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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Katherine

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Member for Katherine be granted leave of absence due to medical issues and the ongoing emergency in Katherine.

Leave granted.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 13 – Assent to Bills Passed in February 2026

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received message number 13 from His Honour the Acting Administrator, notifying assent to the Bills passed in the February meetings of the Assembly. The message is dated 18 February 2026.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Commonwealth Day

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, on Sunday we celebrated Commonwealth Day. This year's theme is 'Unlocking opportunities together for a prosperous Commonwealth'. I table a copy of His Majesty's Commonwealth Day Message 2026, forwarded by the Office of the Administrator.

PAPERS TABLED
Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026, and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 4 March 2026.

This report details the committee's findings regarding its examination of the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026. Amending the *Sentencing Act 1995*, the Bill introduces a mandatory minimum non-parole period of 25 years' imprisonment for the offence of intimate partner murder. The Bill also allows for a non-parole period of a less than 25-year minimum in cases where the court is satisfied there are exceptional circumstances that justify setting a shorter period.

The committee received 12 submissions to its inquiry, the majority of which did not support the Bill. While acknowledging that the Bill seeks to recognise the seriousness of intimate partner murder, submitters raised concerns that the introduction of mandatory sentencing carries a significant risk of unintended consequences and potentially unjust sentencing outcomes for victim–survivors.

While noting that the Bill provides a degree of protection for victim–survivors, submitters expressed the view that the exceptional circumstances framework is ill-suited to cases involving domestic violence. The good character requirement in the exceptional circumstances provision was seen to be particularly problematic given the nature of intimate partner murder.

Following its examination of the Bill, the majority view of the committee is that the Assembly should pass the Bill with no amendments. However, given the evidence received and the recent findings of the New South Wales Sentencing Council regarding the use of good character in sentencing, the committee has also recommended that the Attorney-General conduct or commission a review of the operation of section 53A(7) and other relevant sections of the *Sentencing Act* that relate to the use of good character in sentencing and make any recommendations for reform that is considered appropriate.

On behalf of the committee, I thank all those who made submissions to this inquiry. The committee also thanks the representatives from Attorney-General's Department who briefed the committee on the Bill. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Electrical Safety Amendment Bill

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Electrical Safety Amendment Bill 2026, and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 20 February 2026.

This Bill amends the *Electrical Safety Act 2022* to permanently legislate the current exemption made by the Electrical Safety Regulator regarding the need for a certificate of compliance to be completed for low-risk electrical work that involves like for like replacement of electrical fittings or appliances.

The committee received one submission to its inquiry from Master Electricians Australia. As this submission supported the Bill and the committee has no matters to bring to the attention of the Assembly, it is recommended the Assembly pass the Bill.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Legislation Amendment (Licensing) Bill

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Legislation Amendment (Licensing) Bill 2026, and the associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 20 February 2026.

This Bill amends the *Commercial Passenger (Road) Transport Act 1991* to provide options of 12, 24 and 36-month licence terms for initial applications and renewals for commercial passenger vehicle licences which currently have a maximum licence term of 12 months.

As the committee did not receive any submissions to its inquiry and has no matters to bring to the attention of the Assembly, it has recommended that the Assembly pass the Bill.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report on the Bail Amendment Bill

Mrs CARLSON (Chair of Legislative Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report, Inquiry into the Bail Amendment Bill 2026, and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4), the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 4 March 2026.

This report details the committee's findings regarding its examination of the Bail Amendment Bill 2026. Amending the *Bail Act 1982*, the Bill seeks to clarify that the *Bail Act* applies in relation to youths and the Youth Justice Court, Youth Justice Court judges and Youth Justice Court registrars unless expressly stated in the *Bail Act.*

The committee received two written submissions to its inquiry. These submissions highlighted broad systemic issues in the youth justice system. While acknowledge the concerns raised in the submissions, the committee considered these issues go beyond the scope of the Bill. Accordingly, following its examination of the Bill, the committee is of the view that the Assembly should pass the Bill with no amendments.

On behalf of the committee, I thank those who made submissions to this inquiry. The committee also thanks the representatives from the Attorney-General's Department for briefings on the Bill to the committee. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

SENTENCING AMENDMENT (MURDER) BILL
Serial 51

Continued from 4 February 2026.

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

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill amends mandatory minimum sentencing for family violence-related murders in the Northern Territory.

Violence towards women and children is one of the most serious and complex issues that Territorians face. It has long-reaching and devastating impacts on the health and wellbeing of children, young people, boys, girls, women and men. It is the leading driver of homelessness and incarceration for women. The health, wellbeing and welfare repercussions cut across all socioeconomic and demographic groups but predominantly affect women and children.

The rate of violence towards women and children in Australia is high. On average, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days. These numbers are even worse for certain groups, such as Aboriginal women and children. The prevalence of violence against women and children has not significantly decreased in the Northern Territory. The ripple effects of this violence puts strain on our families, services, communities, economy and society as a whole.

This Bill amends the *Sentencing Act* to include a mandatory minimum non-parole period of 25 years for intimate partner homicides. The amendment will mean that a person who has killed their partner or previous partner will be given a 25-year mandatory minimum sentence by the courts, instead of the current sentence of 20 years, except in exceptional circumstances.

This legislation introduced by the CLP does nothing to deter family violence towards women and children, which the CLP claimed that is the basis for this legislation. Labor supports efforts that seek to support women and girls impacted by family violence and hold perpetrators to account. Legislation alone is not a deterrent.

The unintended consequences of this amendment require further attention. The Bill fails to recognise the gendered context of intimate partner homicide. Reliance on exceptional circumstances provisions is inadequate for the nuance needed to distinguish between the primary perpetrators of violence and victim–survivors acting in the context of prolonged abuse.

There is no compelling evidence to demonstrate that the longer mandatory non-parole period operates as an effective deterrent. For these reasons, Territory Labor does not support the Bill.

The CLP has failed to work with the domestic, family and sexual violence sector and to provide significant ongoing community-driven investment into prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing over crisis-driven tertiary responses. Its Domestic, Family And Sexual Violence Reduction Strategy failed to allocate new funds for primary prevention, capacity building, education, community-based approaches to child welfare, community-based programs for men, service hubs and intersections with housing and homelessness. The majority of the funding goes into government programs, so community programs and initiatives have missed out again. The Commonwealth had to step in to fill the gaps left by the CLP in funding effective and lasting prevention of family violence.

CLP members continue to bury their heads in the sand in regard to meaningful efforts to reduce the high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence towards Territory women and girls. There has been no consultation with experts such as the Top End Women's Legal Service, the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission and other frontline services. They have been ignored and shut out. The Northern Territory has only two men's behaviour change programs. No new remote locations have been identified for specialist co-responder services. The embedding of cultural and therapeutic specialist family violence advice in our courts continues to be absent.

Territorians deserve better. They deserve more than a mandatory minimum sentence which will not protect women from violence. Nearly all the submissions to the scrutiny committee expressed a clear willingness to work collaboratively with the government and policymakers to develop stronger evidence-based responses to family violence. Given their frontline experience supporting women and nonbinary people across the Territory, and their expertise in the domestic, family and sexual violence service and criminal law contexts, further consultation is not only appropriate but necessary before any significant sentencing reforms proceed.

Community-controlled organisations and frontline staff across the Territory are carrying the load now. They are under-resourced and overstretched, yet they are the ones doing the hard work of early intervention and prevention to address the drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence. What this amendment tells us is simple: the CLP government is not serious about tackling the underlying causes of crime, preventing harm to women and children or building safer communities for Territorians.

Territory Labor believes that the solutions already exist in our communities, which is why we continue to advocate for proper investment in community-led, evidenced-based and specialist services that deliver real and lasting safety outcomes. We have heard responses from the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence following the coronial inquest into the death of four Aboriginal women. To describe those findings as uninspiring and to say that they have failed dismally shows a troubling disregard for the gravity of those tragedies and the lessons they carry.

The Coroner issued 35 recommendations to help keep Territory women safe, yet this government has chosen to ignore them. The CLP's domestic, family and sexual violence strategy simply does not meet the expectations of our community. Aboriginal community-led solutions are missing, accountability mechanisms are weak, and there is no measurable pathway for the systemic reform the Territory needs.

Territory Labor does not support this Bill, which will have serious unintended consequences. Women are significantly more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than to be perpetrators of such violence. The evidence indicates that when women kill male partners or former partners, this frequently occurs in the context of prolonged abuse, coercive control and genuine fear for personal safety.

A number of submissions to this inquiry highlight the systemic issues within the Northern Territory, including ongoing misidentification of primary aggressors; the disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; delay or inadequate responses to domestic, family and sexual violence; issuing reciprocal domestic violence orders; and failures that silence victim–survivors and entrench coercive control.

Despite recent legislative reforms recognising coercive control, serious systemic shortcomings remain. These failings contribute to situations in which victim–survivors lose confidence in institutional protection and may ultimately resort to violence as a means of survival or escape. Mandatory minimums for these victim–survivors escaping violence is not strengthening their protections.

Alice Springs-based domestic violence researcher, Dr Chay Brown said the move could:

> *… send a very clear message to our communities, that domestic violence in unacceptable. However, we cannot pretend that this will be a deterrent, the evidence does not support that. That really misunderstands the dynamic for domestic violence and coercive control.*

Rob McPhee from ANSANT said:

> *We all share a commitment to serious and urgent action on domestic violence, but it requires a suite of action across the board, starting with the Coroner's recommendations … And that action needs to be led by the community too, not just government. What we're saying is: let's work together to make sure the reforms are visible, measurable and accountable to the families and communities who are still living with the consequences of violence.*

Territory Labor understands that ending domestic, family and sexual violence means addressing the broader issues that Territorian's face, such as housing, health, education and community safety, while reducing barriers to information and making sure services are accessible and properly funded. Investing in prevention keeps people safe, saves lives and saves the community money in the long run, reducing the enormous cost to our health and justice systems when violence goes unaddressed.

Territory Labor supports stronger protections and genuine systemic reforms, including:

- education campaigns about healthy and respectful relationships with a strong focus on coercive control
- community-based and place-based service delivery that works alongside health, housing and disability supports, not just a pipeline into detention
- greater specialist support services for men and boys, including behaviour intervention programs for people on remand
- removing the barriers that stop women from seeking help or safety when leaving violent situation
- long-term funding for crisis accommodation and specialist services, especially in remote communities
- action on housing stress, homelessness risk, financial abuse, and legal barriers like custody issues that trap women in unsafe situations

- tackling stigma and improving engagement with services for Aboriginal women who are often forced to weigh reporting violence against the risk of further justice system involvement for themselves and their families

- expanding access to clear information about rights, healthy relationships and economic independence in multiple languages.

We continue to back the community sector's calls for the CLP to invest and improve frontline workforces, connect service systems, improve data collection and public reporting, focus on men and boys, strengthen community-led child protection supports for families and address housing and homelessness pressures. If we are serious about safer communities in the Territory, we must invest in prevention, community leadership and long-term solutions, not just short-term quick fixes that look good on paper. Territory Labor cannot support this Bill until further targeted consultation is undertaken to ensure that the reform is fit for purpose, balanced, fair and representative of community expectations.

I acknowledge that the Member for Johnston and I were members of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee who put in dissenting reports. It is important to acknowledge that on this issue there are a number of stakeholders across the Northern Territory: the Northern Territory women's legal services; the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory; Legal Aid NT; and the domestic, family and sexual violence frontline service organisations that deal with crisis situations every day. They work to ensure protections for victim–survivors. They have victim–survivors working in those organisations, trying to do the good work to help free women and children from horrific situations.

If we cannot listen to them or respect what was being done in the submissions to the committee, there is a real problem. That is lived experience; it is evidence that does not lie. It is in black and white. Every one of those submissions had passion, energy, conviction and lived experience. They are the submissions that should inform government when making policy decisions and new laws in the Northern Territory. Those submissions made a clear commitment and a clear ask: do not put this Bill before parliament without working with the sector on strengthening this law and making this better. Making one change will not necessarily have huge and lasting impacts.

Let us be clear: as we saw in the submissions, this is changing something after domestic, family and sexual violence has already occurred. We need to do the work in the front end—prevention, stopping violence before it starts.

The submissions highlighted, again, the failure of this government to properly recognise the gendered context of intimate partner homicides. The evidence before the committee in the written submissions confirms what research and lived experience have long demonstrated: intimate partner homicide occurs within a deeply gendered context. Women are significantly more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than to be perpetrators of such violence.

I repeat this: the evidence clearly states that when women kill male partners or former partners, this frequently occurs in the context of prolonged abuse, coercive control and a genuine fear for their safety. Every one of those submissions spoke about the ongoing misidentification of primary aggressors.

More work needs to be done, and it is disappointing that the government did not accept this and make the relevant changes to give this more weight and listen to those voices to make changes to ensure that misidentification does not happen. In the last 12 months we have seen horrific events in the Northern Territory when women have been taken into custody because of misidentification.

The submissions highlighted again the disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the delayed and inadequate response to domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. They acknowledge that the sector is doing all it can with what it has, but it needs more support.

The Bill's reliance on the exceptional circumstances provision does not, in my view, adequately account for this. Evidence presented to the committee indicated that even when exceptional circumstances are established, the reduction in the mandatory non-parole period is limited and still results in sentences that do not meaningfully distinguish between a primary perpetrator of violence and a victim–survivor acting in the context of prolonged abuse.

Legislation that increases mandatory sentences without properly accounting for these contextual differences risks producing unjust outcomes. There is a lack of evidence for the deterrent effect. The stated intent of the Bill is in part to act as a further deterrent to the perpetrators of intimate partner homicide; however, no

compelling evidence has been presented to the committee that demonstrates longer mandatory non-parole periods operate as an effective deterrent in the context of intimate partner homicide. Although denunciation is a recognised purpose of sentencing, public denunciation alone does not address the underlying drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence.

Without evidence of deterrent effects, the expansion of mandatory sentencing provisions warrants careful scrutiny. The majority of submissions clearly state that mandatory sentencing as a deterrent has not worked and is not working in its current form in Territory law.

The submissions also spoke about the broader domestic, family and sexual violence crisis in the Northern Territory. Although the inquiry's scope centred on the aspect of increasing the non-parole period, it is important to note that the Northern Territory continues to experience the highest recorded rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in the country. The evidence before the committee made it clear: the scale of this crisis is severe and ongoing. Without sustained adequate long-term investment, it will worsen.

Current levels of funding represent only a fraction of the estimated social and economic cost of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. In this context, a singular focus on increasing sentencing does not in itself address prevention, early intervention or victim–survivor safety. Sentencing reform must not occur in isolation of broader systemic reform and investment. There is need for further consultation.

In future, this legislation must be just, proportionate and informed by evidence. It must recognise the lived realities of victim–survivors, particularly Aboriginal women in remote communities who face systemic barriers to protection and safety. I acknowledge all the submitters who took the time to prepare submissions for the inquiry.

For these reasons, I cannot support the Bill in its current form. I recommend that it not be passed and that further targeted consultation be undertaken to ensure that any reforms in the future are balanced, fair and elevate victim–survivors.

I acknowledge and thank all our Territory domestic, family and sexual violence support organisations. They do an incredible job. It was incredibly difficult with the short timeframes to put together a submission for this legislation. I acknowledge and give them all a shout-out for the incredible work they do every day. It is hard to run a crisis service organisation with limited resources and funding, and at the drop of a hat prepare a submission for a government that is rushing legislation and not giving people adequate time to consult with victim–survivors and other peak organisations about the consequences of it.

We know that mandatory sentencing does not work as a deterrent because if it did, we would have lower numbers in our criminal justice system. It is clear that we need to do the work to stop domestic, family and sexual violence. We need to intervene and support people to come forward and prevent violence before it happens. This change alone will not stop domestic, family and sexual violence, because it has already happened before this mechanism will come into effect. We need to look at intervention and prevention services and ensure that adequate funding, government resources and grants are available for organisations that do that work.

The Territory must have needs-based funding to address domestic, family and sexual violence. It is the biggest issue we face in the criminal justice system. Too many people are experiencing this level of violence. Domestic, family and sexual violence is everybody's business. There is not one person in the Northern Territory who has not themselves experienced or known someone who has experienced domestic, family and sexual violence. More work needs to be done.

The Territory Labor opposition supports meaningful and lasting changes that address the high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence. That can be done through a range of investments. Investing in men's behaviour change will see a huge difference in the Northern Territory. There are currently only two organisations funded to deliver men's behaviour change programs—one in the Top End and one in Central Australia. We need more men's behaviour change programs. We need more programs in our schools to address these behaviours.

We need more supports for women and children across the Northern Territory to be safer and more comfortable to come forward and report domestic, family and sexual violence. We need to address the issue of crisis accommodation because, as we have heard from many people, often they will not leave their home because they have nowhere to go and risk becoming homeless.

A family in my community of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) had to leave their home. They lived under the bridge over the Todd River because they had nowhere else to go. There was no safe place for that family to take themselves and their children because the crisis accommodation facilities and the visitor parks were full. There is a critical housing shortage in the Northern Territory. These are the everyday realities faced by many people who try to escape domestic, family and sexual violence.

I know of experiences in remote communities where the perpetrator has been released from prison and sent back to the community where the victim lives with no notification that the perpetrator would be going back. I have heard about someone being sentenced to a seven-day prison sentence because of mandatory sentencing, and in that time they have been unable to participate in any meaningful or lasting program to address their criminal behaviours concerning domestic, family and sexual violence. They have just come through the revolving door of mandatory sentencing; they receive a seven-day prison sentence and then are back in the community where they allowed the violence to occur.

We need more programs to address domestic, family and sexual violence across the Northern Territory. A number of organisations do amazing work. I acknowledge all the organisations that developed and rolled out the PARt training in the Northern Territory. It is a meaningful program, which is investment we need.

I re-emphasise to the government not to be afraid of consulting with people in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector. They have the lived experience, the tertiary responses and the answers. They need to be listened to, funded and resourced. Their voices need to be elevated because we cannot and we should not be making decisions in isolation without the lived experience, tertiary knowledge and evidence-based responses that the sector holds. That is the key to overcoming domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. It is not saying, ‘We know better than you’; it is saying to these amazing organisations, ‘Let’s get together and lift your voice, experience and knowledge so we can build that into legislation’. Let us address prevention and get it happening, because that is how we will change the high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence.

We talk about this issue all the time, but one of the biggest ways we can overcome domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory is needs-based funding to understand how much we are currently funding them. I acknowledge that the Northern Territory Government has made a range of funding commitments over the next few years. Is that enough? This is an opportunity to see what needs-based funding looks like. How much will it cost to address domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory? What is the number for needs-based funding?

That work needs to happen, and the Territory needs a peak body for domestic, family and sexual violence support. We do not need the government to say that it is funding one position in the Northern Territory Council of Social Services; we need a peak body because this is a serious issue. This issue warrants a standalone peak organisation that can do the advocacy and the work of the sector.

Work was undertaken to understand the actual value of needs-based funding in the Northern Territory, which the Territory and federal governments should be looking at, because that is how we reduce incarceration, homelessness and school attendance. There are many kids who cannot go to school because they have been up all night seeking protection or running away from a place that is not safe because of domestic, family and sexual violence. Let us understand what the number is for needs-based funding and work together as a parliament to get funding secured in the Northern Territory to overcome that.

We do not support the legislation, because it is not a solution and does not address domestic, family and sexual violence before it starts. It acknowledges that domestic violence will happen and addresses it after the fact. We have heard from a majority of the submissions. I make it clear that there were one or two submissions to that inquiry in support of the legislation, but several submissions said that this is not a deterrent and will not stop the numbers. People will not suddenly say, ‘I will not do DV now because I will get an extra five years on my non-parole period’. It will not stop. We need to do more work to stop it before it starts, because someone picking up a weapon to cause harm on another person will not suddenly drop the weapon and think about the extra five years in prison. It will not deter that.

What will stop violence is more work in intervention and prevention. How do we curb the horrific rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory? That is the work we should be focused on and looking at as an entire parliament to overcome rates of domestic, family and sexual violence. I make it clear that as the opposition we stand willing and ready to work with the government on meaningful reforms that address domestic, family and sexual violence before it occurs.

Ms CAHILL (Prevention of Domestic Violence): Madam Speaker, I support the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill. Domestic violence is a plague on the landscape of the Northern Territory, destroying lives and creating generations of children who believe that violence in a relationship is normal. Domestic, family and sexual violence remains one of the most serious challenges faced by the Northern Territory.

I am delighted to hear the Member for Gwoja say that this needs a multipronged approach, and he is right. I note that in a previous iteration of government, the Member for Gwoja was the Attorney-General and had the opportunity to make significant change, but that did not occur. Under the previous government there was an appalling 81% increase in domestic violence assaults over nearly a decade. Decisions were continually made to do more of the same. There were no new initiatives or commitments to ongoing funding, but there were a lot of words. There was lots of talk and little action.

Our CLP Finocchiaro government does not just rest on words; it rests on the actions it takes. That is why we took the unprecedented step to guarantee future funding for domestic violence programs. There will be $36m every year ongoing until there is change in this space. This funding supports women's safe houses, legal services and community-led initiatives. Alongside the federal government , we have invested in wraparound services for family support. We worked and consulted with communities to ensure that there is change in this space. We simply refuse to continue doing more of the same old thing.

Our Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Strategy 2025–2028 provided a clear outline of where we are headed. Our roadmap presented the community with real and practical access to solutions and support. Having listened to victim–survivors with lived experience, it is one of the reasons we made the decision to create a domestic violence hub. Victims with lived experience asked for this for years, but it was ignored. We will ensure that survivors of domestic violence who need help will get it when and where they need it, and they will need to tell their story only once.

The domestic, family and sexual violence training and resource centre is due to commence later this year. This will serve as the central structure for developing, delivering and coordinating domestic, family and sexual violence-specific training. There has been an incredible uptake in support services over the past 18 months of our government. We are proud of the record we have set in motion.

In my capacity as Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence, I will work at every opportunity to ensure the strongest of consequences for perpetrators of domestic violence. To appreciate the importance of this Bill, it must be considered it in the broader context of the devastating impact of domestic and sexual violence across the Northern Territory.

Under the previous Labor government, in eight short years there was an increase of 81% in domestic violence assaults. Territorians quite rightly were outraged by this escalation of domestic violence assaults. They said to us clearly that the key to a safer Territory includes serious consequences for offenders, and that is what this Bill delivers. We are listening to Territorians and are committed to reducing crime and making our community safer. Most critically, we are committed to addressing the scourge of domestic, family and sexual violence.

On coming to government it became clear in a short period that if change was to occur, a change in approach was required. Simply doing more of the same was not an option. As Albert Einstein said, 'Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is, in itself, the definition of insanity'. We were not going to progress down that path.

Our Finocchiaro CLP team committed to addressing the root causes of crime. Those on the other side are right; you cannot ignore the root causes. You cannot fix a problem unless you look at where the problem stems from. In their term of government, they did nothing to do that.

Nowhere is it more apparent than in the area of domestic, family and sexual violence that dealing with the root causes is the answer to this terrible situation. We must break the cycle of violence before it starts. This requires ensuring perpetrators are held to account, that actions have consequence, that young people have the opportunity to learn that violence in relationships is not normal and to see what healthy relationships look like and for us to work with families to address the issues that lead to an escalation in violence.

Since coming to government, that is exactly what we have done. In just 18 months the work we have done is achieving results, with an unprecedented 3% reduction in domestic violence assaults across the Northern Territory—not a holding pattern or a cessation of an increase, but a reduction. In some communities like Alice Springs, the reduction is as high as 15%. That is extraordinary. I challenge any other jurisdiction in this country to demonstrate that they have achieved similar results.

There is still much more to do. The early results are encouraging and back our decision to stop doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result. While one life lost is one life too many, we are working to achieve a reduction in victims of domestic violence murder of an intimate partner, with a smaller number of women impacted in this horrendous way in 2025 than in previous years.

For too many years, Territorians have seen and accepted that violence within relationships is becoming the norm. That cannot be tolerated. For too many Territorians, violence is not an isolated incident; it is a pattern of behaviour that escalates over time. Looking to the causes, abuse can take many forms: verbal intimidation; emotional manipulation; and physical violence. It is ongoing, persistent and most often escalates over time. Leaving a violent relationship is not easy, and that is why we are investing in those services to help victim–survivors of domestic violence to escape the horrendous situations they find themselves in.

Victims are often financially dependent; they worry about the safety of their children. As documented by Coroner Elisabeth Armitage in her report into the domestic violence deaths of four Aboriginal women, handed down in November 2024, weaponisation of culture adds a further layer of intimidation and manipulation against Aboriginal women, who are over-represented in domestic violence assaults in the Northern Territory.

The warning signs are often there but all too often missed by family and friends as perpetrators manipulate their victims into silence, too afraid to speak out and too afraid to seek help. As situations escalate, police and services may intervene. Those closest to the victims may extend a lifeline but, sadly, victims most often endure years of domestic violence before attempting an escape from the violence.

For many, that escape never occurs, and for some, the violence escalates to the worst of all possible outcomes and a life is taken. Children lose parents; families lose a loved one; and communities reel in shock and disbelief, unable to fathom how such a tragedy could occur. When such devastating loss occurs because of domestic, family and sexual violence, the community believes that the justice system will respond in a way that reflects the severity of the offence and the devastating harm it causes, that the victims of such senseless violence are owed justice and that perpetrators must not be left at large.

Justice demands that those found guilty of murdering their intimate partner must feel the full force of the law, and the consequences for their actions must be the severest of penalties. In increasing the non-parole period from 20 to 25 years for a perpetrator convicted of murdering their intimate partner, this Bill delivers that justice. Whilst it will not bring back the victims of this most senseless of violent acts, the increase in the non-parole period for those convicted of an intimate partner murder within the sentencing framework will ensure the law reflects the seriousness of the crime. It ensures perpetrators remain behind bars, mitigating the risk of their reoffending. At the same time it ensures balance in that it recognises the reality many victim–survivors face that leaving a violent relationship is never simple.

Domestic violence traps people in circumstances that are extraordinarily difficult to escape. That is why our laws must be strong and fair—strong in holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and fair in recognising the lived experience of victim–survivors.

I note opponents of this Bill have raised the spectre of survivor of domestic violence being sentenced to life with a minimum parole of 25 years as a result of defending themselves against the perpetrator and in doing so, causing the death of the perpetrator. I contend this is scaremongering in the worst possible way. The justice system currently provides for a minimum non-parole period of 20 years following a conviction for murder. The burden of proof in such cases is high, and the elements that must be proven in order to arrive at such a verdict are robust.

This Bill similarly demands a high burden of proof to arrive at a conviction of murder of an intimate partner in order for the mandatory non-parole period of 25-year thresholds to be met.

For clarity, while it strengthens sentencing for murders committed in the context of domestic violence, it does not diminish a defence in those circumstances where a victim–survivor of prolonged abuse may cause the death of a perpetrator whilst acting in self-defence. This Bill does not diminish a case for self-defence as a mitigating factor in such a case, nor does it remove the court's ability to consider exceptional circumstances when determining either a conviction or an appropriate sentence. This ensures that the justice system can properly consider situations where a victim–survivor may have contributed to the death of a perpetrator after ensuring a prolonged cycle of domestic, family and sexual violence.

These reforms are directed at holding perpetrators of domestic violence accountable, not punishing those who have themselves been victims of violence and who may have acted in circumstances of genuine self-defence.

Such a heinous act, the murder of a loved one by the person who is supposed to protect and care for them, demands the most strident o responses and the severest of consequences. That is what this Bill delivers. I commend the Attorney-General's leadership in bringing this Bill to the Assembly.

Murder of a current or former intimate partner is the most extreme outcome of domestic violence. It is a tragedy that shatters families, leaving a trail of victims whose lives will never be the same—children left without either parent, parents losing a child, communities sharing grief and the burden of 'what ifs'. When a life is cut short in this most monstrous of circumstances, all who are affected expect and deserve that the justice system will respond in a way that reflects the severity of the offence and the devastating harm it causes.

Domestic, family and sexual violence is a complex social issue that requires sustained effort from prevention, early intervention, policing, justice and community support. I acknowledge that legislation alone will not end domestic violence, but it is a fitting consequence for the vilest of crimes in this situation.

This legislation is the framework that sets the standards for our community and community's expectations of the justice system and behaviour that will not be tolerated in the Northern Territory.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, when we talk about victims of family violence in the Northern Territory, we are often talking about Aboriginal women. The complex problems in Aboriginal communities since colonisation have increased across all areas and, sadly, family violence is a problem that we have seen growing, not just in town centres but in bush communities.

In November 2024 the ABC reported that 87 women had been killed by family violence since 2000 and that 82 of these women were Aboriginal. All of these 87 women may be *nandis* (mothers and aunties); *gaminyarr* and *gutharra* (grandchildren/granddaughters, from their daughter's children); *yapas* (sisters); and *waku* and *gathu* (a daughter and a son—or rather, daughter from mother's clan and a daughter from a sister's daughter) who are taken from their families. The effect across a community is significant.

In Yolngu community, everyone is kin. There is deep harm for the victim's clan and harm within the clan of a person who has committed crimes. These clans are interconnected through kinships, ancestors, songlines, law, country and alliances. The damage that is done when someone is murdered ripples across all the communities. It creates fractures between clans, and this is created by behaviour that is lawless. I need to be clear: family violence is not part of Yolngu *rom*. It is not part of our law to harm our husband, wife or family members. I was taught the law of the land on my ancestral country by my elders.

I know that violence against family is not lawful. People say that family violence is part of Aboriginal culture. No, they are wrong. Sadly, it has become part of a modern-day problem like drugs and gambling. It is highly dysfunctional behaviour. When the perpetrator is an Aboriginal leader, they are abusing their position of power. It is not something they are doing lawfully as a leader. Put simply, they are a corrupt and bad leader. We see this across our culture, extending to royalty, high-level politicians, judges and leaders anywhere. It must be called out, no matter who the perpetrator is.

Traditionally, when abuse was caused by an Aboriginal or a person, a *Makarrata* would be called to address the harm that has happened to the victim, their clan and family. Elders of many clans would be called together for the ceremony to oversee that justice is restored. *Makarrata* is a system of restorative justice, just like the courts. The *Makarrata* system once historically allowed a spear in the thigh or death, but it is now different to the balanda system that historically allowed the death penalty.

I am talking about the two justice systems because I want to make clear that family violence is not condoned in balanda or Yolngu cultures. Our legal institutions have mechanisms in place to punish. Family violence is unlawful, and we always use this system.

We also have protective mechanisms. The relationship a person has with their mother's mother's clan is important for providing protection. The *mari-gutharra* relationship seeks to provide protection, and this is our kinship system. There are specific relationships which are designated to provide protection. Support for protective mechanisms is something that we need to see much more of from this government.

This Bill increases mandatory sentencing for intimate partner murder from 20 to 25 years. It is not a significant change to the current system, and it begs the question of why the CLP has brought this Bill before the parliament. With this Bill it is clear that the CLP government continues to think it knows what is best. If it truly

wants to change the rates of family violence that we are seeing, it must start by talking to the communities that are most affected and the organisations that are on the ground with victims every day. This requires a grassroots response to address the problems the lead us here, and it requires a government that will listen and support community-led change in order to genuinely protect victims of family violence.

In bringing this Bill, I do not believe that this government is genuine in its approach. If it truly cared, it would engage in proper consultation. This is not what is happening. The majority of the submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee raised great concerns that victims of family violence may be more at risk due to this Bill.

Sending a Bill to the scrutiny committee should not be mistaken as consultation. This process does not replace the work that should happen in the communities. It is important that we clearly state that there has been no consultation on this Bill, and this should have happened. I commend the government for sending this Bill to the scrutiny committee, but the next step is to look at the concerns raised in the submissions and amend the legislation accordingly.

I note that the committee has made recommendations that fall short of addressing the concerns that have been raised in the submissions. Of significant concern is the issue of victim identification, and First Nations advocates made a clear recommendation for the Bill to insert a clear exclusion of victim–survivors from mandatory sentencing. If this government is genuine about protecting victims, this would be an easy amendment to make to this Bill. The committee's failure to adopt the recommendation is concerning.

AMSANT made it clear in its submission that in order to end family violence there is need for approaches grounded in Aboriginal leadership, community control and cultural strength.

This Bill does not fix the problem, and it has not been consulted upon. It is an example of wasted resources and wasted opportunity to bring real protection for victims, and it calls into question whether this government is genuine about the protection of victims of family violence in the NT.

I do not support this Bill.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I seek to address why our government is doing this. Our government is saying something simple: the law must reflect the moral gravity of the crime. DV murder is not only the taking of a life but also the betrayal of the most fundamental human trust. It is the betrayal of the trust that exists in the home and in marriage, and it is an assault on the fundamentals of our society which is built on the trust of love and sanctuary that is part of the home. Home should be a place of sanctuary and safety.

In my view, justice requires a proportionate response. When the state weakens its response to grave evils such as this, it signals uncertainty about the value of the life taken. We are not saying that this Bill solves all the ills of domestic violence; we are drawing a clear line in the sand on the moral gravity of domestic violence murder. By making 25 years mandatory sentencing above that of murder, we are saying that this is a moral crime of such gravity that the state will respond in the harshest way it can to the perpetrator.

The weakening of a response to crime led to the crime crisis that has ravaged every community in the Northern Territory from mine in Drysdale to the top, the south, east and west. Devaluing the moral severity the law places on a crime committed resulted in an exponential rise in crime and victims and then the crushing flow-on consequences throughout society with people leaving, economies crashing and people afraid to leave their homes.

This Bill seeks to address a clear moral line in the law that if you kill your partner, the state will hit you with the biggest proportional punishment it can, because our government believes in the sanctity of love in a relationship, in the home and of innocent people, be it a male or female partner—unfortunately, the victims are usually women—and of innocent children.

It is easy for the opposition and crossbench to mount what I see as arguments that move us away from the reasons. They go into the topic of domestic violence prevention. I will speak on that because it is a fundamental need. The Member for Gwoja and the minister spoke about it, and everyone in this Chamber knows that education and prevention is key in addressing this issue. That is not what we are talking about today. We are talking about what the Northern Territory will respond with if you commit the crime. Our government is clear that you will do 25 years' mandatory imprisonment if you have assaulted what is dearest in society's eyes. It addresses the importance of clear boundaries in the law.

As I have stated, punishment alone will not solve domestic violence. I put forward that a mature society understands that punishment and prevention are necessary. The MLAs of our government seem to be the only people in this Assembly who want to address that point. A mature society needs punishment on one hand and strong investment in prevention and education on the other hand. It cannot be done with one alone.

If you heard the opposition speak, you would think we were not doing the prevention and education work, but I remind this Chamber that our government has a record investment of $36m per year in that work. We are delivering not only the hardest punishment, but the largest investment in prevention and education, because that is what a mature society expects. That is how we will see change.

I want it clear on the record that our government is investing a record spend in prevention and education. The arguments of the other side which seek to fool the public do not stand on any factual basis. There is $36m a year from our minister, and I note that was not addressed in the opposition's comments.

Ms Uibo: Why did you break your election commitment?

Madam SPEAKER: Silence! Stop the interjections, please.

Mr HOWE: When the line into murder is crossed, the law must speak with unmistakeable clarity. Twenty-five years is not just a number; it is a statement. Domestic and family violence is a profound moral violation that strikes at the heart and foundation of society itself, being the family and the safety of home.

I had the benefit of being on the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I sincerely thank the committee members, including the Chair—the Member for Wanguri—and the Members for Fannie Bay, Gwoja and Johnston for their work. I also thank all those who put in submissions.

My chief concern on the committee was to ensure that this Bill did not erode any protections. I would not be supporting this Bill if I believed we were eroding the safety of victims who kill their partner in self-defence. I see no moral violation in that scenario. Personally, that was a key part of the inquiry; I needed to ensure that principle was upheld in order for me to support this. That was my direct line of questioning throughout the inquiry. I was satisfied that there is no change to the current provisions of protection.

The risk of misidentification was also raised. It is an important risk. I do not see that this has eroded the existing risk framework. With those two principles being maintained, I support this Bill.

We heard about the need for community support. Fantastic work is going on in the community. In my electorate of Drysdale, Darwin Youth Services is doing a large drive to get resource and education packs into schools, which is a fantastic effort. Sarah Austin, who is a resident of Drysdale, is doing incredible work with Darwin Youth Services. I caught up with her last year, and she told me about her program and what it is trying to do. It is based on simple yet incredibly powerful resource packs which can be rolled out in schools. They are all about healthy relationships, which is exactly what the Member for Gwoja was discussing.

In that, there are games the children can play. I looked at them and would have no issue with my children playing these games. It teaches them to identify coercive behaviours. It teaches them boundaries and what to do if those boundaries are crossed. By doing that at a young age, that is where I see real change happening. We have to accept that some children do not get that messaging in the home, unfortunately; they are getting the opposite. In a playful environment for our primary schoolkids, it is fantastic that the classroom can start reshaping how they view those relationships.

I should also note the program is doing great work in high schools with our students and getting into some meaty topics. I was chatting with Sarah about what the team is doing, and they are not shying away from the work. That gives me hope. It is an example that the answers are there; our job is to be the collectors of ideas and support what can work. I give a big shout-out to Darwin Youth Services for that ongoing work. I am glad to get behind and sponsor it.

The 'why' is simple: we are placing a value on the moral violation of the crime. We are investing record spending in education and prevention. We are the only party in the Northern Territory taking a mature approach of having punishment at one end and prevention and education at the other.

I will continue to push and support those prevention and education measures to see the long-term change that is needed in Drysdale and throughout the Northern Territory.

I commend the minister for her work, and I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I will explain why I will not support the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill.

I begin by acknowledging something everyone in this Chamber agrees on: intimate partner homicide is one of the most serious and devastating forms of violence in our community. As we have heard from other members, when someone is killed by a partner or former partner, the harm extends far beyond that act. It devastates families, traumatises children and leaves communities carrying grief for years to come.

The community is entitled to expect that our laws treat these crimes with the utmost seriousness. The duty of our parliament must always be to reduce the number of victims, not simply increase the severity of punishment after the harm has occurred. Denunciation alone is not a sufficient basis for a sound criminal justice policy.

The question before this Assembly is not whether intimate partner homicide is horrific; we all agree that it is. The real question is whether this Bill will do anything to make women safer and prevent further deaths. Women's services working on the ground and legal services working with perpetrators and victims are telling us that it will not. Ignoring them does nothing to protect women.

I am sure every member in this Chamber has read the submissions received by the scrutiny committee in preparation for today's debate. As we heard, of the 12 submissions received, nine oppose this Bill, including from women's legal services, Aboriginal legal services and the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission. I will summarise the key concerns raised.

First, there is no evidence that increasing the mandatory minimum non-parole period from 20 to 25 years will do anything to prevent domestic violence deaths. Expert evidence consistently shows that longer sentences do nothing to deter domestic, family and sexual violence, which almost always occurs in moments of crisis or escalation, usually after a long history of abuse. In those moments it is simply unrealistic to believe that someone is weighing up whether the non-parole period will be 20 or 25 years.

If longer mandatory sentences prevented domestic violence deaths we would see evidence of that, but we do not. The recent coronial inquest into the four deaths of Aboriginal women did not recommend mandatory sentencing but pointed to the urgent need for systemic reform, early intervention, properly resourced prevention programs and effective alternatives to custody for perpetrators. We know these are the measures that reduce violence and save lives. I heard from members of the government that they are committed to that, and I commend that, but this Bill takes us in the opposite direction, away from what works to protect women and what we say we are here for.

Second, the submissions outlined that the so-called exceptional circumstances safeguard is far too narrow and risks producing unjust outcomes for victim–survivors, particularly Aboriginal women. The government argued that the exceptional circumstances provision in this Bill will protect women, but legal experts working directly with victim–survivors made it abundantly clear that this will not work. When we hear from government members that this is good enough, that is exactly the opposite of what we heard in submissions to the scrutiny committee.

The exceptional circumstances test is extremely narrow. Women who have experienced years of coercive control, violence and trauma may struggle to meet the legal threshold required to access that safeguard, and many victim–survivors, particularly Aboriginal women, may have prior convictions linked to survival and systemic disadvantage which can exclude them from accessing this protection. The requirement to demonstrate good character risks further entrenching inequities and over-incarceration. As it currently stands, this safeguard is unlikely to protect the women it claims to protect.

Third, the submissions outlined that this approach focuses on increasing punishment after tragedy has occurred rather than investing in the prevention and early intervention measures that save lives. I note again that we have heard that is the commitment of this government, and I look forward to seeing it applied on the ground.

We have talked a lot about the $36m, and there are many questions that remain from people I talk to about what that money is being spent on, why women's refuges are still turning away up to 200 people a month and why nearly one-third of that money is going to the Circuit Breaker Program. It may be a fine program, but it is not a domestic violence program. I applaud that the money is there and that it is ongoing. I am happy to hear the ongoing statements from members of the government that they understand this is needed to make our community safer and protect women and children, but many questions remain about how that is happening.

This Bill is not about keeping women safe. It is not about saving lives; it is about the appearance of action and calling out punishment rather than the substance of change that will make a difference.

The safety of our whole community, especially those most vulnerable to violence, must remain a central test for every law that we pass in this Chamber. Laws that appear tough are not always the laws that make people safer. If a law does not prevent harm, protect victims or make our community safer, this parliament should be willing to say so.

When politicians do not want to debate policy, they often go personal. When I question laws like this one, the CLP members in parliament, publicly or on social media, accuse me of not supporting victims of violence. I will be clear: nothing could be further from the truth. The safety of victims and survivors is exactly why these debates matter. If we are serious about protecting people from violence, we must be prepared to ask whether the laws we pass will work.

Over the last 18 months the CLP government has significantly expanded its law and order response. We know there are about 200 additional police officers, giving the Territory the highest number of police per capita in Australia. About 3,000 people are currently in prison, the highest imprisonment rate in the country. The government has passed 50 new laws, 12 being on urgency. These are laws that tell judges how to do their job. They give us the toughest bail laws in the country and criminalise public spaces, lock up 10-year-olds …

Members interjecting.

J DAVIS: I note that there are cheers across the Chamber about locking up 10-year-olds.

These laws put spit hoods back on children …

Ms Boothby: Well, don't spit.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence! Cease the interjections, please.

J DAVIS: These laws enable the government to put spit hoods back on children.

A member: That is inaccurate.

J DAVIS: That is not inaccurate.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease the interjections.

J DAVIS: The responsibility of this parliament is not simply to introduce more laws or stronger penalties; it is to ensure that those measures are delivering safer communities and to make good law for all Territorians.

When we look at the available data, despite what the government tells us, we can see that the picture is not straightforward. Police statistics do not show a clear downward trend in several key offence categories. Sexual offences, harm and endangered person incidents and property damage have all increased in the most recent reporting period. Police data only captures part of the picture. Court statistics which track how many matters are moving through the justice system indicate even higher levels of crime.

An independent report from the Productivity Commission states that Territorians report feeling less safe than they did a year ago, while a significant proportion—up to half of crimes committed—are estimated to go unreported. It is reasonable and important for us to ask the parliament: is the current approach to expand enforcement powers, increase imprisonment and introduce new laws achieving the safety outcomes that Territorians expect and deserve?

Our goal must always be the same: fewer victims; safer communities; and laws that genuinely reduce violence. Our role in this parliament is not simply to pass laws that sound tough. Our responsibility is to pass laws that are fair, effective and grounded in evidence. If a law risks producing unjust outcomes for victim–survivors and there is not clear evidence that it will prevent future deaths, it is not a law that we should pass.

If this law is to proceed, it should at least be amended to include situations where the offender is a victim–survivor of intimate partner violence including coercion, control, humiliation, trauma or survival behaviour. The Attorney-General's Department told the scrutiny committee of the importance of allowing courts to reflect the complex nature of domestic violence. They highlight the example where the person being sentenced has a history of being abused. The committee recognised these concerns and made a recommendation, which I support, to refer the good character test to the Attorney-General for review. We have not heard whether that recommendation will be taken up.

It is not our job to say, 'Let's make this law, then sort out the problems later'. Our job is to say that if there is a problem with this law, we should get it right before we pass it. Territorians deserve to know the consequences of legislation before it is passed, not some time in the future.

I will be proposing an amendment, because if this law passes we need to do everything we can to further protect victim–survivors of domestic violence under this Bill.

The safety of our whole community, particularly those most vulnerable, must remain the central test for every Bill we pass in this Chamber. Based on the evidence before us, this Bill does not meet that test, and for those reasons, I do not support it. Territorians deserve laws that generally prevent violence, not just laws that sound tough after tragedy has already occurred.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, what a lot to get through. I will address some of the points from the Member for Johnston. She asked if this Bill will keep women safe, and she said no. This Bill is in line with our government's agenda of applying consequences to offenders that are in line with community expectations and keeping the victims and the good citizens of this Territory safe. It is a key part of a larger picture of our reform agenda.

The member said that this Bill takes us away from what works. This Bill is increasing mandatory minimum sentences for murder of an intimate partner. Does that mean you would like less sentencing for people who murder their intimate partner? Maybe we should let them walk out of court and apply no custodial sentence. That is the logical consequence of what the member is proposing. That would not be in line with community expectations.

The member talked about spit hoods. They are a key tool to keep people safe in their workplace. If someone spat on you in your workplace, I do not think you would like it. You would appreciate that person being unable to spit, rather than everyone else having to wear protective gear. Imagine sitting at the Rapid Creek Markets and everyone has to wear biohazard PPE. It would be better if there is one person spitting that they wear a light cotton gauze. I would be happy to put on a spit hood at any time or place. They are not harmful; they are there to protect our workers.

I acknowledge the personal experience of the Member for Gwoja, who talked about his family who lost loved ones to domestic violence. It is rich of the former Attorney-General to attack this government and the current Attorney-General on this legislation. He attacked the mandatory sentencing, but he purchased Metcash shares before allowing Stronger Futures …

Mr PAECH A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; I find it offensive that the Member for Blain said that I am attacking the Attorney-General. That is a negative word. I have been critical, but not attacking.

Madam SPEAKER: These words are synonymous in this Chamber—attacking, debating or having a different opinion. You are being a bit pedantic. Stick to the topic, Member for Blain, and please direct your comments through me.

Mr KERLE: That point of order is what I expect from a member who declared the word 'incompetent' to be offensive in this parliament. This is from someone who purchased shares in Metcash.

I will read from an ABC article, which said that Metcash:

> *… supplies alcohol to Central Australian bottle shops two months before the Intervention-era Stronger Futures alcohol bans lapsed in the region.*

We are all aware of the river of domestic violence and the torrent of blood that flowed in our emergency departments in Central Australia as a result of the Stronger Futures laws lapsing. Shame! The Member for Gwoja has no credibility to speak in this space.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence! Stop the interjections, please.

Mr KERLE: Those on the other side love to talk about the DFSV-ICRO report. Page 24 of the report shows the DFSV-related assaults from 2018 to 2023. It is clear that from 2020 to 2023, the end of the reporting period—other stats confirm this—DFSV-related assaults rose every year, year on year, in every region.

All the things those opposite talk about, they had the chance to implement while they were in power for eight long years, and what was the result? The result was year-on-year increases in DFSV assaults, and against whom? Predominantly, Indigenous women. The most marginalised vulnerable members of this Territory were, by and large, the greatest victims of the policies of the former government, two members of which sit across from us. There is a credibility deficit in their contributions.

I will take a little walk down memory lane, because it is useful in this parliament—we have four-year terms and people come and go. It is useful to remember failed experiments of the past. In 2019, the then Attorney-General introduced a Bill called the Justice Legislation Amendment (Domestic and Family Violence) Amendment Bill 2019. It was debated on 25 June 2020. The Bill did three things, two of which were commendable and one of which was not.

One of the commendable ones one was related to DV impacts on tenancy. There was one on introducing strangulation as an offence, specifically to DV. One of the key things it did, and I will read from the explanatory statement—this is true double speak—was:

> *… removing a disincentive for defendants in domestic violence proceedings to attend rehabilitation programs by providing that the completion of a program …*

A men's behaviour change program, which it talks about later:

> *… is an exceptional circumstance for the purpose of mandatory sentencing.*

That Bill created a loophole whereby people could say, 'I will go to a men's behaviour change program and sit in it for however long it is'. This Bill enshrined in legislation that completing a program is an exceptional circumstance. What racism! To say that being able to complete a program is an exceptional circumstance—what paternalism. I cannot comprehend the thinking behind putting this kind of thing into legislation—the disassociation from reality. I will continue, the Bill amends the:

> *…Bail Act 1982 to provide that rehabilitation programs declared by Minister under Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 are included amongst the programs…*

In the debate on 25 June 2020, the Member for Spillett, our Chief Minister, said:

> *We remain opposed to the dilution of the mandatory sentencing component of this bill. It does that by having the completion of a rehabilitation program as a possible exceptional circumstance.*

This is some six months after the Bill was introduced.

Mr Paech: She was wrong.

Mr KERLE: Well, it is on *Hansard*.

Mr Paech: Well, she was wrong.

Mr KERLE: I read on:

> *It is our understanding that only one men's behaviour program exists in the Northern Territory, there is no available data on it and it is in Alice Springs. Can the minister confirm that? If there is only one program, and it is in Alice Springs, does that mean people in Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy or Tennant Creek … would be bailed … to Alice Springs to undertake the program?*

This is what we were dealing with under the former government. This is why DV went up year after year under the former government, because its ideology blinded it to the reality on the ground. Our government is

not blinded by ideology. Our government is grounded in reality, listening to the people of the Territory, responding …

Mr Paech: Full of racism.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you just accused someone of being racist.

Mr PAECH: No, I said the party of was full of racism, not an individual.

Madam SPEAKER: That is true, but you are treading on shaky ground.

Mr KERLE: Our government is grounded in reality, listening to Territorians, bringing forward a comprehensive picture to address the issues facing us today. As a result, after year-on-year increases in domestic violence, we have finally seen a 3% decline in domestic violence Territory wide. Domestic violence has increased by more than that in some areas, which is showing that while there is more work to be done, what we are doing is working.

I pick up on the Member for Drysdale's comments. He put his finger on the key issue. There is a moral value in keeping the community safe. It is not enough to make announcements, issue media releases, pass legislation with programs that do not exist or let people out of jail for committing crimes they are convicted of. It is important to keep people safe. The result of that is that we have lowered the number of victims of crime by significant numbers since we have come to government, which is helping the people of the Northern Territory.

I give a shout-out to Sarah Austin from the Darwin Youth Services program, who is a constituent of Drysdale. She has a fantastic program which gamifies important concepts like boundaries, teaching kids about red flags in relationships.

Every time we talk about domestic violence, I talk about the 12 signs of coercive control. It is important to teach kids at a young age—from the last years of primary school and through high school—that it is not okay for someone to control who you are friends with or what you wear. As young people grow and enter into relationships, when they encounter these behaviours, they can identify them and know that it is not okay. Hopefully, that gives them the strength to make good choices and choose to exit relationships that are harmful to them.

I will talk about those 12 signs of coercive control, as per Relationships Australia. The signs are:

1. isolating you from your support system
2. monitoring your activities throughout the day
3. denying you freedom and autonomy
4. gaslighting
5. name-calling and severe criticism
6. limiting access to money and controlling finance
7. coercing you to take care of all of the domestic duties
8. turning the children against you
9. controlling aspects of your health and body
10. making jealous accusations about the time you spend with family or friends
11. regulating the sexual relationship
12. threatening children or pets as an extreme form of intimidation.

In this House we often talk about alcohol-fuelled domestic violence. That makes up the majority of the domestic violence we see …

Ms Uibo: No, it does not.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections, please.

Mr KERLE: I will continue. There are other kinds of domestic violence. Coercive control is a particularly insidious type, which can sneak into any demographic, any level of society and people from any background. It is something people need to be aware of so that young people, as they choose their life partner, can make good decisions.

I support this Bill—I think you can tell—because it is part of a broader picture. It is bringing the murder of an intimate partner in a domestic violence context into line with mandatory sentencing for other similar offences. It is also bringing us into line with some other states and jurisdictions down south which have already made this change. It is more consistent.

If someone makes the decision with intent to murder their partner and are convicted by a judge after a trial by jury and found guilty of that offence, then they should spend 25 years in custody, which in the Northern Territory is the term of their natural life. Then the community and any of their future potential partners are safe.

I am a father of three boys, and I do my best to teach them every day that men's strength exists to protect and provide for their families and loved ones, never to harm.

We need a multipronged approach to combat DV. We have a fantastic Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence, Minister Cahill, who is working every day to keep children safe and reduce domestic violence in the Territory. We have a Cabinet which is working hard every day to keep Territorians safe.

I support programs like Sarah Austin's program that runs in schools to educate our young people about strong boundaries and healthy relationships.

We need to work on alcohol-fuelled violence, which unfortunately results in some of the worst crimes, and a large number of them. There will be more to see in that area this year.

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

Debate suspended.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
GPs@Parliament

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, we have a few minutes until midday. I remind you that in the atrium at 12 noon we will have the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners putting on an event for us called GPs@Parliament. It will be opened by the Chair of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners NT, Dr Sam Heard. This event is an opportunity for members to connect directly with the GPs who provide frontline primary care in our communities and to discuss the challenges facing healthcare in the Territory.

They are also offering us a quick health check. You can have your blood pressure checked or diabetes screened. It is being run from midday to 4 pm in Parliament House.

I encourage you all to step outside and avail yourselves of this service and meet our precious GPs.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I present an amended notice for General Business Notice number 25 standing in my name, that this Assembly:

1. notes the importance of safe, respectful and professional parliamentary workplaces

2. acknowledges that all members have a responsibility to model integrity, dignity and respectful conduct in every setting connected to their role

3. recognises that bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation and misuse of authority have no place in the Northern Territory parliament, including towards the Department of the Legislative Assembly staff

4. supports the amendment of the *Legislative Assembly (Members' Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards) Act 2008* to include a clear behaviour code for members with independent oversight, confidential complaint handling and a range of proportionate sanctions

5. calls on the government to implement such a behaviour code as a priority to ensure parliamentary standards reflect community expectations and are consistent with best practice across the Commonwealth.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall present a motion calling that the Assembly:

1. notes that in 2022 the Member for Spillett introduced the Fuel Price Disclosure Bill, stating it would drive down fuel prices and ease the cost-of-living pressures for Territorians

2. notes that Territorians continue to face some of the highest fuel prices in the nation and that cost-of-living pressures remain a concern for families, businesses and regional communities

3. calls on the CLP government to honour its commitment to Territorians by introducing and passing the Fuel Price Disclosure Bill during this term of parliament.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I present an amendment notice for General Business Notice number 4 standing in my name, that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly calls on the Finocchiaro CLP government to address high airfares and the availability, reliability and connectivity of air services across the Northern Territory as a priority to support the Territory's economic development and Territorians' liveability standards.

QUESTION TIME

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, in the absence of Minister Hersey, all questions relating to the minister's portfolios should be directed to the Deputy Chief Minister.

Darwin River Dam – Pump Station Flooding

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES

When were you first advised that flooding had forced the Darwin River Dam pump station to stop operating? Information circulating last night suggested that the incident occurred at 4.37 pm, yet Territorians waited hours before being told anything. They were only advised by Facebook post late last night, advising them to conserve water. This morning the Attorney-General said on radio that an emergency response meeting was held yesterday afternoon in response to the situation.

It is the responsibility of the government to inform Territorians of important information like this. Why did you and your CLP government wait hours to warn Territorians and the people of Darwin that their drinking water supply had been disrupted and that they needed to start saving water?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, on the issue of water supply in Darwin, Darwin residents were notified yesterday evening that the pumping station infrastructure responsible for supplying water from the Darwin River Dam had failed due to water inundation at the pumping station.

Power and Water confirmed that this is an unprecedented situation and is working to get the pump station online as quickly and safely as possible. Water supply in Darwin will be maintained throughout the flood event as Power and Water has commenced drawing water from the bore fields at McMinns and Howard East.

I make it clear that a boil water alert was issued this morning at 11 am by the Chief Health Officer, which is a precautionary boil alert for the greater Darwin area. It is important to make people aware that because the water is being drawn from the bores, there may be some discolouration. The boil alert has been issued by the Chief Health Officer in regard to that precautionary matter.

I am also advised that residents should reduce their consumption. We have already put that information out: fewer showers, and reduce water. All the major water users have been spoken to and asked to reduce their water use.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Concisely the question is about the timeframe. Why did the minister not warn people when the government found out yesterday?

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Noting the clock lost 15 seconds. It did not stop when there was a point of order.

Madam SPEAKER: Noted. Thank you, Member for Daly.

Mr EDGINGTON: The water has not been turned off. There is a reduction in supply due to the use of the bores. Yes, we were notified yesterday afternoon, but water had inundated the pumping station at Darwin River Dam. We have a natural disaster going on in the Northern Territory. It is not just the Darwin River Dam that has suffered flooding; it is all over different parts of the Northern Territory.

Workers from Power and Water went to check on what the problem was. They need to be able to get on with their job rather than being criticised on social media by the Leader of the Opposition and her team.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: The member has about five seconds to go. Just let him go.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; the member is making imputations which are not correct. I was criticising the Chief Minister for a lack of leadership.

Madam SPEAKER: No. Take your seat, Member for Daly. You are on a warning.

Mr EDGINGTON: The same with the Deputy Opposition Leader, all they want to do is create uncertainty, divide the community and criticise Power and Water workers, who are on the front line doing their job.

Katherine Flood – Recovery Efforts

Mr MACKAY to CHIEF MINISTER

As Territorians know, the Katherine and Big Rivers communities are going through an incredibly difficult time following the recent flooding. Can you update the Assembly on your visit to Katherine yesterday and what you saw on the ground, as well as how recovery efforts are progressing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are facing multiple emergency events at once off the back of emergency events in Alice Springs. Now is a time to come together as a community with everyone with their shoulder to the wheel to pull together. The community of Katherine do that better than anyone.

They set an example when it comes to community support, and that was live on display yesterday when I went with the Member for Katherine who has just had surgery. We met with Dave and Emma who were arguably the hardest hit by the flood events. They had about 40 people over the course of the day volunteering. Literally, the entire contents of their house were in the back of trucks and on the front verge.

It was incredibly confronting for the Member for Katherine, and I am sure she will not mind me saying this, it was terribly emotional—a re-living of the 1998 floods. The feedback I got from community members was that the smell of the drenched, soaked mud reminded people of the smell and the aftermath of 1998, which I heard many times yesterday.

The Member for Katherine called Trent from Rod and Rifle—one of Katherine's favourite sons—and David Reed. People would have seen Ben Hockey from Hockey's Northern Services, along with his staff, delivering and filling all the sandbags in the main street. We went to see Phil from North Bank Caravan Park, whose accommodation facilities had also been devastated. He and his sons were ripping Colorbond off the walls and panels off the floor, taking out wet insulation and trying to do everything they can to save the remainder of the building.

It was an emotional but incredibly uplifting day in the sense that the community came together strong, and a great example of that was the partnership at Town & Country Butchers. Jason from Town & Country Butchers and Mel from Bluehole butchers came together and were pumping meat out the door to make sure people had food.

Woolies opened later in the afternoon, which was great. We caught up with Rinaldi, the store manager. Everyone was happy that they could buy some food. The newsagency, with Sondra and Brett, had opened as well as a number of other businesses. The strength in that community is there.

We have activated the disaster relief funding, and people are flocking to Katherine High School. We are desperately working to get a new location to ease some of that pressure and enable us to get it to people as soon as possible. The community spirit is high and the cleanup will be long, but the people of Katherine have done an incredible job in a terribly trying situation.

Darwin Water Supply – Health Alert

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for HEALTH

My Labor team has been advised that yesterday NT Health officials were aware internally that a health alert was required regarding Darwin's water supply. Why did Territorians have to wait almost 24 hours for you and your government to make this information public?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I said, the Darwin River Dam stopped operating just after 4.30 pm yesterday due to substantial flooding at the pump station and associated equipment. The Darwin River Dam wall has not been impacted by this event. Power and Water advised that this is an unprecedented situation; we have never before seen this volume of water at the dam.

Over the past few weeks, and again today, Labor members are exploiting uncertainty in their communities and trying to gain cheap political points about the situation at Darwin River Dam. The community has seen Labor members rushing to social media and, in contrast, our government getting on with the job. We issued alerts. This morning the Chief Health Officer made a decision to issue a boil water alert. Two bores came online this morning. They were not operating last night.

The Leader of the Opposition is trying to create uncertainty about why the boil alert was issued this morning. It is creating fear amongst the people in Darwin. Labor is all about creating uncertainty, dividing the community and creating fear amongst the people living in Darwin …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; specifically, why did Territorians wait 24 hours for this advice after it was decided by your department?

Mr Kerle: It has not even been 24 hours.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please! We do not need any commentary from the sidelines. The minister is answering it, and he has time to continue.

Mr EDGINGTON: I am trying to answer the question, but obviously the Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear the real answer to this. Those opposite have been pushing out press releases, posting on social media and making statements ever since this emergency started in communities across the Northern Territory—in Darwin, my electorate of Barkly, Katherine and Alice Springs. All we have heard is criticism from those opposite. The Labor opposition is criticising our frontline workers for getting on with things and doing their job.

Those opposite should get on board and share consistent information to let people know the real situation at Darwin River Dam. The pumping station is under water. The Chief Health Officer issued a boil water alert this morning because we are using two bores. Stop creating fear and divide in the community. Read what is online, take notice of it and share that information. Stop spreading untruths in the community.

Darwin River Dam – Water Supply

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES

As a long-term Territorian, I can attest that this Wet Season has been wetter than most. Whether in Darwin, across the Top End, in the Big Rivers area, the Barkly or Central Australia, Territorians have experienced loss and delays. Like many other residents across the Territory, those in my electorate are keen to have an update on the situation. Can you please update the Assembly on how Power and Water is supporting communities through the floods? In simple terms, where are power, water and sewage services up to as of today and where are crews deployed? What actions are keeping drinking water supply and assets restored, and how can people get timely updates?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, residents in Darwin were notified yesterday that the pumping station infrastructure responsible for supplying water to the Darwin River Dam failed due to water inundation. Power and Water has confirmed that this is an unprecedented situation and that they will work to get the pump station on line as quickly and safely as possible. That is what they are doing at the moment; staff on the front line are working not only at the Darwin River Dam, but in many places across the Territory.

Water supply to Darwin will be maintained throughout this event. Power and Water commenced drawing water from the bore fields of McMinns and Howard East. Water may be discoloured and a reduction in pressure may be noticed by users. Just after 11 am the Chief Health Officer issued a precautionary boil water alert for the Darwin area, and that is based on the water now coming from the bore fields. As such, I am advised that all residents who draw water from the greater Darwin water network should boil their water prior to consumption.

This advice should be followed in addition to the advice from Power and Water to limit water use where possible. Notices have gone out to reduce showers, turn off your irrigation system—I must say, the large users such as INPEX, government and councils have all done the right thing by reducing the use of water in Darwin.

I ask all Territorians in the greater Darwin area to continue to follow all advice from NT Health and Power and Water. I also ask Territorians to monitor the Power and Water website and listen to the media. Social media has also been updated as well as SecureNT for further updates.

Power and Water has been working to ensure essential services are maintained and restored across Katherine and the Big Rivers region. As of last night, there were a total of 38 power, water and utility support contract workers on the ground in Katherine progressing assessments and repairing reconnections.

While power and water was initially impacted for more than 1,000 customers in Katherine, as of this morning around 400 remain without power. One sewer pump station in Katherine has been switched off due to flood water inundation, and restoration planning for this asset is ongoing.

In relation to the remote areas of Daly River, Jilkminggan, Beswick, Binjari and Murray Downs, restoration works are underway as we speak. I thank all the Power and Water frontline workers for their work.

Darwin Water Supply – Flooding

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Today, Territorians have received conflicting messages about Darwin's water supply. NT Health issued advice to boil water, Power and Water issued separate contradicting advice about how the water could be used and then at a press conference today—which you did not attend and neither did your Minister for Essential Services—Power and Water officials appeared unaware that they had issued their own statement last night. In the midst of a serious situation in the greater Darwin region, why have neither you nor the Minister for Essential Services stood up, backed your agencies and taken the lead in providing clear information to the community?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am disturbed and disappointed by the line of attack from the opposition. We are literally juggling simultaneous natural disasters impacting thousands of people across the Northern Territory. There

are thousands of public servants, be it Police, Fire and Emergency services, school teachers, nurses, ambos and Children and Families providing responses Territory wide.

Now you want to pick on the acting CEO of Power and Water who stood up to provide a brief. I hope you get the chance, next time you see him, to apologise because we are trying to make sure Territorians understand that water consumption has to reduce.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, take your seat, Chief Minister. Opposition members, you asked the question and you have chatted the whole way through the first minute of the response.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; imputations. The acting CEO was not mentioned in the question. It was about the leadership of Lia Finocchiaro, who is the Chief Minister. She needs to take some leadership on this matter, front up and answer the question.

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, Member for Daly. It is not an imputation; it is an answer to a question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It was actually in the question; they were criticising the information put out by Power and Water. They literally talked about a press conference that the acting CEO was at. I have done two media events this morning, and do you know where I was, Opposition Leader? I was with the Member for Daly at the same event where we were celebrating the firewoman of the year. The Member for Daly was there with me, so this politicising is not fooling anyone.

You put out a press release saying that we should have anticipated a natural disaster in a flash flood yesterday afternoon. Someone from the opposition should explain to me how anyone is meant to anticipate a flash flood of a proportion that the Northern Territory has never seen before. You should be putting out factual information and supporting the emergency response instead of trying to nitpick and score political points in an emergency.

Let me give you an example. I have not heard from the Opposition Leader this entire time, even though Beswick has been flooded and parts of her community. I have not heard from her at all—zilch, zero, zippo, nothing.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; the imputation that I have not requested information from the Chief Minister is a lie. Check your emails, Chief Minister. Ask your staff.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Take your seat, Opposition Leader.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The Opposition Leader just called the leader a liar; that is essentially what she said.

Madam SPEAKER: No, she did not use the word ‘liar’.

Mr Edgington: She said it was a lie.

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat. We will have no more discourse across the Chamber. There will be no more chatter. The next person I hear having a conversation on the sideline will spend some time out of the Chamber. This is important communication that the Chief Minister is providing on a current natural disaster, and I think she deserves to be listened to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Opposition Leader wrote to me about disaster relief funding, not about her community. On the other hand, the Member for Daly has contacted me no less than 19 times, all of which we have responded to as quickly as possible. In doing so, he simultaneously would post it on Facebook, and every question he asked us proved to be incorrect.

The politicisation from those opposite is causing distress to their own communities. It is causing confusion about what is fact and what is not fact. I urge those opposite to follow the emergency response. We are dealing with an emergency situation.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; the imputations that I have been incorrect are not correct because this is the information I am getting on the ground. It is not true.

Madam SPEAKER: No, stop. Member for Daly, be silent. You do not use a point of order to stand up and debate an answer given by a minister. There is no imputation.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is beyond disappointing and incorrect. They should be following and supporting emergency services right now; that is the bottom line.

Flood Damage – Infrastructure

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

The Territory has experienced significant rainfall and flooding across most regions during this Wet Season, which has a serious impact on roads and other critical infrastructure, particularly in remote areas. In many parts of the Territory rainfall has reached record levels, leading to widespread flooding and damage to homes, businesses, livelihoods and key transport corridors.

Can you provide an update on the status of the flood damage to Territory infrastructure, including roads and transport links? Can you also outline the actions the Territory government is taking to assess the damage, restore access for our communities and freight and progress repair works to support recovery?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri is a long-term Territory resident and has seen all sorts of events in her time here.

The Territory government is working closely with the Australian Government under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements to support the repair of essential public infrastructure. Our focus is on three key priorities: completing detailed damage assessments so we know what needs fixing; progressing urgent repairs to restore safe access for communities and freight; and rebuilding infrastructure to be stronger and more resilient for future weather events. We need to take the learnings from what has happened over the last few weeks.

Flood recovery, particularly in remote areas, can take time as roads must dry out before major repairs can begin. We must prioritise safety and make sensible decisions if driving on those roads while recovery efforts continue in the weeks and months ahead. People need to slow down, be patient and, of course, be aware. We do not want to see anybody getting into trouble on our road network due to the damage.

We would be hard pressed to find anyone in the Territory who has not experienced the impacts of this Wet Season. Kicking off with Cyclone Fina in November, it has been a relentless season requiring a significant response over months. There has been unprecedented damage to critical infrastructure, particularly road and transport links, where fast-moving water can quickly wash out road surfaces, culverts and floodways.

Our government's priority has been community safety and maintaining access wherever possible. The Territory continues to experience record rainfall and elevated water levels, as seen yesterday.

DLI, alongside contractors and local councils, has crews stretched across the Territory to assess the damage and begin recovery works as floodwaters recede. Teams have started to roll out across affected regions, inspecting roads, bridges, culverts and drainage infrastructure to determine the full extent of the damage. This will take quite some time.

The latest NT Road Report shows up to 65 major regional road sections are closed due to flood damage. Most importantly, the rail corridor has reopened, with no major damage reported, ensuring that essential goods and supplies can continue to move into the Territory.

Unfortunately, late yesterday the Stuart Highway was open south of Katherine but had to be closed as two road trains became bogged in roadworks. As the Territory's key freight route, getting that highway reopened is a priority for us. We have teams on the ground in Katherine looking at alternatives for a bypass so that we can get vehicles through and we are prioritising essential goods and services on that network to get to Darwin to support the community.

Disaster Relief Payments

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Our police, emergency service workers, Red Cross staff, volunteers, school staff, community health workers, communications staff, local community heroes such as Trent de With in Katherine and many other people supporting the flood response have done an incredible job over the past few weeks, and they deserve our respect and gratitude. I acknowledge that you have announced disaster relief payments for the people of the Katherine local government area.

On behalf of the many people who have contacted me and the Labor team, can you advise the following: who exactly can access these grants, and what for? What is the criteria? What is the timeframe? Importantly, why have you not activated the same relief payments for the people of Palumpa, Daly, Jilkminggan, Mataranka, Wugularr, Barunga, Emu Point and other flood-affected communities?

Madam SPEAKER: That is a five-part question.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not think the opposition knows anything other than to spread division and misinformation and create angst. I do not think that midway through simultaneous emergencies is the right time to do that. Of any parliamentary sittings, this should be a uniting moment for everyone. I have been in this parliament for a long time, Madam Speaker, as have you. Usually these moments are uniting.

Oppositions understand that their job is to back their communities and make sure the information is heard and that issues are flushed up directly. I spoke many times over my career to Nicole Manison and Michael Gunner if I needed to know something, and they afforded me that respect.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; who can access the grants, what for, what is the criteria and timeframe, and why has the Chief Minister not activated the same relief payments for the other flood-affected communities?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, you need to get to the point.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Instead, all we have heard over the last few days is this idea that there is somehow a division.

I want to be clear that each of these emergency situations is at different stages of emergency response, and each requires a different response. We still remain in that response phase. That is being assessed and reassessed every day.

The water level is going down in Katherine. In Daly and other areas it is only the beginning. In Katherine people had to stay in situ, and we had shelters for people in Jilkminggan, Palumpa and Daly. We have evacuated some people to a proper evacuation centre, which means people have access to food, clothing, blankets, water and housing.

I have also been clear that all the approvals for the disaster relief payments will come through. We work with the federal government on that; it is run through the Territory Emergency Management Council, and that work happens behind the scenes with federal agencies. I do not understand the …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: She is getting to the answer.

Ms UIBO: I hope so. It is a specific question she has not answered; maybe she does not know.

Madam SPEAKER: She still has some time to answer your five-part question.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Exactly, Madam Speaker.

This is a grandstanding opportunity for the Opposition Leader instead of an opportunity to show real leadership. It is not possible in three minutes to answer the breadth of the question you asked. In any event,

there is a website that has the information on it, if you are so interested. It is the federal rules—your own colleagues set the rules; we do not.

I brought with me two staff from Children and Families to quickly set up and get those immediate relief payments out the door. We will additionally resource that because we have heard that there are huge lines in Katherine. We want people well supported.

NT Floods – Evacuee Support

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Can you update the Assembly on how the Finocchiaro government is working across agencies, including the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations and the Department of Children and Families, to maintain supply chains, support local businesses and provide shelter and assistance to evacuated communities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina's experience as a small business owner means he has a good understanding of what happens when the supply chain is interrupted in these challenging circumstances. Our government is ensuring that Territorians affected by flooding continue to have access to most essential goods and services, and we are supporting communities and businesses at this incredibly challenging time.

Flooding across parts of the Barkly and Big Rivers regions, as everybody knows, disrupted transport routes. It temporarily affected Power and Water infrastructure, as we are experiencing as far north as Darwin. It is an unprecedented situation. It forced evacuations in some communities.

To address the most immediate concerns for families, what has been critical is ensuring that they have access to essential supplies, food, drinking water and everyday household items. The Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations has been working closely with retailers and community providers across the Territory to make sure those essential goods are available and continue to reach communities where they are needed most.

I extend a big thanks to the retailers and community store networks, including Outback Stores, Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation and a number of independent retailers which are monitoring stock levels and identifying emerging supply risks, notifying of them as they occur so the department can respond and ensure those essential items are maintained.

Practical support is being delivered on the ground with essential food drops being delivered to communities including Binjari, Werenbun, Rockhole, Uminyuluk, Nemarluk and Emu Point, and the Department of Children and Families is leading the welfare functional group response, coordinating evacuation centres and supporting displaced residents.

Yesterday I went out to Marrara and Foskey and met with the residents from Daly River and Palumpa who are grateful to have escaped the rising flood waters and be safe and well. Their kids were at school yesterday, having the best time. When I arrived, Top End Critters were there, sharing around the snakes and lizards for a play, which not everybody was thrilled about but the kids thought was great.

Seven evacuation centres are currently operating across Darwin, Katherine and Mataranka, supporting 951 evacuees; welfare services including registration, essential supply and psychosocial support; a chaplaincy; catering—you name it. If they need it, we are doing it. Most critically, in Katherine funding is being delivered and we have so far given our $56,000 to 56 households.

NT Floods – Access to Information

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

Before I ask my question, I welcome my friend Alan Colegrave from my university, who has come to the Northern Territory for a holiday.

Chief Minister, many people have been in contact with me and my team, feeling incredibly stressed about the lack of information available to them. They say they are not receiving daily updates. Many Territorians do not know if their houses or businesses are flooded or not. People are going to shelters, some to evacuation

shelters, and are being given mixed messages about access to food, cooking facilities and food storage. All of this is contributing to people's anxiety during an already difficult time.

Will you commit to more regular updates across all available communication channels so Territorians get the important information that they need at this distressing and difficult time?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, what the Opposition Leader is saying is so unreliable because of the way she has approached this.

Ms Uibo: Are you calling my constituents liars?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I do not believe you, Opposition Leader, because if you really wanted to know, you would have called or messaged me, and you have not. Yet you want to stand in parliament and pretend like you care so much and are harvesting all this important information I need to know about. If you thought I needed to know about it, you would have called me on your phone. We have each other's number; we have spoken to each other before, and I provide you any information you ask for, but you have not asked.

To stand here and pretend like you care is total rubbish. To conflate the difference between a shelter and an evacuation centre—if it is a shelter you have to bring all your own gear; if it is an evacuation centre the Northern Territory provides it. Minister Cahill just explained the services that we have been delivering. In fact, even in the shelters we ended up providing all the support because many people came …

Ms Uibo: So you should! You are the government.

Madam SPEAKER: Excuse me. Please pause, Chief Minister. Opposition Leader, you have not stopped talking throughout the whole of this answer. Desist or you shall spend time out of the Chamber again.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I want to make something really clear. You all might think you are clever and are trying to have a political pot shot at me, and that is fine. I am the leader; I am happy to take that. I am happy to be thrown pot shots every day of the week, but the people you are criticising are the public servants on the ground providing the response.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question is clear. Will you commit to regular updates on all communication platforms so people can get this important information at this stressful and difficult time?

Madam SPEAKER: There will be no more points of order.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A great source of stress and angst is the tack being taken by the Labor opposition members. This is the point I am trying to make in appealing to them to stop and provide proper leadership and messaging support through a difficult time.

We are still mid-emergency; we have not even moved to the recovery phase yet, Opposition Leader. There are differences. You pretend that somehow the CLP government is the big bad guy and we changed all the definitions of 'shelter' and 'evacuation centre'. All of this is in the Territory emergency management plan, which is the same one that existed under Labor, when you, Opposition Leader, were a minister for eight years.

This is an emergency, not a political pointscoring exercise. The Opposition Leader can try to take shots at me all day; I do not mind. That is politics. What I mind is that those opposite have missed the point. It is the people on the ground who are most impacted by their words, not me. I do not go to sleep at night worrying about what you are calling me, but I lose confidence in the fact that the children, families and workers get upset. The teachers at those high school shelters are standing there providing an emergency response to their community. This is a huge response, and you should have a lot more respect for the people running it.

NT Floods – Prisoner Community Work and Reintegration Programs

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Following all the recent flooding in the Territory and surrounds, Territorians have once again seen the importance of communities working together through times of recovery and rebuilding. Across the Northern

Territory, low-risk prisoners participate in community work and reintegration programs that can provide practical support to local communities while also helping prisoners develop skills and responsibility ahead of their return to society. The people of Blain appreciate these programs because they bring genuine benefit and support to my constituents. Can you outline how these programs deliver to local communities and the prisoners?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there is no stronger advocate for the work parties than the Member for Blain, particularly for the Territorians who genuinely need that support, including the seniors in his electorate.

Our prisoner work programs deliver real, practical benefits to communities in the Territory and support safer and more effective rehabilitation for the prisoners. We have a two-pronged attack in relation to this.

During the recent Alice Springs flood, prisoner work crews from Alice Springs Correctional Centre assisted Police and Emergency Services. With the water level rising, some 1,700 sandbags were required to help safeguard Alice Springs Hospital and nearby homes. Guess who helped fill those sandbags. Prisoner work parties. Prisoners were helping the community and paying back the community for the crimes they committed by supporting it and doing their bit. The prisoners started sandbagging on the Friday and worked through the weekend to supply hundreds of sandbags for that area. This support was part of the whole-of-government agency support.

I thank all the government workers who are working across the Northern Territory, including the frontline workers: the people from Power and Water working on the dam; the healthcare workers; the nurses; the teachers; the police; and the firies. I thank all those frontline workers from the bottom of my heart for what they are doing in this time of crisis. This is a natural event of unprecedented circumstances in the Northern Territory, and those frontline workers are out there supporting Territorians.

In the second round of events in Alice Springs, when the water rose in the Todd, when the water level went down the prisoner work parties cleaned up the debris around the Todd River and Alice Springs, trying to help the council in its work to clean up the town. The Treasurer visited those work parties when they were picking up sticks and mud, cleaning up the community. Not only did the prisoners help prior, but also after.

This is a great initiative because the work parties also helped set up the evacuation centres. The commissioner has advised me that the department is working on plans to deploy prisoners to Katherine to help clean up there. We have seen the pictures of mess, trees and debris across the area. The prisoners will be in Katherine to help clean up the community and build a safer and stronger community with the support of the Corrections officers, who will be helping to do that as well. I shout out to those Corrections officers who do a great job of making sure our communities are safer and cleaner.

PFAS Contamination – Rapid Creek

J DAVIS to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

People in my electorate of Johnston continue to be worried about PFAS contamination in Rapid Creek, a place where many people continue to swim and fish. Residents have been told that there have been no studies into the long-term impacts of PFAS exposure in Darwin. When was the last time PFAS levels in water, sediment, fish and crustaceans in Rapid Creek were tested? What were those levels? Will further testing be completed? What is your government doing to clean up Rapid Creek?

Given the current extreme rainfall which can disturb contaminated sediments, move PFAS through stormwater drains and creeks and spread contamination into downstream wetlands and coastal areas, what monitoring is being done to determine PFAS levels in Rapid Creek and surrounding waterways?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not have any information about the Rapid Creek PFAS levels in front of me, but I am more than happy to go away and find out further information for the member.

Mandatory Sentencing – Domestic Violence Order Breaches

Mr HOWE to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

We all know the Northern Territory faces some of the highest domestic violence rates in the country. In March last year you introduced mandatory sentencing for repeat breaches of domestic violence orders to strengthen protections for victims. Can you update the Assembly on how this reform is working? How does it demonstrate this government's commitment to putting victims first and restoring safety and certainty to our communities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a slight change of pace.

The Member for Drysdale is often called up by victims of domestic violence in his electorate, and he often speaks to them directly. In fact, not that long ago, the Member for Drysdale called me and we both went together to a property in Gray where there was a victim of domestic violence. We sat down and had a good chat with her. The Member for Drysdale asked the young woman what she would like to see happen to the person who did that to her. She said, 'I want him to be taken away and locked up'. That went to the heart of why we spend our time in here changing laws to protect victims. Member for Drysdale, thank you for the work you do with the people in your electorate who are victims.

We know that this is a different approach from what we saw under Labor, when there was an 80% increase in domestic violence attacks. That is horrendous. Labor members basically turned a blind eye to it. It kept increasing every time the statistics were released. This government will not stand for that.

We came to government on a mandate to reduce crime and address these horrific rates of domestic violence. A year ago today I introduced mandatory sentencing for DVO breaches to send a clear message to our community that we will not stand for people who bash their partner and get away with it. There are strong and severe consequences for someone who breaches a DVO and spends more time trying to be with the person they have bashed. There are no second chances under our watch.

I will tell you about some of the data we have received. There were 1,864 DVO breaches, which saw 87% of those offenders put behind bars for those offences. That means there are approximately 1,600 DV perpetrators who had a serious consequence, and 1,600 victims—who are likely women and Aboriginal—are using the time that their perpetrator is behind bars to sort their life out. They may have children and may be seeking refuge with family or shelters. This gives them that reprieve, which is why it was so important that we passed that law back in March 2025.

Today we are discussing other DV sentencing laws, and we will continue that after lunch. I want the community to know that we will always send a clear message that the rights of victims will come before the rights of offenders, especially DV perpetrators.

NT Floods – Assistance

Mr YOUNG to CHIEF MINISTER

Many people are asking why the Australian Defence Force has not been called in to provide assistance during the floods. Can you explain why no assistance was sought from the Australian Defence Force to help support operations on the ground, including evacuations, logistics, supply, drop-offs and emergency response coordination? Why did you not ask for assistance with major response needs like sandbagging in Katherine and evacuations out of Palumpa and Daly River? Will you be seeking assistance from the ADF for recovery efforts to take pressures off our emergency services, public servants and volunteers? If not, why not?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that question highlights the ignorance of those opposite and goes to the heart of them trying to strike fear about issues, trying to suggest that we have not done everything possible to provide the most fulsome possible response.

The Member for Daly and the Opposition Leader know that the Australian Defence Force is embedded in our emergency operation centre. There are uniformed personnel in our EOC, so your assertion is entirely

incorrect, Member for Daly. I urge all four of you—soon to be five—to please understand that an emergency response is led by emergency professionals. They are the people sitting in our emergency operation centre. It is not me, the Member for Barkly or anyone else in this Chamber; it is the emergency response professionals which, in the Northern Territory, includes the military and the Bureau of Meteorology.

It is quite interesting that under a federal Labor government and with an NT Labor opposition, the agency you have most attacked is the Bureau of Meteorology for somehow not predicting an act of God in a flash flood yesterday afternoon, criticising the Bureau for other lack of information, when on Thursday night the latest available data for the BOM—which is a federal agency full of amazing people who work closely with our Northern Territory teams. They are an amazing part of our system. We also have Billy Lynch embedded in NTES now, so that is amazing.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I will take the Chief Minister back to the question that was asked. Will there be assistance …

Madam SPEAKER: No, do not do that.

Mr YOUNG: She has not answered the question.

Madam SPEAKER: It was a simple question, was it not?

Mr YOUNG: She has not answered it. Exactly, I agree; it is simple.

Madam SPEAKER: The Chief Minister has been heading in the right direction.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: My point is about misinformation by those opposite. In fact, the Member for Solomon has even commented on Power and Water's Facebook saying, 'Thanks for the update, Power and Water. There is a lot of misinformation.' So we must be careful.

I reinforce the fact that the Bureau of Meteorology does an amazing job. They are embedded in our EOC, and I thank the military personnel who are embedded in our EOC. I remind those opposite that Border Force, an Australian Government agency, provided evacuation and other support, and I confirm that the question asked by the Member for Daly is 100% categorically incorrect.

Domestic Violence – Reduction

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In Fannie Bay I am regularly approached by local families, small business owners and frontline workers who tell me that they are finally starting to feel a real shift. They are noticing fewer violent incidents on their streets, less fear at home and more confidence that when they reach out for help there will be a response. The latest NT Police data shows clear and measurable decrease in domestic violence trends across the Territory. Residents can see the change in the Territory, but more importantly, they can feel it in their daily lives.

Can you update the Assembly on what is driving these reductions in domestic violence and how the Finocchiaro CLP government is continuing to back the work being done in electorates like Fannie Bay to build safer homes and stronger, more confident neighbourhoods across the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an area of strong interest for the Member for Fannie Bay, and I appreciate the advocacy that she does in this space. Her community has been severely affected by domestic violence from time to time.

It is critical that we demonstrate to our community the work that is being done to tackle the things that create the risk and address the root causes so real results start happening.

As the Attorney-General said, when I was appointed as the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence, domestic violence assaults had increased 81% in the Northern Territory over eight years. That number defies imagining; it is so many people impacted and so many families damaged, mainly women and Aboriginal women suffering at the hands of their Aboriginal male partners. We had to start looking at why this was happening and how we could do things differently because, after eight years, if all we were seeing was an increase, clearly something was going wrong.

We shifted the focus to look at the root causes of domestic violence. Sadly, I found in my time—not just as the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence, but also working in child protection and in Children and Families more generally—that we had terrible situations where children were not being supported. They were on the street without the wraparound services that they needed, and they were going down this path. All they saw was that violence was the answer. We have shifted the focus on why that was the case.

We have improved information-sharing between agencies so the risks are identified earlier and managed more effectively. We have committed to record domestic violence funding, an unprecedented $36m spread across a range of departments, so we can all work together to achieve results in this space.

We implemented the Circuit Breaker Program. This innovative program has assisted 515 young people and their families to get them on track, provide support and look at the causes that were leading them down the wrong path.

As evidenced by the latest police data, in 12 months we have achieved the impossible—a fact that those on the other side refuse to acknowledge, for reasons I cannot fathom. We have seen a decrease in domestic violence of 3% across the Territory. This is the work of frontline workers across the board who are doing their job every day in the most difficult of circumstances, turning around the lives of our children and making our families and communities safer as a general rule.

NT Floods – Evacuation Sites

Mr BROWN to CHIEF MINISTER

Yesterday on radio you said that the weather changed overnight last Thursday, with your government left scrambling to respond to the floods that have affected thousands of Territorians. Given we are at the tail end of a massive Wet Season and an unprecedented amount of rain since November, why did the CLP government not have the necessary plans and resources in place before conditions worsened? Why were the residents of Palumpa left waiting to be evacuated in croc-infested waters for 24 hours because evacuation sites were not ready for them?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Arafura is better than that. He should have torn up that question before he read it, because that is rubbish.

Palumpa has two camps: bottom camp and top camp. Bottom camp was moved to top camp well in advance. It is only a little walk to top camp. Everyone was in top camp, except for 11 people who refused to go, and they were not all people from Palumpa. No-one was in croc-infested waters. We had to evacuate those 11 people because we would not allow them to stand their ground and put their lives at risk. We rescued them, despite telling them repeatedly to take a little walk to top camp. I flew over it yesterday; we are talking about a couple of hundred metres. I know that you know this, which is why I know you are better than this question.

The Bureau of Meteorology, as amazing as it is, cannot predict every inch of every weather event. We have saturation points, and all of that was being carefully watched. All the NTES preparations were done, but that significant amount of rain over Thursday night into that catchment—remember that not all rain is born equal; you need the right rain in the right spot. Exactly the same things happen in Alice Springs; just because it is raining in Alice does not mean the Todd flows. If it is raining at Bond Springs, then the Todd flows. This is exactly the same in Katherine. If it rains 100 kilometres up, in that Nitmiluk catchment, then the Katherine River rises, not if it is raining in Katherine.

All the weather systems moved and changed tack during the night, which BOM is obviously monitoring, along with already having our emergency operation centre stood up. We were already watching every component of this. When the data changed, the response changed and we got it done. Everyone is safe; everyone has always been safe.

On Friday we mobilised all of the resources—nine fixed wing and 18 helicopters. We could not send helicopters due to the weather. On Saturday everyone was withdrawn. We had 80 left in Daly that we took across the river, up to Five Mile and then helicoptered to Batchelor, where they were put on buses. That was the response provided at the time in the environment provided to us.

Every time something floods it is different. For example, last time we evacuated Daly, a couple of weeks ago, we well and truly had more warning and were able to bus everyone. Last Friday morning the road was already

cut off. I want to know what you would have done differently, Member for Arafura, because our emergency services team did a great job.

Health – General Practitioners

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for HEALTH

Having a strong healthcare system and ensuring Territorians have the best healthcare is a commitment of the CLP government. General practitioners are often the first point of contact with patients, delivering early diagnosis, preventative care and ongoing treatment. They help keep our communities healthy, particularly in times of crisis like now. Their broad skills allow them to manage complex conditions, support hospital services and play a critical role during emergencies and patient transfers. GPs help ease pressures on hospitals and improve health outcomes for communities across the Territory.

At this important time, can you please update this Assembly on the important role the GPs play in the NT healthcare system and how they help us to deliver the best possible healthcare for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an important question because today we have the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in Parliament House holding their inaugural GPs@Parliament event in the atrium, as we saw straight after lunch. This event brings together GPs and members of parliament to foster connections and build the relationships which are essential for delivering better health outcomes for all Territorians. The GPs will be available to discuss health needs and provide health advice and quick health checks. This event provides all MLAs an introduction to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to discuss the key challenges and opportunities facing primary healthcare systems in the Northern Territory.

This is also an opportunity for a short one-on-one conversation with a specialist GP, including checks for diabetes and of blood pressure and weight. I thank the Royal Australian College of GPs NT Chair, Dr Sam Heard, as well as State Manager Judith Oliver and all the GPs in attendance today for the incredible work that they do and for coordinating this important event for all MLAs.

The GPs will be in the atrium until 4 pm today, so take the opportunity to go and visit them. GPs are vital across the entire healthcare system, from local clinics and primary healthcare services to hospitals and aeromedical retrievals. They provide frontline care, early diagnosis and ongoing management of illness, helping reduce pressure on hospitals while ensuring patients receive timely treatment and coordinated care, particularly in remote and regional communities. I encourage all Territorians to see a GP and have regular check-ups.

Early last month I was pleased to announce that we are boosting the Territory health workforce with more than 200 new doctors this year, and under the CLP we have recorded a strong uplift in trainee doctor retention. A large proportion of NT Health's Royal Darwin and Palmerston Regional Hospitals doctor-in-training workforce is continuing from 2025 into 2026, with a retention rate of 78%. That is a significant increase on last year.

We said that 2026 would be a year of growth, certainty and security. We are growing our health workforce and providing it with security and certainty to deliver better care and stronger frontline services for every Territorian. We are delivering on our commitment to restore our unique Territory lifestyle.

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

SENTENCING AMENDMENT (MURDER) BILL
Serial 51

Continued from earlier this day.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I support the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026. This Bill is about one thing: protecting Territorians from violence and ensuring that those who commit the most serious crimes face penalties that reflect the gravity of their actions.

This Bill amends the *Sentencing Act 1995* to require a mandatory minimum non-parole period of 25 years' imprisonment for murder when the victim was, or has been, in an intimate personal relationship with the

offender. This means that the murder of a current or former intimate partner will now carry the same weight in law as the most serious of crimes—for example, the murder of a child.

This reform increases the standard non-parole period from 20 to 25 years. It does so mandatorily unless exceptional circumstances can be proven. To be clear, this is not about removing juridical discretion entirely; it is about making a clear statement on behalf of the community that tells offenders, victims and families that the Northern Territory will not tolerate lethal violence in the home.

We are here because the statistics are devastating. According to the Coroner's 2024 findings, at least 87 women have been killed by their domestic partners in the Northern Territory since 2000. The NT's domestic and family violence-related homicide rate is seven times higher than the national average. These are not just numbers; they are lives lost, families shattered and communities that are grieving.

One of those tragic stories is that of Ms Kumarn Rubuntja, murdered in 2025 by her partner, who ran her down in an Alice Springs car park and dragged her body to the doors of the hospital. That horrifying event is one of many that has left this community asking when it will stop.

Despite what those opposite continue to say, at no time has this government said that this change is the answer to our domestic violence problem. We have said, and will continue to say, that this amendment is part of a raft of changes and part of our plan. Our government has made it clear that we have zero tolerance for violent crime and domestic and family violence. This legislation sends a clear message: if you take the life of your partner, if you turn love and trust into violence and death, you will face a life sentence with a minimum of 25 years behind bars.

Some will argue that mandatory sentencing limits the rights of offenders, but this reform is not about limiting rights; it is about protecting the most fundamental right of all: the right to life. Governments have a duty to protect people from violence and hold those who take a life fully accountable.

Despite clear coronial warnings and the devastating DV murder toll, the former Attorney-General, the Member for Gwoja, chose reviews and rhetoric over toughening mandatory sentencing, and he simply failed to act when it counted. For nearly a decade Labor knew that the Territory was in the grip of a domestic violence crisis and did virtually nothing of substance to match the scale of the carnage—87 women killed, a homicide rate seven times the national average and coronial report after coronial report screaming for tougher action. It still refused to strengthen sentencing for intimate partner murder. It set up reviews, roundtables and media releases while women, in the majority, were being killed in their homes, but it never had the courage to legislate strong changes for DV murder.

That is Labor's legacy: a government that talked about respecting victim–survivors, but when it came to the hardest decisions to put community safety and the right to life ahead of the offenders, Labor blinked, delayed and walked away. Now, here in this Chamber, when they are in front of the cameras, despite an 80% rise in domestic violence in the Northern Territory under their government, they shamefully attempt to claim the high moral ground on this issue.

When I speak to Territorians, they send me a clear message. They do not want costly reviews. They do not want government to only focus on a long-term response. They do not want drawn-out consultation processes repeated again and again. They want answers now, alongside a plan for the future. That is what we, as a government, are doing.

When exceptional circumstances safeguard within this Bill, it ensures that fairness remains. Courts will retain discretion in truly exceptional circumstances, such as long-term abuse where the offender has suffered years of violence or where a person compassionately assists someone at the end of a terminal illness. Make no mistake, these are rare and exceptional cases.

Despite what those opposite say, this reform has expert support. Professor Mirko Bagaric, an internationally renowned sentencing scholar, wrote in support of this bail, stating:

> *The Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026 introduces a principled and proportionate sentencing reform addressing the distinctive seriousness of murder committed against a spouse, de facto partner, or person in an intimate personal relationship with the offender.*

The principle of proportionate punishment has been long recognised in Australian law. As the High Court made clear in *Veen v The Queen*, proportionality is the governing principle of sentencing. For murder of an

intimate partner, 25 years is proportionate, because it recognises the irreversible nature of homicide and the profound breach of trust it represents.

Critics will say that such reforms will not prevent all deaths, and I 100% agree. There are people in our community who do not care for law, consequence or the value of a life. But this Bill does much more than punish; it declares in law the value our society places on human life. It denounces intimate partner murder as among the most serious crimes imaginable, and it sits alongside other reforms in our broader domestic and family violence strategy in measures like early intervention and improved policing, bail reform and strengthened support services.

It is not an isolated act of policy; it is part of our coordinated effort to make our community safer. The results speak for themselves. Over the past year, we have seen real improvements across the Territory. Assault offences have decreased by 6%; domestic violence-related assaults are down by 3%; alcohol-related assaults have dropped by 4%; robberies are down by 20%; and house break-ins have dropped by 32%.

In the Darwin region, sexual offences are down by 11%; residential burglaries are down by 49%; commercial burglaries are down by 32%; and motor vehicle theft is down by 23%. No matter what those opposite tell you, the numbers show that a firm stance combined with strong support services works. Accountability and prevention are not opposites; they are partners.

I want to address one reoccurring concern: the question of victims who kill their abusive partners. The law already provides avenues of protection through self-defence and provocation where those apply. Our courts understand the realities of coercive control and cumulative violence. Cases such as *R v Secretary* 1996 in the Northern Territory established that self-defence must be assessed in the context of a history of abuse, not as a single moment in time. Those safeguards remain firmly intact, no matter what those opposite say.

This Bill is not about punishing the vulnerable; it is about protecting them—protecting women and men in dangerous relationships, children who grow up witnessing violence and our community from further loss.

This government believes that taking a life, particularly that of a loved one, is an act so grave that it must attract the strongest possible consequence. This reform is principled, proportionate and necessary. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I support the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026. At its core this Bill is about protecting the most fundamental right that exists in any society, which is the right to live.

The Bill amends the *Sentencing Act 1995* to require a mandatory minimum non-parole period of 25 years' imprisonment for the murder of a current or former intimate partner, except in exceptional circumstances. This reform increases the standard non-parole period of 20 years to 25 years and recognises that the murder of an intimate partner sits among the most serious crimes our law can confront.

The legislation amends section 53A of the *Sentencing Act* to ensure that where a victim was or had previously been in an intimate personal relationship with the offender, a 25-year non-parole period must apply. This places intimate partner murder alongside other categories of murder already recognised that are particularly grave, and rightly so, because if someone does murder their partner, it is not only an act of violence but an betrayal. As stated by many of my colleagues today, it is a destruction of trust and the permanent loss of a human life that should never have been taken.

This legislation recognises the reality and gravity of the crime and ensures the law responds with the seriousness of such acts. Behind this legislation lies a stark and sobering truth. According to the Coroner, at least 87 women have been killed by their domestic partner in the Northern Territory since the year 2000. That is 87 women who should still be here today, and their futures should still be possible. Those numbers represent something far greater than those statistics; they represent the daughters who should still be loved and sisters who should still be supported—I have seven sisters of my own—mothers who should still be raising their children and friends who should still be part of our communities. They represent lives with purpose; they had potential and mattered, but they were taken too soon.

When we examine these tragedies more closely, patterns emerge that tell us these deaths were not isolated incidences. Many of these murders occurred after prior domestic violence, and we should be ashamed of this. Many involved alcohol or drugs escalating a volatile situation during arguments, separations or relationship breakdowns and moments where victims were often at their most vulnerable. Often the violence involved was extreme and brutal.

These cases are revealing systemic gaps in protection where warning signs existed, but intervention was unable to prevent the final tragedy. We must also acknowledge another confronting reality that domestic violence homicide in the Northern Territory has had a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal women, reflecting broader social and safety challenges faced across many communities. Taken together, these patterns paint a deeply troubling picture—so troubling that Coroners and researchers have described the Northern Territory as facing one of the most severe domestic violence homicide crises anywhere in Australia.

That is the context in which this legislation must be understood and why this reform matters. I commend the Attorney-General for taking a stance for those victims, and I support these reforms.

When we hear a number like 87, it can feel abstract, but we must not allow it to become abstract. Think about those 87 women and what they could have been. Some might have been teachers shaping the minds of our young Territorians, and some may have become nurses or doctors caring for people in their most vulnerable moments. Some may have become business owners, community leaders and advocates for change. Some may have raised their families, watching their children grow into adults, and some may have grown old surrounded by their grandchildren and stories of lives well lived. They never got that chance. Their futures were taken from them, and their voices were silenced. Their lives were stolen, and that is why this legislation matters.

Domestic and family violence remains one of the most serious challenges facing our community. The Northern Territory's domestic violence homicide rate is seven times higher than the national average. That statistic alone demands action and should be taken seriously. It demands that this parliament takes a clear and decisive stance because when violence reaches the point of murder, the consequences are irreversible. A life is gone, with family shattered and a community left grieving. There is no second chance, no undoing the harm, and the law must recognise the reality of this.

The Legislative Scrutiny Committee carefully examined this Bill and heard evidence from a range of organisations and experts. Many submissions raised concerns about the introduction of a mandatory minimum non-parole period for intimate partner murder. Some argued the longer sentences may not deter every act of domestic violence, others raised concerns about the possibility of unintended consequences, particularly for victim–survivors who may become involved in serious offences after experiencing prolonged abuse.

These concerns deserve to be acknowledged because domestic and family violence is complex. It is often shaped by long histories of abuse, trauma and systemic failure, and no single reform can solve every aspect of that challenge.

Recognising complexity does not mean abandoning accountability. It does not mean lowering the seriousness with which we treat the most extreme form of domestic violence. It certainly does not mean accepting that the murder of an intimate partner should be treated as anything less than one of the gravest crimes our community can face.

This Bill must make a clear statement about that. It recognises that intimate partner homicide represents a profound breach of trust and an act of violence that devastates families and our communities.

Sentencing serves many purposes and one of them is holding offenders to account. It can protect the community and express society's condemnation of conduct that violates our most fundamental values, as earlier reiterated by the Member for Drysdale.

The *Sentencing Act* recognises that sentences may be imposed to make clear that the community does not approve of the conduct in which the offender was involved. It recognises that principles matter, because when someone murders their partner, the law must send a message that could not be clearer: that conduct is unacceptable, intolerable and will attract the strongest penalties available under the law.

Some submitters also argued that sentencing reforms alone cannot prevent domestic violence homicide. They are correct; no single reform can stop every tragedy. The committee acknowledged that sentencing reform must operate alongside broader prevention strategies and victim protection measures. That is why this government continues to invest in early intervention, policing, victim support services and broader domestic violence reforms. Accountability remains a critical part of that response, because a justice system that fails to reflect the gravity of the crime risks failing victims and their families.

This Bill ensures that the law reflects the true seriousness of intimate partner murder. It reinforces a fundamental principle that should unite every member in this Assembly, that it is never acceptable to murder

your partner—not during an argument, during a separation, under the influence of alcohol or under any circumstances.

Every Territorian has the right to live free from violence in their own home and to have safety within their relationships. Every Territorian deserves the protection of the laws that treat the taking of life with the utmost seriousness.

Last weekend communities across Australia celebrated International Women's Day, a day that celebrates the achievements of women, recognises the progress that has been made toward equality and reminds us of the work that still remains. International Women's Day celebrates the potential of every girl growing up today and the belief that she can become anything she chooses.

For the 87 women in the Northern Territory killed by their partners since 2000, those possibilities never came. Their opportunities were taken, their futures were erased and their contributions to our communities will never be realised.

A society that celebrates women must also protect them. Celebration without protection is not enough. Recognition without safety is not enough. Equality without security is not enough.

This Bill forms part of a broader strategy to reduce domestic and family violence and strengthens community safety. Sentencing reform is one pillar alongside prevention, early intervention, policing and support services for our victims because real change requires action on multiple fronts.

We are already seeing encouraging signs that stronger laws and a renewed focus on our community safety are making a difference. When comparing January to December 2025 with the same period in 2024, we see measurable improvements across the Territory. Assault offences have decreased by 6%, domestic violence assault offences decreased by 3%, alcohol-related assaults decreased by 4%, robbery is down by 20%, total property offences are down by 20%, house break-ins have fallen by 30% and commercial break-ins are down by 27%.

These improvements show that when governments take community safety seriously, strengthening the laws, supporting police and holding offenders accountable can make a real difference, but our work is far from finished because one life lost to domestic violence is too many, one grieving family is too many, and one stolen future is too many.

This legislation sends a clear message to victims that their lives matter, a message to families that their loss is recognised and a message to offenders that the law will hold them accountable. It says that murder within an intimate partner relationship is amongst the gravest crimes imaginable. It says that the Northern Territory will not tolerate lethal domestic violence, and that the protection of life must always remain the centre of the justice system.

The Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026 strengthens the protection of life, accountability for the most serious domestic violent offenders and our collective commitment to building a safer community. We cannot bring back the 87 women who were killed by their partners, but we can honour their memory. We can learn from the tragedies that took their lives and ensure that our laws reflect the value we place on every human life because every life matters, every life deserves protection, and every Territorian deserves to live free from violence.

I thank the Attorney-General for introducing this Bill and the agencies across the Northern Territory Government that are working tirelessly every day to make the Territory safer, especially for our most marginalised. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I support the Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026. This is an important Bill. It is a serious Bill, and it is necessary for the Northern Territory. At its heart, this Bill says something simple: if a person murders their current or former intimate partner, the law in the Northern Territory must treat that crime with the seriousness it deserves.

The standard non-parole period for murder is currently 20 years. This Bill increases that to 25 years for DV murders. This is a clear message from this parliament that murder of an intimate partner is not just another statistic and it is not just another case; it is one of the greatest betrayals imaginable. When a person is killed by someone who once claimed to love them, who trusted them, protected them and shared a life with them, the harm runs deep through the families, children, friendships, workplaces and entire communities.

This reform recognises that reality. It places intimate partner murder in the same category as the most serious murders already recognised by the law, such as the murder of a child or the murder of a public official carrying out their duties, and I believe that is exactly where it belongs.

This Bill matters because domestic and family violence is not an abstract issue in the Northern Territory. It is real. It is painful, and for far too many Territorians it is something they have lived, witnessed or feared. Too many families in the Northern Territory have endured the horror of losing a daughter, sister, mother, aunty, friend or colleague to intimate partner violence. Too many children have had to grow up without a parent because violence in the home escalated to murder. Too many communities have carried grief that should never have existed in the first place. In this Bill we are speaking about lives cut short, families left broken, children left traumatised and a justice system that must reflect the seriousness of that loss. This Bill does exactly that.

Some people may ask what difference sentencing reform makes, and that is a fair question. In simple terms, this reform makes a difference because it does three things. First, it makes the law clearer. It tells every Territorian that intimate partner murder will attract one of the strongest sentencing responses available under the law—not maybe, and not sometimes. This clear rule matters because laws do more than punish; they also express our values. They tell the community what we stand for. This law says clearly that the Northern Territory has zero tolerance for domestic and family violence and intimate partner murder.

Second, it strengthens our accountability. When someone takes the life of a current or former partner there must be serious consequences, and this Bill ensures the punishment properly reflects the gravity of the crime. It recognises that this is not just violence; it is lethal violence. This is the ultimate act of control, the ultimate act of domination and the ultimate denial of another person's right to live, and that must be met with strong legal consequences.

Third, it gives confidence to the community. Territorians want to know that the justice system takes this crime seriously. They want to know that the law stands with victims, families and community safety. They want to know that when the worst happens, the justice system does not look away or minimise the seriousness of the offence. This Bill helps provide that confidence.

There has been criticism from some quarters that mandatory sentencing does not prevent crime. Let's speak plainly about that. No-one is saying that sentencing reform alone will solve domestic and family violence. Of course it will not. No serious person believes that there is one law that can prevent every tragedy, but that does not mean sentencing reform is meaningless.

Sentencing serves many purposes: it punishes; denounces; protects the community; holds offenders to account; and signals clearly what society will and will not tolerate. This Bill does all those things, and it sits alongside other important work such as policing, early intervention, support services, education, behaviour change programs and stronger responses across the justice system. This reform is not the whole answer, but it is an important part of the answer, and we should not reject a strong reform simply because it is not the only reform.

Some critics also say that this Bill will do nothing for victims who are already dead. Again, let's be honest; nothing can bring back a murdered person, erase the pain of a child who loses their mother or undo the suffering of a family shattered by lethal violence. The law still has a duty to respond, and it must respond in a way that reflects the seriousness of what happened. When the justice system imposes a sentence, it will not only speak to the offender; it will also speak to the family of the victim and the community. It says, 'We see the gravity of the crime, and we will treat it accordingly'. That matters deeply.

This Bill also matters because of the message it sends beyond the courtroom that every Territorian should be able to live safely; every woman should be able to leave a relationship without fearing for her life; every parent should have hope that their daughters will come home safe; every child should be able to grow up in a home free from violence; and every community should know that its parliament will not stay silent in the face of intimate partner murder.

That is why this reform matters in everyday life. When parliament draws a hard line against the most serious violence, it helps shape the culture around it. It reinforces a basic truth that relationships must never be a place of fear, control or lethal violence. It tells the community that love is not ownership, suppression is not a justification for violence, jealousy is not an excuse, coercion is not acceptable and murder will be met with the strongest consequences.

This Bill is also about restoring confidence in the community. People across the Territory want to know that the parliament is listening. They want to know that when domestic and family violence escalates to the most horrific outcome the government will act. This Bill shows action. It shows resolve and that this government is prepared to take serious steps to protect the community and hold offenders fully accountable.

The CLP Finocchiaro government has made it clear that we have zero tolerance for violent crime and for domestic and family violence. This Bill gives the legal force to that principle. It says that when intimate partner violence ends in murder, the justice system will respond with seriousness, strength and clarity.

For many Territorians, especially women who live through domestic violence, debates like this are not theoretical; they are personal. Some will hear this discussion and think of friends they lost; some will think of abuse they survived; some will think of warning signs they now see differently; and some will think of children left behind. To those Territorians, this parliament says clearly that we hear you, we see the seriousness of this violence, and we are willing to strengthen the law in response.

This Bill is not about politics; it is about protection for Territorians. It is about justice and saying that the life of every Territorian matters. When a person murders an intimate partner, the consequences should reflect not only the loss of one life but also the destruction left behind, the trauma to children, the grief of parents, the pain of siblings, the fear in the communities and the loss of trust in safety itself. That is why this reform matters to every Territorian, because every Territorian deserves to live in a community where the law stands firmly against the worse form of violence.

Every Territorian deserves a justice system that reflects community expectations, and every Territorian deserves a parliament willing to act when action is needed. This Bill sends a simple and powerful message: if you murder your current or former intimate partner in the Northern Territory, you will face one of the strongest sentencing responses our law can enforce. It is a fair and necessary message.

I commend the Attorney-General for this reform. This reform is about one thing: making sure Territorians know that intimate partner murder will face the toughest consequences in the Territory. I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, this morning we heard from the failed Labor Attorney-General, the Member for Gwoja, about how the government needs to be doing more about domestic violence and how he has all these fantastic and wonderful ideas. He had eight years to implement them, and what did his ideas get us? It got us an 81% increase in domestic violence. The Member for Gwoja sat there, ignoring the numbers and the pleas for help from communities across the Territory, and then magically lost an election, and all of a sudden all his ideas were great and what the new government was doing was terrible.

Our reforms are working. We have seen a 3% drop in domestic and family violence incidents. I am a mathematician, and 3% is a small decrease, but it is the first real decrease that we have seen after year-on-year, month-on-month increasing domestic and family violence. We are turning the tide. The Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence is doing a hands-down fantastic job, making sure the resources have been targeted appropriately and putting people on the ground, making a real difference to Territorians' lives. This is another piece of reform that comes out of the Attorney-General's portfolio.

Will this Bill solve domestic violence by itself? Of course not. That is why we are doing so much extra work and have secured the largest funding improvement to address domestic violence that the Territory has ever seen. It is why we added a seven-day minimum sentence. If you beat your wife and breach your DVO, you go to jail for seven days to think about it so the victims can remove themselves from those circumstances. The Minister for Corrections is ensuring we offer programs to help people turn their lives around.

What do we get from the same old tired opposition members? Criticism. They say that nothing we are doing is working and nothing is happening quickly enough, when year after year, month after month, they saw an increase in the number of Territorians being attacked in their own homes by family members. They sat there doing nothing. It is shameful.

We heard from the failed Labor Attorney-General but not from the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or the Member for Arafura. Where are their voices? They do not care about domestic violence. If they cared, they would stand up in this Chamber and explain to Territorians why they do not care if mum is murdered by dad; it is not worth the time thinking about it. They will vote down the Bill because the CLP suggested it, and that is pathetic.

This Bill takes a 20-year mandatory minimum sentence and increases it to 25 years. It puts murdering a current or former intimate partner in the same category as murdering a child, police officer or a public servant in the course of their duties. It recognises that is one of the worst, most awful things someone can do.

The families of the 87 women who lost their lives in the Territory to DV are thinking, 'Thank god the CLP is doing something'. I doubt that one person who had a family member murdered in a domestic violence incident thinks the penalties are too steep or are worried about the justice system and going on Facebook to say that we are jailing innocent people.

We have a fantastic court system. At the last NT election in 2024, the fantastic Helen Secretary was our candidate for Nightcliff—the first-ever case in the NT that used the battered wife syndrome defence which proved that our legal system works.

All we are hearing today is pointscoring, showing off that the opposition members somehow think they are more moral because they do not believe that if someone murders their spouse, wife or girlfriend that they should do 25 years in prison. They would rather see murderers out in public than locked up in prison. That is 100% shameful.

I want to hear from the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I want to see them talk to members in their communities where domestic violence is prolific. The number one group of people who are victimised in the Northern Territory by domestic and family violence is Indigenous women. Those opposite sit in silence; they do not care. They will go on Facebook tonight and talk about water, floods and everything else, but they do not care about everyday Territorians. It makes me sad.

I look forward to a couple of weeks' time when a new Opposition Leader joins us in this Chamber. I look forward to welcoming a future Member for Nightcliff because we might finally get some real leadership. Right now, they are trotting around, swimming in the water, flailing about and seeing what sticks. If your toddler is playing in the mud at the mud races, sometimes you have to pick them up, wash them off and start again.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly, and I condemn anyone who votes against it because this is great reform for the Northern Territory.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. This is about the *Sentencing Act*, a sensitive topic. He should not be politicising what should be considered sensitive.

Mr Maley: What is your point of order? It is about domestic violence.

Mr YOUNG: He has politicised it.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, you are using a point of order to introduce new material to a debate, and that is not how you use a point of order. The Member for Goyder's speech was in order.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General)(in reply): Madam Speaker, wow. The Member for Daly made a point of order and is not even speaking to this Bill. It goes to show how important he thinks this is. That is a disgrace.

I thank all the members who contributed to this important debate. This is one of the most serious issues we face in the Northern Territory. It is a serious topic, it is emotional and it has a lot of stories which are confronting. I thank everyone who spoke in this debate.

I will go through some of the things that were raised in others' contributions. I want to be clear that this Bill says one simple thing: if you are found guilty of murdering your current or former partner, you will serve a minimum mandatory sentence of 25 years in prison before you are even eligible for parole. That is clear, firm and deliberate.

For the record, that is the same sentence you receive if found guilty of murdering a child. That is how seriously we, the CLP, take domestic violence murder. A murder is always a terrible crime, but intimate partner murder is different. It happens behind closed doors, often in the home, and alarmingly in broad daylight. It is driven by control, jealousy, possessiveness and sometimes the refusal to accept that a relationship has ended. It can come as the final act in a pattern that too often starts with coercion, threats and violence, or it can come out of nowhere, even when no pattern existed previously.

Too often, women pay with their lives. We must confront the truth in our own backyards. The Northern Territory has the highest rate of domestic violence in the country. We also have the highest rate of domestic

violence homicides. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, domestic violence murders in the Territory occur at seven times the national average. That statistic should stop every one of us in our tracks. Often when a significant law is reformed, we name the legislation after a catalyst case, just like we did with Daniel's law in Queensland and the Northern Territory CLP did with Declan's law.

In this case, for this legislation, there are just too many women who have been murdered, and it would not be possible to include all their names in this one legislation. Since 2000, 87 women have been killed by their partners in the Northern Territory. That is 87 daughters, mothers and women who should still be here. These are not just statistics; these are lives.

I want to highlight the fact that under eight years of a Labor government, domestic violence offences increased by 81%. Every month those stats would increase. I do not remember a time in eight years that those numbers went down. Maybe they did, but 81% over eight years is a shame.

Under our government, with the work we have done over the last 18 months across myriad portfolios, that number has decreased by 3% across the Territory, which is a large number when considering we are coming off a base of 81%. In Alice Springs alone, that decrease represents a 16% decline in DV, which is incredible. Plenty of people across the Territory would have thought, 'What can you possibly do to change and decrease domestic violence?' The changes we are making will have an impact, and we are decreasing it.

We have all heard the stories. Let me remind you of the severity of the crimes we are talking about that come directly from the Coroner's report. I give a warning that this is very confronting.

One victim was shot in the head, killing her unborn baby. One victim's partner beat her in the head with a stick, causing severe scalp lacerations and fatal skull fractures. He stomped on her abdomen with so much force that her intestine ruptured. One victim's partner slapped and punched her to the head, causing her to fall down. He beat her with a stick to the head and body, then dragged her by the hair and left her lying in a ditch, where she passed away after choking on her own vomit.

That makes me feel utterly sick, reading that. I actually feel sick in my stomach. I am sure anybody listening to this feels the same.

The youngest victim was 17 years old. The oldest was 60 years old. Most were mothers, and almost all of them Aboriginal. We refuse to accept this as the norm. The community demands accountability, and that is why we are passing this legislation.

A number of groups—and the opposition and crossbench—say that they do not and will not support this legislation. I do not understand that. I do not understand what is so confusing about how we should be opposing such an horrific act, the most heinous that you can imagine in our community. We want those who murder their partner to face the strongest possible sentence. They are guilty of murder, and they have been found guilty of murdering their partner.

We believe they should pay the price. While no sentence will ever feel enough for a victim's family and loved ones, we can at least ensure that the murderer spends their life in prison, and that is what this legislation achieves.

Labor, the Greens and all their friends have argued from time to time that I am a racist for taking strong action on my approach to law and order. However, as I have said repeatedly, it is not racist to want a safer community. I stand for those victims in our community across the Territory. They have also said that this kind of strong approach to law and order entrenches Aboriginal disadvantage.

Let me tell you about Aboriginal disadvantage. Aboriginal women account for 89% of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Territory. Almost three-quarters of assault hospitalisations of Aboriginal people are linked to family violence. Aboriginal women are seven times more likely to face intimate partner homicide than women elsewhere. That is the real injustice facing Aboriginal Territorians.

The reality is that some of the things those opposite suggest have been in place for years have not delivered any results. You cannot simply hug your way out of ending domestic violence. You cannot put men in a feel-good workshop and hope they will stop beating their wives. Time and again, Labor let victims down while putting offenders first.

Eight times in 18 months those opposite have voted down our strong law and order measures. Now, they have also said they will vote against this legislation. They have no credibility on the issue of domestic

violence. Despite their grandstanding, emotional talk, promises, pledges and talks about women's rights and Aboriginal justice, things just got worse for Aboriginal women.

Under Labor's eight years, domestic violence increased by over 80%. Under the CLP, it is decreasing by 3% and counting, which is why we keep bringing in new laws. This is the same Labor government in which the Leader of the Opposition and shadow Attorney-General were a part. This is the same former Attorney-General, current shadow, who admitted on 'The Week That Was' a couple of weeks ago that domestic violence was reducing under our government. That is interesting, giving us a bit of credit.

Shadow Attorney-General, it is no coincidence that there has been a decrease in domestic violence under our government. Unlike Labor, we care about victims of crime and vulnerable women.

In his submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, the internationally renowned sentencing expert, Professor Mirko Bagaric, described our legislation as 'balanced, targeted and justified reform'. He pointed out what many of us know: while rehabilitation is an important part of criminal justice, punishment and deterrence also matter. Prevention and accountability go together. You cannot protect victims if you are not prepared to punish those who kill them.

Sentencing laws matter. They set boundaries, reflect our values, hold offenders accountable and protect the community. The logic is simple: if you lock up violent murderers, they cannot keep offending.

I want to address the misidentification of victim–survivors which has been raised a couple of times today and was also asked about in the submissions to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. Issues of misidentification arise at policing and charging stages, not at sentencing following a murder conviction. They are two completely separate things.

Where a person acts in lawful self-defence, they are acquitted; the mandatory provision is not triggered. Courts already recognise cumulative violence and the realities of coercive control in assessing self-defence. Let me now address the concerns about victim–survivors who murder their abusive partners, because this is about self-defence. The courts in the Northern Territory have dealt with this issue for decades.

Courts already consider the full history of violence and coercive control. Juries are directed to consider the full history of violence. The Bill contains an exceptional circumstances safeguard. If there were truly unusual and compelling facts, including a serious history of abuse by the deceased, the court can take this into account, but those cases will be exceptional.

For those who continue to say that this legislation will not fix domestic violence, I agree with you. This is one Bill. It strengthens the sentence for intimate partner murders, but it is just one part of our domestic violence strategy. We are focused on putting victims first, holding offenders accountable and tackling the root causes of crime, all at the same time. We do the pointy end and the prevention, because as governments we can do that. That is why we have had a reduction of 3% across the Territory.

We have already introduced mandatory sentences for DVO breaches. Since that reform, which I introduced a year ago, there have been 1,864 domestic violence order breaches that have been prosecuted, and 87% have resulted in an order or imprisonment. That is 1,621 perpetrators who have been imprisoned based on that one piece of legislation that we changed 12 months ago.

We have expanded police powers to conduct DVO compliance checks. We have introduced the strongest bail laws in the country. We have mandated electronic monitoring for repeat offenders. Victims will know when a DVO offender absconds. We increased the victims levy. We made justice more efficient by resourcing our courts. This helps to avoid recidivism and re-victimisation, and it provides certainty as cases are finalised sooner.

Our strong law and order measures were backed by a $1.5bn investment and are saving lives. At the same time, we are investing a record $36m in a year in domestic violence services for prevention. Our strategy features 45 practical actions, including Circuit Breaker, in which we have seen more than 500 cases of violence disrupted early. In Corrections we are seeing hundreds of perpetrators in education and rehab programs. The number stands at over 500, with half already completed.

In my portfolio we are piloting a specialist domestic violence court and providing specialist witness support because we believe in results. We will check and evaluate the results.

Earlier this week on radio, the Leader of the Opposition was asked what amendments she would propose if she would not support this legislation. She dodged that question. Labor still does not have a plan to tackle domestic violence, but we do. We have put forward this single item of legislation. It is clear, simple and targeted. There is nothing confusing about what we are legislating. As for future measures, which were also raised in the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, it has been recommended that we review existing good character references provisions.

Last week the founder of the 'Your Reference Ain't Relevant' campaign, who lobbied for reform all over the country to reform the use of character references, reached out. He has approached our government now as to what we want to do; there are other states that have taken that on.

If there is one thing Territorians know by now it is that only the CLP will introduce reforms to reduce crime, reduce domestic violence offending, put the rights of victims first, change things and not be afraid to make the hard decisions to reduce the horrific numbers, because that is exactly what we have done. I am not afraid to make any of those changes, but this is single-issue legislation to send a message to the community that if you murder your intimate partner, you will face the most serious of consequences, and that is life behind bars. If you take the life of your partner, you will spend the rest of yours behind bars.

The Member for Gwoja spoke passionately about the fact that this legislation does nothing to deter, yet I would argue that our reductions in domestic violence of 3%—as opposed to the increases of domestic violence under his watch as Attorney-General under the Labor government over eight years—proves that is not true. He mentioned having no consultation, which I find incredibly interesting. He mentioned the fact that we need to listen to people who have lived experience. Guess what? Those people are dead. We cannot interview the victims of murder because they are dead. Their loved one killed them.

Speaking of consultation, the Member for Fannie Bay put it well. She said that when she has been speaking to her community, Territorians are saying time and again that they do not want long consultations, long processes, round tables and, 'Let's all have a think about this', taking 10 years to address something. They want action now, which is exactly what they voted us in to do.

I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence's address. She is a strong minister who turns words into actions immediately, and the work that she has done on Circuit Breaker is a huge credit to her—more than 500 families who are now not going down a life of crime and young people having no choice; they have the support they need to live a great life and not become victims of crime. So much has been done. Everyone is working towards the framework now, and the $36m of ongoing investment every year into prevention is amazing, and she is doing it.

I thank the Member for Mulka for his contribution. Member for Mulka, you were saying that you believe domestic violence is highly dysfunctional; I could not agree with you more. You also said that with leaders who do this, it is an abuse of their powers; again, I could not agree with you more. You said that it must be called out. I agree with you and hope that you change your mind and support this legislation.

The Member for Casuarina said that we should not reject legislation because it is a single issue; I thought that was powerful. That is not a reason to reject, vote down or oppose legislation. There are a lot of things we do and have been doing for 18 months. He also said that the sentence is more than just the sentence on the offender. It is much more than that; it is about sending a message and speaking directly to the family of that victim. That is the powerful reality that a sentence of this gravity has on our community.

The Member for Drysdale was on the money when he talked about the fact this does not solve all the problems of domestic violence, but that it was the most immoral crime when it comes to severity and gravity and it deserves the strongest of punishments. He used the words, 'assaulted what is dearest in society's eyes, which is women'. That is the shame of domestic violence across our community. You take the life of a woman, and the whole community is affected.

The work that he talked about from Sarah Austin of Darwin Youth Services is equally important; I thank him for raising it, because the tool that she has created for children in schools for domestic violence prevention is amazing. Labor members are saying that we are not doing enough, but there are many examples of the things we are doing. I am glad he highlighted that.

The Member for Johnston said that this Bill takes away from the prevention of domestic violence and the work we do and that it goes in the opposite direction of where it should be going. I do not agree with her. We can do both; we can do the pointy end of those serious murders and serious consequences, and we can do

the prevention. Through all the contributions we heard today, that is clear with the work that has been going on.

I like the history lesson we had from the Member for Blain. He took us to the times when Labor watered down the domestic violence offences over and over. The reason they rose so high is that Labor reduced the consequences.

The Member for Wanguri gave a passionate speech; I could feel the emotion. I know this is important to her, as it is for the whole community. I have said a couple of times that we are focusing on the root causes and the consequences, which was addressed by the Member for Wanguri. It is obviously working because we have had a reduction in domestic violence assaults by 3% across the Territory. That is phenomenal.

The Member for Goyder said that Labor was only voting against this Bill because the CLP brought it in. I think that is true because I cannot think of any other reason you would not increase a penalty from 20 years to 25 years. Nothing else changes; it is a simple single-issue piece of legislation. Other states have done it, and we are now doing it because it should be treated with the most serious consequences.

I thank the Attorney-General's Department, which has worked hard to get this through for us so we could bring it to the House to be debated. I thank the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and everybody who submitted to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I also thank the committee because I know they do a power of work through this process to get it to this point.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 3, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr PAECH: What evidence directly supports this amendment?

Ms BOOTHBY: We have been clear on our commitment to reducing domestic violence, and this is one measure of many that we have brought to the parliament to pass.

Mr PAECH: Can I just clarify that this is a commitment or a decision of the government, not an evidence-based approach?

Ms BOOTHBY: This is what Territorians expect from a government—to put the rights of victims above the rights of offenders. We have been clear. We make no apologies for that, and we will continue to do that work to reduce domestic violence.

Mr PAECH: Did you or the department review previous cases to look at datasets or evidence to inform this policy change?

Ms BOOTHBY: There was a coronial of many DV deaths. It was horrific. I went through some of those cases in my summing-up speech. That is why this Bill is happening, because there is a lot of evidence out there about DV murders and that is why we are bringing it up from 20 years to 25 years.

Mr PAECH: Is it fair to say in that regard that you are basing this decision on a coronial inquest?

Ms BOOTHBY: We just had hours of debate with lots of stories shared, and you have shared many instances of domestic violence over the years. That evidence is what I am basing this piece of legislation on, the fact that we will not stand for more domestic violence murders in the Northern Territory. It is seven times the rate in the Territory compared to the rest of the nation; that is a fact, and I will not stand for that on my watch.

Mr PAECH: I am just asking for clarification. You mentioned the coronials. I am asking is this decision based on those coronial inquests?

Ms BOOTHBY: I have read the coronials, and of course all the things I read go towards making changes for Territorians.

Mr PAECH: Can you provide examples of what is meant by 'exceptional circumstance'?

Ms BOOTHBY: For there to be exceptional circumstances the court must be satisfied that the offender is otherwise a person of good character, unlikely to reoffend and the victim's conduct and condition substantially mitigate the conduct of the offender.

Mr PAECH: I note in the committee's report, of which I am a part, there was mention of good character. Is that something that the government will consider changing?

Ms BOOTHBY: Last week the lobby group contacted me about that. They have been lobbying across the country. I look forward to talking to them. If there will be any change, putting victims' rights are above the rights of offenders, our government will do that.

Mr PAECH: Are there any specific training or professional development opportunities that will be offered to the legal profession about the application of this clause in legal proceedings to avoid unintended consequences?

Ms BOOTHBY: The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was consulted on this legislation. They operationalise the legislation. That would be up to them.

Mr PAECH: Stepping this through if it passed today and is assented and gazetted by the Administrator, DPP would then be advised, is there a program or measure in place about how that is communicated to the broader Territory in language, given that it is being marked as a deterrent?

Ms BOOTHBY: All the usual processes will happen. I will also do a media release on it. It will go out broadly to the Northern Territory legal community.

Mr PAECH: In the committee's work, the submissions all raised concerns about the provisions in misidentification. Are you satisfied with this legislation that those mechanisms in place to address misidentification are satisfactory?

Ms BOOTHBY: The issues of misidentification arise at the policing and charging stages, not at the sentencing following a murder conviction. It is exactly the same as it is now. That will continue in that process.

J DAVIS: A follow-on question from that, minister. Understanding that the misidentification happens at the policing level, it then follows through to the court level and people have been misidentified at that level. That is why it is relevant to talk about misidentification in relation to this Bill.

Ms BOOTHBY: None of that process, at any of those stages, has changed. What has changed is the sentence. The judge then says that instead of 20 years it will be 25 years in handing down the sentence.

Mr PAECH: The question is, are you satisfied with the current mechanisms in place to address misidentification?

Ms BOOTHBY: Those mechanisms are unchanged as part of this legislation.

J DAVIS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move an amendment to the Bill, as follows:

After clause 4(3)

insert

(4) Section 53A(7)

omit, insert

(7) For there to be exceptional circumstances sufficient to justify fixing a shorter non-parole period under subsection (6), the sentencing court must be satisfied of any of the following matters and must not have regard to any other matters:

(a) the offender is:

(i) otherwise a person of good character; and

(ii) unlikely to re-offend;

(b) the victim's conduct, or conduct and condition, substantially mitigate the conduct of the offender;

(c) the victim had committed domestic violence (including coercive control, as defined in section 5B of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*) against the offender to an extent that substantially mitigates the conduct of the offender.

I move this amendment because, as it stands and as I have made clear in this Chamber, I do not believe this law should pass. I do not believe it will work or stop women being hurt and killed. In fact, it puts women at risk.

If this parliament decides to pass this law, we must make sure we are doing everything we can to protect women. The evidence before the scrutiny committee was overwhelmingly clear: the exceptional circumstances test is not currently appropriate for women who are victims of domestic violence and are misidentified as perpetrators.

For people who do not know what that means, let me explain the devastating truth that too often our law enforcement and justice system fails to identify the real victim of domestic violence. Let me give you an example: a woman experiences violence, abuse and coercive control for decades. Over that time she may be charged with several offences directly linked to her survival and responses to abuse. After years of experiencing this abuse, she may finally react. Under this law, she could face a mandatory sentence of 25 years and would likely potentially not be protected by the exceptional circumstances provision.

We know that is not the intent of this law. We heard this clearly in our committee briefings and in the Chamber today. We must make it explicit that when someone has been the victim of ongoing domestic violence, courts must be able to take that into account. The current exceptional circumstances measures do not achieve that.

The Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence said that the exceptional circumstances test is there to protect women, yet submissions from nine experts show exactly why that is not the case. The National Network of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls said that the exceptional circumstances framework is ill-suited to cases involving domestic violence. They said:

> *… the definition of exceptional circumstances is extremely narrow and will be inaccessible to many criminalised women.*
>
> *…*
>
> *This threshold … creates significant barriers for those whose lives have been shaped by poverty, racism, trauma, criminalisation and systemic disadvantage.*
>
> *…*
>
> *These histories often reflect systemic harms rather than inherent criminality. Yet under the proposed framework, such histories may disqualify women from accessing the only mechanism through which a court can depart from the mandatory minimum.*
>
> *This creates a two-tiered system of justice … Women who have lived lives marked by disadvantage, state intervention and criminalisation will be far less likely to be seen as meeting the 'good character' threshold, regardless of the context in which the offence occurred. The effect is that those most failed by systems of protection will be the least likely to benefit from judicial discretion.*

Legal Aid noted that exceptional circumstances is so restrictive that the court has little discretion to determine whether the matter before it is exceptional. It said:

> *A broader definition of 'exceptional circumstances' would assist to ensure the court is empowered to do justice to victims of abuse who offend against their partners.*

The Central Australian Women's Legal Services highlighted that laws across the country that deal with women who cause the death of their abusive partners are different and complex and, in many cases, may not be able to use arguments of self-defence—which we heard in this Chamber today—because of the current technical requirements.

We also heard about the good character test. Minister, I acknowledge you said that you will be looking at this. The New South Wales Government recently abolished this test because it traumatises victim–survivors and perpetuates social disadvantage. In practice, what happens is that a person before the court who has connections who can vouch for their good character may get a lighter sentence, but those who have been subjected to years of domestic abuse are often unable to call on support networks to give good character references because of isolation and the effect abuse has had on their lives.

This amendment does one simple but vital thing: it makes it explicit that judges can and must take into account when the person charged with murder has been the subject of domestic, family or sexual violence, including coercive control, which we heard members speak about today.

That is what I am asking my fellow MLAs to vote on now: inserting a simple protection for victims of domestic violence based on the evidence given to our scrutiny committee by nine organisations that work with women experiencing domestic violence every day. These are women with lived experience, minister.

This amendment only strengthens this Bill, and there is no reason to vote against it. Everyone in this Chamber has talked about the horror of these crimes and the need to protect women. This amendment is about that exactly: protecting women; ensuring justice; and preventing harm. I urge all members to support this amendment.

Ms BOOTHBY: Mr Deputy Speaker, we will not be supporting this amendment, but I want to explain why. The change that is being proposed assumes that self-defence does not apply, but it does.

When we are making legislative changes, we need to be mindful of what other legislation could be affected in the system. This amendment may have unintended circumstances in other situations. I understand your intent. We are looking at legislation all the time to try to reduce crime and work within the system. If I can take this away and have a look at it, I will, but we will not be accepting the amendment at this time.

Mr PAECH: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory Labor opposition is supportive of the amendment brought forward by the Member for Johnston.

I do not believe that this would limit the self-defence mechanism and interpretation of the law. As the Member for Johnston has rightly identified, this is about strengthening this response and responding to the nine submissions in the inquiry which all raised the significant issue of misidentification.

In 2007 the Labor government brought in the exceptional circumstance rule. As we have heard through the committee, the rule can be and is interpreted in quite a narrow way, so it requires some work, because as the Member for Johnston spoke about, it is supposed to protect women who may have had to use self-defence and may be before the court as a result of that.

We have heard from Legal Aid, the Top End Women's Legal Services and all our predominant domestic, family and sexual violence prevention stakeholders that the current definition of 'exceptional circumstances' is narrow and restrictive in how the judiciary can consider and apply it. Therefore, we are supportive of the amendment brought forward by the Member for Johnston.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 16
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Guyula	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	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.

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

Bill agreed to.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Guyula
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	Mr Young
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

MOTION
Note Statement – The Year Ahead 2026

Continued from5 February 2026.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking on the Year Ahead statement, I am excited for the coming year. When I was in the private sector, I worked on projects and moved around a lot. I found that it used to take about three months when you moved into a new area to get your feet under the desk and get a handle on things. After about six months you would start performing.

We have been here for some 18 months now. We well and truly have our feet under the desk and are performing. I look forward to the year ahead. We are working on so many things. I look forward to all the reform on public housing that is coming through so that the good people of Blain, Palmerston and the greater Territory can benefit from the quiet enjoyment of their properties so they can go to work, come home, spend time with their families, go to bed and not be kept up all night by noise, fighting, domestic violence and alcohol-fuelled abuse, and not be disturbed by piles of refuse accumulating in yards, attracting vermin. I look forward to gentrifying Palmerston.

In the suburb of Moulden, we have large yards and good water pressure. As Palmerston grows, this should be an attractive area of Palmerston. It should be a place where people are seeking to come and raise their families. Unfortunately, under the previous government, that was not the case because crime was allowed to spiral out of control, people were released on bail constantly after offending, then they reoffended and were released on bail with the constant catch-and-release program that was championed by former Chief Minister Michael Gunner, living his best life in Fannie Bay and not caring about the people of Palmerston. That has all changed under this government.

I must say that I love waking up in the morning, checking the Facebook community groups and not seeing screenshots of CCTV of people breaking in and stealing cars. The community groups are focusing on what they were originally intended for, which is helping people be reunited with their pets. The old dog that sneaks out through the fence or whatever happens—people find them. They see the dogs walking down the street, take a photo and help people get reunited with their pets, and the community is connecting with itself. That is what those community groups were originally set up for, and it is good to see them returning to that purpose.

There are so many things coming up this year. We have a jam-packed Dry Season ahead with sporting events. Rugby league is kicking off. The Palmerston Raiders are rapidly gearing up, and training will be starting soon. It is the same for the Northern Sharks that train out of Moulden oval.

All the schools are ramping up and well into production mode—students with their little uniforms happily studying and working hard. It is a joy to behold, going along to assemblies and seeing all those happy kids going up on stage to receive their awards, lining up afterwards to get their photo taken for the newsletter. Those kids are truly the hope of the Territory. I hear those opposite talk about all their failed ideas that did not work for the last eight years. Then I go to a school assembly, and those kids just fill me with hope for the future of the Territory because they are brilliant.

One of the things I look forward to this year is supporting more of our lifestyle, so I want to get out and about to do more fishing. I managed to do a bit of culvert fishing earlier this year. I think you could probably do some culvert fishing on the side of the road with the amount of rain we have had lately. We got some fishing rods for my boys. They seem to be catching more trees than fish, but we will work on that. When I was a kid and learning to fish, I did not have a rod; I just had a reel, and the thing I caught most was usually my leg as I was trying to cast the lure out into the river. You get a big swing going, and suddenly it is in your leg and you are off to the clinic to try to pull it out.

I am looking forward to the rodeos. I think we have the Noonamah Rodeo and definitely one at the Darwin River Tavern, Adelaide River and Katherine. There is a jam-packed schedule of rodeos coming up. We might even have one at the—what was the one you went to last year?

Mr Maley: Douglas Daly Campdraft.

Mr KERLE: That is the one—Douglas Daly Campdraft. I might have to see if I can make it out there. I hear it was a rip roarer last year.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 9; there is no quorum in the House, so the government needs its numbers.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ring the bells.

A quorum is present. I urge everyone to make sure we have a quorum going forward.

Mr KERLE: I look forward to this year as we drive forward our economic agenda. I have the honour of being the assistant minister to the Minister for Corrections, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Mining and Energy. I look forward having the opportunity to this year to visit some of the fantastic gas industry facilities that are powering our economy and keeping the lights on. We have already visited the Channel Island Power Station, which literally keep the lights on.

The purportedly successful candidate for Nightcliff—the ABC called it—was talking about a community battery for Nightcliff. This government has already delivered a new battery at Channel Island. The previous government had its buddies in the renewable energy development sector build three solar farms, then flogged them off to Eni and changed the rules under its nose before it could connect them. Those solar farms sat idle, underproducing and underdelivering, under the previous government for all those long years.

As those opposite well know, you need system stability. You cannot just go connecting a large, new generator without having stability. This government has delivered on that by delivering a new BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) at Channel Island, which allowed us to connect those solar farms. They are now producing and lowering the carbon intensity of our grid. It is unfortunate that even though we do the right thing all the time, we do not often get the credit for it.

I am not sure where the people of Nightcliff would like a community battery to go. Maybe they would like it on the oval at Nightcliff High School. Maybe they would like it in the car park at Woolies or perhaps on the

Nightcliff Foreshore next to the cafe. I would be curious to know where the new Member for Nightcliff was thinking about putting his community battery.

Going back to our agenda for this year, there are things I am looking forward to in Palmerston. We have the Palmerston Markets coming up. I am happy to report to the Assembly that discussions are already well underway so that this year's markets will be one of the most successful and family-friendly Palmerston Markets in living memory. We are focused on delivering a Palmerston Markets that will be open to all, welcoming to families and a jewel in the calendar for the Palmerston lifestyle.

Who can forget that under the previous government crime, particularly youth crime, was out of control. The Member for Drysdale was there with his wife when a brawl broke out, a riot involving youths. He had to grab his wife and two young daughters, clutch them to his bosom, turn away from the riot and shield them with his body. That was the incident that lit the fire in his heart. Even though he had a successful small business serving the people of this good Territory, he had to stand up and be counted and be part of a team that would change the Territory for the better.

This year, and for as long as we are on this side in government, those markets will be safe. They will be secure and family friendly.

I look forward this year to working with the Palmerston Council. We have a lot of things planned. Our youth festival is coming up. The Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association has a full calendar of events reaching out to the youths of Palmerston, engaging and helping them to make good decisions. The team, Rachel Fosdick and the others, do a fantastic job there every day.

I look forward to the CommSec reports that will come out this year. As our economy goes from strength to strength and the Beetaloo starts producing gas, hopefully those reports will show better and better results, and we will hopefully climb from third to second and then first. I look forward to CommSec reporting that the Northern Territory is the best place in the country to do business, bar none.

Outside of my electorate, the Batchelor General Store should be opening in April or May. The post office will be returning to that town, which is great news. I am sure the people of that town will be happy to hear that.

As the economy gets going under this government, there will be more activity and more small business happening to keep that grocery store and the post office attached to it in business so they can keep going.

We have a great year ahead, and I am excited for all the things we have planned to help the Territory go from strength to strength.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

PAPER TABLED
Government Response to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee Report Inquiry into the Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I report that the government response to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee report Inquiry into the Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 was deemed tabled on 9 March 2026, pursuant to Standing Order 201.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Weather Resilience and Connectivity Across Territory Communities

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the correspondence from the Member for Arnhem as follows:

I propose for discussion this day the following definite matter of public importance: weather resilience and connectivity across Territory communities.

The letter is signed by the Member for Arnhem.

Is discussion supported? Discussion is supported.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, our Labor opposition has put forward this matter of public importance because of what is happening around the Territory. We have seen the impact of weather, the resilience of Territorians challenged and the frustration, anxiety and stress of fellow Territorians who we have the honour and privilege of representing in the Territory in our 25 diverse seats.

This job is such a privilege to have. As the local Member for Arnhem, I have spent an exhausting couple of days fielding many questions and concerns, having to take on some vicarious trauma in my important work as the Member for Arnhem to represent the constituents of the electorate. I will start with a round tour, if you like, because the answers from the Chief Minister today were appalling. Her responses to the critical and direct questions about what is happening for weather resilience and support for people who are flood-affected in parts of the Territory were appalling.

I put it officially on the record that I am disgusted that the Chief Minister has not taken her role as the leader of the Northern Territory seriously. She is not doing it with integrity, care or respect of fellow Territorians who are in a similar situation to those who have been identified in the Katherine local government area to receive disaster relief arrangements and payments for hardship.

I understand there are still assessments underway. I am not stupid or dumb; I listen. What I want is to reply, message, text, call and email every person in the Arnhem electorate who has contacted me and put their faith in me to represent them in this place. It is my job, which I take seriously. I have taken this to the parliament because it is my job to ask these questions of the government, and they have been met with sheer deflection and offensive comments that the opposition is trying to divide when we have asked pointed, clear and direct questions of the CLP Chief Minister. We have received appalling, horrendous and disgusting responses back. Those responses diminish the part of this job which is to represent Territorians and do our utter best to ensure the Territory is a strong and fair place for our constituents.

I will start with my tour. Wugularr (Beswick) community was one of the few communities in the last week-and-a-half that was predicted by the weather experts as needing to prepare for flood evacuation. For those of you who do not know Wugularr, it is a large community of about 500 members south-east of Katherine on the Central Arnhem Road, in the Arnhem electorate. It has two subdivisions: what we call the bottom sub, or the lower sub, which is in the flood zone next to the Waterhouse River; and then we have a top sub, which is the larger part of the community where all the new development has been built, including the schools, shop and new houses—thanks to the Labor government. The CDP office is there, and the night patrol and women's centre all sit in the top sub.

Those who were evacuated from the bottom sub of Wugularr were moved to the top sub. Fortunately, because of all those extra houses, most of the families were able to stay with other families in Wugularr. This is where infrastructure in the bush makes a difference just as much as urban areas, particularly with housing. That is a great story. Uplifting your home at short notice is extremely stressful; we know this and have heard this. We do not want Territorians to have to go through this, but thousands of Territorians have been affected recently, as we all know.

A small number of people—about 40—started off at the evacuation centre, which was at Wugularr School. It is down to about 25 today. I rang some people this morning and spent about an hour-and-a-half on the phone talking to my constituents to find out what is going on with them and what their concerns are. 'What can I raise on your behalf to the Chief Minister and CLP government that is important to you?' As we know, that has been shut down and ignored.

I thank the volunteers, service providers and community members who have stepped up to support their fellow community members in Wugularr. The clinic is now operating at the school because it is normally in the bottom sub, the flood zone.

The aged-care residents have all been moved with family or are being supported at the school. It is a full-time aged care, one of the few in my electorate that has residential aged-care members in the facility. They are now in moderate flooding again, close to major flooding if the rain keeps up this afternoon or tomorrow. This is an ongoing issue, and we acknowledge that there will need to be assessments at different times, but I cannot provide the important answers to my constituents when it comes to whether Wugularr can access the disaster relief payments and hardship support that is being declared for Katherine and its greater region.

We asked the Chief Minister, pointedly, several times in Question Time today. She did not respond; she did not say yes to any of the communities that we asked about. These are question that as local members we have vested interest in, but they were specifically asked by our constituents, particularly in my communities.

Jilkminggan community was officially evacuated. The way the Chief Minister and government talked, you would not even think that Jilkminggan was a community in the flooded area. I was glad to see it on the news and mapped out on the map of the Territory so people knew where it was. All community members were evacuated on Saturday afternoon. People were encouraged if they wanted to self-evacuate or the term I am learning more, 'self-redeployment'—because evacuation costs money but self-redeployment does not.

I appreciate the work of Roper Gulf Regional Council. I have been in close contact with the CEO to see how I can support and advocate for it. On Friday when the arrangements changed in Katherine and the expectation became that Katherine would flood, I asked whether Jilkminggan would be evacuated and whether all the community members would go to Mataranka. I had contact with the police to ask my questions. I appreciate that the Northern Commander—one of the incident managers who lives in Katherine—could field questions to try to get responses for community members.

On Friday Jilkminggan was not going to be evacuated, but this changed on Saturday. I appreciate that, but the evacuation site was Mataranka, and Mataranka was not set up. It was identified as having a shelter. There is a small town hall in Mataranka which we love, but it is not sufficient for a community of about 400 people to shelter at, so Mataranka School was set up.

I thank the principal for her and her team's work. Sadly, the principal's house was flooded, and her husband was medevaced out of Mataranka because of an injury sustained when he was trying to secure his home from the flooding. He was seriously injured.

I have written to the Infrastructure minister about the appalling condition the Mataranka airstrip is in, asking for investment for it to be surfaced because CareFlight cannot land in Mataranka. The good people of Mataranka supported my constituent to get from his flooded home into the Mataranka township to be assessed by Sunrise Health Service and then be transported to Daly Waters towards Larrimah, picking up patients from Katherine and then onto Darwin. I rang him to make sure he was okay.

The principal's house is flooded, and she is now in charge of 12-hour shifts with her school staff whilst also caring for her young children on her own. This is why these questions are so important. Weather resilience, road infrastructure and airstrip and aerodrome surfaces matter in emergencies. Many people are taking on vicarious trauma. It takes a toll on our spirits when we do not get the answers that we have promised we will get from the government, so I am fired up.

One of my constituents told me, 'Be cranky, but be smart about it'. I am doing that, because the lack of response from the CLP government about my electorate and communities makes me wild. People have tasked me to get the answers to questions such as, 'What is happening? Where do we go for information? Are we entitled to disaster relief? What happens to our home when we return? What happens to the bridges and road repairs?' These questions have been left without answers by the government.

From the beginning of the CLP's term in government in August 2024, I said, 'When you are the government of the Northern Territory, you are supposed to govern for the whole of the Northern Territory'. What we are seeing from the CLP is divisive and disrespectful behaviour. It is not caring for every Territorian regardless of their electorate—the imaginary boundaries that we are all here for. Every Northern Territory Government has a duty to look after Territorians. It does not matter who Territorians voted for or what electorate they live in; the government has a duty to serve the Territory with integrity and make sure that everything it does leaves the Territory better than how it found it.

This is where the CLP government is failing, all because of the leadership of the Chief Minister. She is mean-spirited, small-minded and does not care about all Territorians. It disgusts me, because now I have to go back and spend hours on the phone, messaging, texting, calling and emailing my constituents to tell them the Chief Minister failed to answer the simple questions they tasked me and my team to ask.

It makes me wild to see such disrespect at the top level, the so-called leader of the NT, Lia Finocchiaro—a leader by name, but certainly not by nature. I hope she visits the people of Wugularr, Manyallaluk, Jilkminggan, Mataranka and Mulga town camp—if she can get out of her white truck and walk across—so she can hear and see for herself and perhaps, if there is an inkling in her heart, she will feel for the people who have been asking these questions about how her government is helping and supporting them.

When she decides to do that, I will let go of political bounds and happily introduce her to the people who have been asking me to ask these questions on their behalf. Every one of the CLP members is complicit in this because there they are laughing, mocking and saying in Question Time, 'You have the wrong end of the

stick'. No. If you want to do your job as a government minister or backbencher, listen to people who are not in your electorate and are not the people you normally talk to.

Go out and understand what it feels like when your house is flooded and you are cut off by a river or creek for days on end, or to have people saying, 'You should have known this' and, 'You should have done that. The information is on the website.' Think about people who do not speak English as a first language, people who do not have a phone, laptop or iPad, who may not have connectivity or wi-fi to access the information. Where are they getting their information? Tell me where, because I will gladly direct people to that resource or contact.

I appreciate that the local government area of Katherine has been declared an official disaster zone, and people will be supported in this stressful time of need, as they should. It is what people deserve in times of crisis and disaster. It is what Territorians should expect of their government. All Territorians should expect that.

The investment in all services across all parts of the Northern Territory should be a priority of any government, not just the Labor government. The CLP thinks we are bleeding hearts. It should be an investment priority because we care about fellow Territorians. Otherwise, what is the point in being in this place? If we cannot do our best and if we let politics get in the way of doing our job, we are not here for the right reasons.

Mr Mackay: Take your own advice and quit.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Cease the interjections, please.

Ms UIBO: The Member for Goyder has just interjected and said to take my own advice and quit. After I just talked about how much people expect local members to care about fellow Territorians and how much members, particularly those in government, should care about doing a better job for fellow Territorians, aside from politics.

Mr Mackay: I care more than you. Stop politicising a natural disaster.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Goyder, I will not warn you again.

Ms UIBO: Obviously, the Member for Goyder is—to quote my beloved mother—a baby brain, too immature to understand what it means to be in government. I hope the Member for Goyder decides to grow an adult brain and understand the responsibility of any Territory government. I hope he does that. I wish him well in his journey of growing and maturing.

Mr Mackay: I hope you start caring about Territorians.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Goyder, I am warning you. Do not interject again.

Ms UIBO: My god, if I get to tell people today the type of response we had from backbenchers and the Chief Minister, and I will because I will be on the phone for many hours after parliament—that is what you get when your leadership is small-minded and mean-spirited. You reap what you sow; that is the saying. We are seeing that with the Member for Goyder following his mean-spirited, small-minded leader. Great job, CLP.

Connectivity, infrastructure, building bridges, investing in roads, having emergency services and coordination by government and ensuring telecommunications is reliable, particularly in times of need, stress and anxiety—our Labor team believes to the core that no matter where you live in the Northern Territory, you should have the opportunity to thrive. I just wish the CLP government shared that sentiment. The one thing that I would love the CLP to agree with is to share that sentiment that we are here to make things better for all Territorians, not just govern for some.

We see it more and more. The Chief Minister danced around that simple question we asked: why are other areas that are clearly flood-affected not yet declared a disaster zone? She could not say why. Yes, other assessments will happen, but I believe that Katherine was already declared before any assessments on the ground occurred. Is there a double standard here? Yes. Is the Chief Minister leading that standard? Yes. Is the CLP falling behind and staying silent? Yes.

Maybe we could have some more growth and maturity than the Member for Goyder and actually see some people in the government step up, because we know the Chief Minister will not. She picks and chooses who she cares about. Perhaps there are other members in the CLP government who will champion connectivity

and weather resilience and being able to invest just as much in the bush as we need in our regional towns and our city centres.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I make my contribution to this MPI because my heart goes out to the many Territorians who have been affected by this recent flooding event.

I will touch on some of the things the Leader of the Opposition spoke about. It just shows that she is full of words, hot air, gas and no real action. Her opening words were about the impact of weather. That is what caused this. This is exactly right. The impact of a severe weather event has caused this flooding across the Northern Territory and is not the fault of the CLP government. This is not the fault of anyone; in fact, this is really an act of God. We are making the decisions in the best interests of all Territorians across the Northern Territory.

The Leader of the Opposition said that she had been fielding many calls, yet we heard the Chief Minister today say that there has not received one phone call from the Leader of the Opposition on such an important topic. The Chief Minister said that they have each other's phone numbers, yet not one phone call. On the other hand, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition rang 19 times. Of all these calls made by the Leader of the Opposition, there was not one phone call to the Chief Minister. You would think if you were genuinely concerned about your constituents you would pick up the phone and call the Chief Minister, yet the Leader of the Opposition has not done that. She has simply not reached out to the Chief Minister.

She said that the Chief Minister is not taking her role seriously, yet there is no example of that. All I heard was words, words, words. You would think if you were to come to a place like this and make allegations like that, you would back it up with evidence. In my previous life, if I went into a court room to make allegations like that, I would be expected to provide evidence to back it up. You can stand here like I am today and say whatever you want, but if you expect people to take you seriously, you would actually have some evidence. That is where the Leader of the Opposition has failed. She has just come in here and talked.

On the other hand, the Chief Minister spoke good words today in Question Time. She gave practical examples of what she and this government are doing to protect Territorians affected by this flood event. There we have extreme polar opposites: the Chief Minister is showing leadership, giving practical examples and telling the community what has been happening and what will happen, taking clear steps; and the Opposition Leader is belching hot air and gas, talking all these big words, but no practical examples of what she has done.

Again, the evidence is that there was not one phone call to the Chief Minister. My submission is that if you were deadly serious about what you were talking about, you would pick up the phone and call the Chief Minister. Again, nothing has happened.

The Opposition Leader spoke about appalling responses back. I do not know what world she is in, but I was here today in Question Time, listening to the Chief Minister and the Health minister, and they gave explicit explanations about what has been going on. They gave practical examples. In fact, that reminds me, the first question from the Opposition Leader was not to the Chief Minister; it was to the Health and Infrastructure minister. This is another example of the Opposition Leader coming in here, blowing off steam, making allegations with no facts and no evidence to back it up.

The other point I want to raise is the Opposition Leader spoke about fielding all these calls. Was that because she was not in her electorate? Was it because she was in Darwin and had to take all these phone calls? The Opposition Leader had the perfect opportunity to respond, and perhaps one of her colleagues might be able to say where she has been over the last few days, because we know where the Member for Katherine has been: in a wheelchair, being wheeled around Katherine through water. She has been directly fighting for her constituents, looking after the town of Katherine, a place she has been a long time. She is not here today; she is in Katherine doing what she does, representing her constituents and looking after the town of Katherine in a wheelchair.

Mr Young: She told people to stop messaging her. Check her Facebook posts.

Mr MALEY: She is being wheeled around in water, which we know could be contaminated. She had a recent operation on her foot. This is the sacrifice the Member for Katherine has made. She stayed in Katherine and fought for her community, unlike the Opposition Leader, who has fielded these calls—to use her words—because she was not there; she was in Darwin, maybe down at the Wave Pool or at Nightcliff with the Member for Nightcliff, lapping up the sunshine. When people were in need in her community, it seems she was not there.

I am flabbergasted the Opposition Leader would make these allegations with no examples or evidence, just hot air. She talked about not being able to talk to the Chief Minister, but the Chief Minister answered her questions when she was finally asked a question by the opposition, because the questions went to the Minister for Health.

She summed up the Chief Minister by saying that she is not doing a good job and is not good at it. Clearly, that is hot air. The Chief Minister has shown leadership and made decisions. The CLP has acted in the best interests of Territorians across the Territory. Over the last month or so there have been floods in Alice Springs, in and around the Barkly, in Katherine and in the rural area. It goes to show that the Opposition Leader is just blowing hot air and not talking about things that are concerning to Territorians.

Again, that brings me to what the Opposition Leader was saying about only acting for people who voted CLP. Clearly, that is not the case. The Chief Minister is acting in the best interests of all Territorians, and the Opposition Leader should be embarrassed about her own behaviour.

This next one gets me even more. The Opposition Leader told us about the poor state of the Mataranka airstrip and how they cannot land there. Do I need to remind the opposition that they have been in office for the last 19 years before the CLP? The current members have been in office for eight years. The CLP has been in office for about 18 months, yet the Opposition Leader complains about an issue that she and her government could have directly fixed over their eight years in office, with the cheque book, but not one bit of work was done there.

She complains about the poor state of the Mataranka airstrip, yet she, as a senior minister in that government, chose not to do anything about that when Labor was in government. This is another classic example of the Leader of the Opposition clutching at straws, trying to make this a political issue when it is not one. This is about Territory safety, community safety and acting in the best interests of Territorians. That is exactly what people on this side of the House are doing.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about people seeing the Chief Minister as indecisive and that it is her duty to protect all Territorians. I will not even go into that, because I have given clear examples of how the Chief Minister is acting in the best interests of all Territorians.

The Leader of the Opposition said she was fired up and spoke about the poor leadership of the Chief Minister. Again, there were no examples. She asked, ‘Where do I get information from? Where do people get information about what is going on?’ SecureNT is the website for all the information you need. It is up to date and cuts out the rumour mill and the misinformation.

For example, the Member for Daly put information on his Facebook page that is clearly not correct. He gets the answers from the government and then posts information that is not correct. It is a shameful situation when all the opposition is trying to do is make this a divisive matter. It is trying to create fear and alarm for people in the Northern Territory when this is not the time for that. We are dealing with a weather event, and we are here to fix it.

Another point—I will not rewrite history—is when COVID was here a few years ago, then Chief Minister Michael Gunner used his personal Facebook page to put out information. I am sure people remember that. He referred the NT to his personal Facebook. When we talk about reliable up-to-date information, why would the Labor government refer people to a personal Facebook page?

We in the CLP are referring people to SecureNT. We make sure that website has correct, up-to-date information so all Territorians, no matter where they live, can access that information and not have to put up with misinformation like that spread by the previous government members sitting in opposition today.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about building better roads and having better communications and connectivity across the Northern Territory. The members sitting on the other side had eight years in office. All those things the Leader of the Opposition spoke about could have been done in their time as senior ministers of the Labor government, but what did they do? They did nothing and now they are throwing stones at the CLP for doing things, acting on information and getting the Territory up and running.

We know the economy is now looking better, crime has reduced and our lifestyle is being restored after the damage done by the previous government. Those sitting opposite are directly responsible for the Territory going downhill for at least eight years in a row—perhaps 19 years. All this talk about building better roads and making things weather resistant could have been done by the previous government when Labor was in office and had the chequebook and the levers to pull. Labor members chose not to do that and let the Territory

get into such a state that many people left and the Territory's economy went downhill. That has now turned and we are making it better.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about misinformation and things happening differently. That is because the flood that was in Katherine is now reaching Daly River. In fact, it has not had the worst part of it yet; the flood is in different areas and happens at different times. Information is different for areas across the Northern Territory because the flood is different. There would be no point putting out information about Alice Springs now because the flood has been and gone. Information about Daly River will be important because the flood is on its way there. The flood in Katherine has been and gone and—touch wood—it will not come back. We know there is rain around that area.

It shows that opposition members are trying to score political points from a serious situation. We are here to put the record straight because the Leader of the Opposition spoke about many things, and a lot of it was inaccurate misinformation designed to score political points on important information.

When disaster strikes in the Territory, Territorians roll up their sleeves, check on their neighbours and get to work. We have seen this in Katherine, where the Member for Katherine, in a wheelchair, went back to represent her community, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who stayed here. Maybe she was getting the sunshine at Nightcliff beach with the Member for Daly or Nightcliff.

People like Trent De With—the owner of Rod & Rifle Tackle World in Katherine—did a great job alongside the Member for Katherine in a wheelchair. I saw a photo of him pushing her around. The Chief Minister has pushed the Member for Katherine around in a wheelchair, because that is what Territorians do. They work, roll up their sleeves and go flat out.

This is a very bad time. It is the worst flood in over two decades, and we know the thirst for information is high, yet the Member for Daly, who has let down his residents day-in and day-out, could have been out there sandbagging and helping those people, but no; he was sitting in Nightcliff, not helping or sandbagging.

What he was doing—and he did a good job of this—was spreading fear. He could have been bringing the community together, giving information to people who are in a serious situation—their whole life will be swept away—yet he chose to spread fear and not work in the best interests of Territorians. He was driving a wedge in the community and trying to take political pot shots instead of helping.

He preferred to be a keyboard warrior in his air-conditioned office instead of using a shovel and helping his community. Imagine if the people of Daly had Trent De With as their local member. I saw posts of him from midnight to 4 am, in the rain, riding his pushbike around. I did not see that from the Member for Daly.

We know there are worse floods to come, and the Member for Daly is not there; he is here. He also said that there is no information or communication, yet he rang the Chief Minister 19 times and the Chief Minister responded. That is a practical example. The Member for Daly talks about no communication, rings 19 times, receives responses and then posts that no-one is talking to him and there is no communication. It is clearly aimed at spreading fear so people are worried, when what we need at a time like this is to bring people together.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 31; improper motives from the Deputy Chief Minister. He is making a personal reflection on me as a member that is incorrect. What he is saying is not true; he should provide the facts.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order; sit down.

Mr MALEY: Clearly, I am hitting a raw nerve because the truth hurts. This is about making sure we do things in the best interests of all Territorians, no matter where they live or who they voted for, and that is what the Chief Minister is doing in this crisis.

This is not just a one-off. As I explained earlier, we have had it in Alice Springs, the Barkly, Katherine and it is going to the Daly. We had it in the rural area in the last day or so. These natural events are occurring across the Territory at different rates. There is no point making an assessment for the whole of the Territory because all the Territory is affected differently and things occur at different rates.

Natural disasters are not a time for pointscoring. This is a time to come together as a community and make sure Territorians are protected, their communities are protected and they can be as safe as they can be in this terrible time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is important because right now thousands of Territorians are responding to what is an unprecedented sequence of weather events across the Territory. The Deputy Chief Minister is right; this Wet Season has been long, sustained and it started early with a cyclone in Darwin, impacting the Tiwis and the Daly. Since that time, it has continued across the last few months. We have had the two flooding events in Alice Springs. We had the flooding events in Murray Downs and across the Barkly and, of course, now Katherine and the Daly and all the communities impacted in and around that. Yesterday late afternoon, even in the Darwin rural areas—Berry Springs, Darwin River and those areas.

It is timely to put on the record our thanks to the thousands of public servants who are doing the most incredible job in providing responses to multiple events concurrently. Our emergency services teams, the police and all the agencies have come together and stood up emergency operation centres nice and early to be getting ahead with our planning and preparation. That work has been paying off. The work we have done to make sure we get in early has been paying off. People are safe, and that is the main thing. First and foremost, this is all about preservation of life. That has to be our number one priority.

We have a boil water alert as a precautionary measure in the greater Darwin region, and the Department of Health has been putting out that communication. It is being shared far and wide so that people understand that is an important precaution for people to take while we have turned on those additional bores to deal with the flash flood incident that happened late yesterday afternoon with the pump at Darwin River Dam. This is an unprecedented level of water coming in, the highest that Darwin River Dam has ever seen, and there is all that ancillary flash flooding, and it is still impacting people today. This morning we still had water well and truly over roads across several locations in the greater Darwin area.

I thank our Power and Water crews. They identified the situation early. They obviously had to wait for flood waters to recede before they could provide their response, and they have been working around the clock and are still working to make sure that pump can be turned back on. I thank them for that work. As you can appreciate, while that is happening we have dozens of public servants in Mataranka supporting the community of Jilkminggan, people running the Marrara facility supporting the people of Palumpa, people at the Foskey Pavillion supporting the people of Daly River, and people in Katherine across three shelters which are busily being converted into emergency centres to support the people of Katherine.

There are about 1,000 people in shelters across the broader Top End region. It is taking thousands of people to support that effort, not to mention that continued response we are providing out of the emergency operation centre. I thank everyone who has been working through that, including our commander and also the important work of our incident controller, Shaun Gill. Everyone in the team is doing the most incredible work, and heartfelt thanks go to each and every one of them.

Our real focus for today has been making sure people understand that they have to restrict their water consumption, and that we are all in this together. If every Territorian does the right thing by their fellow Territorian, everything will be okay. Those crews are out there doing that important work. We have had 100 of the major water users contacted, and the response has been wonderful and heartening. I have to say that straightaway they have been reducing water consumption. We need to stay the course on that. Tonight is important. Peak water usage is between 3 pm and 8 pm. Tonight everyone gets the night off. No-one is doing dishes or laundry tonight. We can look at this as a positive.

Mr Paech: No showers.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That might be a positive for you, Member for Gwoja, but for others not so much.

We are all in this together; in emergencies that is exactly what happens. I have to say, being in Katherine yesterday—everyone knows Katherine is just one of those towns where people support one another—I got to witness the absolute beauty of all of that on my visit yesterday.

It was not just the 40-odd volunteers helping out at the homes hardest hit, the amazing work that Trent did in keeping people up to date or the amazing work of Brent in making sure sandbags were getting out to everyone across town. The work of the butchers was so incredible, with Town and Country working with Bluehole to get that meat off the shelves, into homes and into people's bellies. The mood on the ground was good.

We are watching the river recede and we all just want the flooding to disappear, but the constant thought about that—this is when we have concurrent weather events—is that all that water is going to the Daly River; we cannot lose sight of that fact. Everyone in Daly River is safe, so there is no risk to life, which is important.

But we have displaced hundreds of people who, for the second time, have had to evacuate the community because of flooding. The loss and the disruption to people's lives is profound.

It was heartening to hear Minister Cahill report that people in the emergency shelters—the evacuation centres, rather—are in good spirits. In that true Territory spirit, people are banding together and making the most of what is a tragic situation. People are safe; that is the main thing. That is something we cannot lose sight of. What will come will come with the Daly. What is important is that we are ready to make sure we can respond once it hits peak, which it has not yet, and comes back down. We can get in and do all the assessments we need to work through what houses need what work and repatriate people home.

Concurrent with all of that is needing a new plan on how to house people, particularly from Daly, for the longer term, because we just do not know at this point what that impact looks like. That is a time of great anxiety and uncertainty, but there are no answers, and that is what I was trying to convey in Question Time today. It is easy to apportion blame and point fingers at what 'shoulda, coulda, woulda' been, but at the end of the day, our emergency services personnel and the scores of public servants who have done this time and again delivered the best response in the situation presented to them.

We cannot ask anything more of people than to do their best, and they did. That is evidenced by the fact everyone is safe. No-one can stop that river from coming; no-one can stop the water heading towards Daly River. I wish we could, but we cannot. What we can do is make sure everyone is safe and supported, and that is what we have done.

We still have people in shelters in Katherine being converted. There are many moving parts, and every day I am provided advice from the Territory Emergency Management Council in relation to what the next day and the next step looks like.

We are focused on making sure that pump gets back up and running, and that people are heeding the warnings in relation to the reduction of water consumption. Power being reconnected in homes has been an important piece of work that Power and Water is currently doing in Katherine. We got it down from 1,500 to 300. Our schools remain closed because we are still running the shelters.

It was great to see Woolies open in Katherine yesterday. Then, of course, the rail opened and trucks were able to go through the Stuart Highway. The DLI teams have been plugging holes in roads and doing everything they can to get traffic moving. In fact, when I was at the butcher yesterday in the industrial area, thanking Jason and Mel for their amazing partnership to get food on tables, a truck had arrived and was running low on diesel, and it had five tonnes of meat. Jason said, 'What can we do? We need to get diesel to this truck.' Straight onto it—Terry Zhang, the commander there in Katherine, was making phone calls. The DLI team had just opened the bridge, so we were able to tell the truck to go through straight to Darwin.

It was fantastic. You had to see it to believe the way in which our on-the-ground staff and teams work. We were going through significant floodwater yesterday. There was a tourist bus in front of us, and a lady had gotten out of the bus and was walking through the floodwater to ascertain how high it was. Commander Zhang pulled up next to her to ask what support she needed. They exchanged phone numbers, and she went back to the bus. We could provide real-time support to help her make decisions, as she needed to pick up people and get to Darwin. That lady had been sleeping on the bus for three days. The collaboration and on-the-ground response has been second to none. I reinforce the incredible work that people are doing.

We know that weather events remain unfolding, and we must wait and see. I flew over Palumpa yesterday and saw there is water everywhere in the bottom camp. At some points on the flight, I thought I was looking at the ocean; there are unbelievable volumes of water across the Territory.

There is plenty to do—no question. The disaster relief funding has been activated for Katherine, because everyone stayed in Katherine; there was no evacuation. Today we saw hundreds if not more than a thousand people lining up to access those payments. We are surging resources in to establish another site to provide more access to people. We do not want people standing in lines for hours; that is not an additional burden we want to place on people. That is the immediate relief assistance, and there is the accommodation assistance and the re-establishment grants. All of this is a well-trodden road with the federal government in regard to those categories and eligibility. That will come through to those other communities as we move to those next phases.

We would love to get schools back online as soon as possible, but there are practical limitations to that. Teachers are running our shelters at the moment. I spoke to one lady on Friday, before the flood had really impacted. People were already going to the emergency centre. She said to me, 'My husband and kids are

ringing me, and they want me to come home', because obviously they were not sure what would happen to their place. People have their own preparations to make. She said, 'I just went home, moved a few things and lifted everything up, and told him that I need to be at the shelter'. She was there with her community to help. It is that incredible spirit and commitment that we can be proud of. There is no question that it is on full display.

I will leave the political pot shots to Labor. I am not sure why those opposite are having a deprivation of relevancy over the last few days. It is unnecessary. Now is an important time to come together and make sure that public messaging happens. That is what all politicians have done in this Chamber for all time. As I said in Question Time, at difficult times the government has to do what it has to do. The best way anyone can support their electorate and their community is to pass on information, not cause more confusion, fear or anguish, and to resolve issues as quickly as possible, which is what we have been trying to do.

The Member for Daly, with the requests he is receiving, is getting the best information first. A lot of it, he could have done himself—some of it was literally ringing the store to see whether it had run out of food. The stores told us they had not. The Member for Nelson said it best with the keyboard warrior comment.

You guys make your bed, and you will have to sleep in it. We will continue to provide the best response and support to our front line. As a born-and-bred, proud-as-hell Territorian, I know that the work being done on the ground is incredible. We have the best people making the best efforts, and I thank them wholeheartedly.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I send my support to the communities that are impacted by the floodwaters across the NT, especially the recent floods in Katherine, in the Centre and now in the rural areas of Darwin and beyond. To those in this Chamber who have been personally impacted by floodwaters, I hope that the recovery will be an easy part.

At this time, many people have significant damage and require the support of the community and government to help clean up and re-establish their homes. This is a difficult time for many. As the job can be overwhelming, I also send support to those people who have been evacuated from their communities to Darwin.

To be told to leave your home and country is difficult. This is the second time for people from Daly River community in only two short periods. When these weather events and emergencies happen in Aboriginal communities across the NT, it is ridiculous that elders and leaders are not included in emergency planning and emergency support for communities. Regional and local emergency controllers need to ensure that the local leaders are getting all the information and are part of working with emergency services to support the community and protect them. If the local emergency controller is not a local Aboriginal person, they need to work in partnership with our local leaders to do the job as a team in partnership.

Every year in East Arnhem Land when the roads become impassable due to rain, homeland towns are cut off. The government needs to support infrastructure projects to ensure that there are improvements to airports and roads, including the roads to homelands that are in poor condition and are often not upgraded for years at a time.

It is distressing to read some of the racist comments on social media about flood victims from remote communities. The government needs to do a better job to protect vulnerable people from these attacks. It needs to set a standard to call out these racist views that we are seeing all too often.

One of the comments I read was about Palumpa, a community of approximately 400 people. The comment said, 'Hope they all drown'. I would like to see some leadership from this government to strongly condemn these kinds of comments and behaviour.

I thank all the volunteers, police and emergency workers who have been working to keep people safe. It is important work that you do, and it is greatly appreciated.

When I see widespread destruction like this, when there are floods or fires, it makes me think we need to remember to step carefully on country and to look after the country as best we can. Sometimes when a river runs strong it is clearing away some of the rubbish and debris that has been building up, and it is a renewal. There is an abundance of water and life. Sometimes when it runs strong, it causes widespread destruction. It is a reminder to look after people and country, and we might look to see if there is harm somewhere that needs to be repaired. It is important across our land that we are taking strong steps to address climate change.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I speak to this matter of public importance because it is an important reminder of not only the time we live in, but the environment we live in.

The CLP government failed to effectively communicate with Territorians about the risks associated with flooding and the necessary health and emergency measures to keep people safe. Across the Territory, people are deeply concerned about the consequences of the government's failure in responding to this emergency.

Let me be clear that the people on the ground—the emergency service workers, community members, volunteers, frontline services and police in these remote locations—are doing everything they can to keep people safe. To them I say thank you for doing the hard work, for staying behind to keep others safe and for being part of those remote emergency management meetings; I know how important they are.

I acknowledge the regional councils across the Territory and thank them for the work they have done. I have been on the phone to a number of regional councils—MacDonnell, Central Desert and Vic Daly—talking to them about the recent rains. They have said that it is bloody wet. There is a lot of water around; we are seeing unprecedented levels. It leads them into the conversation I believe they are having with government about betterment. How do we address the damaged infrastructure and not just replace it like for like, but to create infrastructure that can withstand future events like this?

Territorians knows how to deal with floods, natural disasters and extreme weather events. These are not new to us. We are Territorians; we live through all extremes. For generations Territorians and Territory communities have shown resilience and strength in responding to these challenges. They do the work, look after each other and follow the advice given by the authorities. The question Territorians are asking is simple: why has the response from this government been so different?

Previous governments of all political persuasions have faced floods, cyclones and disasters. We have never seen communication issues like we are seeing now. We are hearing from remote communities that important messaging is not in language. Many people across the bush know English as a fifth language. Emergency management notifications and information must be in First Nations language. At a time when people are trying to get to safety, the government should be removing barriers, not creating them.

We have heard disturbing reports that the Department of Health was aware of the situation last night, but the government chose not to inform the public until today. If that is true, Territorians deserve to know why. We have heard claims on social media that CLP government members were seen in supermarkets last night buying water before the public had been advised about the risk. If this is the case, Territorians have the right to question whether the government has been transparent.

In Alice Springs we have heard concerning reports that no-one was on duty to monitor the flood gauges and warning systems overnight. If that is accurate, it raises serious questions about the preparedness and oversight.

Most troubling has been the government's messaging. The Chief Minister said one thing, the Attorney-General said another thing and SecureNT said something different. These different messages come from three different sources. Territorians have been left asking a simple question: who do we trust? The answer from many people on the street today was clear: trust the experts and SecureNT. They are the professionals who are focused on keeping people safe, not on political spin.

At the same time, we have heard serious concerns about fairness. Some people have received emergency vouchers while others who have lost everything—their homes, their belongings, their communities—are still waiting for help. Territorians expect fairness in times of crisis. People living in the bush are asking the important question: do people care about us too? When disaster hits the bush the response cannot be slower or weaker simply because people live in a remote community. Bush people matter. Their safety and recovery matters.

In Alice Springs people have witnessed unprecedented flood levels. Events like this remind us that flood mitigation and long-term resilience must be taken seriously, yet one of the first things the CLP did when it came to power was to scrap the Northern Territory Risk Reduction Program. That program was designed to reduce disaster risks and improve resilience; it should be strengthened not abandoned.

The government has shelved flood mitigation strategies. When in government we commenced work on levees in Katherine. We built the southern levee, and the northern levee was to be built.

Territorians deserve clear communication. They deserve preparedness and leadership during emergencies. Right now, we are not seeing that leadership. They are seeing confusion, mixed messages and delays. In times of disaster that is simply not good enough.

I raise the issue of food security. During floods it is important to acknowledge food security is crucial to keep communities healthy and strong. It is crucial to stop people's levels of anxiety rising. I acknowledge that when I have asked questions to the Chief Minister about food security issues in Lajamanu, Kalkarindji and Nitjpurru (Pigeon Hole), she has responded. This goes to the broader question: when our store shelves are empty and our remote communities are asking questions, we should be proactively communicating the message, not waiting for further questions to be asked.

In times of need and fear we have seen people resort to social media. People have expressed their concerns, shared messages and events. Like the Member for Mulka, I am horrified that during this time of crisis, anxiety and extreme hurt we have seen people not being kind. There have been numerous comments on social media pages, many of which all members of this parliament have liked or are associated with. We have a role as legislators to call out bad behaviour.

On these social media pages, when First Nations people have shared their stories, experiences, heartache and loss, we have seen comments like that from Sean, 'I hope they all drown', or Donna, 'Why give them something? They don't need nothing; they have nothing', or Samantha, who thought it was okay to say, 'Let them all in a bit of water; they need a wash.'

This is not the Territory that I know and love. It is not the time when people should be coming to social media to express such hateful, hurtful and disgusting comments. This is behaviour that we should not tolerate. No member of this parliament should allow that to flip by, particularly the government. We have an opportunity to call out this bad behaviour and remind everyone that being a Territorian means being united and coming together, like the community of Alice Springs did during our recent weather events, or like many in this parliament have spoken about today in the communities of Katherine, Palumpa and Daly River, where they have come together. That is the Territory that I know and love and we all should be embracing.

Words matter and they have impact. When we let those comments go by and do not call it out on social media, we accept that standard of hate and poor behaviour. No-one in this parliament should be doing that.

Highways and railway lines are regularly being cut off. It appears that there are issues about adequate fuel storage across the Northern Territory. Food security has always been an issue across the Territory. When roads and corridors are closed off, food and fuel become restricted, as do medical supplies. Now we have a boil water alert in Darwin.

All of the weather events this year are clearly influenced by the climate and climate change. Maybe it is time for this parliament to look at an inquiry to develop and improve infrastructure and climate adaption because these events will not be in isolation. I am not saying for a moment that this weather is the new norm, but over recent years we have continued to see an increase in the intensity of weather patterns and events across the Northern Territory.

This MPI is important because it enables us to have a discussion and raise concerns from all of our communities. I again acknowledge the hardworking Northern Territory public service, particularly Police, Fire and Emergency Services and the staff within the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and in Territory Families, who often have to stand up in these remote communities and do the incredible work of getting facilities ready and switched over. Once that is turned over to the recovery, it is work that will continue for some time. It is important to acknowledge that.

I pay tribute to our local governments across the Territory. Many people in this Chamber will not see the work that they are doing now across the Territory, but they are in these communities dealing with the flood issues. Whilst my electorate of Gwoja has not seen the need for the emergency response like other electorates, being on the phone to our local councils and police stations talking about this has been crucial in understanding how we can respond.

This raises important issues about our road networks and corridors. The federal government has provided funding for roads like Santa Teresa Road, Imanpa Road and the road on the Mereenie Loop to Utju and the Tanami. These are important roads. The land councils have done the clearances. The quicker we can seal these roads the quicker we can provide all-weather access for our communities.

Telecommunications is also important. In flood events this is crucial, because when a community loses mobile phone reception they lose access to financial services because the ATMs are down and cannot buy goods and services in their local stores. Tonight is an opportunity for us to consider a parliamentary inquiry on how we adapt to the changing environment with telecommunications, road networks, food security and wholesale distribution and emergency responses. This matter will potentially get worse as the climate changes.

I give an enormous shout-out to every Territorian who has come together in this time of need, reached out and supported one another. I thank people across the Territory. I know people in remote communities who have asked how they can help the people of Katherine, Tennant Creek and the Daly. I say thank you for caring and offering your services; that is the Northern Territory that I know and love. That is the Northern Territory I have seen come out in force in Katherine, Tennant, Alice and in the bush.

To all the people in Darwin, these are unprecedented times; I acknowledge that. Let's work to make sure that this does not happen again. We are an Australian capital city; we should not have to see a boil water alert. There is ongoing work in Katherine because no town should have to evacuate everyone from the hospital just because it is built on a flood plain. Let's get better with our forward planning and do better.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter forward for discussion. The Northern Territory has experienced an unprecedented amount of rain in recent times which has brough with it a series of unprecedented weather events including the biggest floods we have seen in decades.

I start by speaking about my hometown of Alice Springs. After a bout of heavy rainfall, the Todd River began flowing, which is a sight to see in Alice Springs and brings everyone in the community out. Just a few days later, in the early hours of the morning of 12 February, a heavy rainfall triggered an emergency warning for the Todd River. As the Chief Minister spoke about earlier, this heavy rainfall fell over the catchment area near Bond Springs. This led to rapid rises across local causeways, causing road closures, disruption to transport routes and impacts to some homes, properties, businesses, schools and critical transport links.

I understand how stressful this situation in Alice Springs was for many people and their families. I was on the ground early that morning, witnessing firsthand the water flowing through and closing the Heavitree Gap and Stuart Highway access from the south side of town to the north. In my 36 years there, being born and raised in Alice Springs, I had never seen this before and it brought with it a number of things.

With those sudden increases in water, there was also a woman swept off the Taffy Pick crossing, which led to an emergency response by police. On the morning of 12 February, I was standing in the darkness in the Heavitree Gap, witnessing police put themselves at risk to essentially scale along the mountain range to get as close as possible to provide support for the woman who was clinging to a tree in the middle of the Todd River. I thank the Northern Territory Police Force and the emergency service workers who put themselves in harm's way that morning to protect others.

Throughout the coming days it was important that our response ensured the rest of the community was supported. It was wonderful to see the emergency operation centre stood up. All the relevant responders from the SES, police and government departments came together to ensure those who needed support had it. I thank those who volunteered their time to fill up sandbags. It was wonderful to work shoulder to shoulder with our volunteer bushfire crews and other volunteers to ensure our community could be protected in those challenging times.

Those challenging times also revealed the strength of our community. The good people of Alice Springs have shown that our community is a strong one. Throughout this time I received correspondence and phone calls from many in some of our most remote communities. I acknowledge Elkedra Station and the Driver family who went through the worst flooding since the 1970s. Joe Fogarty from Lucy Creek Station got in contact with me to speak about the troubles and the challenges that they faced. People from the communities of Lake Nash, Murray Downs and Ali Curung, which have also experienced flooding and had to react in that Central Australia region, got into contact with me and my office to ensure that there were services. There were a number of other communities that were impacted that I have not been able to mention.

I also give a big commendation to the emergency shelters that were stood up on a Sunday afternoon in Alice Springs. It is hard to explain because we avoided some of the worst of the flooding. Many businesses on that morning of 12 February were impacted severely by flooding. After that a number of emergency warnings were issued as a result of just how close we were to experiencing another flood event. As a result, emergency shelters were set up on the Sunday afternoon by the departments of Health and Education. I thank the

representatives who gave their Sunday evening to stand up those emergency shelters and be ready should the worst happen.

I am glad to report that the worst did not happen after the first event on 12 February. There were a number of instances where we were expecting large flooding events, and every day I went to the emergency operations centre and received updates from the Bureau of Meteorology. Every time there were about three modelling events that were shown so that everyone could make informed decisions about whether to open the emergency shelters, and every time the worst-case scenario showed that Alice Springs would experience severe flooding.

I am grateful that we did not experience further flooding after that episode on 12 February. To all the departmental staff at the Health department, the Education department, Police and Emergency Services who worked around the clock to ensure our community was safe, I send my most sincere appreciation and gratitude.

I touch on what the Member for Mulka spoke about and some of the comments that have been made towards people in remote communities. I stand with the Member for Mulka in condemning those comments. It made me think of a story that I want to relay to the Chamber. I have been witness to a number of protests that have occurred in Alice Springs. Some of the slogans thrown around include, 'Pine Gap, USA, how many kids have you killed today?' I condemn those comments as well.

Throughout the flooding events in Alice Springs, one person sticks in my memory more than anyone else. That person is Dave, who I filled sandbags with over a weekend. He works at the joint defence facility at Pine Gap in Alice Springs. I would often find myself speaking with Dave throughout the days about why he chose to join the emergency services, why he chose to volunteer and why he felt compelled to come out and assist our community.

The way he saw it was that he was a military man who had come from America and was doing his tour. As many people from Alice Springs know, those who choose to work at the joint facility come to Alice Springs for a number of years. It showed me that although there were some in our community who would rather that facility did not operate and that Dave and his family were not there, he was there supporting our community.

When I heard the Member for Mulka speak about those terrible comments relating to those remote community members, I agree we should condemn that. In the same way, I want to support those in my community who are often told to go home, not to be working in our community, yet they support our community every chance they get. To those and many other people who feel as though there have been derogatory comments directed towards them, I condemn that and support those people who continue to support our communities.

The floods in Katherine and surrounding communities of Palumpa and Daly River have been devastating. We are thinking of everyone who is enduring these floods and those whose homes have been affected.

I commend the Member for Katherine, who has been actively out on the ground in her community every day, while in a wheelchair after recent surgery, keeping her community informed, listening to residents and supporting them wherever she can. This is all while her own home has been flooded. I spoke to the Member for Katherine the other day and asked her how she was doing. She could not be in her home; she was with her daughter, who recently had her first child. It was a real mix of emotions, wanting to be there to support her community whilst essentially having her husband go to their home every day and count the rising cost of the floods.

That kind of commitment speaks volumes. The Member for Katherine's dedication to her community truly goes above and beyond, and she has continued to show up for her community day-in and day-out, no matter what.

The Chief Minister was also in Katherine yesterday, taking the time to check in with families impacted by the flooding and visiting flood-affected homes with the Member for Katherine, witnessing the major and confronting cleanup efforts they now face. We know Katherine is a strong community, and they have shown incredible resilience, banding together while this has been unfolding, helping their neighbours, and local businesses keeping their doors open to ensure people do not go hungry.

Throughout these extreme weather events, the spirit and resilience of Territorians has shone through. I acknowledge and thank our frontline responders, who have worked tirelessly around the clock throughout these extreme weather events: the dedicated members of Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Northern Territory Emergency Service volunteers; and Northern Territory public service and council

crews. From conducting welfare checks and responding to calls for assistance to managing traffic control points and providing accurate and timely public information, our frontline workers have worked long hours in challenging and hazardous conditions to carry out rescues, protect property, manage emergency shelters, restore essential services and keep the community informed.

I also acknowledge the many community members who have helped out during this time, checking in on neighbours, assisting with sandbagging and cleanup efforts, demonstrating resilience and spirit that defines the Northern Territory.

The Finocchiaro CLP government is continuing to assess impacts and support recovery efforts for those who have been affected, and we remain focused on strengthening flood mitigation infrastructure to better protect the town into the future.

This government is committed to addressing the incredibly important and complex matter of flood mitigation. As this sits under my ministerial portfolio of Lands, Planning and Environment, I will take the remaining time I have to speak about that.

For the past eight years, the previous Labor government sat on its hands and did nothing to address flood mitigation in my home town of Alice Springs. Unlike Labor, this government is getting on with the job of delivering, because we know how critical this issue is in my hometown.

I want to talk about some of the action that has been happening. There has been a lot of talk and conjecture around this. There is currently $9m remaining in the Alice Springs flood mitigation program. We have invested $1m over the last 12 months to inform concept designs of key trunk drainage upgrades which laid the groundwork to ensure funding is directed to practical, deliverable outcomes.

I will be clear with the Assembly: the trunk drainage issues only address localised flooding in the Alice Springs area. What we saw on the evening of 12 February will not be addressed by the trunk drainage upgrades that we are seeking to do, but it will help should we experience localised heavy rainfall in or around Alice Springs.

A total of $4.9m will be used to progress a range of critical drainage works. The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment is awaiting certification from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, and once that has been issued, the works will commence without delay. Of that funding $2m has been allocated to further work with the Heavitree Gap flood mitigation highway strengthening.

I cannot express to members more clearly what it was like, standing there on the morning of the 12th, watching how high the flood waters came and literally being able to look a couple of hundred metres downstream to the south and seeing how the flood level dropped once it got through Heavitree Gap. For quite some time we have known—it was in a previous flood mitigation report in 2016–17—that the Heavitree Gap is a chokepoint for our town, and only so much water can travel through there.

We are now investing money to look at how strengthening, raising up the roadway through and possibly increasing the flow of water through Heavitree Gap can assist the town of Alice Springs with flood mitigation. For years, we saw Labor have this funding available. They failed to act. There was money allocated but nothing delivered. Unlike Labor, the CLP government is getting on with the job, actively progressing works, navigating approvals and delivering practical flood mitigation outcomes.

All assessments recommended in the Alice Springs flood mitigation report have been actioned—a lot of them related to hydrological reports and the construction of flood mitigation measures—and are subject to future funding opportunities through those Commonwealth programs.

It was good to go to Canberra to speak to the federal government officials there to progress discussions about flood mitigation. It is important. We need the Commonwealth to work with us. It was good to speak directly with those federal government officers so that we could progress those flood talks.

I will be meeting with those federal ministers again later this month. It is important to acknowledge that we must all work together to address this complex and costly challenge across our federal and NT governments, working with traditional owners. I look forward to doing the hard work in the future to make sure this occurs.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and welcome the matter of public importance on weather resilience and connectivity across Northern Territory communities.

I want to start off by thanking the many volunteers who have been in the many communities in the Top End, from Katherine to my electorate in Palumpa, Daly River and checking in on the homelands. They have really brought people together, our emergency services, police and public servants, as well as the community members who have been helping to ensure that all people in their communities are safe. The Aboriginal corporations have reached out to me and let me know what is happening on the ground in these communities across the Thamarrurr region and Daly River.

I thank the West Daly Mayor, Terry Sams, for keeping me informed of what is going on in the homelands across the Thamarrurr region. He is from the homeland of Emu Point and has been advising me directly what has been going on in homelands in relation to food shortages.

I will come back to that to rebut some of the comments that were made by the Deputy Chief Minister and the Chief Minister about the homelands. They have been accusing them of not being truthful in what is happening in the homelands, which has been quite disappointing.

I go back to Friday morning last week when I got the calls from community members in Daly River and Palumpa, when the water levels were up. I will start with Palumpa because that community is surrounded by big floodplains on the edge of a floodplain. People there woke up to water lapping at their doors and some of those houses were already going under water. I thank the Thamarrurr Development Corporation community development program workers and the West Daly Shire Council workers on the ground for helping evacuate people from one side of town to the other to get to safer ground. Palumpa has a billabong with a bridge over it. That was cut off when the water went over the bridge, which created a dangerous situation for residents.

In Daly River we saw the river rising significantly. Many people from Daly River were calling me, concerned about what was going on in Daly River. They were unsure how quickly the river would rise that day.

I make the point that we need to understand what went on there and why it took over 24 hours to evacuate people from Palumpa and Daly River. I have been given information by local people on the ground speaking with me directly. Why did it take so long for people to be evacuated from those communities?

People felt anxious and scared. As we know it can turn dangerous quickly, especially in Daly River with the river system there and in Palumpa. I do not think people there had not seen an event like that for some time. For many people this was their first time, and they were quite worried. I had reports of people calling in about the crocodiles around Palumpa swimming in the floodwaters. They were genuinely concerned and were not too sure when they would get out.

My understanding is that part of the reason was the evacuation centres in Darwin were not set up. The government delayed getting people out until the Saturday when it started moving people from Palumpa and Daly River.

Most people from Palumpa were flown out on Saturday morning into safer grounds in Darwin. Roughly 200 people were flown out of Daly River. All the local people from Palumpa were flown out.

Some of the service providers whose houses were inundated with floodwaters were quite anxious and scared about leaving their pets behind with the locals. Some people decided to stay because they had their beloved dogs and did not want to leave them behind. For those who have pets—I do not have a pet, but I am fond of dogs—it is an extension of your family. Anyone who owns pets would understand why some people did not want to leave their dogs behind. Some people were helicoptered out because they were genuinely anxious about leaving their pets behind.

On Saturday there was a huge operation of helicoptering people from Daly River to Batchelor. I went to Batchelor to see what was going on. Many helicopters were flying back and forth. I believe that roughly three people at a time could fit in a helicopter. More than 300 people needed to get out. Unfortunately, not everyone got out on the Saturday. The 70 people who were left behind were anxious and scared. A number of people who were left behind called me directly because they were unsure what was going on.

That is not a criticism of the coordination on the ground. We know that the police were trying their best to coordinate and understand what was going on and that the service providers in the communities were trying to coordinate to help people on the ground with what was going on, because they were impacted as well. They were part of it. Seventy people were boated out at night-time to Five Mile and then to Woolianna Road to the school. People were genuinely concerned about why everyone was not flown out on Saturday morning.

I put out a statement—it seems to trigger some people on the other side when we put out statements, even though it is what people in our community expect—asking why the Northern Territory Government did not call an emergency for this situation and write to the federal government to deploy the ADF. That does not take away from what the public servants, emergency services workers and police are doing on the ground. In fact, it helps those organisations and emergency services by taking pressure off them, because their people were thin on the ground, and assisting to get people out. I think anyone in that situation in those communities, from the police to the emergency services, would have welcomed ADF support because it would take a lot of pressure off them. They were under a huge amount of pressure to ensure the safety of all people in that community. If we called in the ADF we could have had helicopters flying all people out in one day. That is a concern that I have.

Another concern I have is this: what coordination was done for people in the homelands to ensure they had food security? I have been speaking to people today about where things are at. I am passing on the information to the Chief Minister's office. As she stated, I have sent 19 emails to her office about communities that have food security issues. The five homelands of Emu Point, Woodycupaldiya, Merrepen, Nemarluk and Uminyuluk had food security issues.

My concern is that without that coordination it was costing the government a lot more money because it has to do one-off trips back and forth each day. If it was coordinated, if the needs of the people in those homelands were understood, the government could have done a one-off food drop to all of them. We would not have had this mess whereby I had to send 19 emails to the Chief Minister's office and then keep following up to see where things were at. I asked whether the food drops had been done. I kept calling the communities and the people there said, 'No, we haven't seen it'. Then I would follow up with another email for an update.

That, to me, is not playing politics; it is working with each other as colleagues. It does not matter what stripes you wear in parliament, when it comes to emergency situations we should be able to talk in a mature way and have good faith that the information I receive from my constituents is being believed. The Chief Minister stated before that the information I sent was incorrect. The information I am sending about what she has said is supposedly incorrect. That is information from my constituents in those homelands.

I just got off the phone with the West Daly Mayor, Terry Sams, who is upset by the comments from the Chief Minister, indicating or suggesting that he is incorrect, when he has been calling me and telling me there are food shortages in his homeland and at his shop and trying to do the right thing by the community. Then the Chief Minister comes in here and suggests he is incorrect.

That is why I called for the Chief Minister to come back and apologise and retract what she said in Question Time, because it is disgraceful that she dismissed people from homelands. I remind you these people live in some of the most remote parts of this country.

A lot of people will ask why they did not organise enough food for the homelands. In normal circumstances in a Wet Season, people generally can drive to the closest town. Guess what? Palumpa is flooded, as is Peppimenarti. Emu Point has its own shop but could not get food in because the airport was so wet. That is why it needed to be helicoptered in; the road was cut off.

When you start having pot shots at us, remember I am not taking it personally and losing sleep over it. Our constituents are raising these issues in good faith that the government will also represent them and respond to those food security issues. That is my concern with this.

I copped some criticism for putting Facebook posts up. One communication channel for me and for people in homelands is that I will put a post up and tell them the issue of food security has been raised in Emu Point, for example. I have raised this with the Chief Minister's office and I am waiting for a response. That is fair communication. People can go on Facebook and know I have raised those issues.

The Chief Minister suggests that I am playing politics, spreading misinformation, not being honest and creating division. I am just communicating to our constituents that the information has been passed on. They are following it, liking it and commenting on it. When I get that update, I let people know where it is at.

It is disappointing that the Chief Minister would try to attack me as though I am making this up. The people in the Thamarrurr region in those homelands and the Mayor of the West Daly council will not be fooled by this. I will continue to advocate and work with the Chief Minister.

I do not care what you say about me personally. It is about the people, at the end of the day. The fact that you have not called me once is quite concerning. I tried to call you last week, I sent emails, but I have not

had a single phone call. You called me when Daly River evacuated last time. I would expect you to set a precedent and would call me this time.

Mr EDGINGTON (Essential Services): Madam Speaker, as we are all well aware, a significant portion of the Territory has recently been affected by severe rain and widespread flooding. These events have placed extraordinary pressure on our communities, health services and essential services infrastructure.

In response to these conditions, the Katherine Hospital was required to be evacuated. All patients were safely transferred to hospitals in Darwin, ensuring they continued to receive the critical medical care they needed. Evacuating a hospital under such circumstances is a complex and demanding task. It requires hospital staff to act swiftly and with absolute precision, working in a highly coordinated manner, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of every patient.

Beyond the physical transfer of patients, staff are tasked with the careful preparation of medical records and medications and must maintain clear and timely communication, both with the receiving hospital and the families of patients.

This operation highlights the extraordinary dedication, professionalism and resilience of our healthcare staff. Their commitment ensures that even in the most challenging and unpredictable circumstances the safety and care of our patients remain the highest priority.

A big thank you goes to the many legends in the NT Fire and Rescue Service and the NT Police, who all went above and beyond, retrieving beds and supplies from Katherine Hospital before it was closed.

For patients, being evacuated from the hospital can be understandably frightening and disorientating. It is a stressful experience for the patients and their families who may feel anxious until they know their loved ones are safe and well.

Thanks to careful planning and a highly coordinated emergency response—which is essential to minimise risks and protect patient wellbeing—this evacuation was carried out exactly as it needed to be. Every precaution was taken to ensure patients were safely transferred and continued to receive the medical care they required.

On Sunday I visited the staff and patients from Katherine Hospital who had been evacuated to Darwin. NT Health had established a dedicated ward to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of care, allowing patients to feel as comfortable and supported as possible during a difficult time. I thank Dr Emma and Dr Sonia, Hospital Resource Coordinator Shannon and nurses Amy and Charyl. Your tireless dedication and professionalism have been remarkable. It was clear to me when I visited the patients that they were all in good spirits thanks to the care and support provided everyday by our amazing Health staff.

Of course, there are many essential workers and community members who have gone above and beyond to support not only those affected in Katherine, but also people in surrounding communities including Binjari, Daly River, Beswick, Palumpa and Jilkminggan. Your efforts made a real difference to people's lives in incredibly challenging circumstances. From some of the reports I have seen from Mataranka, people there are clearly suffering the effects of flooding as well.

Most importantly, I acknowledge all the NT Health staff for the incredible work they continue to do under the most difficult circumstances. In these challenging and stressful circumstances, doctors, nurses and support staff have demonstrated outstanding professionalism, compassion and teamwork. Their priority has always been the safety and wellbeing of patients, ensuring that everyone was carefully transferred and cared for throughout the entire process. Your commitment and dedication is a reminder of the extraordinary people who make up our health system and of the strength, resilience and compassion that defines our communities in times of crisis.

To the staff, families, community members and everyone who played a role in responding to this emergency, thank you for everything that you have done. Your dedication, courage and commitment makes a real difference to people's lives, and it is because of you that our communities are safer, stronger and more resilient.

It is not just the health system that is put under pressure when extreme weather events roll across the Territory; our power, water and sewerage infrastructure is also tested. This morning, I spoke about the impacts to the Darwin pump station, as well as infrastructure in Katherine, Daly River, Jilkminggan, Beswick, and Binjari.

My electorate has also suffered significant flooding in the community of Murray Downs. Other communities in my electorate have suffered minor flooding in different circumstances at Alpurrurulam, Canteen Creek and Epenarra. Murray Downs was particularly affected, and some residents are now residing at Ali Curung. They are still two or three weeks away from being relocated back to their community.

Despite the challenges posed to critical utility infrastructure, our established processes, training and emergency systems are working as intended. Because of these preparations, interruptions have been shortened and damaged assets are progressively returning to service.

I can confirm that Power and Water Corporation is actively progressing restoration works at the Darwin River pump station, and further updates will be provided as that work continues. In the meantime, I reassure Territorians that this unprecedented failure has not put Darwin's water supply at risk. Power and Water have alternative sources in place and we are currently having water from McMinn and the Howard East bore fields, which has ensured residents will not lose access to water.

As part of the Katherine flood response, Power and Water mobilised, and although some infrastructure was damaged, crews got to work and by Sunday had power restored to approximately half the customers who originally lost power due to the weather event. Four sewer pumps in Katherine were also electrically isolated due to inundation with flood waters, but only one sewer pump station remains offline with fewer than 30 customers affected. This is due to the hard work and coordination from different teams working together to see the essential services in Katherine restored.

By way of background, these teams have included six personnel flown in from Darwin, two lines personnel driving light vehicles to Katherine from other areas, six utilities service contract workers conducting damage assessment in communities, 10 Katherine-based water staff, 14 Katherine-based Power and Water staff and three apprentices on the job.

Essential services will continue to be restored in Katherine when it is safe and appropriate to do so. As mentioned, Power and Water has also been active in ensuring our remote community services are restored and, thanks to the plans in place, this is going well.

In Murray Downs, in my electorate, they are still offline, but that recovery work is underway where flooding caused significant damage to homes and community infrastructure. There have been contractors in Murray Downs doing the necessary work helping with the cleanup; making sure the houses are safe when residents go back there; checking the electricity supply; and checking to ensure that power, water and sewerage is all available when residents eventually return.

The utilities support contract worker is on the ground restoring power to households, and as soon as certificates of compliance come through, there will be an opportunity for residents to begin their return to the community. I can verify that two-thirds of the community has now had power restored.

I also put out a special mention to the stations in my electorate. I think the Member for Braitling touched on Elkedra station, which had severe flooding go through the homestead. There has been significant to the home and infrastructure, fencing, watering areas for cattle, and the roads to access the station have suffered significant damage. This will affect getting supplies in, getting food and materials to undergo those necessary repairs. The Kurundi homestead also had water go through. The Blue Bush outstation in my electorate is under water as we speak.

There is still significant pressure on people living in the Barkly as a result of the flooding that occurred just a couple of weeks ago.

In Daly River, Jilkminggan and Nganmarriyanga, the communities have been evacuated; however, planning is already taking place to see restoration as soon as those communities are safe to access.

In Binjari, the power supply remains, and crews have been on the ground and found a solution that is providing that community with water.

In Beswick, the power and water supply has continued, with the utility services contract worker remaining onsite to assist in maintaining the systems in that community.

As Territorians, we know our weather can be extreme, but what we have is resilience and backups built into our systems. For what we have seen so far, I give my thanks and support to all of the services that have been out on the front line. We gave seen all public servants, our volunteers, the emergency services, the

frontline police—I have spoken about out Health staff and Power and Water. They have been not only on the front line, but managing incident management teams in the emergency management centres as well. We had an extreme number of staff making sure that these emergencies have been managed. I must say they have done an incredible amount of work which should be commended.

I also commend the residents of the communities that have been affected. We have seen them pull together as well, working together to deal with all of the events we have seen across the Territory, whether it has been Alice Springs, in my electorate in the Barkly, up the highway through Jilkminggan, at Alpurrurulam or Mataranka. Everybody has done their bit. This is what the Territory is all about—people coming together in times of hardship to get things done. I thank everybody for doing their bit.

As the Minister for Health and for Essential Services, I will be continuing to ensure that all my portfolios continue the work they are doing at such a high standard. The other ministers have their departments out doing what they need to do, whether it is manning shelters, assisting with payments or assisting to get some of those services back online. We are out there supporting all of those communities and will continue to do so until this event is over.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE
Member for Fong Lim

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking precedence to move a motion concerning a matter of privilege, pursuant to Standing Order 229. I have written to the member to advise that I will grant precedence for the motion to be moved immediately.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly refers the conduct of the Member for Fong Lim in relation to allegations concerning his treatment of Legislative Assembly staff during the 2025 parliamentary inquiry into voluntary assisted dying to the Committee of Privileges for inquiry and report.

Everyone should feel safe and respected in their workplace. Every workplace should be inclusive—an environment where people are treated with dignity, free from discrimination, abuse, harassment and intimidation. Leaders have a responsibility and a positive duty to set an example and behave in a way that is appropriate and emblematic of the standards we should all expect in all Territory workplaces.

The Legislative Assembly is no exception. Codes of conduct are routine parts of the workplace. They apply to our teachers, police, judiciary, public and private sectors, tradies, hospital staff and even to our volunteers, contractors and community organisations. No exception applies to Members of the Legislative Assembly in terms of creating and maintaining a safe workplace culture and environment that supports peers and takes action when someone reports behaviours of concern. Transparent reporting processes, taking action and taking meaningful steps to eliminate problematic behaviours is the bare minimum of workplace standards across the country.

Recent media reporting has raised serious allegations concerning the conduct of the Member for Fong Lim towards staff of the Legislative Assembly during the select committee consultation process on voluntary assisted dying legislation. According to media reports, these complaints have been made alleging that the member engaged in behaviour towards Legislative Assembly staff that included yelling, swearing and using the power of imbalance between an elected member and official of this Northern Territory Legislative Assembly towards parliamentary staff doing their jobs. That behaviour was in an inappropriate manner.

One source in the media reported the allegations that during committee travel for the inquiry into voluntary assisted dying the Member for Fong Lim lost his temper, became verbally abusive and treated Legislative Assembly staff in a demeaning manner. It appears …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! These are untested allegations.

I move that the question be put.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 5
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown

Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr Paech
Mrs Carlson	Ms Uibo
Mr Charls	Mr Young
Mr Edgington	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mr Howe	
Mr Kerle	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr Patel	
Mrs Zio	

Motion agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Jane Aagard

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the former Speaker, Jane Aagard. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 5	Noes 13
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
Mr Paech	Ms Cahill
Ms Uibo	Mrs Carlson
Mr Young	Mr Charls
	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr Patel
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the amazing achievement by a group of outstanding young Territorians from the Northern Futures Football Program. These eight athletes were selected from under-15 junior players and drawn from communities and clubs across the NT.

These amazing eight athletes are from Palmerston Rovers Football Club, of which I am proud to be the patron, in the beautiful electorate of Drysdale; the Darwin Olympic Sporting Club; Azzurri Football Club; Casuarina Football Club; and Borroloola Strikers Football Club in the Member for Barkly's electorate.

For 10 days in February these young, talented Territorians were immersed within the Celtic Football Club Academy in Glasgow, a long way from home. At the club they trained, played and operated as Celtic Academy players, experiencing firsthand the professionalism, discipline and elite standards expected within

one of the world's most renowned soccer institutions. This opportunity exposed them to the intensity, technical precision and strategic demands required at the highest levels of global soccer. Importantly, the trip was not just about their own personal development; it was about the knowledge, insight and elevated standards they will bring back to the Northern Territory.

Each of these athletes carried with them the pride of their families, clubs, community and the Territory. This program demonstrates what is possible when we invest in our youths, providing pathways that expand their horizons and inspire their ambitions. It is also a reflection of the strong partnership between local clubs, development programs and international organisations willing to open the door to amazing, emerging talent.

Congratulations again to the players, their clubs and everyone who supported them along the way, and to Football NT and the Northern Futures Football Program.

Doreen Creek is a strong Territorian. This year, on Bombing of Darwin Day, she celebrated a wonderful milestone; she was 99 years young.

Doreen Creek is a proud Territorian and a great example of how longevity is not just someone's measure. Doreen has lived in Darwin for the past five years, and before that she lived in South Australia. She was a secretary and bookkeeper for a furniture manufacturer for 35 years and ended up running the business before she retired. When she stopped work, she did volunteer service for about 20 years and performed in an entertainment dance troupe just for fun.

As her son Bob says, she had a lot of heart in the Northern Territory, visiting several times a year, every year, since 1973. In fact, before she moved here permanently she had cultivated many lifelong friends, including Terry and Kath Baldwin. When the Baldwins opened the Bark Hut Inn, Doreen was there helping out, serving behind the bar.

Bob says his mother primarily visited so much to look after her grandchildren, but the Top End also has special meaning for Doreen through her birthday falling on the same date as the Bombing of Darwin. As well, her brother Leslie served in Darwin during that time. According to Bob, while the rest of Australia lived in ignorance, she has always been aware of the significance of the bombing in the Top End.

When Doreen would trek to Darwin, she usually caught the train or bus; she rarely flew. She caught the first passenger train to Darwin on *The Ghan* when the rail link was finally opened. She has seen so much of the Territory, probably more than some of us born-and-bred locals. Doreen has been a seasoned traveller. In 2022 she went to Greenland and then Norway to see the fjords. On her 90th birthday, she partied in Havana.

Home is where the heart is, and that home is the Northern Territory for Doreen Creek. Bob says she continues to live large and independently and has been adopted by the local surf lifesaving community. Every Friday, she is at the Darwin Surf Life Saving Club where they cherish her presence. Bob is the life member, but Doreen is the love of their life.

I know honourable members join me in wishing Doreen Creek the very best wishes for the future and congratulations on her milestone birthday. May she have many more to enjoy with Bob; her three grandchildren Rebecca, Jade and Sam; and four great-grandchildren Liam, Charlie, Caspian and Elliott.

I pay tribute to the amazing Garramilla Duavata women's rugby league team. These incredible players have done the Territory proud on the international stage at the 2026 Las Vegas 9s. The Territory team delivered a truly outstanding performance, finishing as the undefeated champions of the women's community division. The team completed a perfect tournament, winning all seven of their matches and showcasing remarkable skill, discipline and teamwork.

Their championship victory came in a hard-fought grand final where they defeated Canada's Scarborough Aces, with a final score of 18–12. This achievement is the result of sheer determination, discipline and unity. The team fought hard for this win, showcasing not only the outstanding skill but also the trademark of Territory resilience that defines our athletes. Match after match they demonstrated exceptional teamwork and heart.

I acknowledge the exceptional players whose efforts contributed to this well-deserved triumph: Abigayle Vakatawase-Sekitoga; Ellie Niki; Mere Rasaku; Cecilia Misob; Liana Niki; Natalia Grant; Mele Tupou; Courtney Tamati; Matilda Seden; Larana Carriera; Talia Corrie; Kelam Nona; Tyla Kingdon; Mawgan Keats; Zoe Kurnoth; and Siniva Sa'anga.

Each of these athletes played a vital role in securing the win that earned them the chance to compete on the world stage. Their achievement is a testament to their discipline, commitment to each other and the strength of women's rugby in the Territory. I congratulate the Garramilla Duavata team on their remarkable victory and on proudly showcasing the Territory spirit to the world.

I acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable efforts of 69-year-old Gary Browder, a Territorian whose determination and compassion have made a meaningful difference to the lives of so many. Recently, Gary completed an incredible 100 laps in one morning at SWELL Palmerston as part of Laps for Life, raising more than $2,000 for Dolly's Dream foundation. As honourable members would know, Dolly's Dream is dedicated to preventing youth suicide and promoting kindness and resilience among young people.

Gary's fundraising efforts have been inspiring. Despite facing three battles with cancer, and the lifechanging loss of his right arm in 2021 and then his right shoulder in 2025, Gary has continued to demonstrate immense strength, resilience and courage. His determination to push beyond every challenge and his refusal to allow adversity to define him has created a clear and powerful sense of motivation for everyone fortunate enough to know his story.

I have seen Gary many times at the SWELL facility in Palmerston. Gary said, 'I want others to know there is hope for people like me and not to let things like physical disability hold you down'. Gary's 100-lap effort stands as a testament to the impact one person can have when they channel their strength into a meaningful purpose. By dedicating his swim to Dolly's Dream, he has helped amplify the vital message that every young person deserves safety, kindness and hope. His actions not only raised funds but also spark important conversations across our community on an important topic. It is people like Gary Browder who strengthen our community and make it a better place. He is a wonderful Territorian. I congratulate Gary on this outstanding achievement and thank him for his support of such an important foundation.

I pay tribute to an outstanding young Territorian who is breaking barriers and inspiring a new generation in the game of baseball. Young Hannah Fior has been hitting it out of the park. She was proudly named the 2025 Junior of the Year by Baseball Northern Territory. She is the first female ever to receive this prestigious award. The award is among the most hotly contested of the sport, attracting the highest number of nominations on record last year. To rise to the top in such an exceptionally strong field speaks volumes about Hannah's extraordinary talent, dedication and character.

A proud member of the Alice Springs Baseball Association, Hannah plays junior baseball with the pirates, where she competes week-in and week-out in the local senior league competition. Remarkably, Hannah only took up baseball in late 2022. Her progress has been nothing short of phenomenal, from local little league to representing the Northern Territory and multiple states on the national stage, all while giving back to the sport as an active umpire and outstanding role model for others.

At just 13, Hannah plays with a maturity far beyond her years. She has been described as a genuine all-rounder, a notable leader with impeccable sportsmanship and a positive attitude. Congratulations, Hannah. You have done yourself proud and the Territory even prouder.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I wrote to Madam Speaker pursuant to Standing Order 229 to seek her determination as to whether a motion relating to the potential breach of privilege by the Member for Fong Lim should be granted precedence over other business of the Assembly. She granted that just before. Unfortunately, the CLP government has chosen to protect bullying allegations by not allowing that important and substantive motion, written to the Speaker of the Assembly, to be referred to the Committee of Privileges, which is the operating process for all members of parliament to address any concerns about parliamentary conduct or conduct of a member of parliament in or out of parliament workspace.

It is an absolute—I was going to say it is a shock, but it is not. That is what the CLP government does. It hides, deflects and defers and, unfortunately, has not allowed the standing order to be read out in full. I have decided to do it in my adjournment.

Recent media reports have raised serious allegations concerning the conduct of the Member for Fong Lim towards the staff of the Legislative Assembly during travel undertaken as part of the select …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 29; there was a previous vote on this matter, and the Opposition Leader is reflecting adversely on a vote that has previously been dealt with by this Assembly. She should not be able to further debate this matter.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: My advice is that—as we have just debated this—in accordance with the standing orders, Opposition Leader, you are free to use your adjournment as you wish. However, you cannot reflect on the conduct of another member, apart from a substantive motion. We have just had that motion prior to this. I invite you to continue your adjournment, but be careful with the standing orders, in terms of the ruling I have just made.

Ms UIBO: I quote from a media statement that was released by the Member for Fong Lim on 9 March 2026—a statement attributed in full to Dr Tanzil Rahman MLA, Member for Fong Lim:

> *I am seeking to address media reports made in February relating to bullying allegations made against me.*
>
> *I am proud of my work as Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee and remain committed to seeing strong Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation progress smoothly in the interest of all Territorians.*
>
> *I value my integrity and am deeply offended by allegations of professional misconduct.*
>
> *I believe some of the media coverage to be defamatory and am actively considering my legal options.*
>
> *Consequently, I will not be publicly commenting further on this matter.*
>
> *I remain committed to representing the interests of my constituents in Fong Lim, and the people of the NT.*

I believe that everyone in the Northern Territory deserves a safe workplace and to be respected and treated with dignity in their workplace. MLAs, members of the public service, businesspeople, staff of organisations and volunteers should all conduct themselves in a way that provides dignity and respect in their workplaces.

Workplaces across the Territory tend to be unique. In the Chamber I often speak about how unique and special the parliament's Chamber is. The Territory has vast geographic places. Particularly in my team, the Labor opposition, we represent some beautiful parts of the Northern Territory. Workplaces can be quite fluid, as you can imagine—travelling on charter planes, on the road and sometimes on ferry boats across the Northern Territory in open spaces, but in buildings as well.

Codes of conduct should be part of the workplace in every form. The Labor Party was built on strong workforce relations and an industrial workforce background. We are proud of that. I remain committed to our strong Labor values, ensuring that people respect reporting processes. When there are allegations of bullying in any workplace they should be taken seriously and should not ever be shut down, ignored, dismissed, deflected or diminished.

I hope that every Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly would also agree that our workplaces and those of our staff in our electorate offices, ministerial offices, my Opposition Leader's office, in the parliament, including our cleaners, security guards and our cafe hospitality staff—every person who makes this important place work—should be treated with respect, dignity and be protected from bullying.

We have seen media reports. I am not repeating anything specifically. I just read out a media statement that was released directly by the Member for Fong Lim about allegations of bullying. Nowhere in the media statement does the Member for Fong Lim refute the bullying allegations. People can read the quotes of the media statement if they choose, but what I took from that was that the Member for Fong Lim is considering some things as defamatory and is looking at legal options. There is no rebuttal or refuting at all of the bullying allegations in the Member for Fong Lim's statement.

As a fellow Member of the Legislative Assembly, this becomes a matter of importance. It is vital to speak up against things. That is inherently part of what we try to do in this place—make good, robust laws and make sure that laws protect Territorians for the better. It is highly unusual that a process of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly would not be reflective of the values and intent of the parliament's work. That extends to the way members conduct themselves and the way the power balance of elected members often puts out of balance the relationship with staff and what it means to be in a position of power.

I firmly put on the record that I will continue to advocate for safety in the workplace and that bullying is not acceptable in any workplace. In parliament we are supposed to be the example of what a strong, robust, respectful workplace that conducts itself with integrity looks like. When we start to deteriorate that value and

do not have high expectations of ourselves and each other, it puts us all in a bad light. It diminishes the work of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and provides an opportunity for things to grow in a negative way. What I am talking about is the standard that you set should be your example, and we should not walk past a standard that does not meet that expectation.

I am extremely disappointed that this is not a value being displayed by members of the government.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Orders 28 and 29 cover this issue. The Leader of the Opposition should not be reflecting on a previous debate or a vote that was carried out in this Assembly.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, I think she is couching it in a way that is quite obtuse. You could interpret it like that, but you could also interpret it as being a more general comment about what she has referred to—being the press release and other things that have happened in the media—so I will let it go.

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, thank you. I will continue because I do not think important debate should ever be gagged. I do not think, when people raise concerns about the conduct of our behaviour as members of parliament, that it should ever be silenced and I think it should have serious weight.

Territorians should be extremely concerned if we see any of the 25 members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly conduct themselves in a way that sheds a negative light or is questionable. We have processes in parliament to answer questions about our conduct. We have parliamentary committees, including special select committees, the Public Accounts Committee which looks at finances and public spending, the Standing Committee on the ICAC, the House Committee, the Standing Orders Committee and the privileges committee.

For those who do not understand what the privileges committee is, it is basically the tribunal that any member of parliament can be referred to if there are questions about their conduct, about the way a member has used their electorate office or about how an MLA has conducted themselves in their role.

The privileges committee is a serious concern, and to dismiss any concerns by not going through a full and robust process of a parliamentary committee is to diminish the processes we should all be conducting ourselves by. Territorians should be concerned if we are starting to see debate gagged in parliament. We are starting to see a diminishment of code of conduct from parliamentarians.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: I think what you want to say is that the member has crossed the line, and I agree. If you could withdraw your reference, particularly to the gagging of debate, which seems to reference what happened earlier.

Ms UIBO: I withdraw any reference to the gagging of debate, but I believe every person should feel safe and respected in their workplace.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I hope we are boiling our water in parliament, because it could be a messy Question Time tomorrow if not.

Madam SPEAKER: The water is bottled, I understand. It was sourced particularly for members earlier today after the announcement.

Mr HOWE: Is it? You learn something new every day. Madam Speaker, you are on the ball. Thank you.

Madam SPEAKER: The staff of the Legislative Assembly are on the ball.

Mr HOWE: To all staff, we thank you deeply.

I acknowledge a number of wonderful achievements and milestones across the Drysdale electorate and recognise the people and organisations who continue to strengthen our community spirit in Palmerston.

Beginning with Gray Primary School, a school that continues to demonstrate the strength of education and leadership in our community. Firstly, I thank Rachel Turton for stepping into the role of acting principal while Donna Westaway is on leave. Leadership during transitions is never easy, and Rachel's commitment to the students, staff and families of Gray Primary ensures the school continues to thrive.

I also congratulate the newly elected student leaders for 2026: school captains, Jett Jack and Hannah Pierce; and vice captains, Honey Reid and Stefan Rahman. Leadership at such a young age is a tremendous responsibility and a great opportunity, and I know these students will work diligently together to lead and represent their fellow students with pride.

Gray Primary has also welcomed new members to its teaching team. I welcome Elisa Rigoni, who joins the school from Leanyer Primary School, and Lindsay Maillis, who has taken on the role of Assistant Principal. I wish you both every success as you support the students and staff of Gray Primary.

I congratulate the students who represented the school proudly at the Interschool Netball Gala Day held on Thursday 26 February. Several Year 5 and 6 students participated in a round robin competition against other Top End schools to be active, healthy and make connections with their peers. Congratulations to Hannah, Bella, Jianne, Mackenzie, Clara-Belle, Kailyn, Harmonie, Honey and Mia, who were crowned Interschool Sport Champions. What a fantastic achievement and a credit to your teamwork and dedication.

Driver Primary School is another outstanding school in my electorate. I warmly welcome back Danielle Hall, who returns as Principal of Driver Primary after four years away. It is wonderful to see her return to lead the school into its next chapter. At the same time, we thank Simone Timms for her dedication and wish her well as she begins a new chapter at Essington School. Her contribution to Driver Primary will be missed.

I acknowledge the energetic work of Assistant Principal Mrs Kelly Reynhout, whose passion for the school community continues to inspire staff and students alike. We also welcome back the Driver Primary leadership team—Mrs Hall, Mrs Reynhout, Mrs Artango, Mrs Bridson, Miss Jones and Mrs Keelan—and thank them for the tremendous work they do shaping young minds.

Congratulations to the 2026 school captains, Joshua Benger and Shiloh McGowan, and vice captains, Sofiya Williams and Joyce Masibalavu. I also recognise the leadership within the school's house system. Congratulations to the captains and vice captains of the Archer, Johnston, Chaney and Nelson houses: Mariah Jones and Ryan Burke for Archer; Abbie Brennan and Leah Corbett for Johnston; Tidus Pledger and Robert Lee for Chaney; and Blair Alford and Levi Challman for Nelson.

Driver Primary students also represented their school proudly at the Top End Netball Day, demonstrating respect, sportsmanship and resilience throughout the competition. Their teamwork and determination were evident from the first whistle to the final game, and they did their school and community proud.

I acknowledge leadership at Driver Secondary School. We welcome Maisie Floyd as Principal. Maisie brings with her extensive experience, including her previous role as Principal of Palmerston College and her work as Senior Director for School Improvement and Leadership in the Barkly region. We also welcome Chin Huan as Assistant Principal, a highly respected educator who was recognised as the Northern Territory Secondary Educator of the Year in 2019 and who has been a leader in STEM education. Drysdale is incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated educators guiding the next generation of Territorians.

Our community is not only defined by our schools, but also by the strength of our seniors and community organisations. I welcome back our senior groups and committees for another wonderful year, including the Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club, Probus, the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association and NT Breatheasy, which our government was recently proud to support through funding from the Community Benefit Fund.

I also wish happy birthday to several members of our seniors community celebrating this month: Barbara Sealy on 3 March; Carmen Testa on 8 March; Anne Evans on 24 March; Jim Wright on 26 March; and a special congratulations to Isla, who celebrates the remarkable milestone of her 90th birthday.

Earlier this year, the City of Palmerston hosted its Australia Day ceremony, welcoming 34 new Australian citizens from 20 different countries in a wonderful celebration of community, culture and civic pride. Congratulations to the nominees and winners of the Palmerston Australia Day awards.

Balachander Mohanraj was awarded Citizen of the Year in recognition of more than 15 years of volunteer service to the Palmerston community. Joshua Harrington was named Young Citizen of the Year for his dedicated volunteer work with St John Ambulance in 2019. The Tamil Society of the Northern Territory was recognised as Community Event of the Year for the Indian Food Festival, held in Goyder Square.

I also acknowledge the many outstanding nominees whose contributions continue to strengthen our community, including Christopher Kimani, Darrell Ashby, Janette Ashby, Jacob Brant, Jennie Copley, Valerie

Wilkie, Yvonne Coleman, Nicolle Shoobridge and Tomiko Sariago, along with the organisations nominated for Community Event or Group of the Year.

Last month I also had the pleasure of participating in many activities during FebFit, a fantastic initiative encouraging Territorians to stay active and healthy. Palmerston is incredibly fortunate to have so many businesses and organisations working hard to keep our young people engaged.

I acknowledge the many groups that participated: Flametree Yoga Studio; Hartree Foundation; Tennis Palmerston; Pilates with Alex Hurt; SWELL Palmerston; Top End Zumba Crew; Tai Chi with Tom; F45 Palmerston; Sam's Dance Studio; Darwin Divine Dancers; OK Fitness; Youth Drop-in Sports; Elevate Hoops NT—which the Member for Blain and I had a go at, so check that on Facebook if you want to see what I look like upside down; YMCA; Ed/Rec Gymnastics; Jamealah Belly Dancers; Kokoro Busshu Karate; Corrugated Iron; Baby Ballet; Healthy Living NT; Top End Calisthenics; Darwin Sword Academy; Tammy's Fitness Training; and CrossFit Abode.

Palmerston truly is a remarkable community built by volunteers, teachers, students, seniors, sporting organisations and families who contribute every day to making our city stronger. As we continue this year of growth, security and certainty, I look forward to seeing the opportunities that continue to open for our community, especially in Drysdale, which has been neglected for far too long.

For too many years our suburbs have been overlooked, our families have carried the burden of crime and neglect, and our community has been asked to settle for less. I will not accept that. I will continue to fight to restore Drysdale, make our neighbourhood safer, support our schools and ensure our families receive the investigation and attention they deserve.

Drysdale is a proud community, and its best days are still ahead.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and celebrate a number of outstanding individuals and school communities within my electorate of Sanderson. These are people whose commitment to education, culture and community continues to shape the lives of Territorians.

I honour the remarkable Principal of Milkwood Steiner School, Netanela Mizrahi, whose exceptional musical leadership continues to enrich our community. Netanela's career has been defined not only by artistic excellence, but also by deep compassion and a powerful sense of social responsibility. Through her work in Indigenous communities, immigration detention settings and within palliative care environments, she has demonstrated the profound capacity of music to support people experiencing trauma and hardship.

Her work recognises that music is far more than performance; it is a language of healing, connection and cultural understanding. In recognition of her dedication, Netanela was awarded the prestigious Churchill Fellowship in 2017, enabling her to further investigate the role of music in communities facing hardship, recovery and transition. This fellowship provided an opportunity to deepen her research into how artistic expression can strengthen resilience and support emotional wellbeing.

Netanela's leadership extends well beyond the classroom, as creative director of Djari Project, working alongside Galpu songman Mr Gurruwiwi, she helped bring to life an extraordinary collaboration grounded in respect, partnership and cultural exchange. The project received national recognition, earning the Australian Art Music Awards in 2020 and the National Indigenous Music Awards in 2021 in the Indigenous Language category.

These honours reflect work that celebrates language, culture and the importance of storytelling through music. Her recent compositions continue this legacy of collaboration and cultural respect. *Gurrulwa Guligi*, created with Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee, commemorated the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy through a powerful orchestral work that captured remembrance and resilience for Territorians. Other works such as *Wuyal's Journey*, developed with Banula Marika; and *Dalba Gulwa*, a series of Larrakia-language songs written with Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee, further demonstrate Netanela's commitment to supporting Indigenous languages and stories through artistic expression.

In 2025 her collaborative *Stories of Water and Earth*, co-created with poet Melanie Mununggurr and commissioned by Ensemble Offspring and Arafura Music Collective, was performed at the Sydney Opera House, an extraordinary national stage for a Territory-based artist and educator.

Later this year, her newly commissioned work, *Ground*, will premiere and open the concert *From Common Ground*, marking her third year as our Composer in Residence—yet another milestone in an already distinguished career.

While we are fortunate to have Netanela Mizrahi serving as Principal of Milkwood Steiner School, we are equally privileged to witness the far-reaching impact of her artistic vision. She embraced the power of education, creativity and culture to build stronger, more compassionate communities. I commend her to the Assembly and thank her for the extraordinary contribution she continues to make locally and nationally.

I also acknowledge some exciting developments in some of our local schools. The Anula Primary School community has welcomed a number of new staff members who will no doubt bring energy and expertise to their roles. I extend a warm welcome to Corinne Britton, who joins the school teacher in charge, Demi Cubillo, who will be teaching Year 2 and is fresh from receiving the popular Hot 100 Apple for the Teacher award while at Wulagi Primary School.

Angelique Kirwin joins as a senior teacher for wellbeing and inclusion, and Kate Danvers is the new front office administrator, who also joins the team from Wulagi Primary School.

Each of these educators and staff members plays a vital role in shaping the supportive and inclusive environment that schools strive to create for their students and families. At Wulagi Primary, Ramon Dixon has also welcomed two new teachers to his well-established team—Ms Nadia Korfias and Ms Valanti Patmios—who join the preschool program.

These appointments are important because strong schools rely on dedicated educators who bring passion, innovation and care to their classrooms each day. I wish them every success as they begin their journey with the Wulagi community.

I thank all of our educators, school leaders, families and students across Sanderson for the work they do every day to strengthen our community.

I was honoured last week to attend Wagaman Primary School to present leadership badges to the newly appointed school captains, vice captains, house captains, house vice captains, student representative council members and members of the Learning Commission. These ceremonies are always a highlight of the school year because they recognise the emerging leaders among our young people. Leadership at primary school level is about much more than titles; it is about setting a positive example, demonstrating kindness, encouraging classmates and representing the values of the school.

I congratulate the 2026 school captains, Aisha Hall and Alicia Skultety, along with school vice captains Arlo Goudkowski and Ma'Kaylah O'Connell.

I also acknowledge the members of the student representative council: Indiana Campbell; Mason Heywood; Agnus Sta; Cruz Sophia Vo; Thamara Giri; Michael Koenig; Dimitrios Georgiadis; Valentina Toki; Marley Castillon; Ulli Meyer; Benji Munson; and Elizabeth Reeves.

House leadership was also recognised, with house captains Bane Schey-Gerdes and Lahsharn Talbot for Crocs, and Sophie Kuhl and Ellriza Megoth for Sharks, supported by the house vice captains David Koenig, Jorja Stanek, David McKay-Sanchez and Ataska Pambid.

I also congratulate the members of the Learning Commission, Angeline Baiju, Lily Bamblett, George Cremona, Jo Jissan and Celia Mulholland. I congratulate each of these students who accepted these important roles and thank the teachers and families who support them in developing these early leadership qualities.

I provide an exciting update regarding the future of Sanderson High School and its transition from Sanderson Middle School. This is a landmark moment for students, families and educators in the Sanderson community. From this term Sanderson High School has commenced its transition to a fully comprehensive high school delivering education from Years 7 to Year 12. Students will undertake the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training, with access to academic pathways and strong vocational education and training opportunities. Importantly, this transition is not simply a change in year levels, but it represents a transformation in opportunity. Students are already proudly wearing a new uniform and logo, symbolising a new chapter and a renewed sense of identity as they prepare to step into high school.

Under the guidance of Principal Rob McIntosh and a refreshed leadership team including Kieran Lines, Mel Davy, Alister Lear, Tammy Llewelyn, Travis Tunstall, Kvitka Becker, Daylen Bennett and Brent Carter, the school is embracing this transition with energy and a clear commitment to a renewed vision. Over the next four years, this transformation will be further strengthened through the establishment of a specialist industry, trade and technical college for Years 10 to 12 connected directly to the high school. In partnership with industry, the college will focus on building students' practical skills and preparing them for employment in high-priority sectors across the Northern Territory. This initiative is about creating clear pathways from school to work and ensuring our young people graduate with the confidence, skills and qualifications needed to pursue meaningful careers.

Significantly, the school has recognised a large group of students as emerging leaders who will form the Sanderson High School student leadership team for this year. These students include Angelina Penhale, Savvina Chalikos, Laphia Williams, Sofia Dai, Lilly Ferguson, Aubrey-Rose King Carpenter, Rhiannon Fearn, Drake Din, Michael Spicer, Leilani Nona, Nate Dash, Esther Ishara, Clare Westwood, Ruby Okoh, Meisha Ahmed, Samuel Noakes, Rikki-Jane Hinton, Nya Modra, Noor Kashif, Tom Wyndham, Cameron Penhale, Olive Preston, Kingston Grant, Earth Waramit, Feby Hayes, Kayley Penhale, Edward McDowell, William Ibrahim Yokolo, Jackson Delaney, Rosston Joaz Cooper, Jamal Van Dan Berg Hammer, Juliene Ngongo, Agape Etienne, Takaki Toyoda, Rexus Ulanimo, Kooper Royal-Gray, Tommy Hunter, Deishiya Long, Flora Hackenberg, Tullulah Johns Long, Madison McLay and Queenie Pancho.

I congratulate all of these young people in the student leadership team.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I will use my adjournment to speak to the MPI.

Over the past week, as we all know, heavy rain and floods have caused huge disruption, harm and damage across the whole of the Northern Territory, from Alice to Katherine and Darwin, and in remote communities throughout the Top End. These events are not abstract; they are real. They are experienced by real people, including people in this Chamber. My thoughts go out to everyone who has been and is being affected by this. We know that families have been forced to evacuate, homes have been inundated, and that it is ongoing. In some communities there is worse to come. Businesses have been disrupted and communities have been cut off from essential services.

I acknowledge the people on the ground, families protecting their homes, the local leaders coordinating emergency responses, the health, police and emergency services staff and other public servants who put up their hands to work tirelessly to keep everyone safe. The courage and resilience of these people deserves recognition and it deserves applause from all of us.

I vividly remember the 1998 floods in Katherine. I spent a lot of time helping with the flood recovery effort there. When the Chief Minister talked today about the smell after the flood, that was the thing I remember people finding the most difficult.

Many people at that time who had also been through Cyclone Tracy talked about the different challenges of a flood, and in fact how much worse it was for many of them. I know many people are now going through this terrible experience again.

We know that when these events happen, the more vulnerable you are, the more difficult it can be. Our remote communities, who are already dealing with disadvantage with inadequate housing, high food and fuel costs, inadequate roads and lack of communication, are all impacted even more by these events. We need to ensure—and I have heard that this is the work everyone is doing—that every Territorian is safe in these events, because as we have heard, there is more to come.

We also heard about the water issue in Darwin with the failed pump, and the fact that we need to boil our water is unprecedented here. We have heard these events described as 'acts of God', 'unpredictable' and 'unprecedented', but the reality is that we are living in a time when people all over the world, including in Australia and the Northern Territory, are experiencing the impacts of climate change and we should not be surprised by what is happening. What we should do is act.

We know that the Territory is a place with extreme weather events, and it is clear that these events are increasing. What this tells us is that we need systems designed for resilience, not just recovery. Take the Darwin dam as an example. In extreme wet weather, our infrastructure is tested like never before. The dam, which has never faced these conditions, now has failed us, showing us clearly that we must plan for the climate realities of today and tomorrow, not the past.

Even when we are not in a weather disaster, in remote communities like Wadeye people have been cut off for weeks with no communication. When I talk to people in Wadeye, they tell me if you do not have Starlink or satellite wi-fi, you cannot contact emergency services, health services cannot operate, shops cannot restock and families are left isolated. People have been left for weeks without being able to access their medication because the communication systems have been down.

This is not just during the current emergency; this is since the beginning of this year. No-one in a major city would tolerate being cut off from essential services for a week, let alone for months. Territorians in remote communities deserve the same protection as everyone else.

Our responsibility is clear: we must invest in alternative power systems, resilient roads, flood-proofed infrastructure and reliable communications so that communities remain safe and connected all the time, including during crises and extreme weather.

This is about the daily reality that Territorians face. It is about the mum I was talking to in Wadeye who cannot access her medication because the clinic is cut off. It is about families in Katherine and Darwin dealing with rising flood waters. It is about small businesses in remote towns that cannot open for days or weeks. These are all lived experiences; they are not hypotheticals, and we cannot plan as though these events are unpredictable and rare. The climate crisis is here, and the Northern Territory is on the front line.

Every decision about infrastructure, planning and emergency preparedness must be centred on the people of our communities, especially those in remote and vulnerable areas. We are in the middle of these events right now and my support and solidarity is with everyone who has been and is being impacted. I express again my appreciation of the extraordinary work being done by so many to support them.

Our responsibility in this Chamber is not only to respond to crises; it is to prepare for them. We cannot wait until the next flood, cyclone or infrastructure failure. This is our opportunity to design systems that are resilient, reliable and responsive because every Territorian, every day, no matter where they live, whether in the middle of a crisis or in the reality of a neglected community, deserves to be safe, connected and supported.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, across the Northern Territory we experience some of the toughest weather conditions across the country, and governments need to do a better job looking after people in the bush.

I have heard from people across the bush in recent weeks about the conditions of their roads. People are fed up with the poor condition that the CLP has let these roads fall into. These are the roads I have heard about directly from communities: the Papunya road; the Utju road; Willowra Road; Santa Teresa Road; Sandover Highway; Docker River Road; the Nyirripi road; Buchanan Highway; Victoria Highway; Lajamanu Road; and the road into Nitjpurru. These are all important roads in the Northern Territory that have been left to deteriorate by the CLP government. The question communities are asking is when these roads will be upgraded.

I will make it clear that the CLP government has been given money—cold, hard cash—by the federal government, by Marion Scrymgour, to do up roads in the Northern Territory like Santa Teresa Road, but the Member for Namatjira continues to blame land councils and everyone else. I have spoken to the land councils and they have said clearly, 'The land clearances are done. The responsibility lies with the CLP government to get on and seal that road.'

Money was made available by the federal Labor government to bituminise seven kilometres of Imanpa Road into that community. Again, they are waiting for the Northern Territory CLP government to respond. Mereenie Loop Road to the Utju community again is waiting for the CLP government to communicate what action is happening.

These are just some roads across the Northern Territory that remote people are continually waiting to hear from this government and parliament about what it is doing. Roads are important. They keep our communities connected, give access to larger towns for medical appointments, goods and services, enable us to visit family and get in for footy and so forth. Our remote communities deserve to have a high level of access and investment.

This CLP government is not investing in the bush as it said it would. I acknowledge that there are probably one or two members over there who are trying, but we need this road investment. We need to see these roads upgraded.

I heard from families in Titjikala this week saying that for a long time that road has been in terrible condition. They continually raised it with their member who has said, 'We have no money'. That is an excuse. What is the grading schedule for that road? It is the same with the road to Kintore. They are important roads.

We need this government to do better and be clear when the Santa Teresa, Impanpa and Docker River roads are being sealed. When is the next lot of sealing on the Tanami and the Mereenie Loop? They are all important roads.

I will also talk about the statement that was released by the Member for Fong Lim. First, it is a disgrace that the Member for Fong Lim chose to report this in the media on 8 March—an important day for Territory women in the community, being International Women's Day. The Member for Fong Lim released a statement saying, 'I am hurt. I have been vilified.' He did not say what he has been vilified about; he has just said, 'I am hurt, and I am offended'.

He had an opportunity to come clean, front up and face the music. We have heard serious allegations in this parliament and in the media about alleged bullying by the Member for Fong Lim of hardworking Legislative Assembly staff. We heard allegations of the Member for Fong Lim swearing at staff and using aggressive behaviour towards public servants who work in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

The statement he put out says nothing about those allegations. This statement is not worth the paper it is written on because it does not confirm or deny. Are these allegations true? Is the alleged abusive behaviour, abusive attitudes and unnecessary inappropriate conduct to public servants true or not true? That is what the Member for Fong Lim could have put in a statement, and he did not have to do it on International Women's Day. That is a day when we should be celebrating the amazing contributions of Territory women, not trying to pump out a press release, hoping that no-one would notice.

If you are vilified and get offended, tell us what about the allegations offends you. You have failed to communicate what you are feeling vilified, offended or upset about because you have not confirmed or denied the allegations.

There is a complete power imbalance here. The Member for Fong Lim is a member of parliament. The two individuals against whom the alleged conduct happened are not members of parliament. They do not feel comfortable to talk about their experience because there is an abuse of power. I would be careful if I were the Member for Fong Lim, because if those women continue to be empowered by other women in the Northern Territory to come forward and share their experiences, they would have done that before the Member for Fong Lim had the opportunity to stand up, step up, face the music and say whether this happened. That is the simple matter of it.

We are no different today from three weeks ago when these allegations surfaced. What we asked is whether this is true or is it not true. That is what Territorians want and deserve to know.

We should not be putting out statements about these allegations on International Women's Day. It is not on. It is poor form.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, one of my constituents has recently retired from the public service after a long and highly productive career. Steve Wheelhouse concludes nearly 37 years of dedicated service to the Northern Territory Public Sector. Congratulations, Steve.

Steve began his NT career in 1989, with NT Treasury as a mainframe security analyst, progressing through several senior roles, including mainframe security manager and the NCOM manager in Alice Springs. In 1998 he moved to Transport and Works, where he managed Motor Vehicle Registry Customer Services, the Driver Licensing and Vehicle Registration Policy Unit, Road Safety and Legislation, and later worked in Transport Planning and Reform.

Steve played key roles in several major projects and legislative and policy reforms, including the introduction in 1998 of Australia's first driver's licence data exchange, with the NT and NSW going first and other states joining later, and the development and implementation of the 2008 transit security officer legislation, the 2008 alcohol ignition lock legislation and the 2009 hoon driving legislation.

A standout moment in Steve's career was his 2006 secondment to a World Bank project in Samoa, where he helped establish the new Samoan Land Transport Authority.

On behalf of the people of Blain and all Territorians, thank you, Steve, for your long career of service. May you well enjoy your retirement with your loving wife.

Gary Browder from Woodroffe recently swam 100 laps over two-and-a-half hours at SWELL Palmerston for Dolly's Dream to fight bullying and support its initiatives, raising $3,192 as part of Laps for Life 2026.

Gary lost his arm to cancer, but he is the most positive person I know, and he does more with one arm than many people do with two. Each week he completes eight water aerobics classes, two yoga classes, two Pilates classes, three senior swimming classes and a Zumba session.

Gary is such a trooper that when he woke up from the life-saving surgery that cost him his arm, he told the nurses that was the second-best day in his life, because he had beaten cancer. The best day in his life? Well, that was when he drove to Darwin in 1984 to start a new life here. Gary is a legend. Well done, mate.

I congratulate Callum Bailey, who recently received the Be-Excellent Outstanding Service Award by the leadership team of Palmerston Bunnings for his much-appreciated contribution to service excellence. I know Callum, and he is a special guy. He has done a lot of work around Palmerston. Thank you very much for your great work at Bunnings, Callum. I appreciate it. I always love seeing you greet people when I come to visit.

Trent De With from Rod and Rifle Tackleworld Katherine—what a legend. I just want to shout out to him and thank him for his awesome service documenting the floods in Katherine and service to the community. Ben Hockey from Hockey's Northern Services is a landscaper who was driving around donating free sandbags to the Katherine community during the floods. That is the true spirit of Territorians, helping each other out when they are in need.

A big shout-out goes to local MLA for Katherine, Jo Hersey, who came out of surgery and is on the ground in Katherine—in a wheelchair—out and about, looking after the people of Katherine, working hard for her constituents. Good on you, Member for Katherine.

To the people of Katherine, I wish you a swift recovery.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I go back to the MPI because I did not have enough time to finish. I want to, again, give another shout-out to our police and emergency services on the ground, but also a big shout-out to the Berry Springs Primary School teachers. We had seen a weather system over the rural area with a lot of flooding over our creeks and roads. Many people were caught out from yesterday's afternoon flooding to the point where many students could not get home. In fact, 31 students were stuck at school because of the flooding event that occurred at Berry Springs, mainly along Cox Peninsula Road. We saw flooding over Berry Creek which obviously cuts off the main road for a lot of families in the rural area.

A huge shout-out goes to the Principal Carlie and all the teachers at Berry Springs Primary School. The teachers all stayed back to ensure the kids had some entertainment. I believe they were watching movies in the classrooms and some games in the hall. I gave the school a call to check in on them, and they said that they were calling the parents to let them know the kids were happy and safe so that parents' anxieties were not too heightened. It got to about 9 pm when they could finally get students home.

I also give a shout-out to my electorate officer, Kirsty. She was one of those people who got stuck with the waters rising over the road. She had to go back to the electorate office to stay there for a few hours. Thank god she did not have to stay the night, but she was prepared to stay there for the night. I shout out to all the residents in Berry Springs, Livingstone, Darwin River and Wagait Beach, because many people were not able to drive back home.

I want to touch on a story that someone messaged through to me. Jasmine is her name. She lives in Reedbeds Road down near Darwin River. An unfortunate event happened to her yesterday. Jasmine woke up to flooding on her property. She lives on a piece of land which has creeks around her property, and at 6 am she could see that those creeks had risen. Unfortunately, Jasmine was not able to get out.

Jasmine became worried and rang emergency services and friends for help. As time went on, she told me, it got to 2 pm and the water had come up so high it started flooding into her house. She is pregnant and has a young kid and a dog at the property. Eventually, one of the neighbours came around 2 pm, and she had to wade through the water with her young kid and dog, while pregnant, with her partner. Thankfully, her neighbour came to assist and get out onto Reedbeds Road.

These are the stories we are hearing. She is still in shock. I spoke with her today over the phone. She has lost everything—her cars and everything in her house. From what she has told me she has lost her furniture, and they have a couple of motorbikes. She has said the only things they have are the clothes on their backs. She is now staying in Howard Springs with one of her friends.

We should be taking those disheartening stories into consideration, especially when it can get heated in here with the debates. As members of parliament we will start to hear these stories, and when we tell these stories to each other we need to do it with respect, understanding and empathy towards the people getting caught in the flood waters and ensure there is timely responses. At the end of the day, it is people's safety we should be concerned about.

A huge thankyou goes to all emergency services, the police, our teachers and support staff at Berry Springs school who stayed back to ensure students were safe. We had fewer students today at Berry Springs, with a reduced program. I believe that will be the same tomorrow due to the amount of rain in the rural area. Huge thanks go to Carlie, the Principal of Berry Springs school, the teaching staff, assistant teaching staff and all the workers at the school, and to all the parents who have been assisting the teachers and principal with the broader understanding of helping each other out to ensure everyone is safe and checking in on each other.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.