aboriginal Land Act 1978*. What safeguards will replace the scrutiny and oversight that would ordinarily occur through the regular permit process?

Mr MALEY: The direction will be issued, providing those people are acting within their power to enter. They are limited. They cannot just have a permit and go anytime they want; they need to go there under direction of the minister or the CEO. It is narrow what they can go on there for.

Ms UIBO: Can employees or contractors of a licensee enter Aboriginal land under these provisions without any direct government officer being present or supervising their activity?

Mr MALEY: If the licensee is directed to do something, like fix a leak or whatever, they may have their own welder, for example, or will engage a contractor to fix it. If the licensee is directed to do something, that licensee will fix the issue. Again, it is difficult to answer because it is case by case; it could be anything.

Ms UIBO: What mechanisms will exist for land councils or traditional owners to raise concerns or object if they believe entry powers are being misused or going beyond what is reasonably necessary to comply with a direction?

Mr MALEY: They can write to the minister or the department. If the department is notified, it will come up the chain. Again, it will be case by case, depending on what it is, but they—it could be anyone; it could be private land—always have the ability to write to the department, directly to the minister or the local member, whoever that may be. There are lots of avenues to get concerns they may have to the relevant person.

Ms UIBO: In emergency situations when prior notice may not be possible, how will land councils and traditional owners be informed about what has occurred on Aboriginal land and any remediation activity that may be required?

Mr MALEY: You said 'emergency', so it will be case by case, depending on what the emergency is.

Ms UIBO: Does the government intend to develop protocols and agreements with land councils regarding communication, notification and conduct expectations when these powers are exercised on Aboriginal land?

Mr MALEY: No, but there will be common courtesy. A lot of gas companies have land use agreements and TOs working for them, for example. There will be that communication. The technical answer is no, but in reality there will be lots of informal discussion and negotiations. In fact, you might find that the traditional owner or someone from the traditional owner's family will be onsite, because they are working there.

Ms UIBO: That is a good story, but it would put that traditional owner in conflict of their employment as well as their land and cultural obligations. I recommend communication, notification and MOUs with the land councils.

Proposed section 58ZN creates an offence for obstructing a person acting under these provisions. How will traditional owners be made aware of the legal consequences if they attempt to prevent access to their land?

Mr MALEY: The rule of law applies to everyone; it is a matter for them. There will be discussions with the gas or mining companies. All that discussion happens behind the scenes. Land councils already know about this legislation and put submissions in, so there is nothing to stop the land councils from contacting the people they represent to inform them as well.

Ms UIBO: Given the sensitive nature of cultural and sacred sites, what safeguards will ensure that emergency entry powers are not exercised in a way that could inadvertently damage culturally significant places?

Mr MALEY: With a pipeline, for example, there would already be a land use agreement and sacred site clearances; they will be in an easement where the pipe is. All the sacred sites and cultural places would be marked within that easement, and they would know. There would be discussion. They will go in there, and that will have already been done prior to the pipe being laid in the ground.

Ms UIBO: If damage occurs on Aboriginal land as a result of activities undertaken under these powers, what practical avenues will traditional owners have to seek compensation or remediation?

Mr MALEY: That will be through the land use agreement.

Ms UIBO: Can decisions relating to entry on Aboriginal land under these provisions be reviewed by the tribunal and, if not, why has the government not provided specific review rights, given the breadth of these powers?

Mr MALEY: Any landholder already has judicial review available to them, but this is about an urgent application to go and fix the problem so that there is not more environment damaged or whatever the issue is. Again, this is a case-by-case scenario because we do not know what the emergency might be, but it is about trying to get whatever the problem is fixed as soon as we can to stop further damage to the environment.

Ms UIBO: In a snapshot of that answer, it could be reviewed by the tribunal; is that correct?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: When the minister or the CEO exercises discretion under this Act, are they bound by AS 2885—which you spoke about before the lunchbreak—or can they depart from it if they consider it appropriate?

Mr MALEY: Like everyone, we must comply with Australian Standards and international standards. Like anywhere in the world if an emergency comes up, it is not dealt with under that Australian Standard. It will be dealt with quickly and safely to prevent whatever situation is occurring. It is difficult to answer your question because it could be one scenario or a million scenarios.

Ms UIBO: AS 2885 contains minimum standards only. Does the government expect operators to exceed those requirements where local environmental or cultural risks justify it?

Mr MALEY: They are the standards we expect them to comply with.

Ms UIBO: The standards have seven parts, so are you referring to a specific section?

Mr MALEY: It depends, case by case, on what you are talking about.

Ms UIBO: With AS 2885 can you clarify, are there specific parts to that series or are you relying on it?

Mr MALEY: That is an Australian Standard. If you are working in that industry, that is the standard you must comply with.

Ms UIBO: Is there a specific provision that you can point to that addresses some of those issues?

Mr MALEY: I do not know what issues you mean. It is case by case.

Ms UIBO: It is about compliance.

Mr MALEY: That Australian Standard has compliance on all sorts of things. There is well integrity and construction. That is the Australian Standard. If you are an electrician, you would wire a house to an Australian Standard; if you are in this industry, you are expected to use the Australian Standard.

Ms UIBO: Is compliance with Australian Standard 2885 mandatory under this Act, under regulations or through the conditions imposed on a licensee or a pipeline management plan?

Mr MALEY: It is under the pipeline management plan.

Ms UIBO: Is AS 2885 freely and publicly accessible to landlords and community members, or does it require payment of a fee to access it?

Mr MALEY: You can go to the department and view it for free during business hours.

Ms UIBO: Is it like a portal system or a website?

Mr MALEY: I think there is a website. You come into the office and can have a look.

Ms UIBO: When Australian Standard 2885 is amended or updated, will existing pipeline management plans be automatically reviewed in the Northern Territory and updated to reflect the new standard? How does that process occur?

Mr MALEY: The pipeline management plans are reviewed every five years, and any discretion changes will be made in that.

Ms UIBO: Who determines whether a pipeline operator is complying with Australian Standards in practice? Is it the regulator, an independent assessor or the licence holder themselves?

Mr MALEY: I am just trying to line it up. What clause are you asking under?

Ms UIBO: It is clause 30.

Mr MALEY: Is there any particular part, because it is not relevant to the clause?

Ms UIBO: All the new sections are relevant. It is all about compliance and making sure people have processes, specifically regarding management plans, land access and the *Aboriginal Land Act*. When we are talking about whether the standard of any industry, not necessarily just the mining industry, we need to make sure there is a process of review, referral and compliance.

If we are looking at the Australian Standards, which you referred to predominantly before lunch, you would expect that would transfer across to the Northern Territory. I am trying to understand what impact, for better or worse, that would have on either landholders or the licence holder themselves, if there are extra compliance measures through the changes you are proposing.

What consultation occurred with landowners, traditional owners and environmental stakeholders regarding the reliance on Australian Standard 2885 as a regulatory benchmark?

Mr MALEY: You are referring to a national standard, and that is across Australia.

Ms UIBO: If a pipeline incident occurred despite compliance with the Australian Standards, would the NT Government consider compliance with the standard to be a complete defence, or would it be under a regulatory action?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: If any regulated substances comply under AS 2885, such as hydrogen and carbon dioxide transport, which part of the standard would apply for the Northern Territory?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to this clause.

Clause 30 agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 35, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 36:

Ms UIBO: Why has the government chosen a limitation period of only three years for commencing proceedings under the Act, given that environmental damage or pipeline integrity issues may not become apparent until many years after the relevant conduct may have occurred?

Mr MALEY: Three years is a standard period for civil-type cases.

Ms UIBO: Was consideration given to a longer limitation period for serious offences involving environmental harm, safety breaches or contamination and, if so, why was that approach rejected?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Can you explain why proceedings are limited to the three years from when the CEO first became aware of evidence of an offence, rather than from when the offence was reasonably discovered?

Mr MALEY: It is the same; that is standard in the courts in relation to civil-type matters.

Ms UIBO: Is the government concerned that complex compliance investigations involving pipelines, environmental harm or technical failures may take considerable time to uncover and properly investigate and, if so, is this potentially limiting the ability to prosecute serious misconduct in the industry?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: What would happen in the case that a limitation period expires and it was discovered that there was serious misconduct?

Mr MALEY: It talks about once it has commenced, within three years once it was alleged an offence was committed or they knew about it and it first came to the attention of the CEO. It is basically impossible to do what you are talking about because proposed section 67C is about the knowledge. If that knowledge came four years down the line and no-one knew about, once it came to light and the CEO knew about it, they have three years. It is the same in all civil-type law matters.

Ms UIBO: Does this limitation period create a risk the licensee could avoid prosecution when evidence of wrongdoing only emerges after that three-year expiration period?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Could they still be prosecuted?

Mr MALEY: That was not the question.

Ms UIBO: You answered no. After that three-year period expired, could there still be a prosecution?

Mr MALEY: Yes. That is a different question.

Ms UIBO: No, I did a follow-up question for you. I am keeping you on your toes, come on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just focus on the questions.

Ms UIBO: Are there categories of offences under the Act that will be exempt from the three-year limitation period, particularly when there are allegations of significant environmental harm or deliberate concealment of the noncompliance?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: It is, because we are talking about the limitation period and when somebody becomes aware of possible misconduct.

What was the policy rationale for moving from the existing six-month limitation period under the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act* to a three-year period? What consultation informed that decision?

Mr MALEY: Three years is the standard period under the *Limitation Act* for civil-type matters.

Ms UIBO: Why are proceedings restricted to being commenced only by the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO? Does this prevent affected landholders or communities from initiating prosecutions when they believe that the regulator has failed to act in their best interests?

Mr MALEY: If a landowner thinks there has been failure to act by the government, they have their own civil-type matters they can deal. However, we are talking about this Act whereby the CEO or the government would be the prosecutor.

Ms UIBO: In that case, would it proceed as a criminal hearing?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is case by case, whether it is a criminal or civil case. If a landowner wants to bring an action in court, they can. They have to get their legal advice and work out whether it is civil or criminal and which section of what Act. They will need to be the applicant or the prosecutor in any trial if they think something happened, just as I could prosecute someone for assault if I wanted to.

Ms UIBO: For any noncompliance that is found through the CEO/department, would the prosecuting line come from the department to the licensee holder, essentially, if there was noncompliance or someone had breached the Act?

Mr MALEY: We are talking about proceedings, so that is not relevant to the clause. We are talking about three years.

Clause 36 agreed to.

Clause 37, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 38:

J DAVIS: The Schedule of reviewable decisions limits the category of affected persons to applicants, permitees and licensees. Can you confirm that Aboriginal landowners and native title holders whose land is directly affected by a pipeline licence decision are not currently included?

Mr MALEY: They are not.

J DAVIS: If an Aboriginal landowner believes a pipeline licence decision over their country did not properly account for their interest, what is their avenue for challenge?

Mr MALEY: They could go to the department, or they could start proceedings in the court.

J DAVIS: Do you mean as judicial review through the courts?

Mr MALEY: It is a matter for them.

J DAVIS: Can you tell the Assembly what judicial review through the court would cost on average for a matter of this complexity?

Mr MALEY: No.

J DAVIS: The department said that third-party merits reviews would create uncertainty for industry. Can you explain how the uncertainty of a merits review process is greater than the uncertainty of the judicial review process that you have just said is the only alternative?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

J DAVIS: I move amendment 7 to clause 38.

This amendment replaces the proposed Schedule of reviewable decisions with a new Schedule that expands who can seek merits reviews for the most significant licensing decisions so that the category of affected persons also includes owners and occupiers of affected land and native titleholders.

The minister could not answer how much judicial review costs, but it should be an option of last resort. It is extremely expensive and inaccessible to most people. This amendment creates an accessible pathway. It does not create uncertainty. It removes the far greater uncertainty of litigation by providing a clear proportionate review mechanism.

The amendment also adds review rights for compliance directions and stop-work notices—questions were asked about them previously—which is basic procedural fairness for the people to whom these directions are issued.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 38 agreed to.

Clauses 39 to 45, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 46:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 1 to clause 46 to insert the word ‘section’ after ‘under’ in line 7.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 46, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 47 to 49, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 50:

Ms UIBO: Why does this new section allow the renewal of a second or subsequent retention licence despite the noncompliance of the licensee? What type of noncompliance does the government consider sufficiently minor to justify its renewal?

Mr MALEY: That would be a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Under what circumstances would the minister refuse a renewal application because of a licensee’s noncompliance? Are there categories of these breaches which would automatically disqualify a licensee for a renewal?

Mr MALEY: That would be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Will the department provide categories to ensure there is compliance and, therefore, breaches?

Mr MALEY: Again, it would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: How will it be determined whether circumstances exist to justify granting a renewal despite the noncompliance, and will those reasons be publicly disclosed?

Mr MALEY: It is case by case and, no, they would not be publicly disclosed.

Ms UIBO: Does the government accept that allowing renewals despite noncompliance could undermine public confidence in the enforcement of licence conditions and regulatory obligations set out in the Act?

Mr MALEY: The noncompliance could be paying your licence fee one day late or the collapse of a well, so it is a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Would that essentially be minor and major breaches?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Would repeated environmental, safety or reporting breaches by a licensee weigh against their renewal, or could a company still retain its licence, provided the minister considers the circumstances justify it under the Act?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is a case-by-case assessment of the application.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure the discretion to renew licences despite noncompliance is applied consistently and not arbitrarily?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: When considering whether to grant a second or subsequent renewal for a shorter term, what factors will the minister take into account, and what additional conditions might be imposed?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is case by case; it depends on so many circumstances. I am not being difficult; I am saying that it is an assessment of each application as it comes in. It would need to be done individually.

Ms UIBO: Are retention licences not simply warehoused for an extended period without genuine progress towards commercial development, or are there other mechanisms within the department to ensure there is integrity in those licences?

Mr MALEY: They have work program commitments they must meet to get to the next level. If they have not met those work programs, that would be considered in any renewal application.

Ms UIBO: Can affected landlords, traditional owners and members of the public make submissions regarding a licensee's compliance history before any renewal decision is made?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Does the government intend to publish guidance criteria through the department outlining how compliance history will be assessed in renewal decisions to improve transparency and accountability for public confidence in the industry?

Mr MALEY: No.

Clause 50 agreed to.

Clause 51, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 52:

J DAVIS: How will the amalgamation of retention licences interact with Commonwealth legislation such as the *Native Title Act*?

Mr MALEY: You would still need an agreement under the *Native Title Act*.

J DAVIS: Does an amalgamation under this Bill constitute a future act under the *Native Title Act*?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

J DAVIS: It is about whether amalgamation of a retention licence constitutes a future act, which is what this clause is about.

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

J DAVIS: You said that it is not relevant. The question is: does an amalgamation of retention licences constitute a future act under the *Native Title Act*?

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

J DAVIS: You have said that it is not relevant, but it clearly is relevant. The answer was that it is not relevant. Can you answer whether it constitutes a future act under the *Native Title Act*?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister says that it is not relevant, so it is not relevant. Next question.

J DAVIS: That is it from me.

Clause 52 agreed to.

Clauses 53 to 57, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 58:

Ms UIBO: Under what circumstances does the government anticipate fees and levies will be waived, suspended or reduced under this provision?

Mr MALEY: Again, it is case by case. For example, if there was an application and the government misplaced it or made a mistake and there was a fee attached to it and more work to be done, there would be a case to waive, suspend or reduce some of that fee.

Ms UIBO: More so an error rather than a discretionary, in-pocket, in-kind scenario.

What criteria would the minister apply when deciding whether to waive, suspend or reduce the fee, and will the criteria be made publicly available?

Mr MALEY: Again, that would be a case-by-case application.

Ms UIBO: With the case-by-case example, will there be criteria to provide a framework for decision-making?

Mr MALEY: No, because it is case by case. We would have to consider any evidence or information the applicant may want to put before me or the department, and it would be considered case by case.

Ms UIBO: Surely you see the issue: if there are no criteria in making a decision, how can the public have confidence that the decision is free from any interference? If it is discretionary, which you are saying—it is case by case, and I understand and accept that—surely there have to be criteria to have the discretionary power to determine whether it fits the criteria or saying yes because it is close to the criteria?

Mr MALEY: If you are questioning the integrity of the department and the people working there, that is a matter for you, but we are talking about the ability to waive, suspend or reduce annual fees and levies. I said that will be case by case. I gave you the example. I do not want to talk about every example. It will be assessed case by case. I value the work of the department and think the staff do a good job.

Ms UIBO: That is one of the rare things we agree on; they definitely do an excellent job.

Mr MALEY: Are you trying to question their integrity?

Ms UIBO: No. The question was: what criteria would the minister apply? There is a ministerial discretion clause and a CEO discretion clause. My question is not about the department or the CEO discretionary decision. It is about how the minister may apply discretionary powers in deciding to waive, suspend or reduce the fee. Surely, a minister would need criteria. If that is provided by the department, that is great. That is what I want to hear. Currently, it seems that there are no criteria for a minister to make decisions. If you were approached by a proponent that you know—they could be from your brother's company—and a stranger, you may exercise your discretionary powers to approve the one from your family, as opposed to the

independent one. I want to make sure that the public has confidence that any discretionary power applied by the minister for approval has criteria. If it is passed on by the department, that is great.

Mr MALEY: It is passed on by the department.

Ms UIBO: Will those criteria be publicly available?

Mr MALEY: It is a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Will it be publicly available case by case, or is that a flat-out no?

Mr MALEY: It is case by case.

Ms UIBO: Can you explain waiving or reducing fees on the minister's own initiative without an application from the permit or licence holder? Is that a decision that can be approved and, if so, what safeguards exist to ensure transparency and consistency in those decisions?

Mr MALEY: It comes from the department.

Ms UIBO: On the criteria that are not publicly available.

Does the government intend this provision to be used to incentivise projects or industries, such as hydrogen or carbon capture developments?

Mr MALEY: It will be used on a case-by-case basis.

Ms UIBO: Will the minister consider a licensee's compliance history, environmental performance or engagement with landholders and traditional owners before granting a fee reduction or waiver?

Mr MALEY: It will be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: How will the public know when fees or levies have been waived, suspended or reduced for a project and licence holder?

Mr MALEY: They will not know.

Ms UIBO: That is good transparency.

Could this provision result in significant regulatory costs effectively being shifted from industry onto Territory taxpayers?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: What type of fees associated with environmental plans or approvals under the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016 does the government anticipate may be waived or reduced?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant. That is a matter for the minister for Environment.

Ms UIBO: Can you ask him? He is sitting behind you.

Is there a limit on the duration of a fee waiver or suspension that could be granted under this section?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Will decisions to waive, suspend or reduce fees be reviewable? Will reasons for those decisions be published?

Mr MALEY: You have asked two questions, and the answer to both is no.

Clause 58 agreed to.

Clauses 59 to 66, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 67:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 2 to insert, 'whether or not the regulated substance is mixed with any other substance,' on line 5.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 67, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 68 to 70, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 71:

Ms UIBO: Subsection (2) states that the minister is not required to conduct an investigation into whether a person is fit and proper. Under what circumstances would the minister, nevertheless, decide that further investigation may be necessary?

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: If serious allegations or concerns are raised about an applicant's environmental, cultural heritage or compliance history, what steps would the minister take to independently verify the information provided by the applicant?

Mr MALEY: I would ask the department to go back and investigate.

Ms UIBO: Does the government expect a fit-and-proper person test to rely primarily on self-disclosure by applicants and, if so, what safeguards exist to ensure relevant misconduct is not omitted or concealed?

Mr MALEY: Again, the department would go back and check to make sure. If someone lies in an application that is an offence, and the department may prosecute that. If they have lied to the department and have been convicted of an offence for lying, it would make it difficult to move forward with any future application they may have. There is a big stick, I suppose you could say, to make sure they do the right thing. The department will be there to investigate and look at any claims they may have in their application.

Ms UIBO: What weight will the minister give to contraventions or compliance breaches that have occurred in jurisdictions outside the Northern Territory, particularly when those matters may not have yet resulted in any formal convictions?

Mr MALEY: That would be a weighty matter to consider, but it would be case by case.

Ms UIBO: Can the minister consider the conduct of related entities, parent companies, directors or major shareholders when determining whether an applicant is a fit-and-proper person?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: How will the minister assess matters relating to sacred sites, cultural heritage or environmental harm when applying the fit-and-proper person test?

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Are there any categories of conduct or offences that would automatically disqualify a person from being considered fit and proper under this provision?

Mr MALEY: Again, that would be a case-by-case assessment of the application.

Ms UIBO: If the minister is not obliged to investigate, is there a risk that the fit-and-proper person test could become largely an administrative box-ticking exercise rather than generally interrogating the integrity of any assessment?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Will the government publish guidance on how the fit-and-proper person test will be applied, including types of evidence that applicants will be expected to provide?

Mr MALEY: The application form will be published online.

Ms UIBO: Will a decision be attached to any publication to state they are a fit-and-proper person?

Mr MALEY: The application form will be published online, and they can use that and liaise with the department if they need extra assistance.

Ms UIBO: Can anyone view that database?

Mr MALEY: It is published online, so yes.

Ms UIBO: Can affected landholders, traditional owners or members of the public provide information to the minister regarding an applicant's conduct or compliance history before a fit-and-proper person test and decision are made?

Mr MALEY: That can be provided to the department to be put up as part of the whole process.

Ms UIBO: Has the government considered establishing a mandatory investigation threshold when there are credible allegations of fraud, dishonesty, environmental breaches or cultural heritage damage that may involve an applicant?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Given the broad discretion involved in applying the fit-and-proper person test, what mechanisms exist to ensure decisions are transparent, consistent and accountable?

Mr MALEY: I would assess them on a case-by-case scenario.

Ms UIBO: Will there be criteria that will come from the department?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 71 agreed to.

Clauses 72 to 82, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 83:

Ms UIBO: Who can be appointed as an inspector under proposed section 137G? Does the person have to be an employee of the NT Government?

Mr MALEY: The answer is yes. I qualify that by saying if we need outside expertise because it is a specialised field, we would go and get that.

Ms UIBO: Is it similar to one of the earlier answers?

Mr MALEY: Yes, it is a bit of common sense. We will do as much as we can, but we know that this is a specialised field. If there is something outside our realm or remit, we do not want to make a decision without the right evidence and the right experts advising us. We would make sure we get the right people in to give us the right advice.

Ms UIBO: What a great answer. If only we could apply that to all your government's legislation.

Can the CEO appoint external contractors, consultants or industry specialists as inspectors? You have already outlined that can happen, but there is a second part to the question, which can be standalone now you have already answered the first part. What safeguards exist to manage conflicts of interest and ensure that there is independence?

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case assessment.

Ms UIBO: Is there anything preventing—this is similar to a previous question—a current or former employee, contractor or adviser to a title holder from being appointed as an inspector under this framework?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Given inspectors are empowered to enter premises, seize property, compel answers and require access to computers and passwords, what qualifications, training or accreditation will be required before someone can be appointed as an inspector?

Mr MALEY: The government level 4 investigation.

Ms UIBO: Proposed section 137L allows inspectors to authorise another person to assist them. Can you clarify who those assisting persons may be and whether they are subject to the same integrity and confidentiality obligations as the inspectors?

Mr MALEY: Again, that would be case by case. It relates to the nature of the expertise required to help the inspector do their job.

Ms UIBO: If I could be so bold to go beyond the answer that was provided—if it was an independent contractor based on the expertise that the department needed, would they be bound by confidentiality?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Proposed section 137T removes the privilege against self-incrimination when inspectors exercise powers under this Division. Why does the government consider it necessary to abrogate such fundamental legal protection?

Mr MALEY: As I answered previously, this allows someone to give information. Again, that information would not be admissible in a civil or criminal proceedings.

Ms UIBO: The proposed section provides direct use immunity, can information obtained through compelled answers be used to indirectly support investigations or prosecutions against the person who is being compelled to provide it?

Mr MALEY: No, because anyone would have to comply with subsections (1) and (2).

Ms UIBO: How can a defendant establish that they took reasonable steps and exercised due diligence to comply with a requirement or directions issued by an inspector under proposed sections 137Q and 137X?

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case assessment of the facts.

Ms UIBO: What evidence would a defendant need to provide in order to successfully rely on the due diligence defence to the offences under this Division?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case. It depends what evidence they want to put forward. It is a matter for them, when they are in proceedings, what evidence they bring to the court. It is a matter for that person to put up that information.

Ms UIBO: Proposed section 137W allows inspectors to direct a title holder to take action in accordance with what is generally accepted as good and safe practice. Can you clarify how those standards will be defined and who determines what is generally accepted?

Mr MALEY: That is a standard industry term, but the direction would have clear parameters for what needed to be done.

Ms UIBO: What oversight and accountability mechanisms exist if an inspector exceeds their powers, improperly seizes property or causes damage while exercising their powers under this Division?

Mr MALEY: That would be a breach of the Public Service Act.

Ms UIBO: Can any of the decisions or directions issued by inspectors under this Division be reviewed by a tribunal and, if not, what other mechanisms has the government put in place to ensure there is confidence in this process?

Mr MALEY: The decision is not reviewable, but the person who has been issued a direction can come to the department and have that assessed through the department.

Clause 83 agreed to.

Clauses 84 to 89, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

HERITAGE AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 60

Continued from 18 March 2026.

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

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, Territory Labor has taken the time to carefully consider the intent of this legislation and the concerns raised by stakeholders. Territory Labor supports economic development in the Territory. We understand the need to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary red tape, but we also understand something that is just as important: development must be done properly with consultation, respect and recognition of the cultural knowledge and authority of traditional owners. When the process is done right the first time, you do not have delays and legal challenges; you have certainty and progress.

Throughout the scrutiny process stakeholders raised a number of consistent concerns about the narrowing of definitions and what qualifies as heritage; the removal of automatic protections during assessment; increased reliance on ministerial discretion; changes to the composition and expertise of the Heritage Council. These are all valid concerns.

I acknowledge that I am not an Aboriginal Territorian, but as a Territorian who has worked alongside Aboriginal people, especially in my time with the department in planning and delivering roads in rural and remote areas of the Territory, I have seen firsthand the value of their knowledge and connection to country and the importance of ensuring their voices are properly heard in decisions that affect their heritage. These issues go directly to how heritage is identified, protected and respected in the Territory.

We also heard from industry. Industry supports a system that is efficient and workable, but it also wants certainty. That certainty comes from getting the process right.

The cattle and mining industries are key planks of the Territory's economic growth, but that growth must be achieved in partnership with Aboriginal people, not by bypassing them. If consultation is not meaningful and cultural authority is not respected, the result is not faster development; the result is delay, dispute and legal uncertainty.

Territory Labor will propose amendments because stakeholders have made it clear that in its current form this legislation risks narrowing the scope of heritage protections and weakening the role of cultural knowledge in decision-making. Our amendments are targeted and practical. They seek to preserve procedural fairness by ensuring that heritage object owners remain properly involved in decisions affecting their heritage; definitions do not unintentionally exclude culturally significant places and objects; and cultural expertise remains central to the heritage framework. These are not changes to delay development; they are changes to ensure the system works properly.

I must also mention that stakeholders have raised serious concerns about the removal of automatic provisional protections during assessment. We will ask the government to clearly explain what safeguards will operate while a site's significance is being determined.

Territory Labor will move amendments because they are necessary to fix the fundamental issues identified by stakeholders.

At the end of the day, this Bill is about more than process; it is about the kind of Territory we want to build together. Economic growth and development in the Northern Territory cannot reach their full potential unless

Aboriginal Territorians are part of the decision-making process from the beginning. Real progress is achieved not by choosing development over culture but by working together. Aboriginal people across the Territory hold the history, culture and deep knowledge of this country. Their voices are not barriers to development; they are essential to building a stronger, more respectful and more united Territory. If we want sustainable development, stronger communities and long-term economic growth, Aboriginal Territorians must be active participants in the decisions that shape their communities, land and heritage. The future of the Territory cannot be built by excluding the people who have cared for this land for tens of thousands of years.

This Bill is about balance—balancing development with protection, efficiency with fairness and decision-making with cultural authority. If that balance is not right, this Bill, and future legislation that deal with development, risks creating the uncertainty it seeks to solve. Development in the Territory must be done the right way with consultation, respect and certainty for all involved. That is the standard Territory Labor will always hold.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for contributing to the debate and the members who took the time to receive a briefing on the Bill, including the Members for Nightcliff and Mulka.

I acknowledge the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for its consideration of the Bill and thank all stakeholders who engaged with the committee process and provided submissions.

The committee's report, Inquiry into the Heritage Amendment Bill 2026, was published on 30 April 2026. It records that submissions were generally supportive of the policy intent of the Bill while also raising matters for clarification and suggesting improvements.

The committee made three recommendations. Recommendation 1 was that the Legislative Assembly pass the Bill with the proposed amendments set out in recommendations 2 and 3.

Recommendation 2 proposed that the Bill clarifies the timeline for receipt of public submissions to be within 28 days or for a longer period as specified.

Recommendation 3 proposed that the minister may only delegate powers and functions under the *Heritage Act 2011* to a suitably qualified and experienced person.

The government accepts the intent of recommendations 2 and 3. They are consistent with the policy intent of the Bill. The intention has always been that the 28-day consultation period remain the minimum period and may be extended when the scale or complexity of the matter warrants it. It is also the government's expectation that any delegation in the *Heritage Act* will be made only to an appropriate person having regard to the nature of the power being delegated—for example, another minister or a chief executive of the department.

Due to the timing of these sittings those recommendations could not be implemented as amendments to this Bill. They will be implemented through policy as an administrative practice in the first instance and progress through future legislative amendments.

This Bill delivers targeted and practical reforms to the *Heritage Act*, which has been in operation for more than a decade. In that time, administering the *Heritage Act* has highlighted areas where definitions need to be clearer, assessment and consultation processes need to be more predictable and the governance arrangements for the Heritage Council need to work more reliably.

The Bill has been through the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I will focus on addressing the key issues raised through the debate, public briefing and submissions, particularly Aboriginal heritage, automatic protection, procedural fairness, consultation and work approvals.

The Bill does not weaken Aboriginal heritage protection. It does not lower the threshold for heritage significance; it clarifies how the *Heritage Act* operates, particularly when automatic protection applies to Aboriginal and Makassan archaeological places and objects. That is an important distinction.

The *Heritage Act* protects tangible cultural and natural heritage, including physical archaeological evidence of past occupation. It operates alongside and does not replace the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* (the Sacred Sites Act) which protects sacred sites and living spiritual significance. Both frameworks remain important, but they remain separate. This Bill does not disturb the operation of the Sacred Sites Act.

The Bill updates definitions of archaeological places, Aboriginal and Makassan archaeological places, objects and relics. These definitions are central to when automatic protection applies. Automatic protection is a powerful mechanism and the *Heritage Act* must be clear about when that protection is triggered. These reforms provide much-needed clarity and certainty.

For Aboriginal and Makassan archaeological places, the Bill provides that automatic protection is linked to the archaeological evidence. A place must relate to past Aboriginal or Makassan occupation during the relevant period and contain a group of relics, ancestral remains or evidence of modification of the place by Aboriginal or Makassan people. Examples of that modification include rock art, shell middens, stone arrangements, quarries, culturally modified trees, axe-grinding grooves and stone fish traps.

Concerns were raised about the references to the pre-contact and early contact periods. The intent is not to impose one fixed date across the Northern Territory. Contact occurred at different times in different regions, and the Bill allows for recognition of these differences. The Bill is intended to be applied by reference to local, historical and archaeological evidence such as documentary records; introduced materials, including glass, metal or ceramics; and evidence of exchange or interaction. Later Aboriginal heritage is not excluded from nomination and declaration pathways, but the automatic protection is not applied.

The Bill also clarifies the treatment of isolated objects. Significant isolated objects remain capable of protection under the *Heritage Act* through nomination and declaration pathways. The Bill reinforces that a single object without broader archaeological connection does not automatically create an Aboriginal or Makassan archaeological place. That reflects the existing policy intent and gives it clearer statutory expression.

The reforms cover nominations, assessments and public consultation processes. At present, the Heritage Council is required to proceed with assessing almost every nomination unless the nomination is frivolous or vexatious. That has contributed to backlogs and use of resources on nominations that are not consistent with the intent of the *Heritage Act*.

The Bill gives the Heritage Council clearer front-end screening powers. Nominations may be refused if they are frivolous, vexatious, misconceived, lacking substance or otherwise inappropriate to proceed with. This is not intended to shut out genuine nominations. It relates to strengthening triage so that nominations that lack substance, duplicate recently considered matters or are outside the objects of the *Heritage Act* can be refused early. Where a nomination is refused, reasons must be provided.

The Bill also clarifies the assessment period. Acceptance of a nomination or a decision by the Heritage Council to initiate an assessment is an administrative step. It does not necessarily mean assessment work has started. The Bill, therefore, sets clear triggers for when the six-month assessment period begins. This gives everyone a clearer understanding of time limits for assessments to be undertaken.

Extensions remain available, but they are not intended to create open-ended timeframes. They may be needed because of remoteness, weather, access constraints, seasonal conditions, the complexity of the site or the need for further expert advice. Where an extension is granted, written notice and reasons must be given, and the assessment must be completed as soon as practicable. Extensions are available when genuinely warranted, but timely decision-making remains a top priority.

The Bill also clarifies procedural fairness. It identifies certain early decisions as preliminary administrative steps. That includes accepting or initiating an assessment, extending the assessment period and the Heritage Council decision whether a place or object is of heritage significance under section 25 of the *Heritage Act*.

A section 25 decision is preliminary under this Bill because it no longer automatically triggers a provisional declaration. That change is critical. Under the current *Heritage Act*, a positive section 25 finding automatically leads to a provisional declaration and can have immediate consequences for land use. This Bill removes that automatic provision declaration. A section 25 decision will now inform consultation and later recommendation and declaration decisions, but it does not alter rights.

Procedural fairness is, therefore, concentrated at the stage where it is most meaningful—the public consultation stage. At this stage the issues are better defined, the statement of heritage value is available and submissions can address whether a place or object is of heritage significance and whether it should be conserved.

The distinction between significance and conservation is important to highlight. Significance asks whether a place or object has heritage value. Conservation asks whether formal statutory protection through declaration is the appropriate response at the Territory level. This is not about questioning heritage

significance; it is about being clear that declaration is a distinct legal decision. That is also informed by public and stakeholder consultation.

The Bill also reforms provisional declarations. Provisional declarations remain an important safeguard. They allow interim protection where a place or object is likely to be significant and protection is needed to ensure conservation. What this Bill changes is that provisional declarations will no longer arise automatically. Instead, it is a discretionary risk-based decision. Protection can still be put in place quickly where a risk is identified. The Bill also sets out when provisional declarations must be revoked; therefore, interim protection does not remain in place longer than necessary.

The work approval provision is another important part of the Bill, particularly in relation to Aboriginal objects. The Bill clarifies consent and consultation requirements by distinguishing between heritage places and heritage objects. For a heritage place, the owner of the place must consent to works. For a heritage object on private land that is not Aboriginal land, the owner of the land must consent because the approval concerns works occurring on that land.

At the same time, the Bill expressly recognises that another person may own or have traditional rights to possess the object. The applicant must make best endeavours to identify and consult that person about protection and conservation of the object. This distinction between legal land ownership and cultural or traditional interest in an object is important. It does not deny Aboriginal cultural interest in objects; instead, it recognise them through a statutory consultation requirement. It also maintains the legal principle that consent to works on private land is a matter for the landowner. To be abundantly clear: if a heritage place or object is on Aboriginal land, the land trust and land councils exercise full consent rights as the legal landowner on behalf of traditional owners.

The consultation requirement in the Bill requires an applicant to show genuine and reasonable efforts to identify and obtain consent of the relevant person. That may include contacting persons or bodies reasonably believed to hold relevant information; approaching a land council or other recognised body where appropriate; providing clear information about the object and proposed works; allowing reasonable time to respond; and following up and documenting the steps taken and responses received.

If consultation identifies concerns about an object, those concerns must inform the decision. The decision-maker may require avoidance of the object or impose conditions about handling, relocation, monitoring, recording of further engagement or refuse approval where appropriate.

The Bill also updates notice and review provisions to align with the structure of work approval decisions. For work approval on private land, review rights are aligned with the applicant and the landowner, whose legal rights are directly affected by the land-based decision.

Object owners, including persons with traditional rights to possess Aboriginal objects, are recognised through the mandatory consultation requirement.

The Bill also modernises publication requirements. Publication on the agency website is already part of the framework. This now applies for provisional declarations and revocations. The Bill preserves the Registrar-General's role in recording declarations affecting land title. This means formal publication is modernised while legally significant land title recording remains in place.

The Bill also strengthens earlier notice requirements and requires that a written notice to the landowner of the place or object must be provided when a nomination is accepted.

The Bill modernises the Heritage Council. The current structure, with fixed representative positions, has contributed to practical problems, including conflicts of interest, appointment delays and difficulty achieving quorum. The Bill moves to a skill-based model of seven to nine members appointed for their knowledge, skills and experience.

The amendments work to remove mandatory categories of representatives to allow more flexibility in appointing members to the Heritage Council. This approach does not exclude any stakeholder perspectives and does not prevent individuals with backgrounds in local government, land management, industry or community advocacy from being appointed. Importantly, the Act will continue to require, as far as practicable, that at least two members of the Heritage Council be of Aboriginal descent. This requirement remains unchanged.

These changes are designed to improve the Heritage Council's effectiveness and reliability, support sound decision-making and ensure the heritage framework operates in a timely, consistent and reliable manner.

This Bill is a practical reform package. It clarifies automatic protection, strengthens a staged assessment and consultation framework, removes automatic restrictions where they are not justified by risk, improves work approval requirements, recognises Aboriginal interest in objects through statutory consultation and modernises the Heritage Council.

The Legislative Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Assembly pass the Bill. It also found that, subject to its two technical recommendations, the provisions are appropriate. I thank the committee for its work, and I again thank the stakeholders who made submissions, including the land councils, the Heritage Council, industry bodies, heritage practitioners and community organisations.

I acknowledge the officers who contributed to this Bill, particularly those from the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment's Environment and Heritage division and the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

This Bill will deliver certainty and clarity to the heritage regulatory framework.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr SMELT: Can you clarify whether all the necessary regulations, administrative guidelines and appointment criteria required to operationalise the amended framework will be finalised prior to commencement?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mr SMELT: Can you confirm that some aspects will not start before others; all the regulations and guidelines will be done together?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes, it will be done as a package.

Mr SMELT: Does the government intend to commence particular provisions earlier than others? If so, which parts of the amended framework will commence first?

Mr BURGOYNE: No, we do not expect to start any part before another; they will all start together.

Mr SMELT: What transition arrangements will apply to applications or assessments already underway at the time of commencement?

Mr BURGOYNE: That relates to a later clause in the Bill.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr SMELT: Where there is disagreement or limited historical evidence about when first contact occurred in a particular region, what protections apply to a site while that determination is being made?

Mr BURGOYNE: What is important in this section is not whether it was before or after pre-contact; it is about the heritage significance of the item or place.

Mr SMELT: If there are disputes or disagreements, what protections apply while it is being determined whether it falls under the provisions of the Act or outside of it?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to understand that this removes the definitions. It is talking about appointed members and the defined periods being pre-contact and early contact.

The immediate protections that will occur if it reaches certain levels are covered in another clause; we are getting to that. It speaks to the types of relics, ancestral remains and other things that allow for automatic heritage protections.

Mr SMELT: Can you clarify whether culturally significant Aboriginal objects created using post-contact materials, such as glass or metal, remain capable of protection under the amended framework?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes. There is the power for protection that relates to pre-contact and those artefacts if they are deemed to be—which is in further clauses—not a single item but a place. It will have to meet the tests under clause 5. I do not want to have too much of a discussion in regard to that before we get to the clause.

Mr SMELT: I am just confirming the material aspect of it, if it is made of glass or metal—post-contact materials.

Mr BURGOYNE: Are you talking about pre or post-contact? I believe we began talking about pre-contact, and now we are talking about post-contact. It defines other evidence such as ceramics, glass and metal which relates to post-contact. Then there is pre-contact.

Mr SMELT: Given that the government acknowledges contact occurred at different times across the Territory, will there be formal guidance or assessment criteria to support consistent decision-making?

Mr BURGOYNE: That work will be supported by specialist archaeological expertise throughout the decision-making process.

Mr SMELT: Will there be that assessment criteria? Will that be made public?

Mr BURGOYNE: I know what you are trying to get to, but I do not believe we are at that clause yet. Section 4 deals with those two time periods. If you are happy to move on to further clauses, they discuss what classifies certain tests for identifying archaeological places and Aboriginal or Makassan archaeological places.

Mr SMELT: Yes, we can address that. This was just a question about the assessment criteria and whether they will be public. I do not know whether that needs to be especially moved to another clause.

Mr BURGOYNE: In many instances the Heritage Council has specialist archaeologists who work with it to assist in identifying these objects and understanding their significance. It is important that a report is then given to the minister about that. I do not know whether that is then published. That is not currently something that occurs.

Mr SMELT: How does the Bill distinguish between Makassan contact and later European settlement?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is not relevant to this clause.

Mr SMELT: This clause is about the definition of those aspects. Can you point to the applicable clause, if it is a different one?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to acknowledge that ‘pre-contact period’ and ‘early contact period’ are standard terms used by experienced and qualified archaeologists which allow flexibility as contact varies across the NT. That is what we are talking about.

Mr SMELT: Can the government guarantee that places or objects protected under the existing Act will not lose protection as a result of the amended definitions?

Mr BURGOYNE: They will not lose their protections under the changed definitions.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 1 to clause 4.

Just for context, this amendment makes the definitions place-specific by referring to contact occurring ‘in respect of a place in the Territory’ to differentiate places along the coastline and elements of the Northern Territory where that contact occurred.

Stakeholders raised concerns that the government’s drafting may not reflect the historical reality that first contact occurred at different places and regions. This amendment may allow heritage assessments to better reflect local historical context and reduce the risk of culturally significant places or objects being excluded because they do not fit that single Territory-wide contact time.

The Assembly divided:

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

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr SMELT: The Bill introduces the concept of a group of relics. What threshold or criteria will be used to determine what constitutes a group?

Mr BURGOYNE: The grouping of relics refers to an objective and contextual place, so it is tied to that place. It might be towered up and show that it was used in that space.

An isolated relic can still be protected. It is capable of protection, but it has to then be under nomination.

When we are talking about this process it is important to note—it was raised in your speech—it is not that an individual object is not capable of protection; it is just that it will not receive the highest level which is the automatic protection.

J DAVIS: How does the legislation deal with a group of relics that has been dismantled?

Mr BURGOYNE: If it is clear there is a group of relics—again, all these nominations go through the Heritage Council with experts and archaeologists—that will be deemed as such. If one item is identified, it does not automatically become a heritage place, which was identified as needing to be clarified in the Act.

J DAVIS: If a group of relics has been dismantled, would there need to be an application for them as an individual relic?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are trying to define it so that if it is clear a place was utilised and occupied, that is where a group of relics will be located.

As to the dismantling of relics, if there is purely one item that is identified, it is capable of protection via a nomination process.

Mr SMELT: If a site that already held protection is disturbed and then only one object remains, does that site still continue to qualify for protection?

Mr BURGOYNE: If the area was already heritage listed, it will remain heritage listed. Obviously, work would happen regarding what occurred to disturb that site.

Mr SMELT: How does the amended framework protect culturally or spiritually significant places that may not contain a large concentration of physical artefacts?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important when we are talking about a heritage place to define the difference between what might be classified as a sacred site—there are two very different processes. In the *Heritage Act* we are talking about a group of relics that relate to occupation, ancestral remains or evidence of modification by a place by the activity of Aboriginal or Makassan people. We are trying to clarify what deems a heritage place as opposed to what may be protected under the Sacred Sites Act.

Mr SMELT: In that scenario would it be recommended to make an application under the Sacred Sites Act rather than the *Heritage Act*?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 2 to clause 5 to change 'a group of' to 'one or more'.

This amendment intends to ensure that standalone sacred or culturally significant objects are not unintentionally excluded from protection.

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to acknowledge that although automatic protections are in place for that group of relics, as I stated, an isolated relic is still capable of protection via a nomination process.

I respect you might want to continue, but we will not be support it.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr SMELT: How does the government ensure that an individual sacred or culturally significant object does not lose protection simply because it exists in isolation?

Mr BURGOYNE: Does it already have heritage protection?

Mr SMELT: Yes.

Mr BURGOYNE: Anything that is currently protected under the *Heritage Act*, even if it is deemed to be an individual item, will continue to be protected. We are purely defining that if an individual item is found in the future, it will only be made through a nomination process to be found to be a heritage item. The protections in place for automatic protection are strong. We want to ensure we keep that to those specified items.

Mr SMELT: Why does the amended framework place emphasis on the number or grouping of objects rather than the cultural significance?

Mr BURGOYNE: The Act itself does not deem what is or is not; it is purely talking about the automatic provisions that exist under the legislation. It is a powerful thing to have the automatic protections, and if an individual item is found it does not mean that it cannot be protected; it just means that it has to go through a nomination process to achieve that.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 3 to clause 6.

Through this amendment we are looking to address any residual unintended consequences and concerns raised by stakeholders that culturally significant and sacred objects may not be adequately captured by the changes to the Act. Sacred objects with ongoing cultural significance may be more clearly recognised within the heritage framework even when they do not fit this narrower archaeological definition, and to that effect we seek to omit some words. This amendment will omit all words after 'with Aboriginal' and insert 'tradition; or' and 'considered sacred in accordance with Aboriginal tradition'.

Mr BURGOYNE: Anything that refers to 'sacred' relates more to the Sacred Sites Act. The *Heritage Act* refers more to places or artefacts that are of heritage significance; therefore, we will not support the amendment.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Mr SMELT: How does the government ensure that an individual sacred or culturally significant item does not lose protection simply because it exists in isolation?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is through that nomination process.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 4 to clause 7.

The amendment removes the government's proposed additional exclusion wording. The cumulative effect of clauses 4 to 7 may unintentionally narrow heritage protections. The amendment seeks to avoid reducing the range of items that may qualify as protected heritage under the Act. That is why we seek to omit clause 7(3).

Amendment not agreed to.

J DAVIS: Why are artefacts that were produced or created for the purpose of trade or sale excluded from the definition of relics?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to clarify that it is not intended to exclude genuinely significant relics used in trade—that is, Makassan—it is more to ensure that modern items are not classified under this provision.

J DAVIS: Is there a definition of what that means—artefacts produced for trade or sale?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are trying to carve out replica relics made for sale—that is, more modern items. That is not to say that we are taking out what is genuinely a significant relic from the pre or post era; it is just to remove any idea that something reproduced more modernly could then be taken as a relic.

J DAVIS: I understand. Is there a timeframe for the definition of when something would be treated as a genuine relic or one for the purpose of trade or sale?

Mr BURGOYNE: The Act talks about pre and post-contact periods and when they occurred in time.

Mr PAECH: Are you confirming pre and post-contact is colonisation? Are you referring to 1778? You talked about what is a contemporary setting and a relic setting. In terms of this—because this could be used by the court if it is challenged—what are you talking about when you talk about the times?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important that we are not defining a period. As we have discussed, that happened at different times throughout the Northern Territory.

Mr PAECH: If there is a group of traditional Aboriginal custodians still living on country and practising our cultural practices on country with objects—Aboriginal culture is still living, breathing and evolving—those objects might still be as important. They are not replicas; they are still objects. How do they fit within the definitions?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to understand that we are trying to define what is automatically given protection under the *Heritage Act*. The artefacts and items that the Member for Gwoja spoke about can still be given heritage significance under the nomination process.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8:

Mr SMELT: Clause 8 allows the council to refuse a nomination if it is considered otherwise inappropriate. As this term is not defined in the Bill, what safeguards or criteria will ensure that these powers are applied consistently and transparently?

Mr BURGOYNE: An example of a nomination that may be conceived as otherwise inappropriate is a broad nomination. In the past entire townships and large areas may have been placed for heritage significance. It is important to allow the Heritage Council to assess and, if it is otherwise inappropriate, to be able to deem so.

Mr SMELT: This appears to be a theme that has come up a few times. Can you talk about the criteria that will be used to make that decision? What safeguards or criteria will be used?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to acknowledge the work the Heritage Council does. It does not necessarily want to preclude nominations, but there are instances when a large area—a river or a region—rather than a specific place with clear boundaries is nominated. It is important that we support the Heritage Council, when it does not believe it should progress, to essentially give it the ability not to proceed with that assessment. What happened in the past and what we are trying to alleviate is that many nominations had to proceed to assessment because the council could not use its discretion. This example of 'otherwise inappropriate' gives the council that discretion.

Mr SMELT: What you are outlining sounded like the beginnings of a criterion, potentially, to assess some of these inappropriate nominations. If the council determines that a nomination is otherwise inappropriate, will that determination and the reasons for it being inappropriate be publicly available?

Mr BURGOYNE: The council is not required to, but it is my advice that whenever a nomination is not successful the council writes to that proposer.

Mr SMELT: How will the government ensure nominations that might involve oral history or newly found cultural evidence not be dismissed as lacking substance before proper assessment occurs?

Mr BURGOYNE: Should the council proceed to the assessment period, all that information will be considered. Obviously when someone proposes something for nomination, they provide information. If the council deems it to be of heritage significance, it moves to the assessment period.

Mr SMELT: If clause 20 removes procedural fairness obligations during preliminary decisions, what accountability measures ensure that refusal decisions are based on complete and accurate information?

Mr BURGOYNE: The Heritage Council works in many instances with people who put forward nominations to ensure that information is complete. If the council believes there is an instance when information is missing, it will go back and ask for more information to be provided so that it can properly assess to progress it or not. The Heritage Council always works in the best interests of heritage in the NT.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 11, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 12:

Mr SMELT: What factors will the government consider in deciding whether consultation periods should be extended beyond the 28 days?

Mr BURGOYNE: There is a number of reasons why the public consultation period could be extended. One could be the scale if it is a huge application. There are also flexibilities in timeframes regarding the ability to speak to necessary people. If it was over the Wet Season and the place was inaccessible, that would be taken into consideration by the council.

Mr SMELT: Will translated materials, interpreters or culturally appropriate consultation methods be provided where required?

Mr BURGOYNE: This is all part of the important work that the Heritage Council does, yes.

Mr SMELT: In terms of the update regarding the scrutiny committee recommendations, can you clarify what the government is doing for clause 12, given the amendments could not be made despite the scrutiny committee recommendation?

Mr BURGOYNE: An omnibus Bill will come through later this year, and it is my intention that both the recommendations are a part of that Bill.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 15, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 16:

Mr SMELT: Why has the government chosen to remove the automatic provisional protection for sites while they are undergoing assessment?

Mr BURGOYNE: In some instances the provisional declaration was not achieving its goal. It was written into the legislation that the Heritage Council, after receiving an application and essentially assessing it itself before it had even moved to a public consultation period, had to provisionally declare that place. I have seen this during my time as minister, if there is the belief that something is at risk of being destroyed and someone brings that to attention, there are currently provisions, and will continue to be provisions, for the minister to declare it to protect it. The provisional declaration that automatically came when an assessment was being undertaken by the Heritage Council was inefficient and led to red tape.

Mr SMELT: In that case, what safeguards apply between the Heritage Council identifying a potentially significant site and a final ministerial decision being made?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is a risk-based assessment. In the example that it comes to the attention of the council that something of possible heritage significance will be destroyed, the Heritage Council can put a declaration over it or can write to the minister to enact, under those powers, a provisional declaration.

Mr SMELT: Even with that provision in place, does the government acknowledge that there may be a period when a site is under assessment but no longer receives that automatic interim protection?

Mr BURGOYNE: The same safeguard is available; it is just how it is applied. Whilst the Heritage Council is going through its assessment period, the provisional declaration is not in place. If at any time it is believed the heritage place being assessed is under threat, the Heritage Council can write to the minister to enact that power. The automatic provisional declaration, which essentially gave it the protection under the *Heritage Act* while an assessment was being undertaken as to whether it was of heritage significance, was burdensome in many ways.

Mr SMELT: Why should the protection of a potentially significant heritage site depend on ministerial discretion rather than the significance of the site itself during that assessment period?

Mr BURGOYNE: I do not believe that is quite correct. The heritage significance will be determined by the Heritage Council. The risk of the heritage place being damaged or destroyed will then be the determination for the minister. The Heritage Council will undertake its work to assess the heritage place, and in this day and age nothing happens without people knowing about it. This has happened: a place that was going to be demolished came to the attention of the Heritage Council, it made the minister aware and a provisional declaration was put in place.

Mr SMELT: That goes to our concern that the person who is nominating it does not have the ability or wherewithal to follow up with the minister to get that interim protection. If a site is damaged or disturbed before that final protection decision is made, what mechanisms would remain available to preserve the heritage value of the site?

Mr BURGOYNE: There are no protections in place until that declaration is given.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clauses 17 and 18, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 19:

Mr SMELT: If significant new archaeological or cultural evidence emerges shortly after a refusal decision, what mechanisms exist to reconsider the site before the five-year reassessment period expires?

Mr BURGOYNE: There is allowance for exceptions to the five-year ban on reassessment if the owner consents. It is important to understand that. As you outlined, if new information suddenly came to light, that can be assessed by the Heritage Council.

Mr SMELT: Would the onus be on the nominator to bring that to the attention of the council?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to acknowledge that reassessment occurs at the consent of the landowner.

Mr SMELT: If someone came to the council with new information within the five-year period, would it still be up to the landowner?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes. During the nomination period the council would go through an assessment period. I cannot think of a time when all of a sudden, after an entire assessment period, something would just pop up. This new section allows that exception to the five-year ban. It is important to understand the extensiveness of any assessment the Heritage Council undertakes.

Mr SMELT: I think that this question goes to what you have already said. With the minister retaining the discretion to intervene, is that still there if the landowner refuses during that five-year assessment period?

Mr BURGOYNE: This five-year ban, once an assessment has been in place—it is just stipulating how this happens. The process occurs. If the Heritage Council finds that it is not to be of heritage significance, there is a five-year—you can call it what you like—ban or protection in place so that it cannot be continuously put forward and assessed.

Mr SMELT: The point I wanted to get to is whether the minister has any discretion in that or if the landowner can shut it down within that five-year period.

Mr BURGOYNE: The minister cannot override that protection. It is there for a reason.

Clause 19 agreed to.

Clause 20:

Mr SMELT: Why does the Bill remove procedural fairness obligations during the preliminary stages of heritage assessments?

Mr BURGOYNE: The preliminary decisions are made by the Heritage Council. Once an assessment occurs, all necessary stakeholder engagement occurs. We are clearly defining that now so that there is no misinterpretation of when consultation should and should not occur.

Mr SMELT: If a nomination is refused at the preliminary stage, what opportunities remain for traditional owners or community stakeholders to seek reconsideration of that decision?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to note that there is no substantive impact on rights. This new section clearly defines when affected parties are consulted. It has been raised through the current action of the *Heritage Act* that we need to clearly define when affected parties are consulted, and that is what this does.

Mr SMELT: Is there a process whereby affected parties can correct inaccurate or incomplete information if they are not afforded an opportunity to be heard early in the process?

Mr BURGOYNE: Any nomination that is put forward, and the information provided in it, is the opportunity for that individual to be heard and what the council does its pre-assessment on.

Mr SMELT: Does the government accept that together clauses 16 and 20 reduce early-stage protections and opportunities for community participation?

Mr BURGOYNE: No, it is about clear defining. There have been examples when this has been challenged, essentially. Through these amendments we seek to to clearly define at each stage when the affected parties are consulted.

Mr SMELT: With that in mind, can you describe what safeguards remain in the amended framework to ensure that culturally significant places are not overlooked during the preliminary assessment stages?

Mr BURGOYNE: The quality of the nomination.

Mr SMELT: Does no other safeguard remain after these amendments?

Mr BURGOYNE: The assessment process allows for the heritage significance or otherwise to be determined through that process. The application is how you get there. There is still plenty of protection.

Clause 20 agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 23, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 24:

Mr SMELT: Clause 24 requires consultation with heritage object owners but does not require consent. Why did the government choose consultation rather than consent?

Mr BURGOYNE: We have sought to clearly define that the consent from the landowner, who has the legal rights over that land, is engaged and then consult with the owners of the objects. It is clearly outlining the legal obligations of the Heritage Council to get the consent of the landowner and consult with the owners of the objects. It is trying to clearly define the process.

Mr SMELT: In that case, why did the government land on 'consult' rather than 'consent' from the object owner?

Mr BURGOYNE: It is important to get the consent of the landowner to go onto the land and then consult the owners of the object. The Heritage Council can best understand the heritage significance or otherwise of the objects through the consultation process with the owners of the objects.

Mr SMELT: Regarding reasonable attempts to consult with the object owner, what does that mean in practice? How will decision-makers determine whether consultation has been adequate?

Mr BURGOYNE: It means reasonable efforts supported by evidence that can be assessed in regard to records, emails and letters. Whenever something like this occurs the Heritage Council will, with its best endeavours, seek to engage with the relevant owners of those objects. In some cases, the people who may have been the owners of those objects either are deceased or have moved on.

Mr SMELT: The department indicated during evidence that land councils are expected to assist with consultation processes. Why is that role not reflected directly in the legislation?

Mr BURGOYNE: The advice I have is the practice is to consult when there is a cultural interest in a heritage place and seek the advice of the land councils. That is what happens in practice. We did not want to put that into the legislation so it does not then stop the Heritage Council from dealing individually with traditional owners or the owners of the objects directly.

Mr SMELT: If consultation occurs but heritage object owners continue to object to the proposed works, what weight will those objections carry in the final decision-making process?

Mr BURGOYNE: If the heritage place is at risk of being damaged or destroyed, the minister can grant protection so that the assessment can occur to determine whether it will be deemed a heritage place in the future. That is essentially the intent of the Act.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 5 to clause 24.

This goes to the heart of what we have been discussing. We seek to insert 'the consent of the owner of the object'. This replaces the consultation requirement with obtaining consent of the heritage object owner. Instead of being the best endeavours to identify and consult the heritage owner, we on this side of the House believe that it needs to have the consent, as it does for the landowner. The landowner and object owner should be considered on the same level.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 24 agreed to.

Clause 25:

Mr SMELT: Can you clarify how clause 25 changes notification rights for heritage object owners under the amended framework?

Mr BURGOYNE: This clause amends section 74(3)(b) to require that if an applicant for a work approval is not the owner of a heritage place or object, the decision-maker extends the time to decide the application. Under section 72, the owner must be given written notice of that extension.

Mr SMELT: Why were notification rights provided only to landowners, rather than being shared between landowners and the heritage object owners?

Mr BURGOYNE: When seeking to consider whether something is to be made a heritage place, you are advising the owner of the land of that assessment period. In that assessment period you would consult with the owners of the objects to determine whether it will continue to be a heritage place, if it already has the provisional declaration; if it does not, you would move to the assessment period to deem whether it will become a heritage place.

Mr SMELT: Was consideration given to maintaining notification rights for both landowners and heritage object owners so that there was balanced participation?

Mr BURGOYNE: We have clarified that consultation with the owners of the objects. The Heritage Council will continue to consult with the owners of the objects about the process being undertaken.

Mr SMELT: If heritage object owners are not formally notified of decisions, how are they expected to participate meaningfully in review or appeal processes?

Mr BURGOYNE: Owners of objects do not have the appeal rights; only landowners do.

Mr SMELT: Is there a mechanism or process for the object owners to appeal under the Act?

Mr BURGOYNE: No.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 6 to clause 25.

It is the same issue we raised with the previous amendment. We have a number of concerns about the fact that the heritage object owners are not given the same status as the landowners, and we seek for them to both be included in that approval process. Heritage object owners would then remain formally involved throughout the approval process, rather than being excluded from key stages of decision-making. That is the intent of our amendment.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 25 agreed to.

Clause 26:

Mr SMELT: On a similar theme, does clause 26 reduce the review or appeal opportunities previously available to heritage object owners?

Mr BURGOYNE: We are clearly defining that a process occurs. Everyone is consulted through that assessment period, and once a decision is made, it is final. That is what this clearly defines.

Mr SMELT: Can you confirm that the clause reduces the review and appeal opportunities?

Mr BURGOYNE: Yes.

Mr SMELT: With those reduced review and appeal opportunities, what safeguards remain in the amended framework to ensure that heritage object owners can still challenge decisions affecting culturally significant objects?

Mr BURGOYNE: Throughout this process it is important that the Heritage Council is allowed to do its assessment, that archaeologists can deem whether something is of heritage significance. Once the decision is made, that decision is final, because going through the entire assessment period can be a lengthy process, depending on a range of factors, as we have outlined through previous clauses. This aims to give certainty.

Mr SMELT: Taking that philosophy into account, when drafting these changes did the government consider a model that preserved the procedural rights of both the landowner and the heritage object owner?

Mr BURGOYNE: Once again, it is important to acknowledge that clearly defining the processes allows everyone to be consulted and have their say throughout the process. That is what we seek to do.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 7 to clause 26.

This is the same theme as the two previous amendments. On this side of the Chamber we hold real concerns about the disparity in the requirements that would allow the landowner and the heritage object owner to receive notice of decisions relating to heritage objects. This amendment would allow formal notification to both parties regarding heritage objects, and there would be clear awareness of the outcomes that would impact the interests of both the landowner and the object owner.

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 26 agreed to.

Clause 27:

Mr SMELT: Why has guaranteed Aboriginal representation on the Heritage Council been changed to a requirement applying only when practicable?

Mr BURGOYNE: Throughout my conversations with the Heritage Council, the stipulations of the skills of each member and the makeup of the members has led to being unable to fill vacancies in some instances. It is important to understand that there is currently a member of the council who identifies as Aboriginal. It is our intention to continue to ensure—as is in the legislation—that there are at least two council members of Aboriginal descent.

This is important. By essentially setting out, 'You must have these skills and be this person', if a good person puts up their hand to be on the Heritage Council but does not meet any of the criteria, they are still allowed to go on it. That has been clearly identified through the Heritage Council discussions I had. In some instances when a vacancy has come up, the only person who has the skill set has been from interstate. That is not saying that they are not a good person, it just means that all the Territory applicants were not found to have the necessary skill set. Under these changes those people from the Northern Territory who applied to be on the council will be able to go on it. An important part of this is to ensure that people who are on the committee have that understanding which is outlined in regard to the skills, knowledge and experience to deal with matters of heritage.

Mr SMELT: There is still a lot of concern on our side of the Chamber about these changes. You pointed to some examples about why you might not want to have those requirements in the Act. Can you tell us in what circumstances it would not be practicable to appoint an appropriately qualified Aboriginal representative to the Heritage Council?

Mr BURGOYNE: You have exactly hit on the point; if an Aboriginal person were to apply who met all the skills, they are exactly the sort of people we want on the council. If there are no Aboriginal people applying to go on the Heritage Council—that is the difficulty that has been occurring—we will continue to encourage people of Aboriginal descent to put forward their names to be on the Heritage Council because an understanding of cultural heritage is vital when considering places of heritage across the Northern Territory.

Mr SMELT: That is our deep concern as well.

Why is Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority representation being removed from the Heritage Council structure?

Mr BURGOYNE: AAPA supported these changes. It was highlighted that having an AAPA representative did not always mean it was an Aboriginal person. Once again, it is important to have the skill set of an AAPA person—whether they be an employee or otherwise—on the Heritage Council. They are not restricted from applying, as they always have been able to. It was clearly identified through the process that an AAPA representative is not always an Aboriginal representative. In some instance they have been, and can be; that will continue to be the case. I look forward to AAPA continuing its work.

AAPA currently has a member on the Heritage Council.

Mr SMELT: You mentioned wanting to continue Aboriginal representation on the Heritage Council and that you will seek to actively encourage candidates with the requisite skills as well as having that background. Can you talk more about how you will try to ensure that Aboriginal cultural expertise remains embedded within the Heritage Council and the decision-making under these changes?

Mr BURGOYNE: With this amendment we are seeking to ensure that we can always have a full membership of the Heritage Council. To be clear: in the past when the nominations that came forward for the Heritage Council did not meet the clear criteria, those positions remained vacant. We want to encourage representatives from AAPA, representatives who identify as Aboriginal and other people with the necessary skills and knowledge to take part in the Heritage Council. Importantly, we are not seeking in any way to restrict anyone from applying to be on the Heritage Council; it is more broadening the requirements so that more people are eligible to be on it.

Mr SMELT: The key point was about encouraging Aboriginal candidates. Can you give us faith that it will be more than encouragement and that there are other steps you can take and levers you can use to try to achieve that vital representation?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is exactly why we have prescribed that the council must have two members of Aboriginal descent as far as practicable. We are encouraging that through the Act, but if no Aboriginal people apply, we do not want the council to then not have members. Through the words written in the Act we are encouraging people of Aboriginal descent to be on the council. We are encouraging the council to have two members of Aboriginal descent. If no-one who is of Aboriginal descent applies, we still want relevant expertise on the council from a broad range of backgrounds.

Mr SMELT: Moving to a slightly different topic, what safeguards ensure that the Heritage Council continues to operate as an independent statutory body rather than becoming overly reliant on ministerial discretion in appointments?

Mr BURGOYNE: That is not relevant to the clause.

Mr SMELT: I move amendment 8 to clause 27.

This will insert the requirement that at least one member must be a representative of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority appointed on the nomination of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. That reinstates the current requirement. We believe this is a critical part of the makeup of the Heritage Council. By reinserting this provision we would retain the requirement that one member of the Heritage Council must be a representative nominated by the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. This amendment will ensure that Aboriginal cultural and sacred sites experience has a guaranteed role within Heritage Council decision-making.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Mr Smelt	Mr Edgington
Ms Uibo	Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Young	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

Mr BURGOYNE: After speaking with the Member for Nightcliff, I will give the Assembly the undertaking that I will consult with the department about the possible inclusion of amendment 8 in the omnibus Bill later this year. This is the first time I have seen the amendments that have been proposed. I do not know how they may or may not impact on the rest of the Bill, so I give the undertaking that I will consult with the department about the inclusion of this as part of the omnibus Bill later this year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is noted, but the amendment was defeated.

Mr SMELT: I thank the minister for taking that on and consulting with the department. It is much appreciated.

I move amendment 9 to clause 27.

This goes to the heart of representation on the Heritage Council. The amendment replaces the government-proposed amendment with a mandatory requirement for at least two Aboriginal members with relevant expertise or experience in Aboriginal heritage or tradition. This amendment would ensure Aboriginal representation and cultural expertise remain guaranteed, rather than discretionary, within the Heritage Council structure. This amendment would also ensure that the expertise is provided by a person of Aboriginal descent from the Northern Territory, which we think is critical to the operation of the council.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Mr Smelt	Mr Edgington
Ms Uibo	Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Young	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 27 agreed to.

Clauses 28 and 29, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 30:

Mr SMELT: The Bill allows powers to be delegated to any person. You mentioned this in regard to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee recommendations. What qualifications, expertise or safeguards will apply to those delegated decision-makers?

Mr BURGOYNE: The intention is for it to be a delegation to either another minister or the chief executive. That amendment will be made as part of the omnibus Bill to clarify that and ensure the recommendations from the scrutiny committee are upheld and integrated into the legislation.

Mr SMELT: Which powers does the government anticipate delegating under the amended framework?

Mr BURGOYNE: A provisional declaration could be one of those powers. When the minister for Heritage is away, that power will be able to be delegated to another minister or the chief executive.

Clause 30 agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 34, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Schedule, by leave, agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MINERAL TITLES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 56

Continued from 18 March 2026.

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

The reason I am making a contribution now and not at the end during the wrap is that I want to give the Assembly as much notice as I can.

There has been consultation in relation to fossicking. At the moment the Bill provides for a fossicking permit every year, which has a $30 fee. The Member for Goyder and I met with the Northern Territory prospecting association president, Matt, and vice-president, Mick. We attended the AGM to talk about this amendment. After discussions with them, we spoke with the department to have an amendment for the permit to be for five years with no fee. Feedback from consultation was that one year and $30 is just revenue raising, and there was pushback on that. An amendment will come around at some stage in relation to that.

Ms Uibo: Which section was it?

Mr MALEY: The bit about fossicking.

Ms Uibo: That is all right; I will find it.

Mr MALEY: It is clauses 9 and 47. We will amend proposed section 135C. The amendment will omit '12 months' and insert '5 years'. Also, there will not be a fee.

This Bill delivers a more modern, efficient, transparent framework that supports responsible resource development while strengthening environmental accountability, improving landholder confidence and ensuring clarity for all users of the system. The amendments will enhance the efficiency and transparency of the mineral framework while balancing the interests of industry.

Amendments are coming around. There are small changes to administrative things. This includes changing wording like 'exploration licence' to 'EL' to make it consistent within the Act. The main change will be to five years and a zero fee for the permit.

I thank the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for its careful consideration of the Bill. Everyone did a lot of work on it. The recommendations have been addressed, including consideration from stakeholders in relation to the review.

The recreational fossickers raised a concern, and we will deal with that by making an amendment.

This is about making sure that there is a balance between the mineral licence application and the fossickers and bringing the Act up to date as we move forward.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, this Bill did not appear suddenly and it was not developed in isolation; it is the result of the significant work undertaken over a number of years by the previous Labor government. That work was deliberate, structured and tied to a clear economic vision for the Northern Territory. That vision recognised a simple reality: the Territory is one of the most geologically prospective regions in the world. We have the resources, opportunity, right policy settings and potential to be a genuine minerals powerhouse.

Unlocking that potential requires more than ambition; it requires reform, and that reform work has been done. This work was informed by the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission, shaped by the Mineral Development Taskforce and supported by detailed policy development and a structured consultation process that brought together industry, land councils, environmental stakeholders and the broader community.

Through that work a number of issues were clearly identified. There was administrative complexity in the system; outdated provisions; inefficiencies in application and renewal processes; a lack of flexibility for

modern exploration practices; and the issue of land banking, whereby large areas of land were being held without meaningful activity.

The response from the previous Labor government was practical and comprehensive. A reform package was developed to modernise the mineral titles framework, improve transparency, strengthen compliance and ensure that tenure encourages real exploration and development rather than just speculation. A discussion paper was released in 2024. Submissions were received, stakeholders were engaged and a clear roadmap for reform was established. This is all a matter of record.

When we consider the Bill, we should be clear about what it represents. It largely gives legislative effect to the existing body of work. It implements the reform blueprint that had already been designed and the recommendations already made through the taskforce. This is not a criticism; it is simply the reality.

It is disappointing that two years on we are only now seeing this legislation brought before the House. The groundwork was well and truly done, the path was already clear and the Territory was ready to move forward, but instead there was a nearly two-year delay under the CLP government. That delay matters. The resources sector does not wait; investment decisions are made in real time and other jurisdictions are actively competing for capital, projects and jobs. Every year of inaction by the CLP government represents a missed opportunity.

It is important to acknowledge that there is broad support across the Territory community for the mining sector. People understand the role that mining plays in our economy. It supports jobs, particularly in regional areas; drives investment in the Territory economy; and underpins the infrastructure that we rely on every day. Territorians want best practice for any type of resource industry and to ensure that environmental protections are strong. This is not just a contested policy space in the same way as other areas of the resources sector; there is a level of social licence and a shared understanding of its importance. The Territory is deeply connected to its people and its country.

This makes the CLP government's delay even more difficult to understand. The opportunity and support were there. What is needed is a government that is willing to partner with industry stakeholders and get projects moving while ensuring that the key people—landowners in particular—are consulted. Not just that, landowners, traditional owners and those who work on country need to have a seat at the table to make those important decisions. Instead, we have seen a lack of urgency from the CLP government in its coordination. There has been a delay in reform, an inconsistency in approach and a failure to bring the key partners along for meaningful practice.

Consultation is a critical part of this. It is clear that departmental staff have engaged in good faith, and their work should be acknowledged. We thank them for it. However, at the same time this cannot be said of the ministerial and executive government level of the CLP. There are ongoing concerns from land councils and other stakeholders across the industry that they have not been genuinely engaged and their concerns have not been properly considered by the CLP. That is a missed opportunity.

Land councils should not be seen as an obstacle to development; they are a key partner. They represent traditional owners and play a central role in granting land access and the protection of some of our most beautiful country. Land councils are essential to ensuring that development is respectful, sustainable and supported by the communities and landowners that it affects. A strong and enduring mining sector depends on genuine partnership. Increasingly, we are seeing that across the industry, but not from the CLP. Any type of legislation requires engagement, listening and a willingness to collaborate.

A broader issue that cannot be ignored is the CLP government's priorities. When we talk about budgets and choice, investment and decisions, the CLP has shown where the government is focusing its attention and resources, and thinking about the Territory economy is definitely not it. The most recent budget makes that clear. There is a significant focus on Corrections and a substantial increase in funding for prisons. At the same time, there has not been the same level of urgency for economic development, the vision to grow the economy and opening new mines in a best-practice manner.

That raises serious questions about the priorities of the government. Why is there greater urgency to expand the Corrections system than to grow the economy? Why is there a stronger focus on prisons than on projects that can create jobs and opportunity across the Territory? Strong communities are built through economic participation, jobs, investment and opportunity; that is where the focus should be.

In the absence of strong government leadership, others have stepped in. The Minerals Council released its Grounded in Strength report outlining the Territory's potential and the role that mining can play in driving economic growth. That kind of work is important, but it should not be left to the industry alone to drive it. The

government has a central role to play. It must bring together policy, regulation, infrastructure and investment into a coherent strategy. It must provide certainty and direction and ensure that the benefits of development are shared across the community.

This Bill represents progress, but it is not new; it is the continuation of the work that was already started. It reflects the reform agenda that had already been developed and consulted on. A key question is not whether the reform is needed; that has already been established. The real question is why it has taken so long for the CLP government to reach this point. It has no vision or plan, and it cannot deliver. The urgency required to deliver the next stage of development in the Territory is desperate, and we see the government fail. The Territory's potential is clear; what remains uncertain is whether the CLP government is prepared to realise it and do the heavy lifting.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I do not support passing the Mineral Titles Legislation Amendment Bill.

I looked at the submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, and I am aware that all land councils asked for time to assess the impact of the Bill. Several other submissions also asked for more time to look at this enormous Bill and allow their legal firms and policy workers the opportunity to work with government to ensure that this Bill does not conflict with ALRA or cause other significant problems.

I am pleased that the government is sending all Bills to the scrutiny committee, but the feedback coming through loud and clear is that one week is not enough time for representative bodies to get across these enormous Bills. If these organisations, with their staff and lawyers, do not have enough time, how is the rest of the community supposed to manage these timeframes?

This is also a significant concern about the submissions for the inquiry into the care and protection legislation that was presented to the parliament yesterday. There is a one-week period for submissions on this Bill. That is not enough time for people in our communities to be part of the conversation.

Scrutiny committees can only work properly when they have time to engage with the organisations and people of the NT. If the government systems do not make the time for proper scrutiny, it becomes clear that this is just a rubber stamp and the government has no intention of listening to the concerns of the community or amending legislation to create better laws. The passage of Bills needs to be slowed down to give the Legislative Scrutiny Committee a chance to do its job and give the community the opportunity to participate, otherwise this is not a democratic process where people can genuinely engage.

I support the submissions from the land councils and others. I ask the government to adjourn the Bill so that organisations and community members can properly engage before it is passed.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, this government is committed to getting on with the job. This Bill represents another in a long list of Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce work and a long list of work that has been going on in the department that was failed to be delivered by the previous government.

The Member for Mulka talked about the scrutiny committee not having enough time. Member for Mulka, do you know what I did when this Bill came out? I talked to the people I knew it would affect and asked, 'What do you think?' The Member for Nelson and I went to Top End Prospecting and asked, 'What are you hearing from your members? What do you like? What do you not like?'

We consulted. We attended the NT Prospectors and Detectorists Association AGM and spoke with the everyday Territorians that this Bill will impact. We listened and changed. The amendments that the Member for Nelson will move reflect the ongoing commitment of our government to speak with everyday Territorians across the Territory. It is not the job of the scrutiny committee to do all the consultations. Sometimes people need to take that first step and write in.

I give a shout-out to the Top End Gem and Mineral Club. Not everyone who loves fossicking and prospecting goes looking for gold; they go looking for rocks of all kinds. They are another group of dedicated Territorians enjoying their hobbies. I will be the first to say that walking around in the hot sun with heavy equipment and a big backpack is not for me, but I respect those who do it.

I commend the changes, this Bill and our government's commitment to getting the industry moving and the Territory economy growing again.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I support the Minerals Titles Legislation Amendment Bill.

I acknowledge all the work that has been done by the Deputy Chief Minister to get this legislation to the House. I note the Leader of the Opposition tried to lay claim to the work. Starting something, never finishing it and never having any intention of finishing it does not give you the ability to take credit for the good work that has been done by the Deputy Chief Minister and his team.

Investors and businesses are delighted that finally we are getting traction to unlock the opportunities that the Territory has to offer. This Bill matters to the mining industry, our economy, our international partners, investors at home and abroad and people in communities across the Territory who depend on a strong resources sector to put food on the table and keep our local businesses going.

In my portfolio we talk every day about how we attract investment, build relationships and make the Territory the most competitive place in Australia to do business. Investors, whether they are in Jakarta, Tokyo, Singapore or Korea, first ask these questions every single time: What does your regulatory framework look like? How long does it take? Is it predictable? Can we plan around it or will somebody flip it on its head two minutes after we decide we want to make an investment, making it really difficult for us to continue? We are delighted to tell them that our Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to making it as straightforward as possible to do business in the Territory and that our regulatory framework supports the work they want to do.

They can find minerals in lots of places. They do not have to come here. If we make it a challenge, they will not come to us. They need to find, and we are offering them, a jurisdiction that is genuinely open for business and one that treats them like a partner, not a problem. This Bill delivers on that commitment.

The Territory is sitting on one of the most significant mineral resources bases in the world. We have world-class operating mines for gold, manganese, bauxite and zinc. The Nobles goldmine has reopened in Tennant Creek. The Verdant Minerals Ammaroo Phosphate Project was granted its mining licence, bringing hundreds of long-term jobs and serious regional investment.

The Arafura Rare Earths Ltd project is recognised as one of the most advanced rare-earth projects anywhere in the world, which positions the Northern Territory and Australia to be the only competitor to China in developing magnets. Magnets go in just about everything—phones, cars, planes and anything you can think of. Those magnets are important. We may be producing them soon in the Territory.

Our critical minerals guide was expanded this year to include gold and five new commodities, including uranium. It documents the Territory's endowment for 21 global critical minerals with exploration potential for a further 14. The opportunity in the Northern Territory is massive. The world wants what is in our ground and the question is whether we will make it easy or hard for them to come and get it out.

I have sat across the table from ministers, investors, Presidents, Prime Ministers and business leaders from across Asia and beyond—people who are making decisions about where to put their money. I hear consistently that the Territory has extraordinary potential, and our regulatory framework previously got in the way of them seizing the opportunity to work with us to grow our economy and their resource file. There was too much uncertainty, too many administrative hurdles and timelines that were hard to predict. For explorers and investors who are raising capital and need to give their shareholders certainty, those barriers are not just inconvenient; they are deal breakers.

This Bill fixes that. The extension of the first renewal period for exploration licences from two years to six years is significant. I cannot tell you how many times explorers have raised the short renewal period as a genuine constraint on their ability to secure funding. Other jurisdictions offer longer periods, and we have been losing deals to those jurisdictions as a result; that changes with this Bill.

The new mineral lease categories for small-scale mining, fossicking and tourist fossicking open the Territory's mineral wealth to a new cohort of operators—smaller businesses, tourism ventures and zebra rock and gold fossicking. These might sound modest in the context of a large mining Bill, but for communities in remote areas and small business owners looking at new revenue streams, these provisions are meaningful.

The streamlining of reporting requirements, aligning technical and resource reports, reducing duplication—nobody likes duplication—and giving companies more flexibility, might not make the headlines, but it will save industry time and money. In a competitive investment environment, that matters.

This Bill does not sit in isolation; it sits alongside everything else this government is doing to make the Territory the investment destination of choice. We have signed a critical minerals MOU with Indonesia. The first of its kind between any Australian jurisdiction and Indonesia, the MOU is a five-year agreement designed

to build supply chains, foster collaboration on exploration and processing technologies and position the Territory where it should be—a key link between Australia's mineral wealth and Indonesia's ambition to become a Southeast Asian hub for electric vehicle manufacturing.

When I sat down in Jakarta and made the case for the Territory, I spoke about our regulatory framework, our approvals processes and the fact that this government is cutting red tape and making it easier to do business. This Bill is part of that case. That conversation was continued by my colleague the Minister for Mining and Energy when he visited Indonesia and said that we would back the partnerships we wish to have with them. Every barrier we remove is another reason for an investor to choose the Territory over somewhere else.

The current geopolitical environment makes this legislation even more timely. The world is in the middle of a critical minerals race. Western economies are scrambling to secure supply chains that are not dependent on single sources, and China has been consolidating control over key minerals supply chains for years. We have what the world needs—rare earths, copper, lithium, graphite, manganese, tungsten, bismuth and more. We have a stable legal system, a skilled workforce, a government that is genuinely open for business and now, with this Bill, a regulatory framework that is fit for purpose. We are not just a supplier; we are a strategic partner for the nations and companies that need to build secure diversified supply chains. This legislation makes us a better one.

Under the previous government, red tape strangled investment, delays and blowouts became the norm and investors walked away. The Territory went backwards for a long eight years as a result. This government came to office with a mandate to rebuild the economy and make the Territory the most competitive place in Australia to live, work, visit and invest. The Mineral Titles Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 is a tangible practical step in delivering on that mandate with growth, certainty and security. That is what this Bill delivers for our resources sector, our trade and investment relationships and every Territorians in our cities, regional centres and the most remote communities who depend on a strong resources sector to build their future.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, as with every Bill I have spoken to in this sittings, I start by acknowledging the work of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, the secretariat and all those who made submissions to the committee.

I thank the Member for Goyder for explaining to the Chamber how consultation should work and that it is not just the requirement of the committee to go out and chase people. I agree with that. If people listened to the Member for Mulka explaining the complexities of people responding to a Bill that impacts on them in a short timeframe—what the Member for Goyder said, in my view, was deeply disrespectful to what the Member for Mulka raised. I wanted to put that on the record.

This Bill has been presented as a streamlining measure. I have said before that reducing administrative burden and making the system work better are legitimate goals, but streamlining cannot come at the cost of people's rights. We heard in the scrutiny committee from many submitters that the stakes are clear: mineral and petroleum legislation regulates some of the Territory's most significant public resources, and getting it wrong creates uncertainty for investors and landowners. This government talks over and again about the importance of certainty for investors and the Territory. I understand and agree with that. When a law is passed and there are questions relating to that certainty, it does not meet that aim.

The CLC warned specifically that the changes proposed:

> *… are rife with the possibility for unintended consequences which would create uncertainty to investors.*

This is not the crossbench saying no to industry; this is a land council representing 17,500 traditional Aboriginal landowners warning that this Bill could undermine the investment certainty that the government says it is trying to build.

In terms of consultation, it is worth noting that the CLC stated in its submission that it was not even aware that a discussion paper about these reforms was circulated in 2024. We are told that the CLC was invited to participate in consultation, but it has no record of receiving that invitation. It said:

> *Had CLC been aware, it would have made significant and robust submissions …*

Instead, the CLC was given one week, alongside five other major inquiries, to respond to a Bill of this complexity. That is not adequate consultation, and it does not serve the purposes of this Assembly.

This Bill proposes to treat a permit issued under Part II of the *Aboriginal Land Act* as written consent for preliminary exploration and fossicking under the *Mineral Titles Act*. The land councils were clear that a permit issued for one specific purpose cannot simply be repurposed as a blanket consent for mining activities. That is not a technicality; it is the entire point of the consent process. It exists to protect Aboriginal landowners, and treating it as consent removes that protection.

The department's response to this concern through the scrutiny process was essentially to reassure us that the mechanism is appropriate. This seems to have been the answer to every concern raised. Territorians are told, 'Don't worry; trust everything will turn out okay in the end', but when it comes to protecting Territorians' rights, we deserve real legislation that we can rely on, not merely the department's word that things will turn out fine.

I am pleased to hear that the minister and the Member for Goyder talked to the fossickers, took on board their concerns and amended the Bill in response to those concerns. It is disappointing, however, that other concerns raised by many other constituents have not been considered in any amendments to the Bill.

From what the minister said, I understand that the length of the tourist fossicking licence time and the fee for that licence have been addressed. There are other serious questions to ask about fossicking. The Bill allows a lease holder to bring tourists onto land to fossick. Submitters asked what tourists will be told about their obligations and how breaches will be enforced.

The scrutiny committee recommended that the department publish guidance. I am not sure whether the minister has taken that on and will do it. We can find out about that soon. However, guidance is not law; you cannot enforce guidance. For activities that may occur on lands of great significance, guidance is not enough.

Three of the land councils raised concerns about the general lease provisions. The concept was described as problematic. There was a clear legal risk identified that converting a noncompliant existing interest to a general lease on Aboriginal land, without complying with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, could render that conversion invalid.

Once again the department's response was that there are no titles suitable for conversion on Aboriginal land, which may be the current administrative position, but it is not in the Bill. Nothing in the Bill prevents this minister or a future minister from attempting exactly that. The Bill should make clear that converting a noncompliant existing interest cannot result in the landholder gaining any activity or right that was not already provided for in the original interest.

It should also make clear, beyond doubt, that section 74 of the Act, the provision that triggers the right to negotiate under the *Native Title Act*, applies to those conversions. If the government believes what it says, that section 74 already applies, it should put that in writing, where it belongs.

Similarly, a general lease must not allow its holder to conduct any activity or hold any right beyond what was in the original noncompliant existing interest. If the law means what the government says it means, write it down, because that is our job in this Chamber—to make law as robust and clear as possible before it passes. That is what will give certainty to people who want to come and invest in the Territory.

I have been consistent throughout this process. My commitment is that legislation passed by this parliament must be clear, evidence based and not erode the rights of Territorians.

The Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce, which this Bill has been based on, recommended streamlining. Industry supported the Bill, and that is fine; industry has a legitimate voice. However, the land councils, whose constituents hold rights over significant areas of land specifically affected by these changes, raised detailed, serious and specific legal concerns about constitutional validity, ALRA compliance and native title. They are not peripheral objections; they go to whether the Bill will achieve what it sets out to do or create the legal uncertainty the government says that it wants to avoid. Making changes to this Bill to address these problems would be simple and would not prevent any of the goals of this legislation.

The government constantly accuses me of saying no to everything. I say to the government: why do you not lead by example? When people come to you with legitimate concerns and proposals to strengthen your legislation and improve and protect the rights of Territorians, why do you not put aside your partisan politics and work with us to make the Territory, the place we all love, better? All Territorians deserve legislation that is clear and evidence based and does not erode rights in the process of making things easier for big business.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, the Mineral Titles Legislation Amendment Bill is an enormously consequential Bill. It is great that we have ironed out some of the kinks in relation to fossicking to ensure that Territorians can still do something they love with minimal impediments.

What is astonishing is the odd scenario in this House at the moment. We have the government putting forward a significant important Bill, and the opposition has nothing coherent to say about it. Those opposite are not even speaking on it; they do not seem to want to have skin in the game or an opinion on whether to signal to the market that we want to back our mining industry. You have the one person in opposition who I agree with, saying that this is a consequential Bill. It is a good Bill, and I will support it; you may not, Member for Johnston. Nothing demonstrated the strawman opposition that we have in this parliament more than what we have just seen. This is unbelievable.

We are talking about something that constitutes 25% of our gross state product. This is huge. We are in the budget fortnight and nobody in the opposition has anything to say about mining or what we should be doing …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; the Member for Fong Lim claims that no-one from the opposition has spoken. The opposition has spoken to this legislation. That should be reflected in the record.

Madam SPEAKER: The opposition has spoken in this debate, but you can continue, Member for Fong Lim. There is no point of order.

Dr RAHMAN: I recognise that the Leader of the Opposition made a contribution. I am inclined to believe that no-one is making a further contribution, and that is the point I am trying to make. I find that rather astonishing. The contribution made by the Leader of the Opposition was incredibly perfunctory and indicative of a lack of coherence. Is it tepid support for the mining industry? Is it non-support for the mining industry?

By contrast, the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations made a clear statement of why we support this. We are trying to provide unequivocal unmistakeable signals to market that this is a place open for business when it comes to mining and mining exploration activity. I, personally, am behind that.

The Member for Johnston and others of the Zeitgeist might be surprised by that, because this is not my usual subject choice. You would not necessarily think that I would speak about minerals and mining, but that is off the mark. As somebody who has a background in economics, geography was the mainstay of what I did. The mainstay of what I did in my university degree on this was on mining in society.

Do you know why it was my core area of interest? Not just because of the subject matter being novel or interesting, but because I remember being at the University of Sydney and everyone there being taught about the Northern Territory because of mining. This is a mining powerhouse, and it always has been. Everything that has been built and developed here has happened as a consequence of us coherently supporting mining in a balanced way. Over the years there has been a contest between environmentalists and development, and somehow we have not mucked it up to this point.

I do not think we are mucking it up in doing any of this either. We are creating a framework to create opportunity in the Northern Territory again. Here is a hot tip: realise that mining and gas are still the biggest game in town. They are the most probable possibilities for generating revenue. We had discussions this week about the budget where nobody seemed to pay any attention to anything other than how to spend money. Meanwhile, this is part of the strategy for how to make money so that we have more money to spend on the things that matter to us all.

I find it astonishing that there has been such tepid support for and commentary on this Bill, given it is hugely consequential. I will not go through all the changes in it because, apparently, none of you care except for the government. The Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations already pointed out how much certainty we are providing by, for example, extending lease provisions for exploration.

The fossicking part is significant to a small number of people but also economically extremely small.

The big-ticket part of this is about mining exploration which constitutes, as I said, 25% of our economic activity, at least by GSP. That is not insignificant.

I could easily talk about the historic or positively anticipated numbers on mining forever and a day, but I will not because it is clear that there will be no resistance or commentary provided in relation to this. I am happy to just pass the Bill and get on with the job for the Territory. However, I will say a few basic things because it

is important to have them on the record for all the people who read these speeches, look for facts and figures and want to know why we are so gung-ho about supporting mining.

The numbers make it clear how important it is. The first set of numbers worth looking at is in the Industry Outlook, which I pointed out from the budget papers. It was not distributed with the packs we got the other day. Look at the Industry Outlook from pages 9 to 15—which takes a lot of time and effort to produce, I might add, as any of you have ever written these kinds of things and been public servants would know—which will explain to you just how big the economic footprint of mining is, what the growth sectors are and why we are excited about the fact that new goldmines are looking probable. There is significant activity in the gold space, and it is worth knowing. Know about why manganese is on the down slightly, but it has been a big part of what we did before. Know about why lithium is on the up again.

This is how we will make money in the Northern Territory to fund all the things you want. The Northern Territory's development history is almost entirely predicated on the backbone of mining when it comes to our own revenue—that is, actual revenue, not our maintenance money, pocket money, GST money, grants money or whatever you want to call it.

I do not understand how the opposition cares so little about this, but the fact is that NT royalties for minerals and petroleum constitute $300m-odd and will be up to close to $400m-odd by 2025–26. We have nine operating mines, and they have slowed down over the last few years. We are talking about the same nine mines. We have 20-odd mines that are in development, six of which are approaching final investment decision. We have to move that forward or we will just keep talking about how the same old X and Y may be approaching FID soon. They will not approach FID unless you provide greater investment and regulatory certainty and frameworks to entice people to mine in the Northern Territory.

The workforce statistics are staggering. We have 5,000-odd people who are full-time workers. In the latest ABS data there is almost $700m in wages and salaries for all of this. Mineral production value is $4.3bn. These are significant amounts of money. Overall, in sum we are talking about $8.37bn in contribution to GSP—that is almost 25% of all the economic activity that we generate. Look at the numbers: how can you not care about this?

I respect the crossbench members for at least saying that they have concerns and they do not support this. That is fine; at least you care. It is clear that you care and you have a position. You want greater consultation on these issues, and there is a legitimate point to be made there.

We seem to care only about things that are extremely small and insignificant and not care about the massive things that actually matter. It is mind-boggling.

We have mines operating for gold, zinc, manganese, bauxite, lithium, phosphate, and neodymium and praseodymium—the Arafura Nolans stuff. Learn something about that and why it matters.

The thing to basically understand is that exploration activity has slowed in the recent past. There is this narrative that suddenly we are digging holes in the ground at a rate of knots and exploration activity is going through the roof, but it is not; it is slowing down.

The minister has been unequivocal in his support for this, signalling to market loud and clear that we want minerals exploration, mining activity, exploration activity and to make money for the Territory because we want to create opportunity. We have a fighting chance of that happening.

You have to understand that exploration licence statistics are going backwards, not at a dramatic rate; they have not fallen off a cliff. If you want them to keep growing steadily and hopefully improve, and if you want to have the chance of somebody striking gold—hitting oil as it were—and finding a rich vein of a resource that we can extract at a great commercial pricepoint to make money for the Territory faster, you have to support exploration licences. That is why we created a regulatory framework for it. I will not go through the nuts and bolts of it, but that is what the Bill fundamentally does. That is the big-ticket stuff. It is unbelievable.

There are 62 applications for exploration licences in 2026 to date, 10 of which are on Aboriginal freehold land. There is a reasonable conversation to be had, Members for Mulka and Johnston, with other people to make sure that mining benefits everyone. That is fair enough. We have had those conversations in the Northern Territory since self-government, and so far it turns out that nothing catastrophic or cataclysmic has happened. There has always been a contest—sometimes it ends up in the courts—but the bottom line is that there has always been a balance here, and that will always happen.

There will be people who want to preserve things as they are without any mining or exploratory activity and people concerned about sacred sites, and all of this is fair game—it is fair enough—but do not make out like what we are doing over here will destroy all of that, because it will not. None of what I see here suggests that will happen. If you ask your mates over there in the Labor opposition, apparently nothing will happen. There is nothing to worry about and nothing to comment about; wave this Bill through.

The quantum of mining to the NTG historically has been higher; that is what you have to understand—$10bn-odd and 4,000 direct jobs. The sector supports hundreds of small businesses, and resources royalty is the revenue that we use to fund things and have built infrastructure with in the past. The 20-odd developing mining projects that are in various stages of approval, financing or the construction process represent another possible $6bn in proposed capex—that is a huge amount of capital expenditure—and a possible, let us say 3,000, to round it up, direct jobs in construction and production down the line. These things do not happen unless you provide market confidence for them to happen.

Everybody seems to agree—that is the only salient point the Leader of the Opposition made—that we have great natural resources in the ground. Great. They will be stuck there forever and a day unless a government like us does something to help get them out, because it has not happened for a long time. We have been trading on old legacy mines that historic governments gave approval for. In the last 10 years there was nothing but smoke and mirrors in that space and confusing signals to market. That is why a lot of that stuff has not come out of the ground as fast as it should have.

The extractive minerals industry is critical to ensuring sufficient supplies of sand, gravel and crushed rock to supply the construction industry and support future development. Again, maybe it is not sexy to talk about sand and gravel, but it is super important. In 2024–25 we produced 2.6 million tonnes of crushed rock, 170 tonnes of gravel and 310 tonnes of sand and gravel. The total of that was $67m.

Let us talk about $67m worth of sand and gravel. I will not say much more because this Bill will just be waved through; nobody who actually should seems to care. What I will say is that budget week's aims should be fourfold: to save; to stop; to spend; to make. To save money institutionally, to stop the wastage of money institutionally, to spend money sensibly and to make money as well. Here is a tip: this is the make money part of it.

If you want to participate in budget week, join us in the conversation about what we do to make money. Stop being so tepid in your support of this—at least with mining. With gas there are other concerns that people can have, but that is a separate conversation. This is a mining Bill.

Make no mistake: mining has been and will continue to be a critical component of the Northern Territory development story. I support the government's efforts to support mining and exploratory activity; to improve regulatory frameworks and administrative efficiency, like the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations so well articulated; and to create the preconditions for real sustainable investment and growth in the Northern Territory. As I keep saying, that is what will lead to opportunity for Territorians, for everyone's kids and grandkids, in housing, health, education and infrastructure.

This is not about good guys and bad guys. We have always had a robust development versus environment contest in the NT. To date, the checks and balances that we have embedded in the system have been enough to make sure we do not make major mistakes in resource exploration. I want us to continue to proceed in good faith, mindful of the significant benefits for the NT historically and, hopefully, going into the future.

On that note, I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy)(in reply): Madam Speaker, today we had a classic example of why it is so important to get the balance right. The Leader of the Opposition said that it is too slow, we are dragging the chain and we should have done this years ago. Then the Member for Mulka said that it is too quick and we are rushing it.

Today is a classic example of why getting that balance right in the middle is so important, as is doing the work and the consultation to get it right. Like the Member for Goyder said, we do that by talking to people, talking to the prospectors and making those amendments.

I am not sure if the Member for Johnston misled parliament on purpose; I do not think she would have misled the parliament …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; I would like you to make a ruling. Usually when you talk about a member misleading parliament you have to put it forward as a motion …

Madam SPEAKER: No; please take your seat. Member for Daly, he did not accuse the member; he said, 'I am not sure if the member meant to mislead parliament', so there is a slightly different emphasis.

Mr MALEY: She was talking about consultation with the land councils. For this discussion paper, the land councils were invited to briefings and worked out that they did not do a submission. They were invited again and given an extension of time to do their submission, and they did not. It is a matter for the Member for Johnston to check her facts …

J Davis: I am being misrepresented.

Mr MALEY: That is why I said I am not sure whether she misled parliament.

She then went on to talk about undermining investment and legal concerns …

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; that is a misrepresentation of what I said, minister. I said that the land councils talked about not being involved in any preliminary papers that were distributed in 2024 …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, you cannot stand up to clarify things. If you feel like you have been misrepresented, you can make a personal statement at some point or use other mechanisms …

J DAVIS: I feel like I have been misrepresented. I …

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your seat. If you feel aggrieved, you have other mechanisms you can use.

Mr MALEY: The Member for Johnston spoke about undermining investment and legal concerns, yet she did not give any examples. All these broad motherhood statements do is make people confused and cause division.

We are here, as the Member for Fong Lim spoke about, to make the Territory a better place. We were elected to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. This Bill goes to that clearly.

I send a clear message to the businesspeople of the Northern Territory and all Territorians, no matter where they live, that this government supports the mining industry, the jobs it makes and all the indirect jobs that support the mining industry because we know how important it is to rebuild the economy in the Territory.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 2:

Ms UIBO: When is the Bill expected to become operational?

Mr MALEY: Straight after the Administrator assents to the Bill.

Ms UIBO: Is there a timeframe for that?

Mr MALEY: It is expected to be in September.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 and 4, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 5:

Ms UIBO: What is considered to be a prescribed substance?

Mr MALEY: Uranium.

Ms UIBO: Is that the only substance?

Mr MALEY: Any substance under the *Atomic Energy Act*, which is uranium and the associated ones—there are a lot on the periodic table. That is what it is about.

Ms UIBO: Can you give an example of a noncompliant existing interest?

Mr MALEY: An authorised mineral holding under the Mining Ordinance.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 1 to clause 6 to omit 'exploration licences and extractive mineral exploration licences' and insert 'ELs and EMELs'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7:

Ms UIBO: How is 'mineral' currently defined, and how does this clause change the definition?

Mr MALEY: It simplifies it to a naturally occurring substance.

Ms UIBO: How do the new definitions of 'mineral' and 'extractive mineral' improve the social licence for the industry?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: How is the extraction of extractive minerals, as permitted under an extractive mineral permit, treated under the *Native Title Act 1993*, and what is the difference in definition between this Act and the Commonwealth Act?

Mr MALEY: The definition, as amended, reflects the *Native Title Act*. It complements it.

Ms UIBO: Is there no difference? Is the definition the same?

Mr MALEY: I said 'reflects' not 'exactly the same'.

Ms UIBO: Is it similar wording?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 2 to clause 9 to omit 'a mineral lease (ML),' and insert 'an ML,'.

This reflects how that is defined in the Act in other places.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 3 to clause 9 to omit 'a mineral exploration licence (EL)' and insert 'an EL'.

Again, that is to reflect how it is written in other parts of the legislation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 10:

Ms UIBO: Can the minister still reject a request for airborne notice?

Mr MALEY: The minister can put conditions on that notice.

Ms UIBO: Can they reject it?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Are landowners, or anyone with an interest in land, required to be notified prior to an airborne survey occurring?

Mr MALEY: Yes, for private land and Aboriginal land they will need consent.

Ms UIBO: Is there any other process for the survey to occur, like an extra or new process through this Bill?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: Is there a requirement to seek a permit, or will that be covered under a land use agreement?

Mr MALEY: The requirement to get a permit would be under the *Aboriginal Land Act*.

Ms UIBO: Is that through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993*?

Mr MALEY: The *Aboriginal Land Act 1978*.

Ms UIBO: The NT one.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11:

Ms UIBO: Does this clause change existing access or entry powers regarding exploration activities on land?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: How does this provision interact with landholder rights and the rights of traditional owners?

Mr MALEY: This clarifies that they need to get consent.

Ms UIBO: Do consent requirements for Aboriginal land remain unchanged under this amendment?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Is it not changed?

Mr MALEY: There are no changes.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards exist to ensure appropriate engagement prior to access occurring?

Mr MALEY: This could be a case-by-case example.

Ms UIBO: In a case-by-case example, there would be safeguards; is that correct?

Mr MALEY: It would be case by case, but they would need to get the permit first. Whatever conditions that permit contains would all work together.

Ms UIBO: The government's position is that the clause does not materially alter existing access or entry powers. Can you outline what practical issue this amendment is intended to address?

Mr MALEY: It clarifies the matter.

Ms UIBO: If existing rights and obligations remain unchanged, why was it considered necessary to legislate this provision, rather than retain the current framework?

Mr MALEY: It is to make it clearer.

Ms UIBO: Can you explain what deficiencies, ambiguities and operational problems in the current Act this clause is intended to resolve?

Mr MALEY: It just makes it clearer.

Ms UIBO: If consent requirements for Aboriginal land remain the same, what practical legal effect does this clause have?

Mr MALEY: It makes it clearer.

Ms UIBO: Is there no change to the legal effect?

Mr MALEY: There is no change.

Ms UIBO: Can you outline whether stakeholders requested this amendment? If so, what specific concern was identified with the current wording of the Act?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: If it is meant to clarify, there is obviously some type of confusion or misconception. What wording needed clarification to make it clearer?

Mr MALEY: It is to make it clearer. I have answered that question.

Ms UIBO: There was no specific concern, so it is just a change of words; is that correct?

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

Ms UIBO: If this clause is not intended to expand access powers, can you explain why stakeholders raised concerns about its potential interpretation?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

Ms UIBO: It is if you are changing the laws of the Northern Territory and there are potential interpretation concerns. It is intending to expand access powers, so is there a fault in the current Act that needs to be rectified?

Mr MALEY: It is not intending to change anything; it is to make it clearer. I have answered the question.

Ms UIBO: Does the government anticipate that this clause could alter how access provisions are interpreted administratively, even if the legal powers themselves are said to remain unchanged?

Mr MALEY: That is into the future, and it is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

Ms UIBO: The amendment confirms that written consent for preliminary exploration in relation to Aboriginal land relates to permits issued under Part II of the *Aboriginal Land Act 1978* and does not include consent for the purposes of section 41 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA). We are talking about access to land or access on land. Are there existing safeguards and engagement requirements that are already considered sufficient? What other certainties or benefits does this clause intend to provide?

Mr MALEY: I have already answered that question.

Ms UIBO: You have not said what the benefits are. Are there specific benefits that will come from this clause?

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

Ms UIBO: If there is no substantive change to the rights of landholders or traditional owners, what outcome is the government seeking to achieve through this amendment?

Mr MALEY: That is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: There is a whole clause. If the clause is not relevant, will you remove it from the Bill?

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question.

Ms UIBO: You just said that your own thing is not relevant, so why is it in there?

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, we are getting repetitive on the questioning. Can we move on.

Ms UIBO: Sitting down and not answering at all is not being repetitive; it is just being immature.

If there is no substantive change to the rights of landholders, what mechanisms can traditional owners or landholders access if they disagree with a decision?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: With respect, we are talking about consent, particularly regarding Aboriginal land. I do not see why that question is not relevant when we are talking about what mechanisms there are—if there is a complaint, procedure or process to go through—if someone believes that land has been accessed in a noncompliant way or in a way that does not respect the legal frameworks of those two different Acts I outlined, the *Native Title Act 1993* and the *Aboriginal Land Act* in the Northern Territory. It holds weight and relevance when this is a clause that talks about Aboriginal land, permits and consent.

Mr MALEY: I will answer the question. If someone enters Aboriginal land without a permit, that is a matter that the traditional owners take up with the police, I assume, because someone is accessing Aboriginal land without a permit.

Ms UIBO: That was not so hard, was it?

Has the government received legal or departmental advice suggesting that the current provisions were unclear, insufficiently robust or necessitated this amendment?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

Ms UIBO: Has legal advice been sought for this clause?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the operation of the clause.

Ms UIBO: Sometimes you say that the clause is not relevant because it is not talking about the operation. Today you are singing the tune that it is a clause that is only based on operation and, therefore, the question is not valid. Which is it? Which line of defence will you use? Is it relevant because it changes the laws of the Northern Territory? Will you answer the question, or do you not know the answer?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has said a number of times that it is not relevant to the operation of the clause. We will move on.

Ms UIBO: I am not talking about the operation of the clause; I am talking about the intent of the clause. If you are changing the laws of the Northern Territory, people want to know whether you sought legal advice about this clause impacting Aboriginal land. People want to know the answer. I am asking the question that people asked me to ask you.

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay, we need to move on.

Ms UIBO: I hope you sought legal advice. I would be extremely concerned if you have not.

Can you explain whether this clause is intended to respond to any particular dispute, interpretation issue or operational difficulty that has arisen under the existing Act?

Mr MALEY: No, it makes it clearer how it works.

Ms UIBO: If the clause merely reflects the status quo, can you outline how its inclusion improves the operational clarity of the legislation for stakeholders and its proponents?

Mr MALEY: It is not relevant to the clause.

Ms UIBO: Who does it make it clearer for?

Mr MALEY: I have answered the question 20 times.

Ms UIBO: No, you just said 'clarity'. With all due respect, I asked what clarity of the legislation is provided to stakeholders or proponents. If it has been misguided, murky or misunderstood, what clarity is being sought through this clause?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have to move on from this clause, Leader of the Opposition. I do not think we will get any further.

Ms UIBO: Does the minister not get a chance to respond, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr MALEY: I have responded to the same question. It has been repetitive. This is clearly an amendment to clarify the written consent requirement to enter Aboriginal land. If someone enters Aboriginal land without a permit that is not to do with this legislation; it is under different legislation. The land councils and traditional owners have procedures in place to prosecute people who enter Aboriginal land without a permit.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 14	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Ms Cahill	J Davis
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Edgington	Mr Smelt
Mrs Finocchiaro	Ms Uibo
Mr Howe	Mr Young
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Clause 11 agreed to.

Clause 12:

Ms UIBO: If an applicant provided deficient or incorrect information, in practice what would occur administratively? What steps would be taken prior to a decision being made on that application?

Mr MALEY: The department would go back and request the correct information.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clauses 13 and 14, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 15:

Ms UIBO: Can you clarify what constitutes a bulk sample for the purposes of this clause?

Mr MALEY: Proposed subsection (3) states that a bulk sample:

> *… means the excavation of a sample of minerals weighing an amount that falls within a range specified by the Minister as part of an authorisation under subsection (2).*

Ms UIBO: The explanatory statement notes that bulk sampling usually involves excavation of more than 1,000 tonnes of material. Is a formal threshold proposed under the Act, or through regulations to follow, or is this assessed on a case-by-case basis?

Mr MALEY: It is case by case.

Ms UIBO: We anticipated that; it is why we rearranged our questions, just for you.

Can you outline whether bulk sampling is defined primarily by weight, volume, operational impact or intended purpose?

Mr MALEY: Volume, by tonnage.

Ms UIBO: Has the government considered whether the definition of bulk sampling by tonnage could create situations where activities involving significant land disturbance fall outside of its intended framework?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: How does bulk sampling conducted under an exploration licence differ from any activities that would ordinarily require a mineral lease or a mining approval?

Mr MALEY: A bulk sample requires a mining approval.

Ms UIBO: Is that covered under a mining lease?

Mr MALEY: No.

Ms UIBO: What approvals, environmental assessments or work program requirements must be satisfied before a bulk sample can be taken?

Mr MALEY: An environmental (mining) licence.

Ms UIBO: Can you outline what rehabilitation or make-good obligations apply once a bulk sample has been extracted, including whether rehabilitation must occur immediately following any activity?

Mr MALEY: The environmental (mining) licence covers that.

Ms UIBO: During development of the Bill did stakeholders raise any concerns regarding the scale of disturbance or environmental impacts that may arise from bulk sampling activities conducted under the exploration licence?

Mr MALEY: No.

Clause 15 agreed to.

Clause 16, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 17:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 4 to clause 17 to omit the second reference to ‘of the’.

It is a typographical error in line 2.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 18, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 19:

Ms UIBO: Is constructing a pipeline for water required to undergo any assessment in regard to the passing of the Pipelines and Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill?

Mr MALEY: No.

Clause 19 agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 24, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 25:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 5 to clause 25 to omit the words 'granted to the title holder' in line 27 in proposed section 57(1)(b).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 25, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 26 and 27, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 28:

Ms UIBO: Can you outline what forms of public notice the government anticipates may be considered appropriate under this provision?

Mr MALEY: A newspaper or online on a government website, to try to open up the possibilities.

Ms UIBO: Is it the intent of this clause to move away from newspaper-only notices towards more digital and online publication methods?

Mr MALEY: The intention is to remain in the newspaper but broaden it.

Ms UIBO: What factors will be taken into account when determining whether a form of public notice is appropriate?

Mr MALEY: Under this section there is always a public notice. We are not changing that; we are just saying, 'circulating through the Northern Territory'. I do not want to talk about it not being relevant, but this is just trying to broaden it. It will be in the paper, but it can be other things as well. It is narrow at the moment, so we are trying to broaden it to make it easier to get the information online.

Ms UIBO: I will clarify my question. It was previously newspaper-only ads. Will there be a standard set that if it goes into the newspaper, as an example, it will go to all the online publication portals as well? Is that the intention?

Mr MALEY: Yes, that is the intention.

Ms UIBO: Are there minimum standards or prescribed methods for publication to ensure that notices are sufficiently accessible to affected communities and stakeholders, perhaps like geo-targeting information to organisations that are in the region?

Mr MALEY: We are trying to broaden it. We advertise in the Northern Territory and the *Courier Mail* as well. This will be online. We are trying to broaden the information going into the community.

Clause 28 agreed to.

Clauses 29 and 30, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 31:

J DAVIS: Can you provide a definition of 'minimal track'?

Mr MALEY: Yes, a blade-up track.

J DAVIS: This is a question on behalf of a constituent. What does 'blade-up track' mean?

Mr MALEY: It means pushing through with a blade.

Clause 31 agreed to.

Clauses 32 to 36, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 37:

Ms UIBO: Can you outline the rationale for requiring a request to vary expenditure conditions to be submitted within the first six months of a reporting period?

Mr MALEY: This is just to clarify the procedure that is already in the Act and already occurs.

Ms UIBO: What issue or operational difficulty under the current framework is this amendment intended to address?

Mr MALEY: We are no longer allowing retrospective applications.

Ms UIBO: Would that be just at the start of the gazettal of the amendment when it comes into effect?

Mr MALEY: Yes, when it comes into effect.

Ms UIBO: Was there evidence that late applications to vary expenditure conditions were creating uncertainty or administrative inefficiencies?

Mr MALEY: Yes, the volume was great.

Ms UIBO: Can you clarify why the government determined that six months was the appropriate timeframe and whether alternative timeframes were considered?

Mr MALEY: It was determined that six months was appropriate.

Ms UIBO: Will discretion be available in exceptional circumstances when a request is submitted outside of that six-month period?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Who would determine that discretionary power?

Mr MALEY: It would be a case-by-case application.

Ms UIBO: Would that be through the department or by ministerial discretion?

Mr MALEY: The department.

Ms UIBO: How will this provision apply in situations where unforeseen circumstances arise later in a reporting period, such as weather events, access issues or market disruptions?

Mr MALEY: In relation to the discretion we spoke about earlier, it will be assessed case by case.

Ms UIBO: Could it be for a range of issues, like I have outlined?

Mr MALEY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Were any concerns raised by industry stakeholders regarding the potential rigidity of the six-month timeframe?

Mr MALEY: Not that we are aware of. There is discretion, and it will be assessed case by case because we do not know what weather events, for example, may affect people.

Ms UIBO: Is this amendment intended primarily to improve regulatory certainty, compliance monitoring or administrative efficiency?

Mr MALEY: Something new—all of the above.

Clause 37 agreed to.

Clauses 38 to 46, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 47:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 6 to clause 47.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 7 to clause 47.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 8 to clause 47.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 9 to clause 47 to omit '12 months' and insert '5 years'.

This is what I spoke about earlier, the change from 12 months to five years for the fossicking permit.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 47, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 48 to 68, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 69:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 10 to clause 69 to omit '3' and insert '2' at proposed regulation 80(1), line 25.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 11 to clause 69 to omit 'if the proposed project area includes at least 3 title areas'.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 12 to clause 69 to omit '3' and insert '2'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 69, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 70 to 90, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 91:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 13 to clause 91.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 91, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 92 to 102, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 103:

Mr MALEY: I move amendment 14 to clause 103 to omit '(1)' and insert '(3)' in proposed section 131(1), line 4.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 103, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 104 to 112, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

PAPERS TABLED

Schedule of Government Responses to Committee Reports – May 2026

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Schedule of Government Responses to Committee Reports – May 2026.

Quarterly Members' Fuel Transaction Report Quarter 1 – January to March 2026

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Quarterly Members' Fuel Transaction Report Quarter 1, January to March 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I give a special shout-out to the Swampdogs Rugby Union Club 2026 Volunteer of the Year, Melanie Flynn. Mel is a fantastic asset to the Swampdogs and the rural area. Mel has served as the club's grants coordinator and worked tirelessly to apply for grants to help the rural kids get their fair share. She also is the 2026 under-15 boys team manager and an active and reliable committee member. She works to help clubs across the rural area apply for grants. Great clubs are built on volunteers like Mel. Thank you for all you do, and well done on being recognised by the mighty Swampdogs.

I recently attended a citizenship ceremony at Litchfield Council where we welcomed 13 brand-new citizens from eight countries. A proud moment celebrating the diversity that makes our community so strong, it was a particularly special occasion for one new Australian, 97-year-old Paul, originally from Zimbabwe now living in Litchfield with his family. Paul has become a citizen after nearly 11 years in the country, proving it is never too late to take this important step. Well done, Paul.

Recently Dick's Run took place in part of my electorate. It is an annual event in memory of Dick Grylls who passed away in 2018. Completing the triangle on motorbikes from Noonamah Tavern to Pine Creek and back up to the Bark Hut via Jabiru, hundreds of Territorians ride in memory of a great man and those motorcyclists who have fallen. In the last nine years they have raised more than $100,000 for a variety of NT charities. This year's funds will be donated to the Starfish Swim Group which helps disabled children learn to swim and build their skills. It is a fantastic group and well deserving. Well done to Digby and all the riders, supporters and sponsors who were involved.

Last Friday, 8 May, was Do It For Dolly Day, a day we wear blue to end bullying and raise awareness of the importance of sparking conversations with young people about the impacts of bullying while honouring the memory of Dolly Everett. Nutrien Ag Solutions is a big supporter of Dolly's dream of a world free of bullying. Each year it hosts a fundraiser to help achieve this dream. I congratulate the team at Humpty Doo Nutrien on another successful event. Their passion, care and dedication to this important cause is admirable. I thank the local businesses that donated prizes to support the team in fundraising. The Member for Nelson, Litchfield Councillor Kris Civitarese and I look forward to attending this event each year. I thank the Nutrien Ag Solutions team at Humpty Doo for making it all possible and raising a lot of money for Dolly.

My electorate is the home of the giant boxing croc, a renowned and beloved landmark in Humpty Doo. Last weekend it hosted, to the best of my knowledge, its first-ever marathon. Two friends travelling the country donned their crocs to run 42.2 kilometres—approximately 4,200 laps around the iconic landmark—to raise money for the Cancer Council. Mates Noah Milner and Jye Osborne from Victoria have been travelling around Australia and decided to give back to the community for all the help they received along the way. Why the two lads decided to run a marathon in crocs in a small circle around that croc, I may never know, but they took on the painful and dizzying challenge and successfully raised more than $8,000 for a great cause. It is an impressive effort. I believe they started at 4 am and were still going at 10.30 when I walked past. Good luck with the rest of your travels and well done, lads. You are welcome back in the Territory any time.

I congratulate 2026 CAA Women in Ambulance Award winner, Jessica Jeggo. Jessica was recognised on International Women's Day for her valued contribution in her capacity as a paramedic. Rural resident Jessica was celebrated for her impact and contribution to her community through her leadership, skills and commitment. Well done, Jessica.

I shout out to my former employer, Humpty Doo Barramundi, which has beaten producers across Australia to be named Australia's Best Responsible Producer at the 2026 Aquaculture Stewardship Council's Sustainable Seafood Awards. Humpty Doo Barramundi was recognised for its pioneering wetland aquaculture system and partnerships with First Nations communities. Judges praised Humpty Doo Barramundi's innovative wetland recirculating aquaculture system and strong community engagement. Established in 1993, it is terrific to see this family-run and owned business top the nation. Well done.

It was great to see so many Goyder and rural residents feature in the list of finalists for the 2026 NT News Woman of the Year Awards.

Congratulations to all the winners, especially the rural superstar that is Kylie Straube, who was the Health Hero winner. When the local clinic in Berry Springs closed, nurse practitioner Kylie sold everything and started Australia's first standalone nurse practitioner clinic in 2024. Since then, the clinical director and co-founder of the innovative Remote Territory Healthcare and mum has juggled a full patient load while mentoring junior clinicians, creating real career pathways for nurses and pushing for better rural health equity. Serving roughly 7,500 residents across five rural communities, Kylie is ensuring her community has not been left without access to primary healthcare. The innovative nurse practitioner has been awarded the 2023 Nurse of the Year Award by the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association and was named joint winner of Mental Health Nurse of the Year in 2025 for her efforts. Well done, Kylie.

Congratulations to the rural legends who were also finalists. They include Jenny Davis, a resident of Humpty Doo who is a professor in freshwater ecology at Charles Darwin University and a lifelong research scientist. She has been an inspiring role model for her students and colleagues. Jenny is researching groundwater in the Territory. She is admired for her ability to work closely with Western science and traditional landowners, and has published more than 200 works and received the 2006 Australian Society for Limnology Medal.

I shout out to Anna Wensing who, after moving to Darwin with a backpack and a bit of hope as an 18-year-old, transferred her knowledge in fixing farm equipment to become a light vehicle mechanic apprentice at Bridge Toyota. Since then, the 25-year-old has been recognised for her innovation, efficiency and leadership through several awards. In her downtime Anna uses her mechanical skills to support the Acacia Hills Volunteer Bushfire Brigade. Well done.

I shout out to Tracey Leo. With more than 30 years in horticulture improving work conditions, Tracey transitioned to rural advocacy as Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Thamarrurr Development Corporation. She is now dedicated to empowering women in communities like Wadeye. Her mission focuses on driving systematic change by addressing critical challenges in health, education and safety, ensuring local women have the resources and support they need to thrive. Tracey is a fantastic person. She was my boss a long time ago. I know she has been instrumental in getting aquaculture set up at Wadeye. Well done, Tracey; it is about time you got some recognition.

I shout out to Tarun Richards, who is a cornerstone of the Northern Territory aquaculture scene. As co-owner and head of business services at Humpty Doo Barramundi she helped build Australia's largest independent farm. Currently an ANZ and FRDC scholar, she advocates for environmental stewardship and rural development, focused on providing regional communities with the vital resources and leadership needed to sustainably grow their primary industries.

I shout to the former President of Southern Districts Football Club, Mr Kevin Mulvahil, who will be stepping down from the presidency after many years. Kevin has been a tireless advocate for the Crocs and will leave

a lasting legacy, including the lighting installation at Norbuilt Oval. Kevin will be thought of every time players run onto to the Crocs' home ground under lights. His tireless commitment to the red, white and black—the players, volunteers, members and wider Crocs community—will long be remembered. I enjoyed working with Kevin during his time as president. His passion was always evident with the best outcomes for the Crocs and AFL his number one goal. Thank you, Kevin, for the countless hours you invested in the great club.

The Northern Territory budget is out, and everyone will be going through that, but this is also the time local governments start delivering budgets. One council that I know is close to your heart, Madam Speaker, is Alice Springs. I seek leave to table a page from the Alice Springs Town Council budget, which is my favourite page.

Leave granted.

Mr MACKAY: I encourage all Territorians to read their local council's budget to see what is in their community and what has been happening. At the end of the day, local government is the closest to Territorians' hearts. It is important to know what your councils are spending your money on.

Well done to all the councils on producing their budgets, and I look forward to hearing their feedback.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I honour the life of Victor Samuel Ludwig OAM—Vic, as he was known to all who met him—and I do so as someone who had the great privilege of knowing Vic personally. He was a man deeply loved and widely respected whose impact on the Northern Territory will never be forgotten. Vic was not just part of the football community; he was part of the fabric of the Territory itself.

Vic's story is one many Territorians admire, beginning in the humblest of ways. He was born on 10 October 1928 on the back of a horse-drawn cart on the way to Bundaberg Hospital, a beginning that speaks volumes about the resilience that defined his life. He rarely spoke of hardship. He never complained. He simply believed that life had to be lived and worked hard and got it done.

He grew up in tough times, moving across Queensland with his family in search of work. As a young boy, he worked on dairy farms, feeding pigs and even fishing for eels to help put food on the table. At just 15 he began working at the Mount Isa mine. In 1948, after saving enough to buy a motorbike, he made the journey to Darwin—a decision that would shape not only his life but also the lives of many others.

In Darwin, Vic helped build the Territory, quite literally, working on roads across the regions from survey to construction and maintenance. Later, through his work with Ready Mix Concrete, he played a role in building Darwin, both before and after Cyclone Tracy, quietly contributing to the growth of this place we call home.

Beyond his work, Vic was a family man. He and Sadie built a life grounded in love, loyalty and community. He was immensely proud of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and was always there to celebrate their achievements and support them through life's challenges.

For more than 60 years St Mary's Football Club was at the centre of Vic's world, not just as president but also as a mentor, supporter and constant presence. For 42 years, an extraordinary Australian record, Vic guided the club as president, helping shape what it is today—one of the most successful and respected clubs in the country. Under his leadership, St Mary's built a legacy of loyalty and pride, securing 18 premierships and 15 reserve grade flags, with Vic witnessing all 34 since the club's debut in 1952.

What always stood out to me and to so many others who knew him is that it was not just success on the field that defined him, but the culture he had built. Together with his beloved wife, Sadie, Vic created a club where people felt welcome, loyalty mattered and everyone was expected to give their best. Vic had high standards and was always direct, but beneath that was a deep care for people and a genuine belief in their potential. He wanted everyone to succeed.

Even in his later years Vic never drifted away from the game or the club he loved. At 97 he was still there on the sidelines, watching closely, cheering quietly and taking it all in. Vic was there at the grand final the last time I saw him. He was in a wheelchair, but he was still there. I wish St Mary's could have taken it out, for him, that night.

His contribution to football was extraordinary and highly recognised. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, became a life member of both St Mary's and AFL NT and was an inaugural inductee into the

Northern Territory Hall of Fame. Fittingly, the club also honoured him by naming its seniors best and fairest award after him.

I had the privilege of knowing Vic for more than a decade, and I will always cherish the memories we shared. He had a big warm smile, an even bigger laugh and a true heart of green and gold.

What a lot of people do not know about Vic is that he was CLP to the core. That is how I had the chance to know Vic, through his support for our local Palmerston branch. He was always a huge supporter to me. He would come to all my barbecues and activities and be there on election day for me. I thank him so much for his tireless support over all those years. I will truly miss him, and so will the Calder Branch and the broader party.

To Vic's family, St Mary's Football Club and all who knew and loved him, I extend my deepest condolences. His funeral service was beautiful and a fitting tribute to someone who deserved a wonderful send-off. We thank him for everything he gave.

We will miss you, Vic.

I acknowledge the remarkable life and contribution of Dame Jocelyn Cull Finch and place on the record this Assembly's deep respect for a life defined by service, integrity and quiet distinction.

It is with profound sadness that we note her unexpected passing. I was shocked when I saw on Facebook that Jocelyn had passed away.

Dame Jocelyn was a deeply respected member of the Darwin community whose contribution to public life and education and service to others leaves a lasting and meaningful legacy. Dame Jocelyn's commitment to St Vincent de Paul Society was significant and enduring. She held senior leadership roles within St Vincent de Paul, serving first as President of the St Mary's Vinnies Conference and later as President of the St Vincent de Paul Society for half a decade. In both capacities she brought a deep sense of purpose, compassion and practical leadership to the organisation's mission.

Through her leadership, St Vincent de Paul strengthened its work in emergency relief, ensuring that individuals and families experiencing hardship could access essential support with dignity and respect. She was a strong advocate for improved housing outcomes and worked tirelessly to expand services that responded to the real and pressing needs of Territorians.

Her commitment extended well beyond leadership and administration. Dame Jocelyn was also a cherished member of the Order of Malta. Although invested as a Dame only last year, her involvement spanned many years. She gave generously of her time through the order's homeless food service and through missions to Daly River and Emu Point. In these efforts she demonstrated a quiet steadfast commitment to those most in need and did it not for recognition, but from a deeply held sense of responsibility to others. Her life reflected a spirit of selflessness and faith in all that she did, and she offered a gentle and constant example of humility, care and generosity.

In the field of education, Dame Jocelyn made a significant contribution through her service on the board of The Essington School from 2023. She joined at an important time in the school's development and brought with her a wealth of experience in governance, including her standing as a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Notwithstanding her many achievements, her greatest devotion was to her family. She was a devoted wife to Graeme and a loving mother to their four children, James, Aiden, Eliza and Jacob, in whom she took immense pride.

Dame Jocelyn Cull will be remembered for her warmth, integrity and unwavering commitment to others. Her legacy will continue to shape the organisations and communities she served for so many years. Her example will remain an inspiration to all who will follow in her path.

I had the privilege of knowing Jocelyn for a number of years through her work with St Vincent de Paul. She was always an incredibly energetic, bubbly, focused and determined woman. I admired her greatly, and I enjoyed the opportunities we spent together working on policy and other issues relating to the Northern Territory.

On behalf of this Assembly, I extend our sincerest condolences to her husband, Graeme, her children and all who knew and loved her. She has left us far too soon. Her death has come as a terrible shock to everyone, not least of which her loving family, who are undoubtedly in a state of shock and disbelief.

May she rest in peace.

I recognise an exceptional young woman from Darwin who is making history on the national sporting stage. Tasya Jonker is the first Territorian to compete at the Australian ice skating national championships. Darwin born and bred, Tasya competed in the adult women's silver class 1 division at the national championships held in Brisbane in March. She managed to achieve a top 10 finish at the nationals, a wonderful result for a local athlete competing in a sport that is not usually associated with the Northern Territory's tropical climate.

Tasya's fascination with ice skating began at the age of three when visiting family in the Netherlands. She wasted no time since then in getting back on the ice and following what has become a lifelong passion.

At first glance, Darwin might not seem the place to start your ice skating career. Tasya's achievements at the national championships is a credit not only to her skill and determination but also to the Territory's small and dedicated skating community. The opening of Darwin Ice Skating Centre in 2017 allowed Tasya to train closer to home in a supportive skating community.

She had success at the Bucharest International Virtual Competition in 2021 where she placed first in the technical bronze class, beating skaters from Sweden and Romania. Tasya followed up this victory at the 2022 Darwin In-House Figure Skating Competition where she won the judges' award for best performance. More medals followed in 2024 at the Winter Sun Figure Skating Competition, where she won the adult women's bronze division. She followed that up with the silver medal in the adult women's silver division at Winter Sun in 2025.

Tasya has confessed in media interviews that looking back, she probably would have chosen an easier path than taking up figure skating in Darwin. We are incredibly proud of her, and she continues to do the Territory proud. She has backed herself and she is ambitious and determined. She is succeeding despite our weather. It is an absolute credit to her, her family and all who support her.

On behalf of the Northern Territory Government, I congratulate Tasya on this outstanding achievement, and wish her every success as she represents the Northern Territory on the national stage.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I add a contribution to the condolence motion from yesterday for Trish Crossin, on behalf of Maria Alice Casimiro Branco from the Darwin East Timorese community. Maria wrote:

'Today I rise to honour the life and legacy of Trish Crossin, a woman whose compassion, courage and firm commitment to justice touched the lives of so many across borders, seas and communities.

'Trish was not only a senator; she was a humanitarian, an advocate and a true friend to those whose voices were often unheard. Her principles transcended politics; they reached people in moments of hardship, displacement, struggle and hope.

'After arriving in Australia as a refugee from war-torn East Timor, during one of the most difficult periods in my life and in the life my young family, I had the privilege of crossing paths with Trish and her husband, Mark Crossin. Their kindness, humanity and support left a lasting mark on my life.

'I also had the honour of serving as a committee member of the Darwin women's centre, when it was established under Trish's careful guidance. During those years, I was actively involved with the Miscellaneous Workers' Union—now the United Workers Union—where Trish stood firmly alongside working people in their struggles for fairness and dignity.

'As I pursued my career in early childhood education and care, we embarked on a campaign advocating for professional recognition and better working conditions for educators. Trish was always there supporting our struggle. Her office door was always open for discussions, petitions and advocacy. During the many trips I made to Canberra for our campaign, Trish ensured that other senators and parliamentary officers looked after who she effectively called "my NT campaign delegate".

'Her work and compassion extended far beyond Australia's shores. Following East Timor's independence, Trish travelled to Dili and helped establish an East Timorese women's working centre to support women who

had endured violence, exploitation and the horrors of 24 years of occupation. Through that work she helped women stand again with dignity, courage and hope.

'I remain deeply honoured to have worked alongside Trish, Mark and the then NT Trades and Labour Council, whose solidarity and humanity support not only East Timorese refugees in the Northern Territory but also vulnerable women rebuilding their lives in East Timor.

'Trish's contribution crossing borders, seas and lands will never be forgotten. Her legacy lives on in the many lives she uplifted, defended and inspired.

'To Mark, Trish's children and her extended family, I extend my deepest condolences for this immense loss. May you find comfort in knowing that her life made a profound difference to so many people around the world.

'Vale, Trish Crossin.'

That was from Maria Alice Casimiro Branco.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, tonight is exciting. I announce to the Chamber—no-one in my team knows this is coming—that the first lady of Drysdale, Mrs Alice Howe, is with child. I am very excited. I found out while we were sitting today. We are having a boy. I messaged my father and said, 'The name will live on, Dad', which he thought was quite funny. We are excited. I spoke last year when some of the issues with maternity first arose, and I said that we were trying even then. It will be a great year.

The important thing, and the message I want to send to all the women throughout my electorate, Palmerston and the Top End is: it has been a trying time with the maternity services. We are in that boat with you. We will go through the system with you. I will go to as many appointments as I can. Obviously, I missed today. Rest assured that I will fight as hard as I can. I will push for our federal counterparts to provide the funding for the hospital that the minister has asked for. We will be on this journey with you. If you are a pregnant woman anywhere in the Top End, facing this same situation, know that my wife and I are with you throughout the entire journey. I will do everything I can to ensure the best outcomes for you, your baby and your future family.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I extend my sincere congratulations to the Member for Drysdale; his wife, Alice; and the girls. It will be exciting. What a way to announce it. You might have missed the appointment, but now the whole world will know. Member for Drysdale, please make sure you make sure you look after Alice at this time and with the demands of your job as well. It is exciting news. I am excited for your family; that is wonderful.

Mr Paech: I hope that is the front page tomorrow.

Ms UIBO: I think the Member for Gwoja is really pushing for a Chansey junior.

Mr Howe: He will be a conservative.

Ms UIBO: Maybe when he is naughty you can say, 'Good on, Chansey'. It is great news.

I had the pleasure of having a work experience student in my parliamentary office this week. Every year the Arnhem Land Progress Association runs multiple work experience programs for Years 10, 11 and 12 students across the ALPA region. For the last four years I have offered a placement in the parliamentary office. I am always trying to push someone from my electorate to be placed here. They see me out in the community and then they get to see the work I do here in parliament. It is usually for about four days.

This week my office has hosted Kiki Garrawurra who is from Elcho Island in the Member for Mulka's electorate. She is from Galiwinku and is a Year 10 student. She has come and watched us every day in parliament this week, and her eyes light up and she has a huge smile. She is just in awe of this place, and she thinks that one day she would like to be sitting in the Chamber too. That is pretty exciting. We have not turned her off—would you believe—with all the hoo-ha in Question Time. I firmly believe in paying things forward. I had the experience as a student in Youth Parliament of being in this Chamber, and now I get to do it for real. Maybe one day Kiki will have that opportunity as well.

She was so proud. I asked her what her family thought about her being here in Darwin working in parliament for the week. She said that she spoke to her mum who said that she was really proud of her. It is pretty special to have that opportunity, and I think it is on all of us to provide it for the young people to follow in our footsteps. We will not be here forever. We are all caretakers in our roles and positions. Those of us in political

parties are caretaking in our roles and responsibilities to our parties. If we can pay it forward, it is great. It is a wonderful opportunity. If anyone is interested in hosting a work experience student, particularly for the great programs that happen, like what the ALPA team do year-in and year-out, I would highly recommend it.

One of the staff is moving on soon, but he has been with ALPA for quite a few years—that is, Eddy Alder. He is a phenomenal person, a great worker and a real supporter for growing and strengthening the staff, the team and all the workers across ALPA organisations. I am not sure where Eddy is going, but I will send him a message tomorrow. I believe it is his last day. I give a big shout-out to Eddy who has been our connector for the last couple of years. Wherever he ends up going, they will be lucky to have him. Thank you, Eddy, from me and my team for the great work you have done in the organisation for the last few years.

I also give a big thanks to my adviser Rachael Chisholm who has been supervising Kiki throughout the week, giving her tasks and duties.

We cannot be what we cannot see, so it is important to see parliament from all angles and from member and staff perspectives. We have been talking to Kiki about the different types of jobs and opportunities for everyone who works in this place through the cafe, hospitality, security, cleaning, admin, finance—all the people back of house.

I place on the record that Kiki Garrawurra from Galiwinku is a Year 10 student from Shepherdson College. Kiki is part of ALPA's Work Experience Program, which gives East Arnhem Land students a chance to step out of the classroom and into real-world industries. Students from Ramingining, Galiwinku and Gapuwiyak join the program, spending the week with various organisations across Darwin.

Kiki drafted a speech that she would like me to read out in the parliament. These are her words, not my words. Some of it is quite heavy; it is about community dysfunction, but I appreciate that Kiki, even in Year 10, is brave and honest to share thoughts about her community and what she would like to see, in a constructive way, particularly to support young people in her community. These are Kiki's words:

I want all the ministers to answer Selena's question, not just move on to next question. She stands for all Aboriginal people; she stands for all communities, that all ministers need to do. Like helping communities and helping the people that are in need. Because there are lots of bad things happening in every community. The community would welcome a collaborative effort from all portfolio holders to address this challenge.

I want Selena to tell other ministers what's been happening in my community. Like there's been bad things happening. People fighting and lots of breaking in and our leaders aren't responsible to step up. And be a leader to all the young generation and help them.

I want Selena to tell other ministers to help the young generation in activities like (going out on hunting or sending them to an outstation) and not just sending them straight to jail, even if they done bad things. So, they feel safe and not just feel scared.

Kids been breaking into houses and all the departments in Elcho Island, not for fun they are hungry, some parents are not feeding because the parents are wasting money in bad things like (drugs and online gambles), so the kids have nothing to eat nor house to sleep.

There are fights happening at Elcho Island, over small things and it's getting out of hand, like murdering and stabbing each other (which is not good). So, I'm very sad for my community and my people, because I don't want to see that in our community.

We need to look after our environment and look after our elderly family because they are the reason we live today. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't have been here right now. I would be so pleased if all the ministers do something to help our communities.

The leaders of Elcho Island (Galiwinku) are not giving discipline to the young kids. They just let them go to jail at the early age (which is very sad). Long time ago Elcho Island was a very beautiful place where all the people loved and looked out for each other, and they were looking after our community. But now it's all gone, all the young generation are just very different.

There was a leader who really stood up for everyone in our community back then, and that was my grandfather (Mr Jeffery Garrawurra), he would collect kids that were doing bad things to our

community, and he would take them to hunting or he would make them do clean up at outstations. That's what he would do. For their action and not just send them straight to jail.

Now that's different because of the government law and police law, the kids are forced to go to jail even if (they did the bad thing).

At the end they are just normal kids, growing up in an ordinary life and community.

I want all the ministers to provide an activity for all the kids in the community, so the activities can keep them busy.

Sometimes Rec Hall provides them a basketball or football to play so they can pick some of the kids to go other community to represent Shepherdson College, in sports and everything.

School needs more support, because the teachers and principal need money to help the kids get more education and to be able to pay for trips and more fun stuff.

- *Sports*
- *Hunting*
- *Fishing*
- *Activities*
- *Trips (excursion)*
- *Camping*
- *Learning on country*

These are the fun stuff to do in Elcho Island, make all the kids busy so they don't do break-in late at night.

I end Kiki's letter there. Unfortunately, she did not get to finish that last bit because the ALPA bus came to pick her up. There was a little, but she has been working hard for the last few days.

I give a big congratulations to Kiki for the work she has done, being so honest and constructive in her thoughts about her community and thinking of ways to make her community stronger, especially regarding local decision-making, leadership, working on keeping young people supported and thinking of alternative ways to keep kids out of the justice system. As a snapshot, the words of 15-year-old Kiki sums it up well. It has been an honour to host Kiki. Maybe we will see her one day represent one of the electorates. That would be fantastic.

It fills me with pride to see more young people interested in politics, particularly from remote communities. Anyone who knows where Elcho Island is and has been there knows that it is not the easiest place to get to. It is a beautiful part of the Northern Territory, but not without its challenges. Through Kiki's eyes we see different ways to be constructive with solutions to make her community even better, stronger, healthier and smarter.

Well done, Kiki. I look forward to seeing you on your last day tomorrow. Thanks for choosing us.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, first of all, congratulations go to the Member for Drysdale. Obviously, he has been paying attention to CID because he is producing children on a case-by-case basis. I give him full credit for that. All the best to Alice and the whole family.

As you know, I am proud of my newsletter that I hand-deliver. There are competitions in the newsletter. One is the puzzle page, which is popular with a lot of people. I tell people that I just want them to try it—they do not even have to complete it—because I think it is good for stimulating minds and getting your thoughts together, sitting down having a coffee at the Karama shops or anywhere and just doing it. I tell people that if they want to submit their attempts, it will go in for a draw. I had well over 50 entries come in. I congratulate Stephen Bentink who won it. He got a $100 Woolies voucher. He is pleased. Stephen is a little down on his luck, but he thought it was magnificent luck that he won this. He is a well-deserved winner.

Another part of the newsletter is the Anzac Day colouring page. I had lots of entries in beautiful styles. I awarded three winners. I try to judge them through the various age groups—the really young ones, the middle ones and the slightly older ones. You can often tell by the quality of it, but I like the really young ones because they come up with expressive things. Congratulations to Jackson, Denise and young Emily. Each of them got a $25 book voucher, which is fantastic.

We also ran a Mother's Day competition where you had to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar. The prize was a $100 voucher at Lyndall's Haircare and Treatment at Karama Shopping Plaza, plus you got to keep the jar of jellybeans. The winner was Michael Magriplis, who won it for his mother. He guessed 486. The number was 472. The range of guesses went from 70 to well over 600; some people's eyes need a bit of help, I think.

Congratulations to all those who entered. I will definitely be doing similar competitions going forward.

I have an update on my initiative of a free loan of a lawnmower. I may have relayed to you that the first person to take it up was Dwayne at Karama. He was saving up for a mower, but he wanted to tidy up his yard. I dropped it off to Dwayne in the morning and went back to pick it up three hours later. He had looked after the mower perfectly; he had done a great job and cleaned up the mower. I asked him whether I could take a photo of him to promote the service, and he was happy for me to do that and I put it out there. Later that afternoon Charlie from Karama came to me and asked, 'Can you connect me with Dwayne? I have a surplus mower that I would like to give him.' I did, and that afternoon Charlie gave Dwayne a four-stroke Honda mower. Isn't that great? This is where the community comes together and shares it around.

Today I dropped the mower off at 7 am to Kelly in Malak. She was getting her brothers over because they are leaving tomorrow and she wants them to mow the whole place. Her mower had failed. I dropped it over and, from what I understand, she has done a great job. She was a bit worried; she did not want to leave it unattended—I need it tomorrow because I have to drop it off to another constituent in Karama at 8 am—so Kelly dropped it back at my electorate office.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and everyone else who recognised Consul John Rivas and his wife, Edna, last night. It was fabulous. I thank everyone for their contributions. John really appreciated it. The Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Minister, the Member for Wanguri and others spoke. He is 80-odd years old. I had the pleasure of going overseas with him numerous times. Thank you to the whole Assembly; it was a fantastic thing to do.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, tomorrow is National Corrections Day, so I take a moment to acknowledge the important work carried out by Corrections officers, Community Corrections staff, the Elders Visiting Program and all those who work across our Corrections system in the Northern Territory.

Corrections staff do an incredibly difficult job, often in challenging environments and under enormous pressure. They work day and night to help keep our community safe, while also supporting rehabilitation, behavioural change and reintegration back into our community. Too often, people only see one side of the Corrections system. There are many dedicated Territorians working hard every day to support people in turning around their lives, reconnecting with family, addressing addiction, improving education and building pathways away from offending. Whether it is the officers working inside our Corrections facilities, probation and parole officers in community, program facilitators, health workers, administration staff or support services, every one of them plays an important role.

I acknowledge the enormous emotional toll this can take. Corrections staff regularly deal with trauma, violence, mental health issues and complex social challenges. It is important that we continue to support the wellbeing of staff and ensure they have safe workplaces, proper training and the resources they need to do their job effectively.

I thank all the Corrections staff across the Northern Territory for the work they do. It is often without recognition, in difficult circumstances and in the service of our community. On behalf of Central Australia, I give a huge shout-out to the staff at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and the Barkly Work Camp, who have done an amazing job at supporting our local community. Thank you for your commitment, professionalism and care.

I acknowledge how amazing Alice Springs is. It is a great place. I love it. I was born there, and I will die there. My family, friends, community and strength are all there. Whilst we have had heartbreaking news out of Central Australia recently, I acknowledge some amazing people and organisations, including the Central Land Council; Tangentyere Council; Northern Territory Police and the Emergency Services staff;

Purple House; Congress; community services and all the local businesses from Alice Springs. I also acknowledge people in our local community who came out in droves for the search operation in Alice Springs. We had people come from Darwin, Tennant Creek and Katherine to help in that search effort for Kumanjayi Little Baby. As devastating and heartbreaking as that news has been and continues to be for so many in our community, it has shone a light on how amazing the place is that we call home.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for all your hard work, commitment and love for the community. I thank the Member for Braitling who was out on the search, doing what he does, supporting the local community. I know the Member for Barkly was also there supporting the family. I thought it was important to acknowledge that. The Member for Daly also came to support the search efforts.

That is what makes Alice Springs. For all the bad headlines that we have attracted and continue to attract, we are a great place. We are a place that when something goes wrong, that community comes out. I saw people volunteering their time who I never in my wildest dreams would have thought I would see out there actively working for the community, with businesses volunteering thousands of dollars and their time for those efforts.

I say to Alice Springs that I love you, and I am so proud to call you home. It is a hard time for all of us; we are still grieving Kumanjayi Little Baby. In respect for our family, we have to let her rest. Loving her is easy, and we will do it every day; missing her is a heartache that will never go away. What will remain with us is the strength of our community and compassion.

In Alice Springs, within hours of that devastating news, the community came together. There were hundreds of donations of finances and food for the sorry camp and wishes. The community came together for a vigil, with 2,000 people showing strength, love and compassion.

I thank every member of this parliament for turning out to the front steps here for the vigil last Thursday to show your commitment, passion and sign of strength to the family.

It is important in times of need that we come together and support one another. I am so thankful that people are continuing to do that.

To everyone across the country who has made donations through SNAICC, which has helped to collect those donations, thank you. For everyone who held a vigil across the country, thank you so much. To all my family across Central Australia, particularly in Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Kalkarindji, I am with you. I am there to support you. I love you all. We will continue to support one another through this difficult time.

I thought it was important, before sittings finished, to say to Central Australia how proud I am to call you home. The love I have for the Territory is amazing. We are the greatest place in Australia. We have our challenges, but we are unique, bold, beautiful and compassionate.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, in the second half of this year this Assembly will make a decision on one of the most consequential things—certainly in the opinion of many people in the community—in this term of parliament, the matter of voluntary assisted dying. The issue is not resolved yet, and it is definitely something we should all be slowly turning our minds to. I turn my mind to it regularly.

I field a range of queries on a regular basis about voluntary assisted dying. As much as I know about the issue, I am still not entirely across all the details. I think all of us in this House will be asked more and more questions about voluntary assisted dying and what it should and could look like for the Northern Territory.

With that in mind, from 8 to 10 April I attended the ICEL5 conference in Brisbane, the 5th International Conference on Assisted Dying and Other End of Life Care, hosted by the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at Queensland University of Technology. I went because it was an opportunity to learn how VAD works across Australia in practice, not from politicians and not even necessarily from policymakers and academics, but real-world practitioners—nurse practitioners, speech pathologists, doctors and clinicians—the people who are doing the real work and have real insight that humbles you when you hear how it works in the real world. It was my great privilege to be there.

I thank the people from the Queensland University of Technology Australian Centre for Health Law Research who facilitated the program, including Professor Ben White, Professor Lindy Willmott, Dr Eliana Close, Dr Katrine Del Villar, Dr Rachel Feeney, Dr Madeleine Archer and Katherine Waller. I am, no doubt, forgetting many others. I thank you for putting on such an excellent event.

It was an opportunity to learn about some of the things we will be asked about and which sometimes a lot of us do not have the answers to.

Soon after coming back from that event, the Member for Fannie Bay, the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Johnston and I attended the seminar run by COTA (Council on the Ageing) where Peter Warren, Executive Director of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies, gave a lecture. There were many questions from the audience, from seniors in COTA. They were all reasonable questions, but it indicated—I mean this politely—just how little people know about the nuts and bolts of a lot of stuff to do with VAD. We will be bombarded with these questions, so I encourage everyone in this House to try to get across the issues.

I will have more conversations about VAD and will work with COTA and similar organisations to put on information sessions to answer questions as best we can. Even though we are not subject matter experts on VAD, being in this Chamber we are the decision-makers on VAD. If there are things that you do not know about, try to learn about them. I will share whatever knowledge I have in a bipartisan fashion, noting that this is a decision we will all make as individuals in this parliament.

In a similar vein, on 14 April, immediately after I came back from that conference, I had the opportunity to talk to the Darwin Probus group. Its members invited me specifically because they wanted to hear about where things were at with VAD and what I could tell them. We went past all the usual stuff, the history of what happened in the Northern Territory, to talk about some of the nuts and bolts. Lots of basic questions were answered for people who still felt like they do not know how things will go forward. There were questions about legal oversight; the role of review boards, courts and whatnot; what happens in residential facilities, which is of real concern to a lot our seniors; and even things like administration methods. It is tough to talk about this stuff.

I was in a session when I asked about statistics regarding administration stuff and everyone in the room pounced on me at once. I realised it was because everybody in that room deals with VAD. The doctors and nurses were saying, 'This is all preliminary information. You should be across this.'

I also point out that lots of people at the conference were interested in what is happening in the Northern Territory. There are a lot of eyes around the country and the world on what is happening in the Northern Territory with VAD. People care about us moving this issue forward in a sensible way, and hopefully learning from what has happened in other places.

It is hard to talk about, but whether people have VAD substances administered intravenously, orally or enterally, which is tubes in the stomach, makes a difference. These are the real questions, and they matter to the people I saw there, some of whom were looking to access VAD because they were unwell.

I will not go into all the gory details, but one thing that I learned there, which is worth remembering, is that Australia is still relatively forward-thinking on VAD. There are other countries around the world where this is not happening and/or it has fallen apart. A lot of people thought VAD legislation would get up in Scotland and the UK recently. It has just recently died a death due to fear campaigns squashing it, which is what tends to happen around the world. Those fear campaigns succeed when legislators like us are not across the details well enough to answer the questions and try to get sensible legislation through a parliament.

It is predictable that there will be fear campaigns surrounding this, as there always are around the world. They will predictably relate to the issues of dementia and what happens in the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. If you really knew what happened in those places, you would not be concerned. You would see that the numbers of people who access voluntary assisted deaths are very small. When you are talking about people who access in relation to dementia, which is not even a possibility in Australia, the numbers are infinitesimally small. I hope that we do not end up having our Bill fall apart on the basis of fear campaigns and a lack of people in the legislature being across the issues.

I specifically thank a few people who were kind and taught me a lot when I was there. I thank Dr Chloe Furst at Royal Adelaide Hospital. She had a lot of fantastic things to say which helped me understand a lot of the practicalities of VAD administration. I thank Virginia Barbour, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Medical Journal of Australia*. She also had fantastic insight and wisdom to share. I thank Jan Obery, a care navigator in the South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service. Understanding what those navigator services do is important in being able to put together a solid VAD service. I thank Lindsay Marshall from the Clem Jones Group, for facilitating meetings and introductions for me while I was there. There is a range of others from various dying with dignity societies and advocacy groups. It was good to be in a space where people had respectful discussions about VAD.

I also thank my colleagues from the McKinnon Institute who helped host me in the Queensland Parliament. It is always nice to see how another parliament operates. It was good to talk to parliamentarians in Queensland about how their VAD Bill worked and how people on different sides approached the issue.

All of you would have been sent a book earlier this year called *The Power of Choice* which was a photographic book from—it is on the tip of my tongue; I am sorry. Anyway, that book is worth looking at. While I was in Brisbane, there was the exhibition for it. It is confronting, but it is important to understand that behind VAD legislation we are talking about terminally ill people who are suffering and looking for a way forward.

I encourage all of you as colleagues across the House, no matter what party or tribe you are from, to over the coming months get in touch with your electorate's feelings and get across the information that will be required to answer the questions that will be asked of all of us when we come to consider VAD legislation in the latter part of this year. I hope that we can all truly have a respectful debate about it in the second half of this year.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I will share a few highlights from Dripstone Secondary College, because its students have been doing incredible things lately and they deserve the recognition.

To all the teachers and staff at Dripstone, I thank you for the important job you do. Every day you are encouraging, supporting and preparing students for the future. I am sure it can be challenging some days, but you all do an incredible job, and achievements come out of the school all year round.

I give a big congratulations to Year 10 Dripstone student Zaharias, who was selected as one of only seven students from across the Northern Territory to join the Chief Minister's Sharing Our History, Securing Future Peace Study Tour to Okinawa, Japan. It is a fantastic opportunity. The program focuses on learning about historical conflict, peacebuilding, international relationships, leadership and diplomacy—all things that help shape thoughtful, capable young leaders. To be chosen for this is a real credit to Zaharias and the way he applies himself inside and outside the classroom. I look forward to hearing about his experience when he returns. Have an amazing trip, Zaharias.

I also congratulate two talented Year 9 students, Ameliah and Gisele, who, along with their teammates from Casuarina Football Club, have been selected to travel to Valencia to compete in the IDA Valencia tournament. To represent their club, school and community on the international stage is really special. The girls' dedication, discipline and countless hours of training have paid off, and they are off on a trip they will never forget. Well done, Ameliah and Gisele, I hope you have an amazing time and show off the incredible talent coming out of Casuarina.

I acknowledge the Dripstone students who recently took part in the Interschool Secondary Hockey Gala Day. A special shout-out goes to the girls' team which was outstanding all day. They are a united and determined team, and it was fantastic to hear they came away with a well-earned win in their competition. Dripstone's mixed team also put in a strong performance, finishing tied third in their competition—another example of hard work paying off.

Whether it is international study tours, sporting tournaments overseas or local gala days, it is clear that Dripstone Secondary College students are putting themselves out there, working hard and representing their school with pride. Well done to all involved; I am incredibly proud of you. I love Casuarina.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the mighty Nightcliff Tigers Football Club. The club was originally founded in 1950 as the Works and Housing Football Club and first competed in the 1950–51 season. Early success followed with premierships in the 1956–57, 1960–61 and 1964–65 seasons. It would then be a 54-year drought until the cup came home again in 2018–19 to make a three-peat with wins in the following two seasons.

It was an incredible achievement to celebrate a seventh senior men's title in March this year after recent near misses. It was such a fantastic experience for the team and the club, but it is the stories behind the flag that are the most memorable. I will briefly share three stories that illustrate the culture and success of the club from this great grand final win.

Leigh Crossman and Blake Launer not only coach one of the under-9 teams at Nightcliff but also happen to be the senior coach and a senior player. For our youngest players to learn from the best in the NT is something special. It builds a culture where juniors and seniors grow together, share success and support each other on their football journey. Leigh and Blake have been outstanding role models for our kids to learn from. This is shown through their development and enjoyment of the game.

Ben Vile and I both played at University Blacks Football Club in the 2010s. Moving to the NT and playing in the Wet Season is a rite of passage for so many players from southern states. Although it has been some time since I pulled on a club jumper, the bonds and connections never die. Footy has a way of connecting people and communities across Australia and is a big part of what makes local clubs so important.

Then there is Browny. Finishing your career with a premiership is not something many get to do, but on grand final night he did just that. A longtime club champion—from captaining flags to coaching teams—Nathan Brown has given so much to the Tigers.

It is important, though, to express commiserations to the Tigers women's premier league team who came so close to winning the flag again this season. Led by Captain Gabrielle Deller and coached by Andrew Rock, they played an incredibly hard-fought match and did the club proud.

I also celebrate the success of our juniors, with congratulations to Ryder Harvey on winning the Under-15 Boys NTFL League Best and Fairest and claiming the prestigious Hickman Medal for the 2025–26 season.

Three other Nightcliff junior players were recognised for their outstanding season at the NTFL awards. This included Gus Trigwell, being equal runner-up in the under-17.5 male division; Sophia Karanikolas, runner-up in the under-17.5 female division; and Mikhaela Fodra, placing third in the under-15 girls division B.

However, a great club can never rest on its laurels. Already Leigh Crossman and Andrew Rock have recommitted to the club as senior coaches again for the 2026–27 season. They brings outstanding leadership and energy to the club, with a genuine one-club mindset that connects our senior program with the wider Tigers community. Andrew and Leigh's commitment extends well beyond the senior team, with a strong focus on supporting and developing our junior pathways to ensure the future of the club remains strong.

On council I worked closely with the club to help progress the long-awaited new change rooms at Nightcliff Oval. It was terrific to work with past players and committee members like Graeme Shaw and Steve Glennon to finally secure the funding required from the City of Darwin and the Australian Government, with Luke Gosling. This was a champion effort of more than 10 years for so many committee members. It was one of the highlights of my time on council. I look forward to this much-needed development to support women's and girls' football to come to life, hopefully later this year.

Last, but definitely not least, I give a big shout-out to all the incredible Tigers volunteers, from the committee led by President Mark Dodge to the parents and helpers who turn out every weekend at the canteen, on the water bottles and more. They are the ones who keep our club running. From behind the scenes to game day, their hard work and dedication make everything possible, and the club could not operate without them.

Once again, a huge thankyou to everyone involved with Nightcliff Tigers Football Club, and congratulations on a successful season. Go Tigers!

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the Member for Drysdale on his wonderful news—a boy. I have a boy, so I am excited for them.

I will acknowledge a few important community events and individuals whose contributions continue to strengthen our community and demonstrate the generosity, compassion and multicultural spirit that make the Northern Territory such a special place to live.

The Legacy Northern Territory Mother's Day lunch was held on Saturday 9 May at the Palmerston Tavern. I was pleased to attend that event with the Member for Brennan. The minister was meant to attend, but unfortunately could not that day. The event was a lovely high tea that provided a wonderful opportunity for members of the community to come together in support of Legacy NT and the incredible work the organisation continues to do for its beneficiaries and families throughout the year.

Legacy NT has a long and proud history of supporting families of veterans, particularly the widows and children of those who have served our nation. Its work extends far beyond commemorative events. Legacy NT provides friendship, practical assistance, advocacy and ongoing support to many people who have experienced loss and hardship through military service.

The Mother's Day lunch was not only a celebration for mothers and families but also an important reminder of the care and connection that Legacy NT continues to provide to its beneficiaries all year round. The atmosphere throughout the event was warm, welcoming and filled with genuine community spirit.

I make special mention of Joan Motter, who was nominated for and named a finalist in the NT News Woman of the Year Awards in the Angels Amongst Us category. Thank you to Minister Charls who nominated her. Unfortunately she did not win, but this recognition is incredibly well deserved.

Joan continues to volunteer tirelessly alongside a small but dedicated group of volunteers who work behind the scenes to keep Legacy NT operating successfully. From organising events and coordinating the monthly lunches to preparing newsletters and ensuring that beneficiaries remain connected and supported, Joan contributes an enormous amount of time and energy to the organisation.

Often it is the quiet achievers in our community who make the greatest impact, and Joan is one of those people. Her dedication, kindness and willingness to help others deserve to be acknowledged in this Chamber. It is volunteers like Joan who are truly the backbone of community organisations such as Legacy NT. We are incredibly fortunate to have her willingly give her time and generosity to support others.

I also recognise another incredible member of my electorate, Michelle Murphy, for her recent fundraising efforts in support of the Leukaemia Foundation through the World's Greatest Shave. Michelle raised the outstanding amount of $1,273 for this important cause, a remarkable effort that will help support Australians and families impacted by blood cancer and provide funding for research, treatment and support services.

What made Michelle's contribution even more significant was the personal commitment she made in choosing to shave her hair as part of the fundraiser. Michelle's hair was a considerable length, flowing well down to the bottom of her back. Making the decision to shave it was not only important to her but also not taken lightly. For many people, hair can be closely connected to identity and confidence, and deciding to shave it off publicly takes courage and conviction. Michelle undertook this challenge because she genuinely wanted to make a difference and help others facing incredibly difficult circumstances. It speaks volumes to her character and commitment to supporting the community around her.

Michelle is always giving back. In addition to this fundraiser she also volunteers for Legacy NT and regularly supports community activities wherever she can. People like Michelle are the reason our communities remain strong and connected.

Michelle dropped a letter of support into my letterbox outlining her fundraising efforts, and I was pleased to make a small donation in support of her campaign. It was wonderful to see so many members of the community rally behind her and support such a worthwhile cause.

Fundraising efforts such as these not only raise important funds but also help raise awareness and encourage conversations about illnesses such as leukaemia and the impacts they have on individuals and families across Australia.

Michelle, thank you for your compassion, generosity and willingness to step forward and make a difference. The Leukaemia Foundation would, no doubt, be incredibly grateful for your contribution and the awareness you have helped raise within our community.

I also acknowledge the wonderful Japanese Children's Day celebrations hosted on the night of Saturday 9 May on the Esplanade by the Australian Japanese Association of the Northern Territory, which I was pleased to attend with the Members for Casuarina and Port Darwin.

The event was a fantastic celebration of Japanese culture, community spirit and multiculturalism within the Northern Territory. It was wonderful to see so many families and children attending and participating in a wide range of cultural activities organised throughout the day. Children had the opportunity to participate in traditional calligraphy, experience kimono dressing and enjoy the popular yoyo fishing activities. It was fantastic to see children and families engaging so enthusiastically while learning more about Japanese traditions and culture in such a warm and welcoming environment.

Events such as these are incredibly important because they help strengthen cultural understanding and celebrate the diversity that makes the Northern Territory such a vibrant and inclusive place. Our multicultural communities contribute enormously to the social, cultural and economic fabric of the Territory. Events like Japanese Children's Day provide an opportunity for people from all backgrounds to come together, learn from one another and celebrate different traditions.

I sincerely thank President Janet Truong and the committee for the tremendous work undertaken over the past few months to organise this successful event. Community events of this scale require significant

planning, dedication and volunteer support. Their efforts especially paid off with such a successful and enjoyable day on the Esplanade.

I also note that the Member for Port Darwin enthusiastically participated in the calligraphy activities and, with the Member for Casuarina, embraced the spirit of the occasion by dressing in traditional kimono, much to the enjoyment of those attending.

It was a wonderful event that showcased the culture and strength of the community and the importance of our diversity in the Northern Territory.

Each of these events and individuals remind us of the important role that volunteers, community organisations and local residents play in strengthening our community every day. Whether it is supporting veterans and families through Legacy NT, raising money for important charities such as the Leukaemia Foundation or bringing people together through cultural celebrations and community events, these events are meaningful and lasting. I thank all those involved for their ongoing dedication, service and commitment to supporting others and making our community a better place.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, as Minister for Veterans and the Minister for Disability I advise that both portfolios are undergoing reform and are worthy of our unwavering attention, our strongest advocacy and our collective resolve in this House.

I am always proud to stand with the men and women of our Australian Defence Force and the families who support their service.

I honour the service and sacrifice of Warrant Officer Class Two Lachlan Muddle, who died while serving this country in a training incident recently in New South Wales.

Recently I joined GPs and medical professionals for veteran-centred healthcare training, an initiative that in a complex and evolving system builds confidence, sharpens skills and delivers better care for our veterans. Through Operation Thrive, our government is backing this work, equipping frontline providers with the tools and understanding they need to better support our veterans. I thank Jess Gordon, Practice Manager, along with Dr Pete and Dr Chris from Veterans Medical Group, for their leadership on this initiative. I also acknowledge and thank the ex-service organisations that were present—RSL Queensland, Mates4Mates, Soldier On and DMFS—for the leadership they show and the support they deliver every day. Their collective effort speaks to the deep respect we hold for our veterans.

On Anzac Day I joined my colleagues in honouring their sacrifice—service that has shaped our great nation. I was honoured to lay a wreath among those paying their respects, a freedom we could enjoy on that beautiful Dry Season morning in Darwin because of the courage and sacrifice of those who served.

Afterwards, I stood on Smith Street with my colleagues—the Members for Casuarina, Fannie Bay and Wanguri—surrounded by flags, medals and generations marching side by side. It was powerful and a true reflection of our community.

Lest we forget.

Last month during Defence Week, Darwin showed its strength once again. Industry and government came together to highlight the Northern Territory's critical strategic role. At the Defence Summit at Parliament House, I saw the power of connection firsthand. Strong networks deliver strong outcomes. Compared with five years ago, attendance has grown significantly.

During Defence Week we also celebrated excellence at the Defence Industry Awards, recognising the outstanding contribution of our veterans. I thank AIDN for hosting this important event.

Duratec Ltd was named NT Veteran Employer of the Year, demonstrating real leadership in investing in veterans. When we invest in veterans we strengthen our workforce.

Deon Ferreira was named Veteran Employee of the Year, a clear example of service continuing beyond the uniform.

We also honoured veteran partners. Simone Flynn represents the quiet strength behind our service families. This award recognises the extraordinary demands of supporting a loved one in uniform while building a successful career. When we support families, we strengthen our veteran community.

Ahvana in Nightcliff took out the Veteran-owned Business Award, demonstrating that veterans lead as well as contribute to our economy. It is a wellness sanctuary that comes highly recommended.

These awards send a clear message that the Northern Territory Government values its veterans. I congratulate all nominees, finalists and winners. That sense of shared commitment was reflected on the night.

I also thank the members of my veterans ministerial advisory council who joined in the celebration. Meeting again this May, the council brings lived experience to the table, providing practical advice and helping to drive important initiatives forward.

Work continues across the three pillars of Operation Thrive—health and wellbeing; transition, education and employment; and respect and recognition. The council is progressing opportunities to support veteran employment in the NTPS, while helping shape the future direction of Operation Thrive.

Our government is committed to Operation Thrive. Through the Veteran Community Grants program, we are supporting wellbeing initiatives, from art therapy to fishing, sport and community connection. Applications close on 29 May, and I encourage people to get involved.

I welcome the Veterans' Ministerial Council meeting to be held in Darwin this July. It is an important opportunity to ensure Territory veterans are heard at the highest levels of government. This meeting brings together ministers from all jurisdictions to focus on the policies, services and reforms that affect veterans' wellbeing. This is important; it ensures Territory voices are heard at the national table. Hosting the council here recognises Darwin's place in our Defence story and our commitment to those who serve.

We must continue to support our veterans with consistency and purpose. I am proud to stand with them and their families.

That same commitment to listen, act and deliver real outcomes extends across government, including in the disability sector.

Today at the Darwin Disability Expo, hosted by Integrated Disability Action, I saw commitment to support and advocacy in action. Backed by the Northern Territory Government's Community Benefit Fund and valued sponsors, this is a clear investment in inclusive communities.

I make special mention of the DSA Sing Song Choir for a fantastic performance, although I admit that I may be a little biased, with two of my own electorate office stars in the group. Congratulations on a wonderful effort, Chiara and Molly.

I thank the dedicated team at IDA, the stallholders, people with disability, carers, families and their supporters for coming together to strengthen collaboration. It is a powerful reflection of the strength, resilience and commitment across the sector. That same commitment to inclusion must be recognised and celebrated.

Today I announced that nominations are open for the 2026 Northern Territory Disability Inclusion Awards. The CLP government is encouraging individuals, organisations and community groups to nominate those making a real difference. These awards recognise outstanding achievements, celebrating individuals, organisations, businesses and programs that improve the lives of people with disability and strengthen inclusion across the Territory. With seven award categories, nominations close on 28 June, with winners to be announced at a ceremony at Parliament House in September.

Finally, while I am on my feet, I give a shout-out to the Territory Stingers women who are heading into the biggest game in their program's history. As we speak—the game started at 9.30 pm Northern Territory time—they face Malaysian university UNITEN in a knockout semifinal in the 2026 Malaysian Hockey League. We wish them every success.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I will speak about the 50th anniversary of Palmerston Rugby Union Club (Crocs) which was established in 1975.

Last year the club turned 50 and this year, a mere two weeks ago, it celebrated its 50th anniversary at the Mindil Beach Casino lawn. I was honoured to attend. At that event the club celebrated Patron Wendy Leach. Sadly, Mal is no longer with us. Her son, Craig Leach, was one of the emcees; he is a 50th anniversary celebration of the Palmerston Rugby Union Club (stalwart, having played more than 275 games representing the Crocs.

Several life members were inducted. Life membership is one of the highest honours the club can give, recognising those who have gone above and beyond, not just on the field but also behind the scenes. I congratulate the new life members of the Crocs, Dale Reid; Kevin Humphreys; Mick Crossman; and Jacob Brant.

Jacob Brant is the President of the Crocs. He is the first club president who started in the club as a junior, played as a senior and was a member of the committee. I met Jacob in 2024 when, sadly, Moulden Oval caught fire and the ground was burned. There was quite a bit of media reporting about it at the time. I have come to know Jacob since then. Congratulations on becoming a life member of the Crocs, Jacob Brant.

The club also inducted a number of people into its Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame is about what you do when you step over that white line. It is about playing for the A-Grade team with pride and representing the NT with everything you have. This honour is not given easily; it is earned through toughness, commitment and consistently performing at the highest level.

Those on the Hall of Fame board at the clubhouse are some of the hardest hitters and most respected players NT rugby union has seen. They set the standard and built the legacy. Well-deserved congratulations for being inducted into the Crocs' Hall of Fame go to Shaun Gill; Bill Murphy; Ben Emmett; Brock Evans; Sean Kearns; Michael Killner; Mathew Pheeny; Tom Hurse; George Hatzismalis; Michael Scaturchio; and Naomi Roberts.

I will read a little of Crocs' history. I table the club's 50th anniversary document, if I may.

Leave granted.

Mr KERLE: It has pieces of Palmerston history in it. The document states:

> *The Palmerston Crocs home ground was originally at Nakara Oval. But after the NT Government kindly named the new town after the rugby union club, the move was on.*
>
> *The Club claimed Gray Oval as their home ground. The AFL soon kicked them out.*
>
> *The Club moved to Driver. The Cricket kicked them out.*
>
> *The Club then moved to Moulden. The AFL tried to kick them out but an appeal to then-Chief Minister Denis Burke saw him arrive at the oval and tell the AFL they were last in and didn't have dibs. The oval was adjacent to the Moulden Primary School.*
>
> *…*
>
> *The NT Government gifted the oval to the Club in the interests of growing the sport in the new town. But like most sports clubs, there was no money to do anything with the land.*
>
> *That's when another Crocs die-hard stepped in … Chief Engineer for the Department of Public Works … came across a stray $80,000 in the Department of Education budget that was designated for a toilet block on the Moulden school oval.*

This diehard rang the mighty Barry Coulter, the inaugural Member for Blain and the relevant minister at the time:

> *… The conversation went something like this: 'Minister, a lot of embarrassment's going to occur. We're about to build a basic toilet block and clubhouse on the oval and Education's gonna build one beside us. We'll all look like idiots.'*
>
> *Not wanting to look like idiots, Barry Coulter re-assigned the $80,000 to the Club and told the school they would get a key to use the toilet block.*
>
> *There were no hard feelings from the school because the Principal's son played for the club.*

One of the pages of this booklet has a picture of a young and handsome Barry Coulter, with his chest hair on display, cutting a ribbon at the new clubhouse.

I congratulate the Crocs on reaching 50 years. May there be another 50, still in Moulden. It was a lovely night, thank you very much. Congratulations to all who were inducted on that night.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.